

John and Leslie Haviland

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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?

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European settlement subjected Aborigines to intense pressures and transformed with incredible speed the possibilities for Aboriginal life in the Cooktown hinterland. The transformation – initially often violent, and only latterly subject to any form of centralized direction – was nonetheless patterned: the fate of most Cooktown Aborigines was early elimination, and those who survived, both on and off the mission, took their places in the evolving colonizing society.

The missionaries shared with the rest of white society a conviction that European civilization was superior to Aboriginal savagery, but their well-articulated and self-conscious views about the nature and potential fate of Aborigines constitute the most important source for understanding the foundation of the mission community.

Whatever tales the Aboriginal people of lower Cape York might have heard about white men and their murderous weapons, they could never have been prepared for the amazing speed and massive extent of colonization and settlement when it occurred. In 1872 an expedition led by W. Hann was organized expressly for the purpose of investigating prospects for settlement and mining up to the 14th parallel.¹ Hann's guarded report induced James V. Mulligan and six companions to leave almost immediately to prospect on the Palmer River, and the party returned south on the 3rd of September 1873 with news of payable gold.² Within a week the government had commissioned a party to locate a port from which the new goldfield could be supplied.³ Two weeks later Mulligan and a party of one hundred miners with three hundred horses were back on the Palmer River.⁴

The speed of occupation and its transforming effects impressed even those engaged in the enterprise. When G.E. Dalrymple arrived at the Endeavour River mouth in late October 1873 he found an apparently empty and 'remote' place. The following morning the *Leichhardt* steamed into harbour carrying government police for a new port town, wardens for the goldfields, road engineers to prepare a route to the Palmer, and some seventy impatient miners.⁵ Dalrymple observed:

On Friday we had sailed into a silent, lonely, distant river mouth . . . On Saturday we were in the middle . . . of a young diggings township – men hurrying to and fro, tents rising in all directions, horses grazing and neighing for their mates . . . the shouts of sailors and labourers landing more horses and cargo, com-

bined with the rattling of the donkey-engine, cranes and chains.⁶

By early March, only five months later, two tracks to the goldfields had been cut. The Cooktown Police Magistrate estimated that at any one time no less than 1,000 men were coming or going on the track; the population on the Palmer itself was 2,500 and expected to reach 5,000 by the end of the month. To feed them 2,000 horses were constantly on the road.⁷

By March 1874 the population of Cooktown had reached 2,500.⁸ One observer counted over 550 tents in the main settlement, and an equal number spread over an eighteen mile suburb.⁹ The main street was already lined by eight hotels and public houses, a brewery, a Chinese boardinghouse, various stores and other commercial establishments.¹⁰

More substantial evidence of permanency was soon forthcoming. By June 1875 the Crown had received more than £5,000 in land revenues;¹¹ not only were substantial buildings erected on Charlotte Street but cattle already grazed on newly opened pastoral runs.¹² Butcher's Hill just northeast of the diggings opened in 1874; Mount Mulgrave to the west of the goldfield was settled in 1876.¹³

Farming properties began to be taken up along the north bank of the Endeavour River for some eighteen miles of its length, in particular at its junction with two permanent creeks, where the small township of Marton was established.¹⁴ Farming and pastoral settlement, hard on the heels of the gold rush and outlasting it by several decades, as well as the fishing industry which was established some time before the influx to Cooktown, interfered with local Aboriginal life far more than activity on the goldfields. In the early period, however, the large scale, continuous penetration of the bush by miners, digging and travelling on the roads, was the focal point of interaction between Aborigines and Europeans.

In early years miners feared Aborigines as 'bloodthirsty cannibals', and regarded their very presence as hostile. During the 1880s, however, pastoral and farming settlement rapidly expanded; new cattle runs were taken up in the dry, western country around Laura and the goldfields. Smaller farming and cattle properties spread along the

6 Dalrymple 1874:21.

7 Dalrymple 1874:21.

8 Dalrymple 1874:21.

9 Anonymous letter, 7 March 1874, in *Town and Country Journal*, reproduced in Pike 1979.

10 As above.

11 Queensland Parliament, Legislative Assembly. *Votes and Proceedings* (from now on referred to as QVP). 1875, II:917.

12 QVP 1875, II:917.

13 Stephens and Cilento 1976:4.

14 See note 21. Outline Map of the Cook District Illustrating the Pastoral Hold-

1 Hann 1873.

2 Jack 1921, 2:418.

3 Dalrymple 1874:1.

4 Dalrymple 1874:21.

5 Dalrymple 1874:21.

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.¹⁵

The squatters objected to Aborigines not because they killed cattle but because by hunting they ran the cattle which then would not fatten.¹⁶ 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,¹⁷ 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.¹⁸

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.¹⁹

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.²⁰ 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;²¹ 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 area²² 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 1882.²³ A map drawn in 1896 to show rural properties, displays the complete colonial dominion over all permanent water in the Cooktown area.²⁴ 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.

By the late 1890s, W.E. Roth, the Northern Protector of Aborigines, pointed out to Queensland legislators that it was not feasible to expect people displaced by settlers simply to move on to the next river or creek, as this was certain to be owned by another group who would punish such trespass with death.²⁵ In reality, however, the next river or creek was being taken up by colonial settlers. This situation drove Aborigines to beg, to steal food, or to prostitute themselves for tobacco or flour. Roth noted the situation confronting local Aborigines in the Cooktown area:

As a case in point, I may mention that of a Northern run with a seventy mile frontage on a main river, both sides, where the manager has had trouble with the blacks of late owing to their "disturbing" (not spearing) his cattle . . . The manager himself told the police that he would allow no blacks on the run and that "the trackers should shoot them - that was what they were kept for".²⁶ The effect on the people whose tribal land was in the immediate vicinity of Cooktown was also noted by Roth in his first report:

You may have wondered at my gathering so little information of scientific value concerning the actual Cooktown blacks: in fact they are so demoralised and yet half-civilised that it is extremely difficult to obtain anything really reliable concerning habits and customs of the "old days".²⁷

This was in 1898, one generation after the advent of the intruders.

This loss of Aboriginal self-sufficiency was to benefit the settler and the townsman, despite fears of Aboriginal predations on stock and goods. Destitute Aborigines constituted a convenient supply of cheap labour; stock workers, housemaids, errand boys, water carriers, and bedmates could be had for the cost of minimal rations and a bit of tobacco and calico. Even in the mid-'80s, police were wary of settler requests to arrest Aborigines camping on stations; they suspected that the settler wanted them rounded up and brought in to carry out stock work.²⁸

A reliable supply of labour was needed on stations. Some Aborigines were kept more or less permanently as domestics and stockmen; generally they received no wage, but they, and a number of their dependants, were fed and maintained.²⁹ By the late 1890s when the options for self-sustenance in the bush had virtually disappeared and the numbers of such dependants, people begging or seeking work,

²⁵ Queensland. Northern Protector of Aborigines. *Annual Report of . . . for 1899*, by W.E. Roth. Brisbane, 1900 (from now on referred to as QNPA).

²⁶ QNPA (1900) 1901.

²⁷ Roth to Com. Pol., 4 March 1898, QSA COL/142, #3129 of 1898.

²⁸ Brooke to Fitzgerald, 31 December 1882, QSA COL/A356, #1303 of 1883; see also QSA COL/A296, #2378 of 1880.

²⁹ QNPA (1903) 1904.

grew too large, station managers requested police to remove them. Formal legal power to deport Aborigines to distant reserves was provided in the Act of 1897.³⁰

The controversy in Cooktown over 'bringing in the blacks' reflects this ambivalence among settlers. In May 1881 the Cooktown police magistrate, Howard St. George, accompanied by two sub-inspectors and ten native troopers, travelled to Cape Bedford. They found no tracks so moved north to Cape Flattery. There they sighted some people, but failed to establish contact. St. George decided to send among them

some of the boys who understood the language, and when peaceful relations have been established induce them to accompany them to the coast near Cooktown when I have no doubt that some of them might be induced to come over to town and if a beginning was once made they would be sure to repeat the visit.³¹

Police Magistrate Fitzgerald succeeded in camping with the Cape Bedford people the following month, and his report concluded that Cape Bedford should be reserved for Aborigines. A temporary reserve was immediately gazetted on the north shore of the Endeavour River mouth.³² Two months later the Mayor of Cooktown wrote to the Colonial Secretary:

Referring to the matter of the treatment of aboriginal natives in this district I beg to state that numbers of them are almost daily camped on the North Shore . . . If the work of civilising them is intended to be carried out they must be supplied with a certain quantity of food and in course of time no doubt some of them will be induced to ship in vessels engaged in the bêche-de-mer fishing and also in town.³³

Next month his tone became more uneasy. He reiterated the need for the government to feed Aborigines until they took up what 'work they may be found suitable for' but warned 'they are becoming a nuisance to the townspeople who complain of their being allowed into the town at all'.³⁴ Aborigines were now crossing the river 'to beg

³⁰ QVP 1897, IV.

³¹ Howard St. George to Col. Sec., 27 May 1881, QSA COL/A314, #2395 of 1881.

³² This temporary reserve was cancelled in 1881 and 50,000 acres between the Endeavour and Mclvor Rivers were gazetted in its place; Inspector Fitzgerald stated in 1886 that Cape Bedford was unsuitable and would never be self-supporting; Meston, quoting Fitzgerald, concluded it was little but bare rock and sea sand (Meston 1896). Roth (QNPA (1901) 1902) observed that less than 200 square miles of the total of the reserves was suitable.

³³ John Davis to Col. Sec., ca. 23 September 1881, QSA COL/A344, #4154 of 1881.

³⁴ John Davis to Col. Sec., 14 October 1881, QSA COL/A344, #4566 of 1881.

from house to house and in many instances terrify the inmates'.³⁵ 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.³⁶

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.³⁷ 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.³⁸ The government, in accepting the arrangement, offered to assist the missionary with buildings, tools, seeds and free rations for twelve months.³⁹ The Cooktown

³⁵ As above.

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

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

³⁸ Neuendettelaau 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.

³⁹ Milman to Flierl, 12 January 1886, ND.

police also offered a native trooper as interpreter for the first month.⁴⁰

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].⁴¹

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'.⁴² 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'.⁴³

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).⁴⁴ The missionaries were quite prepared to believe that the Cape Bedford people only recently had ceased cooking and eating their own

⁴⁰ Flierl report of 14 January 1886 in KMZ 12 February 1886.

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

⁴² 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.

⁴³ Pfalzer to Connector, 6 February 1887, ND.

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

dead; the Aboriginal practice of hauling around the wrapped and rotting corpses of deceased children, mourning over the remains for months at a time, was abhorrent to them. Here was evidence that, in their darkened and Christless lives, 'they have not our hope'.⁴⁵

The most immediate evidence the missionaries had for the degraded state of the Aborigines and hence their need for the Gospel, however, was in Cooktown itself. Missionary W. Poland, arriving from Germany in 1888, was puzzled that so many Aborigines were wandering about the town and not at the mission; he reflected afterwards that their presence in town was due to 'lust, alcoholism, and opium-addiction'.⁴⁶ The missionaries despaired at cultivating either soil or souls when their native labour periodically left the Mission for town, where they would beg from door to door, occasionally cut wood, carry water, or wash clothes.⁴⁷ Aborigines themselves chided the missionaries for having *mangal murr* 'short hands', saying that on stations near town or at the 8-Mile Native Police camp, for a few days' work, they could receive generous handouts.⁴⁸ Pfalzer had to concede that by contrast two pounds of bread and a cup of tea was not much pay for two hours of hard labour on the mission.⁴⁹ Missionary G.H. Schwarz thought that Aborigines' working for food in Cooktown, or even begging, was not too bad: 'much worse is the way in which black women and girls earn their food and tobacco, and one's hair stands on end when one hears even the smallest children talk about this'.⁵⁰ Though missionaries devoted their primary attention to the Aborigines on the Reserve who were subject to the lure of town and its demoralising influence, they were aware of 'vast and promising' opportunities for mission work among the 'crowds of natives' in the hinterland.⁵¹

Flierl originally agreed to ask for no government support for the Mission Station (which he named Elim)⁵² after the first twelve months, but when government support ceased, in April 1887, it became progressively harder for the Mission to feed its inmates. As one agricultural venture after another failed, the missionaries were constantly in debt to Cooktown merchants, clamouring for money from Germany or South Australia.⁵³ The missionaries at Cape Bedford, though, found the

45 Pfalzer to Inspector, February 1888, ND; Poland report to government, 21 June 1888, ND (KM 1888, #8).

46 Poland 1907, 2:2-4, 'My arrival in Australia'.

47 Pfalzer to Inspector, 7 September 1887, ND.

48 Pfalzer to Inspector, 30 August 1888, in KM 1888, #11.

49 Pfalzer to Inspector, 12 March 1888, ND.

50 Schwarz to Inspector, 17 October 1888, ND.

51 Lutheran Church of Australia Archives (from now on referred to as LCA) 1.2, Meyer to Rechner, 5 August 1888.

52 Grope and Roennfeldt 1977:3; 'Elim' refers to Exodus 15.

53 Pfalzer to Inspector, 26 April 1887, ND, on end of government rations; Pfalzer to Inspector, 28 May 1888 and 3 February 1889, ND, on debts to Clunn in Cooktown and gifts from South Australia.

Queensland government cooperative, and they repeatedly asked for police assistance, both in keeping whites off the Mission,⁵⁴ and in keeping Aborigines, especially children, out of Cooktown and in school.⁵⁵ They also sought partial financial relief by asking the government to subsidise the mission school. The missionaries themselves pinned their highest hopes for improving the natives on the school.⁵⁶

Flierl outlined his mission programme for the Police Magistrate:

. . . the main point of all Missionwork is to Christianise the heathen — so consequently they become good civilised too — and this chiefly has to be done by religious instruction and preaching of the Gospel. Thereby it is necessary to use as soon as possible the own language of the aborigines . . . so they acquire a right understanding of the gospel of truth. On the other part in daily conversation and by teaching all what is possible must be done to communicate in English with the white people . . . As well as for young people instruction in School being good means of education, so for adults work and especially work in gardens to become steadily and useful men.

He concludes:

A good furtherance in our work would be if the natives who frequent the township shall be kept away after opening a station for them.⁵⁷

He argued that:

the blacks need to be shown, taught, attracted to the outdoor work, which will turn this wilderness into a flowering garden; and they must learn to accept a way of life that gives them a safe and permanent food supply in return for the labour of their hands and the sweat of their brow.⁵⁸

Flierl apparently envisaged his task to include: (a) religious instruction, with (b) learning the native language as a prerequisite combined with (c) secular and practical education of children, and (d) training adults to do productive work, with the aim (e) of cultivating enough food to feed the station, thus (f) making it possible for the Aborigines to abandon their nomadic habits, and (g) insulating them from corrupting European influence. Flierl soon left for New Guinea, and the new missionaries, recent graduates from mission training at Neuendettelsau in Bavaria, were young and inexperienced.

54 *Government Gazette* 3 March 1886 forbids unauthorized entry into the Reserve; also Flierl to Rechner, 4 April 1886, LCA 1.1.

55 Pfalzer report, 5 March 1889, ND; he calls for Aboriginal children to be kept from Cooktown.

56 As above.

57 Flierl to Milman, 26 December 1885, ND; this is Flierl's copy of the letter he wrote in English, signed also by the lay-helper Biar.

58 Flierl to Rechner, 16 February 1886, LCA 1.1.

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;⁵⁹ Schwarz, a no-nonsense bachelor worked in the fields and mustered cattle, preaching the Gospel, disciplining disobedient Aboriginal youths, and defying 'heathen' adults.⁶⁰ These two men supervised the creation of the modern Hopevale community, and presided over local mission policy.⁶¹

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'.⁶² 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.⁶³ The missionaries were unsympathetic to the reasons Aborigines gave for leaving; Aboriginal warfare put the mark of Cain upon them.⁶⁴ The missionaries struggled to supply enough food to keep Aborigines on the station. They decided

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

⁶⁰ 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).

⁶¹ 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.

⁶² Pfalzer to Inspector, 30 August 1888, ND (KM 1888, #11).

⁶³ 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).

⁶⁴ 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' objections⁶⁵ 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.⁶⁶ 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'.⁶⁷ 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'.⁶⁸ 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,⁶⁹ 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.⁷⁰ 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.⁷¹ 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.⁷² 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'.⁷³ 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

⁶⁵ Pfalzer to Inspector, 4 February 1887, ND (KM 1887, #3).

⁶⁶ Pfalzer to Inspector, 26 April 1887, ND.

⁶⁷ Pfalzer to Inspector, April 1887, ND (KM 1887, #7).

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

⁶⁹ As above; Poland to Inspector, 5 October 1888, ND.

⁷⁰ Meyer to Rechner, 8 July 1887, LCA 1.2.

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

⁷² Meyer to Rechner, 10 November 1886, LCA 1.1.

⁷³ Pfalzer to Inspector, 6 September 1887, ND.

to give us so little?'⁷⁴ Quick to relate mission life to the promised Heavenly Paradise, they frequently asked 'How much food will there be in Heaven?' and 'How much work will be done there?'⁷⁵

The missionaries quickly realised that their goals were tied to a closed circle of necessity that was to plague them for sixty years. To become 'civilized', the Aborigines had to be induced to shun towns and other contacts with Europeans and to settle on the Mission; Aborigines were attracted to the Mission by ample supplies of food; such supplies could only be obtained through Aboriginal labour.⁷⁶ 'The only thing that could keep these wildly roaming hordes together at all is work; and if they are to work, they must be fed', wrote Pfalzer in 1887.⁷⁷ Thus began a continual, but rarely successful, effort to produce foodstuffs. The missionaries faced two insurmountable difficulties: they considered local Aborigines 'incorrigible loafers', in constant need of supervision, but always ready to eat rations.⁷⁸ They also discovered what early government officials already knew: that the land available was very poor. The missionaries searched the Reserve for better gardening areas, and Schwarz ultimately settled on the southern slopes of Cape Bedford, naming his station 'Hope Valley'.⁷⁹

Although Flierl considered religious instruction to be the greatest priority, in the first years the missionaries had little time for preaching. They lamented their lack of progress in spiritual matters. In fact their metaphors of religious enlightenment reflect their mundane preoccupations. Flierl commented on the religious training of Aboriginal women '... if they could learn to clear the garden of weeds, they might come to appreciate the weeds in their hearts and minds and prepare a fine clean bed to receive the blessed Seed of God's Word into their hearts'.⁸⁰ Pfalzer, in a more nutritive vein, hoped that 'the heathen's hunger for human flesh will soon be transformed into hunger for the Bread of Life'.⁸¹ At Bloomfield Meyer and his staff, somewhat apologetically, put spiritual work after building and cultivation activities.⁸²

At Cape Bedford the missionaries tried to pursue Flierl's program of learning the language and saving souls. The Elim school was conducted in Guugu-Yimidhirr.⁸³ With the help of a *Diyari* evangelist, Johannes Pingilina, Schwarz translated the Lord's Prayer into Guugu-Yimidhirr only three months after his arrival in Australia.⁸⁴ As the missionaries became more proficient in the language, they appreciated its subtleties, although they clearly never grasped its basic grammatical structure.⁸⁵ They were particularly pleased to discover expressions which seemed to encode religious concepts⁸⁶ and considerable effort was devoted to uncovering native religious ideas. The missionaries, however, tried to oppose and correct these 'mistaken notions'; Schwarz, at Hope Valley defiantly made his coffee over a *Dhabul* or 'sacred' fire. in the face of predictions that strange Aborigines would surely murder him.⁸⁷ On the other hand, Pfalzer considered beliefs about transmigration of souls and rebirth (he thought Aborigines believed they would be reborn as whites),⁸⁸ proved that some 'spark of Divine Revelation' remained even among these heathens, these 'lowest of the low' – and thus that even their wretched souls could be saved for the Kingdom of God.

The parents of children in the Cape Bedford school, passing back and forth between Cooktown, local farms, cattle stations and new gold-fields north at Starcke River, were confronted everywhere with a white man's world. The terms on which Aboriginal men and women could find flour, grog or a bit of tobacco in Cooktown were less easy than the missionaries imagined, even though the forty-odd hotels and grog shops in booming Cooktown were happy to pay Aboriginal help in liquor, and to sell them more for cash. It was profitable for publicans to employ Aborigines on whom they could depend and who could warn them about strangers who might have informed the police, once the

74 Pfalzer to Inspector, 3 December 1888, ND (KM 1889, #3).

75 Meyer to Missions Congregation, Adelaide, 2 June 1888, LCA 1.2 (KM 1888, #9).

76 Schwarz to Inspector, 17 October 1888, ND.

77 Pfalzer to Inspector, 6 September 1887, ND (KM 1887, #12).

78 Meyer to Rechner, 5 August 1888, LCA 1.2.

79 The first attempt at cultivation in 1887-88 failed (Schwarz to Inspector, 27 December 1887, ND); another attempt was made in 1889-90 and Schwarz moved there permanently when Poland's bride arrived at Elim (Schwarz to Inspector, 21 October 1890, ND).

80 Flierl to Rechner, 6 March 1886, LCA 1.1.

81 Pfalzer to Inspector, 11 November 1886, ND (KM 1887, #2).

82 Meyer to Missions Congregation, 2 January 1889, LCA 1.2.

83 Pfalzer to Inspector, 5 February 1887, ND.

84 Schwarz to Inspector, 27 December 1887, ND (KM 1888, #4).

85 Poland's first systematic description of Guugu Yimidhirr, modelled on classical grammar, was in a letter to Neuendettelsau, 16 August 1889, ND. See Poland 1907, 1:14, and Roth 1901, which is based on information supplied by Schwarz and Poland.

86 Poland to Inspector, 5 October 1888, ND. There were some notable misunderstandings: Meyer's rendering of 'Thou shalt not commit adultery' into Guugu Yalandji turns out to mean 'Thou shalt not marry'. (Meyer to Rechner, 6 September 1888, LCA 1.2).

87 Schwarz to Inspector, 13 February 1888, ND (KM 1888, #5).

88 . . . and whites as sharks! Pfalzer to Inspector, 28 May 1888, ND (cf. KM 1888, #7). All the Cape Bedford missionaries seemed to subscribe to a theory that Aborigines were somehow degenerated from full human beings; Poland wrote: 'These people are living proof of the low level a human can reach, when he lives like an animal, giving thought to nothing but the satisfaction of his physical needs' (Poland to 'Red School' in KM 1889, #1).

restrictions on supplying Aborigines came into force.⁸⁹ 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.⁹⁰ In 1904 Roth attributed the heavy death rate among Aborigines to opium.⁹¹

The violence, disease and human decay which resulted from intoxicants offended Cooktown councillors and in 1885 an ordinance excluded Aborigines from town after dark.⁹² 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.⁹³

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.⁹⁴

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,

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.

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

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.⁹⁶

Not surprisingly few people knowingly and willingly shipped on these boats. Recruiting practices involved subterfuges, corruption, and outright force to obtain the divers desired.⁹⁷ 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.⁹⁸

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'.⁹⁹ 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.¹

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

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/A353. #1385 of 1882.

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

miles distant, will there land them, and leaving them a small dinghy in which to reach the neighbouring reef where the bêche de mer is to be collected, he and his mates will return to their headquarters where they will revel in the society of the grass widows of the fish collectors, whom they will occasionally visit for the purpose of bringing in the fish obtained by them to the smoke house. Meanwhile the blacks will work patiently for a time, fed on a small allowance of 'sharps' (an inferior kind of flour) and such fish as they can catch. Those that get sick die unrelieved and unrecorded and they all live the hardest possible life, generally on the verge of starvation and frequently in want of water.²

Often Aborigines were put ashore hundreds of miles from their own districts, facing hostile tribes and predatory whites along their routes home.³ Women were detained on board for years at a time. Tooloo came to the attention of the police in Cooktown when she was around fifteen years old having been taken to sea some five years earlier by the schooner *Flirt*. Her companions were said to have run away off Cape Tribulation. She was left in the care of a Cooktown hotelkeeper, then 'decoyed away' by some native troopers. The captain of the *Flirt* tried to trace her, promising to return her to her native area and put her into domestic service.⁴ Another notorious incident occurred in 1882 when eighteen Aborigines aged nine to forty, procured from Townsville, arrived in Cooktown.

They drafted these 'boys' and gins after the manner of sheep, each captain casting lots for nine, mixed sexes, without reference to the inclinations or feelings naturally induced by the filial or friendly instincts of the parties concerned some of whom, I know, manifested a strong aversion to their separation. Amongst those who fell to the lot of Captain Webb of the 'Pride of the Logan' was a girl of 11 or perhaps 12 years old — a mere child, comparatively — who must have received shameful treatment on the voyage between Hinchinbrooke and Cooktown, as one Steve Barry, who belonged to the 'Reindeer' tender proceeded on board Webb's vessel, took forcible possession of this child, claimed her as his own and actually dragged her by the arm through the main thoroughfare of this town, despite my remonstrances until he lodged or secreted her in a public house, incidentally for very discreditable purposes.⁵

Inspector Fitzgerald received advice that he possessed no powers to prevent 'the carrying off of gins'. The abduction of children, however, could be prosecuted.⁶

The abuse of women in the fishing industry became a significant demographic factor. Venereal disease, the exposed life on the boats, the insecure existence, and the likelihood of early death all affected women's capacity to reproduce and to rear children. Just as every diseased or drowned diver was lost to the Aboriginal community, each woman dead or diseased or unable to care for her baby was a loss to her own generation and those following. The rapidly dwindling numbers of Aborigines in the Cooktown area reflected this situation.

The treatment of women and girls by these boat crews was regarded by police as one of the main causes of murder by Aborigines⁷ and eventually the shipping of women and children was prohibited.⁸ Fishing crews had long been accustomed to paying Aboriginal fathers and husbands in food and tobacco for the sexual services of their women. Miners took temporary possession of women in similar ways, though violent conflicts often arose when miners refused to return women to their husbands. These practices and the ambiguous position of the children resulting from such unions forced the government to attempt to control access to Aboriginal women. White rights to female labour, and the movements of Aboriginal women, were controlled by legislation and refinements of policy during the ten years after mid-1890.

Colonial officials regarded Aboriginal women as even more dangerously sexual than European women:

We can hardly expect the emotions of the savage woman to be under more severe control than those of the white. All aboriginal girls, with a few rare exceptions, would drift towards one common destination involving their own degradation and additional burdens on the state.⁹

Even where they were in legitimate employment their 'unowned' sexuality was considered a problem because their employers dismissed them if they became pregnant.¹⁰

Control of the Aboriginal women was essential in the implementation of Aboriginal policy:

6 Fitzgerald to Col. Sec. (and minute by Seymour, Commissioner of Police), 2 March 1882, QSA COL/A333, #1385 of 1882.

7 See Fahey to Col. Sec., 23 June 1882, QSA COL/A340, #3552 of 1882; St. George to Seymour, 3 March 1882, QSA COL/A333, #1228 of 1882; Meston 1896.

8 QNPA (1899) 1900.

9 QNPA (1902) 1903.

10 QNPA (1902) 1903.

2 Parry-Okeden 1897 quoting John Douglas, Police Magistrate, Thursday Island.

3 Roth to Com. Pol., 6 May 1898, QSA COL/142, #6944 of 1898.

4 Blakesley to Robert Grey, 24 September 1879, QSA COL/A250, #3427 of 1879.

5 Fahey, Harbour Master to Collector of Customs, 2 March 1882, QSA COL/A333, #1385 of 1882.

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

Roth was appalled by the abuse of half caste girls, many of them bought as small children and raised as servants in Cooktown households.¹² 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,¹³ out of dangerous living situations¹⁴ with single men, aliens, publicans, etc. and to place them in institutions before they reached puberty.¹⁵

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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹

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.²⁰ 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 Bedford²¹ 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.²² 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.²³

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.

Relations between Mission and government underwent a series of reversals. In April 1889 Police Magistrate Milman recommended the government grant the Mission an annual subsidy of £200, subject to his continued good opinion of Mission management.²⁴ Milman advised Schwarz to use the subsidy for rations and to keep meticulous records so as to justify further requests for assistance.²⁵ Schwarz, always sceptical, agreed that while Aborigines might well come to the Mission if promised government-supplied rations and that this was better than driving them from the towns or stations, he was nonetheless anxious about too many Aborigines flocking to Elim for free food. He was also dubious about depending on government aid which was contingent on the goodwill of a sympathetic police magistrate.²⁶ Schwarz's fears proved well founded; after a few years of favourable government inspections, the missionaries fell out with Police Magistrate Chester who in 1893 persuaded the government to cut off the subsidy. The official reason was to save money during a financial crisis, reflecting Chester's opinion that 'no practical result' had resulted from the Cape Bedford work and that:

no result at all commensurate with the outlay is ever likely to be shown by the latter station and especially since it is impossible for . . . the police to force the aboriginal children to remain in the schools, as such action would be contrary to the essentially voluntary principle of the scheme and would, moreover, inevitably break down.²⁷

The missionaries felt that the police magistrate had ordered the subsidy discontinued because he was unable to persuade Schwarz and Poland to send some educated, well-behaved Aboriginal girls into Cooktown to work as domestics. Chester was determined to have the girls, but the missionaries left the choice to the girls, who refused.²⁸ Cape Bedford received no government subsidy between 1893 and 1 April 1897, when £5 per month was granted for Aboriginal relief, apparently at Meston's suggestion.²⁹ In the interim the missionaries struggled to feed not only Aborigines but also themselves.³⁰ Uncertain funds were received from Neuendettelsau and emergency grants from South Australia.

24 Milman report, 25 April 1889, QSA COL/139, #4058 of 1889; Poland to Inspector, 6 June 1889, ND.

25 Schwarz to Inspector, 7 June 1889, ND (KM 1889, #8).

26 Schwarz to Inspector, 10 July 1889, ND.

27 Parry-Okeden to Rechner, 6 June 1894, LCA 1.2. The Police Magistrate argued, apparently without foundation, that ample native foods were available from the Reserve and the sea, so rations were unnecessary.

28 KM 1894, #1.

29 'Relief for Cape Bedford, 1897-98', QSA COL/457, p.11; see also Meston 1896.

30 Poland reported to Rechner on his own difficulties, 18 May 1891, KMZ 1892; Poland 1907, 1:16.

The government only approved a renewed annual subsidy of £100, 'conditionally on Missionaries Schwarz and Poland taking in hand some of the Cooktown aboriginal waifs and strays',³¹ after Schwarz approached Roth and argued that he had eighty or ninety Aborigines to feed daily who were otherwise starving. This was the beginning of a cooperative relationship between Schwarz and various Protectors of Aborigines and, over the years, many children from other parts of Queensland were transplanted to Cape Bedford.

Roth considered that a beneficial feature of the 1897 legislation was that it afforded protection to the missionaries who could (by taking out 'agreements' for employment 'on their own boys') keep Aborigines on the station. Without such agreements the young Aborigines 'as soon as they can make their way on their own, go off to Cooktown and accept any employment white people will give them'.³² The missionaries always had found their neighbours hostile to their enterprise, competing by underhand means for the services of the Aborigines the Lutherans also wanted.³³ The local settlers also had their eyes on mission land, often expressing the sentiment that setting aside useful land for Aborigines only impeded progress. Commercial timber-getters fought to gain access to the Reserve and they received the support of the Cooktown Chamber of Commerce.

. . . it is scarcely logical to stop the development of a district by locking up some of its richest natural resources as far as the white man is concerned, while they are freely vested in the blacks to whom they are of no use whatever. The position is intolerable and of injustice to the capitalist who has invested capital in the latest machinery [i.e. sawmills] for the purpose of converting this latent wealth into actual money.³⁴

At Cape Bedford the issue was cattle pasture. The Mission kept a small herd but neighbouring settlers freely ran their cattle on the Reserve,

31 Roth to Com. Pol., 6 June 1898, QSA COL/142, #7701 of 1898; also QSA COL/142: Schwarz to Roth, 16 March 1898, #15678 of 1898, and Roth to Com. Pol., 18 March 1898, #3421 of 1898 attachment; also QSA POL/1 Letterbook p.24, of 18 March 1898. Roth took a special interest in Cape Bedford and received letters written in Guugu Yimidhirr from Cape Bedford schoolgirls.

32 Roth's report, quoted in KM 1889, #3 and 4.

33 Poland to Inspector, 12 December 1901, ND. Poland was once approached on a Cooktown street by a landowner in the area who wanted to hire some Elim schoolboys, (Poland to Inspector, 28 February 1890, ND). Meyer reported that settlers near Bloomfield were continually trying to lure natives from the mission (letter to Rechner, 9 January 1890, LCA 1.2); Meyer himself was later involved in the irregular recruitment of some mission boys for fishing boats, which ultimately led to the government's insistence that he be removed (Parry-Okeden to Rechner, 28 August 1890, LCA 1.2).

34 Fruit, Cooktown Chamber of Commerce, to Minister for Lands, 14 July 1891, Queensland Department of Public Lands (LR) 86-89, #14917 of 1891.

abused Aboriginal stockmen and apparently made off with Mission stock.³⁵

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...'³⁶ Around the same time Aborigines in Cooktown told people that Schwarz had driven them from the station and complained of his meanness.³⁷ Townspeople also encouraged Aborigines at the Mission to run away.³⁸ 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'.³⁹

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.⁴⁰ Young men, even those on the Mission, were 'utterly unreliable'.⁴¹ 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.⁴²

³⁵ Schwarz to Inspector, 8 June 1895, ND. One of the 'cattle-duffing' neighbours was reported jailed in 1898 (Poland to Inspector, 5 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*, 15 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.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ The missionaries, betraying their own theories of sexuality,⁴⁵ 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'.⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷ Both missionaries and mission authorities frequently worried how to find suitable mates for Christian girls.⁴⁸

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.⁴⁹

In 1895 five girls were christened and another eight at Whitsuntide 1898.⁵⁰

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 1899, 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, 25 June 1899, ND).

⁴⁷ Poland to Inspector, 12 February 1891 and 25 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'.

had began to progress. Boys often went to Cooktown seeking food or tobacco; they left the dormitory to dance in 'heathen' camps or to attend ceremonies. One young Aboriginal after ten years of 'model' behaviour one day ran off and later appeared in Cooktown, married and working on a fisherman's boat.⁵¹

The story of Podaigo, as told by the missionaries in detail, reflects their view of the problems. A year after his arrival at Elim Schwarz singled out Podaigo, then fifteen years old and a mission 'veteran', as the best school pupil. He was diligent, quick to grasp work, sincere and obedient.⁵² Podaigo made a good impression on Poland the day he arrived in Elim⁵³ and, along with the girl Kakural (baptised Anna in 1896), appeared quickly to grasp and remember 'Christian concepts'.⁵⁴ Podaigo was also the first child to learn to sing newly translated Guugu Yimidhurr hymns properly, to acquire a true appreciation of the Gospel message, to be able to ask relevant questions about it,⁵⁵ and to have any success with arithmetic.⁵⁶ The missionaries claimed he once spontaneously praised Jesus for saving him when out at sea on the mission boat during a storm.⁵⁷

In 1889, however, when Podaigo was about sixteen, he began to show a certain restlessness. Poland thought he had begun 'to waver in his desire to please God', finding his manner vulgar and unpleasant when with other boys, unsure and nervous when with missionaries.⁵⁸ Once when he was being 'lazy and clumsy' Schwarz slapped him and, in the ensuing scene, Podaigo picked up a spear which Schwarz seized to beat him further.⁵⁹ Later the same year he again disappointed the missionaries by yielding to the urgings of certain elders and leaving the station to attend an initiation, where he could eat the forbidden yam.⁶⁰ When he returned, apologising for allowing the old men to lead him astray, Podaigo was punished by being banned from church services for one month. To the missionaries' surprise he appeared not to have forgotten his schooling or Bible stories. Though grown from a child to a youth taller than Poland, 'only spiritually he [had] not grown strong yet'.⁶¹

51 Poland to Connector, 20 May 1897, ND; see also Poland 1907, 1:12-14.

52 Schwarz report, KM 1888, #9.

53 Poland to Inspector, 21 June 1888, ND.

54 Poland to Inspector, 5 October 1888, ND.

55 Schwarz to Inspector, 17 October 1888, ND.

56 Poland to Inspector, 12 February 1889, ND.

57 Poland 1907, 1:13.

58 Poland to Inspector, 12 February 1889, ND (KM 1889, #5).

59 Poland to Inspector, 12 February 1889. Podaigo 'shook with helpless rage' at this treatment, though afterwards he apparently bore Schwarz no grudge.

60 Poland to Inspector, 6 June 1889, ND (KM 1889, #8).

61 Poland letter in KM 1889, #11.

In September 1889 Podaigo fell into disgrace. Poland later called it the saddest day in his professional career.⁶² While on the beach near Elim Podaigo and another boy chased two Elim schoolgirls along the beach and into the water, saying 'shocking and disgusting' things. Afterwards he apparently chose as punishment to be tied up one full morning rather than to leave the station, but Poland was shocked to find him unrepentant and defiant.⁶³ Shortly afterwards he picked up his spears and left the station,⁶⁴ returning before Christmas after having worked for a local settler. He was 'sullen but untroubled by guilt' and though he told the missionaries he had come back because he had been made to work on Sundays, he told other boys that he had returned because the settler had run out of tobacco.⁶⁵ Poland dispatched Podaigo to Hope Valley to work like the other older boys. Here he settled in, moody, but more capable than his fellows.⁶⁶

Although Podaigo had written a letter to Poland's bride-to-be in Germany,⁶⁷ he was not on the station when the white women arrived in late 1890. He had been sent back to the settler from whom, it appeared, he had stolen a shirt and a pipe. Schwarz wrote to him telling him he could return to the Mission if he repaid the stolen items.⁶⁸

Podaigo did not reappear for three years. On a Sunday in January 1893 he returned, accompanied by another long-time runaway. Poland had heard rumours that the boy, now nearly twenty, had been working around the Mclvor River, and tried hard not to betray his joy at seeing him. 'It's me, I had to return to you, longing drove me back', Podaigo said. Poland thought him sincere, 'even though he used exactly the same words as all his countrymen use when they are feigning homesickness'.⁶⁹ During his absence Podaigo had explored his transformed homeland and his own position in it. He had been all over the Cape, up to Batavia River visiting the newly established Mission, and to the tip of Cape York itself, moving from one settler to the next, learning to speak English, to work as a stockman and 'sizing up the white man' though not very favourably. He had 'experienced brutality' and was in fact running from the police when he came back to the Mission although the police agreed to let him remain there. The missionaries were confident he would quickly catch up in school and hoped he might exert a good influence on other boys, enjoying the 'standing'

62 Poland 1907, 1:14.

63 Poland to Inspector, 28 September 1889, ND.

64 Poland to Inspector, 1 November 1889, ND (KM 1890, #2).

65 Poland to Inspector, 26 December 1889, ND (KM 1890, #4).

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

67 Poland 1907, 1:14.

68 Poland to Inspector, 22 December 1890, ND (KM 1891, #2).

69 Poland to Inspector, 21 February 1893, ND (KM 1893, #6).

that accrued to Aborigines who had lived outside the Mission in European society.⁷⁰ Podaigo again worked at Hope Valley, although his health was poor.⁷¹ Poland observed that he still seemed to have a romantic interest in Kakural,⁷² 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.⁷³

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.⁷⁴ 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.⁷⁵ The story ends, abruptly. Podaigo died in the native camp near Cooktown in July 1895; the Mission's 'earliest hope' had come to nothing.⁷⁶ 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'.⁷⁷

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'.⁷⁸ 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.⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰ Although Roth is quoted as being certain that the marriages were 'in accordance with tribal law',⁸¹ 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.⁸²

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.⁸³ 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.

At the turn of the century Hope Valley was on the verge of becoming a very different sort of community. The missionaries had totally reorganized Aboriginal life on the Cape Bedford Reserve. In early 1900 Schwarz took new hope from his belief that the majority of the remaining 'Koko Yimidir tribe' were then living on the station.⁸⁴ Part of the job of the Mission was now to protect the remnants of Aboriginal populations in the North,⁸⁵ or, as Flierl expressed it in his report on the first ten years of Mission work at Cape Bedford, to give them 'a kind of Christian burial service, a kind of promising sunset glow, which cannot be followed by any bright dawn in this life here on Earth'.⁸⁶ The Hope Valley community was soon to be swelled by refugees from the failing Lutheran Missions at Marie Yamba (Proserpine) and Bloomfield, as well as by Roth's promised 'waifs and strays'. Schwarz saw Hope Valley, now with an established core of Christian families, poised to cohere and grow under his own authority and leadership.⁸⁷

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