

**Family Affairs: an historical anthropology of state practice and
Aboriginal agency in a rural town, North Queensland**

**Thesis submitted by
Sally Marie Babidge, BA (Hons) UWA
June 2004**

**For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Anthropology, Archaeology and Sociology,
James Cook University**

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Abstract

This thesis is an historical anthropology of power, a study of the relations between the state and Aboriginal family in Charters Towers, a rural town of approximately 9,000 people, 135km south west of Townsville, North Queensland. In this thesis I argue that the state/society relationship is mutually (if unequally) constituted, and that the relationship (in practice, in discourse, and in the imagination) operates at many levels. The thesis takes up critical evaluations of the anthropological research on family/kinship in rural Aboriginal Australia through an ethnographic study of the practices of family and belonging.

I begin by examining the nature of the frontier, in the construction of knowledge across the frontier and the early practices of the state and Aboriginal people in the reproductions of cultural and social boundaries. The reproduction of Aboriginal difference is institutionalised at the turn of the 20th Century when the state creates specific legislation to control Aboriginal people under the rhetoric of ‘protection’. Subsequent state policies of ‘assimilation’ and ‘self-determination’ are seen as extension of measures of control, although practised by state bureaucracies in novel ways. Under ‘recognition’, in the era of Native Title, Aboriginal difference is ‘recognised’ in terms of concepts of ‘traditional culture’: a static de-historicised Aboriginality with which Aboriginal people identify as well as subvert and resist.

In the thesis I examine how Aboriginal families are produced and reproduced in ways which are enmeshed in state practice as well as constituted by practice identified as particularly Aboriginal. Utilising archival sources produced by the colonial state, as well as published histories, oral history and ethnography, I analyse the complexities of state intervention into Aboriginal people’s lives and Aboriginal discourse and practice in response to these measures. An ethnographic study of everyday articulations of ‘family’ and of events such as meetings and funerals, demonstrates that relations of kinship are formed and reformed through frequent performance, which as *practice* creates and recreates the terms of such relations. My engagement with these arguments in relation to Australian Aboriginal anthropology, is distinct in its analysis of the role of power outside of the resistance/domination duality.

Acknowledgements

My first thanks must go to all of the Murri women and men of Charters Towers. I thank them for their permission to do this research, their patience and forbearance, their care, for opening their doors to me (and shutting them), taking me fishing, sharing cups of tea and for teaching me about themselves and myself. In alphabetical order (by first names) I thank Mr Arthur Spencer, Mrs Alice Fischer, Mrs Bev Santos, Mrs Beverley McKean, Mr Bill Jerry, Mr Bob Masso, Ms Colleen Kennedy, Ms Connie Sailor, Mr David Alley, Ms Dorothy Masso, Mr Eddie Alley, Mr Edward Masso, Mr Evanis Sailor, Mrs Faye Mitchell, Mr Gordon Santo, Mrs Grace Reid, Mr Harry Santo, Mr Henry Mitchell, Mr James Reid (RIP), Mrs Jessie Coleman (RIP), Mrs Kathy Kerr (RIP), Mr Lawrence Kerr, Ms Lizzie Hero, Mr Major Escott, Mr Major Mitchell, Mrs Mary Fletcher, Ms Maureen Reid, Mr Mervyn Santo, Mr Myers Masso, Ms Noreena Masso, Mrs Patricia Dallachy, Ms Priscilla Huen, Mr Reggie Santo, Mr Richard Davidson, Mr Ronald Davidson, Mr Roy Tobane, Ms Ruth Ward, Ms Sandra Callope, Mrs Sandra Escott, Mrs Shirley Huxley, Mrs Sidie McLean, Mr Sonny Burdekin, Mrs Stella May McLean, Ms Tracey Jerry, Ms Trisha Reid, Mrs Valerie Alberts, Mrs Vassa Hunter, Ms Vicky Kerr, Mr Vincent Reid, Mr Warren McLean, Mr William Coleman, Mr William Santo, Mrs Yvonne Moore and their families. A sincere apology to those I no doubt missed.

The Central Queensland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation contributed the ‘Industry’ part of the Australian Postgraduate Award (Industry). From the CQLC I would like to thank most especially, Mr Bruce White and Mr Peter Whalley who (as I understand) were the initiators of the project. I also thank Mr Rod Hagen.

The Governing Committee of the Inland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation in Charters Towers gave me permission to attend many of their meetings, and access to their office and business most generally. The Warringnu Women’s Group, the AICC, Gudjal Justice Group, Jupiter Mosman Housing Cooperative, the night shelter and Charters Towers CDEP all allowed me access to their meetings or their staff and offices at some time or another. I thank them all for their patience with my questions and time to discuss their interests.

Interviews with Mr Peter Black, Dr Jock and Mrs Allingham, Mrs Olive Bagnall, Mr Mac Corr, Mr Jeff Phillips, Father John Emerson, and Ms Sarah Nelson provided invaluable insights into (non-Aboriginal) Charters Towers. I thank them all for their time.

Reading, thinking and talking history in Charters Towers was made possible by the Charters Towers & Dalrymple Archives Group run by Mr Mike Brumby and Mr Mike Power. I thank them for their time on Sunday mornings, their interest and help. Thanks also to the friendly staff at the *Northern Miner* newspaper, Charters Towers, for access to back editions of the broadsheet (and their air conditioned office).

Likewise to the Charters Towers City Council Offices for access to their Minutes of Meetings books from the 1960s and 1970s.

Staff at the Queensland State Archives were very helpful when I visited in November 2002, and have been of great help in correspondence. Archival research was facilitated by Margaret Reid (DATSIP) in the Queensland State Archives.

Jonathon Richards was also most generous with his knowledge of the location of particular records and discussion of colonial bureaucracy.

I would like to acknowledge the wonderful help of Sallie Webster and other staff at the James Cook University library (archives), and Dr May Abernethy at JCU History archives.

I thank all the other postgraduate students in the School of Anthropology, Archaeology and Sociology, but most especially: Celmara Pocock, Jane Harrington, Dr Darlene McNaughton, John Edgar, Annette Field, Dr Julie Lahn, as well as academic staff of the School; Dr Doug Miles, Dr Shelley Greer, Dr Rohan Bastin, Dr David Roe and Dr Maureen Fuary, who have attended seminar papers I gave and made useful comments on rough drafts and works in progress. I thank also my early associate supervisor, Dr Peter Veth.

The School's Administration staff past and present; Walter Dixon, Audrey Logan, Louise Lennon, Robina McDermott and technical staff, Robert Palmer, have all been enormously helpful along the way.

Special thanks to Canberra anthropologists who gave me a copy of their theses and unpublished work: Dr Julie Finlayson, Dr David Martin, Dr Jerry Schwab, Dr Yasmine Musharbash, Dr Sarah Holcombe, and Dr Patrick Sullivan.

Dr Dawn May was very generous with her time and own research material.

I thank Dr Marion Stell for reading drafts of Chapter 2 and 3.

Heartfelt thanks to Yasmine Musharbash for friendship and infectious enthusiasm for anthropology, for listening to phone calls 'from the field' and from afar with patience and interest, discussing ideas, and reading a draft of a troublesome chapter.

The wonderful Celmara Pocock has shared an office with me and without her generous offer to read drafts and her willingness to discuss ideas, I am certain I would not have enjoyed this process, nor been at all satisfied with the result. Thank you for inspiration and friendship and putting up with me.

My parents, Mark and Marilyn Babidge, sent me a note in March 2004 that contained the following quote: "Happiness is having a loving, caring, close-knit family... In another city" (George Burns). I thank them and my sister Kate, for their enduring support from across the country, their ongoing interest in whatever I do and their financial, emotional and loving assistance. I would also like to acknowledge with love my two grandmothers, Doreen Longmore and Emeline Babidge.

Thanks, Pat Blue Dog, for welcoming me home and taking me running.

Thanks must go to Dr Mike Wood my Associate Supervisor, for his entertaining 'obscure marginal comments' (his own words) but principally for generosity with criticism, many suggestions, timely reading of lots of work in progress and pushing me to write an intelligible argument.

Ultimate acknowledgment must go to my Supervisor, Dr Rosita Henry, who encouraged me to leave Perth to take up this PhD in the first place. I am so very grateful for her work in reading stuff really quickly but mostly for her generosity in affirming, enthusing and criticising my work. Thanks so much for being a fabulous doctoral supervisor.

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Abbreviations

AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
ATSIS	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services
<i>CBE</i>	<i>Cleveland Bay Express (newspaper)</i>
CPA	Chief Protector of Aborigines
CQLC	Central Queensland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
Cth	Commonwealth
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs (Commonwealth)
DAIA	Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs (Queensland)
DNA	Director of Native Affairs (Queensland)
FCAATSI	Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders
ILC	Inland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee
<i>NM</i>	<i>Northern Miner (newspaper)</i>
NPA	Northern Protector of Aborigines
NTA	Native Title Act
OPAL	One People for Australia League
<i>PDT</i>	<i>Port Denison Times (newspaper)</i>
Qld	Queensland
<i>Qldr</i>	<i>Queenslander (newspaper)</i>
QSA	Queensland State Archives
<i>RM</i>	<i>Ravenswood Miner (newspaper)</i>
TO	Traditional Owner

Chapter 1 Thesis Introduction

Funerals and fishing: belonging to 'country' in town

I was at a funeral towards the end of my fieldwork and sitting next to Jeanette Green.¹ I had never met the woman sitting next to her, and this woman asked Jeanette who I was. '*She's our daughter*', Jeanette said with a laugh, '*she's from the uni, and we're teaching her about Murri culture.*² *We take her bush, teach her how to get bush foods. We take her hunting and fishing*'.

This is what Aboriginal people *do* with *their* anthropologists. They 'go bush'. Jeanette and others took me fishing, which as an activity encompassed 'going bush', 'getting bush foods', and 'hunting'.

I had been fishing perhaps a dozen times, mostly with Jeanette, and her sister, and other women who are cousins of these sisters. We went on Saturdays and Sundays, though sometimes during the week. We went much more often after I bought an old Landcruiser wagon which replaced a three-cylinder hatchback, which had, in its own turn, increased trips 'to the River'. These trips were almost always inspired by one of the two sisters suggesting they might need to get out of town. Other women joined us and invitations were extended as we spoke in front of others of our plans. We would drive around town gathering people and fishing lines (handlines) for an hour or so, and then drive down to the river and spend the day attempting to catch Black Bream (a very 'sweet' freshwater fish). There were various choices of destination, but none of them were more than about half an hour's drive from the town of Charters Towers and they were not far off the sealed road. They included particular places along the Burdekin River, but also the Broughton, and Fletcher Creek. Once a group of us camped for two nights at the Fletcher and spent two days standing, crouched and sitting on the banks of the creek, index fingers poised holding lines taut.

¹ All of the personal names I use in the thesis are pseudonyms. Exceptions are where I cite published sources that have mentioned particular individuals.

² Murri is a general term for Aboriginal person, used for most of Queensland, south of Cairns.

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Plate 1 Fishing at the Fletcher, finger poised



Plate 2 Going fishing at the Burdekin River

‘Going bush’ around Charters Towers is edgework, in that access to the bush is scant. One travels ‘there’ by the main road, on the marked tracks and on arrival are perched on the edges of waterways. All of the surrounding country is pastoral land, and moving across it necessitates permission from station owners. For this reason (and more that will become apparent) Aboriginal people I know do not move across it. This has ‘always’ been the case around Charters Towers, not least because since very early in the 20th Century much of the country has been fenced.

Going fishing is the only chance that most Aboriginal people in Charters Towers get to ‘go bush’. The older women with whom I spent time fishing, were those who had some history with pastoral work, or who spent time ‘out bush’ as children. Many older (and younger) people have also spent some time living on Palm Island, where ‘the bush’ and the sea are part of one’s backyard. Because opportunities for employment in the pastoral industry disappeared about thirty years ago, and Palm Island is a different place, the younger members of these women’s families never had these experiences and spend all or almost all of their time in town. Most have no desire to ‘go bush’. The older women I went fishing with would complain that ‘none of the young people’ wanted to take them fishing, although groups of young people often took themselves to the river to fish and have barbeques.

‘Going bush’, in the way I describe above, practices the paradox of belonging to ‘country’, for people who have spent most of their lives in a rural town. In the discourse of Aboriginality, ‘country’ is that word that often stands in for the complexity of people-land relationships and covering concepts such as ‘home’, ‘heart’, ‘camp’, ‘hearth’, ‘everlasting home’, ‘life source’ and ‘spirit centre’ (Stanner 1979:230). But to what extent does this concept ‘country’ have meaning for people who have lived their lives in town and on settlements, ostensibly away from ‘country’ for all of theirs, their parents and grandparents’ lives?

The story about fishing at the beginning of my thesis is evocative of the three major elements of fieldwork for me: fishing, native title meetings and funerals. I discuss meetings and funerals in much more detail further in the thesis. Fishing around Charters Towers, perched on the edges of waterways and surrounded by land onto which Aboriginal people cannot go unless employed expresses the paradox of ‘country’ for Aboriginal people of a rural town.



Map 1 Map of Queensland, Australia

Fieldwork

I was first introduced to Aboriginal people from my chosen field area at meetings of the Central Queensland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CQLC)³ – the industry sponsor for my scholarship. I began organising the terms of my fieldwork by attending meetings in Richmond, Hughenden, and Charters Towers (see map 1, also Appendices, Table 12), at the beginning of my doctoral candidature (early December 2000) until about late July 2001. (During this time I also made several day trips to Charters Towers with the aim of talking informally to people about my

³ As I will discuss in more detail (see end of Chapter 5 & Chapter 6), these meetings are part of the process of native title.

project.) As one of the few non-Aboriginal people in attendance at meetings many Traditional Owners (Aboriginal members represented by the land council) assumed from the beginning that I ‘belonged’ to the land council; that I was on staff or some kind of consultant. Although I did my best to explain, what, exactly, I was doing there, many people continued to link me with the land council.

The first meeting I attended introduced me to the political climate of ‘culture’: native title processes in the region and relations with representative bodies, a history of movement, diffusion and most recently, internal conflict. This initial event (for me) was an Annual General Meeting of the Inland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (ILC), the corporation which represented (on behalf of the CQLC) people from the ‘mid-west’ of North Queensland (see Map 7). People who have claim to this region, who identify as Traditional Owners, attended from all over Queensland. Participants at the meetings were vocal and business operated through ‘family groups’ (these seemed at times to be conflated with ‘tribal/language’ groupings) and allegiances and disputes reflected the links and rifts between them. No-one from the CQLC really introduced me to anyone there, as they were too busy attempting to keep up with and at times control the flow of business. I sat on the side of the hall near the door, drank too much tea and did not take notes. At one point, the Facilitator of the meeting said that only Traditional Owners could stay because they had ‘Murri business’ to attend to and all white people had to leave the meeting. In frustration I wrote, sitting in a motel room,

If I get thrown out of meetings all the time, there is very little chance of actually doing anything useful...

While I was aware of the political import of this rejection of ‘white people’ as assertions of Aboriginal exclusiveness and control, what I realised later was that this action is part of the expectation and practice of Aboriginal relations with the state in this kind of event. The kinds of practices that emerged at my first meeting were repeated in varying modes throughout my fieldwork and revealed to me some of the complexities of these organised political events. I sought to understand what it was that Aboriginal people defined as ‘Murri business’, and how this business was constituted and related to the bureaucratic state. More than this, the expert ways in which Aboriginal people exercised certain political powers and their apparent

intensity of knowledge of bureaucratic language and protocol hinted that meeting practice may be a revelation of the history of Aboriginal relationships with the state, as well as Aboriginal socialities outside of these events.

I began my fieldwork proper by moving to Charters Towers in late July 2001 and renting an old house in town. During my preliminary trips I had attempted to find a family with whom I could board, and one woman affirmed that living, eating and staying among ‘us’ was the ‘proper way’ to ‘learn about Murriss’. However, her house was full, and no-one else was willing to have a strange young woman who claimed to be a student from the University and an anthropologist live with them. I rented my old house until the end of August 2002, when I left the field.

In the first month of my fieldwork, August 2001, I assisted a Murri man who was employed by the land council, to undertake structured interviews. These were to be done with the elderly men and women about their lives in Charters Towers and throughout the region, with special focus on their participation in the pastoral industry. I negotiated with the land council that I would assist in the research if I could inform these people of who I was during each interview, and seek permission from them to return by myself for the purposes of my doctoral research. These return visits were to be more open-ended discussion of local Aboriginal history rather than interviews. In this way I met many older Aboriginal people, some of whom welcomed me to visit on a regular basis. I continued to meet other people, conduct formal interviews, take part in social occasions, attend meetings of the land council as well as other Aboriginal corporations, and attend funerals, a wedding, and birthday parties. I was introduced to fresh water fishing and spent time with groups of people (especially women) ‘down the river’.

Throughout my fieldwork, I also undertook historical research. I usually did this on the days when I could not seem to find anyone to talk to or be with, or there was ‘*nothing happening, slack*’,⁴ especially in the middle of the day during the summer months (December to March) when it is just too hot and visitors unwelcome. I read

⁴ ‘Slack’ is a vernacular term that refers to lack of activity, boredom and lack of money. ‘Slack week’ is contrasted to ‘pension’ or ‘pay week’. It used to be the case that everyone was paid government welfare, unemployment benefits and other ‘pensions’ on the same day of the fortnight. In recent times welfare incomes can now be paid on the day (and week) of the recipient’s choice, but there is still some recognition of weeks as alternating in character. (See Chapter 8).

Minutes of Meetings of the Charters Towers City Council and back editions of the *Northern Miner* (newspaper), mainly for the 1960s and 1970s, in their air-conditioned offices. I also spent almost every Sunday morning between 10am and 12pm (these were their only opening hours) at the Charters Towers and Dalrymple Archives Group. This ‘local’ historical research was augmented with research before, during and after the fieldwork period in the National and State archives as well the North Queensland Collection and archives at James Cook University in Townsville.⁵

My research was primarily mediated by my friendships with ‘Traditional Owner’⁶ women. I spent time with Traditional Owners more than other women for reasons that are obvious given that my research topic was initially about ‘land’ and partially funded by the corporate body that acts as representative for Traditional Owners. In Aboriginal Australia, protocol dictates that research begins with those who claim Traditional Owner status, as these are the proper people who can ‘speak for’, or about land (and people, and history). I *did* spend time with some women and men who are not Traditional Owners. However, this was mainly in the context of structured interviews about their own lives in the town or pastoral industry in the area, and others still would not agree to speak with me. One woman told me, ‘*it is not my place*’, *my place*, indicative of both location and ability to speak. Thus the study is centred on and informed by my relationships with Traditional Owner women.

I spoke to many men also but this was more often in the context of structured interviews. The fact that I spoke to women primarily is worth noting, not simply in terms of ‘gender bias’ in the research, and the well-worn yet still debateable point that women research subjects are more likely to speak to a woman researcher. The fact that my research is focussed on women is fundamentally indicative of women’s central role in organisational politics: a role that, as I discuss in Chapter 3, grew from women’s more intensive relationship with the welfare state and living in town. Older

⁵ While living in Charters Towers, I made a couple of day trips to the JCU archives with older women who wanted me to facilitate their ‘having a look’ at pastoral station diaries and employment ledgers for the purposes of their research into their families’ history.

⁶ ‘Traditional Owners’ are those who claim, and are recognised by other ‘Traditional Owners’ to have ‘traditional’ (usually descent-based) affiliation to a tract of land or ‘country’ and so are eligible to claim land under the Native Title Act. This category is discussed predominantly in Chapters 4 and 6.

women are central to organised Aboriginal politics. They are spokespersons, representatives and political motivators as well as social and cultural 'gatekeepers'.

Fieldwork among Aboriginal people in a rural town for a white researcher is significantly different to that in remote locations. In physical terms, access to people's everyday lives means intruding into the 'private' space of their houses. These houses are the subject of some discussion in Chapter 5, especially regarding the extent to which Aboriginal people's houses (as 'domestic space') have been under surveillance by the state. Further, the racism of many white townspeople was evident in the complaints from shopkeepers or more subtle surveillance when an Aboriginal person enters the store. Simply a rolled eye in my direction included me as a white person in this racist behaviour. More overt racism toward Aboriginal people from agents of the state, especially the police, is part of everyday life.⁷ Given such conditions, a white researcher asking questions about people's families and their histories is relatively unwelcome. Informed by other histories and experiences and early attempts at 'getting information' I was highly aware of such factors. Rowley's comment about his own research in rural and urban Australia is useful here. He wrote that

Any attempt to get information tends to be frustrated, not so much because people cannot be bothered, but because of their worry that here is another attempt to harass and disrupt a recently established harmony or a privacy long guarded in a hostile world. (Rowley 1972 [1970]:132)

Issues such as these are taken further by Morris (1989). He writes that the Aboriginal people he worked with rejected being studied, comparing it to being viewed 'like animals', and that research was seen as 'stealing'. Morris argues that

[T]he assertions of a distinctive identity provide a challenge to those forms of hegemonic power. The rejection of the validity of constructions of identity by others is not simply a question of 'understanding', but, more specifically, a rejection of the forms of control that such objectifications sustain. (Morris 1989:224)

⁷ One example of such ongoing harassment is the men and women who are perfunctorily hauled off the street by the 'D's' (detectives), and made to wait in the police station while their records are checked before being allowed back with friends. Another is the routine visits from the 'D's' to certain families' houses if a crime has been committed for which the Ds have not yet made an arrest.

Morris argues that, as such, the ‘politics of identity is an expression of resistance to attempts to make Aborigines experience themselves in the terms defined by the dominant society’ (ibid.:225). In fact this thesis is an examination of the objectifications that are produced and reproduced among Aboriginal people in relation to the state in the age of native title. Principally, the extreme surveillance and oppression of previous governments is perceived to continue in the so-called ‘post colonial’, native title, context.

I am acutely aware of these issues for a number of reasons. Primarily, I continue to be in contact with people in Charters Towers through visits and by telephone. Living only 135km (approximately a 1.5 hour car journey) from my ‘field site’ makes it also unlike other anthropologists’ ‘field sites’. Since I ‘left the field’, I have returned frequently on day trips or over night to visit friends, go fishing for the weekend, check interviews, attend social events and funerals. Friends from Charters Towers also stay with me or visit on their trips to or through Townsville. This ongoing contact with research participants, the production of a thesis at a University ‘local’ to the field area and the highly politicised subject of ‘culture’ in the native title era, means issues such as confidentiality are heightened. I believe it is a positive feature of this research that participants have reasonably ready access to what I write about them. Writing a thesis with at least the chance that those one writes about will read it certainly creates a strong awareness of issues of representation and authorial ‘authority’.

In addition to these factors, my relationship with the land council changed when the anthropological staff responsible for the project left the organisation. This left me with very little contact with the organisation, which given the sometimes difficult relationship between the organisation and Traditional Owners in Charters Towers, was both a positive and a negative factor in the research: positive because it seemed I was no longer aligned with an organisation with which many people were unhappy; negative because I did not have as frequent or open access to meetings (and documents produced in these), of the land council for my research (the decline in the number of land council meetings I attended can be seen in Appendix A, table 13). These factors add to ‘everyday’ concerns about fieldwork and the politics of ethnographic research with Indigenous people.

The thesis

This thesis considers that there are pervasive mechanisms of state control *and* Aboriginal agency in the constitution of Aboriginal family, past and present. I analyse the intersection of modes of state regulation and the nature of Aboriginal social action. My focus is on the *changing* state in its relation to Aboriginal people and changing Aboriginal responses to dynamic practices of the state.

I trace these through frontier times, where a colonial state enabled violence and the massacre of Aboriginal people to go unchecked for some years; then to the years of ‘Protection’ policy and the rise of specific bureaucracies which exercised power over Aboriginal people and effected racial segregation. Racist policies differentiated between white and black, with special laws for Aboriginal people that restricted (among other things) where they could go, what work they could do, how much they could be paid, who they could marry and whether they were ‘fit’ to be parents (cf. Rowley 1972 [1970]; Kidd 2000 [1997]). Moreover these laws created a language of ‘caste’ (Loos 1982:161); with a bureaucracy that actively distinguished between not-so-white, and not-so-black, dividing Aboriginal people according to these racial categories.

‘Assimilation’ was officially adopted as policy by the Queensland government in the late 1950s, however I demonstrate (in Chapter 3) that control under the guise of protection continued well into the 1960s. As policy, ‘assimilation’ was supposed to ‘abandon race-based policies’ and move toward the ‘normalising’ of Aboriginal people into Australian society (cf. Haebich 2000:454). What it meant in Queensland, was that Aboriginal people came under even greater scrutiny from the government bureaucrats in the name of coercing them to ‘enter the mainstream’ (see Chapter 5).

Under increasing international pressure in the 1960s to account for its treatment of Aboriginal people (Haebich 2000:424-5, 453), the Australian state altered its approach. In the early 1960s across state and federal politics Aboriginal people were given franchise and in the 1967 Referendum the last remaining discriminatory sections in federal legislation regarding Aboriginal people were repealed (Haebich 2000:452). The federal government shifted its policy for Aboriginal people to ‘self determination’. The ‘self’ was Aboriginal people and small amounts of funding from

government began to be channelled into organisations run locally by Aboriginal people to help in the *assimilation* of Aboriginal people into ‘wider’ (whiter) Australian society (Kidd 2000 [1997]:249). Aboriginal people could be citizens now, part of the Australian state, as long as they conformed to the dominant view of the citizen. Self-determination retained assimilationist ideology through state funding for Aboriginal organisations directed at the kinds of programs that would produce an Aboriginal ‘self’ acceptable to rural town neighbours (see also Cowlshaw 1998). However, while the state forms of control before the 1970s were aimed at producing particular forms of family among Aboriginal people, Aboriginal people’s response was in fact to turn to (these and other forms of) family, and resist control of their lives through appealing to the relationships entailed. In addition, while changes in the 1970s saw the state aim its controls through newly established ‘Aboriginal corporations’, constructs of family remained central to the operation of these corporations.

Further transformations in the Australian state under the government of the 1980s began to look at the possibility of a National organisation which would be run by and for Aboriginal people. The establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) in 1990 [cite the Act] recognised a form of ‘self-government’ with regional councils who would oversee the local organisations for Housing, employment, land rights, and other matters. However, ATSIC’s ability to act was always under the ultimate control of the Australian federal government.⁸ ‘Self-government’ was not Aboriginal sovereignty.

When the judiciary overturned the notion of *terra nullius* in the High Court’s decision in *Mabo vs Queensland (No 2)* (1992), it was heralded as a significant transformation of Australian law. This decision found that the Meriam people of the Murray Islands in the Torres Strait ‘were entitled as against the whole world’ to their land (Native Title Unit 1998:1). These principals of recognition became known as

⁸ In mid-2003, ATSIC was under increasing pressure from the conservative Howard government, which culminated in a removal of power over funding decisions. ATSIC retained the ability to make policy decisions, and ATSI (S for services), was created to control the funding of grants, consultants and contracts. This is run by the federal government Minister rather than the Aboriginal Council (see www.atsic.gov.au & www.atsis.gov.au). As I write this footnote (April 2004) the Howard government has announced the abolition of ATSIC altogether. It is unclear at this stage what will be in its place, although the government’s rhetoric is of ‘mainstreaming’, apparently a reworking of assimilation (see Chapter 5, ‘the bureaucracy of representation’).

‘native title’, and applied to Australia in places where indigenous peoples have ‘maintained their connection with the land; and where their title has not been extinguished’ by acts of government (ibid.). The federal government’s response was to introduce the *Native Title Act (Cth) 1993* (Native Title Act/NTA), the provisions of which have been significantly eroded by subsequent amendments (in particular *Native Title Amendment Act 1998*) and decisions made through the courts. Thus the Australian state can be seen to represent, on one hand, an essence of public ‘recognition’ of difference, recognition of Aboriginal ‘traditional cultural identity’, and on the other, an underlying assumption that this is separate from a socio-economic assimilation of Aboriginal individuals as citizens of Australia. This thesis analyses transformations of the Australian state and government practice and looks at Aboriginal socialities which have existed alongside and in articulation with state control historically and in the present. In particular, my analysis relates to ‘native title era’ politics and the practices of Aboriginal kinship and relatedness among Aboriginal people in a Queensland rural town.

The state and agency

My examination of the state in this thesis is situated in the practices of Australian government bureaucracies, practices of governance and responses and participation by Indigenous subjects. But I also ‘see’ the state (cf. Abrams 1988; Abu-Lughod 1990; Herzfeld 1992; Gledhill 1994; Bourdieu 1999) in events such as Aboriginal funerals and the play of responses to the state and bureaucracy in relations of kinship. Despite institutions, such as bureaucracies, being a central point of discussion in this thesis, I see state effects as more pervasive than the Weberian notion of centralised authority coupled with legitimate use of physical force (Weber 1978). I argue here that the state has the effect of power, an effect which courses through society (Foucault 1991; Trouillot 2001). Boundaries between the state and society are produced and reproduced in the practices of society and in state mechanisms such as bureaucracies. I discuss state bureaucratic practices and Aboriginal responses historically (predominantly chapters 2,3, & 5), and in the present in relation to native title (especially 6 & 7). These also demonstrate the practices and discourses of the state in its diffusion through and entanglement with society. First I examine some of the literature on the state to support the position in this thesis that the state/society

relationship is more permeable than the notion of a controlling institutional state against which dominated peoples can only resist or acquiesce (Eckermann 1977; and the classic example Scott 1985; for Australia, see Cowlshaw 1988). Instead, relationships of power can be seen to operate at many levels: in practice, in discourse, and in the imagination.

In his paper ‘Governmentality’, Foucault (1991:99) argues that through the discipline of statistics, population became the focus of modern government and ‘the family [was] considered as an element internal to population, and as a fundamental instrument in its government’. In the modern state, ‘government has become a preeminent type of power, meaning specific governmental apparatuses...[and] the development of a whole complex of *savoirs*’ (ibid.:103).⁹ Foucault argues that ‘the state’ has been given ‘excessive value’ – both negative and positive: ‘essential as a target needing to be attacked and a privileged position needing to be occupied’ (ibid.). But the state ‘does not have this unity, this individuality, this rigorous functionality, nor to speak frankly, this importance; maybe after all, the state is no more than a composite reality and a mythicized abstraction’ (ibid.).

Instead Foucault calls for a ‘governmentalization’ of the state.’ By this he means to focus on the government of population, which ‘both refers itself to and makes use of the instrumentation of economic *savoir* [and] could be seen as corresponding to a type of society controlled by apparatuses of security’ (ibid.:104). Foucault’s argument is especially relevant to my thesis in that I analyse instruments of government: the specific departments and bureaucracies, which act on the Aboriginal population.

However, it seems that the state *as* a ‘mythicized abstraction’ may be important in understanding the power of government apparatus. It is perhaps exactly the ‘composite reality’, a coupling of ‘mythic’ and institutional control that lies behind the power of the state. Morris (2001) has argued that forms of governance work in the Far West of New South Wales through a ‘pairing’ of the transparency and obscurity of difference. Aboriginal people are under constant surveillance from the state, as well as are subject to stereotyping, which Morris characterises as

⁹ By which I think Foucault means ‘knowledges’, or perhaps specific knowledge as relevant to the

constructions of predicability. At the same time, the representation of Aboriginal people in the ‘Far West’ as unpredictable (their social and behavioural obscurity), legitimates a type of police control that Morris characterises as ‘contingent’: belonging to the particular conditions of the margins. The state (the police) and its subject (Aboriginal people) in Morris’ paper are both products of each other’s imaginary: ‘[t]he anxiety of a fantasy of menace is participated in on both sides of the divide’ (ibid.:261). This imaginary state is coupled with the institutional state – here the police – as well as working among ‘the people’ to reproduce boundaries, both social and imaginary, between ‘the people’ and ‘the state’. In particular Morris (2001) considers how the working of the imaginary (the danger of territorial and societal ‘fringes’) and actual forms of control (in particular, police violence) constitute a centralised state which defines itself as against this periphery.

The constructions of bureaucracies as purveyors of universal good and service to the community, are an example of the reproduction of the representation of the universality of the state (Bourdieu 1999:72). One can see such representations within the Australian state discourse of ‘helping’, ‘protecting’, and ‘recognising’ Aboriginal people: the state works to represent itself as *the* mechanism by which subject peoples are positively controlled, and its bureaucracies are the instruments of this (rhetorically positive) control. Yet there are limits to this universalist view of the state; the state does not have complete control of bureaucracy, and agents of the bureaucracy do not always represent the state. In my analysis, the state is reckoned with by Aboriginal people in the ‘imagined’ need *and* practical efforts to foster the status of ‘elder’. Elders are a category of people who provide strength of identity, social cohesion and representative leadership among Aboriginal ‘families’ and *as against* the (imagined monolithic) Australian state. However, elders also act in a representative role in direct negotiation over economic and political interests with a range of bureaucrats and agents of the state.¹⁰ Aboriginal people are thus agents within, as well as resistors of the state throughout history, and bureaucracies themselves work to fracture the ‘unity’ of the state (Herzfeld 1992; Morris 2001). These Aboriginal agents of the state are also members of some ‘community’, members of a family (or a number of families), a church, a social club and so on.

functioning of these apparatuses.

¹⁰ See Chapter 7.

The actions displayed by bureaucrats in the files they created (and then locked away) subjected Aboriginal people to intense and prolonged injustice, especially in the period of history ‘under the Act’ that I discuss in Chapter 3. However, an analysis of this as complete control of Aboriginal people misrepresents the state as total institution. Importantly, Herzfeld (1992:33) notes that ‘indifference’, as ‘rejection of those who are different’, may come from a bureaucrat within a system with the potential for exacting suffering on such subjects. Thus we see in the history of the Aborigines Department (and its various successors), a parade of bureaucrats, whose interpretations of the various State and Federal legislation critically changed the ways in which the bureaucracy could encompass and affect Aboriginal lives. These changes may come in the form of extreme interference and violence or the ‘destructive, routinized *inaction* [which] can become an apparently inevitable dimension of everyday social experience’ (Herzfeld 1992:33 my emphasis). The play of this action and inaction across bureaucracies and mechanisms of the state in relation to subjects, produce only an *impression* of universal power that renders opaque state inconsistencies and incompleteness (cf. Mitchell 1991:93; Sider 2003:xliv). The impression of power is perhaps what is referred to as a ‘state effect’ (see Trouillot 2001).

Mitchell (1991:94) insists on the notion of binaries, boundaries and frontiers as one of these state effects: ‘[b]y establishing a territorial boundary and exercising absolute control over movement across it, state practices define and help constitute a national entity’ (ibid.). But the state also creates boundaries based on racial and ‘ethnic’ identifications and situates these on the periphery, with all sorts of bureaucratic and mythical practices designed to maintain these boundaries, as Morris (above) has effectively shown. It is these that I am concerned with rather than National frontiers, and it is also these internal but peripheral boundaries against which the state is constituted. This is why I extend some effort to discussing the town’s place on the edge of a violent frontier in Chapter 2: the fringe is one boundary constructed between civilisation and savagery. In an examination of the history of a frontier town we can see the formation of 20th Century state policy and bureaucratic practice relating to Aboriginal people.

An examination of state and Aboriginal practice in this thesis enables an analysis of the state as incomplete, and Aboriginal people as agents. Trouillot (2001) argues that to study the state *in everyday life* is to reveal its effects. He concludes that ‘we [anthropologists] may have to look for state processes and effects in sites less obvious than those of institutional politics and established bureaucracies. We may have to insist on encounters that are not immediately transparent. We may indeed have to revert to the seemingly timeless banality of daily life’ (ibid.:133). Thus, while my thesis does focus on organisational politics among Aboriginal people in a rural town, and their roles as employees in bureaucracies, the point is that these *are* part of the ‘timeless banality of daily life’. It is the frequent practice of socialities such as ‘family’ within these contexts that makes them central to daily life and crucial in understanding the ways in which the state is pervasive.

That the bureaucratic control of Aboriginal people’s lives has had a profound effect on their ability to reproduce themselves socially, culturally and physically has been well documented.¹¹ I explore some of this literature explicitly for people in Charters Towers, in Chapter 2 and 3. However, my approach, which considers state power as partially *producing* concepts of Aboriginal family, is contrary to much of the literature, which sees the role of the state as ‘breaking up families’ (Attwood & Marcus 1999; Wolfe 1999:6; Haebich 2000; Kidd 2000). I do not in any way deny that the mechanisms of the state acted to fracture and destroy forms of kinship and social networks among Aboriginal people. (In fact I make some effort to outline the extent of the appalling actions and inactions of ministers and bureaucrats of the Queensland State government bureaucracy in particular). However, I seek to show that Aboriginal families have been produced and reproduced in ways that are enmeshed in state instrumentality.

By this I mean that the forms of Aboriginal family now evident are produced and reproduced through an historical and continuing relation with the state. Collmann (1988:6), in his important work *Fringe dwellers and welfare*, wrote

[O]ne cannot understand fringe camps without reference to the whites who try to control them. Nor can one completely understand white welfare policies without reference to the actions Aborigines

¹¹ For Queensland, in particular, see (Kidd 2000; 2000 [1997]; Blake 2001).

take in response to the welfare apparatus itself. Aboriginal clients and welfare agents interact with and affect each other.

Indeed this may be said for state apparatus outside of welfare and reaching into areas of ‘representation’, such as land councils and various other corporate institutions such as housing, health, and state-funded social justice organisations which have become corporate groups under the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act 1976 (Cth)*- (ACAA).¹² The organs of the state interfuse Aboriginal people’s lived experience in a rural town, even if they are not overtly in control in the way that a settlement administration might be. Almost the whole Aboriginal population of Charters Towers live in housing which is rented from a Government agency or the Aboriginal Cooperative Housing agency (funded by the state), and every resident that I know receives or has received in the past some form of government assistance payments. Every family in Charters Towers has some member who is employed in a government bureaucracy and people are well versed in the operation of these at a political level. That is, people are often intimately knowledgeable about *the effects* of bureaucracies, even if they are unaware of the actual details of the running of these.

In this thesis I conceive of the state as principally the apparatuses of government, but conceive of these apparatuses as much more diffuse than State or National government per se. I refer to a state which is fractured in the sense that its dominance is incomplete; the agents of such power are also local agents with multiple allegiances. Nonetheless, there is the state effect of ‘the government’ wielding ultimate power over the lives of its subjects.

My analysis of the meetings of certain Aboriginal corporations in Chapter 6 demonstrates this entanglement of the state. Aboriginal participants represent themselves at the same time as ‘the indigenous oppressed’ and resisting agents within a process that serves the purposes of the state. Participants in meetings play to the bureaucratic system of dominance through assertions of essentialist indigenous identity and enact resistances to the process through verbal argument and physical practice. In addition they engage in purposeful negotiations alongside official processes which partly constitute the workings of family and inter-family politics. I

¹² Undoubtedly, the administrative structure of Central Australian settlements (and by extension Aboriginal people’s lives in outlying camps and cattle stations (Collmann 1988:12) is different to the

argue that a dominant state order is present, but that it is only partly instrumental in the outcomes of social action since the agency of social actors responds to and is partly effective upon any such process.

Family

This study set out to examine the kinds of questions raised by Sutton (1998b:55-56) when he wrote that there is ‘a paucity of [ethnographic] information’ on the construct of ‘family’, and on surnames as identifiers of collectivities, in ‘rural and urban’ Aboriginal Australia. Sutton’s work focuses on ‘families’ as *descent groups* especially in their relation to landed identifications. As such his questions lie within the established state discourse of Native Title. My examination of the structure and practice of ‘family’ and ‘family group’ in Charters Towers looks at the interplay of kinship and relatedness, and the histories of such constructs, and goes beyond the notions of ‘descent’ that preoccupy native title research of state requirements.

Austin-Broos (2003) has critiqued the limitations of the descent model in the representation of Aboriginal kinship. Her critique emphasises the importance of ‘bilateral and labile relations’ of kinship. That is, the importance of choice (rather than lineality) and context in expressions of kinship, the everyday articulations of relatedness, and the continually changing relationships among those known as kin. Austin-Broos’ argument can be understood as an example of Ingold’s (2000) critique of ‘the genealogical model’ in regard to the discourse of Indigenous kinship and indeed about the representation of Aboriginal people more generally. The ‘genealogical model’, Ingold writes,

Presents a history of persons in the very peculiar form of a history of *relatedness*, which unfolds without regard to people’s *relationships* – that is to their experience of involvement, in perception and action, with their human and non-human environments. (ibid.:136)

Ingold’s contention is that the notion of descent as containing the essence of persons denies the *process* of life, that the genealogical model contains an assumption of being which sees the people (specifically Indigenous people) as ‘enactment of identities, or the realisation of potentials, that are already in place’ (ibid.).

The ‘genealogical model’ as critiqued by Ingold is a requirement of native title and as such reflects the influence of these models on Aboriginalist anthropology. Likewise, descent models, such as Sutton’s (1998b) ‘surnamed family’ as cognatic descent group, or the ‘family group’ I discuss principally in Chapter 4 and 6 are conceptual models that largely serve the purposes of an adversarial process. Descent models articulate Aboriginal identity in terms of people’s origin from a past and leave aside the relationships among people in everyday social action. That is, there is the recognised genealogical link between an individual and their ancestor, but little indication of the ever-changing identities of the present and relationships that are reproduced around ‘old people’ (living and dead), who are invoked to give coherence to collectivities. To simply give credence to descent from an ancestor, in Ingold’s words, separates ‘time from being’ (Ingold 2000:136). That is, it leaves history to the function of descent, rather than history as the enactment of pasts throughout time and persons. In this thesis I analyse how ‘family’ is constituted in terms of its relationship to the state (predominantly in terms of the descent model) and in ongoing relationships among kin both living and dead.

My primary focus in this thesis is on the constructs known as ‘family groups’ and how they are mobilised, negated, disputed and articulated as constructs. These are the vehicles of landed politics. On the other hand, kin relationships between many different people (affines, distant kin and long-term associates) constitute further relations of kinship which act on, inspire and conflict with the relations in ‘family groups’. On the (rhetorical and official) surface ‘family groups’ are structured entities that act in political unity, both as families and as ‘*the* [Aboriginal] families of Charters Towers’. In everyday social relations, ‘family’ is a disputatious, fractious and fluid category that is embedded in historical processes.

Anthropological history

Sahlins (1985:155) has written that ‘culture is precisely the organization of the current situation in terms of a past’. An employment of anthropological history as a methodology in this thesis seeks to allow for an analysis of the constitution of Aboriginal identity and social forms (in particular ‘family’) in terms of the impacts from the state and wider economic, political and social forces. That is, Aboriginal identities, and the construction of ‘family’ can be understood through an historically

constituted social difference. This appears to accord with John and Jean Comaroff's (1992:37) call for an historical ethnography which would see 'agency, subjectivity, and consciousness' as products of social forces in relation to the forces of history. This they contrast to a history more often seen in anthropological writing which is epitomised in the 'radical contrast' between 'traditional/modern' or 'natural/commodified'. They argue for a rethinking of history as event, into history as practice.

History is created in the performance of events and also in the telling and retelling of stories of events past in terms of the present (Friedman 1992). Telling massacre stories at a native title meeting, or telling a researcher specific things about one's history is creating history in the present. My fieldwork included undertaking oral history research with older members of the wider Charters Towers community, and these were undertaken mostly with Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal oral history of the town and surrounding area is parallel with that told by the few older non-Aboriginal towns people and ex-station owners to whom I spoke. This may reflect the fact that these white people I interviewed people were suggested to me by Aboriginal people and other white townspeople as 'sympathetic' to Aboriginal people, rather than 'rednecks' who would most certainly offend me (a woman from the university).¹³ Nevertheless, on some crucial points white and black oral history diverge. In particular, massacre stories were narrated and performed as particularly 'Aboriginal' history and a narration of place. Massacres stories among Aboriginal people are stories of place - 'massacre sites' - and central to the list of important places in the country around Charters Towers.

That on the one hand there is was little documentary evidence of massacres in the past and on the other the stories are retold among Aboriginal people, tells us that the practice of history is within the politics of the present as well as the past. In my research, the telling of the massacre stories are certainly a performance of the 'consciousness' of the politics of Aboriginality in the present (cf. Honig 1997). However, more than simply expressions of 'consciousness', Aboriginal oral histories about massacres are told and retold among Aboriginal people in the present, and in the telling actively resist the dominant local discourse of Aboriginal passivism and

¹³ This management of my research is an interesting point, but one I do not have time to go into here.

‘racial’ deterioration. The telling of massacre stories also resists the dominant historical discourse within rural towns (though no longer in Australian national liberal historical discourse),¹⁴ that Aborigines ‘disappeared’, and that the process of ‘pastoral settlement’ was ‘quiet’ (cf. Attwood & Magowan 2001). Moreover, the retelling of these stories among Aboriginal people, and importantly also to historians and anthropologists employed to write Aboriginal history of the area (predominantly for native title purposes), is an affirmation of belonging. This approach is different to most ‘Aboriginalist’ anthropology, much of which has used history for background to events, but have not studied the practice of history as a central feature of the analysis of Aboriginal socialities. My consideration of an historical anthropology in this thesis thus gives Aboriginal practices of belonging a temporal depth. Furthermore, I see the narration and performance of history as revealing plays of power and recreating a peopled past in the politics of the present.

Charters Towers, a rural town

Charters Towers is about 130km south-west of Townsville on the Flinders Highway, a road which extends into North Western Queensland and eventually across the border into the Northern Territory (see Map 1). The 2001 (Commonwealth) census recorded a total population of 8,492 people in Charters Towers, 715 (8.5%) of who are Indigenous (ABS 2001).¹⁵ The great majority of Indigenous people who live in Charters Towers are from the larger North Queensland region. Many of these identify as Kujjala/Gudjal, the recognised ‘Traditional Owner’ group of the area that includes the town of Charters Towers.

In Charters Towers there are a number of different corporations and organisations that ‘service’ the Aboriginal community, all of which are run by Aboriginal people on the Boards or governing committees.

¹⁴ But see (Windschuttle 2000).

¹⁵ Indigenous origin was determined by the question of whether the person was Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin (www.abs.gov.au). The proportion of Indigenous population is representative of the location of Charters Towers in rural, rather than remote, North Queensland. Indigenous populations in rural settings are considerable minorities (between 5-10%), relative to the much higher proportions or even majorities in far North and remote Queensland (places such as Croyden at 24.5%, Burketown (and surrounding area) at 54%, and Aurukun 87%) (ibid.).

- The Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council (AICC), which is funded by the Catholic diocese in Townsville. This is one of the few links to the church discernible among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers apart from some stories of life on Palm Island settlement with Catholic Missionaries there, and at church funerals (see Chapter 8). The AICC lease a building (known as ‘Mary Street’) from the Queensland Housing Commission where a group of (mainly older) women run a ‘Women’s group’ of crafts and morning teas, where they *‘can get away from the kids’*.
- The Gudjal Justice Group (Aboriginal corporation), funded by Family and Children Services, a Queensland government department, works with youth, especially those in and out of Court and Board members of Gudjal Justice volunteer to accompany kids to Court. The Board members run the organisation with very little funding and were seeking funds for a youth worker, education and recreation programs and repairs to their bus when I attended one of their Board meetings in July 2002.
- The Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) under ‘Heartland’, a division of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), helps establish employment opportunities for Aboriginal people in town (as well as some non-Aboriginal participants), and also runs a housing and garden maintenance service.
- Jupiter Mosman Community Co-operative Society is largely a housing Co-operative, which runs on the rent paid by members who live in housing that the Society owns. Jupiter Mosman also manages a ‘night shelter’ which is a crisis accommodation centre, which gets some Queensland government funding. The history of this organisation is addressed in some detail in Chapter 5.
- Charters Towers Warringnu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation runs the ‘Home and Community Care’ (HACC) program which provides services such as meals, accommodation, transportation and basic care for old and disabled people. Also under the ‘Warringnu’ umbrella is a women’s group who organise activities (such as fishing trips, dances, meetings with womens’ groups in other towns) for older women.

- Inland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (ILC) is the organisation that represents the land and ‘cultural’ concerns of Kudjala people under the *Native Title Act 1993*. The Central Queensland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CQLC) is the *official* ‘Representative Body’ under the Native Title Act for the region of which Charters Towers is a part, but that is based in Mackay, a town on the coast about 5 hours drive away. The ILC is the local office that manages the ongoing local land concerns for Kudjala. (The history of the organisation is addressed at the end of in Chapter 5 and its meetings in Chapter 6).

The principal industries of town of Charters Towers are mining and cattle (the pastoral industry). Other important sources of population and income are the three large Boarding Schools (‘the colleges’), and Tourism, which is heavily based on the existence of Heritage-listed buildings dating to the mining boom in the 1880s and 1890s. There is, and always has been, a strong presence of the pastoral industry in the town, alongside the more tenuous and fluctuating history of mining over the past 130 or so years. The town itself is surrounded by pastoral land. The Charters Towers City Council is the local authority for town concerns, but this is often overshadowed by the concerns of the Dalrymple Shire Council (whose councillors, significantly, represent the pastoral industry).¹⁶ The separation of town and shire is indicative of the strong duality between ‘the bush’ and ‘the town’ in Australian mythology. And there are many towns, like Charters Towers that are neither ‘remote’, nor expressly urban and which, as towns, identify strongly with ‘bush values’. What are often described as separate spaces - ‘the bush’ (‘the land’/country, station people, cattle) and the town (commercial interests, community services, social life) - are significantly interdependent and socially, economically and politically associated in rural towns. In Aboriginal people’s lives this relationship has been played out through history and into the present, and is a crucial element of ‘being’ Aboriginal in a rural town.

¹⁶ The Dalrymple Shire covers an area, I was told, ‘bigger than that of Tasmania’ (see also Neal 1984). Charters Towers is roughly at its centre. See map 1.

Australianist Anthropology, rural towns and the state

Anthropologists have worked with Aboriginal people in rural and urban contexts since around the 1940s. However, I have found few studies that examine the historical circumstances informing their ethnographic understandings of family and Indigenous notions of belonging (but see Macdonald 1986; Beckett 1987; Morris 1989). The majority of the ethnographies of North Queensland are located among people in the remote areas of the Cape York Peninsula and the Gulf of Carpentaria (see Map 1), where by population indigenous people dominate (for example Sutton 1978; von Sturmer 1978; Chase 1980; Anderson 1984; Taylor 1984; Trigger 1992; Martin 1993).¹⁷ Most of these studies were part of an Anthropology that sought to reveal a relationship between ecology and society. They are studies of Aboriginal people who are largely physically remote from centres of dominant settler society except for specific mission or settlement administration. Moreover, the ethnographies from which anthropologists and significantly, lawyers and the courts since the *Northern Territory Land Rights* and *Native Title Acts*, derive their understanding of the Aboriginal group/person to country relationship, are those about Northern and Central Australian Aboriginal people. The knowledge of Aboriginality produced by these discourses, does not always adequately convey the differences between rural town and remote or ‘community’ cultural contexts (cf. Sutton 1998b). Clearly, Aboriginal people in more settled areas (Rowley 1972 [1970]) were much more susceptible to the concerted efforts of government and settlers to erode and demolish kinship systems, language, ceremony and other aspects of ‘culture’, compared to those who were physically remote. As a result there is the popular notion that Aboriginal people in these contexts have ‘lost’ their culture.

The anthropology of assimilation

Early studies of Aboriginal people in rural and urban contexts focussed on Aboriginal ‘adaptation’ to Euro-Australian/settler culture and on lifeways that they saw as a result of colonisation and consequent government policies including ‘protection’ and ‘assimilation’ (cf. Kelly 1944; Lommel 1950; Berndt 1951; Beckett

¹⁷ But see Finlayson (1991) and Henry (1999) for their studies of Kuranda, near Cairns.

1958; Barwick 1963; Gale 1972; Eckermann 1977). Marie Reay's work (1945; 1948; 1949) in Western New South Wales looked at communities of Aboriginal people in rural towns and, like others, considered the then prominent issue of 'racial mixture' as paramount in the discussion of town-living Aboriginal people and their social lives.

The title of Rowley's volume 'Outcasts in white Australia' (Rowley 1972 [1970]) expresses the themes from these studies succinctly, especially the attitude prevalent in his time to Aboriginal people living in 'camps' and settlements on the edges of rural towns. According to Rowley, 'part-Aboriginals' living in camps and settlements had a 'sub-culture' and were 'caricatures' of pastoral and bush life of the 1920s (ibid.:195). He noted that this was a result of the fact that in these areas, Aboriginal¹⁸ people are 'inextricably in, but... constantly reminded that [they are] not a welcome member of, general Australian society' (ibid.). Rowley's work (especially where he uses 'subculture' and 'caricature') characterised rural Aboriginal people as having a 'lack' of culture or cultural substance. Nonetheless, Rowley's study is significant in its coverage of what he termed 'settled' (as well as 'colonial' cf. Rowley 1972) Australia for the late 1960s, its exposure of the conditions of life for rural living Aboriginal people in those times and in its importance as an early critique of state and federal government policy.

In assimilationist discourse, cultural change is constituted by the notion of decline from a traditional past and at the same time 'progress' toward modernity. The ethnographers who did spend significant amounts of time among Aboriginal people in town, theorised about their ability to modernise their families and assimilate to wider Australian ways of life (Kelly 1935; Reay & Sitlington 1948; Eckermann 1977). These early studies conceive of pictures of social change in terms of their notions of Aboriginal cultural *ability*. Change was modernisation and progress and Aboriginal culture in this light was disintegrating. This kind of academic discourse can feed into the discourse of the state and legitimate bureaucratic practice aimed at control of Aboriginal 'culture' and its practice in everyday contexts.¹⁹

¹⁸ I dispense here with Rowley's "part" on 'part-Aboriginal'.

¹⁹ See McGregor (1997), especially Chapter 3 'Anthropology renovated, optimism revived and problems renewed'.

The anthropology of self-determination and 'recognition'

In more recent times, anthropologists who have studied Aboriginal peoples in rural, urban or settlement contexts have continued the theme of an acceptance of state domination through their various presentations of resistance/domination (subject/object) dualism (eg. Cowlishaw 1988; Trigger 1992; Lattas 1993). These authors convey a sense of resistance that is drawn from work such as Genovese (1974; cf. Cowlishaw 1993) and Scott (1985), in the sense that resistance (or this mixed with accommodation) is the substance of the culture of the dominated. This has been an unsatisfying analysis because it limits the extent to which complex responses to domination may be analysed, in particular, the differences among those dominated, and the possibility of domination effecting productive change (Ortner 1984; Abu-Lughod 1990; 1995). In Australia, some anthropologists, in particular Collmann (1988) and Morris (1989), have undertaken studies which seek to demonstrate Aboriginal responses to the state and the complexities (beyond resistance) of these responses.

Others have sought to get beyond the dualism by demonstrating 'accommodations' (eg. Keefe 1988; Trigger 1997) and connections at the 'cultural interface' (Smith 2003b). Others still have characterised 'interactions' between Aboriginal people and bureaucracies as 'intercultural' (Merlan 1998) and have employed notions of cultural 'hybridity' after Bhabha (1994; in Holcombe 1998). These studies build into their analyses the notion of separate cultural 'domains'. The players in each of the domains - the Aboriginal domain and the state/white/European domain - 'interact' in particular circumstances, especially bureaucratic. However, all of these approaches continue to assume a duality between Aboriginal people and the state, a duality which seemed not to make sense in the context of my own research. As I have outlined above, I consider the state as much more diffuse, especially in terms of the relationships of control with Aboriginal people. In the present and historically, the state pervades aspects of Aboriginal people's daily lives, their interactions with each other and (central to this thesis) the ways they construct relations of kinship. Furthermore, Aboriginal people are in frequent negotiation with agents of the state in regard to provision of (for example) welfare, education, housing, and 'consultation'

services, as well as ‘work for the state’ as employees, representatives of the state to their family and of their family to the state.

Povinelli (2002:6) argues that multicultural discourses in Australia work through ‘inspiring ...an authentic self-identity;... a domesticated nonconflictual “traditional” form of sociality and (inter)subjectivity... [I]ndigenous subjects are called on to perform an authentic difference in exchange for the good feelings of the nation and the reparative legislation of the state’. This is contrary to the position of the subalternists (eg Guha 1982; Haynes & Prakash 1991; Sivaramakrishnan 1995), argues Povinelli (2002:6), since subaltern studies demonstrated that ‘colonial domination worked by inspiring in colonized subjects a desire to identify with their colonizers’. Similar to the subalternist accounts, I will show that throughout the history of the rural town of Charters Towers, Aboriginal people were coerced (and I will show how state domination is more than ‘inspiration’) into assimilation, and an ‘identification with the colonisers’. Povinelli’s argument diverges from the subalternists since it is an authentic difference from the colonisers (‘indigenous alterity’) that Aboriginal people are coerced to aspire to rather than sameness. In the native title era, when the discourse is of ‘recognition’ (and ‘reconciliation’) of difference, the discourse regulates what aspects of culture may be recognised by the state in exchange for rights. Where Aboriginal people in Charters Towers were previously only accepted in the town (for example only ‘good types’ could get houses) if they gave the *appearance of* being assimilated, this past acceptance now forms the basis for non-recognition within native title. Furthermore, Aboriginal people in town appear to be *no longer* Aboriginal people (they were seen as at least partially assimilated), their claims to *be* Aboriginal people for the purposes of native title are significantly challenged by this discourse of ‘recognition’ in terms of ‘tradition’. Thus, while state power is transformed throughout history and nature of change is at least partially produced as a result of Aboriginal agency, what it is to be an Aboriginal person in the ‘eyes of power’ (cf. Sider 2003 [1993]:125) is still largely determined by the state.

Chapter outline

I begin the thesis with an analysis of state violence against and protection of Aboriginal people in the 19th Century around Charters Towers. In particular I

examine Aboriginal people's settlement around and use of the rural town, as sanctuary from the violence of the pastoral frontier. In the frontier times of the area (1860s to 1880s), the town was also a place where the Australian state transformed the approach of enabling violence toward Aboriginal people on the frontier to a formulation of the new bureaucracy aimed at 'protection' and control of Aboriginal subjects.

Chapter 3 is an exploration of the effects and Aboriginal response to these specific governmental controls. The state mechanism of bureaucracy was fierce in its documentary production of Aboriginal people's lives, whereabouts, and living habits and in its actual control of employment, wages and economic lives. Part of the documentary production of people is the increase in the use of surnames by Aboriginal people, and their appearance in the paperwork. In Chapter 3 I explore these names as transformed renderings of family and identity.

In Chapter 4, I bring the past into the present with an analysis of the structures and articulation of 'family' today. I analyse how the construct 'family group', which is the vehicle of landed politics known in Charters Towers, is mobilised, disputed and articulated through contemporary practices of kinship. Thus, I demonstrate the interplay of structure and practice, principally the use of state discourse in the everyday relations of kinship, which in turn constitute relations among people in bureaucratic contexts.

The politics of family are central to the creation and dynamics of 'Aboriginal' bureaucracies. The establishment, growth and operation of these in Charters Towers and in the wider context of national Indigenous politics is traced through Chapter 5, with a focus on the issue of housing, home and land rights. With an emphasis on mechanisms of state control and an examination of the rise in a national consciousness of 'Aboriginal rights', I explore the developments in the late 1960s and 1970s of economic and political change through a history of local 'Aboriginal' bureaucracies in Charters Towers.

This provides the background to the native title era from the 1990s and the politics of identity and representation explored through an ethnography of meetings in Chapter 6. Through the examination of meetings as events in the production of a specific

discourse of bureaucratic identity as well as the reproduction and creation of certain socialities, I question certain concepts of culture and examine notions of authenticity. Furthermore, I evidence the workings of a Murri polity in relation to organisational politics.

Chapter 7 continues to evidence the pervasiveness of the state in Aboriginal lives through an analysis of the practices and structures of authority, specifically, the social categories ‘elder’ and ‘our old people’. ‘Elders’ and the respect for age as authority, is recognisable indigenous alterity, authentic Aboriginal ‘culture’, and thus ‘culture’ which is recognised by the state in its relations with Aboriginal people in the native title era. Nonetheless, the practise of these categories further demonstrates Aboriginal agency in the construction of their relations with the Australian state.

‘Our old people’ and their embodiment of people’s shared histories as performed at Aboriginal funerals are the subject of Chapter 8. Funerals demonstrate the importance of *expressions* of belonging to a peopled place within a history of movement and dispersal and state attempts to control Aboriginal people through segregation, removal, assimilation, normalisation and ‘recognition’. I analyse these events as central in a person’s belonging to kin, Murri history and place.

In Chapter 9 I conclude by examining some of the major themes of the thesis. The historical nature of relations between the Australian state and Aboriginal people are shown to inhere in Aboriginal social action and state practice in the present.

Chapter 2 Dispersal, removal and blankets: state violence and protection in 19th Century relations with Aboriginal people

Introduction

In the late 19th Century in the area around what became the town of Charters Towers in 1872, and the years of the mining boom in the rural town particular patterns of state-Aboriginal relations emerge. I analyse the importance of the town to Aboriginal people in this frontier world, firstly as a refuge from the violence of the pastoral frontier; and secondly as a place where Aboriginal people and European settler society were in more intensive contact with each other. The town in frontier times of the area (1860s to 1880s) was also a place where the Australian state transformed the approach of enabling violence toward Aboriginal people on the frontier to a formulation of the new bureaucracy aimed at ‘protection’ and control of Aboriginal subjects. Queensland Government policies based on notions of ‘protection’ were constructed out of growing ‘knowledge’ of Aboriginal people who lived on the fringes of towns and stations, and by pointing to these people as *in need*.

This chapter relies heavily on surviving contemporary records: newspaper articles, letters and editorials, official archives and published recollections of contemporary (non-Aboriginal) peoples as well as the oral history of Aboriginal people. Oral histories told by the oldest Aboriginal people in town, Elisa Thomas (over 70) and William Jones (over 80), may be traced to before the turn of the century, since many come from stories told to them by their parents and grandparents.

Histories of Charters Towers

Accounts of Aboriginal people in the growing town of Charters Towers and the oral history told to me by Aboriginal people form the basis of the first part of the chapter. Like many small towns, Charters Towers is a fertile ground for local and ‘amateur’ historians. Yet these have often ignored Aboriginal people’s social, economic and political roles in the identity of the town and surrounding country (for example, Bagnall 1983; City of Charters Towers c1922; Pike c1961). Such texts constitute a

colonial history for the area in the sense that taken together they present a view of the past ‘as if Australia’s history before and after 1788 had little to do with Aboriginal history’ (Thorpe 1996:17). They variously trace the establishment of the town, the mines, important men, and present the white, male view of history as ‘progress’ (eg Bagnall 1979; 1983; Neal 1984; 1988; Brumby & Barrie 1995; City of Charters Towers c1922; Pike c1961; Williamson c1983). There are no written sources for this area that examine Aboriginal people’s lives and experiences in the first few decades after the 1860s in or on the fringes of the mining settlement. Total omission is incomplete only because a young Aboriginal boy named Jupiter Mosman, who was travelling with a party of prospectors (led by Hugh Mosman), is credited with finding the gold nugget that began the rush to the area, in 1871. His story is almost the only one told about Aboriginal presence in almost every history mentioned above.²⁰

Studies of the North Queensland frontier, especially those that consider relations between settlers and Aboriginal people (Allingham 1978; Loos 1982; May 1983; 1993; 1993) focus almost totally on the pastoral frontier. These are significant studies, and ones to which I refer extensively here. Nonetheless, few address the part played by the town within the frontier. Likewise, while there have been studies of Aboriginal ‘fringe-dwellers’ in the early townscapes of North Queensland (Highland 1993; Reynolds 1993), these are bereft of an analysis of the particular relationships between state control and production of Aboriginal socialities.

Accounts of Aboriginal people in the area

Before the turn of the century some North Queensland settlers and state officials displayed an interest in gathering knowledge about Aboriginal peoples. These studies mainly occurred further toward the coast, and also further west, and the information

²⁰ Jupiter Mosman is the epitome of rural man as well as representative of Queensland Aboriginal history. He was not indigenous to the Charters Towers area, but far to the west at Kynuna. Hugh Mosman had sent him to school in Sydney, but later did not include him in his will. Jupiter Mosman worked as a stockman and drover all over Queensland, and ended his days in Charters Towers at Eventide (home for the aged) in 1945. Jupiter Mosman was celebrated for overcoming his ‘race’ by mixing with all townspeople and speaking ‘proper’ English (see www.mininghall.com/people/database), and was honoured with a significant monument in the Charters Towers cemetery after he died in 1945. Elisa, an elderly Aboriginal woman, remembers Jupiter Mosman coming to her grandfather’s house every Sunday for dinner (lunch) when she was a small child. There is no recognition in the colonial histories of his social life as an Aboriginal man. (See Plate 6.)

they collected from Aboriginal people in the 1860-80s conveys a sense of curiosity and scientific authority (for example Howitt 1882; Curr 1886; Roth 1897). These constitute the basis for much of the general colonial knowledge of Aboriginal people in North Queensland, as well as knowledge of those times for Aboriginal people living today.

Early attempts at identification and classification of Aboriginal people in the region, such as Armstrong and Chatfield (in Curr 1886), give tribal names that are unrecognised by Aboriginal people living in the area today. Armstrong identifies the ‘Mungerra tribe, which inhabits the watershed and upper portion of the Cape River’ (see Map 2), covering ‘about 300 square miles’ (Armstrong 1886), which is (at least partly) within what is now identified by Kudjala people as country belonging to them. Armstrong’s (1886) notes of what he knows about ‘the Mungerra’ displays the scientific penchant for detail and description. For example,

The Mungerra wear a bone through the septum of the nose, a mussel-shell on the forehead, and a necklace of small reeds cut into short lengths... Their implements are baskets, knives which resemble chisels in shape and stone tomahawks ground to an edge. They have also nets for the capture of kangaroo, emu and fish... Children belong to the tribe of the father. In youth, the males and females have their skins ornamented with scars... [etc].
(Armstrong 1886:464)

Chatfield (1886), based on observations made further down the Cape River at Natal Downs Station, about 100km from Charters Towers, has a similar, if more lengthy treatment of peoples in this area.²¹ Chatfield identifies the area ‘watered by the Cape River’ (again some of this area would now fall inside the area Kudjala identify as belonging to them) as being inhabited by ‘six *burra*, or tribes, who speak, with small dialectical differences, what they call the Eneby language’ (ibid.:468).²² Chatfield’s description, although more extensive than Armstrong’s, displays the same scientific curiosity and attention to detail of the Aboriginal person and the exterior trappings of their beings. Importantly, both authors were responding to a particular set of questions sent to settlers and others by Curr (1886) and these focussed on the

²¹ His account also dwells on the practices of the ‘Black Police’, and argues that they work at the will of the settlers and at the direction of the Queensland Government and police force (Chatfield 1886).

²² Chatfield names these tribes - Yukka burra; Pegulloburra; Wokkulburra; Mungooburra; Mungullaburra; Goondooloburra. These names have no currency among Aboriginal people today.

languages and ‘customs’ of the peoples who inhabited the informant’s area. Curr’s intention was to define ‘*the Australian Race*’ by collecting information from those all over the continent in contact with Aboriginal people, mostly pastoralists and police. Curr (1886) was primarily interested in identification and classification. He wanted information on a tribes or a language name, a few tools and implements, a word list and perhaps a description of a ceremony once witnessed. Some Aboriginal people today consider these historical sources useful in their search for information on people who lived in the area before, who may possibly be ancestors. However, many are ambivalent about their accuracy. These historical sources are highly relevant, especially in the native title context I discuss in the following chapters. Not only do they create knowledge about Aboriginal people for colonial society, but they can also be used in the present to support and describe an essential Aboriginality. While Aboriginal people do verbalise essentialist identifications to resist a dominant state (see Lattas 1993), they are produced in concert with the state and I argue that such identifications are only part of practice of Aboriginality.

Aboriginal people in the area around Charters Towers are known as Gudjal (or Kudjala). Kudjala/Gudjal appears first in the literature in 1940, with Tindale’s early version of his seminal work *Aboriginal tribes of Australia* (1940).²³ There is no literature on tribes or languages in the area between this work and Curr’s collected volume, which can bridge the gap between the 1880s and the 1940s. At that time, Tindale spoke to men on Palm Island who identified ‘Gudjal’ as the language (and the tribe) around Charters Towers. This reappears in Peter Sutton’s linguistic work in North East Queensland in the early 1970s, and subsequent researchers depend on these sources (eg. Brayshaw 1990). In Sutton’s unpublished (1973:18-19) reports, he compares early word lists in Curr (1886) that were recorded in the region. He found that the word list identified as ‘Clarke River’ (see Map 2), especially, is comparable to the ‘Gudjal’ Sutton recorded from a man from Charters Towers, living on Palm Island in 1970 (Sutton 1970b; 1970a; 1973). Further, Sutton identified a number of speakers of that language living in Charters Towers and on Palm Island (Sutton

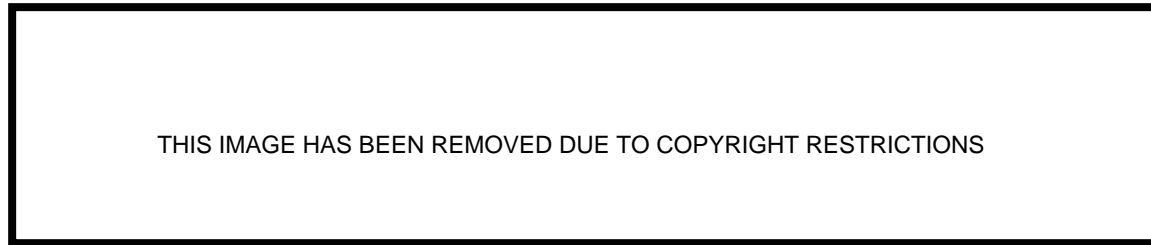
²³ Tindale references himself for the entry under ‘*Kutjale*’ (Tindale 1940:165). Since he does not include a year, we might assume that this refers to his unpublished material. He visited and spoke to people at Mona Mona, Palm Island, Cherbourg and Woorabinda in 1938-9 (Tindale 1938-9). However, nothing in the journal of this expedition seems to specifically support the location of ‘*Kutjale*’, except the following, written at Palm Island, ‘...Many new boundaries are appearing on my

1970b; 1970a:np), and these are older relatives of people who identify as ‘Kudjala/Gudjal’ today.

Brayshaw's (1990) examination of the ‘ethnohistorical literature’ for the ‘Herbert Burdekin’ district (of which Charters Towers is a part) creates a context for her analysis of the archaeological evidence. She critically examines accounts of explorers’ encounters with Aboriginal people in the Herbert Burdekin region, as well as later (ie 1880s) attempts by early ethnologists to study Aboriginal people and their culture, language, diet, implements, and other aspects of material culture. Her work on the ‘material culture’ is impressive in detail and scope, and provides a useful source for Aboriginal people today to access these details. For example, on hearing that I would be in Europe at a conference in 2002, one research participant asked me if I could ‘*go to that museum in Berlin and get those things back.*’ This participant had seen items (for example, possum string ornaments and ‘message sticks’) listed in Brayshaw’s (1990:266-314) work that had been taken from Charters Towers around the turn of the century. These are material ‘accounts’ of Aboriginal people of the ‘traditional past’. In the present they constitute a fragmentary history of ‘things’. Yet, more than this, they are used by contemporary Aboriginal people to construct a history of what *their* people did, entangled with a narrative of what was taken away by the invaders (cf. Thomas 1991). Thus these *things* belong to a peopled past and the knowledge of them and their whereabouts (courtesy of work such as Brayshaw’s) contribute to contemporary Aboriginal histories of the nature of colonial invasion.

tribal map and the positions of many tribes are being checked’ (Tindale 1938-9:619).

Map 2 Section of 1868 Map of the Kennedy District (Queensland State Archives, SRS1885/1 Item 7) (see Appendix B Map 3 for full)



Invasion and settlement of the region around Charters Towers

European ‘explorers’ first passed through the region from 1845. They saw a limited amount of the country, mainly along the Burdekin River, and none of them stayed long. Ludwig Leichhardt was the first of these who came inland on his way to Port Essington (in the Gulf of Carpentaria) through the Burdekin River area in 1845.²⁴ He travelled along the Burdekin to the east and through the ‘Basalt country’²⁵ and noted significantly that in the area was ‘very fine pastoral country’ (Leichhardt 1847). Edmund Kennedy’s expedition followed in 1848 and A. C. and F. T. Gregory’s expedition came south from the Gulf of Carpentaria in 1855-6 along the Burdekin River. Both echoed Leichhardt’s impressions of the country (Allingham 1978:9). After separation from the colony of New South Wales in 1860, the new Queensland Government proclaimed the Kennedy pastoral district ‘open’ from 1861 (see Map 2). They hoped that pastoralists would not only stock pastoral runs and make money for the new colony, but also ‘act as explorers, surveyors and developers’ (Allingham 1978:13).

In April 1861 George Elphinstone Dalrymple (later Police Magistrate and Land Commissioner for the Kennedy District) led an exploration team that included prospective squatters. Frontier historian, Noel Loos (1993:4) writes:

Within six weeks of Dalrymple's arrival, runs had been taken up in an unbroken 350 miles (560km) inland [from Port Denison, Bowen], despite the fact that, by the third week of settlement, there was intense Aboriginal resistance. By the middle of 1862, 454 runs and 83190 square kilometres, had been applied for; by 1863, almost the whole of the Kennedy District had been settled. (see also Bolton 1963)

Despite this relatively dense settlement of the Kennedy pastoral district, it was a vast area. The pastoralists were scattered, had few defences apart from their own guns, which as I will show, some used with impunity on Aboriginal persons who crossed their paths (cf. Hill 1907; Allingham 1978).²⁶

²⁴ A brief account of his minimal interaction with Aboriginal people in the area can be found in Loos (1982:13-15).

²⁵ See Map 2 ‘Impenetrable basaltic mass or range’, and to the west of this, ‘Basaltic Table Land’.

²⁶ Hill’s memoirs of *Forty-five years’ experiences in North Queensland, 1861-1905...* includes his

Dalrymple was established in 1863 as the first inland town nestled amongst the pastoral stations of the Kennedy District, almost ten years before the establishment of Charters Towers. Dalrymple was 'a police camp', as well as 'a supply depot for Bowen merchants' and a Telegraph Station and Land Commissioner's office (Neal 1984:6). There was also a blacksmith and two of the dozen or so pubs (or 'shanties') in the district, where early pastoral workers would indulge in their 'sprees' (Dalton 1991:50). Pastoralists were followed into the region within the next decade by an influx of thousands of miners and prospectors. The first small rushes occurred at the Star River in 1866 and at Mt Wyatt (about 200km south of Townsville) in January 1867 followed by the 'full scale' gold rush at the Cape River in July 1867 (Loos 1982:62) (see Map 2). Ravenswood goldfield was opened up in 1869.

Gold was found at Charters Towers in early 1872, and by the end of the year there were about 4,500 people 'scattered over about three square miles of diggings' (Menghetti 1982:63). Some of these were Chinese, who by the end of 1872 had established gardens and owned 'at least' four hotels (*ibid.*:57, fn43). Most others were European immigrants, and it was the mixture of immigrants among the population that gave the town the moniker 'the world'. The Charters Towers goldfield was originally 1700 square miles (2737 km²), included the settlements of Mount Leyshon, Rishton and Broughton, and was bounded by the 'Burdekin River on the north east, the Seventy Mile Range to the south and the township of Southern Cross on the West' (Menghetti 1982:51).

In contrast to the pastoralists, whose industry demanded of them a commitment of at least a number of years, miners and prospectors were often transient, following the most promising lead to a path to 'instant riches'. In the first years of the town this pattern of occupation can be evidenced in the style of early Charters Towers houses. According to the Rate Books of Charters Towers (Charters Towers City Council 1877-1909) many if not most dwellings in the late 1870s were described as 'two room bark hut', or 'slab hut', and were located on crown land. However, these were far more substantial than the tents and humpies of the more transient diggings and settlements. Bell (1980) writes that the early bark and slab dwellings in Charters

time as a station manager at Reedy Lake near the town of Dalrymple around 1865, and as a clerk of Petty Sessions at Cape River in the 1860s and Ravenswood in the 1870s (Hill 1907; Loos 1982:264).

Towers were replaced with timber and iron buildings as soon as these materials became available. By the mid 1880s, the main streets of Charters Towers boasted substantial wooden and stone buildings indicating the growing wealth in town from the lucrative ‘deep reef’ mining (Janecek 2002:97). According to Bolton (1980:146) the high proportions of women and children in Charters Towers’ population is ‘indicative of its stability’ as a settlement.²⁷ However, the establishment of the settlement lay on security of the gold mining industry, substantial wage labour, good housing, and the businesses (storekeepers, publicans, etc) which served the mines. Pastoralism also served the town, providing the mining settlement with beef and business for storekeepers.

‘Dispersal’: violence on the pastoral frontier

Relations on the pastoral frontier around Charters Towers between invaders and Aboriginal people were at times extremely violent and here I demonstrate the role of the state in enabling these circumstances. Morris’s (1992:84) characterisation of the frontier in colonial New South Wales as a ‘culture of terror’ explores how representations of Aboriginal people in colonial discourse (as savages, as treacherous, cruel etc.) ‘gave legitimacy to ... the pastoralists’ redemptive violence... [a] necessary violence required to tame or nullify the ‘savagery’ in Aborigines’ (see also Slotkin 1973). These representations are also evident on the North Queensland pastoral frontier. In a section of the ‘Queensland Pioneer Book’ (Black c1931:48-49), the following passage illustrates the discourse of fear among colonists:

Mr Gray estimates that from ten to twenty per cent of the white population of that time [1860s] lost their lives by the hands of the blacks. An officer of police of the time said the percentage was between twenty and thirty for as well as shepherds many a traveller on the lonely roads about the Suttor, Belyando and Burdekin rivers never reaches his destination. The remedy was the stationing in each district of a detachment of native mounted police... If the country was to be occupied by white people they had to be protected and this could not be done without a certain amount of bloodshed...

²⁷ At first census in 1876, the population was estimated to be 33% female (Bell 1982:314), and in 1881, the Department of Mines in its Annual Report, estimated that 60% of the town’s population consisted of women and children (in Bell 1982:314).

According to Black (ibid.), however, reports and stories of massacres were exaggerated by pastoralists at the time to ‘scare off blacks’ (that is, to create fear among Aboriginal people), and also by the Aborigines themselves who are ‘no mean romancers’. But her evidence is scanty. She cites W.R.O Hill, ex-Police Magistrate, who was ‘in a position to assert that [he] never knew an [police] officer to allow a shot to be fired unless in extreme necessity’ (Black c1931:49). This same man, in his memoir, recommends shooting Aboriginal people on sight since, in his opinion, ‘the blacks were always on the aggressive’ (Hill 1907). Morris’s (1992:72) argument (after Foucault) that power is a productive social force and that historical knowledge is enmeshed in and inseparable from ‘the real and the imagined, ... truth and distortion on the colonial frontier’ is pertinent here. By those who dwelled in it, the pastoral frontier was characterised as *necessarily* violent in order to endorse the violence that occurred. Aboriginal people are the ‘lawless’ within this scheme and thus interaction with them slips beyond ‘civilisation’ to contingent, frontier violence.

Dalrymple, as an early settlement within the pastoral frontier, was a base for the Native Mounted Police Force (the ‘Native Police’). The Native Police were a force constituted of a white police Sargent and usually 4 to 6 Aboriginal men, referred to as ‘troopers’, from other areas of Queensland and sometimes further afield. The idea of using Aboriginal men was that they would be able to track people in the bush and employing Aboriginal men from other areas of the country was supposed to ensure their loyalty to the police. The Native Police had a reputation for brutality (Queensland Legislative Assembly 1861; Loos 1982), and their presence in Dalrymple was certainly instrumental in the violence that occurred in the area. They were known to have killed many Aboriginal people in their ‘dispersals’ and their reprisals for Aboriginal threats to stock and settlers. In 1858, the Commandant of the Native Police instructed his Camp Sergeants that it was their duty ‘at all times and opportunities to disperse large assemblages of blacks’ (Queensland Legislative Assembly 1861:151). ‘Dispersal’ was a widely-known euphemism for ‘shoot’ or ‘shoot at’. The above instruction was not revoked until 1896 (Reynolds & May 1995:173).

Early newspaper articles indicate that in the pastoral area around Dalrymple there was frontier violence similar to that for the rest of North Queensland (cf. Loos 1982).

Most of the reports by pastoralists in this period are coupled with calls to increase the numbers of police, especially Native Mounted Police, in the area as a method of securing the country.

‘News from Dalrymple’ [:] The blacks continue to commit their depredations ... Every station in the neighbourhood having suffered more or less; the Native Police force being ridiculously small in comparison to the extent of country they have to patrol...(*Cleveland Bay Express*: (CBE) 21st Sept 1867).²⁸

We are sorry to learn that the wild blacks have recently become troublesome in the vicinity of the Star and Fanning Rivers. They have been spearing cattle, frightening persons who live in isolated positions in the bush. Their demands in some instances for damper and beef have been couched in threatening language. The native police might perhaps be employed with advantage in the localities named (*Queenslander*: (Qldr) 6th Nov 1869).

In 1868, the manager of Dotswood station, adjacent to Dalrymple township, was threatening ‘wholesale annihilation of the blacks’ on his run if he did not get more help from Police (*CBE* 28th March 1868). The Star River goldfield, which was the first in the Kennedy district, had opened up in 1866 within the Dotswood ‘run’, and it is possible that Costin’s pronouncements, if not taken seriously by the authorities may well have been taken up as a suggestion by the miners in the area.²⁹

By the end of the 1860s, a few pastoralists had begun to ‘let in’ Aboriginal people in order to provide them access to their ‘old hunting grounds’ (see *Cleveland Bay Express*: (CBE) 17th April 1869), and to make use of them as shepherds and workers. Reports of these few cases of ‘letting in’ occurred alongside printed protestations from Colonial officials in Sydney and Brisbane condemning the practises of the Native Police, and those of the squatters, as well as rumours that these same officials were planning to disband the Native Police force (see *Port Denison Times*: (PDT) 1867). Numerous letters, supported by the Northern newspapers’ editorials, followed and were interspersed among the protestations from ‘Southerners’. The Northerners expressed horror at the prospect of not being ‘protected’ from the ‘depredations’ caused on stock and person by ‘the blacks’

²⁸ Note that ‘depredations’ are most usually stock (cattle and sheep) killings. Where Aboriginal people killed white settlers this was reported very differently.

²⁹ Morgan (1993) documents in detail the violent Aboriginal/settler relations on Dotswood Station and surrounding area.

(*ibid.*). One letter (*PDT* Aug 3 1867) was most explicit, noting that ‘the blacks’ had caused stations to be abandoned due to their attacks. The writer made a threat to get a police force together that would be totally under the squatter’s control: ‘the result [of which] would not be pleasant to contemplate, at any rate by [Southern officials] and other phil-aborigines’ (*ibid.*). The moral tensions between frontiersmen and Southerners were played out in newspaper editorials, letters to the editor and in Queensland parliamentary discussions throughout the last years of the 19th Century, but the government did little to curb the violence happening on the periphery of colonial space.

Aboriginal people were credited with killing 18 shepherds on Natal Downs Station, to the south of the Cape River diggings, as well as others on the Road to Cape River and in its vicinity in the 1860s (Palmer 1903:14; cited in Loos 1982:196-7). It is likely that these were ‘avenged’. Loos notes that:

To suggest that at least ten times as many Aborigines were killed for every intruder killed seems very conservative when one considers that Aborigines were often killed to drive them from runs and river valleys and for merely disturbing or killing cattle and horses, let alone killing or wounding settlers. (1982:190)

Recent debates in Australia have emphasised the necessity to substantiate claims such as Loos’. In summary, the debate centres on Keith Windschuttle’s public attacks (Windschuttle 2000; 2002; 2003) on the work of historians who had laboured to revise Australian colonial history and recognise the struggles of Aboriginal people and the violence of the colonial frontier. One issue Windschuttle raised was in regard to stories of massacres of Aboriginal people by colonial settlers, calling these ‘inventions’. To counter Windschuttle’s often spurious claims, historians (eg Rundle 2003; McFarlane 2004) of the colonial frontier have demonstrated that histories of massacres of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal resistance on the Australian colonial frontier were not fabricated, and have defended their use of Aboriginal oral narrative in the telling of these histories (see, for example Attwood & Magowan 2001; 2003; Macintyre & Clark 2003; Manne 2003). My examination of the sources regarding a massacre in the area around Charters Towers below is poignant in regard to the debate, but also in its evidence of the sorts of claims made by Loos (above).

Massacre at Lolworth

Gold was discovered at the Cape River in July 1867 and thousands of prospectors tramped the road through Dalrymple (see Appendix B, Map 3) passing also through the pastoral runs on their way to the newest ‘field’. There are early reports of Aboriginal people at the Cape River Diggings, which may indicate that some of the actions by pastoralists to keep people away from waterholes and cattle runs were being ‘effective’.

‘News from Cape River’ [:] On Saturday last we were favoured with a visit from about 100 blacks, men, women, and children, who walked into the town in a state of nudity – a very imposing sight. I could only make out that they were hungry. They collected round the office of Mr Hill, CPS, who played on the cornopean, for them, at which they were highly pleased, and held a grand corroboree to the music. They are still knocking about the diggings. (*CBE* April 10 1869)³⁰

It is likely that the author was correct when he supposed that people were hungry. The report appeared at a time when, as discussed above, pastoralists were experiencing widespread resistance from ‘the blacks’ to European invasion and were advocating in return the murder of any Aboriginal person on their ‘run’.

In Aboriginal memory this was a time of much violence. There is a place, now within the Great Basalt Wall National Park, called ‘Niggers Bounce’, said to be where settlers and Police drove Aboriginal men, women and children off the cliff to their deaths. William Jones now over 80, who grew up on stations throughout the Charters Towers area was told by his grandparents stories of massacres that occurred on stations in the vicinity, and in particular that there were ‘many killings around the Lolworth area’ (see Appendix B, Maps 3, 4, 5). ‘The Lolworth’/‘The Basalt Wall’ was notably a kind of ‘last stand’ of Aborigines in the area (cf. Allingham 1978:159). It was considered an ‘impenetrable mass’ of basalt rock (see Map 2), but contained plentiful water and food sources. W.R.O Hill, who was caretaker at Reedy Springs Station for the Anning family in 1865, wrote later,

³⁰ This is an example of a rare report in the early newspapers, that neither complains about Aboriginal people’s presence, nor advocates their expulsion. It is even rarer that it seems (however patronisingly) to provoke curiosity from the author. Note also ‘cornopean’ is ‘an obsolete name for the cornet-à-piston’ (online www.thefreedictionary.com) (presumably a type of cornet or brass instrument).

The constant danger from the blacks who infested the ‘Basalt Wall’, a peculiar formation running for miles parallel with two running creeks, the Fletcher and Sandy, both of which abound in fish, especially the former. This wall was a veritable stronghold for the blacks, who, realising the security it was, were very bold and daring... I can safely say that life was never safe, and the only wise thing to do on seeing a black was to shoot, and shoot straight, otherwise he would certainly spear you. (Hill 1907:30-31)

Local pastoralists, however, did not just shoot Aboriginal people on sight, but some actively sought out Aboriginal people on their cattle runs in order to ‘chase them away’, or kill them in retribution for spearing cattle. These frontier practices are made explicit in Frank Hann’s diaries (1866-1875).³¹ Frank Hann ran a cattle station called ‘Lolworth’ on the western edge of the Basalt Wall, just north of the Cape River Goldfields, (see Map 2). Hann had a decent business in the 1860s and early 1870s selling cattle to the butchers at who serviced the diggings at Cape River gold field. His diary entries for the late 1860s and into the 1870s record ‘large tribe[s] of blacks’ at various times and places around the area of his cattle run, often also noting the remains of cattle and sheep that had been speared, and writing for assistance from the Native Police in Dalrymple. In late May, early June of 1874, on the way to ‘Weanervale’ (one of the cattle runs on Lolworth station), Hann recorded that he found a steer with a dozen spears in it. He and the men who worked on the cattle run looked around the area for about four days and saw many tracks of Aboriginal people. They came upon a group of people in a gorge that is part of ‘the Wall’ on the 2nd June 1874. Hann wrote that he and his party ‘gave them a great dressing’. They took 14 ‘tomahawks’ and ‘took’ a ‘boy’ who he refers to as ‘Spider’. It is likely that Hann’s ‘great dressing’ meant that at least some of those 14 people who dropped their ‘tomahawks’ were shot. The following day Hann’s party first ‘burn[ed] all [the Aboriginal groups’] things’, and then chased the people to the head of the Campaspe River, at Mount Stewart. The party camped for the night, a mile from the Aboriginal group, but close enough to hear them. The following day, 4th June 1874, Hann wrote that his party ‘c[a]me in on’ the Aboriginal group at a ‘very high cliff’. Hann records on that day that he took 16 more tomahawks and ‘burned their spears’.

³¹ Appendix A, Table 5 contains an extract from these diaries most relevant to the discussion here, in particular Frank Hann’s apparent involvement in the ‘Niggers Bounce’ massacre.

The diaries from 1868 and throughout, record Hann and his employees 'going down to the wall to see if there are any blacks' on very frequent occasions prior to this event. Hann's journal indicates that Hann and his employees formed a sort of patrol of the Lolworth area. Like other pastoralists in the area, they 'hunted' (Hann 1866-1875: 18/4/1874) and shot Aboriginal people, burned the remains of their camps, stole tomahawks and spears and chased Aboriginal people away from water sources.

With the extreme approaches taken by at least some pastoralists in the area, it is conceivable that the violence of the pastoral frontier made the towns and settlements seem a safer option. Aboriginal people were also increasingly becoming aware of the fact that towns proffered different possibilities for sustenance, commodities and enjoyment, as their numbers in the 'town camps' demonstrated.

When, after a decade or so, Aboriginal people were 'let in',³² they appeared to have been much reduced in numbers and health through the period of extreme violence, exposure to diseases and restricted access to bush foods (see Curr 1886). There was an outcry from the 'southern' media whose tales of 'wholesale massacre of human beings' (Bulletin June 19 1880 in Jallard 2002:265) incensed 'civilised' people. However there were also those who defended such practices as 'only natural': this kind of attitude could be found in an editorial of the *Northern Miner*.

It is well known in Brisbane as in Normanton that shooting blacks is one of the common accessories of bush life all over Queensland. The squatters in Moreton Bay shot niggers in their time... The whites in North Queensland are an average lot, they shoot blacks and carry off the gins just as they did in Victoria and New South Wales: there is not occasion for any holy howling over the business. It is the inevitable consequence of our possession of the country...(*Northern Miner*: (NM) 24th April 1883).

The notable exceptions to violence in the larger region, for example Chatfield at Natal Downs station (1886) and Christison at Lammermoor, south of Hughenden (Bennett 1927) (see Appendix B, Map 4) provided information and helped create knowledge about the Aboriginal people who 'came in'. Aboriginal people, as they

³² For example, Natal Downs Station was 'occupied' in 1863, '...but the tribe was not what is technically called *let in* until 1868. Generally after the first occupation of a tract of country by a settler, from three to ten years elapse (sic) before the tribe or tribes to which the land has belonged from time immemorial is let in, that is, allowed to come to the homestead, or seek for food within a radius of five or ten miles of it' (Curr 1886:469).

‘came in’, were constructed by these sources of information as dependant on settler society for sustenance and as in need of ‘protection’.

Tension and town life

Menghetti imagines the early township of Charters Towers as a place of violence and disputation - among miners for their claims, and over food and water which was extremely scarce (1984:17-20).³³ During this time complaints in the *Northern Miner* about water shortages are frequent, exemplified by an instance where two women appeared in court for fighting over the contents of a well (*NM* 18th Jan1886). If not entirely hospitable, for Aboriginal people it was safer than the pastoral frontier. Land around the town was quickly denuded of trees for firewood and other plants as feed for animals. Mining Warden Phillip Selheim reported in 1880 that all the available land in around the town of Charters Towers was taken up with cattle and goats: ‘it must be conceded that this goldfield is about the closest stocked piece of land in the country’ (Sellheim in Menghetti 1982:68 fn84). Furthermore, throughout the 1880s the town was plagued by diseases such as typhoid due to water shortages and the deaths of livestock from ‘grossly overstocked Homestead Leases of the field’ (*ibid.*:86). The frontier town was a struggling place, where basic resources were minimal, and manifold tensions existed between the different groups as well as individuals.

Newspapers were clearly an outlet for the views of pastoralists as well as townspeople. They were also a principal source of knowledge of the frontier. They were fiercely ‘Northern’, and although they printed letters, like the one mentioned above, from concerned, moderate ‘Southerners’, the editorials, articles and letters printed in pastoralists’ defence were many. Cryle (1989:8) argues that,

Pandering to anti-Aboriginal feeling and condoning collective acts of white violence were as much a part of the editorial mission as raising subscriptions for the local Hospital and School of Arts...

³³ But see Bell (1982:20), who submits that according to official reports mining settlements were not overly disorderly since the mining warden was there from the beginning, although these officials, of course had an interest in representing the situation as under their control.

Likewise, it has been shown that the early papers were largely owned by pastoral interests (Manion 1982). For example the *Cleveland Bay Express's* shareholders in 1867 included squatters from Ravenswood, Woodstock, Dotswood, Bluff Downs and Houghton Stations (Manion 1982:28-9). Neal (1984:17) notes that 'many stations subscribed to the southern newspapers, and of course, the *North Queensland Register*'. The contemporary media thus was closely aligned with views and the opinions of townspeople and councillors as well as the pastoral interests.

The Aboriginal presence in and around town was not an inconsiderable focus for the town's population, indeed it defined the town as on the edge of the frontier, where these people who belonged 'out there' sometimes brought the 'out there' into civilised space. Throughout the 1870s and early 1880s short articles were published about Aboriginal men and women in camps around Charters Towers, Millchester and Queenton.³⁴ These were mostly concerned with violence among Aboriginal people and/or their large numbers of dogs. However, in the first years of settlement, the newspapers did not dwell too much on the presence of people in town. Rather, the fear of Aboriginal people was projected beyond the fringes of the township, on the roads and on the sheep and cattle 'runs' and remote outposts of pastoral stations.

An article was published in the *Ravenswood Miner* in 1872 that conveys some of the reaction and attitudes to Aboriginal people in nearby towns.

During the week the nigger element has been rather strong in Ravenswood. All day long the 'noble savage' may be seen in all his majesty stalking through the streets, bailing up the passers by with the usual demand for 'tobac' or 'monee'. They have had the audacity to pitch their camp right in the centre of the town, much to the annoyance of the residents in the neighbourhood. Night is rendered hideous by their yells, and sleep for those who have the misfortune to live near them, is quite impossible for the live long night they keep up their infernal chatter. A few blank cartridges, we think, would have a salutary effect in putting a stop to their midnight orgies. (*Ravenswood Miner*: (RM) 24th Feb 1872)

In August of that same year, Aboriginal people were still (or perhaps again, it is not clear which), 'camping' near Ravenswood, using their 'mangy curs' [dogs] to kill sheep belonging to the town butchers (*RM* 3rd August 1872). The tone of these

³⁴ Millchester and Queenton are now 'suburbs' of Charters Towers, but in the early days were separate

articles is annoyance, mixed with a sarcastic characterisation of ‘the noble savage in all his majesty’. It is a much different tone, even when sheep are killed, to the obvious fear of earlier times, and even contemporary articles about groups of Aboriginal people in the bush, and about attacks on stock on pastoral runs. Aboriginal people themselves appear to have a perception of mutual concession as what town space entailed, especially in their ‘audacity’ of pitching a camp in the middle of the settlement and eating the butchers’ sheep. Inherent in the attitude on the part of the settlers is safety and superiority (despite obvious outrage and calls for defence), brought about by their creation of ‘settled’ space: the weight of numbers, guns and their right to use them, the Native Police, as well as a growing opinion that Aboriginal people had somehow been ‘tamed’ and were ‘beaten’. Nonetheless there was still a certain fear about these aspects of the rural frontier being brought to the centre of towns.

‘Kaz Yuel’³⁵ lived with his settler family in Charters Towers in a ‘bark humpy’ situated ‘on the flat near Mosman Creek, below St. Paul’s Church of England’ in the late 1870s. He estimates that during his childhood years there were ‘about two hundred’ Aboriginal people camped ‘about a half a mile over the creek at the rear of our humpy’ (‘Kaz Yuel’ 1922). He remembers ‘corroborees’ being staged on ‘moonlight nights’ and that settler townspeople would go out to watch these, careful all the time of the ‘mangy’ camp dogs. ‘Kaz Yuel’s memories are useful for at least some idea of the atmosphere of the town in the 1870s. For example, he remembers he was charmed as a boy by Charters Towers, with its ‘cosmopolitan crowd’, and

[B]lackfellows carrying spears, boomerangs and nulla nullas... (for they always carried their weapons with them, leaving nothing to chance in their suspicions of whites)... the gins with picaninnies on their backs... (ibid.).

Aboriginal people bartered clothes pegs and bark sheeting for the settlers’ huts in return for tobacco, food or sometimes clothing (‘Kaz Yuel’ 1922). Others performed casual household chores (Menghetti 1989:66), and still others worked for the police as trackers.³⁶ From this point of view, Aboriginal people were part of the social

municipalities.

³⁵ Reminiscences published in rural periodicals were (and in some cases still are) published under colourful pseudonyms.

³⁶ A ‘tracker’ was an Aboriginal man employed by police to find criminals or people lost in the bush through the particularly Aboriginal skill of finding their tracks. Often the police employed men as

space of the frontier town in its early years: trading with settlers, as well being subjects of 19th Century colonial curiosity, entertainment and some limited apprehension.

Other aspects of ‘Kaz Yuel’s piece depict the tensions that characterised the relationship between Aboriginal and settler in these years. Noted above, men ‘always carried their weapons with them’, elsewhere in his article, he describes his fear when having to pass by the camp, where younger Aboriginal boys ‘...would not think twice about throwing [a ‘nulla nulla’ or ‘boomerang’] at a white boy’ (‘Kaz Yuel’ 1922). In the 1880s and 1890s, a growing characterisation of Aboriginal people as menace or ‘nuisance’ around the town, especially when supplied with alcohol, is prevalent in the newspapers. Reports such as those below are relatively common in local papers at this time.

As Mr _____ was coming into town on Friday night when in Elizabeth Street near the Corporation Tank he was surrounded by a mob of drunken blacks... One of them said “bale you whitefellow belong this country, we drive you all out, Marks kill my brother, I kill you” they had nulla nullas in their hands and jumped about like fiends... [the police] ought to remove the blacks from the town at night... (NM 5th Dec 1882)³⁷

We have received a letter complaining of the blacks allowed to assemble at the lower end of Mosman Street [and drink alcohol]... Why don’t the police remove the temptation by chasing the blacks out of town every night? (NM 15th Nov 1883)

As demonstrated in the quote above, some Aboriginal people spoke threateningly to settlers in town, in the first case promising retaliation for settler violence. Others were reported as being ‘cheeky’, especially when having consumed alcohol. Further, many fought against attempts to control their presence or actions. One man, who had demanded goods from miners at the Black Jack Mine, was arrested for using obscene language and throwing a ‘nulla nulla’ at a policeman when confronted about his demands (NM 23rd Mar 1887). These examples give a contrary picture to the growing state rhetoric that Aboriginal people needed ‘protection’. In fact here we see that

trackers from other areas of Queensland (see Appendix A, Table 7).

³⁷ ‘Bale’ can be understood as ‘no’ or ‘not’ (Dixon, Ramson & Thomas 1990:207-8). This comment appears to support the argument made by Reynolds (1982:72-78) that a considerable reason for Aboriginal resistance and specifically killing settlers was retribution for particular acts. Here, it was ‘Marks’ who was under specific threat of violence, but all ‘whitefellows’ were the object of anger.

people were active and angry about attempts to sanction their lives in town, and control them through removal from town. Through drinking, Aboriginal men were in fact taking part in an important pastime of the mining town, which in the 1890s had over 60 hotels and licensed premises.

There were also inter-Aboriginal tensions focussed on town space. Reports in the newspapers during the 1880s include a number of instances where Aboriginal men were identified as the murderers of other Aboriginal men and women within the 'town camps'. This may be a reflection of various groups living in proximity to each other and moving through others' territories partly as a result of colonial impact. Some of this movement was a result of young men and women being forcibly taken as guides, workers or 'companions' to other areas by miners, drovers, and pastoralists.³⁸ Other movement was for the purposes of ceremony or inter-group social contact. For example, in October 1886, an inquest was held into the death of an Aboriginal man, 'Billy', in Ayr (on the coast south of Townsville). Among those who gave evidence was an Aboriginal woman identified as from Dalrymple, 'Flora'. In her statement to the police, 'Flora' mentions that she worked cutting cane near Ayr, and that she had come to Ayr for a 'corroboree' (Justice Department 1886). Thus some Aboriginal people around this time moved of their own accord seeking work, as well as for the purposes of inter-group ceremony. Another example, in 1886 there was a court case staged over the alleged murder of an Aboriginal man named 'Billy',³⁹ who had been brought from 'the Woolgar' by a prospector, by two local men 'Paddy and Wills' (*NM* 14th Oct 1886). 'Paddy' was identified by one of the arresting Constables as 'belong[ing] to a Cape River tribe', and as having deserted from the Native Police. He had served in that force in Pentland as well as Townsville and Ravenswood. The counsel for the defence of the Aboriginal suspects pleaded for leniency on the grounds that:

...It is well known that if blacks from different tribes meet and one gets an opportunity to kill the other he will do it... [I] have been in

³⁸ For example, the explorers Kennedy (1870) and Leichhardt (1847) both mention taking Aboriginal guides with them on their journey. The pastoralist's wife, Gray (1964:25) writes that 'R' brought a 'boy and a gin' (she was 12 years old) from a Townsville camp to work on their station on the Flinders River (near Hughenden) in 1870.

³⁹ Such diminutive names (also 'Jimmy', 'Jacky', 'Tarpot' etc.) were commonly given to grown Aboriginal men, referred to as 'boys' by settlers (mainly squatters and police, see Chapter 4 on Names). Note that in 1890 another man named 'Billy' 'who for a long time resided at Millchester' was reported to have been killed in Pentland by 'some other blacks' (*NM* April 22 1890).

the country twenty three years. The custom of war between the different tribes was a common occurrence and if the prisoners killed the boy Billy they simply followed this custom. (*NM* 14th Oct 1886)

The suspects were put to death, and there followed in the next edition of the *Northern Miner* a plea (unsigned) for better communication of the laws ‘of the country’ to Aboriginal people. It stated: ‘they are entitled to, and should receive, fair play, although they are only an inferior race’ (*NM* 19th Oct 1886). This story is an exposition not only of the settlers’ attitudes to ‘race’ (as shown by the final statement of this written plea), but also the jury’s decision to put to death the two men. The contrast in legal treatment of the ‘races’ might best be illustrated by a corresponding case from some years before. In 1874 James Kennedy, manager of Southwick Station (near Dalrymple) was remanded in custody after a court hearing where he was accused by the station cook and his wife of killing a ‘station black’⁴⁰ next to the Homestead (*Qldr* 28th Nov 1874). No further information about this event could be found and James Kennedy apparently went on to manage other stations in the area.

These court cases are examples of the assertion of a colonial state and the attempts to bring Law into the frontier through the settled space of the town. Aboriginal people’s large encampments around the towns and close to the bigger pastoral settlements were, for a time, coexistent with white population, and were a reminder of the frontier as being on the doorstep of the rural town. For example, a report in the *Northern Miner* in the mid-1880s recounts that a group of ‘blacks’ stole a cask of beer and took it to the manure depot, which was located on Sheep Station Creek.⁴¹ There they killed a man.

Charlie, the blackboy who was killed, was born somewhere round the Towers and has always lived here... The supposed murderer, who is in custody, is called Tommy and is a Dalrymple boy, having lately worked for Messrs A. & W.D. White.⁴² (*NM* Oct 2 1885)

⁴⁰ Morris (1992:14) notes that ‘station blacks’ ‘usually resided on a squatter’s [pastoralist’s] property’ and were ‘a number of men and their dependents.’ They ‘formed a pool of cheap labour to be drawn upon when required to perform menial jobs. When they were not required they sustained themselves through their own forms of subsistence’ (ibid.).

⁴¹ The Charters Towers City Council manure depot was located on Sheep Station Creek, which charmingly, flows into the Burdekin River, which in turn is the main water supply for the town (Charters Towers City Council 1894). As will be discussed below, Aboriginal people had a camp and other housing in the vicinity of Sheep Station Creek in later times, and this event seems to indicate that there was also a camp there in the 1880s.

⁴² The Whites had ‘Bluff Downs’ station (see Map 2), having bought it from the (William) Hanns in

Perhaps more telling than the conflict is that one man is known to have been a stable and identifiable resident if not of the town then of its general area. The other man is known to be from Dalrymple, and the phrase 'lately worked' indicates that he had worked elsewhere, perhaps on other stations nearby. It can be said from this evidence that at this time there were those that perhaps had spent much of their lives in the vicinity of town, and others who worked on stations, but who came into the town at intervals.

There is a growing sense that by the early 1880s white townspeople, especially police, had acquired a certain knowledge of at least some Aboriginal people, and their associations with, indeed their 'belonging to', the town of Charters Towers, or surrounding area. This knowledge was based in people of the town camps and their movement to and from stations rather than any involvement in the mining industry. Bolton (1980:146-7) argues that Charters Towers miners were unlike settlers in the coastal industries (such as sugar cane) in that they opposed the use of 'coloured' (including Islander, Aboriginal and Chinese) labour. Furthermore, the industry was unionised in 1886, and even shopkeepers, bakers, cab drivers and domestic workers had unions in 1890 (*ibid.*:152). Unionisation meant the considerable white settler population controlled the labour market in the mining industry, but also the service and domestic economies of the town and there was little room for Aboriginal involvement.

Before the 1920s, the mining industry was an exclusively (European and Chinese) settler pursuit. From personal histories that people have given me, it is evident that one man, whose origins were Malay but who had married an Aboriginal woman, worked carting wood for the Black Jack Mine in about the 1920s. Elisa Thomas' grandfather also did some tin mining in a creek to the North of the town in about the 1930s, and others were likewise occupied in the war years (Kennedy 1985:33). It is clear that it was still possible to garner a living from native foods on the fringes of settlement, supplemented by settler commodities. Yet, there appear to have been few instances of close and sustained working or other relationships between Aboriginal people and settlers in town, unlike the kinds of relationships that were developing between stations owners and Aboriginal workers and their families. In town the

production of knowledge on both sides of the frontier was made across considerable social distance. This meant that while each could view its Other in the town, it was a view from afar. Interaction between the townspeople, the state and the Aboriginal Other was facilitated by the state; for example, on the occasion of ‘blanket day’.

Blanket Day

A typical town scenario that emerges from the newspapers of the 1880s is the occasion of the ‘annual distribution of blankets’, on the ‘Queen’s birthday’ in May. Allotment of blankets began in Queensland when the Colonial Office set aside 800 pounds for distribution in the State by the Medical staff in 1860 (Queensland State Archives nd). The distribution of blankets in Charters Towers began sometime before 1882,⁴³ and continued into the first decade of the 20th Century. Blanket distribution was part of the wider rationing of food and some implements, which were central to early government practices of ‘protection’. The police distribution of blankets was part of the process of rationing sick and old Aboriginal people, but the performance of the event helped construct the notion that all Aboriginal people needed ‘protection’. It is thus a highly symbolic ritual of the protective state. Blankets were also crucial items in enticing Aboriginal people out of the bush and a way of controlling their whereabouts. Furthermore, given the violence that the state enabled during the same period, the blanket distribution is indicative of a state that is an ensemble of mechanisms of domination effected through police as well as less obvious agents of the state (Trouillot 2001).

Initially, blankets were distributed to pastoralists who were to pass these on to Aboriginal workers and their dependants. However, due to reported pastoralist abuses of the system, direct distribution was effected by police magistrates (Reynolds 1972:30; see also McGrath 1987). The manager of two cattle stations near the coast wrote to the Townsville police magistrate in 1869, asking for government blankets to distribute to the Aboriginal people who had been ‘let in’ to the station, rather than waiting for the Queen’s birthday occasion when they would have to go to Townsville (see Breslin 1992:93-94). The manager saw it as a reward for Aboriginal

⁴³ The first record I could find of this happening in Charters Towers was in the May 2nd 1882 edition of the *Northern Miner*, which notes ‘[the] Usual distribution of blankets to the blackfellows took place

people's 'good behaviour' (that is, not spearing stock) since allowing camping and hunting on certain sections of the cattle run (ibid.). Some pastoralists and police at this time evidently saw the economic benefits of good relations with Aboriginal people, and sought to use gifts such as blankets to persuade them to behave in a more passive manner. On the other hand, Reynolds (1972:45-6) has revealed records which show that settlers (in NSW) were aware that Aboriginal people expected 'material rewards' and compensation for the 'loss of their hunting grounds', including being paid for their labour, and being well clothed and fed. Blankets seem to have been significant items in this minimal reparation (ibid.). The numbers of Aboriginal people who turned up for Blanket Day in Charters Towers (and indeed elsewhere) is indicative of their acceptance of the state ritual of giving, whether their perception of it was as partly reparative for the loss of lands or not.

In 1887, there were reports in the *Northern Miner* of large numbers of Aboriginal people being in Charters Towers for almost a month before distribution. In that year there were 167 men, women and children given blankets outside the Court House (*NM* 3rd May 1887). In previous years, there were similar numbers, although at times only the vague 'large mob' or 'great muster' was reported. Smaller numbers of blankets were distributed in other places, for example in 1882 '39 blacks from the Burdekin' were given blankets, although it is not indicated as to where this took place (*NM* 4th May 1882). Blankets were also distributed to people at the Post Offices at Hillgrove [Station] and Clarke River, as well as Pentland and Ravenswood. After the blankets had been given out, it seems that most people left the town, either to camps on the fringe of town or further afield (cf. *NM* 30th April 1887). Figures in the *Northern Miner* as well as in the Northern Protector of Aboriginals' (NPA) reports (Roth 1901; 1902; 1903) from the turn of the century indicate large numbers of people receiving the blankets.

Table 1 Number of people to whom blankets distributed, Charters Towers

Year	No. People	source
1882	180	<i>NM</i> May 2 1882
1884	200	<i>NM</i> 1 May 1884
1885	'over 100'	<i>NM</i> 1 May 1885
1887	167	<i>NM</i> May3 1887
1891	(approx) 80	24 May 1891 (plate 3)
1899	105	NPA 1900
1900	58	NPA 1901
1901	70	NPA 1902
1902	67	NPA 1903
1903	56	NPA 1904

The figures of blanket distribution also reflect the state policy of distribution and its implementation as a control of Aboriginal movement. According to state policy, the figures of blanket distribution are an indication of people perceived by authorities to be 'in need', but there is no definition of 'need' except for an emphasis on the sick and old. In other official documents, it is stated that 'no decent request' for blankets or assistance is refused. The Sargent's report in 1898 (Queensland Police Department 1900-1924) indicates that there were people in areas around Charters Towers who were also considered 'in need', but at the same time it seems that there was a move to limit the places in which blankets were distributed. Table 2 shows that the proposed places for the year 1898 no longer included post offices in station areas (Clarke River and Hillgrove), nor the smaller towns (Pentland), but centred the distribution in the larger towns and from police stations.

Table 2 Proposed blanket distribution to Aborigines for the year 1898

Place	distributing officer	no. distrib in 1897	proposed supply 1898
Charters Towers	Police	82	100
Clarke River	P & T [post] Officer	12	--
Hillgrove	P & T Officer	24 ½	--
Hughenden	Police	25	25
Palm Islands	Harb Mast T'ville	37	25
Pentland	Police	15	--
Ravenswood	Police	12 1/2	25

A photograph taken in 1891 on the steps of the Court House depicts the occasion of Blanket Day well (see Plate 3). I counted over 80 Aboriginal people in the picture. Some of the Aboriginal men are in stockman's clothing, and about a dozen are holding hats - it is likely that the group was comprised of those who had 'come in' from station camps for the occasion, as well as those who usually lived in the 'town camps'. There are two men (possibly 3) with the brass plates around their necks –

identifying them as ‘Kings’.⁴⁴ There are also a couple of men, sitting in front of the pile of blankets who are wearing trackers uniforms, one Aboriginal man touching the blankets as though he is helping to distribute them, and three others standing beside them. The ever-present dogs are in the foreground. Like most contemporary photographs I have seen, there are very few children (approximately 7). I counted only 20 women (all of whom are seated). It might have been that Aboriginal people treated the occasion as a time where they might meet up with kin or others. Certainly, the photograph demonstrates the social differentiation among Aboriginal people at this time, not just age and sex, but their employment in various occupations and different statuses. As can be seen in the photograph, townspeople came to watch this ‘spectacle’, and take part in the event.⁴⁵ At other times there was ‘quite a crowd’ and reports of the occasion in the newspapers in following days treated it like an exhibition (cf. *NM* 3rd May 1887).

Although there was some element of curiosity among townspeople, others perceived Aboriginal people’s presence in such numbers as a threat, and one journalist noted that after blankets are given out, they will leave, and ‘their presence [in town] will not be regretted’ (*NM* April 16 1887). By the late 1890s flourishing ideas of ‘protection’, notions of Aboriginal people as ‘nuisance’ and increasing police powers of removal meant that for Aboriginal people coming into town was less safe than before. Blanket distribution figures for this period (see Table 1 above) reveal that the numbers of Aboriginal people receiving blankets in the area dropped dramatically at the turn of the century and this may well have been a result of increasing threats of removal to reserves and missions. Thus while blanket distribution creates the effect of a protective state, in particular the protection of the police as benevolent agents of the state, there is also the effect of surveillance, control of movement and pacification. And while the numbers receiving blankets appear to drop, Aboriginal

⁴⁴ Settlers presented these ‘king plates’ to Aboriginal men, often in recognition of someone they saw as distinguished among other Aboriginal people and might be used to correspond with and influence others. For example, Mary Bennett’s (the daughter of Robert Christison of Lammermoor station) description of Christison meeting the ‘tribe’ on his station, includes the following: ‘One old grey-haired man, with the appearance of a ko-bee-berry (head man), was fully six feet high, and had a most commanding figure. Here, thought Christison, was a chance to crown a man who might be of service’ (1928:63).

⁴⁵ See also (Kidd 2000 [1997]), plate facing page 182, where a large crowd of white people are gathered to watch the distribution of blankets to Aboriginal people in Brisbane 1863.

people do come into town to procure these and other items, and some settled closer to town in order to more readily access such things.

Identifying and knowing

Those who lived in the camps were useful labour resources for pastoralists and police. For example, before 1907, police ‘picked up’ Aboriginal men as ‘trackers’ from one of the camps when they needed to ‘track’ a criminal or person lost in the bush. After 1907 a fulltime tracker was employed (‘Norman from Normanton’) (Queensland Police Department 1904-1921).⁴⁶ The Police as local ‘Protectors’ were familiar with particular individuals who stayed in the camps to the extent of knowing and using their (English) names, and having an idea of where they ‘came from’. Police Protectors linked people to particular areas of the town or to stations (using the phrasing ‘their country’) through their observations, information from pastoralists, as well as interrogation. Aboriginal people, in turn, identified themselves to white people in terms of ‘belonging’ to an area of country that they identified by the name of a town or settlement. The merging of people and place in state procedures was perhaps a result of Aboriginal people’s self identification in these situations as well as the bureaucratic need for both name and some place of origin in terms that settlers could comprehend.

⁴⁶ See Appendix A, Table 7.

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An early example of this amalgamation of people and town name/station name comes from the records of an inquest into a death that occurred in Ayr (a town on the coast, see Map 1). The Aboriginal witnesses are recorded as stating in the following way where they come from, and why they are in Ayr:

My name Billy, Charters Towers country belong a me. I come down see him corroboree here [in Ayr].

My name Flora, Dalrymple country belong to me. Billy benjamin (sic) (husband) alonga me. I come here see him corroboree.

(Justice Department 1886)⁴⁷

The process of Anglicising the names of the Aboriginal people in this case (and others like it), as well as ‘settlerising’ the referent to the country that belongs to them, does not deny these people’s Aboriginality, but effectively recodes their identity and belonging for the benefit of state practice. In other words, Aboriginal people are no less Aboriginal because they are presented in the records (and apparently represent themselves) in ways which are acceptable and understandable to the colonial state. In fact their self identification in these terms can be read as a kind of agency, perhaps their use of the institutional elements of the colonial state to formulate new identities, or even confirm old identities (with new names). One of these kinds of identities was clearly the use of town names as reference points for belonging to place. For example, in 1903, Durundur Reserve (near Brisbane) correspondence registered two people from Charters Towers in the following way:

Biddy O’Donnell, Native Name Moorgoo, female aged 26y. Native of Charters Towers, Class Bunburri

Sam, Native name Mullgin, male aged 37y. Native of Charters Towers, Class Goorkilla.

(QSA A/58911, Durundur Correspondence 30.6.1903 in Mackett nd: vol56)⁴⁸

⁴⁷ There were a number of people in Ayr from different regions involved in the corroboree (and also in this particular incident). This kind of information is extremely rare for the area. The incident indicates regional ceremonial activity, coastal/inland ties (and travel), and, people’s opportunistic employment while travelling for other purposes.

⁴⁸ Note that in the same year also, a ‘Harry’ from Charters Towers was deported to Durundur (QSA A/58930 in Mackett nd:vol55). The following year a ‘Weena, aged 25y, native of Charters Towers’, and ‘Sam, aged 36y native of Charters Towers’ (possible the same man as above) were also at Durundur (QSA A/58911 Mackett nd:vol56).

That these individuals are identified with ‘native names’ and ‘class names’, and that the witnesses (in the previous quote, above) speak their own ‘languages or dialects’ creates an identity which is both inside and yet partially outside of the records and beyond the complete comprehension of most agents of the colonial state. The rough English transcription of ‘Native’ and ‘class’ names reproduces (for the state) Aboriginal people’s ‘otherness’, since it is only the name that is known, and not any further comprehension of the kinship system.⁴⁹ Therefore, this identification defines the limits of state knowledge of this Aboriginal ‘other’.

The ‘King plates’ that some Aboriginal men wore (mentioned above in relation to Plate 3), on the other hand, sometimes revealed a more intimate knowledge of Aboriginal people and attempts at some knowledge of local names and languages by pastoralists. For example, Christison of Lammermoor station (south of Hughenden), wrote the following on a King plate for the son of the man who had been the go-between with local Aboriginal people in his first years attempting to establish his sheep station: ‘Kiara, King Barney’s son, Bunberry, Narkool, Dalleburra, Lammermoor, 1907’ (Chisolm).⁵⁰ ‘Bunberry’, like in the above, is probably a ‘section’ name, ‘Narkool’ a principal waterhole in the area, and ‘Dalleburra’ the ‘local tribe’ (Bennett 1928:63). This level of information about individuals is scarce and systems of naming *among* Aboriginal people at this time are mostly outside of the grasp of recorded history. However, the above suggests that kinship systems and Aboriginal systems of naming were contiguous with settler appellations at this time.

Some Aboriginal people also had European surnames in the Charters Towers area as far back as the 1880s. One example is an Aboriginal man named ‘Jim Chism alias Chisolm’ who was charged with the murder of an Aboriginal man and woman at Ayr in 1886 (Justice Department 1886). Another example is a newspaper report of a man named Fred Ross, who in 1882 was killed at Fanning Downs Station (near Charters Towers) by some other Aboriginal men (*Northern Miner* 16th Sept 1882). It is unclear who these men were and why they carried surnames, when their assailants

⁴⁹ These are likely to be ‘section’ names (See Radcliffe-Brown 1930-1 on the section system). It seems that in the region of which Charters Towers is a part there was a ‘four section (or ‘class’) system’ (Chatfield 1886:468; Muirhead & Lowe 1886:26). No further information is available on this for the area.

⁵⁰ See Plate 5, centre picture is of King Kiara. This man later settled for some time in Charters Towers.

were known simply by first names/nicknames. ‘Maggie Douglas’ is the only person buried in Aboriginal ground with a surname in Charters Towers before the turn of the century (Charters Towers Burial Register in Mackett nd).

The use of these first names, surnames and names of towns, are a key expressions of Aboriginal belonging to place which I will go on to explore further in later chapters. The composite of names for person and place suggest that new systems of naming were emergent. The recording of Aboriginal people with these names and places makes them conceivable and locatable to police and the state, and the use of these names by Aboriginal people was a recognition by them of a code to which they increasingly belonged.

Removal and Reserves

Throughout the 1880s and early 1890s there were frequent calls in the *Northern Miner* newspaper to remove all Aboriginal people from the town at night, as well as assertions that publicans and others who supplied Aborigines with liquor were to be stopped. In 1883, when some Aboriginal people were brought before the bench for drunkenness, the Judge noted that ‘after sundown the blacks should be *compelled* to go to their camps as was the case in all bush townships’ (*NM* Mar 20 1883, my emphasis). The policeman, Sub-Inspector Meldrum replied that ‘he had no power to order the blacks out of the town so long as they were amenable to the law’. The judge then alluded to seeking opposite instructions from the government (*NM* Mar 20 1883). The disjunction between judicial and police instructions indicates a fractured state that was perhaps becoming more authoritative. Six years later, the authority of removal had obviously been given, probably from the Commissioner of Police (Brisbane), as it was reported in the *Northern Miner*:

Mounted Constable Quinn, assisted by two black trackers, was engaged yesterday afternoon in rounding up the aboriginals who have infested the town and suburbs lately, and compelling them to take their departure for ‘other fields and pastures new’. (*NM* 16th Jan 1889)

There is a sense that Aboriginal people were settling in (or on the edges of) the town, and were tolerated by some (for example the reluctant Sub-Inspector Meldrum) and characterised by others, such as the journalist, as pestilence. Nevertheless, people

were removed, but it is unclear how the police ‘compelled’ people to move from town, and where they were moved to. Around this time, the notion of a ‘Reserve’ where Aboriginal people could be confined and restricted, although couched in terms of ‘protection’, were thought to be a solution to the ‘Problem’. ‘Protection’ was the appeal of Archibald Meston (who later became the ‘Southern Protector of Aborigines’ in the 1890s. After a tour of North Queensland, he reported to the Parliament: ‘I found the blacks quite as much in need of protection as the whites. I met one tribe whose men and women were like hunted wild beasts, afraid to go to sleep in their own country’ (Meston 1896). Meston argued that if ‘aboriginals’ are treated with kindness then they will ‘return the same’ (ibid.). Indeed ‘other bush townships’ had such Reserves, out of town and out of sight of the regulating influence of townfolk. Charters Towers, however, never had a Reserve, but had camps of varying permanence around the fringes. As I argue in Chapter 3, these camps were a somewhat settled by some Aboriginal people, and others visited regularly from stations.

The police practices of removal of Aboriginal people from the town in the late 1880s and into the early 1890s was the beginning of more concerted efforts of this kind to address the ‘problem’ of Aboriginal people in civilised space. In March of 1890, the issue of a Reserve was again raised in the *Northern Miner*, and in the Charters Towers City Council about setting up a Reserve to solve the ‘Aboriginal Problem’ in town. The newspaper noted that a Reserve would be ‘a more human proceeding than killing their dogs and hunting the poor creatures (who after all, have a good title to live in the land) about like a mob of wild beasts’ (NM 8th Mar 1890). However, the Dalrymple Shire was not keen to attempt to confine Aboriginal people to such a place, or to relinquish any pastoral land for this purpose:

Referring to your letter of the 4th... re Reserve for Aborigines, I have the honour, by direction, to point out that it would be a matter of impossibility to confine aboriginals to a Reserve anywhere within a few miles of a town unless the same were fenced and closely watched, provision would also have to be made for their support, a matter which would present many difficulties; and as the whole of Queensland is nearly occupied under Pastoral Lease, the Board cannot see its way to ask for a Reserve for the purpose mentioned. (Charters Towers City Council 1890)

It is unclear from this point what occurred. Indeed, despite the actions of the year earlier, the Sub-Inspector of police ‘had some doubts as to the legality of enforcing the request [from a town councillor to] drive the blacks out of the town at night’ (ibid.). There appears to have been ‘Reserve lands’ gazetted in 1900 at Bluff Downs and Southwick stations, on the north and east end of the Basalt Wall.

At Bluff Downs and Southwick, consisting for miles of almost impenetrable scrub situated on what is known as the 'Wall' - an extraordinary basaltic mass - there is the anomaly of an Aboriginal Reserve entirely surrounding a piece of country hitherto held under occupation license: the portion thus held comprises two grass pockets of about 8 and 12 miles respectively, each containing a sheet of water. (Roth 1902; see also 1900; 1903:22)

After Roth’s report of 1903, no further mention of this Reserve is made (and the location is quite different to a camping Reserve created in the town in the 1940s). I have to date found no other mention of this Reserve, nor any records of people being taken there. By the turn of the century the ideals about these kinds of Reserves were being eroded and a more complete method of isolating people was being devised by the Queensland Government – that of large scale removals of people to the settlements and missions in other regions.

Removals of people from place were also more arbitrary. Police removed people from Charters Towers and pastoralists from all over Queensland moved their workers from station to station, or took them as servants on journeys throughout the country. If they never returned, these people have largely become unknown to later generations of their family. Records of the Police Department show that as early as the turn of the century, there are people at Reserves such as Durundur (near Brisbane) who are identified as coming from Charters Towers (QSA A/58930 1903 in Mackett nd). There are men and women who spent time in Cooktown and Croyden Hospitals in the early 1890s who also are identified as being from Charters Towers (QSA HOS 14A/45 in Mackett nd). These records demonstrate that even before the introduction of *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (Qld) 1897* (the 1897 Act) that gave police extensive powers to remove Aboriginal people to Settlements, there was some not insignificant movement to other parts of the country.⁵¹ Knowledge of who these people are is limited due to the ways in

⁵¹ Due to the nature of this movement (eg at the will of pastoralists, or in some instances individual’s

which their names are recorded (simply by first name). Oral history of Charters Towers focuses on those who remained in or returned to the area rather than on people who left the area so long ago and never returned. Aboriginal people's own searches in the archives (and those done on their behalf, or for studies such as this) in the present may augment knowledge of people from oral history. However, frequently, data found in archives does not add to people's knowledge of their family, but stands outside it. For example the people at Durundur Reserve at the turn of the century who were listed as 'native of Charters Towers' (QSA A/58911, A/58930 in Mackett nd), have names which are completely unfamiliar to people now, and are considered of little practical use in the construction and reconstruction of family histories.

On the other hand, Aboriginal men and women from other areas of the state who were living in and/or working around Charters Towers and who stayed there are an important part of local and even familial history. A good example is Jupiter Mosman, who when he found the gold nugget which started the rush to Charters Towers, was travelling with Hugh Mosman from his station at Kynuna, and who eventually lived out his days in Charters Towers. His name was used for the first Aboriginal corporation in town (see Chapter 5). There are many other examples of people who were removed to Charters Tower from elsewhere and later married into local families and have become part of the Aboriginal history of the town and its people.

'Disintegration' in the face of 'civilised life'

By the time the scattered mining camps became the town of Charters Towers in the 1870s, the Aboriginal people in the area were being described by settlers as 'remnants' of 'tribe/s'. Settlers supported or perhaps informed by the 'experts' characterised Aboriginal peoples as easily tempted from their traditional ways. Assumptions about the 'race' dying out (cf. McGregor 1997) and some notion of the passive and regrettable neglect of their traditional ways is probably best revealed in Palmer's writings in the 1880s. In regard to the use of 'native foods' he wrote that 'this knowledge is likely to die out with them' (1883:93). In relation to his

choice), much of it is undocumented, and only some records survive of those who stayed in Hospitals or who were removed from areas by the Police.

examination of ‘divisions’ within ‘tribes’ by which marriage is ascribed, he notes that ‘since the advent of the white race these regulations have been broken down and greatly neglected...’ (Palmer 1884:300).

Rowse’s (1998:31-33) work on rationing in Central Australia is pertinent here. He examines how Aboriginal people’s adoption of settler clothing and foods was characterised by settlers as demoralisation and disintegration of their ‘culture’ and way of life, a process of *pauperisation*, especially if people had moved away from their land and resided on the edges of white settlement. Stanner’s concerns about the ‘collapse of ‘tribes’’ as a result of contact with settlers and rationing of goods (cited in Rowse 1993:33) is also significant in considering the impact of these authoritative views on the settler populations and the Australian state. Under the 1897 Act, police were instated as local ‘Protectors’ under a Northern Protector of Aborigines, who was responsible to the Queensland State Government. Government rationing processes were constructed as benevolence - ‘protection’ from violence and starvation - but also temptation away from ‘traditional’ lifestyles. In 1900, the Northern Protector of Aboriginals, Walter Roth, wrote in his report that:

[T]he promiscuous gift of blankets in past years has tended to the utter disuetude of the native-made opossum-skin and bark-cloth rugs: during the past seven or eight years I have not come across a single specimen of the former, and but with only a few of the latter. (Roth 1900:3)

It was widely considered by the 1880s that Aboriginal peoples, once their land had been taken, and they had come into more frequent contact with whites, were on the verge of giving up their lives as a race (McGregor 1997). Indeed, as discussed above, the violence of the pastoral frontier meant that people in the early years of settlement lived precarious lives. Armstrong, a Police Inspector, estimates that before ‘their country was first occupied by Whites in 1860’, the ‘Mungerra’ numbered 350. By the 1880s, when Armstrong would have sent his correspondence to Curr, he noted population was:

... 70 men, 30 women, 30 boys and 20 girls, in all 150 souls... The decrease is attributed to the diseases always introduced by Whites, and to influenza, skin disease, want of food, and probably to the atrocities of the Black Police, which are not mentioned, however... (Armstrong 1886:464)

The paragraph fits well into the notion that the literature was already creating – that Aboriginal people were dying out, and that it was natural for such a process to occur among a weak ‘race’. It is necessary to recognise that far from ‘dying out’ due to some (warped) Darwinian logic, based on a misplaced idea of ‘fitness’ (Cowlshaw 1988; McGregor 1997), Aboriginal people were subject to concerted efforts from many sides to extinguish not only their resistance to settlement of their land, but their presence altogether. This was initially enabled by the government turning its back on frontier violence like that at ‘The Lolworth’, and later by the practices of centralised distribution of rationing in and removals from the larger towns like Charters Towers. The history in the area around Charters Towers that I outline here is in no way novel for Australia. A pattern was being repeated that had been well rehearsed in south-eastern frontiers during the previous century and brought north with the descendants of men who had worked the land in those parts. There are numerous articles and letters in the newspapers published in Charters Towers and other early towns that call for the need to rid the country of its original inhabitants. These sentiments are usually couched in terms of ‘defence’ – defence usually of pastoral lands, and stock, but sometimes and ironically, the defence of ‘civilised life’ itself.

While there had been some ‘letting in’ earlier, by the 1890s many of the large pastoral stations began to obtain Aboriginal labour and allow others to camp near the Homestead or some way distant. The following description was given of Wandovale Station around 1890:

A large number of native blacks live in contentment on the station rearing their families of podgy pickaninnies in comfort and plenty; a good building has been erected and solely for their use, and here, at least, the question of ‘what to do with the blacks’ is satisfactorily solved. Nearly the whole work of the homestead is done by blacks... (*Qldr* Jan 18 1890)

Mrs Hann of Maryvale Station recounts a display benevolence on her part, as she handed out medical supplies to Aboriginal people, and later she and her husband attended a ‘corroboree’ (Black c1931:56). This must have been after the initial violence since older Aboriginal people in Charters Towers who lived at Maryvale station as children and young adults remember that the old homestead kitchen had no windows, just holes around the walls at a certain level for ‘*shooting the blacks when*

they come over the hill.⁵² Undoubtedly, there were different experiences of the pastoral frontier, and these shifted from the violence of invasion to more established pastoral settlement and trusted relationships between settlers and Aboriginal people. By the early 1890s certain stations were being more thoroughly ‘settled’ by the squatters and many Aboriginal people were taking part in this process. These people remained mobile between camps ‘out bush’, work on the stations and camps in town, a mobility I address in the next chapter.

Conclusions

Settling in town in the frontier times, Aboriginal people brought the fringe with them, into the heart of colonial society. The state and colonial society constructed Aboriginal town dwellers as partial, as being remnants of ‘savage life’, and importantly, perceived as dependant on settler resources for survival. White townspeople and agents of the state increasingly sought to purge their growing city of Aboriginal people through the removals, while the state was also working to bring people into the edges of these spaces in order to control and protect them. There is thus a paradoxical and fractured effect of state power which draws people into towns so that they may be watched and provided with food, clothing and blankets, as well as acts to repel and remove Aboriginal people to fringes and separate space.

Settlers and the colonial state created a knowledge of the indigenous other which was applied in ways to subject, control and ‘protect’ them. Government policies of ‘protection’ were tightly bound with the discourse of Aboriginal ‘loss’ and ‘disintegration’, which actively obscured practices of the colonial state. This is reflected in Meston’s report, written the year before the 1897 Act was passed.

Specially entitled to practical sympathy are the aboriginals scattered among the settled districts and wandering about the towns. They have lost their old habits and customs, abandoned their old hunting life, and descended gradually through various stages of degradation to a condition which is a reproach to our common humanity. They require collection on suitable reserves, complete isolation from contact with the civilised race to save them from that small section of whites more degraded than any savage; kept free

⁵² Such fortifications might well be read as pastoralists’ perceptions of being under siege and outnumbered (cf. Gibson 1999:44).

of drink and opium and disease, the young people and the able-bodied taught industrious habits. (Meston 1896:727)

Meston's report, along with those of other early bureaucrats with 'experience' in the North of the state such as W.E. Parry-Okeden (1897) and Roth (in Loos 1982:132, fn36), created government policy around the *need* for state intervention into industry and social conditions that affected Aboriginal people. In the following chapter I trace this policy and its specific applications.

Chapter 3 Under the Act: categories, naming and knowing

Introduction

The key theme of this chapter is the Queensland State legislation created for the subjectification of Aboriginal people –the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897)* (the 1897 Act/the Act). The legislation saw a momentous decline in the extent to which Aboriginal people could order and determine the course of their own lives, and Amendments in 1901, 1934 and 1939 only extended government powers. In recent years, historians have examined the Queensland State Government’s legislation for Aboriginal people in detail (see especially Haebich 2000; Kidd 2000 [1997]), as well as its application in relation to the pastoral industry (May 1994). They have found the Queensland (and Commonwealth) Governments to be crucially implicated in the transformation of Aboriginal social and cultural life, a central focus being ‘families’. The history I write here is focussed on the ability of Aboriginal people to reproduce and determine their relations of kinship in the context of the control placed on their lives by government bureaucracies. Government power is the point to which I return most often, since from 1897 up until the *Aborigines Act 1971*, the state’s discriminatory laws subjected Aboriginal people to removals⁵³ and extensive surveillance and restrictions on their ability to determine their own lives. The ‘state’ in this chapter principally refers to the institutional state. That is, the arms of the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments, their agents, the police and other agents of colonial bureaucracy most concerned with enacting policies of ‘protection’, and later ‘assimilation’, of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people were significant players in the pastoral industry (cf. May 1994) and shared with that industry a close relationship with the rural town. Pastoralists, townspeople and the state had ways of classifying the ‘dark/native people’ around them: according to their ‘blood’ (ie ‘half-caste’, ‘quadroon’ and so on), whether they

⁵³ The *Bringing them home* report estimates that separations of Aboriginal children from their families were so extensive throughout Australia that ‘not one Indigenous family has escaped the effects of forcible removal’ (Commonwealth Government 1997; in Haebich 2000:15).

worked on stations or lived in town and whether they had been sent away to a settlement. There were also those not ‘under the Act’, but still ‘black’ or ‘half caste’ or ‘darkie’ and whose social and economic lives were constrained by white colonial definitions of their ‘race’. However, while the categorical identities by which the state record and colonial history classifies Aboriginal people were powerful mechanisms of control, these are belied by evidence of the agency in determining their own social lives that one finds in Aboriginal oral history.

The first sections of this chapter explores state control over Aboriginal people’s lives, through the operation of extensive government bureaucracy. These are outlined in terms of the contrast between life in town (closer to such controls) and life on stations, and particular bureaucratic practice under the 1897 Act in terms of employment, removals and exemptions. In the later sections, about ‘belonging’, and the gendered history of living in town, I analyse how state construction of the Aboriginal subject is pervasive within but also fractured by social practice. ‘Social practice’ in these sections is examined through men and women’s memories of their lives in town and on stations, and the emphasis in these of choices they made about where to work and live. In the last section of the chapter, ‘naming people and place’, I trace the history and practice of surnames. From this examination of ‘naming’ there emerges a sense of Aboriginal agency in response to the state that works within the overt bureaucratic formation of acceptable categories of people under the Act.

‘Under the Act’

Being ‘under the Act’ meant that an Aboriginal person was subject to the Queensland legislation: the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act, Qld (1897)* (and later amendments)⁵⁴ which made all Aboriginal people wards of the state. At first the administration of the Act was the responsibility of the Police Commissioner, Parry-Okeden (and the Northern Protector of Aboriginals (NPA), Walter Roth, and Southern Protector of Aboriginals reported to him). In 1904, Roth was appointed Chief Protector of Aboriginals (CPA), and a separate sub-department

⁵⁴ The ‘Aborigines Act’ as legislation primarily aimed at ‘protection’ was amended in 1901, 1934 and 1939. Changes to legislation for Aboriginal people in 1965 were aimed at the goal of ‘assimilation’ (Craig 1980:24-38; Loos 1993:22; Queensland State Archives nd).

of the Home Secretary's Office was established to administer the Act, with police officers across the state acting as local 'Protectors' (May 1994:62; Queensland State Archives nd). According to the Act, an Aboriginal person was

- a) An aboriginal [meaning 'full blood'] inhabitant of Queensland; or
- b) A half-caste who, at the commencement of this Act is living with an aboriginal wife, husband or child; or
- c) A half-caste who, otherwise than as wife, husband, or child, habitually lives or associates with aboriginals.⁵⁵

Under the Act, people thus defined were subject to removal to settlements, to have their wages controlled by the Department, and had to ask for permission from the Protector to get married. The 1897 Act decreed that 'every person who desires to employ an aboriginal or half-caste shall make application in writing ... to the nearest police officer in charge of a station...' (Roth 1900:13). According to Roth, the employment permits were supposed to 'protect' Aboriginal men and women from exploitation by the employer. However, the contracts also bound workers to employers for 12 months, and if they broke the contract, they could be removed to a settlement. The majority of work available to Aboriginal men and women in the Charters Towers area (indeed in most of Queensland) was in the pastoral industry: as cattleworkers and 'domestics'.

However, agents of the state did not control people to the extent determined by the Act immediately after its gazettal. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Aboriginal people were moved from the town of Charters Towers and from stations in the surrounding district before, and immediately after, 1897. During the first years of the century, the Chief Protector, as primary agent for state control of Aboriginal lives, was building the grounds for much more extensive restrictions on people's lives in the name of 'protection'. In terms of historical documentation there is a conspicuous amount of detail about the Chief Protector's vision for the implementation of the Act, but there are not a great number of archival records available *about specific people* in the Charters Towers region for this period. After about 1920s, the letters, reports and memos cataloguing Aboriginal peoples lives became much more numerous and

⁵⁵ *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (1897)* (61 Vic. No.17), Queensland Government Gazette 16 December 1897, s4 p1388. See also (Queensland State Archives nd).

elaborate, and through the 1950s these peak to a level of apparent manic bureaucratic overproduction.

I examine below the effects of these policies on Aboriginal people in the Charters Towers area – explored more fully by other authors in reference to Aboriginal people across Queensland (Rowley 1972 [1970]:107-27; Haebich 2000; Kidd 2000 [1997]). There were differing experiences of the town for Aboriginal people, but these can perhaps be characterised through the movement between town and pastoral stations, between stations, government removal to settlements and missions, and movement between rural towns in the area.

In town

As a mining town, with strong pastoral influences, a large contingent of settlers from across a breadth of society and immigrants from all over the world,⁵⁶ Charters Towers was considered a modern town. Bell (1982:19) writes that by 1890 Charters Towers underground mining industry had developed to the point that it had a huge range of supporting industry: ‘engineering plants, smiths, bricklayers, plumbers and tinsmiths, carpenters, timber cutters and merchants, glaziers, ironmongers... two foundries, four sawmills and a brickworks’. In the town there was a school of arts, a library, hospital, various associations and lodges, jockey club, sports clubs, a fire brigade, defence corps, three newspapers, two brass bands and a main street where people congregated on a Saturday evening (Annual Report, Department of Mines 1890 p24 cited in Bell 1982). ‘No other North Queensland mining town ever approached this level of complexity and prosperity until the rise of Mount Isa’ in the 1960s (Bell 1982:19). In 1899 there were seventeen mills (with their ore-crushing stamps) amongst and between the houses, and the noise was resounding and incessant (ibid.:42-4).

By 1901, the population of Charters Towers had reached 21,071 people and almost 50% was female (Bell 1982:9). This presents a highly urbanised and ‘civilised’ picture of the town in which Aboriginal people belong to the margins, and ‘out

⁵⁶ Hence the nickname ‘the world’, painted in huge gold lettering on a water tank on Towers Hill, overlooking Mosman Street

bush'. A resident of Charters Towers at that time remembers only a small population of Aboriginal people around in the first decades of the century. She told an interviewer, 'there weren't a lot of blacks around. There were some on the stations but they were looked after by the station folk' (North Queensland Oral History Project: CD61). It is difficult to find records of numbers of Aboriginal people who lived in towns, let alone those beyond the settled boundaries.⁵⁷ Scant other pieces of information are available about the lives of Aboriginal people in the first part of the century in the town, apart from their existence in 'camps' on the edges of town and the attempts at police and bureaucratic control of their whereabouts.

'Camps': working in town and living on the fringes

Two or perhaps three Aboriginal 'camps' appear in the historical records regarding Charters Towers after the turn of the century. At this time, these were where most Aboriginal people who came to the town stayed. On the fringes of town Aboriginal people had access to the bush (and could be easily 'picked up' by pastoralists on their way out to stations), and for those who were more permanent residents, to the town. However, those who spent more time in the camps, and worked in town, were under constant surveillance by the local 'Protector'. In his annual report for 1901, the NPA wrote of Charters Towers:

The blacks at [the Sandy Creek] camp maintain themselves by doing odd jobs about town, mostly chopping firewood, and are generally loitering around trying to procure grog and opium, and the gins seeking money by prostitution. (Roth 1902:8)

Eight years later, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Howard, toured the Northern Districts, including Charters Towers, and wrote:

When at Charters Towers I took the opportunity of visiting a camp at Sandy Creek, near Millchester, and another on the Dalrymple road. In both of these camps there are a few strong healthy boys, but all the *efforts on the part of the Protector to induce them to take*

⁵⁷ I attempted to find records of burials in Charters Towers to this end. Between 1891 and 1934 there were 62 Aboriginal people, or people in 'Aboriginal ground', registered as buried in Charters Towers. Eleven (11) of these burials were recorded before the turn of the century (ie between 1891 and 1899). Only eight (8) of the total number were female, and 2 had no sex recorded (See Appendix A, Table 6). There was an inquiry into the death of an Aboriginal woman called Polly in Millchester in 1904 (POL J17 in Mackett nd:vol 126 p18), but this was not registered as a burial in the abovementioned list.

permanent employment have so far proved futile... In the camps there are a few old gins but no young women. (Howard 1910:1 emphasis added)

This report displays the colonial discourse about the necessity of work, especially permanent employment,⁵⁸ and the devaluing of the ‘camp’ way of life. Moreover, it indicates that the Act at this time did not provide the bureaucrats with coercive power to move people from the camps. Note that the representation in these reports of unacceptable groups of people, ‘boys’ and ‘old gins’, ‘no young women’ constitute a ‘camp’ rather than an acceptable family. In 1909 there were 2 brothers, ‘Paddy and Jimmy’ whose residence was given as Millchester Creek (QSA HOM/B22 in Mackett nd:vol 18), and there may well have been a number of other smaller camps, with the two mentioned by the Protector (above) as the more permanent and established.

The camps were more or less permanent, they were ‘home.’ A woman who lived as a child (c1910) out by the Wellington Yards on the south west of town, remembered that there was a man called ‘Jimmy King’ who would come to their house for the day and chop wood.

Yes... They’d come for the day and you fed them for the day. Fed them their three meals and then send them home with a few little bags and fill them up with tea, sugar, flour and... they took that *home*. And you gave them shilling I think, besides, for the day... (North Queensland Oral History Project: CD61, track1 emphasis added)

This woman told the interviewer that ‘the blacks’ had ‘sort of gunyas somewhere out in the bush’ from whence they would come for a day’s work (ibid.). Another interviewee remembers that when he was young (c1910), there were Aboriginal people who ‘had their camp about... two miles from our place’ at Grand Secret.⁵⁹ They would come into town to get rations, ‘and [to] sell the [clothes] props...and then go [back] out to their camp’ (North Queensland Oral History Project:CD79 track 3). Aboriginal people partly depended on government rations, but also what goods they could procure through casual work with townspeople. The Chief

⁵⁸ And preferably station employment, see next section.

⁵⁹ The ‘Grand Secret’ was a gold mine on the Western side of town, now passed by ‘Sandy Creek Road’, which might indicate that the camp this man remembers was the same as the one in the

Protector in 1909 was aware that Aboriginal people camped near towns were engaged by townspeople as casual labour. His concern was with the permit system in the Act: if people were working, they must be working under a permit, but those who engaged in casual labour were not under his 'control' (Howard 1909).

That the camps were all situated on the 'fringes' of the main urban area is familiar to Australian received knowledge of how Aboriginal people are accorded space: the fringes, on the edges, often land that is unwanted and low in value. However, their presence in the town, close to people's homes, and sometimes inside them, means their presence is embedded in, rather than separate from, the mining settlement. Indeed it was the proximity of the camps to the township which became a problem for the Protector, whose attitude changed from ambivalent in 1909 (Howard 1909), to intolerant by 1912. He reported that:

A camp of about 25 or 30 natives remain at Millchester and Sandy Creek, who will not work, but loaf about the town, and, I fear, are much demoralised. I think it would be in the interests of these people to remove them from their present environment. (Howard 1912)

In his following report, Howard reiterates his concerns, adding that people are an 'annoyance to the residents' and 'rely for their upkeep on the natives at work, from whom they get money when they visit the town' (Howard 1913). Thus 'unsupported', Howard recommends that they be removed to a settlement (*ibid.*).⁶⁰ In fact, Howard's report shows links between station workers and those that lived in the 'town camps'. It also reveals the bureaucrat's animosity towards casual work, and the dependence of people on one another, characterised here as 'loafing'. Such behaviour confronts the bureaucrat's imagination that all of his Aboriginal subjects should be controlled and dependant on the state.

His department's obsession with control of Aboriginal people is evident in the Chief Protector of Aborigines Annual Reports. Howard complains that there are some people who 'will not settle down to employment' but who 'make a good living at

Protectors' reports, above.

⁶⁰ It is unclear whether, or if so, when and to where these people were removed. Note that in the following report this matter is not mentioned, and thus it is unclear whether removal happened or whether, with the change in Chief Protectors the following year, this matter was overlooked.

marsupial [kangaroo] shooting... and it is not uncommon to see a family with a servicable (sic) camp outfit and a horse and buckboard or springcart...' (Howard 1913). He recommends that restrictions be placed on this type of casual employment, as well as woodchopping and household chores so that it does not take place 'on Sundays or after 5pm on any other day, and the police compel them to return to their camps before dark' (ibid.). Such restrictions reflected concerns from the white population voiced in preceding years (see Chapter 2) that all Aboriginal people be removed from towns and 'fringes', despite some residents who employed individuals as casual labour.

Some Aboriginal people may have escaped the restrictions of town life by living more permanently a distance from the town. Around the turn of the century, a town site had grown up around the Pumping Station at the Burdekin River from which water was pumped to Charters Towers. In 1897 a small school was opened to accommodate the children (19 of them) of pumping station employees and nearby pastoralists (Education Department 1897-1940). According to oral history, there was also a group of Aboriginal people who lived at a camp across the River. They worked for the Pumping Station and their children attended the Pumping Station School, which must have been around 1910. An elderly descendant of residents of the camp told me,

Mum used to come across on the flying fox. They used to be on the peak of the hill and have a house there and catch the flying fox to school... She was born 1902/1904...

She lived across the river with [her mother and father]... and all the family. He was cartin' timber. Mum told us [in later years], when the river was down to go over and have a look.

There are one or two older people who were buried close to this camp,⁶¹ and stories of their relatives who lived on stations and in town, visiting the camp for years afterward from their homes in town in order to 'speak language' and 'talk to them old people'. That none of the written history of the Pumping Station School or Pumping Station records seems to 'remember' this camp of people is perhaps telling of the residents' ability to avoid threats of government removal to settlements, while

⁶¹ Recognition of the camp and grave was recently accorded in a Heritage report written at the time of the raising of the Weir Wall (Hatte & Morgan 1994).

still having access to settler resources, such as casual employment and in this case some education.

Until the 1940s, there was no one permanent camp or reserve in Charters Towers which housed all or even most of the Aboriginal people associated with the town. However, there were these camps mentioned above: one some way from town and across the Burdekin from the Pumping Station, the camps close to town at Millchester Creek and Sandy Creeks on the south and south-west of the town, and a camp near the old Dalrymple Road to the north of the town centre. This last is in the same area, in town, that became 'Corinda', an area which is identified with one Aboriginal family in particular and where they had houses, but also other Aboriginal families and some Europeans. Aboriginal people's homes and camps were situated in these areas on the edges, but still part of the town. As part of the town, people were able to pick up casual work; selling their labour or basic goods, and other means of procuring necessary basic resources. However, those who lived around the town were also subject to the closer administration of the Act: surveillance, control and threats of removal by the 'Protectors'. The camps were where station workers stayed when they came to town and were thus highly relevant to the relationship between bush and town.

Station times

By 1900 Charters Towers gold boom was diminishing, and had all but died in the following ten years. The pastoral industry is credited as keeping the town of Charters Towers alive following the decline of the mining industry after the turn of the century (see Menghetti 1982:117). As many of the miners left, town became infused with a greater pastoral focus. Town was social and economic counterpart to 'the bush', as location of entertainment and social life, for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. For its part, the pastoral industry had strengthened as the settlers became more knowledgeable about the land and technological changes and improved their industrial efficiency. Pastoralists still had to contend with the droughts, tick plagues, floods and the fluctuating markets for their product, but until the late 1970s cheap Aboriginal labour was a consistent feature of this fickle industry (Neal 1984; May 1994). However, government policy surrounded, restricted and directed the

Aboriginal labour market. Policy and its implementation by local Protectors profoundly affected the ways in which Aboriginal people could direct their own labour and lives. The following examines some aspects of employment for Aboriginal people during the station times in the Charters Towers area which were formative of history, constitution of family and relationship of Aboriginal people to the state.

'Station camps' and station employment

The scarcity of 'camps' on stations sets the region apart from others in rural Queensland and other parts of northern Australia where groups of Aboriginal people lived 'camp life' on the edge of stations up until the 1950s or 1960s (cf. McGrath 1987; Cowlshaw 1988; May 1994). There were stations in the area around Charters Towers that had 'blacks camps'. However, it was far from the case that a group or even a 'family' (in the general sense of a unit consisting of parents and children) lived on every, or even the majority, of pastoral stations in the Charters Towers area after the turn of the century. Stations in this area were much more likely to have one or two Aboriginal women working in the homestead, and perhaps one or two Aboriginal men who worked with the cattle, and larger groups at mustering time. Further, some stations never or very seldom employed Aboriginal labour. Violet Allingham (quoted in Houldsworth 2002) grew up on Pajingo Station from about 1901 and lived there until she was married. She remembered that there were some Aboriginal employees on the station when she was young, but she fails to name the men who worked for her, giving the impression that the 'camp' mentioned was not only geographically but also socially distant from the station owners' lives.

And the blacks had their camp well away from the [Homestead]. At Pajingo we only had one or two blackboys at different times.⁶² There were no black women there. I think by that time [probably 1905-1910] the Government had more or less taken over and sent them all to reserves. And, my word, the poor old things! (Houldsworth 2002:35)

⁶² See Pajingo Station Records (Black family 1898 -) for this time – only one or two workers on the books, reflects this remembered impression.

Around the same time (c1900-1905) to the North East of Pajingo (towards Townsville), Julius Mathieson who lived on a farm at Major's Creek tells of 'a big camp of blacks' near his family's farm (Houldsworth 2002:55 -57). Likewise, Fred King recounted that 'the Aborigines at Bulliwallah [Station south of Charters Towers, about 1912]⁶³ lived in a shanty camp down on the bank of the creek about a hundred and fifty yards from the homestead' (Houldsworth 2002:115). It was not a small camp of people, and there were many men and women who worked with the cattle as well as in the Homestead (ibid. p115-117). At a station inland from Ingham, bordering on the Charters Towers area, Robert Atkinson remembers that as a child (c1910) he and his brother would spend the day with Aboriginal women (and men if they weren't mustering) collecting 'bush tucker'. Later they would 'sneak away down to the black's quarters' to eat possum or whatever the catch had been (Atkinson 1979:57-60).

The historical sources point to a small, but consistent population of Aboriginal people who lived on certain properties in the Charters Towers area. On Maryvale station, there was a camp of people for whom the Hanns (station owner) would provide some meat probably around the turn of the century. Elisa Thomas, who claims descent from a woman said to have been taken from the camp, told me: '*I know the Hanns [on Maryvale station] used to kill for 'em*'. A photograph of 'Aborigines from Maryvale Station' (c1910) outside of 'Mr Parson's Hotel on the Burdekin', shows two men, three women, six young children and a young girl (in Neal 1984:275). It was identified to me by Elisa as some of her kin and ancestors who lived on Maryvale from before the turn of the century. However, it is improbable that every station had Aboriginal people living and working on it in the sorts of numbers that were apparently at Maryvale.⁶⁴ Many pastoralists were less inclined to coexistence, and may have employed only one or two workers, as in the case of Pajingo.

⁶³ Although on today's station maps Bulliwallah Station is about 200km south from Charters Towers (see Appendix B, Map 5), and a relatively small 'block', it must have been much bigger when Fred King lived there. He says that their neighbours were Natal Downs, Pajingo, and Mirtna Stations (see Appendix B, Map 4). These stations, too, were much bigger before they were subdivided in 1919, and again between 1955-65 (pers. comm. Peter Black, Mayor of Shire of Dalrymple and current owner of Pajingo Station).

⁶⁴ The (William) Hanns in the early times had Maryvale and Bluff Downs, and Aboriginal people who lived on these stations continued to work for the Hann (later Clarke) family who ran Maryvale, and the Whites, who bought Bluff Downs after the turn of the century.

There were Aboriginal people camped on stations near, or perhaps in the area of the Clarke River police station/post office in the first years after the turn of the 20th Century, as well as Hillgrove station (also a telegraph/post office) and near Pentland. All three of these places (along with Charters Towers) appear in the 'return of Blanket distribution' for the Northern Protector of Aboriginals (NPA) reports of the years from 1897 to 1904 (Parry-Okeden 1897; Roth 1900-1904). (From 1905 separate figures for each area were no longer given in these reports.) These figures tend to support the idea that in the Charters Towers area people may have camped for some time near or on station land and some distance from towns. They used government rationing to supplement bush foods and any resources gained by them or others as a result of station work.

Neal (1984:58-9) tells of government resumptions of pastoral land taking place 'on many stations, ostensibly to open new selections for closer settlement... Many resumptions were scheduled for 1904 but were left in abeyance until 1913 because of tick and drought problems'. The pastoral area around Charters Towers was in a precarious economic position, but by the 1920s the demand for skilled Aboriginal labour had grown and did not diminish significantly until the 1960s and 1970s (Neal 1984; May 1994). In a cruel twist, moves to regard Aboriginal people as workers in Queensland, rather than slave or rationed labour (as in other states at this time) meant that their lives on stations with their families (where this had been possible in the past) was threatened. According to May (1994:104), the Workers Unions had campaigned since 1915 for a reduction in the numbers of Aboriginal workers in the cattle industry (while the state was attempting to get Aboriginal people into such work), and the 1919 regulations sought an increase in wages 'to two thirds that of the Station Hands Award.' May recounts a situation following the 1919 regulations where young Aboriginal men who earned money for their older people were removed from a station in central Cape York Peninsula, leaving their older people without anyone to look after them (ibid.:105).

In the Charters Towers area, it seems that already there had been considerable movements off stations by non-workers. Maryvale and a station further north, Valley of Lagoons, were exceptions, and the generation of men and women born in the late 1920s and early 1930s remember living there with their family around them. The

station manager's daughter remembers that when she was a small child on 'the Valley' in about the 1930s she and her sisters would 'hang around the butchering',

...until [the men] would give us some big rib bones. And we'd race out to the blacks camp and we'd throw them on the fire, bury some potatoes under the coals ...They had huts further down, the dark people. The cook had her quarters right beside the kitchen. Then the really old, the black people had a hut right down [the hill].

However, by the mid 1930s, the situation was much the same as other stations in the area, as Norman Maynard told me,

Everyone knew their family groups and where they came from, where their grandmother and grandfather and that was born, but all that clan stuff was finished by the time I was around.

This is in contrast to many other areas of Northern Australia, where there were large 'camps' of Aboriginal people on stations, in some cases until the late 1960s (cf. Cowlshaw 1999). The area around Charters Towers is much more closely settled by Europeans, even on the pastoral land, than further to the West and North in Queensland and certainly much more so than in the Northern Territory. Few 'station camps' survived past 1920, and it seems that even before this time the camps were not a widespread feature of station life in this region. This was certainly due to the nature of pastoral settlement in the region, but it is also influenced by the 1897 Act and increasing regulations on employment and living conditions for Aboriginal people in the pastoral industry.

Creating Aboriginal workers

Rowley (1972:232) observed that Queensland's labour conditions were 'advanced and humane' compared to other states, owing to the 1919 Queensland legislation regarding wages and conditions. However, his conclusions in *Outcasts in White Australia* (Rowley 1972 [1970]:114) about workers' illiteracy and station employers' practices such as falsifying records that went to the Department and minimising real amounts of pay shows that the legislation was far from effective. McGrath (1987:140-41) writes that in the Northern Territory, station managers often were 'creative' with the ledgers and accounts books in order to 'exaggerate the costs of

maintaining Aborigines and dependants'. Suspicions of this kind of behaviour are reflected in the Chief Protector of Aborigines (CPA) Annual reports in Queensland, and my own research in the records of stations in the Charters Towers area: records are rough and variable, and payment of Aboriginal workers sporadic. Quite apart from being paid, Aboriginal workers often received rations which were deducted from their account, and to which they were then held to be in debt to the station (cf. Kidd 2000 [1997]:69, 130-31). The Chief Protector, reporting on the workings of the employment permit system as part of the 1897 Act, wrote that overall the 'behaviour' of Aboriginal workers was good, but that they were treated by some stations 'more as a part of the stock or working plant than as a human being' (Bleakley 1919:2).

The minimum wage was set for pastoral workers in Queensland in 1919, which supposedly 'made wages and working conditions, especially in station work, more in keeping with those enjoyed by white employees...' (Bleakley 1920:1). The fact that few workers saw much of their money made the provisions almost irrelevant. Section 31 (part 5) of the 1897 Act gave the Chief Protector control over the wages of Aboriginal people living on a reserve or settlement. This control was widened in the amendments to the Act in 1901 so that the Protector could order that *any* employer of an Aboriginal person pay their wages to the local Protector (Queensland State Archives nd). When the station workers came into town, they would have to go to the police station to request access to their accounts. The local Protector accompanied men and women to clothing stores to buy their town clothes and other items and marked these against their accounts, rather than release cash. In 1913, for example, the total amount of monies deposited in Charters Towers Aboriginal people's accounts was over £1,000, but withdrawals from these accounts that year was only just over a quarter of that amount (See Appendix A, Table 8). 'Pocket money' cash amounts given to station workers were usually 1 shilling or a few pence (cf. Nimmo family 1888-1962). These 'savings' did not represent voluntary practice by people who lived in extreme poverty (see also Kidd 2000:37).

For women the new regulations were worse if they were married. Rowley (1972 [1970]:114) writes that under the 1919 regulations, if a worker had his wife with him, she received rations, but 'the employer could demand twelve hour's free work from the Aboriginal employee's wife in return'. Oral history from the 1940s suggest

that even then (and later) women who came to live on the station with their working husbands were not employed on a separate contract or permit despite working long days in the homestead: they subsisted on their husband's wages. Station ledgers and accounts I viewed attest to this practice – few women's names appear in the wages books.⁶⁵

Despite the 1919 Regulations, long lists of people whose wages were owed to the Department (who 'held them in Trust') by station owners appear in files of a later incarnation of the Department, labelled 'Outstanding Wages' (Community Services and Ethnic Affairs Department 1938-1971). According to the Queensland Government,⁶⁶ their current (2003) offer of 'compensation' to Aboriginal people for loss of wages and savings under the 1897 and subsequent Acts is a recognition of historic injustices. In Charters Towers, a number of elderly Aboriginal people have expressed to me that the amount of compensation does not cover the amount that was '*stolen from us*'. Kidd has shown that one reason behind Queensland Government reluctance to 'hand back' savings accounts to Aboriginal people, was that '\$1.435 million was invested in Commonwealth bonds and hospital building programs, with the state capitalising on the interest' (2000 [1997]:266).

Many women avoided the unrewarding life on stations as domestics by living in town with their children from the 1930s and 1940s, where they had access to work in laundries, hotels and local businesses. There was greater availability of work during 'the War years' (WWII), since Charters Towers had become a base for American soldiers (cf. Charters Towers State High School 1995). There is a list of about a dozen Aboriginal women (both exempt and under the Act) who were 'eligible for child endowment' (a Commonwealth Government payment to mothers for the support of each child) in 1941 in Charters Towers (Community Services and Ethnic Affairs Department 1941-1970). Those under the Act would have had to apply to the local police Protector for the use of such monies. But these conditions may well have

⁶⁵ Station diaries and ledgers from which I draw this inference include those of the Black family (1898 -); J.S. Love Pastoral Company (1929-1949; 1929-1950; 1932-1950); the Burt family (1916-1939); Natal Downs Station (1937-44); Wongalee Station (1923-24); Nimmo family (1888-1962) and Anning family (1888-1962).

⁶⁶ Indigenous wages and savings (1890-1980) reparation process, Information sheet, February 2003, available at www.indigenous.qld.gov.au/.

been preferable to being the only Aboriginal woman on a station, or living the more restricted life on a government settlement.

The (less than) minimum wages Aboriginal people were paid through station work was then further reduced by the state through a wages levy. The funds were put into the 'Aboriginals Provident Fund', to look after 'workers and their dependants when they were ill or out of work' (Kidd 2000 [1997]:75). The Chief Protector, Bleakley, reported that,

One result [of the new regulations], which cannot be regarded as other than beneficial, was that a number of old people and very young children, who were being exploited as cheap labour, were sent to reserves where they would receive proper care. (Bleakley 1920)

As the Aboriginals Department under Bleakley increased their control over Aboriginal people's lives, the old were separated from young and male from female. Aboriginal men and women, as long as they were not too old or too young, were being categorised by the state as the useful new class of pastoral and domestic workers. In 1937 there were almost 70 people under work permits in the Charters Towers area, almost all of whom were working on stations (AUD/ W76 in Mackett nd). Many of them had kin who had been sent away to government settlements at Palm Island and Cherbourg.

Removals

Blake argues that Richard Howard, as CPA (1906-1911) was 'less of an enthusiast for removals than either of his predecessors, Meston or Roth' (Blake 2001:34). His reports in regard to the camps in Charters Towers (see above), and his suggestions to remove people to settlements from these camps (but seemingly he did not do this) seem to support Blake's assertion. And Howard's successor, Bleakley, removed many more people from 'the ills of camp life' and 'town life' throughout the state immediately after he was appointed (Bleakley 1915; 1916; 1917). It seems that it was not just the rhetoric of 'protection', but also moral concerns that influenced the Protectors' decisions about removal of people to settlements. In addition, pressures and complaints from the wider settler population (as discussed in Chapter 2) influenced removal actions by the police and such pressures were legitimised by the 1897 Act.

Economic and ecological factors have also been given as reasons for removals, in particular drought (Blake 2001:34-35).⁶⁷ But it seems that despite any droughts there was a fairly stable demand for Aboriginal labour in the pastoral industry (as noted above), and a strong desire from the government for removing the non-workers to settlements and missions, leaving only the working population.

In the state as a whole there were more than 6,000 people removed to reserves between 1900 and 1939.⁶⁸ Between 1901 and 1938 approximately 73 people⁶⁹ were removed from Charters Towers, or areas within the Charters Towers protectorate. This is low compared to the whole state, and may represent the levels of employment on stations, or as I discuss below, exemptions from the Act in the area. In 14 instances, people were removed as a 'family': as a mother and her child/children, or a couple and their children together. As Haebich (2000:174) notes, they were then split up at the mission or settlement, the adults to camps and the children to separate dormitories.

As can be seen in table 3 and table 4, there appear to be few people who were removed from Charters Towers in this period. Given that there were 151 working people with wages accounts in 1913 in the Charters Towers protectorate area, and this would not represent the whole Aboriginal population, this does seem to be a low figure.

⁶⁷ Blake writes that '[d]uring good seasons, when demand for labour was high, fewer removals were ordered. When drought hit the rural industry, the number of removals increased.' However, the highest number of removals that I calculated from the CPA reports was for the year 1914 (reported 1915), the year before the 1915-16 drought in Queensland (cf Blake 2001:35). Numbers of removals were high in the following year.

⁶⁸ The figure does not include people who slipped underneath the Northern/Chief protector's radars, for example people who were taken by employers to other districts. See also (Rowley 1972 [1970]: 117).

⁶⁹ This is a conservative estimate. (see Appendix A, Table 9).

Table 3 Removals, whole of Qld 1900-1930⁷⁰

**Table 4 Removals, Charters Towers area⁷¹
1901-1938**

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⁷⁰ This table compiled from NPA, CPA Annual Reports and represents men, women and children, there were no figures for 1932.

⁷¹ For a detailed version, see Appendix A, Table 9.

Some of the orders for removal were thwarted, and women and children escaped capture, as shown in the following incident.

Instructions were received in 1901 for the removal to Yarrabah of [a] half-caste [girl], about ten years of age, from Millchester (Charters Towers) camp, but before the Minister's order arrived, she had been taken away by her people in the direction of Clermont. (Roth 1904:13)

There are few admissions of failure like this one in the Protectors reports, and this one shows that while the Protector has some information about the escaped girl, there are two, perhaps three years between the instructions to remove her and the report of failure to do so. Others too are likely to have been warned before they could be taken, or perhaps have been removed and the actions not recorded, given the apparently flawed manner in which actions of the Department, and reports of such actions, were undertaken.

The rationale for incarcerating people in the State settlements changed throughout the years, although the following from Howard's Annual Report as Chief Protector in 1910 gives an indication of his reasoning:

Besides the 12 young girls and 17 children already mentioned [in that report], 58 males, 9 females, and 9 children were removed by the Minister's order to the Barambah Settlement, most of these being old people, infirm and incapable of caring for themselves, and neglected children to be sent to school. Some also were sent from the districts as an example to others, in some cases after serving a sentence in prison, to remove them from bad influences, and to provide them with healthy occupation under proper control. (Howard 1910:18)

This rationale thus covers those defined by the state as too old, too young, deviant from state-accepted behaviour, needing work or less freedom. In the years before, under the policy of 'protection' under Roth (Howard's predecessor), women, especially 'half-caste' women and children, were primary targets. Roth's understanding of 'protection' was closely linked to prevalent ideas of women and girls in 'moral danger' (cf. Haebich 2000:302-3). For example, a 9 year old girl was assaulted at Cargoon Station (north-west of Charters Towers) in 1903, and as a result was 'sentenced to seven years at Yarrabah Industrial School' (QSA POL/J17 in

Mackett nd: vol126). And this continued under Bleakley. In 1922, another woman and her child was removed from Cargoos station ‘for their protection’ (QSA A/58792 in Mackett nd:misc3). Given the state of reserves and settlements at the time (cf. Haebich 2000; Kidd 2000 [1997]), clearly there was a double standard in this morality. Under Howard, men were also subject to considerable levels of state control in the form of removal, as we can see in the above table (see also Appendix A Table 9). As in the quote above, government removal of men, women and children to settlements was for the purposes of producing effective and useful subjects who appreciated a ‘healthy occupation’.

The majority of people removed from Charters Towers were taken to Palm Island settlement, off the coast to the north of Townsville, after it was opened in 1918.⁷² From CPA reports this was the case for most of Queensland. For example in 1920, 189 people out of a total 295; and in 1929, 108 from 174, were sent to Palm Island (Bleakley 1921; 1930). Bleakley (who was to remain in the job until 1942), wrote of the continuing program of removals, and that those sent away ‘would receive proper care’ (Bleakley 1920). The lack of ‘care’, but more importantly, basic facilities, food, medicines and shelter, has been extensively researched by Kidd (2000 [1997]), and more recently by Donovan (2002). Relevant here is that many Aboriginal people in Charters Towers and surrounding towns avoided removal (hence the low figures, above) through seeking exemption from the Act. Perhaps, too, there was some non-reporting of removals. However, most people escaped this particular method of state control by living lives in town and on stations that complied with state definitions of good behaviour, made possible by the high availability of pastoral work at this time. Nonetheless, while removals for the town seem relatively low, it could not be argued that Murrumbidgee in this area were not impacted on by the Act, as state power was effected in many ways.

The figures in Table 3 and 4 above do not go beyond the late 1930s, when removals ceased being reported in the CPA’s Annual Reports. The Queensland Government reported in 1996, that ‘only twenty-three percent of the total removals from 1908 occurred after 1946’, and the 376 removals of children in the 1950s was reduced to 58 in the 1960s, and none in 1971 (in Haebich 2000:531). The Queensland

⁷² See Appendix A, Table 9

Government was seeking to reduce settlement populations in the late 1960s. This change in policy reflected their desire to ‘put an end to the cycle of removing children to settlements where they grew up, settled and established new families’ (Haebich 2000:532). Kidd (2000 [1997]:238-41) has discussed the background of Queensland’s policy in this regard. She reveals the Director of Native Affairs, O’Leary’s plan in the 1960s, to radically reduce funding to ‘eligible’ (ie light skinned) Aboriginal families on settlements in order that they were ‘persuaded’ to leave the settlements and assimilate into wider society (ibid.).

The removal process can be analysed as a bureaucratic attempt at the reconstruction of Aboriginal identity and family through institutionalisation. Through removals, and importantly, the *threat* of removal, the ‘Protectors’ sought to turn all Aboriginal people into manageable subjects: a well behaved working population. Furthermore, many removals by the Queensland bureaucrats were of ‘families’, that is, a parent or couple and their children (see Appendix A, table 9). As such, the bureaucrats produced the concept of acceptable family as this man+woman+children unit. While such forms of family continue to be pervasive in town, on stations, in settlements and missions and in the movement between these, people also reproduced much wider relationships, lived with, cared for and counted as ‘family’ many more people than this bureaucratised ‘family unit’.

Exemptions

An exemption from the provisions of the 1897 Act (under S26 of the Act), was available principally to ‘half-castes’, that is people with one non-Aboriginal, or in some cases ‘half caste’ parent. An exemption was supposed to enable an Aboriginal person to manage their own affairs, to run their own bank account, to freely seek employment wherever they might wish, to travel without restriction and to legally drink alcohol. In addition, the exempted person was not supposed to associate with Aboriginal people, since the state considered the former no longer ‘Aboriginal’. The first exemptions from the Act for Queensland were made in 1902 (Roth 1903). From 1902, exemptions climbed, but far more people applied for exemptions than received them (see Appendix A, Table 10). In 1925 the CPA wrote that even though he would like to exempt more people from the Act he felt that their ‘blood was always an obstacle to advancement’. ‘Knowing this, the Department, even after granting

freedom, as far as practicable, keeps an unobtrusive eye upon them, ready if necessary to help or even resume control' (Bleakley 1925:6). In practice this bureaucratic 'eye' was far from unobtrusive.

In Charters Towers two men were exempted in the mid 1920s (A/58980 in Mackett nd:vol115), three men were exempted in the early 1930s (A/4736, and A/4738 in Mackett nd: vol15), and almost 20 people (about half were women) in the 1940s (A/58979 & A/58992 in Mackett nd:vol116). There were various ways to gain the certificate, and station employers often supported their employees in an application.⁷³ In the 1930s Marnie Kennedy, who worked for some years on a station to the north of Charters Towers, was able to get an exemption from the Act with the support of her employer (Kennedy 1985:24). In order to get the exemption, her employer helped arrange Kennedy's marriage to the head stockman who himself was exempt. A number of people from the Marasa family in Charters Towers gained exemptions in the 1940s, especially women who married exempted men. At the same time others were not successful in their attempts to gain exemption from the Act, as the local Protector notes:

Recently several aboriginals [*sic*] here have made application for exemption, but were not approved, and it would appear that this family has adopted the same procedure, influenced by others. (Protector of Aboriginals 1945)

The following decades saw a much larger number of applications for exemption to the Charters Towers office, 26 people in the 1950s and over 60 people in the 1960s (A/58992, A/71091, A/58979 in Mackett nd: vol114, 126, 117). As the recurrence of people's names in these years attests, some of these applications were refused first time around. Others were put on 'supplementary lists', where they would be watched for a number of years, and encouraged to meet the specifications of exemption. Under the *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act of 1939* (which replaced the 1897 Act), 'protection and preservation' heralded new increases in the state control over peoples lives. Under the revised Act, an application for exemption might include the following information:

Applicant habitually associate[s] with aboriginals (yes or no).

⁷³ There was some anxiety from the CPA about employers assisting in exemption of their employees, that it was 'bad whites' with 'immoral intentions' who sought these.

Lives in a civilised manner and associate[s] with Europeans (yes or no)

Of good character, steady in employment and industrious (comment)

Applicant can read and write. Does not drink [alcohol]

Is thrifty and [understands] the value of money...is intelligent enough to protect himself in business dealings.

Can obtain award rates at present place of employment.

[the Protector recommends Exemption, however]... the control of this Aboriginal's Bank Account should remain under the control of this Department.

The last piece of information was a new clause under the 1939 amendments, which stated:

If any half caste is exempted from the provisions of this Act... the Minister may make such exemption subject to such conditions as he shall think fit, including a condition that all money or property belonging to such half-caste and held in trust for such half-caste by a Protector shall remain subject to the control of a Protector. (Queensland Government 1935)

The government thus allowed for Aboriginal men and women to be paid higher wages, but kept control of these monies in Departmental accounts, as shown above. Oral history attests to the uncertainties that this 'supplementary exemption' system produced, with older men and women telling me conflicting information about whether, or when, their parents or other members of their family were exempted. This could partly be a result of the fact that even though there might well have been differences in ability to earn a wage and live a less controlled life between those exempted and those not, there was still a substantial element of surveillance over all people's lives. Such vigilance is evident in the copious Departmental records throughout the 1950s and 1960s, where names of those exempted still emerge (for example Community Services and Ethnic Affairs Department 1938-1971).

The retired cattleworkers ('ringers') that I spoke to said that a 'good' station employer would try and fill out the exemption paperwork for a respected worker (in the 1940s, but more so by the late 1950s and 1960s). While this meant 'freedom' from the Act for the ringer, the Department was afraid that employers sought exemptions for their employee so they could get away with not paying them, paying less than minimum wages or paying only in rations. The ringers I spoke to

emphasised that, once free from the Act, they just sought work elsewhere if conditions of employment were not right. These memories emphasise the state bureaucrats' profound underestimation of the men's ability to determine their own lives.

Belonging to stations, belonging to town

Many of the older men and women with whom I spoke noted their preference to work on particular stations. They favoured certain stations based on time growing up there, and/or that their parents grew up on the station, but also because the station owner or manager was known to be 'fair', they were 'good people' or they 'paid well/better than others'. One man noted that the station at which he preferred to work *paid* their workers (ie paid them in cash rather than rations and 'pocket money') and treated them with more respect: *'Murriss didn't have to eat on the woodheap like most other places'*. Some of the stations near Charters Towers such as Maryvale, Bluff Downs Fletchervale and Allendale (see Appendix B, Map 4, 5), were clearly preferred because of much longer histories of association, going back to frontier pastoral times and before. An example from the region is Lammermoor station, west of Charters Towers and near Hughenden (see Appendix B, Map 5). The station owner, Robert Christison sought to protect Aboriginal people from frontier violence. As a result, a great number of Aboriginal people from the surrounding stations camped at and worked on Lammermoor and some of the surrounding stations (Bennett 1928) and would go to Hughenden at Christmas and show time (see Plate 5).

Men and women from Charters Towers who I spoke to worked on a great number of properties, but most within reasonable range of Charters Towers. Norman Maynard and Albert Marasa said that in station times, they would seldom go outside 'their area', and as much as they could sought work on the stations that were in the vicinity of Charters Towers.

SB Why stay around here? Is that just where the jobs were?

Albert: No well, You know the place and you knew the people and you coulda got a job anywhere...

*Norman: Oh yeah, you just stuck to a region, and sorta you had no reason to go anywhere. I worked around Hughenden for years but that's as far west as I go... I had no particular reason to go any further.*⁷⁴

These men reveal that although their descent and history are important in their practices of finding work, belonging to a place is translated in the practice of *ongoing* relationships with family, respected employers and known area (see Beckett 1988a). Not only are these men attracted to country they know through their personal and families' histories, but the station owners know the men as 'locals', and are aware of their experience in the area. Further, the station owners know the men will probably come back to their station after holidays since the men's families live in Charters Towers or small towns in the surrounding area. People who worked on stations in the area came back to Charters Towers for holidays, predominantly at Christmas and Show time.⁷⁵ When I spoke to Norman Maynard and Albert Marasa about whether they spent the holidays in Charters Towers in the 1950s and 1960s, they reckoned that they, and 'everyone else' was '*always [in town] for Show or Christmas*'. Norman said, '*We were all pretty much family oriented... Most of the big families here were, you know, they all come back.*'

⁷⁴ A contrary example of the importance of one place and always coming back, is Miles Lalor's history (Beckett 1996; 2000). Lalor travelled much more widely than most Aboriginal men of his time and certainly much more so across his lifetime than most men I spoke to in Charters Towers.

⁷⁵ 'The Show' is the annual agricultural fair held in every sizeable town in Australia. Pastoralists, graziers, farmers and gardeners competitively display their produce and prize livestock, there are sideshows, food and drink stalls, games and amusements, etc. In particular, the Show was (and to some extent still is) an important event for young people to meet and socialise. 'The Show' is sometimes referred to as the time that 'the bush comes to town'.



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**Plate 4 Station workers in town for Christmas (North Queensland Register 5th
December 1921)**

Go the Court house and they get what they want, like they buy all their ...clothes, what they want, shoes. They used to get everything! Hats! Stockin', make-up, everything! Beads, yeah they were really well dressed when they used to go up town. Stockings and everything. [Esther Sorrel]



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Plate 5 'An Aboriginal Carnival' the Queenslander, 22nd January 1931.

It is likely that the dancers and stockmen and women are from many different areas of Queensland. However, some would have been from the Hughenden area, such as King Kiara in the centre photograph.

Gendered histories and the town

While some individuals and families were removed to settlements and missions (in particular Palm Island), many others avoided removal through their continuing employment on stations. Some people (mainly women) were able to live in town by gaining employment in the laundries, pubs and other local businesses in the 1940s, sending their children to school in town, and gaining (at least some level of) exemption from the Act. White townspeople I spoke to do not remember there being *any* Aboriginal people living in town in these times, or as an afterthought, '*oh, the ones in town, they had all assimilated*'. On the surface Aboriginal townspeople were simply townspeople, although differentiated by being 'coloured' or 'dark', and this apparently minimal level of differentiation from wider society was necessary for them to remain in town. Overall the social picture produced from Aboriginal memories is far more diverse, especially for the 1950s onwards and in comparison to the picture of the restricted lives led by Aboriginal people, projected by the files of earlier days.

Many women, some men, and children lived in town with mothers, grandparents or aunts, attending school, but returning '*for holidays*' to the station where their parents worked. Other people lived between Palm Island, stations, and the town: many of the older women talk about spending at least some years in the dormitories on Palm Island as children (given their ages these years stretch from the 1930s to the 1950s), and have shared experiences of those years. The women who lived in town had much more contact with each other and with their children than their counterparts 'out bush.'

Men had little other choice than to get station work 'out bush', as Norman Maynard, who grew up in the 1940s and 1950s in an exempted family observed:

It woulda been interesting to see what sorta jobs them fellas woulda had if they hadn't been under that Act... cause some of them had no interest in the bush, even tho' they're Aboriginal ...

But being exempted did not mean that there were any more choices. Norman's parents, for example, wanted him to be a mechanic but there was little opportunity in

town, and he ‘headed bush’ to be a ‘ringer’.⁷⁶ Noah Jones, who also grew up in the 1940s and ‘50s said that although some men of his generation were sent away, he stayed in the area for work. A younger woman, when we were talking about a particular area of station country, said to Noah: ‘*yeah Uncle you know all that country round there from working round there all your life...*’ to which he replied:

They sent [Thomas Green] off to Palm to get education, but they kept me on the stations because I was a good worker, I never got education because I was a good worker, see.

Noah Jones and other men like him worked on stations for most of their lives, and many told me that it was good work, where there was some freedom ‘out bush’, where ‘*a man could feel like his own boss*’. Being one’s own boss, meant picking up jobs wherever you could, and being much more flexible than the departmental reports and files represent. Some men I spoke to had worked at over 20 different stations during the 1950s and 1960s, and many others up to a dozen. The point is that work was available and so men were almost all out bush. In town there was a danger of being stopped by police for ‘loitering’. If a person was exempt, such ‘loitering’ could jeopardise their exemption status, and if they were under the Act, they could be removed by police to a settlement. I asked Myrtle Green and her brother Thomas Green, who grew up on stations in the area, at Palm Island and in town, what it was like for them in Charters Towers in the late 1950s and early ‘60s (when they both were in their early 20s).

MG Yeah well, when they finished their... when Christmas was over all the people had, Aboriginal people, had to go back out on the stations and work again. Until the next holiday comes around. You weren’t allowed to just take a week off in them days, you had to wait till the holidays, Christmas and Show, maybe Easter.

TG Yeah ‘Why aren’t you at work, because of you’re not at work we got a place to put you fellas’.

SB So if you were seen walking around town a policeman would pick you up?

TG You go thatta way. Yeah, you go thatta way [Palm Island], if you won’t go back out bush.

MG And then you work till daylight till dark

⁷⁶A ‘ringer’ is a cattleshaver. The job mainly involved mustering cattle, horsebreaking, & sometimes fencing.

TG Daylight till dark. Nine o'clock at night sometimes, you riding home

SB Is it better than being in town?

MG yeah

TG Mmm Mmm [nodding] It's a lot better to be out there than in town ere because you're not free. You know out in the bush you can't go anywhere but you feel free.

The Act gave the Protector the authority to determine Aboriginal men and women's employment and social lives. In town, the Protector obviously had the ability to do so to a much greater extent. For men 'ringin' represented freedom, and the respect earned by this employment. The men I interviewed who had worked on stations all talked of many other men they worked with. Ringers moved from station to station, 'oh, three months here breaking horses, six months there, two months somewhere else mustering' in the 1950s and 1960s, and on each station there would be other Aboriginal and white men who knew each other. In contrast, from about the 1940s when there were not likely to be any other Aboriginal women on the station such work was lonely, undervalued and constricting for women. Myrtle's feelings for domestic work are reflected in the non-committal 'yeah' during the interview above, in agreement with her brother. She had been employed at a number of stations throughout the 1950s and '60s, and told me at another time that she frequently moved from station to station because it was lonely work, and sometimes she was the 'only one on the place'.⁷⁷

In contrast, town at Christmas and 'Show time' must have been a busy place for Aboriginal people in from the bush to visit family. Right through this time and into the 1970s, people remember coming into town to stay with their aunts and grandmothers *who lived in town*. These women organised dances at Corinda⁷⁸ in the early days, at the 'Buffalo Hall' in town and other venues in the 1950s. There was a property out of town where one Aunt lived with her white husband and dances were held out there as well, where the dirt dance floor raised memorable clouds of dust that would only settle at daybreak. Every older person I spoke to mentioned these

⁷⁷ Myrtle was reluctant to talk much about this work, and few other Aboriginal women were interested in talking to me about their experiences on stations.

⁷⁸ Corinda was a pre-WWII suburb of Charters Towers but was levelled to make way for an extension to the airstrip in about 1942 or 1943. Many Aboriginal people lived in this area, and when speaking of Corinda today are referring only to the block of land where they had constructed their homes. See

dances in connection to the women who organised them, the music people played (especially guitar and accordion), and the songs that were sung. Some remember the drinking and others remember these occasions as sober, but *'it didn't matter, everyone [all the Aboriginal people] went'*. During times in town, others remember the cricket matches organised by these aunts, or dressing up and going to the pictures. Two Aunts were married to white men who had trucks and would ferry people around town and to the river for fishing trips. These women who lived in town were the foundation of this social life. They established their role as keeping a home and organising time together for their families, which acted as the centre for Aboriginal sociality in the rural town.

From the late 1950s through to the 1970s, it was these particular older Aboriginal women (and some others) who are remembered as those who lived in Charters Towers full time. A number of younger women and men would leave their children in town with their older women kin while working on stations. By the late 1950s, women and men had greater access to the monies they earned, as well as the 'child endowment' payments, since they could direct the operation of their accounts to the women (examples being mothers' sisters, brother's wives, and elder sisters) who were carers of their children (Community Services and Ethnic Affairs Department 1949-1965). These carers were older women who had been able to procure a house in town. One example in particular was old Mary. In the years following permission from the Protector for her son to buy her a house in town as she had 'retired' from station work, she looked after the children of three different women (ibid.). William Jone's wife Gwen who lived in town, looked after many of her husband's two sisters' children, as well as her own and her brother's children. The mothers of these children were younger, worked out bush, and organised to transfer their 'endowment' payments to the town carers. Myrtle Green remembers two women she calls 'Granny' and three Aunts who had houses in town in the 1950s and early 1960s, and these were *'always full of people.'*

It was not just older women who established permanent lives in town, using support from government welfare and small amounts from station wages. Elisa Thomas told me she welcomed coming back to stay in Charters Towers permanently when she

was in her 30s instead of living out on a station. Once in town she was able to apply for ‘endowment’, she said, there was the *‘freedom to run your life, buy your own groceries’*. Her husband was still working out on stations and would come in to town as infrequently as in times past. From about the 1960s, many Aboriginal women also worked ‘in the colleges’, that is in the school dining halls.⁷⁹ This ‘freedom’ for women was still controlled by bureaucracy. Many people in and from Charters Towers had ‘come out from under’ the Act by about the early 1960s through employer sponsored exemptions, but there were still people under the Act well into the 1970s. This meant that in Charters Towers throughout the 1970s, some men and women still had to ‘go to the courthouse’ (Clerk of Courts) to ask for money from their accounts. The departmental files reveal that during the 1970s, surveillance was still such that (‘previously’) assisted persons had information recorded on their accounts regarding what they spent their money on (Community Services and Ethnic Affairs Department 1972-1977). Many remember having to report to the local Clerk of Courts to ask for their money. The man who was Clerk of Courts in the late 1960s, told me *‘I was only 21 and it was embarrassing that there I was sitting behind the counter while women with children and grandchildren asked me for money to buy their food.’*

Other anthropologists have noted the bureaucratic support of women’s domestic stability in missions and towns of this period. Barwick’s (1963; 1978) work creates a picture of the forced dependency of mission life in Victoria in the 1960s.

Nonetheless, she notes that through a mission supported stability that was based in the status of childbearing (and rearing), women became the managers of the new domestic spheres, and hence the ‘agents of social change’ (Barwick 1978:56).

Collmann’s (1988) research in the Northern Territory found that patterns of bureaucratic support for women as the centre of family ‘denigrated men’s roles and excluded them’ while supporting the role of women. Finlayson (1991:21 ff) takes up Collman’s point and contends that the gender roles of men as wage labourers and women as childrearers, while being supported by the welfare state, are also notionally constructed by Aboriginal people. Birdsall (1988:27), like Finlayson,

⁷⁹ There are four private boarding schools, known as ‘the colleges’ in Charters Towers. These were all established in the early part of the century to cater to pastoralists’ and miner’s children. From about the 1960s Aboriginal and Islander children from all over the state were sent there on scholarships.

notes that women's dominance in the 'domestic group' is accepted and conventional. The question is not whether these roles reside originally in the control of the government or the particular Aboriginal community. And it might be accurate to state that practices of residence and relationships between men and women are structured and negotiated around 'meanings common to the history of the community' (Finlayson 1991:296). However, this tells us little of the particular histories of dominance and the embeddedness of the state in Aboriginal histories.

There is a continuing emphasis on the 'bush' and the pastoral industry as the focus of many people's economic life as a result of men and women still being employed in the pastoral industry up to the late 1970s. Increasingly, government welfare payments such as endowment and pensions, were significant to sustaining life in town. Before the downturn in availability of work, men had come into the town mostly for the holiday times. Changes to the pastoral industry from the late 1960s: increased mechanisation (such as the introduction of motorbikes and then helicopter mustering in the early 1970s), the further division of pastoral leases into smaller selections and the implementation of equal pay for Aboriginal workers, meant that the demand for Aboriginal labour slowly declined through the 1960s and 1970s (May 1994:172-73, also pers.com. Dr. J. Allingham, pastoralist). Some Aboriginal men got jobs in the Railways, and there were a few jobs going with the Dalrymple Shire and the Charters Towers City Council. The station times had finished, and though there were still some men working in the industry in the 1980s, and even a few in 2004, by the early 1970s, it was no longer the case that any man or woman could get a job.

The gender division between the types of employment and opportunities available as a result meant that Aboriginal women had lived in town more consistently than men for almost two generations when pastoral work really ended in the 1970s. Not only were they used to life in town, they had built social networks among each other and spent time visiting each others homes, looking after each others' children and making the town 'home'. Although domestic 'work' such as was available in town is not valued by dominant society, the incomes from such work as well as government payments such as endowment meant a certain level of control of their own and their families' lives. Aboriginal womens' extensive transactions with the welfare state (see also Collmann 1988: Chapter 4; Finlayson 1991) have meant that they have had more

intensive experience of the bureaucracy than men. Through such town-based interaction with bureaucracies, women also gained important political experience in dealing with the state. This was experience which became evident in their active participation in the ‘Aboriginal’ bureaucracies of the 1970s onwards.

Naming people and place

State control of Aboriginal people in the bureaucratic mechanisms I have examined in this chapter, relies heavily on agents of the state knowing people’s names. The following section examines the extent of this knowledge as well as how some of the categorisations of family were institutionalised through bureaucratic and police practices of naming. The history of surnames and naming practices below also reveals Aboriginal agency in the gaining and passing on of names that complicated as well as accommodated bureaucratic practices.

The surname in Aboriginal history

The use of names is inconsistent across the Aboriginal population. In the very early part of the 20th Century, it was often the exempted Aboriginal people who had surnames. Others who had surnames at this time appear to have been those in long-term employment with the same employer, possibly since childhood, and had taken their employer’s surname. Interestingly, those who had surnames before the mid 1920s also included women who had married Islanders,⁸⁰ and men who were well known as a result of their work reputation (often referred to in archives as ‘good types’). Aboriginal people with surnames had achieved a kind of ‘passing’ into, or recognition within, White society. They were no longer the ‘savage’.

Station records demonstrate that in the early part of the century it was those men who ran the mustering camp, and who travelled between stations and were trusted to work by themselves who were most often those considered ‘civilised’ and had a surname. These men were more independent and mobile, not so closely linked with the ‘black’s camp’, and were those who lived in the working mens’ quarters closer to the

⁸⁰ Mainly South Sea Islander men, referred to as ‘Kanakas’, who had been brought to Queensland as indentured labour to work on cane farms on the coast, and also inland to stations for shepherding and

Homestead (May 1983). The women who were married (either legal marriage, which most often was a result of time spent on a mission or settlement, or relationship recognised as 'marriage') to these men often carried their surnames, or were attributed them in station records. There were women also who carried many surnames, perhaps in the form of a husband's first name, or mother's/father's name. From the records that I have viewed for the early part of the 20th Century, however, women working in the homestead, if they appear in the records at all, do so with surnames less often than did men. If there is a link between the getting of a surname and mobility, increased status and autonomy in employment, it follows that men would be more likely than women to have a surname around the 1920s. It is a reflection of the nature of women's station employment, as dependents of their husbands (as noted earlier in regard to employment permits) and as fundamental to the immobile and dependent life of the station homestead. That Aboriginal men had surnames and women more often did not have surnames also reveals the early 20th Century transference of the settler patronymic system to Aboriginal people, as well as valuation of men's work and the subordination of women's domestic work.

After about the mid 1920s in the Charters Towers area Aboriginal people appear with a surname much more frequently in the station records and other archival materials I viewed. It is unclear to what extent Aboriginal people used these names among themselves at this time. But the practice of adopting a surname coincides with an increase in the coordination of surveillance and control of Aboriginal people by 'Protectors' under the Act. As shown above, the records produced by Aboriginal Protectors at this time become far more frequent and detailed, and surnames much more prominent. By the 1930s, seldom does any Aboriginal person from the Charters Towers area appear (either in the station records, or the CPA files) without a surname.

It is possible that changes involving the people being moved off stations and into town 'fringe camps', missions and settlements (discussed in relation to new employment regulations), were closely related to the increase in production of named Aboriginal individuals and 'families'. Dissolution of the camps on stations meant the 'mob' (sometimes described as 'tribe') in the camp 'disappeared' and what remained

was a much smaller group: the worker/s and his/her immediate dependants consisting of partner and children. State and station attribution of surnames to individuals and hence to their wives and children heralds these people's production into nuclear style 'families', at least in the state documentation.

That in the Charters Towers area from the 1920s (and for some even before) surnames were being applied to and adopted by Aboriginal people, contrasts quite sharply with station records from more remote areas of North Queensland. For example a comparison of the records from two of JS Love's stations: Gainsford (just north of the town of Charters Towers) and Dunbar (near the west coast of southern Cape York)⁸¹ show a distinct disparity in the lists of Aboriginal employees in the 1930s. At Gainsford all of the employees have surnames, whereas on Dunbar few of the 'employees' are listed with surnames, and the only ones that are were members of the mustering team brought up from Gainsford. Surnames are thus linked with men who could work ostensibly as individuals, 'like white men', without the immediate support of a camp, their 'family', their 'mob'.

At Burdekin Downs, there are individuals up to 1920 with only first names, but by the early 1920s all the Aboriginal workers have surnames. At Oak Park (slightly north of the country people include as 'Charters Towers area') some Aboriginal workers do not have surnames recorded in the wages book in the late 1930s, but others did. Workers at Natal Downs (see Appendix B, Map 4, 5), in the late 1930s, all had surnames. The differences may have been a result of station managers/owners' practices or the nature of the work at different stations. What the station records do not show is information about who lived there and was not working, for example children, as well as older people who may have been left to live at smaller outstations.⁸² In addition, oral history tells us that many women who worked at the station were never paid or were paid through their husbands and so may well not have appeared in the station books.

⁸¹ See Map 1

⁸² These 'outstations' are basically permanent mustering camps. They ranged from just a bore to those with huts, and some had more established houses. They depended for supplies on the main Homestead of the station. Some older people were allowed to live at these outstations and did some fencing work or similar.

Surnames were an act of power over, and knowing of, the Indigenous other, but also an Indigenous use of these systems of naming that suggests tacit acceptance, or in some cases an embrace, of a different social order. In terms of the state relationship with Aboriginal people, the surname brought people just far enough into Settler society to track their movements, and link them to other Indigenous people who had then also gained the surname. It was the ‘wild blacks’ who were only known by a first name (‘Billy’, ‘Paddy’, ‘Jimmy’ etc.), who still lived ‘out bush’ or in fringe camps and who most often did not have a surname. The camps on the edge of a station homestead included few such people, as I have discussed, after about 1920. To the station owner the smaller numbers of workers with some immediate kin who worked for him were less a ‘mob’. They were a small family, and thus the station owner could more easily apply a surname and hence confer this knowledge to the local Protector who controlled the workers’ wages. Thus for station workers in the Charters Towers area, the station owner paid their wages to the Charters Towers Protector and the Charters Towers Protector created people’s accounts in his books and became aware of which people ‘belonged’ on which pastoral stations. Further, if these Aboriginal people wanted to seek access to their account, they had to go to Charters Towers. There was thus a disjunction between productive work and payment for that work that meant Aboriginal economic practice was stretched across the rural and town divide. Furthermore, their surnames, which already ‘belonged’ to particular stations as recognised workers, now also became closely associated with the town.

Practices of (sur)naming

In many instances, surnames are patronymic in that they have been passed from father to child. However, throughout the genealogies that I recorded, as well as through archival records I studied, many children ‘take’ their mother’s surname. This seems especially the case where the father was white or was not around to help care for the child, or perhaps where the mother stays in ‘her country’⁸³ with her children. Thus the taking of fathers’ surname is dependent on the *demonstration* of fatherhood. An example where a brother and sister, probably born in the 1920s, have as a

⁸³ Especially where the father is from a different area.

surname their mother's first name is a good example of this point. Thus 'Jane Gemmel's children are 'Andrew Jane' and 'Nelly Jane' (see also Sutton 1998b:48-9). Throughout the Department of Aborigines' records from 1940 to about 1960, these siblings appear with their mother's first name as a surname, and their mother her employer's surname ('Gemmel'). Later (1960s) she and her children all appear in the records with a surname that is the one people use to refer to her today, which is the name of her Aboriginal husband in her later life (Adamson). While some Aboriginal surnames are less pursuable, others have a clear derivation, for example the name of an employer (as above), a station, station owner, or a place or country of origin name.

One of the earliest surnames in Charters Towers originates from a 'South Sea Island'. A progenitor of the 'Marasa' family was shipped to Queensland to work in cane farms and later to pastoral stations around Charters Towers. This man was given an exemption in 1884 under the *Pacific Island Labourers Act (1880) (Amendment Act 1884)* under a name 'Johnny Crave' (Department of Immigration 1884). By the first years of the century his descendants (he married an Aboriginal woman) were consistently referred to by 'Marasa', derived from the name of the Island this man came from.⁸⁴ Other Aboriginal women in Charters Towers who married 'Islander' men around the turn of the 20th century and before, took the men's surnames as did the children of their marriage (see Figure 5 Chapter 4, where the 'Jones' brothers are Islander men).

Furthermore, police Protectors attributed names to men and their families in the records, perhaps out of convenience, lack of knowledge of the person (or simply not asking them). Esther Sorrell, a woman of about 65, told me that for many years she had believed her family's surname was that of a prominent station owner in the Charters Towers area, 'Northington'. Her father and mother had worked for this station owner (Mrs Sorrell and her siblings also lived at the station before school age). After looking at her family history documents, Esther found that it was about the time that they were working on that station that the family surname (previously 'Adams') had been changed by the local Protector to 'Northington'. When asked

⁸⁴ Access to the records cited here was provided by an individual from the 'Marasa' family under the condition that the information be kept confidential. There is no South Sea Island called 'Marasa'.

why, Esther said '*just to make it easier for them [the police] I suppose*'. Esther's older brother, who had worked at the same station for some years, was known to Aboriginal people as 'Dick Adams', as well as 'Dick'/'Richard Northington', although I am unsure whether these were different over time, or whether he and other people used these in different contexts.⁸⁵ Thus surnames were attributed by Protectors according to their perception of people 'belonging' to the station, with the kinds of connotations of indentured labour that this entails.

The early Aborigines Department (after 1939, 'Native Affairs') developed and depended on Aboriginal people's names for keeping track in the bureaucratic records of all such people under their 'protection'. However, there are examples where people rejected, avoided or changed their names. A number of examples in the Department files reflect significant confusion among bureaucrats caused by Aboriginal people being attributed and themselves adopting different surnames (as well as first names) at different times. One series of letters between the local Protector in Charters Towers and the Director of Native Affairs (DNA) in particular names three, perhaps only two, men in regard to their request for exemption from the Act, and illustrates that such confusion could be to a person's detriment.

It is presumed that [Peter Fred] is identical to [Paul Fred]... [Peter Henderson] does not appear to have an account with your Charters Towers accounts unless he is known by a different name... (Secretary for Health and Home Affairs 1954)

Throughout the 1950s, 'Peter' and/aka? 'Paul' applies to the local Protector for exemption from the Act, who forwards the applications to the Director of Native Affairs, who is not quite sure who the man is, and does not approve the exemption until 1958.⁸⁶

An earlier example is also relevant here. An older woman, Nora, told me that her great grandmother (MMM) was known by at least two given names ('Nora/Polly') and up to seven surnames. Nora/Polly appears on a list of women employed out of

⁸⁵ This man passed away in late 2002 and his death notice read 'Richard Northington aka Dick Adams'. Esther could not tell me where 'Adams' came from, and it is not clear from my research to date.

⁸⁶ It is quite possible that this confusion is in part caused by the 'number' that each person under the Act has in their Department file – the first digit of which is the letter of their first name. As such 'peter' and 'paul' (possibly the same person) ended up with two file numbers.

Charters Towers, in 1920, aged 49. On that list she appears without a surname, but according to Nora one of the surnames Nora/Polly was known by was the name of that station, and another was the name of the owner of the station (who is listed as such) in 1920. Other surnames Nora/Polly had relate to the several stations on which she had worked and the men with whom she lived or ‘married’. It is unclear how Nora/Polly might have been known by her kin, although given that she was probably born before the turn of the century it is likely that she had a ‘language’ name as well (however, there is no evidence of this).⁸⁷ That she had many names reflects a number of things. The great-granddaughter of Nora/Polly relates the story that her ancestor ‘*could not be tied down*’; ‘*she used to walk right round the boundary, visiting her country*’, and has the reputation in family lore as a ‘*traditional Kudjala woman*’. Multiple names might well have been her technique to avoid control (by her men? By the ‘Protector’? By employers?). Travel is a freedom that under the Act Aboriginal people did not have, and defiance often meant internment (indeed Nora/Polly was in her later life incarcerated in an asylum). This woman’s range of surnames also reflects her possible adoption of new names as a signifier of attachment to a new husband/employer/other.⁸⁸ In some Aboriginal societies things, objects, places and people have multiple names; public or ‘outside’ as well as ‘inside’, for example secret/ritual or contextual names that are applied according to country (eg. Povinelli 1993a:148). However, what is not clear is whether Nora/Polly used the names serially or contextually or perhaps a mixture of both.

In Charters Towers many people had surnames relatively ‘early’ (for North Queensland). This does not necessarily facilitate family history research (which is a significant occupation among Aboriginal people in the present) since as shown above, these surnames are not ‘fixed’. Searching for the siblings of a parent or grandparent becomes complex where surnames are multiple or changing (cf. Finlayson 1991:42).⁸⁹ For example, three brothers who all worked on the same station, and had the same mother (and two of whom had the same father) had three different surnames, only one of which was the station owner’s surname (but the

⁸⁷ That one of her first names is ‘carried’ by her great-granddaughter, Nora is likely to have been the name by which Nora/Polly was known by direct descendants.

⁸⁸ Some of her surnames are of known husbands, and at least one is of an employer.

⁸⁹ Note that Aboriginal children’s first names were often changed if they were removed to settlement dormitories (see Haebich 2000:343).

station owner was not his genitor). The other two brothers are not identifiable in the oral or documentary history, but the man who had the station owner's surname spent his younger teenage years working for that station, and had continued to work there as an adult. In later life he was known by a different surname. First names in some cases are also used to symbolise the links between employer and employee. Some children were named after station owners their parents worked for, especially if they had worked there for some time. In one example, three brothers (all born in the 1940s and 1950s) are named after the station owner and his two sons. Naming in this way is an indicator of social closeness and perhaps, an attempt to communicate both respect and also the bonds and the responsibilities of 'family' to the employers.

Surnames are thus problematic tools by which to chart a history. Nevertheless, they can reveal relationships over time between people and tracts of country and between individuals and other families both Indigenous and non-Indigenous. They are also devices through which to understand the varying attitudes among Aboriginal people to the state and non-Aboriginal society.

I have shown that surnames were in many cases attached to persons by pastoralists, other 'employers' and police. A pattern that emerges from a number of studies in Australia (cf. May 1983:52; McGrath 1987; Cowlshaw 1999) shows that Aboriginal people who worked on stations often belonged to the 'country' (or tract of land) of which the non-Aboriginal owned station was a part. Long-term work histories in an area can sometimes be traced to a person's affiliation to birth, totemic, or other places in the region. Throughout the history of Charters Towers, Aboriginal people were attributed and themselves adopted first and surnames in ways which reveal basic kinship, but also reveal connections to their employer and to place. The memories of these details of naming, home and movement impact on notions of relatedness and family in the present, in particular through the construction of family histories. Where people stayed in town, as well as who they stayed with, also expressed belonging to particular families.

Conclusions

It was a slow process in the late 1960s and into the 1970s to abolish Queensland Government powers to remove and detain Aboriginal people on settlements and

eliminate the overt categories of control of the Act. One man told me several times (to my initial disbelief) that he was still ‘under the Act’ in the late 1970s, and mostly this meant that his pay was controlled by the Superintendent of the Palm Island settlement, even when he stayed for long periods in Charters Towers.⁹⁰ This was during the time that the Commonwealth Government was attempting to wrest power from the Queensland Government in relation to Aboriginal Affairs (Kidd 2000 [1997]), and implement ‘progressive’ idea of ‘self determination’.

Cowlishaw has written that approaches such as Thomas’, where he argues that ‘colonial histories were shaped by indigenous resistance and accommodation’ (Thomas 1994:15; in Cowlishaw 1998:145), mute the effects of colonising forces on the ‘social domain of colonial subjects’. Cowlishaw (ibid.) argues that the state is very much the oppressor of Aboriginal people. The ‘progressive’ policy initiatives of the normalising and modernising state, in particular ‘self –determination’, operate to erase cultural difference by the government insisting on the kinds of help for which they would provide funding. These actions, Cowlishaw argues, assist in the reproduction of racial inequality rather than liberate Aboriginal subjects from such oppression (ibid.:165). In the foregoing chapters I have argued that Aboriginal practice in response to settlers and the colonial state has shaped Aboriginal history. This is in contrast to Cowlishaw who ultimately sees Aboriginal people as victims under state control. In the camps on the edges of town and stations, adoption of names and naming practices, and the use of exemptions to particular advantage in Charters Towers, I have shown that Aboriginal people have responded in ways that have altered the controls imposed on their lives. The state consistently shapes its old practice and discourse in new ways, and Aboriginal people continue to constitute their difference and sameness through practices which produce knowledge particular to their kin as well as comprehension to the state.

Notions of ‘accommodation and resistance’ might well be applied here, however the concepts seem to fall short of complexities that I have attempted to convey in this and the previous chapter. It is the same kind of hesitancy that Sider has noted in the

⁹⁰ The old Queensland Acts were not repealed until 1984 with the *Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984 (QLD)*, which finally removed the *official* categories of discrimination of Aboriginal people (Kidd 2000 [1997]:266).

use of the concept ‘struggle’ to describe the ongoing lives of African Americans and Native Americans. He writes,

[I]n ordinary daily life, “struggle” is usually so deeply mixed with collusion, accommodation, evasion, denial, and more that just to give it a separate name introduces an aura of romanticization and of unreality. While we can actually see many struggles, they are often just the surface manifestations of deep and pervasive contradictions. These underlying contradictions can make struggles possible or necessary, and they can also limit the effectiveness of struggle as a source of change by merging it with other processes. (Sider 2003:xxxv)

Social practice itself might be read as ‘resistance’, as can visibility. To the white population of Charters Towers for many years, the town had an ‘invisible’ Aboriginal population, in the sense that white people considered them not ‘really Aboriginal’. Scattered around the town women, children and some men lived in homes that they rented or had bought out of the wages they had been paid after being exempted from the Act (or as a result of permission to purchase from the Protector). People in town had to present, on the surface, a picture of ‘assimilation’. Such quiet living and ostensive ‘assimilation’ belied their ongoing relationships with their families and the larger Aboriginal population of the area. In the face of punishment from the state – especially revocation of exemption certificates - those Aboriginal women (and some men) living in towns housed and welcomed their families when they came into town from the station and they organised dances, parties, cricket matches and outings to the river. They were integral members of Aboriginal families and as such reproduced the conditions of sociality that sustained the relations among Aboriginal families. These responses to the ongoing dominance of the state may be characterised as resistance/accommodation, but they also characterise the fissures in state control of Aboriginal subjects. State control is incomplete. For example, Departmental knowledge of who Aboriginal people were, and where they were working was incomplete. More clearly, surveillance under the Act (whether in town, at work on stations, or on a settlement) breaks down when people eschewed bureaucratic categories (of exempt/under the Act) that were a state attempt at creating social divisions among family.

The following chapter draws on some of the aspects of relationship to the state that I have outlined in the history of naming and surnames above, and demonstrates the interplay of the practice and structure of family in the present.

Chapter 4 ‘Family group’ and family

To be Aboriginal is to be born to, to belong to, to be loyal to a family (Barwick 1974:154)

...many of the most rigorous genealogical discussions I have heard focus on the definitions of ‘family’. It’s in the blood, to be sure; but it’s also in the reckoning. (Bell 1998:245)

Introduction

Aboriginal kinship in Charters Towers is most often expressed as ‘family’. It has been said that there is ‘a paucity of [ethnographic] information’ on the construct of ‘family’, and on surnames as identifiers of collectivities, in rural and urban Aboriginal Australia (Sutton 1998b:55-56). More broadly, there is limited information on the practice of Aboriginal kinship, expressed as ‘family’ and sometimes ‘mob’. Among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers, the expression ‘family’ may refer contextually to a number of different sets of, but overlapping, relations. That is, when people talk of ‘family’, the term may refer to their residential unit; bilateral kin; an ancestor focussed construct such as cognatic descent group; inclusive combination of all ‘close’ kin, including affines; and ‘one big family’, being all those who are related in some way (cf. Finlayson 1991:197; Sutton 1998b:57). In consideration of this complexity, I discuss here two particular intertwined forms of expression of ‘family’ among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers. The first concerns relationships that engender the everyday and changing economic, political and social relationships between people who consider each other kin, or ‘bilateral and labile relations’ of kinship (Austin-Broos 2003:118).

The second expression of ‘family’ is the construct ‘family group’. This emphasises descent and figures large in most organised political forms, such as organisations established for the purposes of Native Title processes. The ‘family group’ is an entity that is constructed in an organised political arena. The ‘family group’ has a genealogy, with apical ancestors, ‘rules’ of descent, and a name and thus does have a basis in reality. There are three ‘Kudjala family groups’ which are recognised (enshrined in the constitution of the land council) as ‘Traditional Owners’ of the area around Charters Towers.

Family groups, as constructs, are abstract and simple in the sense that as formalised entities (with legalised structure) they stand apart from the more complex rendering of relatedness. This is not to say that they are not ‘real’, but their structured-ness belies the more complex ways in which people belong to family and express their kinship.

In this chapter I analyse how the constructs, the vehicles of landed politics known in Charters Towers as ‘family groups’, are mobilised, negated, disputed and articulated through the practice of ‘family’. On the (rhetorical and official) surface ‘family groups’ are structured entities that act as political units as ‘*the families of Charters Towers*’. With native title, Aboriginal people are acutely aware of the adequacy and inadequacy of definitions of groups whether these are families, tribes, ‘estate groups’ or clans. While the existence of ‘groups’ may not be solely a function of the state, and in particular native title process, being recognised within the native title process depends on demonstrating certain kinds of Aboriginal social structures.⁹¹ As examined in Chapter 2 and 3, the effects of the history of a controlling state have meant that knowledge of family and connections between family are not always certain. The use of archives and the bureaucratic documents of the past might help extend the knowledge of family in this context. However, given the complications of documentary records - for example the official confusion caused by people’s multiple surnames as discussed in Chapter 3 - the records can also significantly complicate the connections between past and present family. Moreover, extending knowledge through the use of documents can lend uncertainty to people’s own knowledge of their families. It thus becomes important to show the performance of kinship and relatedness, as well as the ways in which knowledge and uncertainty of knowledge of family is managed, in relation to the ‘family group’ structures.

I begin here by reviewing some of the relevant literature of Aboriginal kinship, ‘family’ and household to draw out some of the aspects of kinship I present in the body of the chapter. A review of the literature facilitates working through notions of ‘public/private’ domain and other dualisms that I have found arise in my analysis of the construct ‘family group’ expressed in organised politics and ‘family’ in everyday social practice. I argue here that concepts of private and public are not useful to this

⁹¹ I discuss these extensively in Chapter 6 and 7.

analysis since people bring the politics of everyday relations into organised politics, and draw the processes and outcomes of organised politics into their living arrangements, their personal relationships and the demands they make on other kin. Furthermore, the ‘complications’ of structure help to bring a greater focus on the ongoing importance of the practice and articulations of kinship despite the organised political emphasis on an ancestor-focussed ‘family group’ construct. This chapter about ‘family’ basically analyses the tensions and overlaps between bilateral kinship and descent based groups.

Kinship, family and household

Aboriginal family and ‘assimilation’ in rural Australia

An initial impression of early material is that anthropologists who undertook studies of Aboriginal ‘families’ in rural areas had to some degree taken on the discourse of assimilation in their focus and analysis, which had arisen from 1930s Australian politics in regard to Aboriginal people. In this discourse, Aboriginal social change outside of acceptable the Western norm was seen as ‘barriers to assimilation’ (see Reay 1945; 1949; Bell 1956; Fink 1957; 1960; Calley 1969). However, these and other studies are part of the discourse of assimilation, progressive for their time, and thus helpful in an analysis of the government role in the production of family.

Reay’s later work on comparing ‘white Australian family structure’ with ‘Aboriginal family structures’ seeks to understand both of these in order to facilitate the Aboriginal ‘merg[ing] with the white Australian pattern’ (1963:44). Unfortunately there is very little ethnographic detail in her work from which to assess Reay’s most interesting conclusions, that ‘a new model of behaviour which is influenced as much by indigenous native models as by the white Australian model’ is emerging (Reay 1963:44).

Beckett’s detailed work on practices such as mobility stands apart because these practices of mobility, understood in terms of Aboriginal systems of kinship, introduce a notion of connections and wider sets of relations between kin (1965:17-23). In contrast, a notion of family that belongs predominantly to ‘household’

economics and interpersonal relationships leaves out the connections between these and wider social politics. What distinguishes the above studies from studies of ‘traditional’ Aboriginal kinship (eg. Radcliffe-Brown 1930-1; Malinowski 1969) is that the ‘traditional’ studies linked family closely with bounded ‘groups’. The discussion below looks at notions of Aboriginal family that transcend both approaches; in considering the politics of ‘household’, or basic economic grouping as well as relations to land or corporate/political affiliation. The studies of the 1940s and 1950s are somewhat useful for their focus on the reproduction of Aboriginal economic units in rural Australia, but demonstrate the need to understand better the relationship between these and the political nature of kinship.

Family and the ‘private and public’

In Australia, later studies of family and household among urban living Aboriginal people have found that ‘household’ composition is variable but houses are usually occupied by a core of immediate kin who can be considered the ‘the household’ (cf. Barwick 1974; Sansom 1982). These studies represent a focus by researchers on the difference of residential practices among Aboriginal people in urban Australia to settler society. The differences emphasised the importance of wide networks of kin and the social imperative to appear generous and accommodating in order to maintain good relations among one’s kinship networks in case of hardship. These studies of urban Aboriginal people help understand the practices of family I discuss in later sections of this chapter, however I depart from them by exploring the kinship networks in relation to their links to place and organisational politics. Other studies in north Queensland have demonstrated similar connections.

Anderson’s ‘mobs’ at Bloomfield River Mission (Cape York, North Queensland), are large socio-economic complexes, or what he terms ‘macrodomestic units’ (1984:365; 1989). They are made up of a ‘clusters of linked households’ where individuals were not necessarily co-resident and the household is an economic unit, with ‘responsib[ility] for its own sufficiency’ (Anderson 1984:363). The mob includes those among whom food and other economic resources may be shared outside of the household. Anderson shows how inclusion in bush trips was mob-dependant and how knowledge of another’s history and ‘business’ was mob exclusive (except where

the information was particularly scandalous and could be used, for example, as insult). He also examines how these mobs were basically historically continuous with the ‘camps’ as well as reasonably contiguous with ‘estate group’ (ibid.:365-382).⁹² His study thus structurally intertwines economic and domestic activity (in the household), with the social activity of the ‘mob’ and then links ‘mob’ (reasonably loosely) to the concept ‘estate group’.

Finlayson’s thesis (1991: see esp. Chapter 6) includes detailed work on Aboriginal gender relations and households in Kuranda, North Queensland. She finds that ‘family as households of kin who form a political interest group is certainly commonplace in Kuranda’s community life’ (ibid.:198). Finlayson’s primary focus here is on the economics and characterisation of the matrifocal household, and not necessarily on how these relationships might be transferred to wider social relations. Nevertheless, Finlayson’s detailed focus on the relations among ‘households of kin’ in Kuranda and Cairns begin to move us toward the impact of these relations on the politics of wider kin groups. Ten years later, Henry and Daly (2001:6-8) found generally that ‘family’ in Aboriginal Kuranda is best understood in terms of the larger units, more like Sutton’s ‘surnamed cognatic descent groups’ (cf. Sutton 1998b), rather than in terms of the ‘household’. Nonetheless, it seems that a study of the structure of Aboriginal households can inform a conceptualisation of the relations *between* ‘households of kin’ and cognatic descent groups.

Yanagisako and Collier (1987:28-9) argue that we should see that all social action, ‘takes place in a socially structured world’, the concept of which deconstructs notions of distinct domains such as ‘domestic’ and ‘public’ (see also Yanagisako 1979). Likewise, in a study of kinship and the ‘new reproductive technologies’, Strathern (1992:102) centres her critique on particular dualisms in British anthropology. She argues that British anthropology has tended to distinguish descent from kinship, where the first is based in social relations which affect group affiliation, and the second on natural connections (cf. Fortes 1969). In other words ‘[s]ociety’ and ‘nature’ ‘mapped different domains of social relations, the former being more obviously moulded by convention than the latter’ (Strathern 1992:102).

⁹² At Bloomfield River Mission, ‘mobs’ were based on the camps, which had their historical basis in camps from pre-mission and early mission days (Anderson 1989:70). Camps were significant in that

We can see the influence of British anthropology in the Australianist literature, in particular in the terms ‘band’ and ‘clan’, where the first mainly describes an economic, mundane and everyday unit based on subsistence; and the second is the political, landowning and descent based domain.⁹³ Such divisions limit the understanding of social practice, especially social practice within structured contexts such as bureaucracies.

The person/land relationship is especially important in the native title era, and is closely related to questions of tension between basic units of ‘family’ and wider political structures based in kinship. Myers (1986a) in his study of Pintupi in Central Australia emphasised the need to understand person/land relations on a different basis from the band/clan division. He argues that

[A]t both levels of territorial organization, residence and landownership, groups are the outcome of processes of individual choice and negotiation, influenced by demography and environmental pressures. [...] The lack of closure and the emphasis on negotiability in membership – as well as the dispersive tendencies of bands - are dialectically related to the organization of the larger regional system (Myers 1986a:73)

While Myers’ notion that ‘individual choice and negotiation’ may be influenced by environmental and demographic pressure appears limited (since there exist many more pressures in addition to ecology) in a colonial context, the basic reanalysis of the classic division between band and clan is important. This reanalysis might be used to understand the motion between public and private, and to help deconstruct the notion that descent groups are inviolable structures rather than groups whose membership depends on changing domestic and kinship relations.

As I have shown in previous chapters, the colonial state, especially the bureaucracy, pervades the most intimate aspects of Aboriginal people’s lives. As subjects of the interest of the state (particularly in their sexual bodies)⁹⁴ Aboriginal women and Aboriginal domestic life more generally is already the subject of ‘the public domain’

each mob had their camp which no other mob would use.

⁹³ For the classic debate, see (Radcliffe-Brown 1930-1; Hiatt 1962; Stanner 1965) A good general discussion of this can be found in (Maddock 1982 [1972]:42-47).

⁹⁴ The intensity of state interest in Aboriginal women, in particular their sexual selves is a central subject of the legislation aimed at ‘protecting’ Aboriginal people in Queensland under the 1897 Act and subsequent legislation. The impact of this and similar legislation has been widely discussed in relation to other areas of Australia by anthropologists and historians (see for example McGrath 1987;

though exposure to state control and the gaze of bureaucrats and scholars in public reports. Men also have extensive knowledge of the state in their work, home and wider social lives. Their social ties and symbols of relatedness (cf. Schneider 1968) from these relationships, historical and contemporary, are brought to bear on organisational politics, as I will go on to demonstrate further below.

Analyses such as Yanagisako and Collier's and Strathern's help deconstruct concepts of domain, these divisions between public/private; politics/household, and so on. Further, these deconstructions assist in the conceptualisation of relations across networks of people and social spheres for a more complex perspective on the politics of family. My own research has focussed on the understandings of belonging that inhere a concept of 'family group', especially in the growth of kinship and group classifications in the native title era. In this chapter 'family' is explored in the sense that it is applied by Aboriginal people in Charters Towers, and especially in how kinship might be political, historical and linked to people's relationship with place. Below, I leave aside the construct 'family group' for the moment and explore some of the articulations of kinship as everyday relations of economics between interdependent people. I then examine these relationships in their consequence to the structure of 'family groups' in bureaucratic contexts.

Articulations of 'family' and relatedness

Residence and resources: 'family'

Aboriginal people in Charters Towers today, and in the past, live dispersed around the town in houses and units. However, each of these residences by itself does not constitute a family in the sense that I discuss it here. Instead, 'family' is understood here to describe bilateral relations among interdependent kin. Kin who are not necessarily resident with each other are dependant on one another for food, for childcare, and other primary resource sharing such as money and transport. Often, people who *normally resided* in one house might choose to eat or sleep in a number of others, but other people, notably those whose house it was recognised to be, were much more permanently resident in one place. I found that a 'family's' life thus

involved an economic interdependence of a number of related people who live in more than one residence.

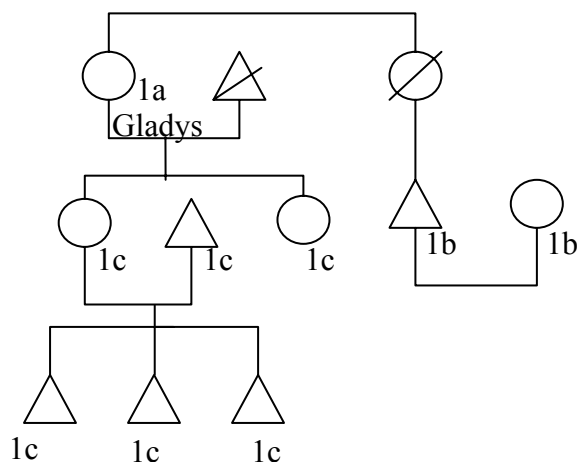


Figure 1 Gladys' 'family'

Figure 1 depicts an example of 'family' from my fieldwork data. Other examples of 'families' of interdependence are presented in Appendix A, Table 11. These 'families' are interdependent kin who share basic resources. The letters differentiate between people's residences; that is where they most usually 'stay'.⁹⁵ In genealogy 1; those marked '1a' stay most often together in residence 'a', those marked '1b' in residence 'b' and those marked '1c' in residence 'c'. However, there is some movement of individuals (especially children) between these residences. They all depend on each other for basic resources such as small amounts of cash, which are less often borrowed between, than demanded from each other. The examples I give are in no way fixed, and every visit I have made to Charters Towers since my fieldwork I have noticed that different relations of dependence can be seen among kin. Nonetheless this figure demonstrates the basic point that members of a family may stay more often in one residence, but depend on a range of kin on a day to day basis for food, cash, and the basics of day-to-day life, as well as an alternate place to stay.

The following account of 'Myrtle Green's family' is a more detailed example of this resource and residence 'sharing', and is further elaborated in Figure 2 and Figure 3.

⁹⁵ Note that this data was collated through observation over a period of about 3 months in 2002 and was accurate at that time. From my knowledge, many of the people have since changed circumstances, as at April 2004.

Myrtle Green's 'family'

Myrtle has a house with three bedrooms that she usually shares with her eldest daughter's eldest daughter, Jenae. Myrtle's eldest daughter, Jane, lives in a flat on the other side of town with her younger daughter Pippa and her son Joshua. Pippa and Joshua also stay with their grandmother if Jane goes out, and the three eat at Myrtle's house frequently. They also sleep at the house if it is convenient to their daily activities.

Myrtle's youngest daughter, Gemma, used to live there with her son, Austin, but Gemma moved out to live with her boyfriend in another town, until she became pregnant and returned to live in Charters Towers where she and her boyfriend and Austin rent a flat. Gemma spent much time at her mother's house to eat and to watch television. She also sometimes leaves Austin with her mother if she goes 'out'.

Myrtle's eldest brother, Eddie, lived in her house for some months after he came back to town and then moved to Jane's flat but still travels between them. Myrtle's other brother, Will, returned from Palm Island to stay in Charters Towers for some time with his wife, Elaine, and two sons and they moved in with Myrtle. They do not always share food, and the two sons do not stay there very much but they use her house as a base. Wilson, Myrtle's eldest son, has no kids and no stable residence. On his payday Myrtle 'hunts him down' for cash. He also gets cash from Myrtle when he sees her.

Emile, Myrtle's youngest son, and his partner Tara leave their two kids with Myrtle for childcare, or they might leave them with Tara's grandmother. Myrtle's phone account is in Tara's name. If Myrtle and I had lots of fish after a fishing trip we dropped some off to Emile and Tara's house.

The father of all of Myrtle's children, Ned, lives in the town but they are no longer together. Through her children and grandchildren, Myrtle demands money from him to buy food when money is generally short, for example '*go tell him to give you 20 dollars*'. Ned bought a car and Myrtle's brother, Campbell, is the most frequent driver. As such Campbell is called upon by Myrtle and her children to drive them various places, or just 'around'. Campbell, as a single man and brother, tells Myrtle from time to time he needs money for food, or might turn up sometimes at meal times.

Myrtle's younger sister, Jeanette, might demand money, or Myrtle might demand money from her, but they do not often share meals like the others, nor do they share child- or grandchild-minding duties (but Myrtle 'grew up' Jeanette's eldest son for some years). Jeanette has many other dependents. Campbell also 'shares' his sister Jeanette's resources such as food and money when he can.

All of the people mentioned above are aware of each others' 'paydays' and might seek each other out according to whether they have a need to do so.

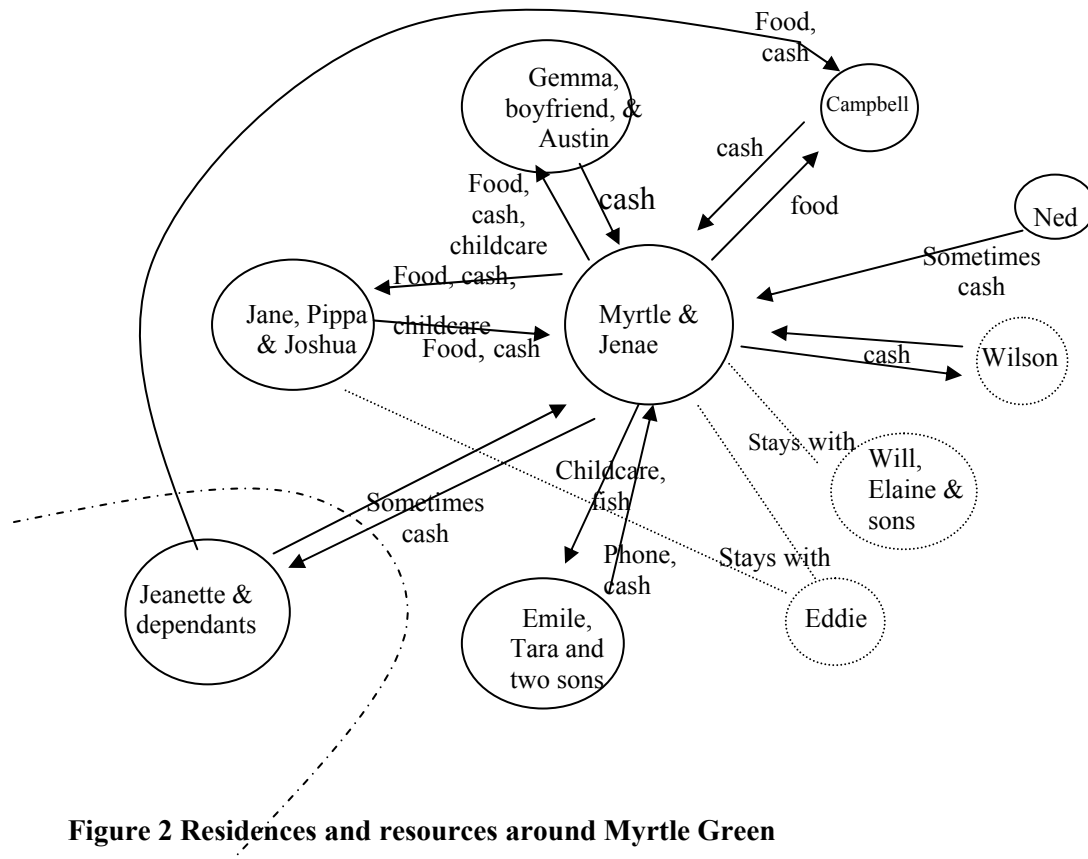


Figure 2 Residences and resources around Myrtle Green

Figure 2 depicts the flows of resources between Myrtle Green and her ‘family’, as described in the above text. A solid circle around a person/people indicates a residence. Dotted lines around Will, Elaine and their sons and around Eddie and Wilson indicate that they do not have their own residence and stay periodically with others. The arc around Jeanette indicates that she and her dependants are largely outside of the ‘sharing’ around Myrtle. Not depicted are the extensive flows of cash, food and childcare *between* Myrtle’s children, and between some of the children and their father, mother’s brothers and sister.

The genealogy in Figure 3, below, further depicts Myrtle’s family. (The lettering and numbering system in Figure 3 is the same for that in Figure 1, above, and linked to Appendix A, Table 11). In Figure 3, the genealogical link between Myrtle’s and Jeanette’s ‘families’ is demonstrated. While all individuals in this genealogy are ‘all the same family’ in the sense that they are bilaterally related kin, not all are dependent on each other. As noted, above, while Jeanette and Myrtle sometimes share resources, as do Jeanette and Myrtle’s daughter, Jane (as do others across this genealogy), it is much more occasional and from my observation, demands are slightly more hesitant than the easy demands *among* Myrtle’s ‘family’ (that is, all

those numbered '6' in Figure 3). In the same way, Jeanette's 'family' (all those numbered '5', in various residences, 5a-5c) are dependant upon each other on a day-to-day basis. Thus while individuals may be closely linked in genealogical terms, whether they are 'family' in the sense I use is here, is about being dependant on each other for basic resource sharing.

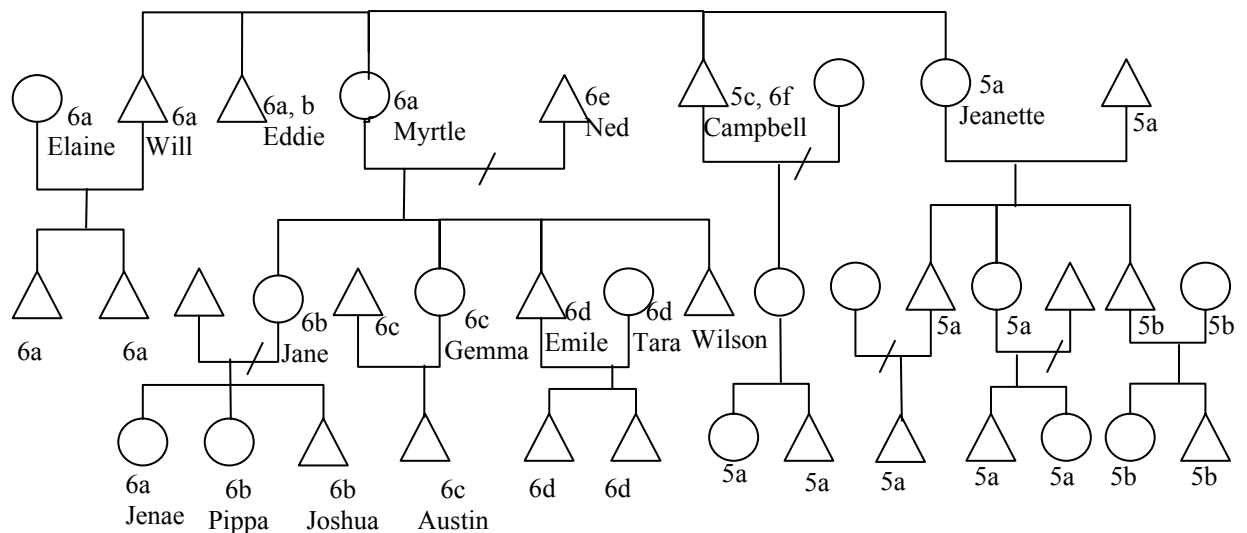


Figure 3 Genealogy of residences relevant to Myrtle Green⁹⁶

Anthropologists in Australia have described similar kinds of resource use among other Aboriginal people. Most emphasise that this is about the securing of resources and relationships rather than altruism that is inferred by notions of 'sharing'. Sansom (1988:170) has noted (after Goody 1982) that among Aboriginal people there is 'performative kinship', where in many cases, 'recognition of kinship is contingent on action'. Within this scheme, money is transformed into social action, where it is 'help, helping, helping out', and such terms become the 'grammar of exchange' that substantiates persons within the scheme of kinship (ibid.:176). In this understanding, the resource use such as described among Myrtle and her kin cements their belonging to her family, rather than being a function of kinship per se.

In what Peterson (1993; 1997:189) has called 'demand sharing', Aboriginal people manage the pressures between the importance of recognising a 'widespread range of kinship ties' with the corresponding many demands, and the necessity of minimising

⁹⁶ The numbers in the genealogy also correspond to those in Appendix A Table 11.

social relationships and thus also lessening demands. During my fieldwork, I observed differences in frequent and easy demands *among* Myrtle's 'family' and the more occasional demands or sharing of resources between members of Jeanette's 'family' and Myrtles'. However, the closeness of the kinship links in this case means that these interdependences may shift so that greater demands are made between Myrtle and her sister (see below). These examples begin to show how demands are limited but also accentuated among kin. Peterson has noted that this process 'reflects the underlying tension Myers has identified between autonomy and relatedness' (ibid. cf Myers 1986a). Applying the demand sharing concept to Wiradjuri, Macdonald (2000:108) also finds that giving/receiving/demanding is about being in relationships, that the 'focus is on the relationship rather than the object' and thus 'the person with resources who never gives is refusing to enter into a relationship'. While demand sharing most generally may define the presence of a relationship, it is the frequency and type of demands between certain people which differentiates a kin relationship from one of friendship, for example, and from those of 'family'.

Riches (2000:677-79) has given a critique of Peterson's notion of 'demand sharing'. He asks 'what are caring, nourishing, protection, and supporting, if not expressions of everyday giving and demanding?' And argues that 'demand sharing' 'as a concept... is a contradiction in terms, for it conflates action (demanding) and notion (sharing values) levels of social life' (ibid.:678-9). It seems to me that it is exactly this conflation which is useful to convey the readiness to share and easiness in demanding that defines kinship relations, and more specifically those of 'family', and how these relationships are expressed and idealised.

For example, all of the people in Myrtle Green's residence and resource network are 'family', they are people with whom she shares her life and means (but not necessarily her surname). She looks after as well as is looked after by the others. These relationships can be brought to bear on political alliances in bureaucratic fields, as well as these impacting on resource 'sharing'. Myrtle's attendance at meetings and her support of her brother Campbell sometimes depended on whether he had refused to drive her somewhere, or had been giving all his money to others. Likewise, if Myrtle was dissatisfied with Campbell's decisions or actions in a meeting she might not ask him for a lift or avoid him so that he may not ask her for

money or meat from her freezer. Since my fieldwork, Jeanette has become more involved in the bureaucratic politics of organisations around town and Myrtle's demands on her sister appear to have increased. Such actions (and non-actions) symbolise being in a relationship, as well as create the terms of that relationship: the easy demanding and giving of money and food (and childcare, etc.) between the people above, mean that they are 'family' in the most immediate and interdependent way. Moreover, the interplay between these everyday relationships between members of a 'family' feed into the relationships that are played out in terms of bureaucratic political interests. And the absence of such relationships, or their bad terms, is also demonstrated in minimal or lack of political backing for individuals without such networks.

Kin terms and first names: relatedness in practice

Jeanette Green told me that the use of kin terms kept 'her kids' together. She has a daughter and a son by a first marriage, her husband has two sons by his first marriage, and they have another son together. Jean's and her husband's children all have children themselves, and some of these live with Jean. Some of Jean's brother's daughter's children also stay with her for long stretches. Her sister's daughter's children are often around at Jean's house eating, playing and sometimes sleeping. Jean says that she '*treat[s] them all the same in my house*', and tells them all to call each other brother and sister, that way, '*they stick together*'. Kin terms can thus be symbolic of kinds of relationships in practice, or rather; the use of kin terms can *create* a close kin relationship rather than infer one.

An individual may also choose to use kin terms in a way that reflects their immediate desire (eg asking for money): Megan Foster asked Elisa Thomas, her mother's sister, '*Mum, have you got ten [dollars]?*' Kin terms might also be avoided in order to 'level' relationships. At another time, Elisa was playing a game of cards with her daughter's daughter, one of her sons, a distant cousin and her brother's daughter (and myself). Within the idiom of the game, everyone called Elisa by her first name (or variants on it) rather than Aunty Elisa, Mum, or the respectful 'old girl' that I have heard on every other occasion. Here, Elisa's kin in the context of the card game denied her the status of older relative and they were all equals at the table (but when

Elisa's daughter's daughter got up to make tea, she asked '*how many sugars, Mum?*').

In the context of meetings, the use of kin terms is the language of 'respect', but also expressing relationships of trust and belonging. As a negative example, people who do not call an older person by 'Uncle/Aunt' in meetings might be demonstrating a dispute with or deliberate lack of respect for that person. The use of kin terms mobilises relationships of family; that is, of 'sharing' and interdependence.

Shared history, shared meanings: 'my mob'

In Charters Towers, there are aggregates of adults who spent their working lives together on stations, grew up together in the town, or perhaps in the dormitory on Palm Island. There are those who were brought up together in extended, foster or adoptive families, or who were fed and 'looked after' as children by particular adults and as a result have strong social bonds (for example naming their own children after these carers). These relationships extend to adulthood and the comment '*we grew up together*' can explain a relationship which might be continued in looking after each other's children and spending drinking or other social time together. Often these people *are* actual kin, such as close or distant cousins. The children of such consociates are encouraged (and in most cases do) call the kin, non-kin, or 'distant' kin adults in such relationships Aunt/Uncle.

Figure 4 shows an example where a female friendship (Rachel and Marcy) based on time together at High School, was followed by Marcy 'marrying' Rachel's mother's sister's son, and Rachel's sister Nicola being long term partners with Marcy's brother. Such relationships between people sometimes mean that they may refer to each other as belonging to 'our mob', and spend all their social time together.⁹⁷ These friends who become kin and these relationships may be passed from one generation to the next, but may also be subject to change over one's lifetime. The people in Figure 4 at the same generation level as Rachel and the children of that

⁹⁷ In the Aboriginal vernacular, people in Charters Towers refer to certain groups of people as 'that mob' or 'my mob', etc. These may be 'family', in the various ways outlined above and the term is widely used and interchangeable with 'family' as well as 'friends'. It may also be contextual, for example 'that land council mob' refers to those who work for the land council and the interests which surround such work.

generation were sometimes referred to by others as ‘Rachel’s mob’. Significant conflict occurred between Rachel and Marcy (as a result of Marcy having to ‘side’ with her ‘family group’ against Rachel in a bureaucratic forum) and this lasted some five years. Despite this, and the fact that the women do not speak to each other, their children continue to play together, Rachel often minds Marcy’s children for an evening or a weekend and all the children call the three women ‘Auntie’.

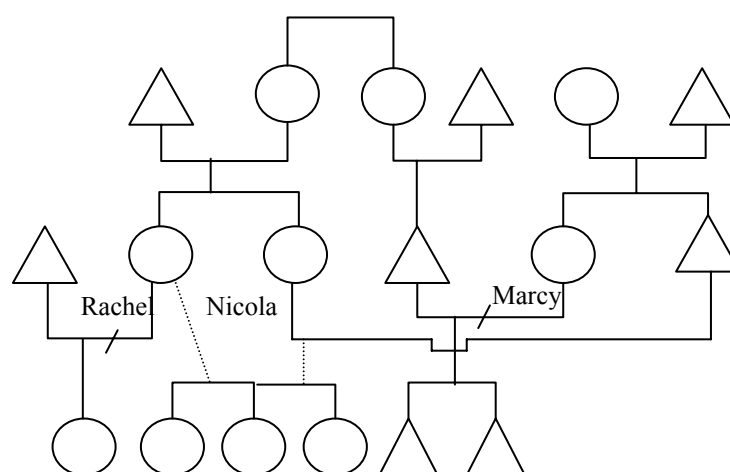


Figure 4 ‘Rachel’s mob’, a shared history⁹⁸

In Charters Towers people spend time together in each other’s houses as well as difference spaces of the town, such as the park or the bus stop at the top of the main street. ‘Keeping up with’ the business between and among kin who live in different houses across town on a daily basis means the continuation of shared histories as well as shared meanings that come with intimate knowledge of each other’s lives.

Visiting may include those that, as above, are friends with whom the visitor has a shared history.⁹⁹ Women of similar age often visit other women with their children and the children whom they care for. Young people form groups that ‘hang’ together (quite often in gendered groups of cousins). Older women who play cards together on pension day and the older women who belong to the women’s group and meet

⁹⁸ Dotted lines in this diagram indicate that the children are looked after by the women on a full-time basis.

⁹⁹ Older people complain that ‘people don’t visit as much as they used to’, accentuating the changes in

during the week days and groups of drinkers are all bases for visiting and the beginnings (or continuations) of shared history. Older men also visit, usually other older men, and often where they have a shared history of station or similar work. Albert Marasa, for example, lives up the road from his sister's son, Norman Maynard. Albert and Norman are only about ten years apart in age and spent time working on the same stations in the 1960s, and now as older men spend time together.

Where kin have little shared history, they are much less likely to be comfortable visitors or, indeed, to visit each other much at all. A person is not necessarily able to walk into any residence belonging to other kin and freely avail themselves of the contents of the other's fridge. Or where one brother might eat from his sister's fridge, another brother might not. Being 'family' is concerned with the particular dependant circumstances of individuals, and these often are based on their life history associations. While inclusiveness as kin is an important basis for visiting one another's houses, the importance of shared history is also significant. Members of one's 'family group' with whom one has little shared history would seldom be referred to as 'my mob'. Barwick (1962) noted similar importance of shared history, and the importance of 'gossip' among Aboriginal 'kinsmen' in Melbourne. She notes that the 'gossip network' and shared experiences among kin form the basis of friendships and ongoing social relationships. Thus although a 'mob' may often be made up of cognatic kin, those referred to as '[my] mob' are constituted by relationships based in similar interests and 'looking after' each other (and ones' children), in effect, the performance of relationships of kinship.

Travel

Birdsall notes that older Nyungar women, in the south west of Western Australia travel frequently 'among their kin, especially visiting their daughters with children in order to 'meet their obligations to the family community' (Birdsall 1988:148). Older women, especially grandmothers, in Charters Towers are comparably mobile and have similar visiting practices to those in Birdsall's account. One of these is Mrs Annie Marasa, an older woman who 'married in' to the Charters Towers area, in the

sense that her parents' origins were further west. Mrs Marasa met her husband on Palm Island and they then lived with his family in Charters Towers, and raised their children in the town. Members of her family now live up and down the coast, from Brisbane to Cairns, as well as in towns in western Queensland. Although frail, Mrs Marasa is '*always travelling around*' (as Esther Sorrell, her friend, once told me when I asked after Mrs Marasa) especially visiting her children and grandchildren in Brisbane and Mount Isa.

Likewise, Jeanette Green often visits her daughters, as well as brother's daughter, especially those who live on Palm Island. Her frequent visits often coincide with a period of 'looking after' her grandchildren for a number of months due to various hardships of the mothers. Her house in Charters Towers is always full of her adult children, their partners, children and her brother's daughter's children. Jean's visits to Palm Island, frequently serve the purpose of making sure the children are being 'looked after properly' (see Birdsall 1988). That she is going to check up on the kids is never explicitly stated, but referred to implicitly through stories of '*how bad it is over there* [on Palm Island]'. One story, told by Jeanette with considerable mirth, involved a grandchild (about 6 years), when asked if he was going home to his mother for the holidays, stating that he preferred to stay with his Nanna in Charters Towers, unlike his younger sister, '*she wanted to go to Palm and starve*'. The story is also told with clicks of the tongue, and comments about the inability of some younger women to properly look after their children. The travelling grandmother perform their role as grandmothers by travelling, and looking after 'family'.

In the 'Native Title Era', the opportunity to travel to meetings in another town is sometimes seized for the chance to 'meet up' with people. This is especially the case for those who have lived for all of their lives on a mission or settlement (now generally referred to in the literature as 'communities', such as Yarrabah, Woorabinda, Cherbourg or Palm Island). These meetings are sometimes used as an occasion to find lost kin. One very frail older woman whom I met at one meeting had travelled the considerable distance to Charters Towers for the meeting not to hear about the native title claim business, but to chase up the origins of her family. She had never known who her father was except that he had been taken from further west of Charters Towers when he was a young child. This search for family has been

initiated by the process of native title, and the demands within this process of ‘proofs’ of origin. However, ‘looking for family’ is often distressing and not resolved due to gaps in the oral and official records of removals, as well as the difficulty of tracing ancestors who might only have a first name, or whose surname is unknown. Such travelling expresses the history of removals and movement of people throughout the state that I outlined in previous chapters. However, meeting up with people at these bureaucratic events is a kind of performative kinship, a demonstration of belonging by meeting and looking for kin.

There are also those who are well known as alcoholics (sometimes ‘*goomies*’),¹⁰⁰ and who spend significant amounts of time travelling. I know of two men in their late thirties and one woman about the same age, who are ‘always travelling’ from town to town throughout Queensland and even into the Northern Territory and New South Wales visiting family and friends, ‘*looking for a change*’. These people are important message givers and takers and those who hear news along particular ‘grapevines’ and spread the kinds of news that non-drinkers might not hear. Like the travelling grandmothers, and travelling for meetings, travelling drinkers maintain the knowledge of one another’s business that is a requisite of being part of, and a defining feature of family.

In reference to their work with Aboriginal people and native title in Queensland, a number of anthropologists have noted the term ‘diaspora people’ (Rigsby 1993; Smith 2000; see also Weiner 2002). These are Aboriginal people who have been removed and moved from their ‘country’, but retain their links to it through knowledge of family (or reforming such links in recent times), or through attending meetings for native title processes. It is these links that, as Rigsby (1993) has argued, demonstrate the continuities of bonds between people and between people and place despite physical removal. Smith (2000) has discussed the ways by which such people are included in native title claims and the barriers to such inclusion or full-inclusion. Weiner (2002) goes to the original use of the term diaspora. He argues that, like many people of the Jewish diaspora, some Aboriginal people who do not live on their country *may not wish to* or do not have the means to do so. Weiner argues that

¹⁰⁰ ‘Gum’ [goom] is the slang term for Methylated Spirits, which can be drunk neat or mixed with cask wine.

‘diasporic native title claim groups’ understandings of the connection to traditional land must be considered as a variety of the contemporary exercise of Indigenous rights in country’ (ibid.:8). In fact as these writers demonstrate, Aboriginal people do consider the ‘rights in country’ under native title of people who have lived for some time outside ‘country’ as a result of removals or other movement.

However, while there is some friction in native title contexts among those resident in Charters Towers and those who live elsewhere, it is much less so if those who live elsewhere travel to the town frequently. Travel is a result of the conditions of ‘diaspora’, as these authors have described it. However, the practice of travelling also engenders efforts to demonstrate and retain connections of family in ‘diaspora’ (see Chapter 6, 8). Travel is enabled by organisational or bureaucratic affiliation, as well as affiliation to a ‘family group’, especially travel for meetings. This kind of travel, too, maintains one’s belonging to ‘family group’ and through continuing shared experiences, there is sustenance for ‘family group’ of the ongoing relatedness between kin.¹⁰¹

Knowing your relations and performing relatedness

Being ‘related’ is not the same as ‘being family’. Many times when I have been ‘up town’ (in the central business district of Charters Towers) with Jeanette, she might point another woman out to me: ‘*See her there? She’s related to Fiona, you know, Shyanne’s mother. She’s really a ‘Jaid’ through their grandmother.*’ There is often laughter while this is pointed out. The joke in this scenario is that often the people pointed out do not identify as Murri, nor would the wider community identify them as such, due to their pallor, the way they dress, and the fact that they don’t ‘associate’ with the general Aboriginal community. They are not ‘family’ in the sense that they do not belong to everyday kin relationships through sharing resources, the use of kin terms, ‘keeping in touch’ or through a shared history. But they are related in the sense that ‘everyone’ is aware of the kin links from one person to another.

¹⁰¹ Barwick noted the same in her work in Melbourne in the early 1960s, where the ‘battlers’ who had to move in and out of the city, existing on casual employment, formed ‘an important part of the gossip network that maintain[ed] group ties throughout the State’ (Barwick 1962:21).

Another example is pertinent here. Jeanette told me the following story on a number of different occasions.

Me and [Zach] were painting that mural at the school one time when a bunch of kids started fighting. They was mainly boys, black against white. One white lady saw this happening and sung out 'Get away from my boys youse black cunts'. I went over there and saw who she was then, and told her 'Don't you call them black cunts, you and me are related you know'. You see we're really related... [recounts how they are related] and she knew that, and she shut up then.

Jeanette pointed out to me with some humour that '*any white person who's lived in this town long enough is related to one Murri family or another*', emphasising this kind of relatedness. Others too have stated to me that '*they all know who we are*'. 'They' meaning the 'older white families' (those who have been associated with the town, and especially the stations in the vicinity, for more than about two or three generations). But these people are not family, despite them being related. They are not part of the everyday or regular interaction and interdependence. You would not borrow money off them, or travel to visit them. They do not (usually) come to funerals, and although there are parallels in personal histories, these are marked by a distinction of class and race rather than shared experiences.¹⁰²

The overlap: 'family' and 'family group'

The articulations of kinship among Murrin in Charters Towers that I have outlined so far in this chapter, are the performances of 'family' and relatedness. These do not 'add up' to a definition of family, rather they are the changing relationships among kin that express connections and disconnections between people who refer (or do not) to each other as 'family'. These are the active relationships that impact on the relations among and belonging to 'family group'. The following section outlines the *structure* of 'family group', as it is defined by bureaucratic forms and how such forms are infused with the performance of family.

¹⁰² There are one or two pastoralist families who do attend the odd funeral (see Chapter 8) and keep in touch with Murri families who once worked for them, and who may be referred to as 'Uncle', but they are the exception.

The structure of 'family group' and descent

I have outlined above some of the discussion of Aboriginal 'family' in the literature, but here I want to discuss the links that have been made between 'family' and descent group, in particular in the context of descent to rights in land, and which link such constructs to native title processes. Among those people (both Murri and white) that work in native title it seems that these constructs have a basis in anthropological language about 'clan' which is then linked to 'family' (see Sutton 1998b:57). An example of this link, which is pre-native title, is Ronald and Catherine Berndts' (1993) detailed kinship work in the lower Murray River and lakes. They described named *clans* with alliances forged between them and between them and others through intermarriage (Berndt, Berndt & Stanton 1993:31-57). They wrote that 'it is clear that by the turn of the century if not before the clans were being replaced by the emergence of named 'families'' (1993:57). However, what the composition of 'families' is, how they were different to 'clans', what the process of 'change' entailed and what the changing relationships to land were as a result is not examined in their work.

Nonetheless with the same people (Ngarrindjeri) many years later, Bell writes that

Today people commonly speak of the "families", a unit held together by blood lines, but lines that may be traced through all four grandparents and even by reference to one's great-grandparents and their siblings. Thus the "family" is larger than what might have been a clan group and smaller than (sic) a dialect/language grouping...(Bell 1998:212)

In her discussion of these families, Bell writes that she 'think[s] of these "families" as large local cognatic descent groups who are known by [sur]names that connect them to particular places' (ibid.:245). She goes on to describe the process whereby 'names still go through the patriline, but the residential pattern is more likely to be matrifocal' (ibid.:246). Similar kinds of structures emerge from Sutton's extensive work in Aboriginal Australia, especially in native title. In his paper *Families of polity* (1998a:57), Sutton understands the 'surnamed family' as being 'polysemous'. That is, it may refer to a 'cognatic descent group', 'minimal procreative family'; a household with key defining residents from a particular family plus affines; or a wider group or 'mob' mainly composed of a descent group, but with others affiliated by history and residence. However, he is primarily concerned with analysing the role

of the ‘surname family’ as ‘cognatic descent group’ in relation to native title throughout urban and rural Australia (ibid.).¹⁰³ He writes:

They are descent groups of enduring and central importance to the conduct of Aboriginal business. They are families of polity in the sense that they form major structural elements of public life in Aboriginal society and do not belong merely to a domestic or private domain. They persist over long periods, and thus have many recognised deceased members who are not merely remembered but who continue to form powerful reference points in determining how their living descendants establish rights and interests in traditional forms of cultural property including country. (Sutton 1998a:60)

Sutton’s ‘families of polity’/ ‘surnamed families’/ ‘cognatic descent groups’, as well as Bell’s “families” fit well into the traditionalist mould demanded by native title. It is a neat transposition of the classic division between descent and kinship (see Strathern, above), where the descent groups belong to public life, not ‘*merely*’ the ‘private domain’.¹⁰⁴ Such structural notions are useful for the process of native title, which asks for rules of descent, not the less legalistic ‘practices of belonging’, or reproduced practices. The ‘family group’ of Charters Towers parlance has a *structure* similar to Sutton’s ‘surnamed families’: principally, elements of cognatic descent to ‘family group’ and through mother or father and elders (both alive and dead) recognised as knowledgeable and central figures *for that family group* (see Chapter 7). Here I do not seek to overturn the model that Sutton proposes, but to demonstrate some of the limitations of it given my data on the complications of membership and belonging to ‘family group’. I outline the structure of Charters Towers ‘family groups’, below. Here and in the following chapters, the limitations of the ‘family group’ (or ‘cognatic descent’ or ‘surname family’) as effectively representative of Aboriginal kinship systems, or as representative of ‘the polity’ is demonstrated

¹⁰³ Cognatic descent group is defined in Sutton (1998a:60) as ‘[a group] formed by those who share recognised descent from a particular ancestor or set of blood-related ancestors, and who trace their links to such ancestors through either parent.’

¹⁰⁴ Sutton’s (1998b) work has been criticised (among other things) for being overly conservative in his ‘emphasis on rule-driven practices’ (Pannell & Vachon 2001:239). Sutton’s rejoinder (2001:368) to these criticisms points to his discussion of the limitations of ‘kinship-based structures’ in ‘territorial interests [and] inter-group political relations,’ and to his note about the ‘importance of both the individual and the regional system’ as well as kinship in governance. My argument with Sutton is that his discussion of ‘surname families’ leaves out the negotiation, politicking and sometimes creative structuring of these ‘groups’.

through bureaucratic contexts. First I outline the constitution of ‘family group’ in Charters Towers.

Charters Towers ‘family groups’

The three ‘family groups’ of Kudjala in Charters Towers are those recognised as entities with concomitant representation in the constitution of the Inland Land Council (ILC). They are ‘recognised’ by Kudjala and other kin in Charters Towers; that is, each ‘family group’ is a ‘group’ devised in response to native title legislation, but based on the established knowledge of kinship relations among these people. The family groups as composite named descent groups are illustrated in the simple diagrams in Figure 5.

The example in Figure 6 of the Green/Jones family group is a cognatic descent group, and this is also the case for the other two family groups. However, as I will outline below, the constructs are also complicated by residential and political factors. The family groups in Charters Towers identify an apical ancestor each.¹⁰⁵ This apical ancestor is a woman who is recognised as being born in, or having been taken from the tract of land that is identified as belonging to Kudjala at or before the time of first settlement of the area (1860s). None of the family groups, however, carry their ‘apical ancestor’s surname; the composite name of each of the family groups is derived from men.

In the Marasa/Hughes, the surname ‘Marasa’ is derived from ‘old Betty’s’ husband, and ‘Hughes’ from that of her daughter ‘old Gwen’s’ husband. For the Green/Jones, ‘old Sarah’s daughter, old Bella’, had two husbands and the surname Green is taken from one of them. Jones is taken from the two Jones brothers that old Bella’s two daughters (who went by Brown) married (see below). The Burn/Jaid family group take their surnames from ‘old Elly’s two daughters’ husbands. Although some of the men from whom the surnames for the family groups are of Aboriginal descent, none of them are identified in the research done by the ILC and members of the family

¹⁰⁵ In the Burn/Jaid family group diagram, * indicates a woman who was known to be an ancestor and whose great granddaughter (DDD) believed to be from the Kudjala area, but who was not officially listed as an ‘Apical Ancestor’ for the Burn family. I am unsure why this is the case, although suspect that one reason is that the DDD and other Burns are not heavily involved in native title.

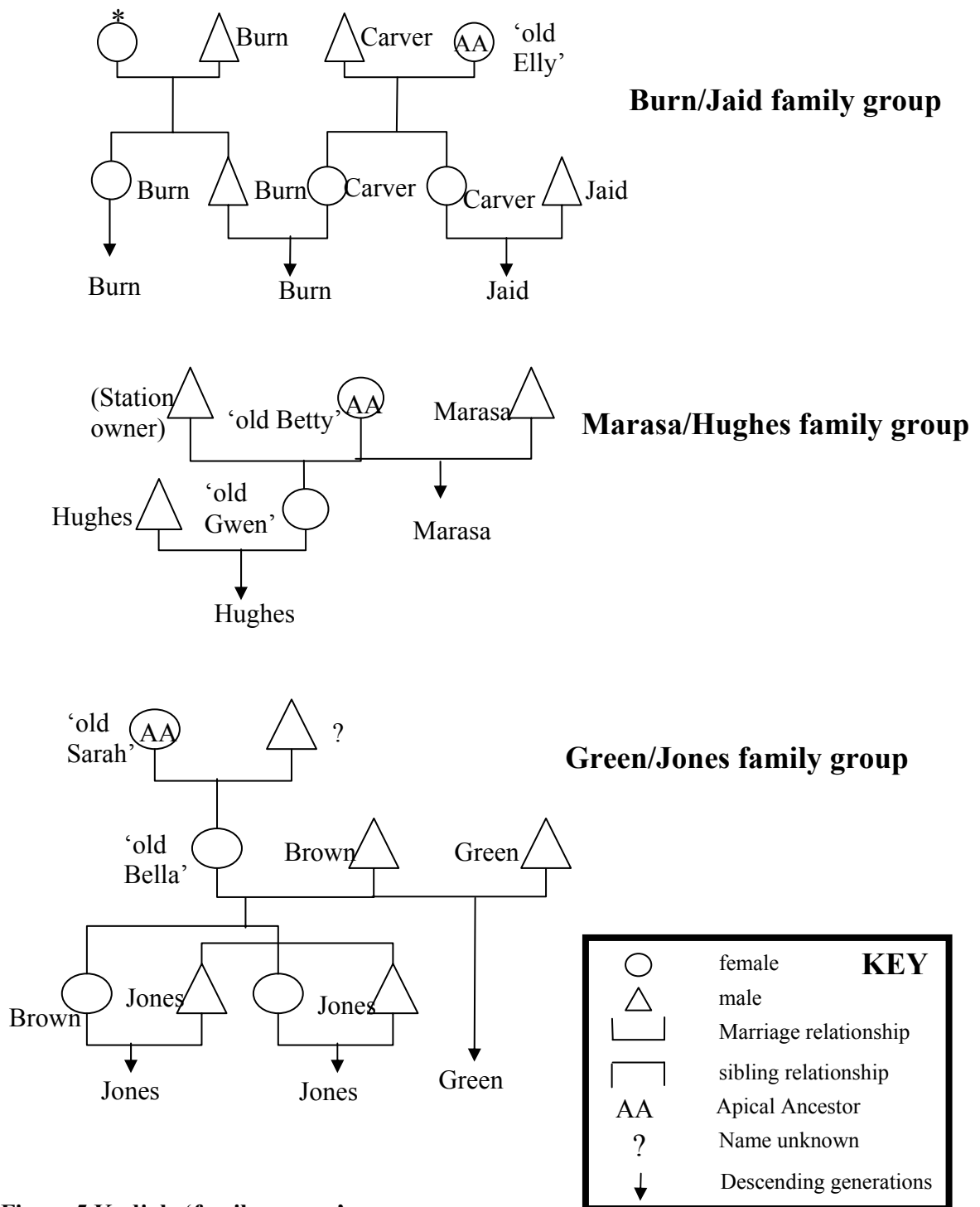


Figure 5 Kudjala ‘family groups’

groups as having come from ‘Kudjala’ area. Thus it is the women apical ancestors through whom descent to land is traced, but it is their early husbands (Islanders, white men and Aboriginal men from elsewhere) whose names are taken for the ‘descent groups’. The surnames are patronyms, but descent and belonging to the family group is traced predominantly through the ancestor women.

Each family group is recognised to have particular associations with ‘country’ in terms of political representation. On this bureaucratic level each of the three surname families is presumed to act as a unit, with internally recognised ‘elders’ as representatives of the whole group and modes of decision making based on consensus with deference to such elders and voting at meetings in a bloc.¹⁰⁶

To belong to one of the family groups, a person must be born to a member of that surnamed family either mother or father (and in some cases both). From there, belonging to ‘family group’ for the descending generations becomes more complicated. I will extend the Green/Jones diagram from Figure 5 (above) to descending generations and discuss these in order to illustrate cognatic descent and other aspects of belonging to ‘family group’.

The ‘Green/Jones’ family group identifies with one named apical ancestor, old Sarah, who with her Islander husband had a number of children.¹⁰⁷ Only their daughter, old Bella, stayed around Charters Towers and she had two husbands (whose surnames were ‘Green’ and ‘Brown’). Old Bella had many children by these two men (not all shown in this diagram). As noted above, the surname of the family group comes not from old Sarah, but one of her daughter old Bella’s husbands (Green) and the two husbands (who were brothers) of her daughter’s daughters (Jones 1 and Jones 2).

The Green/Jones’ today actually have many different surnames, some examples being Brown, Allen, Thomas and Martin.¹⁰⁸ These people are descendants of a Green or a Jones woman marrying an Allen/Thomas/Martin and the woman and her children identifying with the Green/Jones family group. The Browns live on Palm Island (and have lived there most or all of their lives). This is the reason that although they are officially members of the Green/Jones family group and their surname belongs to ‘old Bella’s’ first husband, the family group has accentuated the ‘Jones’ surname instead. Clearly, any cognatic tie to the ancestor can generate strong basis to membership of family group.

¹⁰⁶ See Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁷ Only one daughter is shown here. Note that Figure 5 is not a complete genealogy of the Green/Jones.

¹⁰⁸ I estimate that there are more than 200 people who identify as belonging to the ‘Green/Jones family group’.

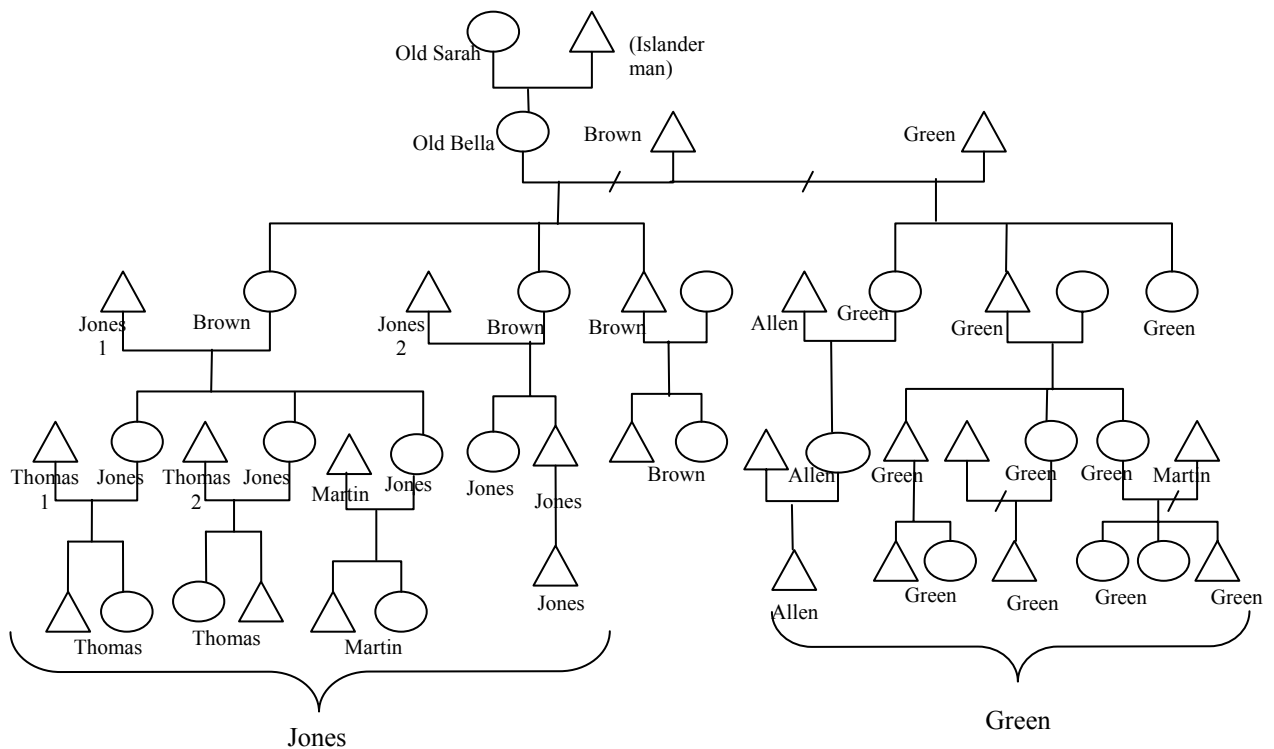


Figure 6 The Green/Jones family group and other surnames

The Thomas' say they are 'really Joneses'. They are the descendants of two Jones women (the two Jones sisters who married two Thomas brothers) and most of the descendants of these women live in Charters Towers.

Martin is a name that is widely recognised from a neighbouring region, and although many people have the name Martin 'officially' (for example, on their birth certificates and other identification papers), they are known as Jones among 'their own mob' especially if they 'go Charters Towers way'.¹⁰⁹ If someone 'goes Charters Towers way' it means they participate more often in the bureaucratic politics of that 'side' of their family. This is less choice than consequence, as I discuss below.

The Allens are 'really' Greens, but all of them 'go by' the name Allen after their father. There are many people also who do carry the Jones or Green surname through their being descended through a male line (and a male line that passed the name

¹⁰⁹ There are many more people with the last name Martin, and who belong to the Green/Jones family group who are not represented in Figure 6.

down). There are also older Green women who ‘carry’ this surname from their father, and whose children ‘carry’ Green rather than their father’s name.

There are people in Charters Towers who have the surname ‘Allen’ (and ‘Thomas’ and ‘Martin’) who are not Green/Jones, such as affinal women who have taken their husband’s name; and children who have their father’s name, but who ‘follow’ their mother. These are not represented in Figure 6 because they are not effectively part of ‘family group’. Which ‘way’ someone ‘goes’ (or ‘follows’) is not a *choice* so much as a *consequence* of a history of living in a place and having demonstrated relationships with other people of that place. ‘Choice’ is sometimes emphasised when people talk about possibilities for participation in organised politics, for instance Megan once told me after a meeting for native title business, *‘I’m sick of all this fighting, you should come to meetings up there [an adjoining area]. They don’t fight like this lot here. I can go there through dad.’* However, since Megan lives in Charters Towers and has lived for most of her life in the town, she continues to be involved in Kudjala meetings. While her rhetoric emphasises ‘choice’, performance of kinship as linked to place somewhat determines her involvement with a Kudjala ‘family group’.

If I was to ask a Martin (for example) who they are, they might reply they are a ‘Martin from Charters Towers’ and further, *‘I’m really a Green through my mother.’* Questions about their relatedness by a researcher (giving the conversation a native title context) the person might then include that *‘we’re all one mob, Greens and Jones’, through that old girl [Bella] who had them two men.’*¹¹⁰ Being a ‘Green’ is actually the primary focus of the belonging to family, however, belonging to the ‘Green/Jones family group’ is structured through a knowledge of the native title era imperative to accentuate descent from an ancestor. The Greens and Jones acknowledge shared times in their families’ histories and they recognise the connection between their families in various ways such as the use of kin terms when addressing each other. However, many of the members of their families have lived relatively distinct lives. There is a recognition of the kinship connections between

¹¹⁰ ‘Old Bella’ had three men (see Figure 7), but when talking of the Green/Jones’, usually only two were mentioned.

people of the Greens and Jones, but not necessarily the everyday practices described at the beginning of this chapter such as residence and ‘sharing’.

Throughout the living and past generations there are affinal links between all of these ‘family groups’. Thus while people emphasise the distinctiveness of each of the family groups, ties between them are recognised in the methods of address (especially by calling some older members auntie/uncle/nanna), and by frowning on unions between people who have a primary kin relationship despite ‘belonging’ to different ‘family groups’.¹¹¹ Figure 7 shows some examples of the links between the Green/Jones and other family groups in Charters Towers.

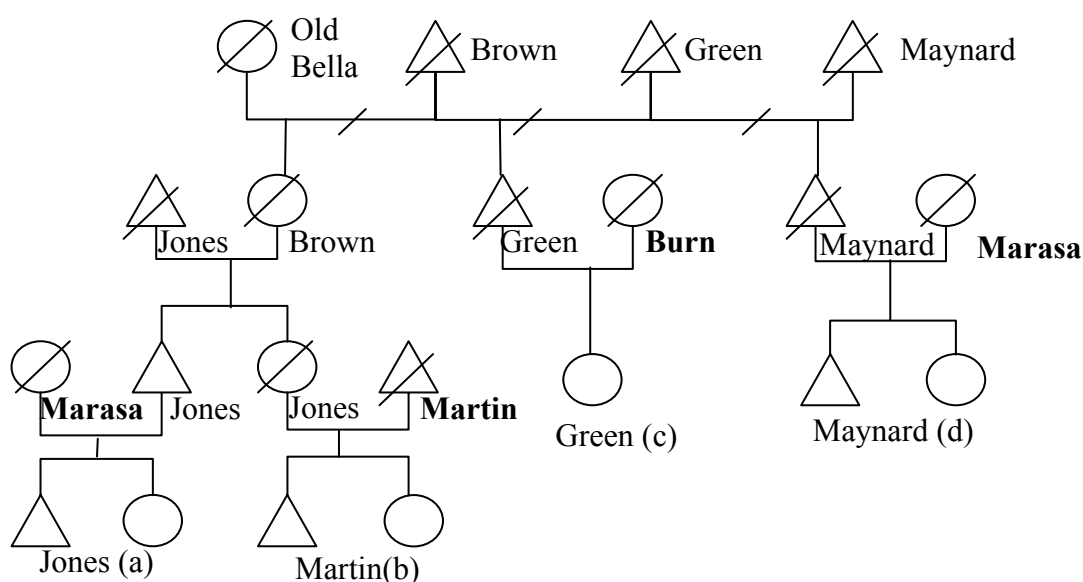


Figure 7 Example of some affinal connections between the Green/Jones family group and other family groups

In Figure 7, the links between the Green/Jones family group and other family groups is demonstrated through the names of affinal kin in bold. While some of the children of these unions are members of the Green/Jones family group, others are not. The varying ways in which people count membership to family group, and why one relationship is emphasised over the other is explored through the four examples in Figure 7.

¹¹¹ However, there are a number of cases where cousins have married or been long-term partners.

- (a) The Jones siblings all use the surname Jones and the sibling who is involved in organised politics, Sheree, does so as a member of the Green/Jones family group. When I asked why she did not ‘go through’ her mother, as a member of the Marasas, she told me that ‘her family’ (meaning her siblings, mother and father) have ‘*always been together*’ with the Jones’.
- (b) Both in their 40s, the Martin siblings ‘carry’ the name Martin, a surname from an adjoining language group to the north (although Megan now uses her married name). Both siblings attend meetings for Jones family, but also go north for meetings as members of the Martin family. They are thus members of the Green/Jones’ through their mother, but also mobilise membership with their father’s family group. These siblings thus demonstrate the ability of some people to be members of multiple claim groups in native title process.¹¹²
- (c) Kirsten Green does not live in Charters Towers. However, she attends meetings regularly and joked once to me that she does so for the Burns *and* the Greens, ‘*for mum and dad*’. At meetings, I have observed that this woman more often sits with and supports members of the Burn/Jaids, or else leaves the meeting (or goes outside for a smoke) before she has to make this choice. Like the Martin siblings in (b), Kirsten is involved in organised politics but not to the extent that she is responsible for having to make a choice between membership of family groups. Living away from Charters Towers is instrumental in this avoidance of choice.
- (d) I have seen only one of the Maynard siblings at meetings, and she was clearly a member of the Marasa/Hughes family group. Her brother Norman Maynard, who does not attend meetings told me at different times that his family are part of the Marasa family for Charters Towers. They emphasise this link rather than the connection to the Green/Jones, to whom, Norman said, they are only related ‘*way back*’, and that they ‘*never really had much to do with them [Green/Jones]’*’.

Thus, there are multiple ways of reckoning membership to the ‘family group’ because of cognatic descent, and it is possible to mobilise membership in more than one family group, as in (b) and (c). However, membership is crucially about other

¹¹² Notably, neither siblings are Board members of the Inland Land Council. My observation is that if such a commitment was made, then that person is likely to cease being part of more than one claim (see below).

family group members' recognition of your belonging (such as the acceptance entailed in the phrase '*we've always been with them*').

Furthermore, involvement and demonstration of interest are central to the exercise of descent-based rights. For example, the Browns, whose surname comes from old Bella's first husband, are not involved in the politics of native title in Charters Towers. The Jones are widely recognised by white and black townspeople as 'belonging to' Charters Towers, '*they've always been here*'. The Browns, on the other hand, have '*always been on Palm [Island]*'. Thus the surname Jones is emphasised in the name of the family group, rather than Brown. Here, long term residence 'in country' determines not so much membership of 'family group' but is symbolic of residence as a primary category of belonging to the 'family group' construct. In other words, the construct of 'family group' is built on notions of 'clan' (cf. Berndt, Berndt & Stanton 1993; Sutton 1998b) and emphasises kinship as place bound as in studies of 'traditional' Aboriginal kinship (Radcliffe-Brown 1930-1; Malinowski 1969). Belonging to 'family group' is a more complex process than simply cognatic descent from one of the apical ancestors and residence in Charters Towers. That is, 'family group' is a structure that is given meaning by organised politics. Therefore, the extent of a member's involvement in those politics may determine whether they are members of one or another (or as above, multiple) family groups.

Which side?

The tensions between taking a surname, state naming practices and belonging to family group produce the question 'which side do you follow?' or 'which way do you go?'. The generalised diagram of the Green/Jones family group in figure 6, illustrates my observation that although it is more common for surnames to be patrilineal, sometimes the child also 'carries' their mother's surname (which may be mother's father's, or mother's mother's surname), especially where the mother and father are no longer together.¹¹³ Which 'side' a person will 'go by' may refer to the

¹¹³ Few Aboriginal people in Charters Towers are married by the church or state (although there have been three church/celebrant marriages between 2001 and 2003 between couples who are in their 40s or above and are grandparents) and long term defacto partnerships are treated as marriages. In a long term defacto partnerships surname filiation is also mixed.

choice of surnames that a person makes (mothers or fathers), or to which ‘family group’ they belong to. This second is less ‘choice’ than the first, as the decision is most often to be based on long term residence. However, some people might choose to identify with the ‘side’ that is outside their current residence, but is generally accepted by them and other family members as their home.

Belonging to one ‘side’, individuals are often honouring their personal and work histories in an area, or that of their parents and grandparents (if they had avoided removal). Importantly, much oral knowledge of the kinds of links to country through family ties is far in the past and people talk about their belonging to land in a wider sense: through their ‘family’ they belong to land which is within what has been identified as belonging to ‘tribe/language group’. However, there is some important information which people hold, and which remains to be researched more fully (in addition to archival research), that connects people throughout their family’s history to particular tracts of country. I have already discussed some of these issues in the previous chapter.

Among younger people the ‘belonging to side’ appears more flexible and opportunistic, and Winona Jaid/Brennan, 18, told me that when she’s in Charters Towers she ‘goes by’ her mother’s surname (MF’s, Jaid), and when she stays in Townsville (where most of her father’s family is), she ‘goes by’ her father’s surname, Brennan. These opportunistic decisions are not relished by older relatives, and one of the girl’s Aunts commented that she was ‘a little bitch’ for not being more consistent.¹¹⁴ There are two pertinent points to make about the example of Winona. The first is that many people, especially where their parents kin are from different towns, have two operating surnames: their mothers when with their mother’s kin and their father’s when with their father’s kin. By taking her father’s surname in Townsville, Winona emphasises her belonging to that family and can thus activate the types of demands on residence, resources and knowledge of that family despite the fact that she most often stays in Charters Towers. This practice appears somewhat similar to the example of Nora/Polly in Chapter 3, a very mobile older woman who lived in the early 20th century and who had multiple surnames.

¹¹⁴ Note that although this language sounds harsh, it says more about the fact that the comment was made half in jest not anger, and in the context of the Aunt’s opinion of Winona’s character more

These similarities raise the analytical question of whether we can, as Handelman (1996) suggests, interpret the past through a study of present social practices. If so, Nora/Polly's multiple surnames might well indicate multiple social ties by on which she depended in the context of her mobility.

The second point is that in Winona's 'family group', there are many people in the generation above who are involved in native title business and 'speaking for' the family in such forums. As such, there is no need for Winona to choose to become involved in such issues, and in some ways, the choice would be premature at her age.¹¹⁵ In this light, 'family group' becomes less a 'descent group' than a group of persons who (on the basis of descent, residence or frequent contact, knowledge, & acceptance by other members) choose to become involved in the politics of native title.

However, having emphasised above the element of participation, it is also relevant to note that people who are potential members of 'family group' but do not necessarily participate in organised politics, expect to gain the benefits of membership (such as having a right to some share in compensation monies or the results of deals made with government/industry in their name). For example, despite Winona's stated ambivalence, she received one of the traineeships with 'the mines' that were brokered as part of a larger deal between a mining and exploration company and Kudjala Traditional Owners. 'Participation' can thus be active as well as evidently passive.

Those who are members of 'family group' on the basis of descent (such as Winona), may choose not to be involved in the politics of 'family group', but acceptance of any benefits such as jobs/traineeships constitute some level of involvement. Such benefits come with their own obligations, and there is some level of expectation that the receipt of opportunities such as this 'traineeship' will result in an active involvement in 'family group' politics. If Winona does become involved in organisational politics, 'which way she goes' is most likely to depend on such obligations, her relationships with kin and her performed kinship rather than a

generally.

¹¹⁵ The structure of native title processes as belonging to 'older people' is more fully discussed in Chapter 7.

‘choice’ of sides. As I have noted above, which ‘way’ someone ‘goes’ is more a corollary of other life choices – residence, personal relationships, choice of partner - than a *choice* per se.

These possibilities of participation in ‘family group’ are quite different to the structure of descent presented by the Australianist literature of ‘traditional’ or ‘classical’ Aboriginal society, or even those for ‘post-classical’ descent classifications (cf. Sutton 1998b:50-52). While cognatic descent is the most basic criteria of membership in family group, participation in organised politics of ‘family group’, and perhaps multiple membership, may then be determined by age, life history, and personal relationships. In addition to the basis of descent that makes a person a member of one of the three Kudjala ‘family groups’ of Charters Towers is the *reckoning* of that descent (cf. Bell 1998). That is, which ‘side’ emphasised by a person through their membership of a family group, depends on the historical and ongoing relationships among their ‘family’. These are the kinds of interdependent relationships among bilateral kin that I discussed earlier in this chapter, and result in the kinds of statements like, ‘*we’ve always been together.*’ Reckoning of membership is thus crucially based on knowledge of connections, based on a shared history. Thus, participation in demand sharing and other performance of relatedness among ‘family’ throughout history impacts on the membership of ‘family groups’. Thus while ‘family groups’ are structurally cognatic descent groups, one’s ‘traditional owner’ status and membership of a Kudjala family group also depends on the various practices of belonging to ‘family’: residence, travel (to meetings, to visit other family), use of kin terms and so on.

Traditional Owners/Historicals

Macdonald (1997) has written that there is a tendency in the Australianist literature for a Foucauldian analysis to produce an ‘us and them’ approach – the state vs Indigenous interests. On the contrary, Macdonald argues that conflict *among* Aboriginal people is of greater concern and has been heightened by the structural ‘imposition’ of concepts such as ‘traditional owners’ and ‘historicals’. Similar distinctions between people on the basis of residence, birth, knowledge and assertions of political power operate in Charters Towers. Macdonald (ibid.) discusses

these categories among Wiradjuri (in NSW) and elaborates these to labels such as ‘way back people’, ‘visitors’, ‘Johnny-come-latelys’ and ‘blow ins’. These categories differentiate between those who may claim to be traditional owners; groups who were moved to the area by the state but have lived in the area for ‘three or more decades’; those who have resettled in the area, and those who are temporary residents (Macdonald 1997:70-1). I am aware of fewer terms of distinction in Charters Towers. Traditional Owner is the principal category, and though ‘historical’ is sometimes used by people, more often a person or a family might be referred to as belonging elsewhere, for example, *‘they’re really from Mt Garnet way’*.

In contexts outside of native title I have also heard the terms ‘stranger’ and ‘local’ used. ‘Local’ includes people who have lived in the town all their lives, and whose families have done so going back maybe thirty or forty years. One family, the Herveys, have lived in Charters Towers permanently since about the mid-1960s. Even before this time some Hervey men and women worked with people from Charters Towers on pastoral stations in the wider region and had spent occasional station holidays in the town. Further, they ‘married in’ to Green, Jones and Marasa families. The Herveys are generally referred to as ‘locals’, but not Traditional Owners.

‘Strangers’ is a more contentious term and I have only heard it applied openly to those Aboriginal people who are very recent arrivals. In a private discussion the person with whom I was speaking applied the term ‘strangers’ to the Newland family, a family who has lived in the town since about the late 1970s and some of whose members were at times involved in the administration of one of the local bureaucracies. The person referring to them as ‘strangers’ was opposed to their control of local resources and appealed to the Newlands’ lack of history in the town to justify opposition to their involvement in local corporations. I did not hear any other such strong opposition. In addition, the only organisation that formally defines a person’s membership on the basis of origin is that which is concerned with the management or representation of people’s interests in land: the Inland Land Council. Other organisations make no such distinction between Aboriginal people, and some (for example the CDEP) allow for non-Aboriginal members.

Macdonald's paper emphasises that the very public divisiveness of native title is centred in the historical/traditional distinction, since native title necessarily distinguishes these people from each other. Conflict caused by distinctions among people before this time, were dealt with by non-acknowledgement or internal acknowledgement ('inside the community'), rather than the public disputes in meetings that arise from distinctions made between people on the basis of their or their family's origins. In Charters Towers, native title has caused divisiveness *among* those who claim Traditional Owner status, and has brought to the fore the conflicts among 'local' people. These disputes centre on claims to primacy, and about who are the 'real' Traditional Owners. However, central to these disputes are claims and counter-claims about one family or another not being the 'real' family for the area. I have heard two reasons for a claim such as this. The first is that [X] family are not really from this area because [y] (the apical ancestor to whom they trace their descent to land) was *not really from here*. The second is that [X] family is not really from here because [z], through whom they trace their connection to [y] (the apical ancestor who *does* belong in Charters Towers area) is only adopted or the child of another man. Those who claim to have this information usually only state it in front of their own family and perhaps a researcher. For instance, I have been told, '*I'll show you [a document] one day, that one that proves [X family] are not from here*'. Statements of such information are not usually said in public, unless in anger.

Given also that very little information is available in the written record about Aboriginal people in the area, claims to knowledge which no other family (or no other family member) has are the pivots on which a claim to authority turns. In addition, knowledge about 'culture' is at a premium, since most people say their parents and grandparents were too busy working to tell them things or were threatened against language or ritual transmission by missionaries and the state. Thus, one of the elders of the Greens was given knowledge of the Kudjala language from 'those old people' when he was young and living on Palm Island. Other Green elders talk of the boundaries of Kudjala country that they were told about by their father. A Marasa elder has engaged in considerable archival family history research and claims to have information (in a similar way that others also claim) that puts their family as the *real* people for the area. And a woman from [Y] family group has told me that '*an old lady [from another region of Queensland] who knows [X*

family]’ has told her about [X] family group’s lack of connection to Charters Towers. Assertions of primacy are essentially *among and between* those recognised by the state as Traditional Owners, rather than between them and known ‘historicals’.

Genealogical memory and the force of the photograph

Genealogies and asking about ‘family history’ and kinship relationships are sensitive, whether present or past. Reasons behind this kind of sensitivity are closely tied to the extensive removals that continued into the recent past, and state interventions into Aboriginal people’s lives as outlined in Chapter 3 (see also Kidd 2000 [1997]), as well as the pressures of ‘proof’ from Native Title legislation. The kinds of intrusion into people’s lives in the past is in no way forgotten, and as a researcher asking questions about the details of family may cause affront in two ways, firstly, by asking for information that is ‘family business’, and secondly, by asking for information that the state may well have erased through practices of removal. Furthermore, the current processes of native title heighten sensitivity to the issues surrounding proof of descent and relatedness. Where it may be unclear where people’s origins lie due to the intensity of invasion and settlement, knowledge of genealogy is precious and paramount in proving your family’s belonging (in some cases as against another family’s). For these reasons and others, I did not make any concerted efforts to record genealogical information in the kinds of ways that anthropologists usually do. Thus, the information that I have in genealogical form is a result of a compilation of the information ‘along the way’, a process which is difficult and involves constant revising.

Others who have engaged in work in similar cultural contexts have noted similar issues. Bell (1998:231ff) highlights how, among Ngarrindjeri, knowledge of genealogies is held in high esteem and that reproduction of such knowledge is extremely hurtful if done without the permission of persons involved. Bell writes that during the Hindmarsh Island Bridge court case, ‘to [Ngarrindjeri] the way in which Aboriginal family information was being thrown about was reminiscent of living under the Act’ (Bell 1998:239).¹¹⁶ Similar comparisons were made by Aboriginal

¹¹⁶ Bell’s account of the Hindmarsh Island Bridge affair and Ngarrinjeri ‘traditions’ is by no means the

people in Charters Towers about the ways family information had been handled by some researchers and others during the current native title process. Indeed, the emphasis on *'the family'* was sometimes commented upon by old people as a negative element of their own society. That is, people told me on numerous occasions about how, before *'all this native title business'*, no-one cared about which family you came from.

Kinship, these old people seem to be saying, is expressed through relationships *between* people not in some structures of descent *from* people. This expresses the contention made by Ingold (2000) in his critique of 'the genealogical model'. In the genealogical model, descent contains the essence of persons. That is, people (specifically Indigenous people) are the 'realisation of potentials' already in place in terms of the vertical line on the genealogy from parent to child (ibid.136). The 'family group' is this kind of model, and as a structure has no room for relationships among people in everyday social action. 'Family group' articulates Murri identity in terms of people's relatedness to an ancestor, and these ancestors in terms of their relatedness to what came after (rather than people in terms of their ongoing relationships). The importance of genealogy and notions of descent serve the purposes of an adversarial process such as native title. Garth Marasa, as well as his uncle (FZH), Will Jones, noted to me that when they were young (ie in the 1940s, 50s and 60s), everyone was *'all together, one big mob'*. The divisions between people now, they say, were never there before, life was much more harmonious. While, clearly there were divisions between families as a result of different histories and personal differences, there was also accord brought about by state racial classification of Aboriginal people (as well as the divisions among Aboriginal people caused by such definitions). And while we have to take into account the role of nostalgia in older people remembering 'the good old days', native title with its emphasis on static, atemporal descent models, forgets about history as the enactment of persons through time (Ingold 2000). Instead one's history is constructed as a linear function of descent.

Photographs are a widely used artefact of 'family', and are used in particular ways in the native title era to 'prove' the coherence of 'family group'. Old photographs of

only one. See for example (Tonkinson 1997; Weiner 1999; Kolig 2003; Peace 2003).

‘family’ ‘test’ known links to ancestors and test ‘memory’ and knowledge of relations to these old people. Gaynor Macdonald has written:

The genealogical memory is a memory of real people in real time. Photos have the capacity to extend socialities which, in the Koori case, are primarily based on face-to-face encounters. They allow people to become known. People who did not know their grandparents but who nevertheless have photos of them can name them and may know other information about them as well. This is increasingly being extended to great grandparents, once unknown and unknowable. In this sense, photos can constitute relatedness as social fact. They seem to create a form of intersubjectivity, bringing those distant in time and space into a present. (Macdonald 2003:235-36)

Photographs can be thought to ‘prove’ the knowledge of a place, and the social context of land. On a number of occasions I showed old people photographs I had ‘found’ in archives which had no caption. In one example, I showed a print of Aboriginal people sitting on a cart, obviously ‘in the bush’ to two older men (on different occasions), both with extensive knowledge of their own families. The first man to whom I showed the photograph had little knowledge of those in the print, but said they looked like people from the other man’s family. The other man, who is over 80 years old, confirmed that they were his kin, then deduced where and when the picture was taken from his knowledge of where his family worked, when they worked there and the nature of the work at that time. His ‘niece’ (MZSD) who listened to the details of this information at the time, requested afterward that I get her a copy of that print ‘for her kids so they know where they come from’.

Photographs facilitate narratives of people and place being told. They extend people’s knowledge of their families, and demonstrate their families’ presence in places that might only be known in vague terms by future generations. However, photographs also ‘concretise’ social relations and relationships to place in a way that oral history in its fluidity does not (Morris 1989:215). Because photographs are artefacts or documents of material reality, they can be used to convey an authoritative truth of person, time and place. Photographs are important social documents among Murriss. Old family photographs depict relatives with dignity, dressed up in their best clothes for town, for the show, or for a wedding often in stark contrast to the way people were treated in these times (see also Smith 2003a:18). However, they are problematic as evidence of ‘reality’, or as ‘proof’, since they

capture a moment of time that often is lacking in contextual narrative. The salient point here is that photographs become tools of showing belonging to place, enabling demonstration of knowledge of places and people. That is, they expand the past in relation to belonging. But this extension of past brings with it an expansion of people's *obligation to know* what also belongs to these times. As such, photographs can point to holes in the fabric of genealogical and 'family history' knowledge among living people, which may also be emotionally difficult for people to handle.

The popularity of photographs and the secrecy of family history in the native title era are some familiar examples of the imperative among Aboriginal people to find concrete examples of evidence of connection to place through connection to family. Alongside such imperatives are the changing dynamics and relationships of 'family' that complicate and enliven 'family group' structures and linear descent.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have demonstrated two expressions of kinship among Murrin in Charters Towers. The first, 'family', is bilateral kinship exemplified by everyday relations of 'demand sharing', shared history, use of kin terms, travel and the performance of relatedness that these entail. Secondly, 'family group' is a structure defined by cognatic descent and most prominent in organisational politics. Where the first expression of kinship overlaps with the 'family group' is crucial to understanding the nature of membership of the 'family group'. While cognatic ties determine the basis of membership (that is, without a cognatic tie, membership is not possible), there are thus multiple ways of reckoning which 'family group' one belongs to. While some people emphasise their ability to 'choose', in fact 'which side' is not a free choice, since the 'side' a person goes by expresses the historical and present sets of relationships between them and their immediate 'family' (and between them and other families). These sets of relationships are based on residence and resource sharing and knowledge of people and place: the changing relations of kinship. In addition, whether people decide on membership of *one* family group is usually only explicit if a person is very active in organisational politics, otherwise, people often leave open the ability to emphasise one side or the other.

In native title politics, friction between Traditional Owners has become greater in the competition to be recognised as the ‘real’ TOs of an area. This competition is realised in the discourse of authenticity of knowledge about family connections, whether passed down by older relatives, researched in the archives or elaborated on from photographs. The certainty of connections between people and their ancestors (and between people and land) demanded by native title tends to highlight the uncertainty among people regarding the extent of their knowledge about descent going back many generations. While the uncertainty of connections between people (and people and land) has been wrought by the history of state and Aboriginal relations, the emphasis on *proof* of connection in the present is also counter to a kinship system which focuses on the performance of relationships rather than the incontrovertibility of linear descent.

The adequacy of concepts of ‘family’ and ‘group’ definition are no longer just the anthropologist’s problem, but also a problem of everyday Murri life in the native title era. In Chapter 6, the complexities of family in structure and practice are further analysed in the context of native title meetings and bureaucratic practice. First, however, I examine the history of housing in Charters Towers, which is also a history of the growth of ‘Aboriginal’ bureaucracies. Thus the following chapter includes a background to state policy and enactment of legislation in regard to Aboriginal people, but more importantly forms some context for the relations of family evident in the native title era organisational politics and workings of bureaucracy.

Chapter 5 Home, family, polity: agency and politics in belonging to town

Introduction

In this chapter I consider the nature of Aboriginal social action in regard to housing and reproduction of belonging in Charters Towers in the late 20th Century. The backdrop to this is changes in national politics, shifts in government policy and practice from the 1950s to the 1970s, coupled with the downturn of demand for Aboriginal labour in the pastoral industry. I argue that a study of the forms of social action that people practised during this period reveals the familial and historical nature of Aboriginal people's belonging to town as well as the operation of a functioning Aboriginal polity.

While some social action that I discuss in this chapter may be seen as resistance to forms of domination (especially state domination), I argue that Aboriginal social action in Charters Towers is much more complex than resistance (cf. Ahearn 2001:115-6). Critics assert that studies of resistance can be used as a *diagnostic* of power, that is, as action which can tell us about the relations and transformations of structures of power in a given society (Abu-Lughod 1990; see also Ortner 1995:175). Despite these insightful critiques of resistance, which assert its usefulness as a category to explain a range of social action among 'subaltern' peoples, the term itself retains something about unidirectional response which I find limiting in relation to my material. I prefer to characterise Aboriginal social action as agency. To me, the notion of agency conveys a much broader sense of social action, *including* resistance and accommodation of dominant forces, but also personal desires for autonomy, response to others' demands and kinship obligations. Thus action may be seen as assembled 'as much by internal dynamics as by the nature of the external events' (Sahlins 1981; in Ortner 1984:159), and as variously reproducing and transforming relations of power within family, among families and between families and the state.

Here, I examine belonging in the practices by which Aboriginal people housed themselves and their families in Charters Towers from the 1940s to 1970s, often in

the face of considerable bureaucratic limits on people's ability to freely do so. In the 1970s, social action among Aboriginal people became public in the context of organisational politics around the government funded Aboriginal bureaucracies. The documentary records of these organisations feature the rise of a few prominent individuals. The media attention and increased state rhetoric of 'Aboriginal advancement' under 'self-determination' policy, brought considerable social pressure on Aboriginal people, especially these prominent individuals. In Charters Towers, there was internal differentiation on the subject of social change, which in some ways reflected wider political discourse, and in others was specific to plays of power among and between Aboriginal families. This chapter traces historical agency and differentiation among Aboriginal people as they act not only as subjects of the state (as is most strongly presented in Chapter 3), but as subjects within cultural and social worlds of Charters Towers.

My perspective of these times comes from three main sources: oral history, government records and the records of the Jupiter Mosman Society. It is thus a retrospective impression of the growth of the organisations and forms of agency that developed around them as a result of my ethnography in 2001-2002. For background and clarity, I also discuss the state policy shifts of the period that effected bureaucratic control of social action as well as created new economic and political resources for Aboriginal people.

Policy shifts, bureaucratic continuities

Assimilation as a policy rose to prominence in the late 1950s and 1960s, but it was not a novel concept in Australia, which had looked to social and 'racial' uniformity (white Australia) as a nation since the 1920s and '30s. Assimilation as 'absorption', and through eugenicist ideas of 'miscegenation' or 'breeding out the colour', had been adopted as national policy by the Commonwealth and State heads of departments meeting in 1937 (McGregor 1997), although some bureaucrats were more enthusiastic about the ideas than others (cf. Haebich 2000:454). At this time, assimilation was less a coherent government policy than a 'doctrine of nationhood', and a 'statement about the nature of Australia' (Beckett in Rowse 1998:107). What was new in the post World War II years of the 1950s, writes Haebich (2000:454-5),

was that assimilation would ‘abandon race-based policies and practice and endeavour to create a place for Aborigines within mainstream Australia...and the goal was middle-class family life.’ In spite of such shifts in national imaginary for Australia, in Queensland (as we have seen in Chapter 3), control under the guise of ‘protection’ continued to be bureaucratic practice into the 1960s. In fact, it was clear from the records, that the Native Affairs Department (which changed to the Native Welfare Department after 1962) quite dramatically increased surveillance of Aboriginal people from the late 1950s. In 1959 the Director of Native Affairs, O’Leary had boasted that ‘we know the name, family history and living conditions of every aboriginal [*sic*] in the state’ (1959; see also Haebich 2000:528). In the following years, however, this surveillance was underplayed in his report for the rhetoric of assimilation (under tutelage). O’Leary (1962:2), wrote that ‘the Department considers that Settlements and Missions are preparing numbers of families for such acceptance as respected and responsible equal citizens in the community’. The incoherence and contradiction of assimilation policy was expressed in the fact that while the rhetoric called for equality and inclusion, the policy was implemented through authoritarian means (Stanner 1964; Beckett 1988b; in Rowse 1998:107-8). While popular expectations and government propaganda began to represent Aboriginal people as equal citizens and new neighbours (Haebich 2000:426-7), the Native Welfare Department continued to exert considerable control over Aboriginal people’s lives.

In the early 1960s the Queensland Government created and supported various organisations to ‘assist’ Aboriginal people on their way to assimilation. One of these was the One People for Australia League (OPAL), which began in Brisbane. The Council for the Advancement of Aborigines had a political focus of fundamental social change. In contrast, OPAL was a voluntary organisation albeit with some government financial support. Representatives organised charity around education, housing and basic subsistence in towns throughout Queensland and especially for those people not ‘under the Act’. Rowley argues that OPAL’s publically anti-Communist stance especially ‘attracted growing support for Aboriginal claims *away from political to charitable operations*’ (1972:105-6, my emphasis). OPAL had representatives in Charters Towers, and played a small role in early provision of housing for Aboriginal people (see below), but does not seem to have been very

active apart from this. However, an understanding of bodies such as OPAL is relevant for a wider perspective on the tension between politics and social welfare in the practice of social change. The Queensland Government seemed to support the idea that changes that were expected from Aboriginal people in the process of ‘assimilation’ could be helped along through provision of basic health, education, welfare, and housing from (limited) government assistance and charity (cf. Rowley 1972:107; Kidd 2000 [1997]:251-2). Other forces, and increasingly these came from national opinion and eventually the Commonwealth Government, were pushing for social improvement effected as actual social change (ibid.). They argued that change could be accomplished through support for inclusion in Australian society, participation in bureaucratic and governmental agencies and political moves such as land rights for Aboriginal people. These kinds of changes and the political action entailed are reflected in my discussion of belonging.

Accommodation and ‘assimilation’: belonging to town 1940s to the 1970s

Most Aboriginal people I spoke to about the period of the 1940s to early 1960s insisted that ‘*everyone was out bush*’. The nature of employment ‘out bush’ and holidays ‘in town’ has been touched on in Chapter 3 where I discussed ‘gendered histories’. There I found that there were a few women and some men who lived in town during these times. They had their own or rented houses, one man ran a boarding house, they looked after children and did casual domestic work and accommodated family members in their holiday times from stations. People who lived in town were ‘quiet’, not *invisible*, but assumed, or perhaps expected, to act as though they were ‘assimilated’. I was told by one Murri man that ‘*there was never any racism in this town*’ in these times (though the same man noted that Murris had no choice in the kinds of jobs they could get, got paid a pittance and were told where they could live). Matching these comments with the few sources of history about any ‘Aboriginal identity’ around Charters Towers from the 1940s to the early 1960s, political protest was not on the agenda. Beckett (1996:321) reflects that in Western New South Wales during these times of assimilation, there was a ‘favourable rural labour market [which] seemed to offer a place for Aboriginal workers... [and] the impact of the Cold War on Australia created an unfavourable climate for political protest.’ My oral history research focussed on the pastoral industry and ‘what life

was like in those times'. Similarly, the impression in people's memories in Charters Towers was that everyone was working and that these were 'quiet', conservative times. No-one spoke to me of politics in the 1940s-60s, except to defer to the maxim that '*we was all together*'. Nonetheless, the increasing imposition of bureaucratic controls over Aboriginal social and familial life in the post war years in Queensland are an important historical backdrop to the character of Aboriginal politics, which can also be drawn through an analysis of housing conditions and practices of home.

Staying with family

'Corinda' was an early suburb of Charters Towers with shops, a pub and a number of homes of white and Aboriginal people. The area is located north of what is now the airport and the suburb known as Richmond Hill (see Appendix B, Map 6). From about the late 1920s, there were corrugated iron ('tin') shacks as well as more substantial wooden dwellings in Corinda that belonged to Aboriginal families. A South Sea Islander man, Mathew Brown, who had married a local Aboriginal woman, ran a boarding house on an area of land at Corinda. Members of Mathew Brown's family, came to stay at Corinda at Christmas and Show time, or on the way through mustering. The Jaiids, Allens and others had their own houses adjacent to his boarding house. Children who stayed at Corinda would walk to the primary school at Richmond Hill. In the late 1930s there were also other Aboriginal families living close by Corinda, or from time to time staying at Corinda itself. Elisa Thomas remembers that Jupiter Mosman, as an old man would come to her grandfather's boarding house at Corinda for Sunday dinner (the midday meal). Today most Aboriginal people in Charters Towers¹¹⁷ use the name Corinda to refer not to the whole suburb but just that area where their kin had homes, and which was 'home' for their kin.

During World War II, in the early 1940s, the army reclaimed the land around Corinda for their aerodrome and all of the houses in the area were demolished. William Jones and Elisa Thomas remember this time well, although they were children or young adults at the time. They were moved from Corinda, and Elisa and

¹¹⁷ An elderly brother and sister, William and Elisa, however, remembered the details of the whole area and recounted to me all the white people who lived in every dwelling on both sides of the road

her young brother Noah Jones stayed with their mother and father in a house near the Showgrounds closer to the town centre. William was out working on stations at this time, but he recounted to me the few people with houses in town in the mid to late 1940s that he remembers.

Mum and Dad had a house in Miner Street, and in the late 1950s they had one in Church Street. The [Burn] family was in Miner St next door... [Their daughter Linda] was working at the college with [Will's wife] as young girls. Oxford Street, [Maynards], old [Herbert] and [Amy] had their place. Old [Earl Easton] had a place out there going up towards the dump. Bought the ground and built on it. [Fannings] lived down, here in the town. Down behind that shop near the show grounds. [Hughes] there too, behind show grounds, they rented the house.

Hardly anyone here, everyone out bush. Except show time and Christmas. Aunty [Molly] she was in town, she used to work for Doctor Stevens. Aunty [Kaye] she had a house, she worked for Doctor Farnley.¹¹⁸

The end of Corinda meant that people found accommodation on their visits to town with those who had houses, or in rented housing. That a number of Aboriginal people owned or rented their own homes in the town of Charters Towers sets the town apart from many others in rural Australia where a reserve or mission was set aside for their segregated accommodation (cf. Cowlshaw 1988; Morris 1989). More importantly it demonstrates a concerted effort of the older women and men who had these houses to provide a home for their families in town space. In many cases, and I think all of those mentioned by William Jones, above, people who had houses had been made exempt from the 1897 Act, and were thus no longer under direct control of the Native Affairs Department.

The local Protector's job was to watch the behaviour of those under the Act while they were in town, and also to provide limited access to these people's wages accounts. Thus the local Protector was concerned from a bureaucratic point of view about people who were still under the Act staying with kin throughout the town. He wrote that since Corinda had been demolished, there was a 'very vexatious matter which...is accommodating the number of the native population who spend their Xmas vacation in the city' (Department of Community Services 1947-1987: 18th Feb

going down towards where their family lived.

1947). ‘To provide the necessary services’, the local Protector wrote, ‘and check up on [the various places that people stayed] is most inconvenient, unsatisfactory and a waste of a lot of time’ (ibid.). He suggested that a camping reserve be established in the town (ibid.:18th Feb 1947), and the following year had set his sights on a particular spot. In 1948, he wrote to the DNA that an area on the side of what is now the ‘Rotary Lookout’ on Buckland Hill, would be a good place for the reserve, since it ‘is convenient to the main shopping area of the City (*sic*) without being too close in, or without being isolated’ (Department of Community Services 1947-1987: Jan 1948). His statement rather nicely demonstrates the treatment of Aboriginal by the state throughout history. That is, relegate Aboriginal people to the fringe but not so far away that they cannot be controlled or watched. But exclusion was not within the already- established practice of many Aboriginal people and their lives in town. Elisa Thomas said she and her family felt ‘*thrown out*’ after they were made to stay there when next in town on their holidays.

Local bureaucrats intended for the Reserve to be the only place where those under the Act could stay if they came to Charters Towers for their vacations. Faced with the rocky ground and tents on Buckland Hill, many people *chose* to take their holidays elsewhere in the year after it was opened. The local Protector wrote that ‘approximately only 30’ people came into Charters Towers for Show Week, and only seven of these stayed on the Reserve. The following year, ‘[a] lot of the Aboriginals were allowed to visit other towns and Settlements during their Christmas vacation and the tents and accessories were not required’ (Department of Community Services 1947-1987:23rd Jan 1948). The services provided became slightly more amenable, such as pit toilets, materials to build a cooking shack, a shower and ‘practically new’ tents (ibid.: 14th Feb 1949), but it was still a far cry from even the most basic accommodation that people had been able to rent in previous times.

In 1952, the Ulcinbah Station owner wrote a letter to the Minister for Health and Home Affairs complaining about conditions on the Reserve. An excerpt from her letter gives some insight into conditions there.

Can you see your way to having decent accommodation provided for the station Aboriginals when they visit Charters Towers for

¹¹⁸ These women probably did domestic chores for the doctors.

their holidays. All that is on their camping ground is a bathroom (1) & one lavatory. The camping place is under Buckland Hill & when it rains the water pours down & you can imagine the position is most uncomfortable especially for mothers with their children, to say nothing of the scarcity of wood for fires. It is really time something was done to make their holidays more comfortable. I have reason to believe that in other centres conditions are much better...(ibid.: 17th June 1952)

In October 1953, a 'kitchen and laundry [was] erected' on the Reserve (ibid.:27th Oct 1953) and by 1956 there was electricity in the hut (though still tents provided for sleeping accommodation). In Christmas that year the Protector reported that there was, 'a big influx of aboriginals to Charters Towers and a large number of them were placed on [the Reserve]' (ibid.:cJan 1956).

By the late 1950s, it seems that many Aboriginal people had found a way to provide better accommodation for themselves than the Reserve, and it had become a marginal, last resort kind of place. There were 'about 60' Aboriginal people who were 'on the books' in the Charters Towers Protectorate at this time, who

[R]eside in and/or are in employment in this Protectorate, while other Aboriginals from other Protectorates and Settlements, particularly from Palm Island Settlement... pass thru and/or are in employment in this Protectorate also... (ibid.:19th July 1958)

In 1958, the Protector noted that 'only one or two' people stayed there at Christmas and Show time. The rest of the Aboriginal people in town stayed 'at the Watchhouse¹¹⁹ or with friends/relations' (ibid.). The fact that there were over 60 Aboriginal people staying in the town in various places other than the Reserve indicates that the Protector was not as in control as he wished. Moreover, it demonstrates that Aboriginal people had acted themselves to avoid this control and to re-include themselves in their families' homes and decent rented accommodation.

In the following year, the City Council complained in the newspaper *North Queensland Register* that Aboriginal people's houses become overcrowded during the holiday periods. The local Protector retorted that most of the houses that the Councillor referred to were owned by people who were not under the Act, and so

¹¹⁹ The use of the Police Watchhouse as 'accommodation' for Aboriginal people clearly demonstrates their close link to the police and the perceived need for control in town. This role continued the use of police in a welfare function that had begun with them being responsible for the distribution of

‘not subject to his control’ (*North Queensland Register*: 1st Aug 1959). By the late 1950s it seems that when station workers ‘came in’ for Christmas and Show time most would stay with a family member who rented or owned a house. The limited accommodation meant these few houses were crowded, but ‘*everyone was family*’ and they were only in town for a week or sometimes less. Norman Maynard and his older cousin Albert Marasa (who was mustering at the time and under the Act) recollect with pleasure memories of sleeping on Norman’s parents’ verandah when the men came in from the station.

Norman: Yeah everyone just sleep out on the verandah, summertime...

Albert: ... there was five of us [working men]

Norman: There’s all us kids, boys and younger, we all used to sleep on the floor on my father’s swag there. But we survived. ...They was all out at [the same station]... Wait for the mail truck... we used to see it comin’ in across the gap there... And we’d run up here and tell Mum, ‘they’re comin’ [laughs]. Bloody old truck would pull up and all these fellas would jump off... swags, dogs, chickens...[laughs] ... And they’d all stay here, see...

Exempted people were supposed to lead lives apart from Aboriginal people still categorised as under the Act, but clearly this was not something the local Protector could (or perhaps chose to) enforce. His note about ‘natives residing with their coloured friends’ also demonstrates that Aboriginal people in Charters Towers did not necessarily lead separate social lives on account of state categories. They accommodated their kin, no matter whether they were exempted or not. Thus for Aboriginal people, coming into town at these times and being ‘*all bunched up*’ together in one small house were recalled as good times. I asked two sisters once where they would stay when they came into town at Christmas time in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Esther: We’d stay on the reserve.

Gladys: And mum had her own house down here, Granny

E: that’s right, yeah Granny, Mary

G: I’m talking old girl. People used to come and stay there, be overcrowded again

E: Yeah Mum used to have eeeeeverybody there [laughs]. That was a small reserve on its own!... Yeah! All the relatives, all the [Greens], all the [Herveys], who else?

Many of this generation of people remember staying all together in one place. It was part of the social time of being in town and spending time with one's own family as well as other kin. A certain familial and social cohesiveness is presented by such memories of being '*all one mob in those days*'.

As employment and other circumstances began to change through the 1960s, there was also one family who had made a permanent home at the 'Hut' on the Reserve at Buckland Hill, and other kin of theirs still stayed there during station holidays and on return from Palm Island Settlement. Richard Northington and his wife and their six children were living more or less permanently on the Reserve in 1970, and this continued to be the case until 1975, when the Department (since 1966, the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs, DAIA) moved them to a house it owned at 51 Mary Street. The local DAIA officer wrote to the Director in Brisbane that, '[t]he small building on the reserve together with the delapidated toilet facilities were demolished ... and all combustible material burnt on the site...' (ibid.:28th Oct 1975). Richard Northington's sister, Gladys Jones says she herself was also living at the Reserve. She told me, '*the Council burned that Reserve, burned all the buildings and everything, just burnt it down.*' Her tone was accusatory, 'the Council' had burned the Reserve, their home.

A man who had worked with the Charters Towers City Council since the late 1960s told me he thought that the Reserve burned because of a fire caused by *those people* being irresponsible: leaving rubbish around and leaving the stove burning in the kitchen to light cigarettes. The difference in stories is indicative of the disjunction in history and memories: official, personal and observational. In the official memory, the state cleaned up mess, protected children, and provided a new home for a family (although it only recognised the man, wife and children, rather than also the man's sister, Gladys, her children and another sister who were also living there). Gladys' personal memory adds more people to the 'family' who were removed from their home, and presents the profound loss experienced when the terms of this removal -

burning what was left behind – made return impossible.¹²⁰ The observational memory of the Council worker represents the fire as the result of ‘Aboriginal domestic behaviour’, a representation which rests on assumptions of *their* lack of ability to live in houses and to assimilate to town life.

The assumption that the Council worker’s story embodies is that Aboriginal people were not capable townspeople. This kind of prejudice caused great difficulties for some families trying to find accommodation when the station work began to dry up by the late 1960s, and they were moving to town on a more permanent basis.

State housing

The Director of Native Affairs, O’Leary, noted in 1960 that there is ‘a line of demarkation (*sic*) between coloured and white people’ in Queensland, which saw Aboriginal people excluded from rural town housing (in Kidd 2000 [1997]:241). In Charters Towers, the Protector’s insistence on the establishment of a Reserve and its substandard facilities had indicated an acceptance of this exclusion of Aboriginal people from proper housing on the basis of race. For example, O’Leary as Director of Native Affairs in 1962, suggested that ‘cheaper homes be constructed for ‘coloured persons’ across Queensland, but this was ‘angrily refused’ by the Housing Commissioner (in Kidd 2000 [1997]:251). In addition such processes were part of the operating assumptions not just by the DNA, but also ‘well meaning’ local white people. Members of the One People of Australia League (OPAL) (mentioned at the beginning of the chapter), visited Charters Towers in the early 1960s (Kidd 2000 [1997]:251). A Charters Towers doctor, a member of the organisation, had picked out two houses for ‘local coloured people’. OPAL turned these down since they ‘lacked basic amenities’ (OPAL 1966-68). What housing Queensland did build for Aboriginal people around Queensland from monies provided under Commonwealth funding in the 1960s was severely sub-standard. Kidd (2000 [1997]:254) notes that ‘most homes were not ceiled or lined, and lacked power, toilets, showers or laundries’. A shortage of housing in general in Charters Towers in the 1960s and early 1970s (Charters Towers City Council:1963-1968, June 1973-74; *Northern*

¹²⁰ The actions of the local council in burning the reserve is evocative of frontier history of this area, when certain pastoralists burned campsites to threaten Aboriginal people and scare them away from

Miner: 19th Jan 1973) meant there was almost nothing available for Aboriginal people. Although this was not the case for all Aboriginal people in Charters Towers at this time, it meant that those who did have houses were accommodating many others.

In 1970 the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs was looking to select some land on which to build houses for Aboriginal people (Charters Towers City Council: Oct 1970). These were eventually built out on Phillipson Road, on the south edge of town. Two older women told me that these were only ‘*three little houses next to each other*’, and these, like other homes, quickly became crowded, especially when people came in from the stations. The Regional District officer of the newly formed DAIA reported to the Director that

There is constant movement of stockmen and itinerant pastoral workers in Charters Towers who flock to the most convenient house to stay. This causes problems of overcrowding which attracts unfavourable notice from the Health Authorities and the public generally... (Department of Community Services 1947-1987: 10th Nov 1970)

There were greater numbers of Aboriginal people staying permanently in town where they could. With the new DAIA came its powers, under the guise of assimilatory tutelage, to inspect Aboriginal people’s homes (whether they were owned by the DAIA or rented from private owners). Ongoing government control of Aboriginal people and their whereabouts in town, as well as the limited number of available houses, exacerbated and reproduced the prejudice against Aboriginal people as they moved more permanently into Charters Towers.

Belonging to town

Despite there being limited accommodation in town, being exempted from the Act meant that one could live more freely where one chose and how one chose to live. Ursula Hudson, who was one of the few who did move from another town to Charters Towers with her husband and children in the early 1970s, remembers that there were drinkers who stayed ‘*over near where the PCYC¹²¹ is now*’, which used to

cattle runs (see Appendix A, Table 5).

¹²¹ Police and Citizens Youth Club – a sporting complex where many different community events including meetings, bingo games, indoor and outdoor sports, etc., now held. It was built on old

be old mining tailings dumps and rubber vine. *'They called that place 'the green doors', and a lot of people used to camp there and drink'*. In 1970 there were also Aboriginal people who were camping in Mosman Park (a park on the southern edge of town), referred to in the Charters Towers City Council Minutes as 'itinerant squatters' (Charters Towers City Council: Oct 1970).

Those who had houses at this time, Myrtle Green told me, were renting old miners cottages all around the outskirts of town. Some were rented from white townspeople, some owned and paid for in *'bits and pieces'* of money from station work. Thomas Green told me that his father had been able to rent an old house on the edges of town in the early 1960s because the owner knew his father from their time mustering together. However, it appears that by the mid 1970s, most of the houses that had been owned by Aboriginal families had been sold off by the Charters Towers City Council due to rates arrears (Charters Towers City Council:1963-74). Megan Foster told me that, *'A lot of them old people lost their houses. They didn't know they had to pay rates, they just thought they could buy a house and that was that'*.¹²² Home owners were either unaware that they had to pay rates, or they found it more and more difficult to pay them in the gradual decline of availability of pastoral employment.

The disjuncture between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal concepts of residence can be seen as underpinning bureaucrats' continued view that housing Aboriginal people was a problem. In 1966, a letter from the then 'Minister for Works and Housing', Joh Bjelke-Peterson, to the Minister for Education noted that people were being 'encouraged to leave' Palm Island settlement and they were 'returning to Charters Towers and had no-where to live' (Department of Community Services 1947-1987:Feb 1966; see also Haebich 2000:529; Kidd 2000 [1997]:240). However, when I asked, few Aboriginal people could remember more than one or two people who had 'moved back' or 'moved to' Charters Towers at this time. People who had worked on stations and who may have stayed for some time on Palm Island, also travelled back and forth periodically (once or twice a year) from these places to Charters Towers. Hence, the question about whether many people had 'moved' or

tailings dumps, some of which remain in the open land across the road from the club.

¹²² See Henry (1999:360-1) for comparative experiences of Aboriginal people in Kuranda.

‘come to live’ in Charters Towers in the 1960s and 1970s frames the situation in the wrong terms. The changes in pastoral work, the conditions of roads and the quality and availability of motor vehicles all made travel to and from stations and towns much more possible and affordable. Perhaps more importantly, increasing numbers of Aboriginal people were exempted from the Act and able to travel more freely. Aboriginal people who knew Charters Towers as home, as well as visitors, could and did stay in town more often and for longer periods than previously.

In contrast, the wider Charters Towers community saw Aboriginal people who had lived in town for some time as ‘assimilated’ - or perhaps, pointedly, they were *not seen*. Their maintenance of education for their children, the condition of their front gardens and lack of neighbours’ complaints meant that they ‘blended in’ to town life. At the same time, most continued to accommodate other family members during station holidays. Belonging to Charters Towers meant coming back, and practising family by crowding into homes *together*. Thus having a home in Charters Towers was made possible through those people’s *partial* consent to the state-driven notion of assimilation. It was partial consent because the practice of family among Aboriginal people was (and is) to accommodate and depend on kin (as discussed in Chapter 4, see also Martin 2001:6-7). While allowing kin to stay in one’s house, and not just the nuclear family, Aboriginal people were resisting state control of their family life. However, their actions were not just in resistance to the state. They were expressions of belonging according to expectations and ongoing relationships of family.

‘Self-determination’ and Aboriginal bureaucracies 1970s to 1980s

National movements in Aboriginal politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and Commonwealth Government policy changes, which the Queensland State Government continued to resist, impacted significantly on local politics. According to Rowley (1972:240), the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) was crucial in the pressure on the Queensland government to abolish its control of wages, employment and settlement populations in the late 1960s. FCAATSI was also important in its use of the media (*ibid.*), which saw growing national as well as local discussion of Aboriginal issues and much more

vocal political activism from Aboriginal people. Locally, this was in evidence in changes in content and language in the local paper (*Northern Miner*) between 1971 and 1976. Among other things, Aboriginal people began writing letters to the editor, one woman ran for City Council, ‘aboriginal’ became ‘Aboriginal’ and there were numerous articles regarding national Aboriginal policy as well as racial tension in town (see below).

Events of national Aboriginal activism during the early 1970s are symbolic of an historical consciousness of Aboriginal identity and the discourse of Indigenous rights. These include the group of Aboriginal people who addressed the United Nations in 1970, and the establishment of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy outside Parliament House in Canberra on Australia Day in 1972 under the red, yellow and black flag (designed by Harold Thomas, an Aboriginal artist). Furthermore, in 1972, the Commonwealth Government adopted a policy for Aboriginal people which, in Prime Minister Gough Whitlam’s words, sought to ‘restore to the Aboriginal people of Australia their lost power of self-determination in economic, social and political affairs’ (in Haebich 2000:571). ‘Self-determination’ meant a different style of Aboriginal bureaucracy. There was the appointment of a Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) which included Aboriginal appointments, consultation and funds for research and development of social policy. Moreover, ‘self-determination’ meant federal funding allocations for Aboriginal health, employment, legal aid, welfare, education and housing, as well as granting ‘equal access’ for Aboriginal people to government services, including unemployment benefits and other pensions (Haebich 2000:572).

These changes were too much for Queensland, who fought for the retention of State Government control over peoples lives, homes and wages until the eventual repeal of all of these in 1984 (see Haebich 2000; Kidd 2000; Long 2000).¹²³ The Commonwealth policy of ‘self-determination’ and national perceptions of social change were progressive. However, the assumption underlying ‘self-determination is one that Aboriginal people generally could be ‘autonomous and self-willed’ (Cowlshaw 1998), but that there were definitions of what the ‘self’ was to

¹²³ Queensland’s *Community Services (Aborigines) Act 1984*, repealed the *Aborigines Act 1971*, which had still contained provisions to control the property of Aboriginal and Islander persons until they

determine, and how this could be done, contradict notions of autonomy. In Charters Towers, the modes by which Aboriginal people determined their selves reflected the history of state domination within the workings of an Aboriginal polity. The social action in these times that was recorded by bureaucracies, as well as remembered by Murriss I spoke to, helps in the detection of internal workings of power which determined outcomes of local politics.

The Aboriginal Housing Association

In Charters Towers, Jupiter Mosman Housing Community Cooperative Society (the Society/Jupiter Mosman Society) was the first of the Aboriginal corporations to be established under the new Commonwealth policy of self-determination. The Society had been operative for a few years and had ten houses, when it was incorporated in April 1975. It appears to be one of the thirty Aboriginal Housing Associations in Queensland at this time which had sprung up by 1975 to take advantage of Commonwealth Government funds (Long 2000:111). It bought older housing, renovated these for Aboriginal tenants, and charged them a level of rent which was low, but would cover the Society's costs and pay the City Council rates (cf. Long 2000:109). Some of the houses bought by the Society had been purchased from Aboriginal people who were on the list of rates debtors in the Charters Towers City Council and these houses were spread throughout the town (Jupiter Mosman Community Cooperative Society: minutes of meetings 20th Oct. 1975). This matched Commonwealth Government policy, which sought to avoid ghettos of Aboriginal housing (Long 2000:111). However, it seems more likely that the Society bought houses more for their relative low cost, availability and the familiarity of the old houses than for accommodation of Commonwealth Government policy.

The Society had a central role in housing Aboriginal people, many of whom were transforming their residence patterns from the movement between station, town and settlements to more full-time town life.¹²⁴ Those who ran the Society were predominantly Aboriginal people who had been exempt from the Act and/or lived in

requested otherwise (Queensland State Archives nd:10-11).

¹²⁴ Though this was still punctuated by considerable movement between Palm Island and other communities and towns where family resided, especially throughout the region and North Queensland.

town for some time. They were concerned that other Aboriginal people attain a level of domestic and residential acceptance, as clearly this reflected on them as kin and long-term residents. The complexities of ‘acceptance’ were manifold in an era when ‘self-determination’ was still underlaid by popular notions of ‘assimilation’. This resonates in the naming of the first society as ‘Jupiter Mosman’. As I have noted in Chapter 1, Jupiter Mosman was an Aboriginal man who was widely recognised and respected in white history of the town, as well as among Aboriginal people. In a ‘special feature [article] on the British colonisation of Australia and the subsequent birth of Charters Towers’, Jupiter Mosman was given special mention, with a large photograph of the dignified man (see Plate 6). Jupiter Mosman was described as a ‘respected citizen’, and ‘a much respected member of sporting teams’ (*Northern Miner* 26th Jan 1974). The symbolic value of Jupiter Mosman is inclusion and acceptance of Aboriginal people in white society. However it must also be remembered that while he was alive, Jupiter Mosman spent his Sunday dinners with the (Aboriginal and Islander) Jones family at Corinda. He thus had a social life among the Murri families of Charters Towers, and is remembered as a distinguished man among Murris as well as the wider community.

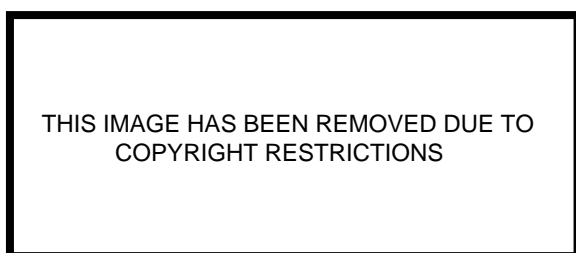


Plate 6 Jupiter Mosman (from Northern Miner, 26th January 1974).

Uneven experiences of state control and the social differences among Aboriginal people became apparent under the spotlight of ‘self-determination’. Those who were in control of Jupiter Mosman Society to some extent shared state visions of assimilation and thus demonstrated the power of state hegemony in the realm of ‘common sense’ assimilation: *these people*

need to learn *how to be* in town (see Mitchell 1990:545-57). Jupiter Mosman Society Board members carried out inspections of homes and gardens for cleanliness, order, overcrowding and damages. However, while these sorts of actions convey the sense that the Society was acting out a supervisory role similar to that of the state, they might also reflect inter-familial rivalries to gain a house in town (cf. Rowse 2000). For instance, internal disputes evident from the minutes of Board meetings revolve around who was entitled to housing. Notably accusations were made about relatives of Board members having received the first houses. Conflict over these issues (and probably others besides that do not appear in the minutes of meetings) resulted in considerable turnover in Board members. But while some Board members left altogether, others returned when the person with whom they had a dispute had, in their turn, left. Board members, and especially the President, had considerable control over the allocation of the Society's resources. Hence, the frequent turnover meant a particular family's control of these resources was never longstanding. Thus, not only were resources spread across families, but more people were able to experience the workings of a bureaucracy.

Prominent individuals and social memory

In the documentary records of this period it is apparent that a number of Aboriginal people were able to exercise 'self-determination' through the control of financial and capital resources within the Society as members of Boards of Directors. Some became prominent individuals as Aboriginal spokespersons to the state and society. These positions created a wider public awareness of social and political differentiation among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers, and put considerable pressure on the Society as a representative of all Aboriginal people in the town. Somewhat in contrast are the memories of this time I recorded as oral history. The Aboriginal people I spoke to remember *who* started up various organisations and what they did to effect social change very differently to each other and in some cases to the records. Not only do these memories reflect, in themselves, an agency according to familial and other allegiances, but give an historical continuity to the internal politics which continue to shape social action around Aboriginal bureaucracies.

When I started asking Aboriginal people in Charters Towers about the beginnings of the Aboriginal organisations and corporations, everyone told me that it was Jupiter Mosman Society that was the first in town. Given this, different informants give their own emphasis in accounts of how it started, and who was involved. Doris Roper told me that Brenda Gould, later a prominent Board member of the Society, went around Charters Towers in about 1970 and took photographs of all the places that people lived. She said there were people living in drinking camps and ‘humpies’, run-down houses, and tin shacks like Doris and her family. The intention was to send these photographs off ‘to the government’ as part of a submission for Housing grants. Another woman, Beryl Weston, was visiting relatives in Charters Towers in 1971, when she attended a meeting where some people, including Edward Green, Regan Marasa, and Brenda Gould, talked about forming a Housing Co-op (Beryl moved to Charters Towers with her family four years later). Esther Sorrel and Gladys Jones thought that Jupiter Mosman Society was begun by ‘*Old Regan* [Marasa]’. Gladys said, ‘*He kicked it off, ay, he started it*’.

Records of the Society reveal certain prominent individuals as highly active in the process of establishing and running the organisation. For example, in January 1976, the President of the Society, Jacob Long, acted as spokesperson in the local paper when complaints were being made about Aboriginal people. The headline of an article on the front page of the *Northern Miner* (26th Jan 1976) read, ‘The darkies make dreadful neighbours: White residents in Charters Towers have had a gutful of their Aboriginal neighbours’. The article reproduced claims by white residents of Aboriginal people’s drunken brawls and sex in the street. Jacob Long responded to the local paper, and it quotes him as saying that he,

[H]as appealed on several occasions to the townspeople to be tolerant during the assimilation of the Aborigine [*sic*] families into the houses, [he] said the whole Aboriginal community should not be condemned by the behaviour of a few. “People don’t realise how hard it is for the members of the Aboriginal community here to change from one lifestyle to another” he said recently. “They were raised under the protection...Act. Now they have to be independent.” [Jacob Long] said the society could not be there 24 hours a day to supervise the management of the houses... “Blaming the whole race because of a few [he said] has been the case as far as I can remember. It makes it hard for the rest of us.”

Further, in a letter to a local Minister and responding to the article, Jacob Long outlined what the Society was doing to address the ‘problems’ facing people and housing and the ‘backlash’ from the Charters Towers white community (Jupiter Mosman, 30th Jan 1976). The solution to many of the current problems, wrote the President, was more housing for Aboriginal people.

Given the publicity and prominence of Jacob Long, it might be assumed that he was also a strong figure among Aboriginal people. However, only one person I spoke to about the beginnings of the organisation named this man as having a pivotal role, followed by their mother Adel Jaid. Brenda Gould, Regan Marasa, Victor Muir, Charlie Hodgkinson, Edward Green and Hannah Newland and others were variously remembered as active in the meetings and on the Board. Only three of the individuals mentioned here are members of the ‘family groups’ outlined in the previous chapter (and incidentally, only two are still alive). The others were people who ‘married in’ to local families or had moved to the town in recent years, and their families remain there. And while most of them are prominent in the records of the organisation, some who are spoken about as ‘*being the ones*’ who started up Jupiter Mosman Society never appear in the records. Regan Marasa is one of these. While almost everyone at least mentioned ‘Old Regan’, as ‘*getting that thing going*’, his actions must have been more behind the scenes. By this I mean his political influence was among his kin rather than in the everyday bureaucracy of the organisation. I suspect that the reason that Jacob Long was almost never mentioned to me by people in connection with the organisation may have been primarily that he no longer has immediate family living in Charters Towers, or none that I know of. My point here is that prominent individuals among Aboriginal people, and those who remain prominent in the social imagination, are active members of families, and respected kin *first* as well as the organisation’s recognised spokespeople.

Politics and the polity

Brenda Gould wrote a letter to other members of the Board in 1978, that she thought another Board member was ‘treating tenants like myalls’ (Jupiter Mosman

Community Cooperative Society:1978).¹²⁵ In the same letter, she makes a connection between ‘local’ peoples and rights to homes, saying that there were ‘original Charters Towers people’ who did not have houses at this time (ibid.). This contention is unusual for the Society, which apparently had not had any bias towards ‘original Charters Towers people’ over newer Aboriginal residents before, and from the beginning has had members of the Board who were residents of the town of only a few years standing.

Brenda’s complaint was partially grounded in conflicting personal and political views among individuals and members of her family and another. There were differences among people’s opinions of the ‘needs’ of families. Where some saw such needs as principally being about better housing and welfare, others had visions of political movement toward notions of Indigenous rights and rights to land. The Federal government had passed the *Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* in 1976, under which Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory could claim land under Aboriginal ‘tradition’. There was considerable publicity about land rights in the local and national media, but the Queensland Government was strongly against any such suggestion for their State. The tensions surrounding all of these issues were heightened in the 1970s by the local focus on Aboriginal people’s business, and national politics of Aboriginality. Throughout the early and mid-1970s articles appeared in the *Northern Miner* regarding the Whitlam Labour Government’s positive stance on Aboriginal land rights and the Queensland Government’s strong stance against anything like it for Queensland. Letters, editorials and articles addressed the notion of land rights and special funding in relation to the local situation.

In the early 1980s, political protest by Aboriginal people grew and was participated in by at least some members of Jupiter Mosman Society. People I spoke to remember prominent members of the Society going down to the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane in 1982 to join the Aboriginal rights protests.¹²⁶ The Jupiter Mosman Board

¹²⁵ ‘Myall’ is a word derived from the Dharuk (Sydney area) language, meaning ‘stranger’. It was appropriated by colonisers and used to refer to Aboriginal people who lived totally or partially outside colonial influence (Dixon, Ramson & Thomas 1990:172). It is used by Aboriginal people in the present as an insult to mean someone who does not know anything of white ways of doing things.

¹²⁶ See (Watson 1988). The Commonwealth Games in Brisbane in 1982 was an opportunity to embarrass the Queensland and Australian Governments into changing discriminatory legislation, and

minutes record a request at this time from a group of members to begin a ‘land rights organisation’ asking for donations, and the Society sent a delegate to the National Aboriginal Conference (NAC) Land Needs Conference in 1983. Some members of Jupiter Mosman Society began to infuse the housing issue with land rights politics. They organised meetings at ‘Mary Street’ (owned by the Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council),¹²⁷ to talk about getting two blocks of Reserve land in town transferred to Aboriginal people in Charters Towers. The Secretary of Jupiter Mosman wrote to the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs in Brisbane to request that the land be handed over to Jupiter Mosman for the purposes of building more accommodation for Aboriginal people. However, the DAIA replied that because of the nature of the title to that land it could not be handed over to the Association (Department of Community Services 1947-1987: April 1983). This refusal sparked a concerted effort from certain members of the Society to ‘*get those Reserves back*’.¹²⁸ Rachel Langan remembered

They had a lot of meetings at Mary Street, ay, about that Reserve... Well they was in that AICC when it first began and they bought that building there. They used to have the little land meetings there, the Reserve lands. There was a lot of people there. There would have been about 50 ... lot of people.

The request for return of the lands also drew the attention of the Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Affairs & Northern Development (Mr Bob Katter). He formed a ‘management committee’ of four young Aboriginal men from local families who were to ‘oversee the purchase of some land in the Charters Towers area’. The land was for a cattle station, which was ideally to provide employment for men in a ‘traditional’ occupation for whom there was little or no work available. The property was to be financed ‘by the sale of Aboriginal Camping Reserve No. 8069 in Charters Towers’ (Department of Community Services 1947-1987: 7th Nov. 1986). Rachel Langan told me that she and others perceived this as a move by the Minister to prevent Aboriginal people from owning any land in town, and doubted the viability of the venture.¹²⁹

to push for land rights.

¹²⁷ The AICC is a church group. I am told they lease the house, known as ‘Mary Street’, from the Queensland Department of Housing.

¹²⁸ This is the same Reserve that was created by the Department to accommodate station workers in the 1940s onwards.

¹²⁹ See May (1994:177), who argues that by the early 1990s, cattle properties in Queensland were not

In the following month seventeen women and four men met at Mary Street. They included older and younger members of local Aboriginal families. Senior members of the Green, Marasa, Jones, Burn and Jaid families¹³⁰ were there, as well as some older long term residents of the town. Present were also younger members of their families who have since been involved in organised politics in the 1990s and into the present. The group wrote a letter to the Minister and the Charters Towers City Council advising that they intended on starting clearing work on the Reserve land to enable building of a hostel to start (Department of Community Services 1947-1987:8th Dec 1986). During this time those at the Mary Street meetings established a new corporation, the (now defunct) 'King Kiara Community Aboriginal Corporation' (King Kiara CAC).¹³¹

While it seems that building on the Reserve did not actually start, it is apparent that this meeting and others of the time were pivotal in local Aboriginal politics. Faced with the threat of losing the Reserve land to an uncertain venture of owning a cattle station, the older members of town acted together against the Minister. These were older men and women who belonged in Charters Towers and had lived there for some years. In addition there were members of their families who were more recent permanent residents, but who considered Charters Towers as their home. As such they valued the imperative to have a place for Aboriginal people to stay in town. The fight for the Reserve was unambiguously a demonstration by Aboriginal people of their centrality of belonging to town.

Furthermore, the actions of the group who met at Mary Street describe the workings of a polity that embodied the complexities of social action taken by Aboriginal people at this time. Firstly, the young men's apparent eagerness to accommodate the Minister's proposed project might be explained by their identification with the history of respect for Aboriginal men in the pastoral industry. As I have already noted, many of the older people who were leaders in organised politics were those

very profitable in economic terms for individual owners. Furthermore, properties transferred to Aboriginal ownership were often those that were cheap (and thus run down and in need of considerable financial input), few older Aboriginal men had experience as *managers* of a station, often younger people had no experience as pastoral workers and had no desire to stay long out bush, and the demand for labour, given mechanisation, is low (*ibid.*).

¹³⁰ See Chapter 4, Figure 5. Charters Towers 'Family groups'.

¹³¹ 'King Kiara' was an Aboriginal man who was widely respected and had lived in the town for many years up to about the 1950s, but was originally from a station further West (see Chapter 3, Plate 5).

who had moved into town before (or at the beginning of) the downturn in the pastoral industry. Involvement in Jupiter Mosman Society and King Kiara CAC had also fostered an awareness of the language of bureaucracy and institutionalised advocacy and the possibilities of land ownership and creation of community resources in town. The rejection of this project by the group who met at Mary Street was the workings of a polity who did not recognise the committee of young men as having the authority to make decisions about land, which was perceived as that belonging to Aboriginal people of Charters Towers. The polity, as of members of families who belonged to Charters Towers, chose town life over station life. Moreover they chose not to bow to the overt pressure of the Minister – an agent of the state. Instead the polity in this case used their internal political means to overrule the Minister’s committee and pursue ownership of land in town.

Importantly, this land was not just any land. It had been designated Aboriginal land for as long as most of those alive at the time had known. Despite, or perhaps because of its origins in the segregation and control of Aboriginal people, it represented for many people, with the passing of time, an element of home.¹³² Fighting for the Reserve land was thus another way of demonstrating Aboriginal belonging to the town.

King Kiara CAC continued to agitate for the return of the Reserve lands, although the running of it passed through different individuals. By the 1990s, those who ran the organisation included some of the young men from the Minister’s committee. Around this time, it was clear that as Aboriginal reserve land under the Queensland Government’s *Aboriginal Land Act (Qld) 1991*, the Reserve in Charters Towers was eligible for transfer to Aboriginal people. When the Queensland Government ‘handed over’ the title of the Reserve to Aboriginal people in Charters Towers in 1995, there had to be an organisation which could act as a Trustee for the lands, on behalf of ‘Traditional Owners’.¹³³ It appears that the polity was active again in overturning the attempted control of resources by the group of young men. Again, a meeting at Mary Street, which was attended by some of those active in previous

¹³² There have been a great many studies based in Aboriginal settlements and reserves that consider Aboriginal identity in and belonging to these places. See, for example Koepping (1976); Haebich (1992 [1988]); and Rowse (1993: Chapter 2 ‘Lives in Custody’).

¹³³ Under Section 3.02 of the *Aboriginal Land Act (1991)*, the Minister must appoint trustees in

years, agreed that a new body should be established, since ‘*King Kiara was not representative*’ of their interests. When the Reserve land was ‘handed back’ to Aboriginal people of Charters Towers, it was handed to their Lands Trust. The Trust had been formed with two individuals from ‘*each of the families*’ named as Trustees,¹³⁴ and included some of the young men as well as older men and women who operated as the polity.

In this way the polity was instrumental in the creation of an Aboriginal authority structure within bureaucratic boundaries. It was a method that those involved employed which recognised the differences among and between ‘the families’. It is this kind of agency that is important to consider in the history of Aboriginal people’s social incorporation of these bureaucratic structures. That there was a high proportion of women who attended the meetings and acted as spokespeople, and the few men that were listed as attendees were older and had also lived for some time in town also tells us something of the operation of the polity. They had a savvy of local social politics that was based in a long term and stable residence in town. In addition, these women and men had knowledge that came from experience with dealing with state bureaucracies as well as local Aboriginal organisations. Furthermore, the ways in which certain political changes were effected demonstrates the workings of a polity whose power was based in older, and respected women and men among *the families* of the town. Nonetheless, while on some level there appears to be ‘factions’ in the history of politics and dispute I discuss above, the dynamics of the rise of ‘prominent individuals’ and who else they involve or attract at any one time, shifts according to changing relations among ‘family’ and between families. This shifting authority continues to be effected in the politics of the present.

The economic changes that saw Aboriginal people coming to live more permanently in town were occurring within the scheme of changing national politics, bringing a level of attention to ‘the Aboriginal cause’ locally. Board members and other spokespeople for the organisations were emerging as public political voices for social change for Aboriginal people in the region. They and others determined the shape of

consultation with Aboriginal people.

¹³⁴ I was told that these were ‘the same’ families as those that are recognised as the Kudjala families for native title claims, as discussed in the previous chapter. However, more research is needed to determine the continuities (in structure and practice) between the ‘3 families’ of the Lands Trust and

local Aboriginal bureaucracies in the practice of relationships, disputes and alliances among kin and between families. Moreover, the shifting Aboriginal polity in Charters Towers can be seen as a structure of authority based in age and in the authority vested in those Aboriginal people who were recognised as belonging to Charters Towers. These people were also in the front line of the new and public spotlight on Aboriginal people, and thus open to the internal and external pressures that such attention could bring. In the 1990s, state discourse of Aboriginality as ‘tradition’ only increased the political pressure of Aboriginal people to identify in conflicting ways.

Native Title, ‘tradition’ and the bureaucracy of representation

The High Court decision in *Mabo vs Queensland (No 2)* (1992) found that the Meriam people ‘were entitled as against the whole world to the possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of (most of) the land of the Murray Islands in the Torres Strait’ (Native Title Unit 1998:1). The High Court thus concluded that the principals of the recognition of some form of native title applied to Australia in places where indigenous peoples have ‘maintained their connection with the land; and where their title has not been extinguished’ by acts of government (ibid.). The Commonwealth Government’s response was to introduce the *Native Title Act (Cth) 1993* (Native Title Act/NTA). The Act was a method of limiting the extent to which Aboriginal people might, on the strength of *Mabo*, begin to make claims over Australian land. As such, the NTA sought to provide ‘certainty’ for the ‘broader Australian community’ (*Native Title Act 1993:preamble p2*).¹³⁵ Throughout Australia, Aboriginal people and their representatives have sought to lodge claims to their land since the passing of the NTA, although many had undergone claims processes under various other State Government and Territory land rights regimes.

In terms of my discussion here, the Native Title Act applies a concept of ‘recognition’ of rights to land (Pearson 1997:154), but within the confines of its definitions of what it is to be an Aboriginal person. In particular, it is a cruel irony for Aboriginal people to be asked to prove their ‘traditional connection’ with land,

the three ‘family groups’ of native title.

¹³⁵ For anthropological discussions of the Native Title Act its workings and failings, see for example (Fingleton & Finlayson 1995; Sutton 1998b; Mantziaris & Martin 2000; Sutton 2003).

given the history of massacres, institutionalisation, and coercive assimilation, with which the state had sought to make them into good middle class (and preferably white) citizens of Queensland. Native Title legislation in the 1990s returned to an idea of ‘traditional’ Aboriginality. New kinds of bureaucracies, set up to address native title would represent Aboriginal people who could reveal they had the right kinds of cultural artefacts (tradition, connection, ‘tribe’), which under assimilation policies the bureaucracies had been trying to eradicate since the 1950s and before.

Two comments made to me were typical of the mixed attitudes to Native Title legislation from Aboriginal people in Charters Towers. Frederick Marasa told me,

Everyone used to get on good here, no fights. It's just when Native Title came...We lost the harmony here. I'm very sorry that it ever fuckin' come about.

And on a number of different occasions, Rachel Langan had said to me, often in exasperation, ‘*We'll use that one [Native Title] until another legislation comes along and then we'll try and use that one*’. These two comments represent the ambivalence, determination, cynicism, and agency among Aboriginal people that is part of the native title era. This section outlines some structural responses to the *Native Title Act* by Aboriginal people in Charters Towers, principally as a background to the following chapter about meetings in the native title era.

The government and corporate structures of representation

The Commonwealth Government established the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) ‘by the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission Act 1989* ...and began operations on 5 March 1990 as a means to involve Indigenous people in the processes of government affecting their lives’ (www.atsic.gov.au). ATSIC became the funding source for Aboriginal ventures that replaced the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Importantly, it was a Commission that was constituted by elected local and regional Councillors and as such it held a kind of Indigenous sovereignty. Of particular relevance here, it was the regulating and funding body for the Aboriginal Land Councils, which act as ‘Representative Bodies’ under section 202 of the *Native Title Act 1993*.

In ATSIC's Central North Region, of which Charters Towers is a part, the Central Queensland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (CQLC) claimed to be 'broadly representative of the Aboriginal peoples... in the area'. It was gazetted as a Native Title Representative Body (under s202 of the NTA) in 1995 (CQLC 1997:8). The CQLC had been incorporated (under the *Aboriginal Councils and Association Act 1976*) since 1990, but had worked with fluctuating and minimal funding until its gazettal. Being a Representative Body meant that the CQLC must act to support and represent Aboriginal Traditional Owners in its region (see Appendix B, Map 7) in their claims under the Native Title Act.

To this end, the CQLC held a 'Land Summit' in Charters Towers in 1996 which is effectively the most central town in their operating region. The CQLC reported that the Traditional Owners (TOs) who came from the many different areas of their region were concerned that the CQLC should represent the Traditional Owner groups equally and that each had 'exclusive control over any Native Title decisions over their own lands' (CQLC 1997:30). The CQLC set up a 'Reference Group' structure, wherein Traditional Owners gave instructions to the CQLC through a local Coordinator so that they might 'control all native title decisions (*sic*) over their own lands' (*ibid.*). Thus, the CQLC sought to recognise within its structure the nature of Aboriginal politics as *local*, through dividing the operations of the land council into sub-regions. In Charters Towers, some Aboriginal people saw this as a result of their own political activity. Rachel Langan, told me that it was on the strength of her aunt, Evelyn Jaid's criticisms, that the 'Mid-west reference group' was formed. Further, from Rachel's perspective it was after a meeting held in about 1995 in Porcupine Gorge National Park, approximately 200km west of Charters Towers (see Appendix B, Map 5) that the Mid West Reference Group became the Inland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (ILC).

Rachel Langan's memories of the ILC's beginnings represent them as local actions to address local concerns. Rachel told me that the ILC was to be an office run by a Charters Towers Murri and represent the land concerns of Murriss. Furthermore, Rachel and other early staff and Board members of the ILC were concerned about a 'backlash' from pastoralists and other land interests as a result of the registration of claims to land under the Native Title Act. I was told that it was not uncommon for

Aboriginal staff at this time to receive anonymous calls, which they perceived to be from pastoralists and graziers, threatening to shoot them if they proceeded with claims or sought to visit the claimed area of land. Those who established the Reference Group told me it was like a common front, a local representative, which could deal with resentment from other sections of the rural community.¹³⁶

The ILC's (*Draft*) *Strategic Plan* (Inland Land Council nd:np) states: 'The mission of the Land Council [ILC] is to support traditional owners in access to and management of their country and looking after their culture'.¹³⁷ For about five and a half years, the ILC ran an office and serviced its members in regard to native title procedures. Changes in Board members and Coordinators as a result of internal power plays of prominent individuals backed by shifting alliances were similar to the processes within organisations in Charters Towers that I have traced in this chapter.

However, during my fieldwork, in mid-2002, the CQLC was compelled by ATSIC as its funding body, to radically change the structure of its organisation.¹³⁸ The Reference Groups were considered unwieldy and expensive and there was a complete retraction of funding from the Reference Groups in each of the CQLC sub-regions. Around the same time, the Coordinator of the ILC found work in another town, and closed down the ILC office. However, because the ILC was also a separate corporation to the CQLC (Under the *Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act (1976)*), the Board of Directors was able to continue to run the ILC as long as they could find alternative funding. After several months, a trickle of funding came through from a successful grant that the previous Coordinator and I had been successful in applying for. The ILC members had a meeting to elect a new Governing Committee/Board of Directors and re-opened their office in Charters

¹³⁶ It must be noted that not all pastoralists are hostile to Aboriginal people's interests. However, the native title process and the general perception of it as primarily adversarial, has the *effect* of conflict even where personal relations are reasonably amicable.

¹³⁷ The 'ILC region' is defined as '...those lands from Cape River in the South, Calcium and along Harvey's Range in the East, Greenvale in the North East and Nonda in the West' (Inland Land Council 1999). See Map 1, and Appendix B, Maps 5 & 7.

¹³⁸ ATSIC at this time was under increasing pressure from the media and the conservative Howard Government to account for its funding practices. In mid-2003 it was divided into two bodies, ATSIC, which retained the power to make policy decisions, and ATSI (S for services), which administers the funding of grants, consultants and contracts (and is run by the Commonwealth Government Minister rather than the Aboriginal Council) (see www.atsic.gov.au & www.atsis.gov.au). As I write this footnote (April 2004) the Howard Government has announced the abolition of ATSIC altogether. It is unclear at this stage how this will change the corporations currently funded under ATSIC,

Towers in mid-2003. They continue to be the contact point for all land matters, and matters of ‘culture’ that are relevant to Traditional Owners in the area around Charters Towers.

Conclusions

In the first part of this chapter I found that actions of those who kept a home in town were crucial to a sense of belonging and also in a practical sense of having somewhere for them and their kin to stay. The creation of the Reserve in town, its marginality, and then its transformation into home by one family in particular conveys a sense that Aboriginal *place* in Charters Towers was invested in family. Those women and men who kept homes in town, had mostly been exempted early and had been determining their own lives for some years, including white education and dealing on a day to day basis with the social expectations, and boundaries of the town (cf. Collmann 1988:80-81). They became some of the most prominent individuals in the politics of the era of self-determination and they were aware of the complexities of ‘acceptance’ in an era when ‘self-determination’ was still underlaid by popular notions of ‘assimilation’. The concepts of family and belonging they brought into the realm of organised politics had been formed in the history of their lives as daily negotiating and avoiding state dominance, as well as accommodating relations among and between families.

Agency can be located in the process of remembering. That is, the ways in which particular individuals are remembered and linked to a set of events, and the extent to which they are remembered as instrumental in the outcome of these, is part of the practice of internal politics. The different perspectives of those Aboriginal people I spoke to reflect their familial and political alignment of those times and of the present. The memories are often in contrast to the minutes of the corporation’s Board meetings, and the government records of that correspondence, in which certain people emerge as ‘leaders’ or ‘spokespersons’. While they acted in these roles in relationships to state bureaucracy, their activity among their family and among ‘the families’ is more complex. Family members and others allied themselves to particular individuals at different times and for specific causes as well as in

although the government’s discourse revolves around the term ‘mainstreaming’.

allegiance *as* family members. This analysis of ‘prominent individuals’ leads into the following chapters, where I explore the issues of political and familial representation and structures of authority such as the category ‘elder’. It also conveys a sense of internal differentiation among Aboriginal people, which *was counter* to growing popular notions of Aboriginal *community*.

The Commonwealth Government’s legislation to administer the policy of ‘self determination’ channelled Aboriginal housing as well as ‘land rights’ aspirations into a form acceptable to the state and in a way that contained Aboriginal people in a *group*. This communal identification sought to mute the differences among Aboriginal people, and manage their interests as a ‘community’. The form of such representation, and the nature or even possibility of the representation of ‘Aboriginal interests’ has been the subject of some analysis in Australian Anthropology (Howard 1978; Sackett 1978; Tonkinson 1985; Mantziaris & Martin 2000). The idea that is central to the concept of Aboriginal corporations (and indeed to the ‘self’ in ‘self-determination’) is that Board members and other spokespersons of these corporations are able to represent ‘community interests’. The problems with assuming cohesion has been outlined by other researchers (for example Sullivan 1996; Peters-Little 1999). There are extensive historical and social (as well as personal) inequalities and differentiation among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers and representation, as any other political process, is contested and political. Furthermore, the national and local expectations to represent a certain kind of Aboriginal identity, to fit into town life, and to provide social welfare services as well as political leadership among Aboriginal people puts Aboriginal corporations and their members under immense pressure.

In the native title era, Sider’s (2003:xix) notion that ‘culture’ is ‘an element of struggle and claim, within and against the state’, is useful in understanding the discourse of Aboriginality and the nature of Aboriginal agency. The expressions of the representation of Aboriginal ‘family’ and ‘community’, and the political manoeuvring of bureaucracies and their resources conveys the ongoing practice of an historical sociality. That is, Aboriginal social practice might be seen as constituted by the history of a constantly present state bureaucracy and the agency of Aboriginal people expressed in terms of their practises of family and belonging.

Chapter 6 Meetings: social practice and the construction of identity

Introduction

In this chapter I analyse Aboriginal social practice and the structure of ‘the family group’ in the articulation of interpersonal and inter-‘family’ relationships within bureaucratic processes of meetings. I argue here that the intensity of identity construction within corporate forms such as meetings create ‘culture’ that is saturated with historical and political meanings. In meetings the state, as represented here by white and black bureaucrats, is productive of an objectified Aboriginal ‘culture’ (Merlan 1989) as political discourse, around which rights can be claimed and even converted into increased control of resources such as money, property and power. All participants in meetings are aware that this is a forum for the expression of this ‘culture’. At the same time, social practice infuses meetings with an immediacy, a relevance, which transcends and subverts bureaucratic conventional understanding of culture as well as at some level adheres to it.

In this chapter I will outline the general procedure of the meetings I attended; their rationale as bureaucratic procedure, their general frameworks, such as who is invited and who attends, and where and when they are held. That these meetings are not straightforward procedural events that belong to bureaucratic process is then examined through an outline of the social practice of meetings through aspects such as reasons for attendance and absence, modes of discussion, decision making, speaking, and concepts of time. In addition, I consider the language of culture and authenticity in relation to the reproduction and practice of Aboriginal family in these contexts. This chapter analyses constructions of ‘family’ and ‘cultural difference’ during meetings, and demonstrates that meetings are a site for the reproduction of an objectified ‘Aboriginality’. Further, I elaborate on these points through a case study of a ‘meeting about a meeting’. This case study enables an analysis of ‘official’ meetings through a discussion of what took place outside of, but in relation to these bureaucratic processes. In other words, what happened between ‘family’ and among ‘the family groups’ in the context of native title meetings and the lead up to them,

and what was expressed as culture in these contexts, revolved into the practice of family.

Meetings: the procedure

Between December 2000 and October 2002 I attended about 40 meetings as part of my fieldwork, the great majority of these pertaining to processes prescribed under the *Native Title Act 1993*.¹³⁹ These are frequent events in which the majority of adult Aboriginal people, at some stage, have taken part. Most meetings I attended were the business of the Inland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (ILC) and/or its (then) parent body the Central Queensland Land Council (CQLC), and it is to these that I mainly refer here. Indigenous participants expect, on some level, a meaningful outcome from the proceedings of such meetings. However little in the way of material outcomes has been seen in Charters Towers in the way of rights to land.¹⁴⁰ Bureaucratic processes by which to claim land, or receive compensation for land have changed over time. Even the central concepts of Native Title, such as ‘connection’ and ‘tradition’, change with the resolution of claims in other parts of the country. Furthermore, each meeting is the subject of a specific process within the Native Title Act, or particular processes related to the exercise of a kind of right. Thus the process of meetings, especially those where Traditional Owners meet with their Representative Body, are often intensive information sessions rather than processes of negotiation or consultation (cf. Sullivan nd). In effect, the business procedure of the meeting consists predominantly of lawyers (from the Representative Body) informing their clients (the Traditional Owners) of changes to procedure, expectations, and other bureaucratic matters. During, before, around the edges and after this procedure, are played out the social processes that I discuss here.

The bureaucratic rationale of meeting

Meetings are central to the bureaucracy of representation, consultation and negotiation that is the business of Aboriginal corporations. The kinds of meetings

¹³⁹ For a discussion and outline of this Act see Chapter 5, pg177. See Appendix A, Table 12 for a list of the meetings I attended during fieldwork.

¹⁴⁰ Some material outcomes have been realised through negotiations with industry, especially major mineral companies in the area. Some compensation monies have been paid to a Trust fund and increasingly, employment and training programmes are being put in place as a result of negotiations

that are most common are, first, meetings that are called as appropriate for the business of the corporation such as Annual General Meetings and Special General Meetings, as specified under the *Aboriginal Corporations and Associations Act 1976* (ACAA). Primarily, these meetings concern only the members of the organisation, their Governing Committee, and sometimes lawyers who are present to advise members or interpret policy or procedure to the meeting.

The second kind of meeting most often called are those relevant to the Central Queensland Land Council as a Representative Body. That is, under Section 202 of the *Native Title Act*, the CQLC is empowered to facilitate the research and preparation of Native Title claims, the resolution of disagreements in relation to claims, and assist in negotiations and proceedings relating to claims. Further, they may certify applications for determination of claims and certify applications for registration of indigenous land use agreements (ILUAs). Under all of these functions, the CQLC, and the ILC as its Reference Group, would call meetings of its members to garner opinion and negotiate decisions in order to fulfil its representative function. For example, the CQLC may invite its members to a meeting where members would be notified of development (usually exploration/mining) activity in the area in which the members have a Native Title claim (or may potentially have a claim). The meeting may then also involve members being asked to authorise the CQLC to lodge a native title claim over country in which the development is proposed in order to secure their ‘rights to negotiate’ over that land.¹⁴¹ Or, the CQLC might call meetings that involve, for example, inter-group/intra-group discussion or negotiation over claimed or claimable land.

Further, under its function as Representative Body, the CQLC (sometimes through the ILC), will be responsible for organising and facilitating meetings to discuss issues that might have arisen out of changes to legislation that affects claimants, and these may involve representatives from other government departments, industry or

with industry.

¹⁴¹ Under the Native Title Act, registered native title claimants have the ‘right to negotiate’ over land that is subject to a ‘future act’ which may effect native title (cf. Native Title Unit 1998:37ff). A ‘future act’ is an act by government which ‘affects the rights of native title holders’. Examples are the grant of a mining lease, a fishing license or a compulsory acquisition. ‘An act affects native title if it extinguishes native title rights or is otherwise wholly or partly inconsistent with their continued existence, enjoyment or exercise’ (Native Title Unit 1998:28). See Ben Smith’s (2003b) paper on the construction of notions of ‘uncertainty’ under native title.

local council interests attending and addressing the meeting. Meetings are an important interaction point between the representative body and the bulk of its constituents, and the representative body, its constituents and all other legal, organisational, governmental and commercial interests. Meetings are ideally where Aboriginal people get to ‘have a say’ about native title issues, where their views are represented to the state.

Membership

Members of the ILC were defined in their rules of incorporation as those who are accepted as ‘Aboriginal Traditional Owners’. This category is founded on the person’s ability to ‘establish genealogical connection’ to one of the language groups (in 1999 these were ‘Kudjala, Jirandali, Wanamara or Mitjamba’).¹⁴² To be a Kudjala Traditional Owner, a person must establish their connection to one of the ‘common ancestors’ of the three named ‘family groups’ (Inland Land Council 1999:Section 8.2). Each of the three family groups: the Marasa/Hughes, the Green/Jones, and the Burn/Jaids trace their descent to the area around Charters Towers and thus their Traditional Owner status to a named apical ancestor (see Chapter 5 ‘Charters Towers ‘family groups’).

The Board of Directors, which together with the Coordinator, is the Governing Committee of the organisation, is made up of a member of each of the Kudjala ‘family groups’ (that is, one Burn/Jaid, one Marasa/Hughes, one Green/Jones). There is also one representative from each of the Wanamara and Jirandali groups, but I refer here only to the Kudjala Board members.

To belong to a ‘family group’ for the purposes of ILC membership, a person must apply for membership. Under Section 8.4 of the Rules (Inland Land Council 1999), a person could be subject to genealogical research to substantiate that person’s membership in one of three Kudjala ‘family groups’. Membership of ‘the family group’ in bureaucratic terms, therefore, rests on categories of belonging determined according to *rules* of genealogical descent.

¹⁴² Additional language/tribal groups have been named subsequently.

Notification and attendance – who comes?

The CQLC is charged with notifying its members of meetings that concern them according to its role as representative body under the Act. Under the Reference Group system outlined in Chapter 3, the CQLC passed some of these duties to the ILC. The CQLC and the ILC both had a database of its members and their addresses in order to fulfil the requirement of notification by mail. Such notifications usually include a cover letter or flier explaining the purpose for the meeting and an agenda. Notifications needed to be posted to people throughout Queensland, and some to Traditional Owners who resided in other states and territories.

Those Aboriginal people who attended meetings thus identified themselves (and were identified by others according to membership criteria, above) as Traditional Owners of the land interests which happened to be the subject of that particular meeting.

Other participants in the meeting events included CQLC staff; staff anthropologists, lawyers and administrators. Sometimes a Consultant Anthropologist who was writing a report for a claim might attend, or a lawyer who was involved in the particular process. A facilitator would be hired to act as Chair of the meeting. Representatives from Queensland Government departments, or industry representatives might also be part of meetings where, for example, an indigenous land use agreement was being negotiated.

Structure of the event

In most meetings such as the ones I examine here, a whole day is scheduled for the event and in some cases two days. The staff of the CQLC, or the Coordinator of the ILC (again, depending on the meeting) usually hires a hall in the town. If the meeting is only a handful of people, such as a meeting of the Board of Directors of the ILC with staff from the CQLC, then the meeting is held at the offices of the ILC.

Larger claim authorisations where several Traditional Owner groups are involved may be held in other towns, for example I attended meetings for the purposes of future act negotiations and claim authorisations in Townsville and Bowen. Likewise, where the meeting is an ILC Annual General Meeting (AGM), this concerns all of

the members of the ILC, and is thus rotated between the three major towns in the region for which the ILC was Reference Group: Charters Towers, Richmond and Hughenden.

Meetings are most often scheduled for a whole day, sometimes two days with lunch provided. Travel is often a significant part of meetings for participants, not least Land Council staff. Traditional Owners are sometimes provided with support to travel to meetings, or reimbursements for costs such as meals, accommodation, fares and/or fuel. This is generally referred to as 'T.A.' (Travel Allowance). The CQLC administration was responsible for such funding decisions, however at times the administration of these funds was passed to the Coordinator of the ILC.

In meetings where decisions are to be made, such as an AGM, a quorum (or minimum number of people) is specified by corporation rules. Under Section 14 of the ILC rules, a minimum of 10 people must be in attendance for the meeting to proceed and for it to be valid (Inland Land Council 1999).¹⁴³ Further, in a meeting of the Governing Committee for the ILC 'three fifths' of the committee must be in attendance (ibid.:Section 9.11).

The format of the meeting is often the same. Anthropologists, lawyers and other defined experts in their field present to the meeting their explanation of the process involved in the particular context. For example, in a meeting concerning a 'future act', a lawyer might outline briefly to the meeting that there is a development proposal to be addressed, and then discuss some details of their member's rights under the Act in regard to that particular issue. If the members decide that the development proposal lies within an area that they do or should claim under native title, the lawyer will assist in drafting a Native Title claim. This process includes the authorisation of the claim through agreement at the meeting, where the name of the claim, general reasons for the claim and the naming of people to act as Applicants for the claim are decided by the Traditional Owners in attendance.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ For reasons not clear to me this quorum was variously stated to be 10% of all members, and at other times around 30 people.

¹⁴⁴ Applicants are those persons under whose name the claim is made. The Applicant is generally the person recognised as most eligible to 'speak for' that area of land.

The Rules of the ILC state that '[d]ecisions at Committee meetings shall be made by majority vote following discussion in accordance with Aboriginal tradition' (Inland Land Council 1999:Section 9.14). Further, these rules specify that failing consensus, decisions about the corporation's business must be made by 'majority vote of the family groups', and each of these only has one vote (ibid.:Section 15). Therefore at meetings where all members are invited people split into 'family groups' (as defined in the membership of the ILC) in order to discuss the issue and return to the meeting with a bloc vote. The institutionalisation of 'community' and 'family group' entailed in this decision-making are discussed further below.

The idea is that at a meeting, formal speaking and discussion happens through the Chair, or the facilitator. In the section below I discuss this role in its official capacity as well as describe the role of the particular facilitator that I observed, and as such begin leading into the section following which is primarily concerned with the *practice* of meetings. As such, through the structure of these sections, I highlight the facilitator's central role as broker or agent of this particularised and highly structured bureaucratic event.

The Facilitator

At any large general meetings, the Corporation would hire a professional facilitator who was charged with calling the meeting to a start and an end, who announced the agenda and who attempted to keep general order of the proceedings. Neil Watson, the man usually contracted by the ILC to perform this role is a Murri man from another area of Queensland.

The facilitator began meetings by calling for a minute's silence to acknowledge those who have passed away. Neil would then read out from a list of rules which he had drawn up on a board at the front of the meeting. These usually consisted of:

- *Respect for everyone*
- *No talking when someone else is speaking*
- *No swearing*¹⁴⁵
- *No grog or drunks*

¹⁴⁵ At which Isabel said once or twice, 'Oh fuck you Neil!', to general amusement.

- *No smoking in the meeting hall*

Neil usually added that the meeting rules were just a ‘general reminder’ and that people in the meeting should know how to behave in terms of ‘Murri protocol’. The facilitator would call each item of the agenda and introduce the item and particular speakers for the item, such as lawyers or anthropologists. He would then call for discussion and in doing so often reminded people of their obligations under the Act.

During the meeting the facilitator used jokes making fun of Murri way of doing things for example, being late, always swearing, and sexual jokes accusing people of ‘going off to have a poke’ (that is, leaving the meeting to play poker machines), to diffuse tense situations. He is a superb embodiment of bureaucratic practice in ‘Aboriginal’ corporations in all of its complexities – including the complexity between individualism (he is a contract operator, a consultant making his own money) and communalism, the established ideal for Murri business (his identification with people in the meetings, as ‘us Murris’).

Meetings: Practices and subversions

This section relies heavily on my observation of and attendance at the many different kinds of meetings, as outlined above, as well as observation of social practice that surrounds the meetings. Such surrounding action includes practices and discourse I observed, for example, in the ‘Murri run’ office of the ILC, discussion on the street and in people’s homes, about an upcoming meeting or about meetings generally, and the conversations and actions of people in the lunch and tea breaks (‘smoko’) during the event.

Attendance and non-attendance

The majority of Aboriginal people at meetings are quite old, I estimate that most are over 35.¹⁴⁶ Meetings of members ranged from around 20 people up to 100 and at almost all of the meetings I attended there were more women than men. This high

¹⁴⁶ Given that, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2002) an Indigenous person in Australia at birth is expected to live 20 years less than a non-Indigenous person, as well as the fact that a woman in her mid-30s may well be a grandmother, it is reasonable to say that ‘over 35’ is ‘an older person’.

level of women's attendance in meetings could be seen across (housing, health, land, social welfare) bureaucracies and reflects the involvement of women in organised politics in Charters Towers throughout its recent history.

Aboriginal people's attendance at meetings often depends on employment and other pressing occupations that preclude interest in or ability to spend a day in a meeting hall. Many other factors may influence attendance, such as social relationships with others, location of the meeting, and funds or lack thereof to travel. Native title processes to some, especially for those who are in their 50s and 60s is, *'like being under the [1897] Act again'*: for some they represent a general level of oppression of all bureaucratic forms. However, only a few old people avoid meetings altogether. Relations among and between 'family groups' may also preclude attendance or alternatively spur people to attend.

Meetings also provide the chance to travel, get out of town and see kin and friends who live elsewhere. There are almost always researchers from the land council present, and so the event of a meeting is an opportunity to ask these researchers for documentary information about family history. As a researcher, though proclaiming my 'observer' status, I was often approached for such information. At one AGM I was introduced to an older woman who had travelled to Charters Towers with a group from Yarrabah for the meeting. She was most concerned about any documentary information she might find ('before I die') about her father who was removed as a child from around Hughenden or Richmond to Yarrabah (mission).

In terms of representation, meetings are wound up in processes that surround the ongoing social politics. Board members might represent 'their family' in an official sense but are not necessarily representative of all members of the 'family group'. Whether a member of the ILC, for example, will attend a meeting also depends on inter and intra familial politics, for example a disagreement with Board members. Other members of a family group may attend, out of their ongoing interest in the native title process, or perhaps through such consistent attendance they are an unofficial 'representative' of their family, or they desire to be seen as such a person. Many older women noted offhand to me that they attend just *'for sticky beak'*. But, in their attendance they are witnesses to the performance of personal and inter-family politics as well as the decisions that are made on their behalf.

While it is important that people generally ‘know’ about the meeting, being directly invited is an essential element of belonging at that meeting. ‘*Nobody told me about that meeting*’, can thus be a strong accusation against those responsible for notification. A person who does not receive a meeting notification might claim that a Governing Committee member caused a slight on that person’s membership status. Hence, the potential contentiousness of a hand-delivered meeting invitation, since the coordinator of the mail-drop could not in that instance blame the postal service or the computer generated address labels. Not having received a direct invitation from the organisers can also be used as an excuse not to attend, ‘well, they never asked me.’ Likewise, being asked by the wrong person might preclude attendance.

On one occasion, I drove around Charters Towers in a hire car with Campbell Green, a member of the Governing Committee (the Board), delivering invitations on instructions from the Coordinator of the ILC, to a meeting which concerned Native Title Claim mediation. Campbell’s hand-delivered invitations indicated to at least one person that Campbell was closely involved in the running of the meeting. Therefore, Doris Roper, a member of Campbell’s ‘family group’ who on this occasion did not share Campbell’s politics, told me that she was not interested in attending. She intimated that if Campbell was so keen for the meeting to go ahead, then he must be confident of his views being represented and supported, so Doris thought she might as well not attend. The meeting was eventually cancelled, and so it is unclear whether Doris’ perception about possible outcomes had been correct. However, I note that at other times members of this family group have attended meetings *in order to speak against Campbell*.

Membership and family groups

Conforming to the structure of the ILC, people order their behaviour through the ‘family groups’ within the meeting processes. They sit together, and according to the corporation’s rules of business, they vote as a ‘bloc’ and are expected to present a common front to the meeting.

Each of the ‘family groups’ is actually separated into two strands, represented by the composite names. The division of the families thus recognises their disparate histories, despite their shared descent. Some families or family members had

exemptions early or late, lived on Palm, were moved or moved themselves around, or spent most of their time working on stations. Not all in the same family group had the same experiences, and some knew little about each other until relatively recently, given the history of removals. All of this history impacts on people's attitudes to their connection to the town as home, but also impacts upon kinds of knowledge that can be mobilised in organised political forums. That the family groups are composite *and* separate is apparent when people talk of their family in relation to identifying themselves. The most common mode of identification is with their surname only. For example, a person might say, 'I'm a Jaid'. Yet in identification with processes linked to native title or 'land council business', a Jaid might say 'I'm a Jaid, part of that Burn/Jaid family group'.

Families continue to 'find' links in their genealogy through archival and documentary research, as well as speaking to older people from other 'communities' (especially those from missions and settlements to which Kudjala or related people were removed). Assertions about one or another family being the 'real' Traditional Owners are made by those who are involved and have an interest in the ILC, along with claims to hold important documents that prove such claims. The other way of claiming to 'know' about another's family is having been told by 'that old lady' (the one that lives in a distant community, who knew an ancestor of that family) that '*those Jaid, they don't really belong here*'. Such things are not the subject of discussion at meetings, and were claims made to other family members and to me as a researcher.

In practice, membership of a family group, or at least involvement in ILC business is not as the rules (see above) imply. For example, some of Owen Brennan's family are recognised as Traditional Owners, but because his biological father was not a Kudjala man (nor his mother), he does not claim Traditional Ownership. However Owen has lived all his life, and so have his siblings, in Charters Towers, and he is married to Nicola Gould, a Traditional Owner. He sometimes helps with meetings of the ILC and gets some work through the ILC, which (it is generally asserted) 'should only be available to Traditional Owners'. But Owen had particular skills and training, which were useful to the ILC at the time, and which meant that he could organise work contracts for Traditional Owner men. Once or twice I heard

complaints from others outside meetings that Owen was getting work that ‘belonged to Traditional Owners’, but this was never aired at a meeting, nor his role formally challenged.

The ‘family group’ as a coherent unit is contested and negotiated during meetings between Kudjala (but less often, in my experience, in front of representatives from outside of the land council, such as in negotiations with industry or government departments). In the lead up to the voting-in of committee members at a particularly fraught meeting, one cousin loudly cast aspersions on another’s (who was not present) genealogical background, in an attempt to thwart that cousin’s nomination for one of the available positions on the Governing Committee. Loud verbal abuse ensued among various members of that family group. Almost the whole of the rest of the participants in the meeting left the room when this began, including some members of the family group who were fighting. The implication of the exodus is that such arguments *should* take place outside of the structure of the meeting. Gladys Jones, who is not from that family group, commented later amongst a small gathering in her sister’s kitchen, ‘*Shame! She shouldn’t have done that in there, that’s family business.*’ Gladys’ comment highlights that such accusations should not happen openly, but that they should be sorted out among the family outside of these ‘public’ forums.

When a family group member who is usually involved in the corporation does not turn up to a meeting, they might be conforming to such constructs of disagreement through avoidance of support (cf. Sullivan 1996; nd). This kind of action, and expectation about ‘consensus’ conforms to ideals, within the state bureaucratic forms made for Aboriginal organisations, that Aboriginal families are cohesive. Tonkinson (1985:380) observed that ‘consensus’, or decision, might best be defined among Aboriginal people in meetings as: ‘that which is achieved when public disagreement ceases, though opposition may persist privately’. Similarly, Sackett (1978:43) noted the outcome at ‘men’s meetings’ in Wiluna (WA), where decisions about community business were made, were ‘not so much a consensus, though this is supposedly the goal, as it is a decision that all the participants can live with.’ In regard also to decision making processes, Williams (1985:243) has suggested, in relation to Yolgnu (Northern Arnhem Land), that, ‘one may... view consensus as an agreement not to

differ'. In contrast, unanimity was where 'general agreement [was] marked in some manner to indicate that all relevant decision makers agree' (ibid.). As I will discuss further below, decision making processes among 'family group' at meetings I attended conformed to ideas of outward 'consensus' as those above describe it, rather than Williams' 'unanimity'. For Murriss, keeping family group disputes out of the meeting is also a way of keeping the important business of family representation and decision making under the control of family group. The fight among one family at the meeting mentioned above was clear subversion of both ideals, resulting in mass abandonment of the meeting by Aboriginal people, and attempts by white lawyers to resolve the dispute through legal methods.¹⁴⁷

The cousin's allegations that were made in the meeting may be compared to an example discussed by Merlan (1997), where accusations were made by members of one family to another of the kind that might well be levelled in return at the accusers. She writes that 'the immediate intention of the damaging remark was to affect the standing of the prominent family against whom it was levelled' (ibid.:12). Although Merlan's example is inter- rather than intra family dispute, the point remains that rhetorical forms and behaviours such as loud and seemingly inappropriate accusations, or fighting, openly subvert 'consensus' process. They also reflect the state of conflict and dispute in the native title era when assertions of rights bring to the surface new tensions. Yet, the accusation was made within the discourse of state (native title) process: the genealogical background of a member being held up as paramount to membership and rights to speak. The accusation thus reflects an intimate knowledge and selective use of state discourse, which in turn is constructed through selective knowledge of Aboriginal 'culture'.

Speaking and decision making

There seem to be few overt decision making *processes* which actually happen at meetings among Murri 'family groups'. That is, while people come to a meeting in order to make decisions, often these have already been discussed widely among members of the land council in each others houses and in the street in the lead up to

¹⁴⁷ The lawyers attempted to help resolve the dispute by looking up corporate definitions of membership, all of which were as open to the kinds of claims being made.

the meeting. Most who attend will have some idea about how the decision will be made and what level of argument to expect (and will modify attendance, or not attend accordingly). For example, I was at a meeting that called for two representatives from each family to be elected to the Trust and to act as Trustees. Principally, two of the three families were involved in this particular meeting as the development was recognised as an area where the third did not have a history. The Burn/Jaids remained inside the meeting hall and attempted to reduce a large number of nominees for the position and the Green/Jones met outside. Sitting around the verandah were most of the senior Green/Jones women who presently lived in the town, and a few others who had travelled from other towns to be at the meeting. There were also some younger women and a few children. Three older men from the Green/Jones' stood together in front of the women, and two of them took turns in addressing the gathering. The men's mode of speech was more rhetorical than informative or discursive: *'We gotta put someone in who can stand up and be strong', 'Put someone there who's gonna go to the meetings, going to turn up.'* A Green, who had been a Trustee in the previous year nominated his brother to take his place, which was accepted with no overt discussion. They then asked for nominees for the trustee from the Jones'. A younger woman who had recently moved back to the town was nominated, and she (rather reluctantly) accepted. She said, as she left, *'I knew I shouldn't have come to this meeting'*, although it was clear that like the man from the Green family, others had asked her to attend and the idea had been talked about among the family before the meeting had begun. The men took the results of the decision back to the bigger meeting; some of the older women also returned to the meeting and most of the younger women left (especially those with children).

Before meetings I often came across Board members and others discussing the upcoming meeting with 'family' and others, in their homes, on the street, and in other informal situations. The decision was made before the meeting, and people's attendance expressed their support for, and participation in a decision, rather than their intention to participate in voting. Dissension was also seldom a surprise since family members spoke to others before a meeting about their intention to 'speak out', to 'have a say'. Once when a Trust meeting was imminent, Myrtle Green and Gladys Jones told me (as they had told a number of others) they were going to attend that

meeting in order to stop Thomas Green, who was their representative, from speaking up too much. It seemed to me (no-one told me explicitly) that Thomas had made clear his opinion on excluding another family group for a particular negotiation to which his women relatives did not agree they should be excluded. Myrtle's, Gladys' and other's presence in unusual numbers was enough in that instance to make Thomas unmistakably restrained.

In deciding on the rules of a Trust to be established to look after some compensation monies, the 'family groups' agreed that there would be six Board members, two from each family group. They all had to be present at a meeting for decisions to be made, and 4 of the 6 Board members had to agree for the Board to make a resolution. Someone said '*it should be unanimous, ay?*' and there was an aside about how unlikely others in the meeting thought it would be that '*six Murris together would agree on anything.*' However, that the decision was to be made by six present Board members, recognises some of the practices discussed regarding membership: representation of difference among members and the provision for autonomy of individual members. Further, the structure recognises that people stay away from open dispute since the rules insist that all Board members should be present. The rules thus attempt to over-ride a situation where conflict is avoided rather than addressed, and demonstrate the Board members' acceptance that bureaucratic process places value in efficiency and decision making.

'Murri time'

No meeting I attended started at the time advertised – this kind of delay is generally referred to by all of those involved in the process as 'Murri time'. One important aspect of this is a level of disinterest, and in some cases, feigned disinterest, in the proceedings. Although most people expressed some level of interest in the possibilities that could be wrought from 'native title' (as some vague thing, out there) a large number of people expressed their frustration at the way meetings were conducted. At times people turn up late (or do not turn up at all) *in order to* miss some part of the process of the meeting such as the choosing of candidates for positions, or voting. 'Murri time' is also used as a strategy to avoid conflict, or to make a political statement about an ongoing dispute. This may have the effect of

stopping corporate process totally, since quorums need to be met in order for business to proceed.

‘Murri time’ is sometimes about practising avoidance of dispute, or demonstrating the existence of dispute. However, the rhetorical declaration of ‘Murri time!’ when a meeting is late to begin also mimics colonial discourse about Aboriginal people: that they ‘go walkabout’, that they have no work ethic, no proper concept of time (cf. Morris 2001). People reply with the phrase ‘Murri time’ as an explanation of why people are late, as a statement of difference. It is an expression of a distinct conceptualisation of time, particular to Murris. The importance of distinguishing oneself from organisational or bureaucratic officials is crucial to the perceptions of persons as ‘*free agents*’, not ‘*dictated to by Migalus*’.¹⁴⁸ This kind of explanation is thus asserted as an autonomy contra to controlling behaviour by the conventions of state process. People also practice lateness or avoidance of meetings when the meeting is called and run by Murris. Autonomy is emphasised in relation to white agents of the state (who are ‘*always dictating to Murris*’), but autonomy from Murri agents of the bureaucracy, and basically anyone who attempts to control another’s actions is also crucial to Murri sociality (cf. Martin 1993: especially Chapter 1). A familiar refrain that I have heard among Murris in Charters Towers, and especially in bureaucratic contexts is, ‘*no-one dictates to me*’.

Coming and going

Aboriginal members subvert wider bureaucratic time procedures by attitudes that are part of ‘not being dictated to’. During most meetings, except perhaps the smaller and more intensive Governing Committee meetings where members of the Board sit around a table, there is a lot of ‘coming and going’. People might ‘look in’ for a while at a meeting to check on someone’s whereabouts, ask about progress of the meeting, or to see who came to the meeting (and thus gauge whether their own attendance might be warranted). Others might ‘duck out’ of a meeting to check on a child, have a game or two on the poker machines, go for a drive around town, or leave to pick someone else up and bring them back to the meeting. There *is* a

¹⁴⁸ ‘Migalus’ is the term for white people (in contrast to ‘Murri’), and is often used in an offensive or derogatory way.

structure of the meeting, a beginning middle and end and an agenda which defines these. Yet in practice there is no compunction for members of the land council to stay at a meeting, and no rules that say people must remain in the venue until all the items on the agenda are addressed. Land Council staff recognise that members at the meeting have extensive social obligations that must be met or be called on, and that take priority, and do not insist on adherence to the structure. In fact Land Council staff *expect* members not to do so. Thus while the structure of the meeting is recognised as necessary and all participants expect the agenda to be followed in the proper manner, there is also the general acceptance by Land Council staff of Murri practice of non-adherence to this structure. The interplay of structure and practice is thus managed in novel ways.

An AGM where a new Board of Directors was to be elected for the Inland Land Council was scheduled on a public holiday, the 26th January. Also happening on that day was the ‘Goldfields Ashes’, a large annual cricket tournament organised in Charters Towers every year. In 2002, 150 teams from all over Queensland, including many Charters Towers people as well as a team that was all Aboriginal men, ‘the Black Breams’, competed over three days of the tournament on a total of 51 playing fields. Competitive and social games were played, as well as novelty games (where beer-drinking games and costumes are part of the event). Later that night there were two big birthday parties being held by Aboriginal families, one for an 80 year old man and the other a 21st. Officially supposed to start at 10am, the meeting scheduled for the day did not start until 1pm, after there had been some driving around the town looking for willing members of the corporation to make up the quorum. Adrian Marasa, who had been a Board member and was keen to be voted onto the Board again, spent the day between the proceedings of the meeting and the social cricket match in which he was a team member of the ‘Black Breams’. While the ‘Black Breams’ were fielding he could leave his outfield position to sit in on the meeting, and return to the game to bat, and in between turns at batting, he could return to the meeting again. Adrian came and went throughout the afternoon, and once the voting had to wait be delayed while he was fetched from the cricket ground.

Other cricketers in his team were members of the ILC, but none of these attended the meeting. Adrian needed to be at the meeting in order to be elected (as agreed by his

family) as representative of his family group. However, he also had social obligations to a group of Murri men to make up the numbers of their team. There is a sense that, although meetings more generally are important in terms of representing political interests and ‘getting something out of’ native title processes, it is only one among many other obligations that people have.

Roles and representation in the practice of a meeting

So far I have not clarified the position of the Central Queensland Land Council lawyers and anthropologists, apart from in their role as speakers to the meeting and interpreters of the bureaucratic process to Aboriginal members of the Inland Land Council. As staff of the Representative Body, the (almost exclusively white)¹⁴⁹ anthropologists and lawyers work ‘for Aboriginal people’, in an organisation funded by the Commonwealth body, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), an ‘Aboriginal’ bureaucracy. However, white staff are often acutely aware of their ‘whiteness’, and their appearance as representative of the colonial state in meetings. Anthropologists, for example, often have to report on the findings of their research. One anthropologist, despite his extensive research and experience with historical materials, told me that it ‘*seems wrong to be standing out the front of a meeting telling [Aboriginal] people about their history.*’

This awareness of in-between-ness of white staff is especially clear when considering the range of meetings as described above. When a meeting is with, for example, an industry representative or local council, the CQLC staff and Aboriginal members together will appear to present a common front. If a meeting is between Aboriginal members, their representative the CQLC, and another government department, the CQLC staff appear to act more as go-betweens and facilitators. Where the business of a meeting concerns Aboriginal members and one or two staff from the CQLC, the attitude of Murris toward the staff is as outsiders encroaching on ‘Murri business’, and they may be ejected from the meeting. In these situations, the Coordinator of the ILC represented members of the ILC often *as against* CQLC staff and drew on notions of self-determination and ‘local knowledge’.

¹⁴⁹ This is not the case with all land councils, where some lawyers and anthropologists happen to be Indigenous. Many other staff at the Central Queensland Land Council are Indigenous, especially administration, and project officer staff. In 2001 the CQLC reported that 41% of its staff were

There have never been staff from the CQLC who are permanently resident in Charters Towers. As such, most Aboriginal people do not know staff on a personal level much outside that of meetings or contexts relevant to meetings, except perhaps for Governing Committee members who have a much closer relationship with staff. When visiting the town for a meeting, CQLC staff stay in a hotel and socialise at night among themselves. Aboriginal people (who might have been at countless meetings with anthropologists and lawyers) might not necessarily recall staff names or their positions. This is the social distance that the CQLC sought to overcome by creating the Reference Groups in each of their sub-regions.

In the first meeting I ever attended (an Annual General Meeting for the ILC) and before I had met many people, Murri speakers called for ‘all the CQLC mob’ (white staff, and me as a visitor) to leave. I wondered as I waited to be let back into the meeting how I was going to understand this process if I was to be thrown out of meetings. In an AGM the following year the same process was followed, and by that stage I was familiar with this practice. This time, when I asked whether the meeting went well, Mrs Jones had a consoling tone to her voice when she said that she did not know why we had all been told to leave since ‘*nothing secret happened.*’ The process of evicting white staff is an assertion of control of a process which for much of the time is dominated by the conventions of white bureaucracy.

Bureaucratic concepts of Aboriginality in practice

Some experienced bureaucrats are very aware of ‘Murri way’ of decision making and such perceptions are sometimes built into the ways in which certain bureaucracies do business with Murrus. An example is the round of meetings I attended that were linked to the native title process, but run by the Queensland Indigenous Working Group (QIWG), which was funded through ATSIC.¹⁵⁰ This group was concerned in this instance to deal specifically with the backlog of future act applications that the Queensland Government had put on hold due to the ‘uncertainty’ caused by native

Indigenous (CQLC 2001).

¹⁵⁰ Queensland Indigenous Working Group (QIWG) is one of the working groups established by the Land and Sea Policy Group of the Queensland Government. QIWG comprises the chairs of all Queensland Regional Councils of ATSIC, the Aboriginal Coordinating Council and the Islander Coordinating Council of ATSIC and all Queensland Native Title Representative Bodies.

title. In negotiation with the Queensland Government, QIWG had developed a draft 'Indigenous Land Use Agreement' (ILUA) which they envisioned could be used as a model for all land use negotiations between, for example industry and local council, and native title claimants (Aboriginal people). It would 'increase efficiency' of the process of negotiating over native title, by having the basic terms of agreement already established in the model document.

In organising the consultation with groups QIWG had scheduled numerous meetings with the same groups of Traditional Owners, sometimes also with other government department representatives, and industry. Some of the meetings about this document were with large groups of Traditional Owners, and others with particular 'family groups'. QIWG also provided funding for a special position within the CQLC so that person could explain the draft model ILUA to Traditional Owners. I attended seven separate meetings in Charters Towers and in other locations over the course of a year about this single document (and there were some that I did not attend). During this time, in response to information that the next meeting would be about this document, I frequently heard, '*Oh, not that old thing again.*' The format of the information session about the ILUA was almost identical in every instance, it seemed: the document would be explained at some length using diagrams and projections, and questions invited afterwards.

The structure of this particular consultation regarding the draft model ILUA, attempted to mimic processes of information, dissemination, discussion and decision among Aboriginal people. That is, the structure 'recognised' the necessity for giving people time to talk about the information presented outside of the meeting and with people who did not attend. Whether or not this was effective, what state policy represents here is the 'recognition' of Aboriginal social practice and the incorporation of such practice into bureaucratic structure. However, *actual* bureaucratic practice subverted the intentions of state policy. The government department representatives involved in the meetings seemed unable to translate the apparent intentions of policy to their presentation, since these were most often dominated by legal and bureaucratic jargon rather than some form of effective communication of the ideas behind and effect of the 'model' document.

Doing business: Murriss and the state

Mantziaris and Martin (2000:272) write that contrary to some commentators' views that 'indigenous entities cannot truly reflect the values of indigenous societies' (they are 'culturally inappropriate'), corporations have become central to the Aboriginal polity, and are 'among the most important means for Indigenous access to resources.' In Charters Towers the various corporate entities are very active in, for example, creating places for local Aboriginal people to get together out of their suburban homes; in facilitating access to welfare, employment and health services; and helping with funding for funerals. Corporations and their corporate functions are utilised as a vehicle, as well as provide venues, for expressions of complex kin alliances and enmities and enfolding plays of social influence. Further, as argued by Mantziaris and Martin (2000:272), the corporations are often the site of struggle among the 'families', but also between 'local' people and the state.

The local (Charters Towers) people who ran the organisation – the Native Title Coordinator (who was the only employee) and the Board of Directors (the Governing Committee) - had particular views on what the role of ILC was in the larger land rights/activism framework. At times there was significant disjunction between what the Governing Committee of the ILC believed to be their role, what the CQLC delivered in terms of policy and directed financial support, and what the local members of the ILC and others believed to be the role of the corporation.

In meetings, members spoke over the top of each other and brought up issues that were outside of the agenda, and even the corporation itself. People at times did not turn up at all and not getting a quorum meant meetings were often invalid. 'Proper process' according to rules was different to acceptable process according to Murri expectations of the event. One of the common complaints about meetings from Aboriginal people was that they entail 'too much fighting'. But the conflict (the social drama) of a meeting builds among members of the organisation during the lead up to the meeting. Conflict may occur at the meeting or perhaps around it, in other spaces and in reference to the meeting. However, 'peace among the contending groups' (Turner 1974:41) is not always restored at the meeting, but may continue to simmer and erupt later. This is because the purpose of the event is not to resolve issues among Aboriginal people, but to 'get business done'. It was clear that the

above aspects of meetings created significant difficulties for those who ran and financed the meetings with the purpose of ‘doing business’ according to bureaucratic ideas of progress.

Meetings are places where long-standing disputes and inter- and intra-family conflicts are played out and the participants often comment that meetings are futile, useless events that ‘never go anywhere’, and ‘say the same thing every time’. A common lament expressed after native title meetings is, *‘same thing, just fighting. It never goes forward’*. In this sense there is no acceptance of meetings as politically effective events. Rather, the participants have to some extent accepted the bureaucratic expectations of meetings - as events that provide a group/s space to come to a decision on some detail of the larger legislative/bureaucratic process – and often see this falter. In this is a level of tacit acceptance of the rhetoric concerning native title legislation - that it might somehow ‘move things forward’. However, some people attend meetings over and over again: this perceived lack of bureaucratic utility does not halt their participation. It cannot be just because of some vague hope that there will be change. Continual participation in meetings reveals that meetings are not just seen as productive among Aboriginal people of some notion of (bureaucratic/legislative/activist?) ‘progress’, but are also reproductive of social process and ‘family’ politics.

‘Family group’ and the politics of representation

Unsurprisingly in a political context, the theme that runs through the data above is the tensions of representation among ‘family group’. As *potentially* the most resource rich of corporations in Charters Towers, how and by whom certain interests are represented in native title business through the Inland Land Council is the principal context for struggles among and between families for control of the interests in that corporation. Bern (1989:166, 69) asserts that dispute among and between families as political players should be likened to the factionalism of any political party, rather than portrayed as dysfunctional or disintegrative. Instead, disputes (such as those I have outlined above) can be characterised thus as competition among Aboriginal families for political power, competition that is resolved (or ongoing), and ‘embattled by other groups, interests and structural constraints’ (ibid.:169). In Charters Towers it was not so much competition, as

dissatisfaction that was expressed about the ability of nominated family members to act as representatives of their family group, or about the nature of that representation. The social bases for such antagonism is relative to the interplay of autonomy and authority in Aboriginal socialities that has been examined by anthropologists in recent years (Myers 1986a; Finlayson 1991; Martin 1993). In short, representatives had to walk the line between being authoritative enough in their position to be perceived as doing their job properly, but not so authoritative to be perceived as ‘dictating’ to others (and impinging on their autonomy).¹⁵¹

The likelihood of dispute about representatives of each ‘family group’, is recognised and the possibility is framed in the bureaucratic structure of the Inland Land Council, where Kudjala are divided into three families, which themselves are composite of two strands of family. This therefore *allows for* the expression of difference among Kudjala. ‘The families’ present a structure by which Kudjala can deal with the bureaucracy without compromising their internal differentiation, and with which agents of the bureaucracy should ideally be able to deal with Kudjala. The structures themselves thus reveal understanding and accommodation of the expectations of bureaucracies and discourse of the state.

That the concept of ‘family’ presented in these forums is simplified, genealogical and bound by notions of ‘tradition’ and descent is a product of the entanglements of state and indigenous lives. To begin with, ‘family’ is not in practice a bounded group. Belonging is renegotiated and reproduced and contested by Aboriginal people around the frequent events of meetings, not least because genealogical information, ‘family history’, for *proof* of native title continues to be the subject of research. Furthermore, that decision making processes cause dispute and conflict among and between families, is an accepted fact, but also a recognised *effect* of native title. That I was told repeatedly, ‘*we was all together, all one mob, before all this land claim business*’ is not just an expression of nostalgia. As a common observation, it reflects a discourse among Aboriginal people of the divisiveness of native title processes, and within this, of the state as intentionally destructive: ‘*just another piece of legislation to make us Murris fight amongst ourselves*’. Fighting in and around meetings is perceived by Murris to reflect the conflict that native title processes have caused or

¹⁵¹ I address the practice of authority in more detail in Chapter 7

accentuated among and between families. This perception of fighting may thus be understood as resistance to the rhetoric of native title as cultural gain in which a ‘well intentioned’ state wraps its dominance and control. Further, when the bureaucratic structure is harnessed outside official process in order to counter an agenda by an agent of the state, perceptible changes may be effected, but are likely to reproduce structures of power in place. Using native title discourse and bureaucratic structure to fight a dispute between or among family also expresses the entanglement of Aboriginal family and the state.

Case study. Isabel’s meeting: a meeting about a meeting

The following case study is an account of a meeting that occurred toward the end of my fieldwork, when the CQLC was ‘restructuring’ its organisation. The meeting was extraordinary for a number of reasons: it was called by a member of the ILC, it was ostensibly in reaction to a previous event, and, according to the understanding of those with whom I spoke, it was about wider feelings of dissatisfaction with the governance of the ILC and its business. I give an account of the event below and then discuss and analyse its relevance to this chapter and the thesis.

A brief account of Isabel’s meeting

Isabel O’Regan is an older woman from one of the three main ‘Kudjala families’ in Charters Towers. She had attended a meeting in Townsville with a small number of people from Charters Towers that was called by the CQLC, through the ILC, in the two weeks before. That meeting was for the purpose of authorising two native title claims located in country that was under claim by Kudjala (Gudjal) people, and also within an area which was contested by two other groups of native title claimants.¹⁵² At the time of the CQLC’s meeting, Isabel questioned the notification process for that meeting, noting the small number of participants. Her companion accusation was aimed at decisions that were made on behalf of Kudjala people in the meeting, and, their unrepresentativeness because of low attendance.

¹⁵² This is why the meeting was in Townsville rather than Charters Towers – the CQLC appears to have a policy (I say appears because over the three years I have been involved in this research, this policy is not consistent) to hold claim authorisation meetings which concern more than one group in a

Later, Isabel wrote a letter and distributed this among many Kudjala people in Charters Towers. It outlined her grievance with the ILC's notification process and especially noted that there were certain 'elders', including herself, and the oldest man of the Marasa family and the oldest Jones man, who were not being consulted in this process. Isabel invited them to a meeting and also invited the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the CQLC (an Aboriginal man) and the Coordinator of the ILC (Rachel Langan, also a Kudjala woman and Isabel's sister's daughter).

The meeting would take place in the lounge room of the building owned by the Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council (AICC), known as 'Mary Street', and was to start at 10.30am.

On the morning of the event I arrived early, and I counted about 30 other people who arrived for the meeting, most around 11.00am. Men mostly stood and sat out on the verandah, and it was mainly women who sat inside in the lounge area of the building where the meeting was to take place. Those inside the small space of the lounge room were predominantly older women who belong to the womens' group who use and look after the AICC building. The men on the verandah included quite a number who I had never seen attend a meeting for the CQLC/ILC (the reasons for them coming to the meeting are explored below). There were also many more members of Isabel's family than usually attend meetings – about a third of all participants. The rest of the attendees were members of the two other 'family groups'.

Neither the CEO nor the ILC Coordinator, Rachel Langan, arrived until about midday. They had to walk through everyone on the verandah and into the crowded lounge area. Isabel announced that the meeting should start, but that first there should be a minute of silence. This was usual procedure, but on this occasion particularly poignant, since the silence acknowledged two deaths in the week preceding the meeting and the fact that neither deceased had yet been buried.

Once the silence was over, a few of the men on the verandah crowded around to listen at the windows. Others, especially the eldest of the group, stood around smoking and talking to each other, apparently disinterested in what was said inside.

central and more 'neutral' place. That is, Townsville is not in either groups' 'country'.

During the meeting a number of issues were brought up by Isabel and others. Primarily, Isabel was concerned with the recent claim authorisation and the fact that, according to her, two important ‘elders’ had not been at the meeting, or indeed, they were not notified of the meeting in the first place. She said that this amounted to ‘*disrespect of elders*’ in particular on the part of Rachel, the Coordinator.

Rachel stated that Isabel (an older woman and her mother’s sister) was ‘*not my elder*’. Similarly, Campbell Green, an ILC Board member who was standing at the door, stated that he, himself, was an elder and did not have to look up to any other elder.

Isabel repeatedly asked the CEO what he could do about the fact that some Kudjala were unhappy with that claim authorisation, which had gone ahead ‘*without proper process*’. Some people who had been present at the claim authorisation meeting seemed to be in support of that process, but others were disgruntled like Isabel. She asked the CEO what was he was going to do about the situation. The CEO told the meeting that he could do nothing since he was not at that claim authorisation meeting and also he was not a lawyer so he really did not know the proper process.

There was some heated discussion between Rachel and Isabel. Campbell Green told the meeting that the ILC sent letters to everyone. He then walked out of the meeting, and as he did so said loudly that people should get involved and go to the meetings, rather than complain about the outcome afterwards. This focus on ‘outcome’ by Campbell was a deflection of the principal complaint, which was about *process* (I discuss this further below).

The CEO signalled that he had heard the complaint and was going to leave the meeting. He intimated that he had no control over these issues, that they were administrative and legal, and he did not have the power to come to a decision about Isabel’s (and her supporters’) grievances. He then left the meeting.

General discussion ensued among those remaining about land issues, primarily the Reserve lands. It was especially an issue that Victor Jaid thought should be discussed. Some others tried to tell him that the meeting had nothing to do with that Reserve land, and Isabel attempted to turn the discussion back to native title claim issues, but was unsuccessful. The meeting finished once Victor had said his piece

and others had also had their say about Trust fund money, and Land Council business more generally.

As the meeting broke up, a few of the older women hung back and packed up chairs and cleared away cups and I stayed around to help. Once most people had gone from the building, and there were only three or four women around and myself, one woman said '*Land Council should show more respect*'. Someone else said '*Campbell was very cheeky today*'. There was general chucking of tongues and shaking of heads, '*he should show more respect*'. Someone else noted that it had never been this bad with '*all the fighting and arguing,*' intimating that all of those involved should not have said the things they said.

When I met up with some of the same older women in the following few days one commented with some mirth and agreement from the others, that '*Rachel's been very quiet.*'

Discussion: polity in practice within and around a bureaucracy

A number of points arise from this meeting which are broadly illustrative of the Murri polity in Charters Towers. In particular this is telling of the polity in action in regard to place and decisions about place-linked resources. This whole process illustrates the practice of the Kudjala polity, where dissatisfaction with a process as well as with a person/people involved in that process was aired in a meeting. The fact that the meeting was held at 'Mary Street' in this context is symbolically important. 'Mary Street' was the place where all the meetings were held for the beginning of the fight for the Reserve lands. It was also the place that first housed the ILC office. It thus represented the political will of Charters Towers Traditional Owners.

Isabel O'Regan's meeting had the purpose of airing publicly hers (and other's) dissatisfaction with the way business was being done through the Inland Land Council at that time. The importance of having the meeting at that time and the urgency of the business that was discussed was emphasised by Isabel considering that two deaths had occurred and neither of the deceased were yet buried. Isabel emphasised the importance of the meeting, even in the face of such tragedy, her point being that the Board members of the corporation were involved in such wrongdoing

that a meeting had to be held, even *in these times of mourning*. Rachel criticised Isabel for holding that meeting when the deceased ‘*haven’t even gone down* [been buried] *yet*’, and said that Isabel herself was provoking ‘wrong’ behaviour by holding a meeting at such a time. Rachel’s implication was that the members of the ILC Isabel accused of wrongdoing were inside of accepted behaviour in comparison.

The fact that many ‘community members’ attended the meeting illustrates the social acceptance of certain kinds of allegations made by Isabel, but not a total acceptance of her intentions – they did not ‘side’ with her in a dispute that was ‘family business’. However, by their attendance they signalled a certain level of support. (Not to mention their interest in social theatre such a meeting promised). Support for Isabel’s meeting was shown in that attendance was much broader, that is, I saw a number of people attend who seldom, if ever, attend land council meetings. In addition, most of Isabel’s immediate family attended in support of her. Concerned older women, who had been heard complaining about ‘all that fighting’ surrounding ‘land council business’, made the AICC’s ‘Mary Street’ available for the meeting and they occupied most of the chairs inside the lounge room. Few if any of the women said much during the meeting, and afterwards were ambivalent about all parties who spoke. However these mothers and grandmothers and great-grandmothers sat and bore witness to events, which they allowed to unfold in ‘their domain’, and later gave their ‘word’ on the events to each other, and to others. (A member of the corporation later commented on the subtle actions of these women by calling them ‘those old gatekeepers’).

The reference to ‘elders’ by people at the meeting is a signifier for broader concepts of respect, according to age and experience, especially in processes of decision-making. As far as I am aware, neither of the older men who Isabel asserted were being left out of the process had attended land council meetings over the past few years. However, William Jones had expressed his dissatisfaction to me in the months previous to the above meeting about the behaviour of certain family members of his who were involved in land council affairs and who were making decisions on behalf of their ‘family’ in this forum. Albert Marasa had not mentioned any interest in these issues to me and so I am unaware of his general feeling towards the events. The naming of William and Albert was, as far as I could see, less about their exclusion

per se than about their exclusion as an example of how the ILC was being run: without ‘respect’. The fact that neither of the men had been overtly active in meetings was less important than the fact that both men are elderly, that they worked extensively in the pastoral industry on the country that is claimed by Kudjala. For example I was often directed to one or both of these men when I sought information about local history, particular events in station times, and stories about ‘old people’. William Jones and Albert Marasa are considered knowledgeable, and hence worthy of ‘respect’.

Importantly the issue of respect for elders is one that I have heard repeated in almost every meeting in some or another guise. During the claim authorisation meeting which preceded Isabel’s meeting, speakers from another claimant group who were present had frequently pointed out their respect for their elders in the decision making process. In that meeting, two or three men (probably in their forties) did most of the speaking for their group. When a decision had to be made, they consulted with two elderly women who were sitting somewhat apart from the group, who gave their assent or point of view. No such process was evident among Kudjala at that meeting, and in fact there had been some conflict between those Kudjala present, which was overridden by members of the Board in order to make a decision. Given that I had observed processes of decision-making (involving consultation between speakers and overtly passive and more elderly participants either before or outside the official space of the meeting) in other Kudjala meetings, this one had been out of the ordinary. As such it called for special action: Isabel’s meeting.¹⁵³

The older women’s comments to each other after the meeting were important to an understanding of the course of events in terms of the operation of polity. ‘*They should have more respect*’ was a familiar refrain, in this case aimed at those running the corporation: there was too much fighting among some people, others were dominating the process and not listening to other members of their families. The comment that ‘Campbell was very cheeky’, made by an older woman member of his family group, indicated to me that his comment as he left was primarily aimed at Isabel, but also William and Albert. His ‘cheekiness’ in talking in such a way to men

¹⁵³ It is possible that the actions of the other claimant group ‘showed up’ Kudjala in that other claimant group were ‘more authentic’ in their Aboriginality in their show of ‘respect for elders’.

much older than himself, and to ‘elders’ from other families was not approved of by the women of his family. It was ‘shame’ that he assumed he could tell another family what they should do. Finally, the comment made in the company of three of these women a few days later, about how ‘quiet’ Rachel was being began to convey to me some of the purpose of that meeting.

Most people who were involved in some way with the Inland Land Council were aware that the Central Queensland Land Council (under pressure from *its* funding body, ATSIC) was planning to cut off ILC funding. This would mean the end of the ILC as it had been for the past five years. The turn up at the meeting demonstrated general support for change, although not necessarily support for Isabel (as some of the older women demonstrated in their expressions of distaste with her mode of speech), and certainly not for the ‘the land council’. For some time there had been complaints among members of the ILC in and out of Charters Towers about the effectiveness of the governing committee. People had been talking about the need for a change in how ‘things worked’, in order that ‘things’ might ‘go forward’. Isabel’s meeting was a significant event in the process of change. Thus people’s attendance signalled that there was wide support for the need to change the way the corporation worked, but this change was expressed in terms of the crucial concept of ‘respect’. Campbell’s ‘lack of respect’ was shown not just by being ‘cheeky’ at the meeting, but crucially, by his actions in previous months where he was perceived to have made decisions on native title claims on behalf of his family without consulting with them properly. Many of the older women who attended the meeting belonged to the same family as Campbell and were in attendance in order to show their discomfort with the process as it was unfolding. Further, members of the governing committee had been seen to make decisions on behalf of not just their own families, but on behalf of all Kudjala. That they had been perceived to be trying to ‘talk for’ everyone was crucial to other’s dissatisfaction with their representation.

Isabel’s meeting was a meeting which sought to curtail the autonomy of representatives. Autonomy is valued, but too much autonomy in this case threatened other’s ability to ‘have their say’. Isabel’s meeting is an example of a system which holds autonomy in check.

That this meeting was about the ongoing process and methods of the Inland Land Council as it stood, rather than just about the one claim authorisation meeting is evident. Attending meetings is ‘having a say’, even if one does not ‘speak’. In fact, few people apart from the central agents of the dispute actually spoke at Isabel’s meeting. Nor did anyone, including Isabel, speak directly about the claim authorisation meeting that had been the catalyst for this particular gathering.

The third party, the CEO, who was invited in order ostensibly to give answers to the problems at hand, was of no clear use. The fact that he refused to act in this role was somewhat symbolic for people’s perceptions of the greater ills embroiled in ‘that native title business’, and his own position in the CQLC.

In ‘Isabel’s meeting’, Isabel herself used the meeting to expose the rhetoric about ‘elders’; to express wider ‘community’ concern about the running of an organisation; to exercise her voice when she had perceived herself to have been silenced; and to publicly air her opposition to a family member whose method of representation she did not agree with. The various other actors at the meeting had their own plays of participation, and participation was only partially motivated by concern for what the meeting was – ‘officially’ - about in this case. Interest in the history of the individuals at the centre of the action, their various roles in the corporation’s business and their interrelationships meant there were vested interests of many different social networks in the outcome of any further action. Moreover, the very control of the corporation and its capital, ‘cultural’ and social resources were at stake.

Are meetings ‘intercultural space’?

In most of the analyses of bureaucratic practice in Aboriginal ‘communities’ there is discussion about processes of decision making, use of language, and other Aboriginal practice within and around these structures. In a sense these Aboriginal practices demonstrate the ‘culture of the meeting’ in process, as I have intended my discussion above. However these writers have seen it in terms of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures in interaction, principally because the Aboriginal settlement or community is primarily ‘Aboriginal domain’, dealing with the physical and bureaucratic imposition of ‘settler domain’. For example, Tonkinson (1985) wrote about the operation of the

Jigalong Community Council and the separation of ‘whitefella business’, handled by the Council in its meetings, and internal community affairs, which are dealt with in the ‘camp forum’. His analysis posits two quite separate domains which are upheld by the structure of the meetings, but also by the ‘Jigalong mob’, who see the Council as a welcome ‘buffer [from] wider society’ and the ever-increasing bureaucratic invasion of their lives (ibid.:380). Similarly, Trigger’s (1992:163ff) discussion of Council meetings at Doomagee settlement also positions such processes and to some extent those who speak in them (ibid.:166-7) within the so-called ‘Whitefella domain’. These studies see meetings and bureaucratic structures as somehow outside of Aboriginal people’s everyday lives. Yet, in Charters Towers, meetings in the native title era and in the context of the history of life in a rural town, bureaucracy and the relationship with a colonial state are integral to Murri sociality.

In the native title era, anthropologists have analysed Aboriginal bureaucratic practice in various ways. However, there is still the tendency to conceptualise Aboriginal culture as outside of, or separate from bureaucratic practice, and that Aboriginal people and the state come together at this meeting ‘interface’. But is administrative and bureaucratic ‘space’ in the native title era ‘intermediate’ or ‘intercultural’ in the sense that Merlan (1998:176) and others conceptualise it? Mantziaris and Martin, citing Sullivan’s (1996:123) work, write that the corporations ‘operat[e] in the intermediate domain between indigenous and non-indigenous systems of meaning and practice’ (Mantziaris & Martin 2000: 274).¹⁵⁴ Although Sullivan (1996) takes into account the ‘fundamental ambiguities’ in corporate and bureaucratic systems, neither he nor Martin move beyond thinking of these as ‘intermediate’, that is, systems which operate *between* the state and the (Aboriginal) people. Merlan’s (1998) analysis of native title as ‘an intercultural product’ follows Pearson’s (1997:154) concept of native title as a ‘recognition space’ ‘between the common law and the Aboriginal law’. The concept of ‘recognition space’, and of native title as ‘intercultural’, asserts that there is space which cannot be characterised as being wholly within the ‘domain’ of the state nor of Aboriginal ‘culture’ in the ways that these things have been conceptualised in the past.

¹⁵⁴ Note that Sullivan does not use the phrase ‘intermediate *domain*’, rather, his work conceptualises Aboriginal organisations (in the Kimberley, WA) as ‘intermediate *systems*’ (Sullivan 1996:123).

There may be reasons for understanding settler Australian and Aboriginal cultural systems in terms of separate ‘domains’. For example, most of the studies which put forward notions of ‘domain’ have been conducted among Aboriginal people living on settlements and communities ‘remote’ from wider Australian society. However, Holcombe (1998) has shown this dichotomous conceptualisation of indigenous and white domains does not adequately represent the situation at the ‘cultural interface’ as it stands in the late 1990s. Her discussion is an insightful re-positioning of the Aboriginal/State interaction using Bhabha’s notion of ‘Third Space’ (Bhabha 1994; cf. Holcombe 1998:139), which appears to move towards something more than dichotomies. For example, Holcombe discusses how state funding for ‘community’ activities through ATSIC grant monies ‘is described as *maruku mani* (“money belonging to Aboriginal people”). She characterises this *mani* as belonging neither to the Aboriginal nor non-Aboriginal ‘domain’, but as ‘an area of hybridity’ (1998:140). But this ‘third space’ still assumes a separate first and second, it retains the duality of Aboriginal and state. Instead, I argue that bureaucratic ‘interaction’ is so well known by the parties involved that it is an integral element of the production of culture relevant to the state and Aboriginal people.

Merlan (1998) tells us a story of ‘land rights’ history, where the management of a National Park near Katherine in the Northern Territory was the subject of contention. The co-management of the National Park was rejected outright by whites in the early 1970s (in the context of land rights), but a considerable shift of attitude occurred in the context of native title era politics, which saw the white population treating the idea of co-management as economic and civil good-sense. The more recent idea was based on a notion that inclusion of Aboriginal people in management of the national park represented the ‘diversity’ of the region, in line with current popularity of the notion of a multicultural nation. Merlan uses the concept of ‘mimesis’ (after Taussig 1993) to understand ‘intercultural space’, ‘whereby representations of what Aborigines are, are redeployed with benevolent intent in a way that affects what they may become’ (1998:208). Her point seems to be that there is no autonomy in the production of the Aboriginal self in relation to Australian nation. The resistance model of indigenous selfhood (for example, that put forward by, for example, Cowlshaw and Lattas) and the traditionalist model make the same mistake – ‘what these seemingly opposed views share is their vision of indigenous cultural production

as autonomous... That scene is not one of autonomy, but of still unequal, intercultural production' (Merlan 1998:180-1). It is unclear to me why this process must be 'intercultural', if there is no autonomy in the production of culture – surely this is simply *cultural* production? Kapferer (1999), in his review of Merlan's monograph, notes that 'mimesis' here seems to be 'another word for hegemony'. That is, it is not mimicry that is behind the reproduction of 'culture', specifically here 'Aboriginal culture'. Rather it is the powerful forces of state discourse and the expectations of the particular discourses of native title and (in Merlan's example) 'multiculturalism', which have the effect of 'culture'. It is the *effect* of culture – the discourse of difference and rhetoric of appropriate 'laws', 'customs' and other artefacts - produced in meetings that confuses us into seeing such interaction as 'intercultural'. Instead, this interaction is conscious reproduction of objectified culture that is produced especially for the communication of certain aims within a bureaucratic context. But it is not *outside* the state or Aboriginal people, nor is it between them, but intrinsic to reproduction of culture in the native title era.

In those studies discussed above there remains the sense that somehow settler culture 'intrudes', or is 'introduced', rather than being inherent in the very structure of everyday life in a colonial setting. In a rural town, and particularly in Queensland, Aboriginal people have been subject to far more state control and greater levels of the imposition of settler ideologies than Aboriginal people in the more remote regions of Australia. Meetings and bureaucracies are not some *distinct* space but one of the many mechanisms of the state that pervades peoples lives. Here meetings, as one aspect of state bureaucracy, are specific and extreme examples of the construction of identities: Murri construction of the state and state constructions of Aboriginality. In this sense meetings are 'interactive' of the extremes of cultural representation, they are where culture is objectified and elevated, where it is represented as being anything but the everyday reproduction of being and meaning.

Brokers

Collman (1988:15-16) wrote that the premise of welfare administration (and we might now add service organisations, native title representative bodies, etc.) is that 'ontological differences divide Aborigines and other Australians'. Further, these

differences 'constitute an organic boundary' which has 'an absolute quality in the sense that violations of it necessarily produce disorder' (ibid.). Thus, according to the welfare administration in its assimilationist thinking, any interaction between cultures is necessarily disorderly and reproductive of negative social effects, and cross-over between cultures must be complete for it to be valid. Therefore, writes Collman, administration of welfare to Aboriginal people concentrates on the need for intermediaries between whites and Aborigines in order to control (order) these relations. These intermediaries are the brokers, and the 'boundary' between cultures (white and Aboriginal) is a 'constituted boundary within the field of the welfare apparatus itself' (1988:16). I interpret Collman to be saying that in fact no such clear distinction exists between cultures, and the necessity of brokers is itself produced by the boundaries that are constructed by the welfare administration. Sider's (2003 [1993]) work on 'Indian' histories makes a similar point: that difference is produced and reproduced by the state.

In relation to native title meetings, the 'brokers' might include most of the participants: employees (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) and governing committees of the land councils and other corporations; and employees of other government agencies, or even industry representatives. All of these people are in some way reproducing the conditions of these meetings and the discourse that surrounds it. All of them conform in some way to the rhetoric of native title. Those who ostensibly represent the 'side' of Aboriginal people in meetings and negotiations, intersperse their (often differing) notions of Aboriginal cultural practice with administrative processes as defined by the Native Title Act, or with essentialisms enshrined within it. Those who represent government agencies (the State, and its various departments) accept (at least in principal) these objectified notions of cultural practice through the discourse of 'recognition of the value of Aboriginal identity and culture'. As brokers of the meeting space, all of these agents constantly reproduce the space according to institutionalised versions of bureaucratic forms and notions of culture or cultural difference. At the same time, however, participants in the process allow for social practice to infiltrate bureaucratic structure, such as 'Murri time', 'coming and going', coming to decisions outside of the event, and contesting the structured notions of 'family'. These practices themselves are the reproduction of culture. Bureaucratic space and meetings are not 'intercultural', but

highly idealised events (cf. Cornish 1988) in which the discourse is given special meaning according to recognised and institutionalised constructions of Aboriginal culture.

Part of state discourse about Aboriginality concerns the value placed on communal activity, and in this chapter I have analysed meetings and the notion of the ‘family group’ as the embodiments of the principles of representation of others in their ‘group’. But also, Aboriginal practice puts limits on the autonomy of the representatives in meetings and bureaucratic process. The case study above (Isabel’s meeting) demonstrates Aboriginal polity in practice. It explores a situation where the prominent representatives for the purposes of native title business were seen by some members of the Kudjala ‘family groups’ to be taking on too much autonomy in their decision making. They were to be called to account. A meeting was called with the overt aim of addressing a particular issue: the process and outcomes of a previous meeting.

Conclusions

Performances of relationships in these events do ‘not merely instantiate or enact existing structures’ they create a ‘history in such a way as to alter those structures’ (Merlan & Rumsey 1991:6). Practice, here, is social performance acting within and upon structure. Meetings are part of state bureaucratic process, and are complicated by certain modes of Aboriginal participation. In some sense these complications are instances of ‘resistance’ or subversion of bureaucracy. Yet if it is subversion, it is a contextual subversion that is actually within the expectations of the agents of bureaucracy who also continually work within this context. In other words, at meetings and within bureaucracies, Aboriginal people largely represent themselves and ‘Aboriginal culture’ (from long experience with state bureaucracies) in forms that are recognisable to the state: including ‘resistance’. Likewise, agents of the state work within corporate forms that have been created for the specific purposes of ‘working with Aboriginal people’ (cf. Cowlshaw 1998) and as such their practices reflect the construction of Aboriginality by the colonial state. Many bureaucrats have ‘worked with Aboriginal people’ for some time and their bureaucratic practice often

reveals understandings of Aboriginal social practice particular to these contexts, and some understanding of practice across social fields.

Meetings are complex, *central* processes of cultural expression and social reproduction. They are highly productive of certain socialities among Aboriginal people (in the native title era, especially, of the plays of dispute between and among ‘family groups’ as well as the discourse of the ‘importance of culture’), as well as reproductive of the ongoing pervasiveness of the state. My research demonstrates that although the Aboriginal corporations and especially meetings, may be used for communication between state apparatuses and Aboriginal people, they are not ‘intermediary’ or ‘intercultural’ spaces between separately functioning systems. Corporations and their vocal members – who are usually employees and Board members – run the corporations in ways which they imagine to be Murri way, as well as conform to bureaucratic structure. Bureaucracies help order meetings in such a way as to conform to the state’s conception of ‘Murri way’ of doing business, but only to the extent that it suits the state.

‘Culture’ is something that the state uses to both include and exclude Aboriginal people (Sider 2003). ‘Culture’ as expressed in essentialisms is the discourse of native title but, at base, many of the things expressed as essentialisms come from Murri practice. The most clear (and relevant) of these is the rhetoric of ‘the importance of family to Aboriginal people’. While this has become a part of the discourse of Aboriginality it is also expressed in the practice of family in everyday life, including at meetings. ‘Respect for elders’ is much like the claim that Aboriginal people make for ‘family’: these are expressions of Aboriginal socialities that mark Aboriginal people as *different* to non-Indigenous people and their acceptable ways of being. As Isabel’s meeting demonstrates, ‘elders’ and ‘family’ not simply part of some cultural rhetoric but are cultural tenets around which the practice of Murri socialities revolve. In the following chapter I analyse structures and the articulations of authority and autonomy entwined in the concept of ‘elders’ that has been introduced through the case study of the meeting analysed in this chapter.

Chapter 7 Elders and old people: authority and the ordering of social relations

Introduction

The processes of power and authority among Aboriginal people and in relation to bureaucracies in Charters Towers are the subject of this chapter. In particular I examine the categories 'elder' and 'our old people' and argue that these concepts are central to the ordering of social relations and authority. These categories might be differentiated by pointing to the fact that 'elders' is a concept principally used by Aboriginal people and agents of the state in relation to their 'consultation of the community' in organised politics and bureaucracies. Elder is a concept of generalised Aboriginal practice which notices respect for older knowledgeable men and women and it has been inculcated by colonial state apparatuses (for example in the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991 (QLD)*) and turned into a fixed category (cf. Gledhill 1994:80). 'Our old people', on the other hand, is a category I have only heard used by Aboriginal people to talk about their own past in place, relatedness, relationships and shared history and includes those remembered dead and those who are buried in the local cemetery, whose graves (and the tending of these) attest to a certain belonging in place. Nonetheless, the category 'our old people' is also sometimes mobilised to give particular practices an authenticity and authority that is expected from demonstrations of 'tradition' and 'culture' (especially those in relation to the state). There are interfusions in the categories which has led me to analyse them together here.

The diffuse authority that is practiced by 'elders' could be explained through a concept of the interrelation between autonomy and dependence in Aboriginal society put forward in particular by Myers (1986b) and later by Martin (1993). The authority of 'senior men was in fact a form of nurture' which 'sustain[ed] heirarchy within an essentially egalitarian framework', and which discouraged 'authoritarianism and arrogance' (Myers 1986a; in Hiatt 1996:97-99). However it is not so much that

Aboriginal society is ‘egalitarian’ as Martin (1993:32), argues, but individuals assert individual autonomy which works against anyone claiming overarching leadership.

The context where I saw the category of ‘elder’ practiced was essentially meetings and response to meetings. Here age status is ‘recognised’ (categorised) by the state as a primary element of (generalised) Aboriginal sociality. This feeds into state understandings of acceptable political relations in bureaucratic and ‘consultative’ contexts. However, I have demonstrated that the category is also transformed, disputed and practiced in nuanced ways among the Kujjala polity, in particular by contesting the authority of ‘elders’ if they seem to be controlling or ‘dictating’ too much (as the case study in Chapter 6 indicated). Furthermore, the practices of Aboriginal workers in bureaucracies and between them and their kin do not always adhere to notions of ‘elders’ as authority figures, or reposition the notion in order to effect a decision or political advantage. I consider such relations as informing my analysis of how systems of dominance operate within the interplay of structure and practice. I seek here to tease out the complexities of distinctions and overlaps between the terms ‘elder’ and ‘old people’, and demonstrate that these categories of people are examples of changing Aboriginal practice. In addition, ‘elders’ and the respect for age as authority, is recognisable difference, authentic Aboriginal ‘culture’, and thus ‘culture’ which is recognised by the state in its relations with Aboriginal people in the native title era.

‘Elders’ and ‘Old people’

Elders in bureaucratic frameworks

It is within bureaucratic settings that the category ‘elder’ is invested with public political status and where such terms become important for individual and group political activity. Rhetoric about elders simply being the oldest living person of a family group are made by Aboriginal people and such concepts are deferred to in principle and sometimes in practice. But this elder-reckoning is far from fixed. From a very young age the eldest siblings in a family takes on greater responsibility than the younger siblings (for example, an older child is put in charge of the younger children). However, as an adult, the eldest in a group of cousins or siblings may not

be willing or able to take on political roles such as decision making or a spokesperson role either within bureaucratic frameworks or within the generalised Murri 'community'. Such roles are often taken on by those who are physically able and willing to 'put themselves up', vocal, skilled in speaking or bureaucratic experience, resident for long periods of time in town or who appeal to any of these.

Under Section 4 of the *Aboriginal Land Act 1991 (QLD)*, a determination of a claim to land may be made on the basis of a 'traditional' or 'historical' connection. In either of these cases, the Tribunal (set up for the purpose of determining such claims under Section 8 of the *Land Act 1991*) must 'consult with and take into consideration the views of the persons recognised under Aboriginal tradition as the elders of the group of Aboriginal people'. However, a third basis for claims to land may be on the basis of 'economic and cultural viability'.

A claim by a group of Aboriginal people for an area of claimable land on the ground of economic or cultural viability is established if the Land Tribunal is satisfied that granting the claim would assist in restoring, maintaining or enhancing the capacity for self-development, and the self-reliance and cultural integrity, of the group. (Section 4.11, *Aboriginal Land Act 1991*)

Strangely, this kind of claim does not need to 'consult with or consider the views of elders', and a claim is determined on the basis of the 'proposal made...for the use of the land.' 'Elders' are thereby considered by the Queensland State to be an authority on 'tradition' and on 'history', but not the ongoing 'economic or cultural viability' of contemporary Aboriginal societies. Reynolds argues that '[t]he traditional authority of elders has been replaced with the authority of the State'(1995:200). Yet, social authority is more complex than the legislation and this quotation declares, and the idea that the state can totally *replace* elders' authority is questionable. Indeed, the state recognises the authority of older people in Aboriginal 'culture' through its land legislation (above). That it clearly apportions such authority to fields of 'culture' and 'history', and not to the ongoing economic, political or development issues relevant to the community is an attempt at the same time to limit the authority of 'elders'. If they are to negotiate with the state Aboriginal people must have this category of persons, or 'create' them in response to, or mobilise them in relation to, bureaucratic demands for consultation and negotiation. That historically those who engage in such negotiations from the Aboriginal 'community' are older people bears out state

assumptions about authority. These complexities and twists in construction of authority contradict ideas about the ‘replacement’ of Indigenous authority, since authority is not situated completely in the state or in Indigenous hands, rather it is contingent on social acceptance and context.

Status among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers is clearly asserted by certain categories of people, especially in bureaucratic contexts. Authority, especially that invested in the category ‘elder’ is contested, and ‘elders’ are less a fixed group of people than a category of person who takes leadership roles, or in whom others place a certain kind of responsibility (especially in political and economic fields). Martin & Mantziaris have noted the following about ‘elders’ regarding native title matters.

‘[E]lders’ cannot be taken as a category of persons who have unambiguous authority over land matters, particularly in factionalised polities. In many contemporary indigenous societies, the authority of those who claim to be ‘elders’, and the principles under which such a judgment can be made, are matters of considerable dispute, with the fault lines often occurring along lines of kinship. (Mantziaris & Martin 2000:303)

‘Elders’ are often idealised as those who make the decisions in Indigenous society (cf. Behrendt 1995), but it seems that is seldom without internal struggle. I describe some of the ways in which elders are imbued with authority as representatives of their families in relations with the state, but are limited in such authority to context and to their ‘family group’.

Complexities of authority and representativeness in meetings with the state or other parties, have been partly examined in Chapter 6. What I want to examine here is the extent and nature of authority in relation to the categories ‘elder’ and ‘old people’ that are mobilised in relation to native title and related matters. In a sense these categories are produced, or given new life, by definitions provided by state bureaucracies. However, I examine how dependence, dispute and contestation between ‘elders’ reproduce certain modes of authority among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers.

Elders in practice

I consider here some examples of political activity: especially in relation to the work of the Inland Land Council and also some examples of the work of older people who

do not take part in the ILC. In settings such as in the meetings analysed in the previous chapter, ‘elder’ is contested as a category. There is not a single ‘elder’ for each family. ‘Elders’ *are* generally older people, that is, over about 45. Nevertheless not all people of this age are elders. Even if one of the oldest persons in a family group does become an ‘elder’ in these settings, he or she is not automatically *the* ‘elder’ to whom everyone in that ‘family group’ defers on a decision. For example, in the ‘Green/Jones’ family there is a large number of ‘elder’ (that is, people over about 45 years old) men and women who are ‘all cousins’: they share a common grandmother (See Figure 8). Each of the cousins is a potential elder of the Green *or* the Jones family. Further, most have children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren for whom they are considered ‘elders’. In Figure 8, those *shaded* are active in a political ‘elder’ role, while those of the same generation *not shaded* have not taken on this role in organized politics. There are also some very elderly women (Figure 8, the two women with stars) of the more senior generation to these cousins still alive. However neither of them are physically able to be involved in corporate matters. Notably few of the children of these elderly people are themselves active in the field of landed politics but some do play important roles in other local bureaucracies.

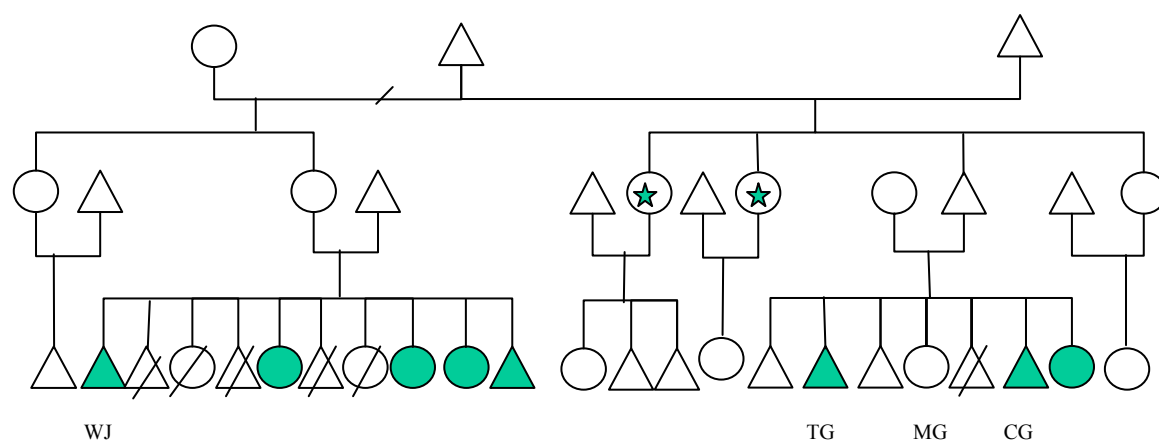


Figure 8 Elders of the Green/Jones family group

Although age demands significant respect, that respect must also be earned for it to carry authority within bureaucratic settings. The ways in which some older people in meetings are treated – in particular the frequent use of kin terms such as ‘Mum’ for mothers sisters and the more general use of Auntie/Uncle for older women and men

– are articulations of kinship, respect for their age and authority and recognition of belonging to their ‘group’.

William Jones (WJ in Figure 8), the eldest of his generation in his ‘family group’ has for many years declined involvement in matters of a wider political nature (for example native title or cultural heritage meetings). William was head of a mustering team for many years that included some of his younger cousins and other men from Charters Towers families and has an ongoing interest in cattle and horse work. He and his (now deceased) wife also spent many years looking after their own children, as well as many other children: nephews, nieces and so on. Thus many of these (now adult) men and women see him as a figure of personal authority. He remains informed in community and bureaucratic politics through a daughter and son-in-law, and sporadically voices an opinion on current issues through them. This is especially the case when people are speaking about aspects of history or ‘culture’ on which he perceives they do not have authority to speak. In particular, William is the source for much of the received oral history about massacres and frontier pastoral history. Every time I asked a person a question about such matters I was told ‘*You can ask Old Will about that.*’

There are also quite elderly members of the Green/Jones family who live in other cities and towns and have decided not to be involved in land matters in Charters Towers by virtue their long term absence. An older man, William Brown, is recognised by his Charters Towers relatives as having genealogical roots in the town, but he has spent all of his life on Palm Island, and his children and grandchildren also know this as ‘home’. Nonetheless, the CQLC must endeavour to consult with all ‘Traditional Owners’, and as a known Kudjala man, he is included in their consultation process. When I visited him with CQLC staff in regard to an upcoming meeting in Charters Towers, he said to me ‘*we [he and his children] don’t know that place anymore*’. This is despite the fact that they travel regularly to their family in Charters Towers for funerals and the odd wedding and big birthday party.

A number of older people are ‘drinkers’ (they drink to excess often), and while they may be informed and/or consulted about issues, events and impending decisions (and are thus given the opportunity to speak), they seldom attend events where politics are discussed.

Other potential elders do not get involved in ‘politics’. Myrtle Green (MG in Figure 8), in her 50s, said to me, ‘*Campbell and Tom, they got that covered*’, intimating that she did not need to speak up or attend meetings regularly, since she accepted these men’s activity on her behalf. Thomas and Campbell Green are brothers (TG and CG in Figure 8). They are both involved in the politics of native title and are nominated to ‘represent’ their family, as elders, on a number of boards and trusts and both regularly attend meetings, especially those for the ILC. Before one meeting, Campbell was in hospital for a couple of days for a minor operation. Thomas told me that he was not looking forward to going to that meeting ‘*without my partner*’. These brothers support each other as speakers and together garner acceptance from other family members.

Age is the core factor of ‘respect for elders’, for example, although Campbell could claim to be an ‘elder’ and was generally accepted as a spokesperson, he was not given the same respect across contexts in the same way that his older brother (the eldest able sibling) Thomas was by their women cousins and sisters. However he held some respect in other ways. For example, through his involvement in teaching young boys to perform traditional dance (see Plate 7, 8).¹⁵⁵ A person’s respect as a speaker in political forums rests to some extent on their ability to claim ‘elder’ status, primarily on the basis of age, but also on knowledge. Hence, because there may be a number of older people who claim ‘elder’ status within one family, or ‘family group’, and although this does not always result in competing claims of superiority, there arises the potential for dispute among families about primacy.

¹⁵⁵ The boys and girls who had learnt to do traditional dance often performed this feature of ‘Aboriginal culture’ in street parades at festivals, but particularly during the street march for NAIDOC week (see Plate 7, 8). However, this kind of dance was also popular at parties and community dances: whenever the deejay played a track that contained didgeridu, for example any song by the band Yothu Yindi, most of the young boys would jump up and ‘shake-a-leg’ in a circle. A couple of times some of the girls and older women might accompany them on the outside of the circle with ‘digging stick’ ‘coolamon’ type movements. Other women and men would all look on in encouragement and interest, making comments on style. At the next track, inevitably popular Hip-hop music, everyone would go back to the gyrations of black American soul.

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Plate 7 Dancing in Gill Street during the NAIDOC parade, July 2002

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Plate 8 Dancing in the NAIDOC parade, outside the Court House Hotel

Much of the time Campbell and Thomas Green are accepted by members of their family in their role as speaking and representative ‘elders’. Yet, as we have seen in the previous chapter, there are times when decisions they make are not representative of their other cousins’ (most of whom are women) views and these cousins may oppose Campbell and Thomas’ actions through discussion of their opposition before a meeting and attendance in numbers. Such attendance is an expression of actual as well as symbolic intention to represent themselves in another way than through the two brothers. Thus despite the fact that they ‘speak for their family’ in most meetings, the spokesperson might qualify their statement, *‘I can only speak for myself and my little family here’*, if they know that some members of their larger ‘family group’ may not be altogether happy with them. In addition, I have heard people say, ‘I have spoken with my elders’ as a way of accentuating that they have more general support (even where the spokesperson may identify themselves as *an elder* of that family group). Thomas and Campbell, in effect, depend upon the tacit support of the women elders of their family, who have the authority, as elders themselves for their children and grandchildren and within bureaucratic frameworks, to reject their representative role. In turn the women elders depend on Thomas and Campbell to attend all the meetings and speak in bureaucratic forums in a way which is representative of their interests.

Rachel, who is the eldest of her siblings, and whose mother (now deceased) was the eldest of her siblings in the Jaid family, claims that she has thus ‘inherited’ elder status through being the eldest of the eldest of the Jaid. Interpersonal dispute plays an integral part in this wrangle over elder status. Rachel’s mother’s sister (and the only surviving person of the eldest generation), with whom Rachel does not speak, is *‘not my elder, I don’t call her Auntie’*. In a sense the authority that Rachel has as an ‘elder’ is confined to ‘consultation’ and reputation within bureaucratic practice, and to the influence she has with her siblings and some cousins and their families. That she does not always have wide support is for a range of reasons, but I guess it is primarily about her relatively young age. Rachel’s mother was well respected in her time, and an active spokesperson for the Jaid family as well as the wider Charters Towers community. It is this tradition of leadership within their family, and the fissure that was left with the older woman’s death, which has clearly contributed to

contestation and disputation over status. Anderson (1984:387) notes that the overuse of the term 'boss' indicated a lack of real power among Kuku-Yalanji. That Rachel was often heard to be proclaiming who was and was not an elder might have signalled a similar lack.

Few members of the Burn family are active in bureaucratic politics such as the ILC meetings. At certain times individuals from the family have entered the discussion through protestations in the local newspaper about decisions made by the ILC, or through attending and speaking at meetings where important decisions are to be made, or through messages sent to other family members. That there are no active elderly or 'elder' members of the Burns in local bureaucracies might be a result of the older generation having all now passed away and none of the next generation yet taking on, or being invested with, authority or expectations of responsibility.

Among members of the Marasa/Hughes' there are differences in life experiences, but there is an overarching ideal for their elders similar to that Macdonald (1990; 1997) writes about among Kooris.¹⁵⁶ That is, there is a concern not to 'air the dirty linen', since the 'appearance of everything being under control is important' for leaders' credibility and the benefits which flow from such confidence (1990:129). There are fewer vocal women involved as 'elders' in the Marasa/Hughes; it is the men who most often speak, even though there are one or two older women who are usually present at meetings. This 'family group' also has many members who live dispersed throughout the state. There are 'elders' who have moved away from Charters Towers but retain a strong interest in land matters and attend most meetings. Also there are 'elders' who live in Charters Towers and are involved in the running of various local organisations. Again, similar to the Green/Jones, most of the spokespersons and those involved and who attend meetings are men and women of the second eldest living generation. Although there are men and women who are of a more senior generation to those active in political fields, they are not involved in bureaucratic/ 'political' business. They are considered 'our old people', too frail and somewhat disinterested to be active as 'elders'.

¹⁵⁶ This is the south-eastern Australia equivalent of 'Murri'.

The nature of the family group as two families ('really' there are the Marasas and then there are the Hughes) with a common apical ancestor means that there are varying methods of representation of 'family'. The fluidity of the power structures within these families creates an emphasis on the ability and willingness of a person to represent other members of their family effectively – that is without causing further dispute. These demonstrate that 'elder' is not necessarily totally dependent on age, but about the taking on of a particular role and wider acceptance of the person within this role. That there are no people in Charters Towers who are elders with authority across the 'family groups' indicates that political belonging is practically anchored in notions of family, rather than 'community' (or 'tribe' or 'language group', etc). Further, the fact that even among families the authority of elders is fractured across groups of siblings and cousins (and in some cases between two generations of kin), is indicative of the incomplete authority that a single person holds. Like the nostalgia I noted in regard to 'family' in previous times, there is also a certain ideal attached to 'elder'. I have been told that there is no-one that holds real authority, *'not like the old days'* when *'them old people'* could *'bring everyone together'*. The native title era has established new constructions of the past that impact on the authority of older people at the same time as promoting them as *the* representatives of Aboriginal 'culture' with whom wider society should consult.

'Consultation'

In the early stage of my research I wanted to look at a collection of materials that is often consulted by anthropologists in native title contexts, but reasonably restricted: the Tindale collection.¹⁵⁷ The bureaucratic (and ethical) protocol in this case is to seek permission from the 'families' about whom genealogical information might potentially be held in the collection. I first sought permission from Rachel Langan, the Coordinator of the ILC, who said she could only speak for herself, and that she would only want information relevant to her family. She then sent me to ask the permission also of all the other 'elders' of the Burn/Jaid family group – in this case all five were women who had no older brothers or sisters, and whose parents were

¹⁵⁷ Tindale was a botanist turned anthropologist. He travelled throughout Australia in the 1930s and 1940s with Joseph Birdsall (a physical anthropologist) studying Aboriginal people on missions and government settlements. The material referred to here are the genealogies and fieldnotes he collected during the late 1930s. Relevant to Aboriginal people in Charters Towers are those on Palm Island,

deceased. (In her role as Coordinator of the ILC, Rachel also told me the most appropriate people to speak to from each of the other 'family groups'.) As I went to each of the Burn/Jaid women to ask permission, each asked me who it was who had sent me to them, and who else I had spoken to. In particular, I noted that although these women, elders, I spoke to had disputes with each other, all of them named the others that Rachel Langan had named as crucial to my process of permission/consultation.

Similar processes of verification occurred in 'consultation' with members of the other 'family groups'. At the time of my search for permission, I spoke to some people from the Marasa/Hughes at an ILC meeting individually, in 'tea breaks' and when there was a break in the action of the meeting. Despite the fact that I spoke to them individually I was summoned at the end of the meeting to seek permission from them in a group. Members of the Greens were also careful that I should speak to all of the elder siblings who were concerned with such matters, and sent me around town and from house to house to explain the material and what I thought I might find. They then told me I must also seek the permission of the Jones' separately.

During the process, almost every person from every family asked me who else I was asking, thus ascertaining who I had been sent to first, and perhaps where they were in the scheme of consultation by an outsider. I would show them my list of people and each person I spoke to added another person to the list, and at times sought to extract a person from it (I was told by one woman, *'you don't want to bother that old man, he's not interested in these things'*).

This kind of permission-seeking process reveals that despite meeting tactics and speaking styles within such events, representation is carefully monitored and elders' autonomy widely recognised. Despite the fact that 'elders' assert and contest their positions of authority in meetings, in situations such as described above, elders claim only to speak for themselves and their immediate younger kin (their children and grandchildren). Thus the extent of representation is contextual. That is, there is a strong sense that each 'elder' has a say in their own right; that each is an autonomous voice within the local polity. That someone would exclude an older person from my

consultation process was more often a judgement about the interest (or rather disinterest) of that person in political involvement than about dispute. It was perhaps a measure of the perceived importance of the materials I was seeking to people's research into their family's history, that no-one should preclude any other from access to such information.

Limiting power

Elements of bureaucratic organisations demonstrated a general principal of authority among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers, more generally than just among 'Traditional Owners'. That is, that no one person, even respected elders, hold complete authority. The status of 'elder' in one corporation might be transposed upon other corporations within the organisational milieu of the town. For example, an 'elder' for the ILC may also be a persuasive member or board member of the Justice Group, or the Housing Co-operative. Willingness and skill in a role as 'elder' in the ILC may mean that that person is encouraged by their family or others to take on an 'elder' role elsewhere. Thus some individuals can claim authority across bureaucratic fields. However, if they are seen to be making too many decisions by themselves, or 'too bossy', others act to limit their authority.

This can be represented by Megan Foster's statement in a comment about the involvement of some people in more than one local bureaucracy: '*No-one should be boss for everything*'. Megan made the comment around the time that Rachel Langan (the Coordinator of the ILC) was asked to be involved in issues relevant to the running of the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP). Rachel's cousin and other men were seeking her expertise with bureaucracies and had asked her to attend a meeting of the CDEP in order to lend her support to their argument. At that meeting, others commented, '*what is she doing coming down here, this isn't her area*'.

Similar issues have arisen in the past in relation to the spread of power across local bureaucracies. Around the mid 1980s, the principal organisation in town was the Housing Cooperative, Jupiter Mosman. The Cooperative had offices from which people began to establish other organisations, in particular the 'King Kiara Community Council', housed in the same building. I was told that once this began to

happen, *'all the business was mixed up'*, and *'some people wanted to get involved in all of those things'*. It seems that the ideal is to have different people running different projects so as to *'give everyone a go'*, but in such a way that no one person (and by extension, their *family*) had control of all of the resources that such organisations administer. Due to such social pressure, I am told 'King Kiara' corporation set up their office in another location.

Limiting the authority that individuals (and by extension, their families) have ensures a diffuse kind of authority; or perhaps that this practice creates multiple power blocks safeguards the autonomy of family groups and family members. Holcombe (1998:162) has also pointed to the ways in which Aboriginal community members attempt to limit non-Aboriginal workers' knowledge of and involvement in a range of organisations outside of their office capacity. When that employee wanted to get involved in a 'community' activity outside of their employment brief (because they thought they could help), they were blocked from doing so. The context and framework of Holcombes' example is quite different to those of Charters Towers. Yet it demonstrates that Aboriginal people have a strong sense that the control of bureaucracies and their resources can mean considerable community influence. By limiting any one person or family's authority over the resources available through government funding of these corporations to one area, Aboriginal people guard the integrity of multiple voices among Traditional Owners, and also afford the possibility of other Aboriginal people resident in Charters Towers of having 'their say' in the administration of corporate business.

'Our old people'

Who 'our old people' are, that is, how this category works, can be demonstrated through the following events. I was told that NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee) week has been celebrated every year since about the 1990s in Charters Towers. At a meeting to organise the annual celebrations at 'Mary Street' in mid-June 2002, the local organising committee discussed a range of organisational and political issues. Representatives from the various organisations, including Jupiter Mosman, the night shelter, the CDEP organisation, and members of the women's group based at Mary Street attended. They discussed contributions from

each of the organisations and it was noted with some irony that it would be unlikely that the ILC would contribute anything given its uncertain funding position at that time.

Every year on the Sunday morning that marks the beginning of NAIDOC week, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are raised at the 'top' of Gill Street, outside the Tourist Information Centre, where they are expected to be left in place for the entire week. Who was to be asked to raise the flags was one of the matters discussed by organisers. '*It has to be an elder who raises them flags*' Doris Roper said. '*Well old Sandy won't do it*', noted John Allen, Sandy Martin's son in law. Doris said, '*Mum Milly would do it, but we'd need a wheelchair and a drip*'. Other suggestions were 'old Adel', 'old Albert', or 'old William'.

Taken together as a group, those suggested comprised the eldest living person from each of the three 'family groups' recognised as Traditional Owners of Charters Towers, plus two people who had 'married in' and are recognised as belonging to the town. One was 'Mum' or 'Nanna' to many people, both black and white, the other had worked and lived in the area all his life, and both had many children who lived in and 'belong to' the town.

At the event of the flag raising, Doris, Esther Sorrell, and Campbell Green, from the generation below the 'eldest' of the Green/Jones', and Ursula Hudson, whose son is involved in the administration of local corporations, came along to the quiet occasion. Ursula and Doris raised the flags as Campbell clapped some boomerangs together. There were a small number of people present. I am unsure about whether the elderly people mentioned were formally asked to take part in the flag raising, however that the discussion took place about who *should* be asked meant that there were no repercussions when the event took place.

Further, the raising of flags at the 'top of the street' in town is of some symbolic importance. The junction of Mosman and Gill Streets ('top of the street') is on a hill, and the Tourist Centre at this junction looks down through the centre of main street. It is adjacent to the City Council Chambers, which also command this view. That the flag raising be performed by 'our old people' is crucial to such a performance since age status is something that recognisably belongs to 'Aboriginal culture' and has an

authority through this recognition. Raising the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags is also part of the political statement of belonging and difference that in the big cities is well recognised and accepted. However, in rural Australia, claims for Aboriginality and difference in the native title era sit uneasily with the pastoral land interests, the perfunctorily accommodationalist mining industry and defensive towns people. The Tourist centre, who were supposed to leave the flags in place for the entire week, replaced them with the Australian and Queensland flags the next day and I seemed to be the only one who was surprised.

Belonging, 'all our old people' and difference

In the context of contemporary discourse about the recent past 'old people' are venerated for their various abilities, as well as their knowledge. At the funeral of Old Mrs Adel Jaid, Pamela Muir murmured '*all our old people are dying*', to her friend Vera. Neither of these women could claim to be close relatives of each other or Mrs Jaid, but they grew up in the town together and called the older woman 'auntie'. 'Our old people' here is a category that has little to do with blood kin and everything to do with a shared history in place. The 'old' in front of their names, sometimes replaced by 'mum', 'auntie' or 'uncle', is recognition of this respect relative to the person's age and life experience in regard to the town, to work (especially pastoral work) and to many different families of whom they have knowledge.

Older people are those who can claim to know who everyone is in the Aboriginal population (and their pasts), and to some extent also the wider town population. 'Old' Elisa Thomas would comment to me if we were driving around, '*lot of strangers in town these days*', pointing out an Aboriginal person who she did not know and what she thought they might be doing. Elisa and others pride themselves on being in touch with everything that is going on in town among Murrumbidgee in the present (despite exclamations of '*I don't know who these kids belong to half the time*'). If a fight is happening, I was told, an older woman might find out where it is and go and have a '*dorry*', a look, especially if it involves her family. This not only means she will be well informed of a potentially important social event, but as an authoritative figure might be able to help the situation reach a useful conclusion (even if only temporarily). Resolutions of a fight or a conflict situation might well be dependant on a knowledge of past disputes and the histories of relations between

certain families (see also Macdonald 1990). Unlike many non-Aboriginal older people who live in separate accommodation from their grown children and grandchildren, most older Aboriginal men and women live together with other members of their family.¹⁵⁸ They thus have a primary knowledge of the day to day lives of the younger generations. Old people are also respected for their knowledge of the past of the town, and the details of many families and these families' histories as well as their own.

I asked Elisa Thomas and her brother together one day about what the town was like when they were teenagers (in the 1930s and 1940s). They commenced to rattle off the name of every shop in the main street of the town from that time, and the changes into the 1950s and up to the present. They knew all the names of the people who ran these shops and what they were doing now. Often they knew these people's family business as well. For example, who was pregnant before they were married, or a long term conflict between brothers who ran a particular store, or the details of the marriages of white people, especially shopkeepers in town. Morris (1989:145-6) writes that

Aborigines consistently had more information about the European community than *visa versa*... For them, the possession of knowledge about Europeans and, conversely, the limiting of knowledge about themselves served a strategic and, hence, political function.

It also reflects a self-inclusion in the town that of which white people do not seem to be aware.

There is a sense of co-identity among all known Aboriginal people in the town that can be seen in the notion of 'our old people', and also in expressions of identity as against the state or non-Aboriginal people. The assertions about 'loss' of culture and negative comparisons like '*we haven't got culture like that Territory mob or that Desert mob*' are expressions of outward difference to these other groups but still a level of Aboriginal similitude. 'We' (Murriss in Charters Towers) haven't got those things that make 'us' so clearly different to wider Australian society. Things like the Law (which usually refers to initiation ceremonies), songs and language. Those

¹⁵⁸ See Appendix A Table 11, for examples of residential units.

things are clearly what most people think of as ‘Aboriginal’. But the things around which Murriss discursively construct their social difference are ‘family’, ‘respect for old people’ in which there is a continual process of the assertion of difference in both practice and in rhetoric. Jeanette Green would outline to me how her family used kin terms for a wider range of relations and especially for ‘elders’, adding ‘*you [ie you whites] don’t do those things, ay?*’ Her point was how inferior ‘white Australian culture’ is, that Murriss know this culture and choose not to do it that way, it’s *this way, Murri way*, different. Partly this difference may be reflected in the historical construction of difference, which as we have seen, focussed on social reproduction and the family. Assertions of identity are thus constructed through this discourse, but because the social ‘things’ identified are widely recognisable as ‘Aboriginal’, they become a form of resistance. Assertions of Aboriginal difference rails against accusations from white Charters Towers residents that Murriss in town, ‘*they’re just like us*’.

The kinds of knowledge often shown and thought of as culture are those memories of and identification with places and people. It is these aspects of people’s knowledge about ‘their culture’ which are paramount in the consultation with ‘old people’. Often when I asked anyone a question about the past, I would be referred to either or both of these siblings: ‘*Ask Old Elisa*’ or ‘*Old Bill would know about that*’. Likewise, when I asked those people who did not identify as a ‘Traditional Owner’ about their experiences of the town almost every one noted that they ‘*can’t really speak for this place*’, and directed me to an older person in the ‘TO’ category. I spoke to two (non-TO) elderly people who had spent all their lives in Charters Towers, and were sometimes happy to speak of their work and personal experience in and around Charters Towers. Neither, however, would speak about the families, organisational politics, or any such ‘political’ matters.

Other ‘old people’ had links among Charters Towers Aboriginal people from a shared experience and life on Palm Island, while ‘Under the Act’. ‘Mum Jaid’, for example, was well known and respected not only from a life spent in Charters Towers, but also because she was an older girl when many other women were children in the girls’ dormitory on Palm Island. ‘*We was all sisters in there*’, Jeanette Green told me, and a remembrance of these relationships is carried through to the

present through a use of kin terms to address one another and through the attendance at funerals for members of one another's families (see following chapter). Many of 'old people', as Pamela Muir reflected at the beginning of this section, are now deceased. Those still living and the deceased are central to concepts of relatedness to people as well as spatial belonging because their knowledge, and a memory of their knowledge, attests to people in that place through time, despite movement, travel and social change.

However, the lamentation '*all our old people are dying*', heralds a recognition of shifts in eras: that a certain generation of people, especially those who were 'Under the Act', are going or now gone. The generation that are 'elders' in the bureaucratic sense: those who are active in politics, have fewer and fewer living 'old people' to refer to, and many of those now spoken of as 'our old people' are deceased. Those referred to are often those waved to, greeted, as people drive past the cemetery; and are those whose images are sought out in the keeping of photographs.

The social category 'our old people' is at times interchangeable with 'elders', and is a grounded authority of people and place located in age and lifetime's knowledge. However, 'our old people' are those who can attest to the history, family and incidental knowledge of the *general* Charters Towers 'mob' (not just Kudjala or Traditional Owners) and are recognised as having skills which belong to another time. 'Elders' and 'old people' are categories that to some extent overlap. They are contextually applied, and refer to authoritative individuals; representatives of their family in bureaucratic spheres such as meetings and the business of the ILC. Sullivan (nd:8) has written that, 'the power of elders does not extend to making decisions that affect the daily life of individuals and families. This [is] the prerogative of family and co-residential groups themselves.' Similarly, I have shown that elders in bureaucratic fields are not necessarily elders for the 'family group' outside of meetings, despite the fact that each older person is generally treated with respect as an 'elder' to their younger kin. 'Elders' are thus closely linked to each family group, and further to their individual family (their close kin).

'Our old people', are those aged heads of families who are considered 'ours', that is, belonging to Charters Towers and all the families who identify with the place. 'Our old people' are more often the generation above the more active and political

‘elders’, both living and dead. There is some overlap between the categories, where, for example ‘the old people’ act as elders, or are referred to as an elder in organised politics. Both categories refer to those with an authority that originates in a knowledge and experience of the people and place of Charters Towers now and in the past. ‘Our old people’ are the last of the generation that experienced being ‘Under the Act’ throughout their working lives, and who know the pastoral industry. However, they are under no compunction to make decisions, to be representatives or to be involved or to act with political authority. ‘Our old people’ are imbued with the kinds of knowledge and respect as elder statespeople, but unlike the category ‘elder’, they are perhaps, retiring. Elders are those who may mobilise their knowledge in order to effect representativeness, decision making or political authority. ‘Old people’ crucially relates to history, but it is through the ‘elder’ category that history is mobilised.

Practising authority and autonomy

Any inequalities among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers are generally denied, and in practice, as we have seen, people who assume power can become victims of ridicule or overt displacement. Further, ‘elders’ of a family, as well as members from other families, may prevent another ‘elder’ from becoming too influential across the community. If an ‘elder’ is too vocal or self-important they are curbed in their behaviour (see also Mantziaris & Martin 2000:302-3). Although there is the structural status that comes with age, an elder must mobilise this status and build on common respect for such status to be effective. That the polity curb apparently unjustified claims to power, or more specifically, control of economic and cultural resources, has been shown in the example of Isabel’s meeting in the previous chapter. These elements appear to support an egalitarian ideal. However, the social differences among Aboriginal people that have developed over time and the dominance of the state create a sense that there are further complexities to be found. ‘Elder’ – as in *‘I’m an elder of my family’* or *‘You’re not my elder’* is about inclusive and exclusive social boundaries according to the lines intended to be drawn. In the interrelation of social and bureaucratic fields these lines are drawn and redrawn around personal and political alliances. As we have seen, though, these political alliances come from relationships in other fields of sociality, as well as from the

history of inter-family relationships and relationships formed and broken in the history of involvement in local bureaucracies.

Those employed in local bureaucracies may be exploited by family members for the services to which they have access, and for their skills in dealing with the bureaucratic state. Rachel's position in the ILC was imposed upon by her nieces and nephews to gain employment, to use the office equipment to fill out (and photocopy) welfare or unemployment forms, write letters on the computer, and so on. Men of Rachel's age generation would call her '*sister*', and hand her their employment forms to fill out for them, or other paperwork required by one or another bureaucracy. An example of a woman in a comparable employment situation is useful here.

Marcy Brennan, a woman in her early 40s, had agreed to talk to me in her office one day about the history of the Aboriginal organisations in town. She worked at a college and gave classes in 'cultural education' to staff and to outside parties, as well as assisted in the retention of Aboriginal student numbers at the college. Soon after we sat down to talk, Clarissa Jones, Marcy's cousin, came in and demanded that Marcy type a job application for her. (Clarissa had come in the previous week and asked for the same favour and then stormed out when Marcy had said she was too busy). She said, '*Sister, I asked you last week.*' Marcy complained, '*I'm not your bloody secretarial service*', while she quickly typed the requested letter. Meanwhile, Clarissa made jokes with me and we talked about the job she was applying for. '*This is the last time!*' Marcy told her. Clarissa replied with some mirth '*it better be a good letter then!*' After Clarissa had left, Marcy told me how often this happens. She said, '*if you're in a job like this everyone wants things done, they all come in, especially the family!*' She told me that sometimes she would 'hide' from people and ask the administration staff to tell anyone coming in that she was not there. Similarly, the door of Rachel's office often appeared unoccupied since she would lock the door in order to avoid people 'dropping in' to ask favours.

This is a responsibility that one holds as soon as one takes a job. Employment is difficult to find in a small town, especially for Murrumbidgee, but one person stated to me that he avoided this kind of responsibility by not being employed. A person with a job becomes the person to whom others go for the help that is needed in dealing with the bureaucratic demands of everyday life – filling out forms especially, and writing

letter, but also photocopying, organising funerals and ringing up relatives. This dependence on them gives those with the job some control over and responsibility for those they help, and this position is not inconsequential. Further, often such workers have the administrative control over community resources, since many of the jobs available to Aboriginal people are those within service or 'community' organisations specific to Aboriginal people. Although such employees of these organisations command some level of respect, it is important to note that this responsibility is not necessarily authority. From a history of participation in bureaucracies Aboriginal people are acutely aware that people with jobs are necessarily accountable to their employer as well as the community. This split of allegiance also means that any authority they have over family members is somewhat fractured between individuality as a worker, responsibility to employer and loyalty to family. This is in contrast to 'elders' whose allegiances are grounded in family.

Elders are not 'big men' or 'big women' in the Charters Towers that was my fieldwork. This is in contrast to the region further north, where Anderson (1998:198) argued that, contrary to notions of 'egalitarianism' in the Australianist literature, certain individuals in Aboriginal communities have an achieved status that makes them leaders. These are qualities 'over and above' structural status such as age and sex. Elsewhere on the Cape York Peninsula, others have discussed similar systems of power located in a few individuals and their ability to influence or 'lead' others in ritual *and* mundane affairs. For example, Chase (1980) uses 'big man', after Thomson (1933,1935 in Anderson 1984), to refer to those who could wield power in social and ceremonial organisation. I have shown that in Charters Towers certain individuals are given respect by members of their family and the wider community; they are accepted as spokespersons, and are empowered as decision makers in the spheres of economic and political power – in particular in bureaucratic politics relating to negotiations over rights to land. However, none are individual authorities, nor can they transfer authority easily to other social contexts.

That 'elders' in bureaucratic fields are accepted as representatives and as speakers and overt decision makers, but not permitted to convey this authority easily to other fields of social life is important in the characterisation of authority among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers. Following other studies (cf. Myers 1986a; Finlayson

1991; Martin 1993), it seems this is about the importance of autonomy interwoven with an authority based in mutual dependence. Myers (1986b:431) has written that the uncertainty and ‘internal contradiction’ of the polity is that ‘personal autonomy lies in the capacity to choose which social relations to sustain’ and ‘paradoxically’ the need to ‘sustain relations – shared identity - with others.’ The social torsion involved in this paradox might well be seen in the contest (described above) between family members over elder status and the parallel emphasis on the existence of multiple elders.

Conclusions

Part of being an elder is being able to appeal to the differences that symbolise Aboriginal culture to the wider Aboriginal polity *and* to the state. The analysis of the state as productive through its mechanisms of control and interference is certainly relevant here. Like Collmann (1988:5), I see the role of the state in Aboriginal peoples lives as an integral feature of social change. Nonetheless, the categories of ‘elder’ and ‘our old people’ are built on the interplay of autonomy, dependence and authority *within* Aboriginal society. As I noted earlier, when focussing on the workings of the state and especially in relation to Aboriginal people in rural towns there is a tendency to conclude that ‘the authority of elders has been replaced with the authority of the State’ (Reynolds & May 1995:200). As we have seen, processes of authority are far more complex.

Chapter 8 Coming and going: death, funerals and the living

Introduction

In this chapter I move away from performance of categories and bureaucratic practice to analyse funerals as central to contemporary Murri sociality. I examine death and the funeral event in its function of ‘bringing people together’ to demonstrate the shared histories that are often embodied in the ‘old people’ (living and dead).

Funerals are significant events in Aboriginal people’s lives in Charters Towers. Large numbers of people attend funerals, and are expected to travel widely to attend those of family in other towns. During the year of my fieldwork there were seven funerals held in the town that I knew of and attended and at least twice as many others that people from town attended elsewhere around the region as well as in Brisbane. In the Aboriginal social context of Charters Towers, the death of someone in the community initiates a chain of events and rituals, which for all their ostensive structural similarity to non-Aboriginal funerary processes, are specific and closely linked to Aboriginal notions of sociality and relatedness. In this chapter I examine funerals as events which describe the complexity of social relationships in practice.

Families are spread throughout the state, and in order to *be* family, one must participate in family events. That is, to be part of the family, one must behave in a way that is cognisant with belonging. As an event, funerals elucidate significant elements of family and mob as both social process and belonging to place. They also emphasise the links between Aboriginal families across Queensland, links which, as discussed in Chapter 2 and 3, were initially a product of removals and movement under the 1897 Act. Historically then, state control over family and life in general was severely restrictive (up to 1970s) and gathering and travelling for funerals was not possible.¹⁵⁹ The flipside of this restrictive life is that another form of

¹⁵⁹ Neither my archival nor fieldwork research to date has revealed any examples of people travelling for funerals while under the Act. Gladys told me that if it was a ‘close’ relative who died permission could be sought from the Protector to travel to another town, though with little money this was not

‘togetherness’ was facilitated before 1970s by putting Aboriginal people from throughout the State together on reserves, settlements and missions. Practices observed at funerals today are a mixture of those developed on settlements such as Palm Island and Cherbourg and those developed partly in mimesis of Western funerals in the towns across rural Queensland. The church makes a rare appearance in the lives of Aboriginal people in Charters Towers at funerals.¹⁶⁰

Funerals as emotionally charged events expose the rifts, divisions, disputes as well as the allegiances and cohesiveness of ‘family’: death brings people together, to grieve and heal ruptures, but it also exposes old wounds and accentuates internal divisions (Hertz 1960 [1907]). Here I use the event of the funeral to describe some relationships which constitute ‘family’ and other sociality among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers. That ties between families in Charters Towers and across the State remain and continue is evident in the families coming together at funerals.

Death and the funerary process

The intense and personal emotion involved in the death of a family member, and especially a member of a small community, might be understood in terms of how Aboriginal people die in a rural town. Of the seven deceased that I participated in mourning only two could be called ‘old’ in Western terms (they were over 60 years). Three were male suicides. One was early death from alcoholism (died in her sleep at 38). One was from cancer. In the first few months after I moved back to Townsville after my fieldwork I returned to attend four more funerals, and missed a fifth. I am told I hit a particularly bad period, that ‘*we usually have about four a year*’, but this still appears high for an Aboriginal population that numbers under a thousand people. It is this frequent grieving in the community that embodies the national statistics on Indigenous health and mortality. While frequent, death is far from mundane. Elisa lost her much loved grandson to suicide, and watched her daughter slice her own arms in grief. She told me that she was ‘tired’ of seeing all the young people die

often possible.

¹⁶⁰ While some people attend church regularly, mainly Baptist, Catholic or the ‘Family Church’ (an evangelist style sect), and others say they were ‘brought up Christian’, especially if they lived on Palm Island, there is little practice of Christian rituals among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers, and there has never been a mission in the town.

before her. The ‘psychic scars’ (Povinelli 2002:190), the emotional impact, of frequent death touches everyone in the community because the weaves of interrelatedness are fine.

However, it is not so much this impact of death and grief as the expression of connections between the living and the dead and among mourners that I am concerned with here. As a researcher, my experience of death and funerals is based on being on the fringes of bereavement. Only once has someone died in Charters Towers who I was very close to, and then I had already left Charters Towers and could not be involved in all of the ceremony before and after, only the day of the actual funeral. This chapter is thus heavily influenced by my marginal place in the grieving at these events, and what I was more aware of were those on the boundaries, the more distant family and friends of the family. These people were the supporters of the bereaved and the networks around the closest members of the family of the deceased. Thus, the close family of the deceased – mother, father, son, daughter, or the person whose relationship is seen as primary to the deceased¹⁶¹ - are the core of the process I discuss in this chapter, but not the main focus. The deceased and their close family are ostensibly those who draw other family and friends to attend the funeral. I am interested in this drawing-in of people to Aboriginal funerals, and aside from grieving, why so many people attend funerals.

Telling the family and getting them together

People talk about ‘calling the family together’ around the death of a family member, and often this is done when a person is seriously ill and not expected to recover. Adult children might relocate their own families to live nearby a father or mother who is very ill and not expected to live for long. Likewise other family might plan to live in the town for some months when a relative is ill, or travel to other towns to visit them in hospital. When Mrs Mabel Jennings was rushed to the Townsville hospital with serious illness, three of her female cousins (MBDs) found people to drive them to Townsville immediately. In the next few days her condition became

¹⁶¹ For example, the grandmother of one young man who died ‘grew him up’, was mother to him, and was considered his closest kin. The ‘sister’ (MZD, with whom the deceased grew up) of woman who died and the deceased’s two children were considered the closest kin. ‘Close’ family thus indicates those kin with whom a person has shared their lives through mutual dependence, as outlined in Chapter 4.

worse and many of the other women her age in the town sought to travel to Townsville to see her (in case she might die), including taking out small loans to fund the travel.

When a person dies in Charters Towers the closest person to the deceased speaks to or makes telephone calls to close family and then others in reverse order of *closeness*. I was told that the husband or wife of the deceased should do the telling, or if they were not around it should be the eldest son or daughter, '*whoever is the closest*'. The news of a death travels fast in this way to family, and then to wider circles of related people along what is generally referred to as the 'Murri grapevine'. News as important as a death is the first thing that is said upon speaking to another person on the telephone or meeting another Murri person in the street.

After an old man died during the night I knew about it by 9am the next morning as it was the first thing I was told by the first person I saw that day, and by everyone else consequently. On this occasion I was with the deceased man's wife's cousin (his WM'Z'D), Doris Roper later that afternoon, who complained to the other women I was with that she had heard about it not from the old man's eldest daughter, but from an unrelated person with whom she works. In this case the mothers of the deceased's wife and Doris are first cousins rather than sisters, but are 'considered sisters', I am told, by their descendants.¹⁶²

Not only is it an important responsibility to notify all members of the deceased's family, but the process of notification is an important statement of who family are. Who is notified and how soon is an obvious statement of the closeness and distance of relationships, and in some cases of knowledge or acknowledgment of family. Grievances between people are expressed and can be created through not notifying family, or tardiness in notifying them (thus allowing them to be told by other people).

¹⁶² The relationship here is also considered close because the deceased's eldest daughter is a long term partner to Doris's brother. Doris said that she should have been told by someone 'close' (ie by immediate family of the deceased). Through her younger brother, Doris was a 'sister-in-law' to the deceased's eldest daughter, however the partnership had been unstable in the previous months. It is possible that there was an element of these tensions also being played out in the daughter of the deceased not informing Doris sooner, but also possible that there was a disjunction in the two women's understanding of 'close'.

Once the call has come through about a death, family who are away from town then begin their travels or preparation for travelling. Siblings, parents, children, and other kin very close (those who spent their lives together with the deceased) might leave straight away for Charters Towers in order to stay with the widowed or other family for the week leading up to the funeral, and stay for weeks afterward. Before funerals there is a gradual swell of Aboriginal population that is not always discernible from the 'outside'.¹⁶³

The expectation that many people will attend is clear in the long lists of names of those specifically invited to attend funerals that appear in the newspaper notices – sometimes these number over a hundred surnames. There is an element of extravagance in the large death notices, which list all the surnames of 'family' and those of friends. Two examples are reproduced below.

¹⁶³ Many 'travellers' are anyways sometime residents of the town, or past residents. People who are 'strangers' seem not to spend time in the main street or open public places of the town before a funeral.

THESE NOTICES HAVE BEEN REMOVED DUE TO
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Plate 9 Two funeral notices

These notices are for the funerals of older people.¹⁶⁴ The notices are usually (I was told) written by the closest family member - a daughter, son, or partner. The notices give a profound account of the deceased's social field, that is, all the relationships in their lives. The notice on the right conveys the life of a person whose relations were wide across the region (the surnames listed belong to Murri families from throughout North Queensland), but centred on Charters Towers. Notably, the list of surnames invites the whole range of kin to mourn, and invites friends *as families* as well as individual friends to mourn. The notice on the left, naming first the deceased's children and partners, conveys a much tighter and local social field of the deceased. It is focussed on the closest members of the deceased's living family and widens out to other Charters Towers families and last to families and friends of the wider region. Those who write the funeral notice summon and textually recognise the relations of the deceased's life in a certain way in the event of their death. Thus the funeral notice continues the production of people as relational members of Murri society after their death.

¹⁶⁴ I have blacked-out the names of the deceased and their immediate family's first names in an effort not to cause offence, and to preserve some anonymity for the individuals.

Before they 'go down'

From the moment of death until the deceased 'goes down' (is buried) is a tense time. This is a kind of social liminality (cf. van Gennep 1960), a time where people are careful to 'do things right', especially since the dead might still be 'walking around'. Their death is not yet socially resolved by their burial. Aboriginal people in the town, but most of all family, are 'quiet', others visit the family of the deceased and cry with them. When meeting the closest members of the family of the deceased (mother, father, children, and siblings; and those who grew up or were grown up by the deceased) in the street during this time others quietly shake their hand. Public grief of the closest members of family before the deceased is buried is characterised by this profound quietness and solemnity. In addition, for those close to the deceased it is protocol to halt most activities except for those related to the organising of the funeral.

Political and social activities such as meetings are often also cancelled when a death has occurred and the deceased is not yet buried. Although this is a rhetorical 'rule' for proper procedure when someone dies, at times meetings go ahead if judged by the organisers to be important enough. Where I have seen meetings go ahead between a death and the funeral, the main speaker (or chair) of the meeting acknowledges the unavoidable or urgent nature of the meeting, and a minute's silence is observed in respect for the deceased.

Normally, day trips to the river to go fishing occur on the spur of the moment if someone gets access to a vehicle. But fish apparently know when someone has passed. If a person dies, I was told '*we don't go fishing...you won't catch anything until [the deceased] goes down*' and that it is '*disrespectful*' to go fishing at this time. Fishing trips are held over until some days, even weeks after burial.

Another activity, 'drinking for' the deceased, is common, though mostly among those who are 'drinkers' anyway. Sober members of the family attempt to keep a control on the drinking lest the drinkers consume funds meant to go toward the funeral. In the week before one funeral, I was told that some members of the family had been '*fighting up the street*'. 'Up the street' refers generally to a pub at one end of the main street where many Aboriginal people drink and have drunk throughout the town's history. Thus the 'Court House Hotel' is widely recognised as the 'Murri

pub' in Charters Towers. Fighting and drinking are not halted, but increased by those who are drinkers. The night before one funeral I was at Rachel Langan's house and Adrian Marasa (a long time friend and co-worker, not family) turned up to ask for money to go and buy a 'slab' of beer. He was already drunk, and said '*we've been drinking for [the deceased] down the Court House [pub]*'.

Organising the ceremonies

The funeral and wake are organised primarily by the same person who is responsible for notifying family. This might be the eldest child, the widow, or eldest living capable relative. As Pamela Muir told me:

When [my husband] died I did it all, it fell to me. But sometimes if the eldest son or daughter can see that their parent isn't coping then they will take over. And everyone chips in, of course, helps in their own way – usually with money.

Family (close family, as described above, but sometimes the definition is widened according to financial need) 'chip in' money for the funeral and sometimes they also draw on funds set aside for such purposes by Aboriginal corporations and associations. The AICC organisation in particular donates \$100 to every Aboriginal funeral held in the town. This organisation often also provides the venue for the wake, its premises at 'Mary Street', especially where the family are keen to have a 'grog free' gathering. In some cases all of the organisations in town contribute, and it seems to be the case that whether a donation is made and how much is determined by the deceased's, and their close family's, connections to the organisation. For example, the local office of the land council often contributes a sum of money to funerals, and for travel to funerals for Traditional Owners. However, this policy is not a simple one. In one case, contribution was made to the funeral costs of an older man who was not a Traditional Owner. He was noted as having contributed to the community of Charters Towers by being a strong mentor to many young people, he was referred to as a 'community elder'. He was also closely related to people in the land council office. There are rumblings of discontent in private about such moments of selective generosity on the part of organisations. Nonetheless, such complaints are not pursued, where in more mundane contraventions of policy they are. It is inappropriate to make accusations in public about such issues when linked to grieving.

The funeral ceremony is almost always organised for a Thursday or Friday, and when it does not fall on a pension week (the week in which most people receive their government welfare payments) there are concerns about travellers being unable to afford to attend. Bureaucratic control, in the form of welfare payments, here underlies the arrangement of life cycle rituals, although these arrangements are moulded by relations among family who borrow money from other family to get around such structural limitations. The time for the funeral is always set in the middle of the day or early afternoon in order to give travellers time to arrive. And the funeral is set around the possibilities of everyone attending. Part of the business of phone calls that go between people concern arrangements and messages about when people can arrive, which day they get paid, and whether they might rely on others for funds while in town.

When Pamela lost her husband she had to make a decision about where he should be buried. He had lived with her in Charters Towers for over 30 years, but when he died she thought his sister wanted his body to be taken to the settlement where most of his family live (and 'where he is from'). *'If she had insisted'*, Pamela said *'I would have let that happen'*. But the sister did not insist and so he was buried in Charters Towers, Pamela said, *'that was his home, really'*. Decisions such as these do not always end amicably, and such negotiations reveal further the dispersal of people across different regions, and their multiple levels of connection to places through dispersed family.

The viewing

I did not ever attend a viewing. Principally, this was because I was never asked if I would attend by people who usually took me to or asked me to drive them to, and hence attend, various funeral 'events'. I also initially thought the viewing was 'just for the family'. This further reflects the nature of my observation of the funerary process as somewhat on the fringes of bereavement, but also my unease with being a spectator amongst grief.

The evening before the dead is buried, the body is laid out for viewing at the funeral parlour in town, for a period of one and a half hours. The local funeral director, whose family has run the Funeral Parlour and hardware store for 22 years, told me

that with non-Aboriginal funerals maybe 2 or 3 people might come to the viewing. With Aboriginal funerals, about 30 or 40 people in an hour was likely, and the funeral director said *'more than that if you let [the viewing] go longer'*. Myrtle told me that 'everyone' goes to 'say goodbye' to the deceased. This includes the mother, father, children, grandparents, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, but also other kin and friends. The expectation that people do this is such that on one occasion, when I was driving back from a trip out of town with an older distant relative of the deceased (his MMMBD, the deceased called her 'aunt'). She was concerned that we would get back in time so that she could change into clean clothes and 'pay her respects'.

Who comes?

Those 'family' who live out of town hire a bus on the day of the funeral and will journey together from Townsville, Mount Garnet, Murray Upper, Palm Island, Mackay, and so on. Those who live in the places of the larger region create webs of connection that expand and contract for events such as these.¹⁶⁵

Almost every Aboriginal person in town, it seems, attends funerals, and as noted many more attend from other towns in the region if they are able. Children stay out of school for the day, although some distant relatives, or children who did not know the deceased very well might not attend the ceremony. At one funeral I attended three young men were brought out of prison for the day to carry their cousin's coffin and to see him buried.¹⁶⁶

Offices of the Aboriginal corporations and organisations, as organs of the state bureaucracy display their belonging to Aboriginal worlds by closing down for the day of a funeral. I was told this is out of respect for the deceased, and also so that employees may attend the ceremony. These organisations are often acknowledged in the order of service booklets for their contributions and support, further effecting

¹⁶⁵ The places mentioned are somewhat like Beckett's (1965) & Birdsall's (1988) 'beats' and 'runs' – in the sense that one travels widely where one is known, and thus is unlikely to travel to a funeral where one is not known. A person will only attend a funeral of non-family in another town if they have people they know there (other than the deceased).

¹⁶⁶ I was told prison release for the day costs a lot of money and the family is not always able to afford this expense.

their links to the community, to family and to Aboriginal social worlds, and understating belonging to the state.

Dressing for the dead

On the day of the funeral children who are family to the deceased are brushed and washed and made to wear their best clothes. Little girls' hair is braided and styled as if going to a party, and little boy's hair is combed down with conditioner.

Those family close to the deceased, and sometimes also very close friends to the deceased, often wear black skirt or trousers and a white shirt. This is especially so in the case of the pall-bearers. Austin-Broos (2001:198) notes this 'urban style' of white tops on black bottoms is not common where she worked in Ntaria, Central Australia. She does not note a source for the observation on 'urban style'. In fact on detailed observation this 'style' is much more complex than the broad category 'urban'. In Charters Towers older women usually choose to wear a new outfit, sometimes in florals, and men might wear a favourite shirt, some of them in cowboy style. Those attending who are not family wear their best clothes, not necessarily in black and white and not necessarily in dark colours. Like Austin-Broos (2001), I was aware, from brief encounters with other urban communities in the past, of the practice of wearing black bottoms and white tops and had made the mistake of wearing white on black in this way thinking it was 'protocol'. I was unaware of my mistake for some months. In Charters Towers it is only the closest family, who wear this 'style', and as noted, not all of them.

There is a relationship between how 'good' your clothes are and your closeness to the deceased. Someone very close to the deceased is likely to buy new clothes for the occasion, whereas distant family or other (socially distant) persons in the community might wear their best, or simply neat and clean clothing. Someone who has few resources for clothes, and who is not close enough family to the deceased to be bought a new outfit by other family, might tuck in their shirt for the funeral service. How people dress thus is expressive of their genealogical and social relationship to the deceased and to the mourners.

Gathered together

The family gather at a house so that they may all go to the funeral service together. Waiting around in their finery, people shake one another's hands, and greet one another with some solemnity. Seeing one another for the first time since hearing of a death, family members embrace strongly, with such bodily contact uncommon in everyday life.

Group photographs taken before the funeral are confirmation of the deceased's importance to the family – people in the future, when shown the photograph, will see that the deceased was well loved by her/his family, 'everyone came', and everyone dressed up for that person. I was at a house on one such occasion and was asked to be photographer (as well as driver of older members who did not want to get on the bus). I took photos of the group who gathered together in the sun on the back lawn, dragging kids and reluctant young adults into the shot. Someone commented, '*oh well, we're all together for old Uncle.*'

At the church : Order of service booklets

Order of Service booklets are placed at the door of the church. These are put together by members of the close family of the deceased. The booklets include a photograph of the deceased on the front, a written eulogy, the order of service, a list of pall bearers and an invitation to the wake. The booklets often include poems written by children and other close family as well as various photographs; the deceased with arms around mates, the deceased with their children and grandchildren, and so on. Macdonald (2003), writing about Wiradjuri photographs of the deceased argues that these images are an access point to the person no longer available, the photos have 'taken on the role of linking the living and the dead in ways that were once mediated through myth' (ibid.).

It has been curious to [her/ Macdonald] that people who were once so strict about naming the dead could value photos of the dead so highly, even within hours of their decease. Far from the deceased being avoided, it is as if they are encouraged to remain part of the living through the photos displayed and exchanged prominently after their death. (Macdonald 2003)

The photographs reproduced in funeral booklets create narratives of the person passed, and their 'connectedness' to others in the photographs. Particular choices of

photographs for inclusion in the booklets and the presentation of person in the images and biography, is how the family and others want to remember the deceased. It is about (re)creating personal histories for the present. These booklets, containing photographs and biographies of people, give them a post-death publication, a kind of celebrity. The attention one gets from the community at one's funeral is beyond that at any other time in a person's life. At a wake I attended I saw that funeral booklets had been saved from many funerals and strung across the living room like Christmas cards.¹⁶⁷ It was a testament to the numbers of funerals which people attend. But it was also a monument to local history, particularly in the native title era when history and 'old people' are ever-present.

Time

Time at funerals is different to everyday time. Unlike the process of meetings and other gatherings, funerals run very close to 'on time'. The importance of funerals is thus emphasised by the numbers and their punctuality. Not only do many people attend (often spilling out from the church, standing in doorways, and in the adjacent gardens) they arrive more or less at the time advertised. This is in contrast to other events, such as meetings or appointments with government agencies, which are more often run on 'Murri time' (ie late).

Sansom (1995:275) notes the importance of keeping to whitefella time during a funeral in Darwin. He recounts an occasion where the 'whitefellas' betray their own laws about time when the hearse carrying the body of Aboriginal deceased is late for the scheduled burial. Thus Aboriginal perceptions of white fella time is betrayed by whitefella himself (in this case), and a betrayal of the system at a time like this is a betrayal of larger systems of *how things work*. However, being 'on time' to funerals in Charters Towers is about the funeral practice belonging to Murri families. While the state is pervasive (for example in funding the event), funerals belong to 'family' because the event is primarily the expression of grief over a family member, and the coming together of people to share those expressions.

¹⁶⁷ It is unclear whether these were always strung up like this, or that this was something which had been done for the wake.

If a person is participating in a funeral in Charters Towers they do so within the time frames of the ceremony. The close family of the deceased often comes into the church last, and might be a little late. Lateness in this sense is part of the system, it operates to illustrate the close family's priority in mourning and hence their centrality in the funeral proceedings. Punctuality by the rest of the family and others (indeed the importance of a full church, on time) is a way of showing respect for the deceased and their family, through their participation in the system in the *right way*. Participation in the right way is a demonstration of solidarity among family and wider mob by all those who attend. It reveals, further, that unlike other events where time is a factor – such as meetings – funerals are considered Aboriginal events, that time (as part of the system) belongs to Murris. Conversely, I have argued earlier that in meetings of organisations, lateness, or 'Murri time', expresses the tensions in 'ownership' of these bureaucratic systems. At funerals there is no such tension because the practices there more clearly belong to Aboriginal people.

The ceremony

Charters Towers funerals take place in the Baptist, Catholic and 'Family'¹⁶⁸ Churches, although most often in the Anglican. On one occasion an Aboriginal priest presided, but otherwise it was performed by the parish cleric for that church. Family members who are considered good speakers might do a reading, and another reads the eulogy. The service on all occasions I attended was similar, with the hymn 'The old Rugged Cross' always sung. This is a hymn that emphasises the pain and suffering of life, and the joy of the afterlife.¹⁶⁹ I reproduce it here because the hymn conveys the sense among Aboriginal people that the living have difficult lives, perhaps relieved by death.

¹⁶⁸ The 'Family Church' is an evangelist style sect.

¹⁶⁹ The Anglican priest in Charters Towers told me that this hymn is not in the contemporary hymn book. He told me it was an old hymn that was '*brought with missionaries*'. Although I have not found any evidence of missionaries active in Charters Towers, many Aboriginal people have spent at least some time in their lives on a 'mission' or government settlement and the influence may have come from there. The lyrics are reproduced here from order of service booklets.

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In all denomination's ceremonies there is space for people to speak after, or during the minister's sermon. Coming forward to 'say a few words', often meant explaining an absence of other family members to the congregation. Sometimes, especially at the funeral of elderly people, a member of a family (in the sense of interdependent bilateral kin) who is the only or one of the few members there might say something '*on behalf of their family*'. At the funeral of a woman who was a heavy drinker, a number of her fellow drinkers got up to speak 'to her' (most addressed her directly and gestured at the coffin) and express their grief and sorrow at her parting. Although the speakers were obviously drunk and difficult to understand and spoke in some cases for a very long time, nobody (except for the minister on one occasion) interrupted them and the congregation upheld respect for them as mourners, and for the deceased.

The opportunity of '*saying a few words*' during the funeral service was often taken up by middle age or older men, who are (or who position themselves to be) spokespeople for their 'family'. On a number of occasions men stood up and said that they were speaking '*on behalf of the [Green] family*' or '*all this [Jones] clan*', for all of those who could not be there. They are speeches of solidarity, sometimes explicit, as '*one of the families of Charters Towers*' to another. These are demonstrative of the ties between family and non-family among Aboriginal people. On one occasion a man stood up in a funeral of a drinker to say his 'few words',

saying that he was ‘sorry’ for the deceased’s family, and that he spoke for ‘*my clan, and also the [Albinia Street] mob, my real family*’ in giving them support. His clarification of who his ‘real family’ at that time signified an allegiance among ‘his mob’, a clique of drinkers, just as the deceased was a drinker. At other times, a statement of condolences and regret at not being able to attend ‘*on behalf of all the [Allan] clan*’ clearly expressed the exigencies of attendance. Further, such statements are an expression of the community process of grieving which is not limited to ‘family’ alone.

Although at times, the speech-making was personal, in almost all cases where people stood up it was as an opportunity to make a statement of social/political importance. During the church service (that I did not attend) for the funeral of an older woman who had been involved in a number of Aboriginal organisations and corporations in Charters Towers, a representative from each of these stood to ‘say a few words’ on behalf of that group (pers. comm Dawn Glass). The speeches made at a funeral can thus be expressive of the deceased’s non-familial social relationships and wider networks of life influence. They also articulate the intense involvement of bureaucracies in Aboriginal people’s lives and the mediation of personal and ‘community’ relationships through such structures.

Motorcade

After the service the family follows the coffin out of the church and are in the first cars of the motorcade, which winds its way through the main street behind the hearse towards the cemetery out on Dalrymple Road. Principles of the motorcade, still observed most generally in Australian rural towns, are such that all other traffic is expected to stop for the line of vehicles that move slowly through the town with their lights on. For an Aboriginal funeral the number of cars and busses in the motorcade is always very long, much longer than for a white funeral, and the motorcade holds up the ‘traffic’ in the main street, sometimes with the aide of a police escort. The ‘Court House Hotel’ in town will often close its doors (especially if the deceased was well known there), and patrons and staff will often stand outside to watch the motorcade pass. Generally there is respect for the passing dead and bereaved and

people stop and take off their hats, although this is not always the case.¹⁷⁰ In a small town, the motorcade through the main street is a significant presence and I was often struck with how strong this sort of procession down the main street was in its impression of the occupation of this central town space by a large number of Aboriginal people. There are few other occasions where Murri presence is so visible in Charters Towers.

At the graveside

Most people who were at or outside the funeral service go to the cemetery, except those who cannot catch a lift or who are unwell or perhaps judge that they are too distant from the deceased. Others who do not attend include those who are cooking for and setting up the wake.

Next to the grave a canopy is erected under which there are three or four folding chairs for the very closest family members of the deceased.¹⁷¹ Other close family stand under the canopy and around the back of it. Everyone else – more distant family, friends and other Charters Towers people - gathers around the graveside, with gradations of closeness emanating out from the grave.

The cleric says his benediction and while the coffin is lowered closest female relatives sometimes wail loudly. Mourners file past the canopy after they have thrown some earth on the lowered coffin and hug and kiss the bereaved, or if more distant shake their hand. After consoling the family, people often then move on to other relatives and friends, continuing the greeting and embracing each other that begun before the funeral ceremony. Here, as at the wake, questions are about where other family are, are they here? Will they be at the wake? Are they staying in town long? As the bodies of family and friends embrace, so the connections between them are reinforced.

Most people stand around the graveside for a short time after the burial, then move away from the grave and take the opportunity to talk and catch up with others and small groups of people form, with those moving between. I was surprised at first

¹⁷⁰ I noticed this was mainly older men. Older women might also stop to look on. Younger people were more likely to go about their business.

¹⁷¹ As described in footnote 161, above.

with the amount of laughter and jocularity while still at the cemetery especially among older people (but not those close to the deceased, and not while standing close to the grave). There is genuine warmth shown at the graveside after the deceased has ‘gone down’, that I have not seen demonstrated at other social occasions – meetings, parties and the one wedding I have attended. This warmth is people supporting each other and being comforted and comfortable in the presence of family. However there is a kind of relaxation and release – which reminds me of Sansom’s material about the importance of the funeral business not being ‘wrong’ (1995). Perhaps there is general relief, among the wider ‘mob’ at the internment of the body in the ground, and hence the ‘liminal’ period of mourning is over. Once the dead is buried this first stage of mourning finished and in the words of Hertz, ‘society, its peace recovered, can triumph over death’ (1960 [1907]:86). There is relief also that the deceased is buried and has been done so according to the *right way*.

The family are the last to leave the gravesite and sometimes the men of the family insist on manually shovelling all of the earth onto the coffin instead of letting the truck tip the soil into the grave. Once, as the council worker started the hydraulic lift that tips the tray in order to drop its contents into the grave, there was some panicked yelling from the men who then proceeded to shovel the earth off the truck, to the chagrin of the council worker. Being able to direct the proceedings, and importantly tell a (white) council worker what to do, in this way is significant to family (rather than state) ‘ownership’ of the ceremony. The practice of shovelling the dirt is symbolic, but also a real means of control of the funerary process. I was once told that on Palm Island settlement, there is no truck, and the men who were closest to the deceased do all the shovelling, taking it in turns to sweat and work for the dead.¹⁷² Apparently this was also the case at Cherbourg settlement where ‘the family put the dirt on’ and not the council workers. The Charters Towers woman who told me this reflected:

It’s nice and culturally symbolic I suppose, but what someone else said to me was ‘well, in the old days they [meaning settlement inmates] had to do it themselves.’

¹⁷² The Anglican priest I spoke to in Charters Towers said that he sometimes conducts funeral ceremonies on Palm Island. He told me that after the coffin had gone down, ‘*the men would take turns to shovel the sand in... [they would] make it neat with yellow sand and then cover it in flowers. When the grave is filled in, then it is final. They can show us a thing or two about grieving.*’

Thus actions imposed as a result of state controls and restrictions on people's lives in the past have been reinterpreted as 'culturally symbolic' practices in the present, and such practices belong to the *Murri* funeral process. That is, certain practices are reinterpreted as 'culture' - things that belong to an objectified set of behaviours among Murris - *Murri culture*.

As the grave is being filled in, mourners gradually move away, piling into cars and buses and heading back into town – to go to someone's house for a cup of tea, get changed out of good clothes, go to the pub and to give the close family time to leave the cemetery and get back to the venue of the wake.

The wake

There is always food provided at the wake and the quantity and quality of this provision is much commented upon, as are absences and presences of people. Travellers returning on the same day as the funeral always eat first at the wake, followed by others. Being properly fed is an important aspect of the gathering. Being a traveller means you are there because you are demonstrating how much you care. Thus the family cares for you, and recognises the effort by providing food.

Food varies, but it is usually a mixture of hot, or cooked meat, salads, and plates of cakes and other deserts. The food is laid out on tables with disposable plates and cutlery at one end of the table. People line up at the end of the table where the plates are and file past each dish, piling on meats and salads, and returning for deserts. Drinks are generally 'bring your own', although sometimes tea and coffee, or cordial are provided also.

Like most other social occasions that I have attended, people mainly sit together with their close family to eat, except for bunches of kids who run around together. For example, where a close family might travel for a funeral in Charters Towers, they will be joined in eating at the wake with their Charters Towers based kin. Adult and younger children will often eat with their parent/s and uncles/aunts, and be called upon to '*get you mother another piece of bread*', and so on.

There were no organised speeches at the wakes I attended, nor did anyone get up to speak formally. There is a sense that once the eating is done, and once everyone has

met their responsibilities in terms of consoling or greeting family, the wake is over. So, wakes do not always last long, especially non-drinking gatherings: people have a feed and a chat and then leave, especially if they have to travel. Others go to the pub or perhaps other venues where they can drink alcohol. A number of wakes I attended were followed by large gatherings at one of the pubs in town where a local band with Aboriginal band members played well loved tunes and everyone got up and danced.

Coming together, fighting and staying away

The bonds between family are not necessarily amicable. Nonetheless, a death and grieving ‘brings people together’. Hertz, in his seminal work wrote that ‘mourning is the living participating in the social disintegration of the dead’ (Hertz 1960 [1907]:86). Every death involves the disintegration of social relationships. And the death of someone (especially an older relative), whose presence meant that others did not engage in open dispute, clears the way for fighting to erupt or accentuate a simmering tension.¹⁷³ Funeral ceremonies might shore up some connections between people, but in the ‘renewal of social life’ entailed there may be newer fractures. The following from my notes explores some of these possibilities.

Old Betty died earlier in the week and we were at her funeral this afternoon, and attended the wake afterward. There was a distinct absence of one side of old Betty’s affinal kin. She was not ‘from’ Charters Towers but had lived here with all of her children for most of her life and married a man from the town. After she died a dispute was renewed about the paternity of her children and their right (or not) to claim to be Traditional Owners. It was all said at a meeting some months ago, but there have been fights about it ever since. The cousins in their 30s and 40s were out fighting in the pubs and ‘up the street’ during the week before the funeral and now most of that side of ‘the family’ had not turned up. It was a conspicuous absence. At the wake, there were further absences, for not all of those who had come to the graveside then came to the wake.

People greeted and hugged each other, laughed and helped themselves to food. There was Old Marg (who had lived on Palm with Old Betty) sitting there with two of her daughters. She was

¹⁷³ Reay (1949:111) recounts a story of a ‘feud’ between two families she witnessed on a settlement in Western New South Wales in the 1940s. She writes, “The feud lasted for about a week, the women of the two families passing one another without speaking and some of them carrying a stout stick wherever they went. The argument flared again, then subsided until the occurrence of a death in the community reawakened the hostility of the two families”.

saying to one of them who does not always live in Charters Towers, 'Go on, get me a piece too', and her daughter replied, 'No! shame!'. 'Go on, don't be silly, we all one mob' said Marg, then looked around for laughs and confirmation. The young woman got up and got her three pieces of cake.

There are a number of things which we can draw out of the above story. The first is that although all 'family' and 'friends' are invited to the ceremony, the graveside and the wake, not all come. The emotions surrounding a death can provoke conflict, and the absence of the elder may give accusations a free voice. Here the death of the elder woman gives the underlying tensions in her family a performance place. Without her presence to invoke 'respect', and fuelled by grief, members of her family are free to fight out the dispute in public. Here, the renewed dispute was centred on the rumour that a person claiming the right to speak for 'their family' in organised politics should not do so because of doubts about their paternity. While there were claims of primacy and autonomy between individuals behind the expression of these accusations and doubts, the articulation of the dispute exemplifies the use of the state discourse of 'certainty' to politick among family.

The other (related) aspect is that funerals are important spaces for the recognition of family (and other relationship) ties, and give the chance for people to assert the notion of 'one mob' (cf. Eckermann 1977:291). Whenever I heard this expression 'we're all one mob' it was accompanied by laughter, as though expressing how tenuous this 'one mob' could be. At the wake 'one mob' might be those who choose to attend, and sometimes as distinct from those who stayed away, and further distinct from those who usually do not attend funerals and thus are not part of 'one mob'. However, those who stay away for particular reasons such as personal or factional disputes are not refraining from involvement out of disinterest, but intense interest in the social relationships. They are part of 'one mob' because of the intensity of the relationship, rather than its fission. At funerals there is a temporary and fragile expression of unity – 'one mob' - defined by co-presence as well as obvious absence of 'family' members and wider kin.

Regional connections and belonging to Charters Towers

'Family' travel to attend funerals, but so do very distant kin. While these might be said to not know the deceased 'personally' (as a friend, for example), they will undoubtedly have a knowledge of that person and their family's relationship, and will have heard stories about them or those to whom they are close. A conversation I had over the phone with an older woman in Charters Towers illustrates further why 'distant kin' travel for funerals. During the conversation my friend recounted to me the whereabouts of all the women to whom I am close. Some of them were away from Charters Towers, visiting sick relatives in hospital, at funerals, etc. When told about a particular woman who was going to a particular funeral (because it seemed out of the ordinary in terms of my perception of whose funerals one is expected to attend), I asked: *'Why's she going up there for funeral?'*, and was told, *'Oh, you know, just going for sticky beak'*. The context of the funeral gave the woman travelling to that place an excuse to verify a rumour about a male relative who was supposedly having an affair with the widow of her recently deceased brother. But this was according to the teller of the story, not the woman who was going to the funeral. Later, the woman who was going to the funeral told me she wanted to *'be there for the family [of the deceased]'*, but added that she would not speak to her brother's widow.

Older women's role is thus active in the practice of relationships among family and between families. By not speaking to the widow the traveller would achieve three things. Firstly she would see for herself what was going on. Secondly, she would 'shame' her brother's widow by turning up to the funeral, letting the widow and the widow's family know that she thought the widow's actions were disrespectful to her brother. Finally, she would be letting the family of the deceased know that she had respect for their family. This last element – about respect for family and for the deceased – is probably most relevant to regional connections between family and 'mobs'. Through attending the funeral the woman would be letting that family know that she did not have a dispute with them, only her brother's widow, thus continuing the ties between her family and theirs. The event of the funeral in this case enables these connections to be shored up.

Old women at wakes point out children and ask who they belong to, ‘Who’s this one’s mother?’, or grab their arms as they run past and ask them direct ‘what’s your name, granny?’. Children quickly tell them their first and last names ‘Jeylan Green!’ and run off. A conversation ensues about there being ‘*so many children we don’t know anymore*’. Travellers are asked all about the family and where they are. The questions from one family member to another at the wake serve many functions. Not only were Charters Towers people catching up on the ‘gossip’ and news of their families in other places, but they were reaffirming as well as displaying knowledge of one another and one another’s children. My inability to follow much of what was said was affirmation of my outsider status. Individuals were talked about by their first names only, and seldom was any clarification apparently needed as to which ‘Gary’ or which ‘Julie’ was being discussed. The identification of characters in one story or other is clear to those involved in the story by the context of its various elements (ie where the characters are, who else was there, when it was etc) and knowledge of family connections and relations. Often these stories will be told over and over, especially stories of people who were contravening moral behaviour.

The story that begins ‘Did you hear about that one who’s off with that married one in Brisbane?’, can signal to family of the protagonist in the story, their need for action in controlling other’s behaviour or at least an understanding of an event that ensues (such as someone hitting that one for their behaviour). Thus these kinds of conversations are another example of reaffirmation of the cohesiveness of Murri *families* across great distances, from one community to another. In fact they emphasise the importance not of place (so much) but of connections between people. They are also personal and individual proclamations of knowledge, especially among older women who take intense pride in knowing every detail of the business of their family. However, it is not just pride which such knowledge produces, but also control. Older women through such conversations can influence behaviour of members of their family. The talk, the stories, are the construction of respect for the elder members of family, who know all about the details of one’s past and present relationships. Morphy (1997:128) writes that ‘...one of the main mechanisms for bringing together the different participating groups in a ceremony is to sing the connections between their countries’. Perhaps the calling of ‘family’ and all kin from other places together for funeral, and importantly, providing a wake where people

can talk, facilitates the shoring up of connections between people in a similar way. Bringing family together for funerals makes possible the intimate links between people who live in disparate areas and who day to day live different lives. The talking through of family connections, breaks in relations, births, sickness and death maps the social life of a people spread across great distances.

Belonging to Charters Towers

Frequent funeral attendance is not only because mortality rates are higher in Aboriginal life worlds, but attendance is more expansive. Attendance at funerals displays respect for one another and the deceased and there is less an expectation to attend than an assumption of involvement that goes with belonging to the Charters Towers 'mob'. This also refers to those who 'really belong' to Charters Towers mob but who reside for most of the time elsewhere. Without frequent attendance at these events, without showing respect, they cease being part of the social sphere of 'the families' in Charters Towers.

Stated reasons to attend a funeral for those other than close and grieving family reveals wider systems of social ties. One does not have to go to every funeral. Yet, choosing to or not to attend for those non-close relations might express certain levels of belonging. If one frequently does not attend funerals out of being 'too busy', or other such reasons, one becomes less and less part of 'the Charters Towers mob'. The fundamental purpose of travel to funerals is 'for family' and to show that one is family.

Stories about death

Discussions about deaths and funerals have the social function and symbolism of relationships and belonging to one family or one mob. I was sitting with two sisters and their nephew (BS) and his wife at their kitchen table one time. The nephew had recently moved up to Charters Towers from Brisbane, to be close to his father who was unwell (and soon after passed away). The nephew was asking the elder of the sisters about the funeral she had recently returned from which was held in Brisbane. This funeral of a member of the 'Brisbane branch' of the family and it had been the

women's cousin who had died. He asked the elder sister about people one after another who had attended, asking whether she recognised their children, guessing at how tall they would be now and whether they had attended with their mothers, which aunts had attended and where they were living now. He expressed his disappointment then that he had not made the trip to attend the event. He told a story about how, the previous week he had been home by himself, and was sitting on the couch and the door, for no reason, no wind, just opened itself up and then closed again. He got up and there was no-one there, and then later got the call about his uncle's (FMZS) passing. *'Its just the sort of trick he'd pull, always mucking about'*. This kind of story attaches people to their dead and the dead to them in ways that disregard the physical distance between one and the other. I have often heard stories like this of the dead 'telling' people, especially those far away, of events that happen in their absence.¹⁷⁴ These occurrences happen particularly in the time between a person's death and burial of the body. That the strange event is interpreted as having been done by a dead person only after the person who experienced the 'communication' hears about their passing is less important than their telling of the story. In this way the links between living and dead are upheld to sustain not only death but also the span of the country. Likewise, the telling of stories such as this place the teller of the story right inside the story of that person's death – they belong to the group of mourners, they experienced something of the deceased's passing. To be included in a person's death is necessarily to have been part of theirs (and by extension, the family's) life.

Old graves

Old people are visited by going past their grave. But where a death of an Aboriginal worker happened on the station, often they were buried on that land. With the end of station life, their descendants have very limited if any access to these graves (cf. NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service 1998). Other graves may be among many that are around the town and near old camps. Descendants may have moved or been taken away and the graves are no longer part of the knowledge held by living people. With the increasing participation of some people in Cultural Heritage processes and the activities of archaeologists, comments about *'where graves might be'* can be

¹⁷⁴ See Reay (1949:105): 'Belief in spirits is an important factor in the resurgence of aboriginal modes

coupled with the recognition that much knowledge of these things are gone. In contrast, graves in land at Corinda and at the Burdekin River Weir are of known people who passed away in the early years of the 20th Century.¹⁷⁵ Unmarked, the graves are looked after by descendants of those interred, many of whom are still in Charters Towers. For example, Doris stormed into the City Council offices when she heard about a bulldozer being on land where ‘Corinda’ had once stood. She was told that it was part of a process of ‘*clearing woody weeds* [in particular the scrubby bush known as ‘Chinee’ or ‘Chonky’ Apple] *on Crown Land*’. Doris and her cousins went down to the land at Corinda and made sure that the bulldozer did not grade (clear) over or near the ‘plum tree’¹⁷⁶ under which their ‘granny’ was buried. Afterwards there was a story told that the bulldozer driver had said to Doris that he ‘*felt funny*’ when he was grading whenever he went near that old plum tree.

Graves in the town cemetery are well cared for and tended (cf. Reay 1949:104-5; Goodall 2001). Family put flowers on them regularly, even plant flowers and return on (Christian) religious holidays if the deceased was a Christian, the deceased’s birthday, marriage anniversary and anniversary of their death. Often those closest acknowledge such anniversaries with a memorial note in the local paper.

Anniversaries of a death can be used as an explanation of behaviour, ‘*Oh she’s always funny around this time of year*’. This brings old people into the loved one’s present life. Driving past the cemetery, the older women who often travelled in my vehicle would acknowledge their relatives passed, sometimes waving, sometimes saying their names. This waving to the deceased, saying their names and recounting stories about their lives draws the ‘the old people’ into the present. Likewise, the opportunity to travel to another place for a funeral is sometimes also the opportunity to visit a grave. And going to the cemetery for a funeral is also the opportunity to visit the graves of old people (and young) who have passed. The practice of remembering the dead in this way keeps the relationships between people alive in a social (and familial) present.

of thought whenever a death occurs’.

¹⁷⁵ The area known as ‘Corinda’ where some Aboriginal families had homes is discussed in Chapter 5.

¹⁷⁶ This is a native plum tree known as ‘Burdekin plum’. The plums ripen if buried or placed in a dark cupboard for a week or two.

Conclusions

For Murriss, funerals as ceremonies are the same as and yet different from wider Charters Towers society (cf. Austin-Broos 2001:196). The non-Aboriginal priest I spoke to about the funerals he conducted in Charters Towers said that the Murriss there had done ‘*a good job at assimilating in this town.*’ Both he and the funeral director I spoke to told me that it was clear from funerals that ‘family’ was something that was ‘very important’ to Aboriginal people; it made an otherwise incomprehensible alterity (from which *they* were mostly assimilated), manifest. Family is something that Christian and wider Australian society is *supposed* to value, but Aboriginal people demonstrate this import more by the numbers of people who attend, their support to mourners and the long distances travelled to attend these events. However, ‘the importance of family’ as an explanation for why so many Aboriginal people come to funerals simplifies social practice, belonging and the history that I have provided an analysis of here.

Aboriginal people replay and reproduce connections among and between families, and links between ‘communities’ across the state. These connections are similar to Beckett’s (1988a) beats and Birdsall’s (1988) ‘runs’, in that you go to funerals where you are known. Most often, people travel to funerals that are within the region around Charters Towers: out to Palm Island, Townsville, down to Mackay, up to Murray Upper near Tully and maybe west to Hughenden or as far north as Yarrabah near Cairns. While being highly mobile expresses this history of state control and the connections between kin, it also articulates the pervasiveness of the state in the present. The state ‘recognition’ of ‘culture’ means Murri practice such as going to funerals is widely accepted and also actively supported by the Australian ‘multicultural’ state (cf. Povinelli 2002), which in some of its government departments offers Aboriginal employees ‘cultural leave’ to attend funerals. In this way and in the bureaucratic funding of the event itself the state remains entangled in the production of Aboriginal people, even in death. Nonetheless, it is the ‘old people’ who are the figures that authorise a family’s belonging and in whose memory stories of belonging are embedded. These connections do not just belong to the past - they must be performed. From the death notice to extensive travel and the discursive and performative links made between ‘family’ and distant kin at and after the wake, the

connections that created the sociality of the deceased are recreated among those who attend (and do not attend) their funeral. Thus, funerals are central to the transformation and reproduction of kinship and the practice of history that links Murriss together, living and dead.

Chapter 9 Conclusions

The profound attempts by the state at regulating Indigenous peoples movements and production of knowledge of the world and about themselves has been the subject of much of this thesis. My contribution to the anthropological and historical literature on this subject is that I have shown that the state is constituted locally (here, in a rural town) and characterised by an encompassing, yet incomplete dominance. This has enabled a discussion of agency and an analysis of Aboriginal social practice. As I noted in Chapter 1, I have considered the state primarily in its location in government and bureaucracy, but like Abrams (1988) I have argued that these institutions are not the makings of some universal power of the state. Abrams (1988:79) writes:

[P]olitical institutions, especially in the enlarged sense of [the] state-system, conspicuously fail to display a unity of practice – just as they constantly discover their inability to function as a more general factor of cohesion. Manifestly they are divided against one another, volatile and confused.

The state is fractured by the contradictions and diverging projects of the institutions of power, but the *effect* of state power is as unitary dominance. That is, the state appears in its own and in a resistance discourse to be a cohesive force and this creates the effect of power (Abrams 1988; Trouillot 2001). Throughout the thesis I have shown that practices of government and bureaucracy, while creating the effect of dominance over Aboriginal people's lives, are changed and affected by the agency of Aboriginal subjects. Furthermore, my study has shown that institutions created in the name of and by Aboriginal people, are also entangled in this political confusion and division, but these are characterised by particular social practices which I trace through a notion of family. I conclude here by drawing out some of the major themes of the thesis.

The Australian state in history

It is difficult not to emphasise the dominance of the state in the examination of colonial history. As I discuss in Chapter 2, in the late 19th Century, the Queensland government and police enabled and instituted violence on the frontier and legitimated

the violence through the discourse of fear and necessity of violence within the larger colonial project (cf. Slotkin 1973; Furniss 1999). Parallel to the violence, the state created an effect of ‘protection’ of Aboriginal people, through distribution of blankets and removal of those in moral danger (or those who put others in moral or physical danger) to reserves. Agents of the government such as the future Chief Protector of Aborigines, Archibald Meston (1896) effected a settler knowledge, channelled in the newsprint media, of Aboriginal people *in need of protection* in frontier times and as subject creations of colonial violence/protection. The notion of ‘protection’ itself was multiplicitous: protection of settlers from the violence of ‘wild blacks’ on the frontier and Aboriginal people from settlers; moral protection for Aboriginal women and from settler society; protection of the town from Aboriginal people and the drawing into town of Aboriginal people through the distribution of blankets and other rations. Local bureaucrats, judiciary and police were far from unified in, for example, the question of whether those Aboriginal people who were settling on the fringes and spending time in town could be forced to leave the town altogether. This pointed to a state, which in producing knowledge of Aboriginal people *in need*, especially in facade of benevolence from the powerful, was defining itself as against those who were to be controlled but externalised. This construction of internal frontiers made it possible for the state to create restrictive legislation - the effect that government and bureaucracy were in control.

The principal mechanism of an increasingly bureaucratised government was the ‘1897 Act’, the provisions of which I examine in Chapter 3. Historians have imagined the state as containing Aboriginal people in Queensland under the Act (cf. Kidd 2000 [1997]), but I argue that there was certainly some ineffectiveness of the bureaucracy which diminished the powers of coercion. While the Chief bureaucrats boasted about knowing the name of every Aboriginal person in the State (the ultimate assertion of the unity of governmental knowledge), there are a number of examples of bureaucratic confusion regarding the identities of persons in files. Moreover I evidenced that, while persons exempted from the Act were expected to assimilate into Australian society, in fact, local officers of the bureaucracy could not or were reluctant to apply the extent of the law in regard to those with exempt status. Therefore, in Charters Towers state power lay principally in the hegemony of assimilation bolstered by the preoccupation with easily procured employment *in*

addition to the more physically coercive means that proliferate in accounts of other areas of Queensland.

The categorical identities based in racial definitions and practices of removal were instruments of power that aimed to restrict people's ability to determine their own lives. However, the history of the workings of this legislation in Charters Towers disassembles any notion that state power was affected only through the imposition of controls and restrictions. The legislation also produced categories of people who were rewarded with less overt restrictions if they conformed to an ideal: nuclear family, steady employment, saving their wages and sending their children to school. In effect, through this hegemony of the ideal (Aboriginal) Australian, the state *produced* types of Aboriginal persons at the same time as it was attempting to eliminate less desirable 'types'. Thus, the example of Charters Towers in the study of the history of the Australian colonial state demonstrates the multiple 'disguises' of power (Gledhill 1994).

In the 1950s and 60s the policy of assimilation was at its height. Mitchell (1990:554) writes that Gramsci's notion of *consenso* is 'the consent given by the exploited groups to their exploitation'. In this sense, among Aboriginal people living in town in the assimilation era of the post-war years, there is a certain 'consent' to the notion of assimilation, in terms of adhering to work practices and aspiring to similar notions of housing and wage labour as other (non-Aboriginal) wage labourers. However, assimilation asked for a reduced notion of family (the kind of 'family' that limited the number of people who could stay in one's house) that was not always acceptable to Aboriginal people. Their 'consent' to assimilation was not complete. Nor did every Aboriginal 'family' 'consent' to controls which limited their ability to provide for kin in a way that contributes to the very definition of Aboriginal family.

Aboriginal family

Aboriginal family is not a 'private' social form that occurs in the home, but, I argue, the centre of notions of social and cultural belonging and political activity.

Historically, the politics and complexities of Aboriginal 'family' can be drawn from the attribution and appropriation of (sur) naming practices by Aboriginal people in the

first years of the 20th Century. Aboriginal uses of surnames (and first names) apparent from the records during this and later times demonstrates agency and some management of settler knowledges of Aboriginal people and their families through use of names. Moreover, exemption from the Act and consent to assimilation often called for Christian marriage and apparent formation of nuclear families. Failure in this regard might eventuate in removal of the family, but Aboriginal people established their own social mechanisms in the use of wider kin networks to accommodate them and their children in town. While these networks were ‘family’, and people talk about the ‘*Jones, Herveys, Browns, we was all together*’, in effect, the practice of coming together and sustaining these relationships *produced* a history of social links. Given this history, we can see that the discourse of kinship is the locus of social (and so political) action past and present.

In Chapter 4 I demonstrated the importance of changing relationships to kin and family in the construction and structure of descent groups. The emphasis on ‘family group’ as the principal form of Aboriginal kinship in the native title era maintains the rather limited notion that descent from ancestors of the traditional past is the model by which to understand the politics of belonging to place and people (cf. Ingold 2000). The everyday practices of ‘family’ complicate notions of descent as the foundation of kinship. The basic interdependence among ‘family’ and the changes in relationships of sharing and helping, are a significant element of the constitution of relationships between people in organised political arenas. Thus, while there may be a vertical line connecting cognates on a genealogy, the practice of changing relationships, residence, emphasis in belonging and disputes among ‘family’ might deny that relatedness its efficacy. Furthermore, the ongoing relationships between people who are members of different ‘family groups’ and members of groups who are other than Kudjala, as expressed by attendance at funerals, confounds the sense that descent might be the foundation of Aboriginal kinship.

The notion of certainty in relation to knowing family, genealogy and connections between people and their ancestors (and between people and land) demanded by native title tends to highlight the uncertainty among people regarding the extent of their knowledge about descent going back many generations. The pervasiveness of the state discourse of certainty of connection, definition and blood arises in the

practice of funerals – demonstrated in the terms of the dispute I mention (in Chapter 8) after the death of old Betty. While Old Marg ironically suggests that ‘*we’re all one mob*’ at the wake, many relatives who would otherwise be considered ‘close’ did not attend. The politics of family and representation and the pressures of genealogy and proof intervenes in death. Yet, in the native title era the everyday practice of ‘family’ and the politics of Aboriginal-state relations are interwoven. The uncertainty of connections between people (and people and land) has been wrought by the history of state and Aboriginal relations. However, the emphasis on *proof* of connection in the present challenges a kinship system that focuses on the ongoing *performance* of relationships rather than the incontrovertibility of linear descent (cf. Povinelli 1993b). The pressure to identify in certain ways, in particular to the level of proof for the purposes of native title processes, creates divisions and alliances among people that were perhaps less explicit when not called into question so publicly as in organised politics.

Agency and the politics of social action

In Chapter 5 I made an argument for Aboriginal agency in Charters Towers in Aboriginal people’s increasingly corporate dealings with the state from the 1970s onwards. My argument about agency privileges the importance of seeing local social action amongst the wider social changes occurring in the period. Australian political shifts included Commonwealth government policy of ‘self-determination’. This required a ‘self’ that was ‘Aboriginal’, without any recognition of the state-enforced differentiation and assimilation that had characterised the previous century of government policy. Now Aboriginal people were expected to be a (semi) autonomous ‘community’ a cohesive ‘self’. Aboriginal people involved in the state project of ‘self-determination’ worked to inject family into the operation of bureaucracy. I view this as social action which works within *and* against the dominance of the state (Abu-Lughod 1990). By the 1980s, Aboriginal people in Charters Towers had established separate corporate bodies to channel government funding for Aboriginal people in Charters Towers. The separation of housing and land both suited state-constructed divisions between economic welfare and (land based) political ‘advancement’ for Aboriginal people, and the disparate visions of change among those Aboriginal people involved in local organised politics. In

Chapter 5, I concluded focussing more on Aboriginal corporate interests in land. In the native title era, ‘family’ is a central structural concept in the ascertaining of group connections to land and thus drives political involvement and membership.

The politics of state recognition of Aboriginal people has intensified the focus on group identifications. The formation of ‘family’ is thus artificially drawn away from its everyday meaning to be recreated as a bounded group. Moreover, the state discourse of native title promises political and economic gain – in principal, recognition of ownership of land – by Aboriginal people if they conform to expressions of ‘culture’ that authenticate them as Traditional Owners. There are three central points to Chapter 6 that demonstrate the interplay between agency and power in the native title era. The first is that Aboriginal discursive representations of themselves to the state in meetings (and in relation to native title process more generally) are consciously accommodative of state discourse of ‘traditional culture’. The second is that Aboriginal practice in meetings (for example, coming and going, ‘Murri time’, modes of speaking and expressions of relationships among and between family) demonstrates the complexity of Aboriginal identity which is ‘different’ and immediate and historical.

My third point is that agents of the state (white and black) practice a kind of bureaucratic culture specific to these meetings and in relation to them which reproduces essentialist discourses and gives strength to the structures of descent (‘family group’) as the basis for Aboriginal identity. In this last point I attempt to convey a sense that the practice of the events of meetings themselves reproduce relations of domination and agency in changing ways. That is, as those people involved perform the relationships in and around meetings they are doing so in ways that conform to and change the effect of state control (for example, by choosing to be involved in ways that are convenient to them) and continue the effect of Murri autonomy.

Authority and belonging

An analysis of the categories ‘elder’ and ‘our old people’ in Chapter 7, finds that these categories are central to systems of authority, which are intricately woven with individual autonomy (cf. Myers 1986a; Finlayson 1991; Martin 1993). These

categories are enmeshed in relationships with the state, which demands, as part of the essentialisation of Aboriginal identity, 'knowledgeable elders' as 'community representatives'. Strategic essentialising by Murrís also helps to create these status definitions. Meanwhile, individual autonomy and the workings of the Aboriginal polity (as demonstrated in the case study, Isabel's meeting in Chapter 6) put a check on the ability of an 'elder' or representative to dominate. And at the same time, there is a strong respect among Aboriginal people for some 'elders' or 'the old people' of Charters Towers. These are sometimes political representatives, but more importantly are those who can attest to the history and family relationships of Charters Towers Murrís in the past and present.

'Old people' are those alive and dead who instantiate family belonging to place through a personality which contains the importance of 'respect'. The extensive attendance of 'family' as well as distant kin at Murri funerals that I discuss in Chapter 8 are about relationships between people being respected, performed and reconnected. Whereas in meetings it is necessary for an individuals to demonstrate belonging to one of the Kudjala 'family groups' in order to participate, at funerals the relationships of 'family', and between families, connected through 'old people' and shared history, formulates the relationships of belonging among mourners. 'Old people', especially, embody the social connections present at a funeral and are central to relationships of the present. Thus, while funerals are about death and the movement of time beyond a person's life, they are not about a past history, but a history performed in the present among people.

The history of multiple modes of state regulation of people's lives is present in Murri funerals. In the wide acceptance of the funeral as a Christian ritual, in the financial and other involvement of local bureaucracies, and not least in the extensive regional connections among Murrís that were formed during internment at government settlements and at missions. However, while state control is productive it is continually coupled with Aboriginal practice. Categories such as 'Elder', 'Traditional Owner' are not categories which distance people 'from the continuous and fluid totality of their lived existence'. Rather they are 'intensified and changed in the cultural orders established in the growth of bureaucratic systems' (Kapferer 1995:85). 'Elders' are part of the hegemony of the state discourse about native title

era Aboriginality, but they are also part of Murri everyday life. Such categories are negotiated, disputed and thus have complex social meaning, despite the fact that they are reified and objectified through their necessity in producing dialogue with the state about 'rights', whether those rights be in relation to land, to welfare, education or justice systems. The discourse and practise of 'elders' thus reproduces the *effect* of Murri authority among Murris and to the state, and in the production of the effect, renegotiates the structures of authority and their basis in the practice of family and in place.

Difference

Difference is actually articulated within a denial of authenticity expressed in the statements of certain white townspeople who told me, there are 'no Aboriginal people here, *they* are all assimilated'. Aboriginal people practice forms of 'family' and 'belonging' which are strangely familiar yet 'different' to white townspeople. And while an authentic Aboriginality is discursively produced by the state *and* Aboriginal people, the practice of familiarity is confusing to those who seek to articulate the bounds of 'culture'. Identity and the play between difference and sameness, especially in multicultural Australia has been noted by Povinelli. She writes,

[T]hose who consider themselves to be liberal are confronted with instances of intractable social difference...moments of fundamental and uncanny alterity: encounters with differences they ... consider too hauntingly similar to themselves to warrant social entitlements – for example, land claims by indigenous people who dress, act, and sound like the suburban neighbours they are. [These 'moments'] mark the site where indigenous persons struggle to inhabit the tensions and torsions of competing incitements to *be* and to *identify* differently. (Povinelli 2002:13)

Aboriginal people in Charters Towers conform to notions of traditionality especially in their assertions of the 'law' of family, and ideas about the 'rules' of descent of rights to land. With these assertions, they fit the 'national imaginary of the traditional Aboriginal person' (Povinelli 2002:189) and so tradition, in this sense is a recognised form of power. By asserting this notion of Aboriginality they have negotiating powers with agents of the state as well as with other land interests. In meetings I

attended Murriss represent themselves often through an Aboriginality that is essentialist in its assertions of authenticity. Lattas, in support of such representations by Aboriginal people, writes:

It is a mistake to see essentialism as exclusively something which the state imposes upon minorities. What this ignores is the cultural and political functioning of essentialist themes in resistance movements and the empowering role of essentialisms in identity politics. (Lattas 1993:246)

For Lattas, essentialisms are not simply a reaction to, or emulation of the state-imposed notions of authenticity enshrined in the Native Title Act, but central to grounded notions of Aboriginality (ibid.:248). Morton (1998:367), who critiques Lattas' article, agrees with him that 'essentialism is not something to be routinely dismissed'. However, Morton finds fault with the rationale of Lattas' argument on the basis that it rests on a dualism between white state and black subjects and this is exactly the effect of essentialist discourse. In meetings, Murriss use essentialist discourse to great effect about the natural cohesiveness of Murriss and their families and the all-powerful state that acts to divide and dominate their families. It may be seen as a discourse against the threat of 'losing the few judicial and material resources the state has made available to them' (Povinelli 2002:189). In this way the discourse of essentialism is a highly constructed force in self-identity.

Furthermore, that Murri practice is similar on the surface to rural town family and social practice makes Aboriginal people appear 'uncannily familiar' to dominant society and unworthy of state sponsored claims to land based on notions of traditionality. In this light, essentialisms of Murri selves (ie this is a way *we* do things, as opposed to *you*) might be seen as some sort of *resistance* to sameness with wider society; a declaration of difference. While the language of essentialism asserts the traditionalism that allows Murriss into the native title process, their differences of social practice – especially in the practice of family - demonstrates this identity in a much more subtle, changing and nuanced way. But this is difficult to express, and it is through the language of essentialisms, especially in terms of Traditional Aboriginal Culture, that Murriss include themselves, and make themselves clearly includable, in native title processes. I contend that this kind of discourse is not 'grounded in notions of' Aboriginal identity, but constructed in response to state and

wider social pressure to identify in certain ways in order to represent a ‘cultural’ identity that is acceptable for native title era Aboriginality.

Weiner (1999) has noted that anthropologists must recount the conditions of the reproduction of culture –particular ontologies and ‘being-in-the-world’ – in representing Aboriginality in the face of a state that asks for artefacts and stereotypes. However, we must also remember that the state demands these artefacts in a way that is bound with a knowledge and discourse of ‘recognition’ of difference which brings a kind of stealth to mechanisms of power. Hence, I have continued to emphasise social practice *in relation to* objectified ‘culture’ and the structures entailed.

Aboriginal people discursively construct cultural difference for themselves which cannot be known by others, especially in the face of pressure from the state to reveal (and document) an alterity which is radical (and thus somehow more authentic). In relation to similar matters, Sider (2003 [1993]) notes that the anthropological notion of culture as ‘shared values’ must be re-thought in relation to oppressed peoples. Such peoples ‘must – just in their ordinary lives and not as an explicitly “political” act - struggle against and learn *not* to share the some of the values of the dominant society and of each other’ (ibid.:286). Consequently, while ‘difference’ itself may be empowering, the construction of such difference may rely on identifications which are destructive. For instance, the constant demand to present oneself to the state as an Aboriginal person, as different and valuable, can be ‘turned into an internal local anxiety’ about knowledge, revelation thereof and secrecy (Povinelli 2002:69), like that I discussed above in relation to ‘family history’ and the uncertainty of connections. Here ‘difference’ can be seen as not just that which is perceived by outsiders, the co-production of known attributes *of* the other, but also that which is the production of a form of ‘inside’ knowledge that constitutes ones’ own difference *to* the other.

Sider (ibid), Wolfe (1999) and Povinelli (2002) argue (in different ways), that it is the interplay of inclusion and exclusion of the Indigenous by the state that constitutes difference. While the state works to ‘assimilate’ Aboriginal people as citizens, its rejection of everyday Indigenous practice of family puts them outside the state: still the other against which the Australian state constitutes itself. In native title discourse,

Aboriginal people are legislated for and told they are ‘recognised’ as ‘Traditional Owners’ by the Australian state if they meet certain conditions of Traditionality, but when it comes to negotiate over land, Aboriginal people do so in mediation and in court as against ‘the State’.

Country and culture

I began this thesis with a story about fishing, and the characterisation of ‘going fishing’ as being ‘on country’. Making trips to the river is popular across generations, especially in March and the early part of the year after the rain has been and the Black Bream are fat and plentiful. It is a chance to get out of town and sit by the water, do something different, ‘get a good feed of fish’ for everyone. But in a sense, the river is an extension of the town – it has always been the *whole* town’s playground, picnic ground, and fishing spot. Major waterways such as the Burdekin River, are public land, and even here the state extends to the country, legislates for public space and regulates this space, including fencing off certain areas of the river, building paths and legislating for numbers, type and size of fish caught.

The discussion of fishing here seeks to accentuate the complexities of notions of and the relationship to ‘country’ among Aboriginal people in Charters Towers. Further to my argument throughout this thesis, such relationships are regulated and to different extents dominated by the state, but the state is not a monolithic entity. When people go to the river, they cross fences to get there, ignore some signs and sometimes they catch ‘undersize’ fish. In Jeanette’s representation of teaching me (her anthropologist) about ‘Murri culture’, she portrayed our fishing trips to another Aboriginal woman as a distinctly Aboriginal practice: something ‘traditional’, being ‘on country’ where activities such as hunting (fishing) and gathering of bush foods occurs. This discourse accords with state rhetoric about the necessity of an authentic Aboriginality that is located in such ‘traditional’ practices. But it is more than this. Jeanette’s comments were said with considerable mirth, irony that I perceive as her implicit understanding of such discourse as that which is effective for recognition of ‘culture’, while at the same time motioning that other forces are at play. Her self-representation as a ‘traditional’ Aboriginal woman is social action, agency,

encapsulated within the state discourse. However, the action itself (us actually going fishing) is only partially related to that discourse.

The frequent events within Aboriginal people's lives, for example fishing, meetings and funerals, are part of the practice of Aboriginal socialities and the reproduction of culture. As I have shown throughout the thesis, the state is continually present within Aboriginal peoples lives, and to greater and lesser extents in each of these 'events' or social contexts. Sahlins (1985:155) has written that 'culture is precisely the organization of the current situation in terms of a past'. Where history meets practice (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992) is in the conclusion that not only are people products of the past, and the past products of people, but that the complexities of responses to domination, and the extent of the possibilities of domination, are evident in the conjunctions of memory, written record and contemporary practice. In order to understand conflict and allegiance among Murrumbidgee in the native title era, as anthropologists, we must understand the conditions of history and the extent to which Aboriginal people and the state are entwined.

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Appendix A Tables 5-13

Table 5 Extract from Frank Hann diaries

The following extracts are from Frank Hugh Hann's diaries (Hann 1866-1875), written while he managed Lolworth cattle station, which abutted what is now known as 'the Great Basalt Wall' (see Map 2, Map 3, "impenetrable basaltic mass or range"). A large section of 'the Wall' is now a National Park (see Map 5, 'Great Basalt Wall N.P.', directly north of the town of Pentland, and West of Charters Towers).

Acknowledgement must go to my colleague John Edgar who painstakingly transcribed large sections of Frank Hann's diaries, brought their contents to my attention and generously allowed me to use his transcripts as an index to entries that mentioned Aboriginal people. All notes below are my own transcriptions from the originals, but using John Edgar's notes as a guide. It is worth noting that John's transcriptions of Frank Hann's diaries are unique. No other researcher that I am aware of who has documented the violence of the Kennedy district pastoral frontier (cf. Allingham 1978; Loos 1982; Reynolds 1982; May 1983; Breslin 1992) has used this material. This is intriguing given that it is one of the few sources that I am aware of that contains clear evidence of massacres in the region.

The section of entries reproduced below cover a 14 month period between April 1873 and June 1874 (note that this period was the culmination of an escalating level of violence). The entries here tell of Frank Hugh Hann and his offsiders riding around 'the Wall' looking for Aboriginal people in retribution for spearing cattle. When Hann and his men found any Aboriginal people, they appear to have shot any they could, burned their weapons ('Tomahawks') and 'all their things'.

[Note: In the following transcripts of the diary I have reproduced the particularities of Hann's language, grammar, spelling and punctuation]

Date	Diary entry
10.4.1873	... When I got home Dick was here. He said the Blacks had been killing the weaners and Brien had seen them the day before
11.4.1873	... After dinner Brien and I went out to find the Blacks went across to the first point of the Wall had tea there. It was dark then. The went down the Wall to close to Gardiners Plain and there we heard them in the wall So we could not get at them so we camp close to them
12.4.1873	Saturday just at day light we come on them but they heard us and bolted I had one shot at one of them, they had a beast in the We burnt all their thing and the beef got 9 Tamaks and brought them home I stayed at the camp some of them came back I had another shot. We had breakfast then came home, made a fire on the main camp to burne some of the wood and another on Toby Plain camps and came home.
13.4.1873	I wrote for the Native Police
25.4.1873	... I went down to Gardiner's Plain to see if there were any blacks about did not see any.
28.4.1873	... Brien and I went out to the first point of the Wall and from there to Weanervale to see if there were any Blacks about did not see any signs of any.
29.4.1873	... Willie and I went down the Wall to the [...] Lagoon's to see if there were any Blacks did not see any.
6.5.1873	Native Police came to look after the Blacks here. Constable Robertson and 4 troopers.
7.5.1873	... I went with the Police. I sent Willie and one of the troopers on to Weanervale with the pack horses. I went with the others to the Wall and to Weanervale no Blacks about.
8.5.1873	I went with the troopers down the Wall to the Dry Lagoon saw no Black's lots of old camps.
9.5.1873	I went with the troopers up on the Range... Troopers and I went on all the creek on the range no Black's or cattle. We camp on Neger Creek & was very sorry to find no cattle there.

11.5.1873	...The troopers start for Dalrymple. to follow the Wall down.
3.2.1874	...Willie and I went out and run the Wall down to Weanervale to see if any black were about saw none...
6.2.1874	[At a newly established camp at 'Toogoomba'] ...Alf and I working at the hut all day. Just at dark I heard a black fellow chopping close to. After dark I heard blacks round the camp I went to see if I could see them too dark to see them.
7.2.1874	...Alf and I went over the Wall to look for the Blacks Could not see any of them.
8.2.1874	Started for Weanervale. Saw tracks of Black at wall plain could not find them
18.4.1874	[on the way from Reedy Springs to Mount Emu Plains] ...met John Anning just come back from hunting Blacks...
28.5.1874	...start for Weanervale. I saw a steer with 12 spears in him. I took 11 out of him
30.5.1874	Come on to Broadleys Creek. Saw a Black tracks and saw Camped they had the bones of 2 bullocks. I tracked them over the range to Brandy Creek. We went to Weanervale and stayed all night.
1.6.1874	[From home at Lolworth] Broadley Fred Willie and I started for Weanervale to look for the Blacks. We went over camp on Toby Creek saw no Black tracks
2.6.1874	Went up on the Range. Saw where the Black had camped that night We had dinner Went on their track and found them in the Gorge. give them a great dressing took 14 tomahawk took Spider the black boy Camped about a mile away.
3.6.1874	We went back the Black had not been back We burnt all their things. Went on their tracks. tracked them over in the head of the Campaspe. We saw them on the gorge but too late to touch them. We camped about a mile from their camp. We heard them. Wet night.
4.6.1874	We start we came in on them in a [...?] place a very high cliff. We got 16 more Tomahawks burnt their spears. Came back to camp had dinner. after dinner starte for home.

Table 6 Burials in Charters Towers 1891-1934

Extract from Charters Towers Burial register, all entries marked 'Aboriginal' or 'Aboriginal ground' in Charters Towers burial register (from Mackett nd: vol11).

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Table 7 Trackers in Charters Towers and Pentland

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This information is extracted from files in the QSA of the Queensland Police Department regarding trackers (Queensland Police Department 1894-1935; 1904-1921).

Table 8 Wages Held in trust – comparative Protectorates

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Figures compiled from Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines

Table 9 Aboriginal people removed from Charters Towers area 1901-1938

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This man had originally been removed from Charters Towers to Barambah.

BA Barambah (later known as Cherbourg)

HR Hull River

PI Palm Island

W Woorabinda

Y Yarrabah

This table removals is compiled from the Heritage Index (Mackett index, QSA); Reports of the Northern Protector of Aboriginals (1901-1904); Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines (1905-1932).

'≥2 children' in this table indicates a situation such as 'a man, his wife and their children' were removed.

*Indicates a 'family' (counted where there is a group of people removed with the same name, where a woman and 'her children' are removed and where a man/woman 'and his/her family' are removed. This constitutes 13 instances of removals, and 45 people from a total of 73.

Note that from 1920-1937 all removals (approx 46 people) from Charters Towers were sent to Palm Island.

In five of the entries, the removal was for a couple and 'their children' and I have only counted this as four people. If we assume a higher estimate; that each couple had six children, this brings the estimate to over 90.

Table 10 Exemptions from the Act for Queensland 1900-1931**Cert. Granted**

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Compiled from Northern Protector of Aborigines (1900-1904) and Chief Protector of Aborigines (1905-1931) Reports. No figures broken down into areas.

Table 11 Family: residence and interdependence

I/d group	res	principle indiv & others ref to them
1	a	Gladys
1	b	ZS, ZSW
1	c	D1, DH, D2, D1S1 D1S2 D1S3
2	a	Adel, S, N
2	b	D, DD
2	c	DD, DDH, DDD, DDS
3	a	Nora, S2
3	b	S1, SW, SD1 SD2, SS
3	c	Z, ZH, ZS
4	a	Megan, H, D, DS, SS
4	b	Z, ZD, ZDD1 ZDD2 ZDS
5	a	Jean, H, S, D, DD, SS, BDS, BDD
5	b	B1
5	c	S, W, SD, SS
6	a	Myrtle, D1D1, B2, B1 B1W, B1S1 B1S2
6	b	D1, D1D2, D1S, B2
6	c	D2, D2H, D2S
6	d	S, SW, SS1 SS2
6	e	H (ex)
6	f	B3 (see 5b)
8	a	Adrian, W, Cx4
8	b	WM, WZ, WB, WZCx4
9	a	Norman, S, S FB (see 17a)
9	b	Z, ZH, ZD1 ZD2
10	a	Elisa, D1, D1D1 D1D2, D1Cx4
10	b	D2, DH
10	c	S1, S2 (floating men)
11	a	Rachel, D, BD1 BD2
11	b	Z, ZH, Z1D
11	c	MZD
11	d	MZDD, MZDDS
12	a	Sharon, H, F, HS1 HS2, 'S', 'D'
12	b	FZ (Ef 10a)
13	a	Anna, D, DD
13	b	S
14	a	Esther, H, S
14	b	D, DH, DCx2
15	a	Irvin, W, ZS
15	b	Z, H, cx3
16	a	Ashley, W, WM, WZ, WZcx2, FS1 FS2
17	a	Nick, W, S1 S2, D1 D2, FB (same as FB in 9a)
18	a	Isabel, H
18	b	D1, Dcx3
18	c	S
18	d	D2, H, D2Cx2
19	a	Beth, BDD
19	b	D, Dcx2
19	c	BD
20	a	Isabelle, H, N, HB1, HB2 (10c 'floating men')

explanation

In each case residence 'a' contains the person (named) against which all the other people in the interdependent 'group' are identified in this table. So, an older woman, 'Gladys', lives in 1a. Her sister's son and his wife in 1b, and in 1c lives Gladys's eldest daughter, her eldest daughter's husband, their children and Gladys's second daughter. As discussed in Chapter 4, those with the same number are a 'family' in the sense that they are interdependent kin who share basic resources. The letters differentiate between people's residences; where they most usually 'stay'.

Note that this data was collated through observation over a period of about 3 months in 2002 and was reasonably accurate at that time. From my knowledge, many of the people have since changed circumstances, as at April 2004.

KEY

M mother
 F father
 D daughter
 S son
 Z sister
 B brother
 W wife
 H husband
 C child
 N non-kin
 D/'S' adopted/foster
 D1/S1 eldest daughter/son, D2 second daughter, etc
 (So, eg. ZD1H is ego (f/m)'s sister's eldest daughter's husband)

Also Cx3 means three children

Table 12 Properties owned by Jupiter Mosman Housing Co-op 1975, 1980, 1997

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*(Most houses unnumbered in 1975), some unnumbered 1980

For location of streets see Appendix B Map 6

Information from Jupiter Mosman Community Cooperative Society files, accessed March 2003.

Table 13 Meetings I attended 2000-2002

date	location	People/organisations and purpose
16-17/12 2000	Richmond	ILC AGM (all ILC members invited)
30/4-1/5 2001	Charters Towers DSC	Birri-Kudjala boundaries meeting, NNTT
9/05 2001	Richmond	ILC Board committee
9/05 2001	Richmond	ILC Board and Richmond Shire Council ILUA
10/5 2001	Hughenden	ILC Board and Flinders Shire Council ILUA, NNTT
11/05 2001	Charters Towers ILC	ILC Board and CQLC -boundaries and strategies
13/06 2001	Charters Towers ILC	ILC members & CQLC Future Acts meeting
13/06 2001	Charters Towers ILC	ILC members, CQLC & EPA/DME/QIWG; ILUA
14/06 2001	Charters Towers ILC	ILC members, CQLC & EPA/DME/QIWG/Industry; ILUA
15/06 2001	Charters Towers PCYC	Kudjala Trust meeting; Legal & facilitator
16/06 2001	Charters Towers PCYC	Kudjala/CQLC claim authorisation –exploration lease
3-4/08 2001	Charters Towers ILC	ILC Board/ CQLC/ Anthro; boundaries & claims; QIWG ILUA
8/10 2001	Charters Towers CDEP	CDEP starting up meeting, Vulture St.
26/10 2001	Charters Towers ILC	ILC Board/ CQLC AGM planning, Anthro, claim strategy
27-28/10 2001	Charters Towers PCYC	ILC AGM, ILC members/ CQLC
29-30/10 2001	Charters Towers PCYC	ILC members/ CQLC/ QIWG ILUA QLD Govt
30/10 2001	Charters Towers ILC	Kudjala Trust meeting; facilitator
14/11 2001	Charters Towers CDEP	CDEP/ ATSIC
17-18/11 2001	Bowen	CQLC/Burdekin,Whitsundays, Bowen people & ILC as observers to claim authorisation
28-29/11 2001	Airlie Beach	CQLC/ Reference Groups policy
4/12 2001	Lissner Park, CT	Flying fox - 'Bat meeting' – Gen CT community, EPA, QPW
26/01 2002	Charters Towers PCYC	Kudjala Trust
27/01 2002	Charters Towers PCYC	Kudjala Trust - new Board & old Board
11/02 2002	Charters Towers Arthur Titley	Kudjala & Carpentaria Gold (Mining Co.)
18/02 2002	CT ILC	ILC/CQLC new Board
18-19/05 2002	Townsville	CQLC; Kudjala, Birri, Jangga claim authorisation
30/05 2002	Mary St AICC, CT	Kudjala re objections to claim authorisation
4/06 2002	Charters Towers ILC	CQLC/ Kudjala ILUA (proposed)
5/06 2002	Palm Island	CQLC/ Kudjala ILUA (proposed)
14/06 2002	Townsville	CQLC/ Kudjala ILUA (proposed)
17/06 2002	Charters Towers AICC	AICC morning tea; NAIDOC week
18/06 2002	Charters Towers AICC	NAIDOC week committee
28-9/06 2002	Hughenden	CQLC/ Kudjala/ Yirandali ILUA authorisation
1/07 2002	Charters Towers AICC	AICC members and guests, morning tea
10/07 2002	CT CDEP	CT 'Community'; police - solvent abuse
25/07 2002	CT Park Motel	ILC board, CQLC Chair - new board
5/08 2002	CT CDEP	Dance Group establishment meeting; Gudjal & CDEP
7/08 2002	CT Gudjal (Vulture St.)	Gudjal Justice Board meeting
19-20/10 2002	Townsville	Kudjala, Birri & (Gas Pipeline Co.)

Abbreviations from Table 13

AICC	Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council
Anthro	Anthropologist hired to consult to the CQLC and produce a 'Connection report' for the claims.
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council (Federal Govt funded, now defunct)
Birri	Birri Traditional Owners

CDEP	Community Development Employment Project
CQLC	Central Queensland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
CT	Charters Towers
DME	Department of Minerals and Energy (Queensland Government)
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency (Queensland Government)
Gudjal	Gudjal Justice Group (an organisation that runs various programs such as liaise with police about juvenile crime, run a night patrol, etc.)
ILC	Inland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
ILC Board	Members of the Governing Committee of the ILC (not necessarily all)
ILC members	Members of the ILC, including Board members
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement. (QIWG had a 'model ILUA' which, throughout 2001, they were attempting to put in place through 'agreement' with Traditional Owners. The idea was that the model could be used in all land agreements in order to get greater efficiency into the process of negotiation).
Jangga	Jangga Traditional Owners
Kudjala	Kudjala Traditional Owners
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration (now lasts one week)
NNTT	National Native Title Tribunal – mediators from this body present for negotiations
Qld Govt	Representatives from various departments of QLD Govt present at the meeting, such as DME, EPA, etc
QIWG	Queensland Indigenous Working Group (ATSIC)
QPW	Queensland Parks and Wildlife

Appendix B Maps 3-7

Map 3 1868 Map of the Kennedy District (Queensland State Archives, SRS1885/1 Item 7)

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Map 4 1901 Station Map (modified from Water Supply Department, Map of Queensland. John Oxley Library, Brisbane).

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Map 5 Current pastoral station around Charters Towers (adapted from © Terrance Alick 1994)

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Map 7 Showing the region for which Central Queensland Land Council Aboriginal Corporation is a Representative Body