

LUTHERANS AND ABORIGINES AROUND COOKTOWN TO 1900\*

John and Leslie Haviland

Hopevale, the oldest surviving Aboriginal mission in North Queensland, has a continuous history as an institution from 1887 to the present. Social and genealogical continuities with the past are important for Hopevale people but modern life on the mission is also the product of ninety years of official administration. Descendants of the original inhabitants of the Cooktown area form part of the wider Cape York Aboriginal community produced by the haphazard workings of government policies, and today live in towns, on stations and other Queensland settlements. However, most of the people who can still lay claim to the area are members of the Lutheran community at Hopevale, tracing back genealogical connections within the mission five or more generations. Hopevale people maintain strong personal ties to their community and land, even if they have moved elsewhere. Although Hopevale is an artificial community, socially and geographically isolated by its founding missionaries, its roots lie deep in the history of the Cooktown area

Hopevale people take a strong interest in their own history. The oldest people, whether born on the mission or brought there by police as children, grew up in an established mission society that became their entire universe - a universe which, during their lifetime, before and after World War II, underwent two complete transformations. Younger people know something of, but did not experience, a time when mission life apparently was insulated wholly from the outside world. They have heard of their ancestors who formed the core of the early mission, and of others who maintained the last autonomous Aboriginal groups in the area, often taking final refuge in small bush camps on mission land. Knowledge of the past at Hopevale, though rich, is unorganized, and largely contained in the memories of a few.

This paper explores the earliest period in the formation of the Hopevale community, the founding of the mission at Cape Bedford. Why did government, police or settlers want such a mission at all? Why did missionaries take it up? Why did Aborigines frequent the mission, and why ultimately, did they remain?

\* We wish to thank John Beaton and Winifred Mumford for the maps, Elisabeth Patz for German translations, Konrad Rauh, Archivist at Neuenhettelsau Mission Society, for copies of early correspondence, and Rev. I. Roennfeldt, the Archivist of the Lutheran Church of Australia and R.M.W. Dixon for the loan of other historical materials.

From:

Aboriginal History

IV (1-2), 1980.

Endeavour River branches and its tributary creeks. Aborigines came to be regarded by colonists as 'thieves and scoundrels'; complaints to the police reflected more concern for the predations of hunters on settlers' cattle than any genuine fear for the safety of the settlers themselves. Settlers, however, often phrased their complaints in terms of putative threats to their persons, or alleged attacks. Henry R. Jones wrote:

take my earnest and solemn warning that if some decisive steps are not taken at once to put a stop to these black raids, some of us about here will lose our lives, as the blacks are growing bolder and more mischievous every day. They are certainly worse about here now than they were years ago, as any mischief they do now is done with perfect impunity, at least as far as the Native Police are concerned . . . We are being impoverished almost daily by our losses in stock being killed and crippled and, what is still worse, driven all over the country.<sup>15</sup>

The squatters objected to Aborigines not because they killed cattle but because by hunting they ran the cattle which then would not fatten.<sup>16</sup> Aborigines crossing station land and camping at water holes were not approved of by settlers.

At this time police were willing to move Aborigines off settlers' land, to caution them against killing stock, and to hunt them down when they were considered threatening,<sup>17</sup> but they were less prepared than many settlers wished to 'disperse' Aborigines — to shoot up Aboriginal camps — merely for hanging about. Fitzgerald, the Police Magistrate at Cooktown, remarked:

It is utterly hopeless for him [the police inspector] to expect the good feelings of the majority of his neighbours — humanity is unrecognized — their creed: *extermination* of the natives.<sup>18</sup>

As both Aboriginal men and women became useful in the colonial economy, not all settlers regarded extermination as a necessary policy. In fact, both official and popular opinion believed that Aborigines,

archaic remnants of an outmoded form of humanity with an anachronistic style of life, were destined to die out. According to a *Cooktown Herald* editorial in 1874:

When savages are pitted against civilization, they must go to the wall; it is the fate of their race . . . Much as we may deplore the necessity for such a state of things, it is absolutely necessary, in order that the onward march of civilization may not be arrested by the antagonism of the Aborigines.<sup>19</sup>

For some colonizers of the Cooktown area, this belief morally required the conquering civilization to ease the pain of the last days of the Aborigines; for others, it was a justification for venality. Whatever their attitude toward Aborigines the very presence of the settlers soon made the Aboriginal hunting and gathering way of life impossible. In the Cooktown area this process occurred extremely rapidly.

The road to the goldfields, as well as the telegraph line to Maytown finished in 1876, followed the Endeavour River for almost its full extent.<sup>20</sup> Police patrols and gold escorts made hunting and camping along this vital artery risky for Aborigines. In addition by the late 1870s scattered farm settlements existed along both banks of the river;<sup>21</sup> during the next decade and a half settlement enclosed virtually all the land along the river, more than half of the right-hand branch, and all permanent waterways connected to them.

Following a government investigation into the possibility for tropical agriculture in the Cooktown area<sup>22</sup> the McIvor River region north of Cooktown experienced a sudden sugar boom. In the McIvor region, unsettled prior to 1881, more than 13,000 acres were taken up by southern speculators in 1882.<sup>23</sup> A map drawn in 1896 to show rural properties, displays the complete colonial dominion over all permanent water in the Cooktown area.<sup>24</sup> In twenty years, just one generation, any possibility of living within a traditional economy had been denied the Aboriginal population.

ings, 1896. Queensland State Archives (from now on referred to as QSA) Map N 1896, Cook.

15 Henry R. Jones to Colonial Secretary (from now on Col. Sec.), 16 February 1885, QSA COL/A422, #3053, of 1885.

16 'Stone Age', letter to *Queenslander*, 17 August 1895 (in QSA COL/A801 #15056 of 1895); Aboriginal burning of grass, part of the normal cycle of land maintenance, distressed cattlemen; see Sgt. Whiteford to Commissioner of Police (from now on referred to as Com. Pol.), 24 July 1897; QSA COL/140 (typed reports).

17 See Sub-Inspector Jocelyn Brooke to Police Magistrate (from now on referred to as Pol. Mag.) Fitzgerald at Cooktown, 20 December 1883, QSA COL/A356, #1303 of 1883 and enclosures.

18 Pol. Mag. Fitzgerald to Com. Pol., 5 March 1885, QSA COL/A422, #3053 of 1885.

19 *Cooktown Herald*, sub-editorial, 24 June 1874.

20 The Cooktown-Laura Railway also followed this route and was opened in 1885. QVP 1886, III:151.

21 See Alex McNickle to editor, *Cooktown Independent*, dated 28 March 1897, published 7 April 1897, QSA COL/142; Pike 1979:53, 85, 88.

22 'Report on economics and tropical horticulture', QVP 1880, II:1243-1247; see also 'soil report', Queensland Parliament, Legislative Assembly, *Journals* 1881, II:926.

23 *Cooktown Chronicle*, 20 September 1879, 'Closing of McIvor land', mentions Baird, C. Walsh, and F.J.W. Beardmore, all Cooktown merchants; see also *Queenslander*, 23 October 1881, showing 15,000 acres at the McIvor applied for from Cooktown; *Queenslander*, 4 March 1882, p.261, col. 4; *Queenslander*, 18 March 1882, p.325, col. 1 (References courtesy of Ruth Kerr.)

24 QSA Map, N 1896, Cook.

from house to house and in many instances terrify the inmates'.<sup>35</sup> Within a few months townspeople demanded a regularised, supervised, rationed settlement be organized on the North Shore Reserve which would keep the 'naked savages' off the streets except when their labour was required.

By 1885 the *Cooktown Independent's* editorial opinions reflected the changing climate:

"Bringing in the blacks" is one thing, but *keeping* them in as a fraternity of thieves is another, and we won't have it. The poor devils have been taught how to appreciate civilised food by a civilising and humane government, and then they are left to satisfy their cravings by preying on decent people in indecent costume, to the disgust of wives and daughters . . . We still adhere to our opinion that they should be rounded in at the North Shore Reserve, and kept there by the aid of the police, with a qualified governor or teacher to show them how to work for their living, by cultivation, fishing, etc., and by hiring themselves out to bêche-de-mer boats. Every two or three months our fishermen have to go south for labour, while there are hundreds of black loafers about the suburbs. By confining them to their reserve, and establishing a labour depot under charge of a qualified protector, the town would be cleared of an intolerable nuisance and the demands of the fishing labour market met.<sup>36</sup>

No Queensland mission society wished to start work on the North Shore Reserve, but a series of fortuitous events brought missionary Johann Flierl, later founder of the New Guinea Lutheran Mission, to Cooktown and ultimately to Cape Bedford. Delayed on his way to New Guinea, Flierl preached to an unenthusiastic German community and picked up a few words of Guugu-Yimidhirr from Aborigines he encountered about Cooktown.<sup>37</sup> Stung by the remarks of the German Consul that missionaries had refused to work at Cape Bedford because it did not offer any prospects of material gain, and encouraged by Fitzgerald, Flierl applied to the Premier of Queensland to establish a Mission Station at Cape Bedford, pledging at least five years of school, gardening and Gospel.<sup>38</sup> The government, in accepting the arrangement, offered to assist the missionary with buildings, tools, seeds and free rations for twelve months.<sup>39</sup> The Cooktown

<sup>35</sup> As above.

<sup>36</sup> *Cooktown Independent* 14 February 1885, QSA COL/A422, #3053 of 1885.

<sup>37</sup> Flierl 1910:57; *Deutsche Kirchen-und Missions-Zeitung* (from now on referred to as KMZ) 1885, #26 (Flierl letter of 8 December 1885).

<sup>38</sup> Neuendettelsau Mission-Society Archives (from now on referred to as ND) Flierl to Deinzer, 24 December 1885 and 31 December 1885, ND; Flierl and Biar telegram to Premier Griffiths, 17 December 1885, ND; Flierl to Milman, P.M. Cooktown, 26 December 1885, ND.

<sup>39</sup> Milman to Flierl, 12 January 1886, ND.

police also offered a native trooper as interpreter for the first month.<sup>40</sup>

Flierl saw both a pressing need to improve the lot of the Cooktown Aborigines and a particularly open field for Christian missionizing. He wrote:

The number of blacks in the close vicinity is supposed to be 400-500. Three years ago they were still cannibals [*frassen sie noch Menschen*] . . . only recently they started coming into Cooktown begging for alms. They have not had much contact with humans [sic]; they speak hardly any English. The 'ironclad' power of the police during former times should have trained them for Christianity [sic].<sup>41</sup>

Flierl's earlier experiences with Aborigines in South Australia led him to observe carefully the North Shore natives' appearance and customs: their dances were 'ugly and disgusting'; their 'bloodthirstiness', preoccupation with 'witchcraft', 'nakedness', and their reluctance to work were ample evidence that the mission had much to contend with among 'these poor pagans'.<sup>42</sup> Missionary Pfalzer, a young seminary graduate who replaced Flierl at Elim in September 1886, decided after only a few months that his expectation that the Aborigines might have been partially 'civilised' by contact with Europeans was ill-founded. From being 'notorious cannibals' who 'attacked anything that moved, be it animal or human, speared it, roasted it and ate it', Pfalzer considered the Aborigines to have hardly progressed at all; changes that *had* occurred he attributed to violence between white and black: to 'a number of terrible bloodbaths . . . - whether justified is a different matter - in which almost all fathers of children who are now ten years or older were killed', and to police control of Aboriginal groups. Nevertheless, Pfalzer remarked, 'robberies and lootings take place almost daily as well as injuries to whites and killings of Chinese'.<sup>43</sup>

Aborigines north of Cooktown had 'noble acts' to their credit, (rescuing shipwrecked whites), but also 'despicable acts of treachery' to their debit (for example, rebelling against a Cooktown fisherman near Lizard Island, throwing him overboard, and absconding with his boat).<sup>44</sup> The missionaries were quite prepared to believe that the Cape Bedford people only recently had ceased cooking and eating their own

<sup>40</sup> Flierl report of 14 January 1886 in KMZ 12 February 1886.

<sup>41</sup> Flierl report, 'Foundation of a new Lutheran Mission in North Queensland', 15 January 1886, ND.

<sup>42</sup> Flierl's final report before leaving for New Guinea, published in *Kirchliche Mitteilungen aus und über Nordamerika* . . . (from now on referred to as KM) 1886, #9.

<sup>43</sup> Pfalzer to Connector, 6 February 1887, ND.

<sup>44</sup> Flierl's remarks, KM 1886, #9 for credit; Pfalzer to Inspector, 6 July 1887 (see KM 1887, #10) for debit.



W. Poland came to Elim in June 1888 and remained for more than twenty years. A slight man with a partially paralyzed arm which hindered his ability to work physically, he took a strong interest in the Elim school children. But G.H. Schwarz was ultimately to have the most profound effect on the Mission community. He arrived at Cape Bedford aged nineteen in 1887 and remained almost without a break until 1942, when he was interned as an enemy alien. From 1889 onwards, Schwarz and Poland were jointly in charge of Mission activities. Poland and his wife cared mainly for schoolgirls at Elim, and Schwarz, physically imposing and a strict disciplinarian, managed a variety of agricultural and pastoral projects at Cape Bedford with Aboriginal labour. The two men complemented each other: Poland – kind, slight, in a civilized household where women cooked and sewed – sang hymns and played parlour games with young Aboriginal girls;<sup>59</sup> Schwarz, a no-nonsense bachelor worked in the fields and mustered cattle, preaching the Gospel, disciplining disobedient Aboriginal youths, and defying 'heathen' adults.<sup>60</sup> These two men supervised the creation of the modern Hopevale community, and presided over local mission policy.<sup>61</sup>

Flierl had appealed to the police to keep Aborigines out of Cooktown and to find ways to get them to frequent the Mission. For years the missionaries despaired of making any progress 'while the blacks are allowed, if not encouraged, to hang around Cooktown loafing, begging, and brawling'.<sup>62</sup> Tribal fights, rumours of free blankets, pipes, tobacco or rations would lure them into Cooktown, and children would disappear from school to follow their parents.<sup>63</sup> The missionaries were unsympathetic to the reasons Aborigines gave for leaving: Aboriginal warfare put the mark of Cain upon them.<sup>64</sup> The missionaries struggled to supply enough food to keep Aborigines on the station. They decided

<sup>59</sup> Poland to 'Red School' (a sponsoring school in Bavaria), KM 1892, #11.

<sup>60</sup> Poland to Inspector, 12 February 1889, ND. See Rose 1978: Ch. 8. Although both missionaries clearly employed corporal punishment, Poland reported Schwarz did not believe in striking Aboriginal children but favoured ignoring them as a form of punishment (KM 1888, #12).

<sup>61</sup> Schwarz was almost solely responsible for the direction of the Cape Bedford Mission from 1907 until 1942. Most Hopevale residents alive before World War II have very strong feelings about him, ranging from intense loyalty and devotion to resentment and hostility towards his demanding manner. He was convinced that Aborigines, no matter how civilized and well-trained they might appear, required firm supervision. No one now alive at Hopevale knew Poland when he was a missionary (although many met him during the War in southern Queensland), but considerable lore has grown up around him. A forgotten hero of the early mission is Johannes Pingilina, a Christian Aboriginal from Bethesda who was primarily responsible for helping the missionaries with the languages at Cape Bedford and Bloomfield.

<sup>62</sup> Pfalzer to Inspector, 30 August 1888, ND (KM 1888, #11).

<sup>63</sup> As above and Pfalzer to Inspector, 10 March 1888, ND, and Meyer to Rechner, 12 April 1887, LCA 1.2 (and see KM 1886, #6).

<sup>64</sup> Pfalzer to Inspector, 30 August 1888, ND.

to try at least to keep school-age children on the station whether or not their parents could be induced to remain. At first the missionary would simply go to the camp and drag truants back to school over their mothers' objections<sup>65</sup> but soon the missionaries decided that the children must be housed away from their parents on the station, and there take all their meals and attend school.<sup>66</sup> The missionaries could thus keep children under control (and indirectly maintain a hold over their parents), and also remove them from evil camp influences. Pfalzer asserted: 'It goes without saying that they never hear or see anything good while they stay with the older generation'.<sup>67</sup> Schwarz found that the 'girls listen in rapt attention to the filthy gossip the women bring back from Cooktown. The poor youngsters unwittingly absorb the most appalling moral poison'.<sup>68</sup> Schwarz's solution was to house boys and girls in separate dormitories and to enforce a rule of silence at bedtime. According to the missionaries Aboriginal parents also tried to induce them to keep and feed infants, proposing to come only for periodic visits,<sup>69</sup> though the missionaries refused to keep children below school age.

The government initially supplied rations to Aborigines on the Mission because they hoped that if the Aborigines received enough food it would prevent their wandering about and induce them to remain permanently on mission stations.<sup>70</sup> The missionaries hoped to supply enough food to keep Aborigines from stealing mission food crops, to get them to cultivate gardens and to receive the Word of God.<sup>71</sup> The Aborigines did not always seem to appreciate the efforts at cultivation made on their behalf. When Meyer tried to get them to drain a swamp near Elim for rice cultivation, they complained that they preferred to eat nuts from trees already growing there.<sup>72</sup> Pfalzer considered it counterproductive to encourage Aborigines to fish or hunt to supplement dwindling rations: 'What they catch on the side they eat on the side, and if they ever have lots to eat by themselves, they don't turn up for work either'.<sup>73</sup> Nor were Aborigines always impressed by the missionaries' generosity; they responded to the dictum that only those who worked would be fed by asking, 'Does the One in Heaven tell you

<sup>65</sup> Pfalzer to Inspector, 4 February 1887, ND (KM 1887, #3).

<sup>66</sup> Pfalzer to Inspector, 26 April 1887, ND.

<sup>67</sup> Pfalzer to Inspector, April 1887, ND (KM 1887, #7).

<sup>68</sup> Pfalzer to Inspector, 5 October 1888, ND (KM 1889, #2).

<sup>69</sup> As above; Poland to Inspector, 5 October 1888, ND.

<sup>70</sup> Meyer to Rechner, 8 July 1887, LCA 1.2.

<sup>71</sup> Meyer to Rechner, 26 May 1887, LCA 1.2; Pfalzer to Inspector, 4 February 1887, ND.

<sup>72</sup> Meyer to Rechner, 10 November 1886, LCA 1.1.

<sup>73</sup> Pfalzer to Inspector, 6 September 1887, ND.

restrictions on supplying Aborigines came into force.<sup>89</sup> Chinese in Cooktown (merchants, market gardeners, miners) were able legally to import opium, and Aborigines acquired charcoal opium from them in exchange for work and sexual services. Police found this impossible to control, but were unable to convince the government to forgo the £20,000 a year opium import revenue.<sup>90</sup> In 1904 Roth attributed the heavy death rate among Aborigines to opium.<sup>91</sup>

The violence, disease and human decay which resulted from intoxicants offended Cooktown councillors and in 1885 an ordinance excluded Aborigines from town after dark.<sup>92</sup> Missionaries and police tried to exclude Aborigines from town altogether, but their efforts failed because too many townspeople profited from Aborigines, relying on their cheap, casual labour and, increasingly, on the virtually free work of Aboriginal children. Roth described this practice:

Settlers in outside districts who have plenty of myalls about their country are often importuned by town residents and others to bring them in a boy or girl. In due time the child arrives. How the children are separated from their parents is a subject of conjecture and surmise. Most people will tell you they are better off with Europeans . . . Most of the children will bolt (if old enough and the distance is not too great) and then they are termed ungrateful by their owners. This practice has been going on for years, and with the exception of one or two cases . . . without good result to the children; they change masters and mistresses, prostitution and disease follow, they can only speak pidgeon English, and generally become pariahs among both whites and blacks.<sup>93</sup>

The future of these children was even more uncertain than that of adults; stolen, or bought at a young age, raised as slaves, uneducated in Aboriginal or European knowledge, unshaped by either morality, they faced certain rejection by both worlds when set adrift to shift for themselves as adolescents.<sup>94</sup>

Traffic in children, and the kidnapping of children and adults had been common on the east coast of Cape York before the establishment of Cooktown. This was the principal means of obtaining labour in the bêche-de-mer and pearlshell industry, as Roth reported in 1903:

At Cape York the bêche de mer fisheries have been going on for thirty years past now and the natives here — although hopelessly demoralised from a protective point of view — have, nevertheless,

. . . come to that stage of civilisation when their very existence is in a sense dependent upon the trade.<sup>95</sup>

To recover pearlshell and bêche-de-mer Aborigines had to dive along reefs, and this was unpleasant, dangerous, and debilitating work. During the recrudescence of this industry in the late 1890s Roth observed the effects on young Aborigines:

The following . . . [eight] deaths all within eight weeks of the boys' return from the boats . . . may be directly attributable to the life, and exposure. All these boys were apparently in sound health at the time they were originally signed on, and, with one exception were well under twenty years of age. The symptoms were common: general emaciation, pains in the back and chest, coughing and the spitting of blood.<sup>96</sup>

Not surprisingly few people knowingly and willingly shipped on these boats. Recruiting practices involved subterfuges, corruption, and outright force to obtain the divers desired.<sup>97</sup> One ploy was to obtain the services of boys from the old men of a tribe through payments of flour and tobacco. As late as 1898 Roth reported such a case from Starcke River.<sup>98</sup>

It was relatively easy for boats to abduct people along the coast. In 1882 the Collector of Customs at Cooktown was moved to observe, 'The mode of obtaining their services should, in the interests of common humanity, be more legitimately pursued than decoying them at every convenient spot along the coast and its islands irrespective of age or sex'.<sup>99</sup> In 1884 Frank Lee was charged in Cooktown with running down a canoe, kidnapping three Aborigines and shooting or attempting to shoot the rest. The bêche-de-mer boats were willing to pay £4 a head to 'recruiters' of Aborigines at this time.<sup>1</sup>

Fear ruled the boats, and captains developed elaborate procedures for protecting themselves against uprising, assault, and escape.

A Bêche de mer man owning a small vessel will sail from Thursday Island with two congenial ruffians . . . shipped as mate or cook . . . He will then by presents and promises induce as many blacks, male and female, as he can carry to come on board . . . and sail for his ultimate destination — some islet or sand bank in the Great North-east Channel, or far out on the Barrier Reef. Here he will erect his smokehouse and commence real operations. Taking all the male blacks he will sail to another sand bank, perhaps fifteen or twenty

89 Roth to Com. Pol., 16 February 1899, QSA COL/143, #11350 of 1899.

90 QNPA (1901) 1902.

91 QNPA (1903) 1904.

92 QNPA (1899) 1900.

93 QNPA (1902) 1903.

94 QNPA (1900) 1901.

95 QNPA (1902) 1903.

96 QNPA (1899) 1900.

97 QNPA (1903) 1904, quoting John Douglas, Police Magistrate, Thursday Island.

98 Roth to Com. Pol., 24 June 1898, QSA COL/142 (typed letters).

99 Collector of Customs, Cooktown, to Col. Sec., 2 March 1882, QSA COL/A333, #1385 of 1882.

1 QSA COL/A394, #4976 of 1884, March-June 1884.



Freedom for the women to come and go when and where they please will ensure a permanent increase of the half-caste population.<sup>11</sup>

Roth was appalled by the abuse of half caste girls, many of them bought as small children and raised as servants in Cooktown households.<sup>12</sup> The girls themselves were the result of thirty years of abuse of their mothers. The very existence of these children and their vulnerability touched the sensibilities of officials and by 1902 a bureaucratic campaign was under way to bring children, especially girls, in from the bush,<sup>13</sup> out of dangerous living situations<sup>14</sup> with single men, aliens, publicans, etc. and to place them in institutions before they reached puberty.<sup>15</sup>

The Act of 1897 and its amendment in 1901 regulated Aboriginal employment through permits and legal agreements which became the main means of controlling Aborigines in the colonial economy.<sup>16</sup> Theoretically every case of employment was examined and approved by protectors; men's wages and conditions of employment were controlled, but the placement of girls and women most concerned protectors.<sup>17</sup> During the period when the regulation of Aboriginal employment was undertaken seriously, authorities accelerated the removal of Aborigines to reserves. For 'humanitarian reasons', protectors incarcerated waifs and halfcaste girls at missions for protection and training. Their future as adults on the missions was seen as a problem for, to allow them to marry tribal Aborigines was to throw away all the effort that had gone into civilizing them, but it was even more undesirable that they marry non-Aborigines.<sup>18</sup> The rounding up of children and their placement on missions contained the seeds of later policies of permanent mission residence.

By 1896 the government had accepted that Aboriginal free access to towns was undesirable. The Colonial Secretary wrote:

Aboriginals are and should be removed after the sun goes down, and no law is necessary to justify this, save the law of necessity.<sup>19</sup>

The reserve was their rightful place and here they were expected to remain unless gainfully employed elsewhere. Similarly, station managers and farmers only tolerated Aborigines usefully employed on their properties. Roth 'while anxiously striving to treat him [the Aboriginal]

11 QNPA (1901) 1902.

12 QNPA (1901) 1902.

13 QNPA (1899) 1900.

14 QNPA (1902) 1903.

15 QNPA (1902) 1903.

16 QNPA (1899) 1900.

17 QNPA (1902) 1903.

18 Meston 1896.

19 Police order, Inspector Lamond, Cooktown, 18 July 1896, QSA POL/12D/A1.

as a human being whose wishes should, as far as possible – i.e., within reasonable limit – be considered and respected' maintained that the forced transference of Aborigines to reserves could be justified where drought and settlement threatened starvation, where remoteness restricted access to medical and surgical requirements and where they could not be adequately protected against unscrupulous aliens and Europeans.<sup>20</sup> By 1900 nearly all Aborigines not gainfully employed for lawful purposes by respectable Europeans were candidates for forced removal to reserves.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century Cape Bedford Mission became a small community, with a core of permanent residents whose entire existence was tied to an evolving Mission social life. Disillusioned by their failure to lure adult Aborigines to the station and unable to support and feed large numbers, the missionaries concentrated on an enclave of children whom they could carefully supervise. Agricultural efforts on a reduced scale were continued, with severely curtailed finances. Until the end of the 1890s and the arrival of the Protectors, Meston and Roth, the missionaries enjoyed little support from local authorities, even less from settlers, miners, timber-getters and fishermen. As Aboriginal numbers around Cooktown dwindled, the Mission became the last refuge for elderly 'heathen' Aborigines. By carefully marrying off Aboriginal women who were faithful converts to Christianity the missionaries established an isolated Lutheran enclave, while Aborigines outside either perished or developed radically new ways of life.

After missionary Pfalzer departed for New Guinea, leaving Schwarz and Poland alone at Cape Bedford<sup>21</sup> Schwarz planned to reduce cultivation at the Mission to a level the missionaries, schoolchildren, and the few adults could manage. He could neither feed nor rely on the availability of a larger Aboriginal work force.<sup>22</sup> From the time Schwarz moved to Hope Valley, leaving the Polands at Elim, there was a (normally amicable) division of labour between the stations. Poland and his wife kept the schoolchildren at Elim; Schwarz, the older children, and any adults who could be induced to work raised food crops and cattle at Hope Valley. Periodically, Schwarz attempted to consolidate the stations. In 1900 Elim closed and the Polands and their schoolgirls moved to Hope Valley. By 1902 Schwarz was trying to make a commercial success of copra and sisal fibres.<sup>23</sup>

20 QNPA (1901) 1902.

21 From 1905-1907, Poland was on furlough in Germany, and left the mission in 1909; another missionary who had served in East Africa spent 1900-1901 at Cape Bedford but returned to Germany (Thiele 1938:116).

22 Schwarz to Inspector, 2 April 1889, ND.

23 Schwarz to Inspector, 12 July 1902, ND.

abused Aboriginal stockmen and apparently made off with Mission stock.<sup>35</sup>

In Cooktown itself the Mission's reputation was always fragile, among both Aborigines and Europeans. When Mission debts were high Meyer reported people in town would yell in the street: '... those bloody missionaries, always writing cheques when they can't pay...'<sup>36</sup> Around the same time Aborigines in Cooktown told people that Schwarz had driven them from the station and complained of his meanness.<sup>37</sup> Townspeople also encouraged Aborigines at the Mission to run away.<sup>38</sup> Alex McNickle, a settler on the Endeavour River, considered that Cooktown people rather than the missionaries had 'reformed the Myall tribes adjoining the town up as high towards semi-civilization as they generally get' and the Mission boys he considered were work-shy and dishonest. He dismissed Meston's suggestions for increased Mission support:

With regard to the Cape Bedford Mission station, if it costs £1000 per annum to teach 'a few gins' of one tribe, how much will it cost to reform the numerous tribes of Queensland blacks...

Aborigines he believed were 'relics of humanity who must die out in a few years'.<sup>39</sup>

McNickle's remark about teaching a few gins' reflects how, perhaps by default, the missionaries had come to focus their efforts on Aboriginal schoolgirls. Ultimately they used their control of these women to draw Aboriginal men into their proposed Christian community. The missionaries, long concerned for the welfare of Aboriginal girls, were horrified by the relations between Aboriginal men and women and refused to contemplate the prospect of any of their girls associating with heathen husbands.<sup>40</sup> Young men, even those on the Mission, were 'utterly unreliable'.<sup>41</sup> As the schoolgirls grew older, however, even the missionaries became sensitive to the 'bitter reproach' in the Aborigines' queries concerning their keeping marriageable girls on the station, since everyone (even little Mission children) knew that many local whites took sexual advantage of Aboriginal women.<sup>42</sup>

35 Schwarz to Inspector, 8 June 1895, ND. One of the 'cattle-duffing' neighbours was reported jailed in 1898 (Poland to Inspector, 3 January 1898, ND; KM 1898, #3).

36 Meyer to Rechner, 7 March 1891, LCA 1.2.

37 Poland to Inspector, 7 December 1891, ND.

38 Poland to Inspector, 28 February 1890, ND (KM 1890, #6).

39 Alex McNickle letter to *Cooktown Independent*, dated 28 March 1897, published 7 April 1897, rebutting an article by Archibald Meston, *Queenslander*, 13 February 1897 (see note 21 above).

40 Poland to Inspector, 21 April 1889, ND (KM 1889, #7).

41 Poland to Inspector, 28 February 1890, ND (KM 1890, #6).

42 Poland to Inspector, 21 April 1889, ND. At this time both Schwarz and Poland were bachelors.

The missionaries lived in constant fear that older girls would be overcome by a desire to marry and would run away. They feared adults would simply abduct girls and so older students were closely supervised and their dormitory was guarded at night.<sup>43</sup> In April 1889 five girls were lured away by a large mob of Aborigines passing through Elim on the way to a great yam-eating ritual on the McIvor River, but Schwarz and the McIvor Native Police Inspector fetched them all back again.<sup>44</sup> The missionaries, betraying their own theories of sexuality,<sup>45</sup> considered that the girls' own impulses and urges might get the best of them. Poland, warned by his Mission superior that the first girl to be baptised in the church might not be able 'to resist future temptation', replied that she was small and rather plain and 'might not be submitted to temptations'.<sup>46</sup> Such anxieties held Schwarz and Poland back from baptising girls until they were considered strong enough not to fail their new faith. One girl did leave the Mission to marry a native trooper but died in childbirth shortly afterwards.<sup>47</sup> Both missionaries and mission authorities frequently worried how to find suitable mates for Christian girls.<sup>48</sup>

Ultimately the girls began to 'prove' themselves: they gave up smoking, cursing, fighting and sulking and they learned to do chores and to practise 'disinterested giving, unknown among their tribe'. Poland wrote of his little girl pupils:

Once we see proof in the heathens that they are no longer slaves of their passions and low cravings, that they have ceased to subordinate themselves to sin, we may assume with confidence that the spirit of the Lord abides in their hearts and is working in their minds.<sup>49</sup>

In 1895 five girls were christened and another eight at Whitsuntide 1898.<sup>50</sup>

Similar success with Mission boys was not forthcoming. From the beginning boys often ran away just as the missionaries thought they

43 Poland to Inspector, 28 February 1890, 22 April 1890 and 20 January 1893, ND.

44 Poland to Inspector, 21 April 1889, ND (KM 1889, #7); Schwarz to Inspector, 7 May 1889, ND (KM 1889, #7).

45 In his sketch 'A moral picture of the blacks', Poland (1907, 1:21-22) writes that while it is 'unjust to call the blacks animals', it is also 'foolish to consider them better than they are... Satan has them under his control. They are children of the Father of the Lie'.

46 Poland to Inspector, 20 January 1893, ND; and Poland's Easter report, KM 1891, #10. Poland even worried about the possible ill effects on his own son's morals if he continued to play with the 'scantily clad Papuan girls' (Poland to Inspector, 23 June 1899, ND).

47 Poland to Inspector, 12 February 1891 and 23 March 1892, ND.

48 Schwarz to Inspector, 20 May 1896, ND; Flierl report, KM 1898, #11.

49 Poland to 'Red School', KM 1892, #11.

50 Poland to Inspector, 6 June 1895 and 31 May 1898, ND (KM 1898, #10). Poland wrote enthusiastically: 'In the hereafter surely even black people must be beautiful'.



that accrued to Aborigines who had lived outside the Mission in European society.<sup>70</sup> Podaigo again worked at Hope Valley, although his health was poor.<sup>71</sup> Poland observed that he still seemed to have a romantic interest in Kakural,<sup>72</sup> although the missionaries had little prospect that any of the girls would be able to marry at that time; none of the boys had demonstrated willingness to stay permanently on the Mission.<sup>73</sup>

Podaigo's health continued to fail. He stayed in the Cooktown hospital in mid-1893 with a persistent rash, and he reported that the hospital people repeatedly ridiculed the Mission's work.<sup>74</sup> Over the next year Cooktown exerted a growing hold on Podaigo. He would come occasionally to Hope Valley but Schwarz banished him as a bad influence. In April 1895 Poland wrote:

Now he has turned into a drunk in Cooktown, like so many men of his tribe. I met him there recently: he is just skin and bones. He wasted no time in asking me for money in an impertinent way.<sup>75</sup> The story ends, abruptly. Podaigo died in the native camp near Cooktown in July 1895; the Mission's 'earliest hope' had come to nothing.<sup>76</sup> He was no more than twenty-two.

Though the missionaries had more success in Christianizing young women their efforts were often short lived. Kakural, who with Podaigo had impressed Poland, was baptised, became extremely devout and faithful and went on to marry at the Mission. Her line also comes to an abrupt end; of her two children, one died single, and the other succumbed, along with his wife and all his children, to an epidemic at Woorabinda where the Cape Bedford people were removed during World War II.

The shrinking social resources of Aboriginal life eventually succeeded where the missionaries' inducements of food and religion had failed. Young men found it virtually impossible to obtain marriageable women in the Cooktown region. Older men had traditionally monopolized young women but the situation was now complicated by competition for women from settlers and townspeople who appropriated young women and girls as servants or wives. The high death-rate among Aborigines also affected traditional prescriptive marriage rules.

Young men, on as well as off the Mission, faced as much difficulty in finding wives as the missionaries did in finding appropriate husbands for their Christian girls. The congruence of these needs ultimately was

70 As above.

71 Poland letter, KM 1893, # 6.

72 Poland to Inspector, 24 May 1893, ND.

73 Poland, KM 1894, # 1.

74 As above.

75 Poland to Inspector, 24 April 1895, ND.

76 Editor's note in KM 1895, # 7.

to determine the immediate future of the Cape Bedford Mission. In 1897, Schwarz, desperate to find a means to keep older boys on the Mission, finally asked them what would induce them to stay. They replied: 'If you give us your girls as wives'.<sup>77</sup>

Though most Mission boys, like Podaigo, ran away and many perished outside, by the late 1890s four young men had begun religious education in earnest, in order to be baptised and to marry Christian girls, even though Flierl remarked in a report that this 'hardly constitutes the right motive for entering the communion of saints'.<sup>78</sup> The problem of establishing a core of Christian families among Cape Bedford Aborigines long had exercised the missionaries. As early as 1891 Schwarz considered bringing Aboriginal men, raised and trained on local properties, to marry mission-raised women, on condition that they undertook to stay on the Mission.<sup>79</sup> Finally, in early 1901, three Christian women married men undergoing religious instruction, who, the missionaries claimed, promised to stay on the Mission, to refrain from heathen practices, to attend church and never to attempt to estrange their wives from their Lutheran convictions.<sup>80</sup> Although Roth is quoted as being certain that the marriages were 'in accordance with tribal law',<sup>81</sup> it is clear that the girls' parents opposed the matches; a few days later one mother 'delivered a loud and venomous diatribe' against the Mission and all its inhabitants as her daughter's rightful betrothed lived in the 'heathen' camp.<sup>82</sup>

Traditional Guugu-Yimidhirr life had revolved around food acquisition, and had been organized by principles of social regulation and the control of sexuality. The disruption of traditional life, both on and off the Mission, altered access to food and family structure. Aborigines were attracted to Cape Bedford by food; ultimately they were tied there by marriage. Schwarz wrote, apologetically, that the girls were not kept deliberately on the station to make the boys stay. He argued the girls had always been free to leave and stayed of their own free will.<sup>83</sup> There is no doubt, however, that the women at Hope Valley helped launch the Christian community the missionaries envisaged. The missionaries had monopolized the only source of social survival open to Aborigines.

77 Poland to Inspector, 7 November 1897, ND.

78 Flierl report, KM 1898, # 11.

79 Poland to Inspector, 7 December 1891, ND.

80 Poland to Inspector, 9 January 1901, ND.

81 Roth report to Parry-Okeden, KM 1899, # 3 and 4.

82 Poland to Inspector, 9 January 1901, ND (KM 1901, # 8 and 9).

83 Schwarz to Inspector, 3 September 1901, ND.