
THESES SIS/LIBRARY
R.G. MENZIES LIBRARY BUILDING NO:2
THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
CANBERRA ACT 0200 AUSTRALIA

TELEPHONE: +61 2 6125 4631
FACSIMILE: +61 2 6125 4063
EMAIL: library.theses@anu.edu.au

USE OF THESES

This copy is supplied for purposes
of private study and research only.
Passages from the thesis may not be
copied or closely paraphrased without the
written consent of the author.

DON'T DEPEND ON ME:

**AUTONOMY AND DEPENDENCE
IN AN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY
IN NORTH QUEENSLAND**

Julie Dianne Finlayson


June 1991

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of
the Australian National University, Canberra.**



DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any other university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is attached.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie D. Finlayson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Julie D. Finlayson

June 1991

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	iii
Abstract.....	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1 PERSPECTIVES ON AUTONOMY IN GENDER RELATIONSS.	9
Traditional gender relations	11
The impact of colonialism on gender relations	14
Gender relations in urban households.....	22
The characteristics of the matrifocal family.....	25
Household constitution.....	26
Welfare income	28
Gender and economic roles	32
Social mobility.....	34
Conclusion	36
CHAPTER 2 MONA MONA MISSION: VEHICLE OF CHURCH AND STATE.	39
Responses on the frontier.....	40
Response to Aborigines in Kuranda	43
Mission administration of government policy.....	50
Mona Mona mission	52
Conclusion	62
CHAPTER 3 ABORIGINAL LABOUR RELATIONS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND,	
1890s-1950s.....	65
Aboriginal labour in north Queensland.....	66
Segregation and exploitation.....	68
Resultant social change	77
Aboriginal women as domestic workers	80
Domestic work and the mixed race issue	85
Case histories of Mona Mona women	89
Work on Mona Mona	90
Work outside Mona Mona	96
Exempted labour	97
Conclusion	103
CHAPTER 4 FAMILY AND MISSION.	105
Mission aims in social transformation	106
Segregation.....	111
Disciplining for dependence and conformity	116
Work 120	
Transforming the family	125
The dormitory.....	132
Conclusion	137
CHAPTER 5 THE KURANDA ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY	139
The basis of community	140
Church	141
The Ngoonbi Housing Co-operative	144

Mona Mona.....	145
Ngoonbi Farm	147
The Residential divisions (Villages).....	151
Statistical Profile.....	151
Hill End	157
Picnic Point	161
Valley Heights.....	164
West Road.....	169
Gumtree Flats.....	170
Kuranda	170
Kuranda households in Cairns.....	172
Kuranda Households in Mareeba	181
Conclusion	183
CHAPTER 6 HOUSEHOLD ORGANIZATION	187
Households.....	192
The family	197
Economic units.....	199
Household cycles.....	200
Household A	200
Household B	207
Mobility in households	213
Matrifocality: the evidence from Kuranda	221
Conclusion	225
CHAPTER 7 NURTURANCE RELATIONS	229
Nurturance in the mother-child relationship	229
Ambiguities in socialization.....	234
Emotional dimensions of intimacy	237
"Cruelling"	238
Sexual jealousy.....	240
Violence as social control	242
Violence in "loving up"	245
Nurturance in domestic relations	249
Ambivalence in nurturance relations	251
Nurturance in social life	254
"Soft" talk: claim talk	257
Claims on women	258
Conclusion	261
CHAPTER 8 NURTURANCE RELATIONS WITH THE WIDER SOCIETY	263
Boss relations	263
The "business" of nurturance	269
Conclusion	281
CONCLUSION	285
REFERENCES.....	293
TABLES	
Table A Household income sources, November 1986	154
FIGURES	
Figure 1 The Kuranda region.....	vi
Figure 2 The study area.....	vi
Figure 3 Residential cycle, household A.....	205
Figure 4 Residential cycle, household B.....	206

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to those residents of the Kuranda Aboriginal community who extended their friendship to me and encouraged me to participate in their domestic lives; even to assume the ambiguous benefits and responsibilities of acting as a Boss. Particular thanks are due to Mrs. Lucy Levers, the late Mrs. Charity Mango, Mrs. Esme Grogan, Mrs. Elaine Chookie, Mrs. Enid Boyle and the late Mr. Jimmy Boyle, Mrs. Dulcie Newbury and family, Mr. Lyne Hobbler and Mrs. Marita Hobbler, and the many other Aboriginal people with whom I talked and visited during the field work. Pseudonyms are used for people and for suburbs of Kuranda throughout the thesis.

My supervisors Nic Peterson and Ian Keen have contributed immensely to the whole project through their support and encouragement, and through their scholarly criticisms and suggestions. Special thanks are due to David Martin for his invaluable discussions on ethnographic points and theoretical issues of mutual interest, and for his generous help with thesis production. I am also grateful for the assistance of Ms Diane Smith for her considerable skills in proof-reading during the final production stages. The maps and the diagrams were drawn by Ms Val Lyon of the A.N.U. Geography Department.

The Division of Anthropology at the South Australian Museum made Tindale's records of his visit to Mona Mona in 1938 available for study and provided desk space. The Seventh Day Adventist Headquarters, Coorombong, New South Wales gave me access to the few records of Mona Mona's administration in their archives.

Dr. Kingsley Palmer, Research Head of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, generously provided a quiet room for the final stages of writing up.

The thesis was financially supported by a Commonwealth Department of Education scholarship.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the interplay between autonomy and dependence in domestic relations in a north Queensland urban Aboriginal community. Autonomy and dependence are mutually related principles of sociality which structure not only gender roles in Aboriginal domestic life, but also the relationships Aboriginal people establish with Europeans.

This thesis offers a different view of the nature of households and the dynamics of gender relations in Aboriginal households from the prevailing emphasis on matrifocality as a dominant form in contemporary Aboriginal domestic life. Although matrifocality may be a feature of certain of the mundane dynamics of households, the model fundamentally misrepresents power relationships. In this thesis Aboriginal domestic relations and household organisation are approached through an appreciation of the historical circumstances which have influenced gender roles within the Aboriginal family. The contemporary Aboriginal family, it is argued, is more complex in its internal dynamics than was previously thought and cannot be understood without considering both the relationship between Aboriginal people and the State, and the specific cultural patterns of household life.

Today the majority of Kuranda Aboriginal households depend on welfare income with little opportunity for wage labour. Women appear to be materially advantaged by welfare benefits and to have a potential for consolidating this advantage through their prominence in domestic life. But in practice Aboriginal men dominate domestic relations and succeed in monopolising the material resources of others, particularly those resources belonging to women. Cultural ideals about gender roles in domestic life cast women as nurturers who look after children and men, as their dependents. Through these ideals men legitimate their relationships with women and lay claim to women's goods and services. In the same cultural process women themselves expect to look after and provide for others. Autonomy in such relationships emerges as the ability to appropriate and command the resources of another,

but paradoxically this is achieved often through a position of dependence. Consequently, a woman with many resources is constantly under pressure from claims by dependent men to relinquish her resources. Thus she loses any capacity for, or means to control the accumulation of goods and services.

The same principles structure wider Aboriginal social relations. Aboriginal people in Kuranda often become dependents of Europeans in a boss-dependent relationship where the primary aim of the relationship from the Aboriginal point of view, is access to the goods and services of their boss. In the domestic sphere the Aboriginal boss is usually a woman who must care for her dependents. Similarly, Aboriginal people structure their relations with Europeans by seeking a European boss, who is also like to be female, as an extension of the same principle of dependency and autonomy.

Aboriginal people develop gender relationships of this kind within their own community and they work successfully, but the same relationships with Europeans, even within the same sex, lack a mutual understanding of the basis and expectations of the arrangement. Subsequent cultural misunderstandings ultimately marginalise, not maximise, the knowledge and involvement of Aboriginal people with the wider society.

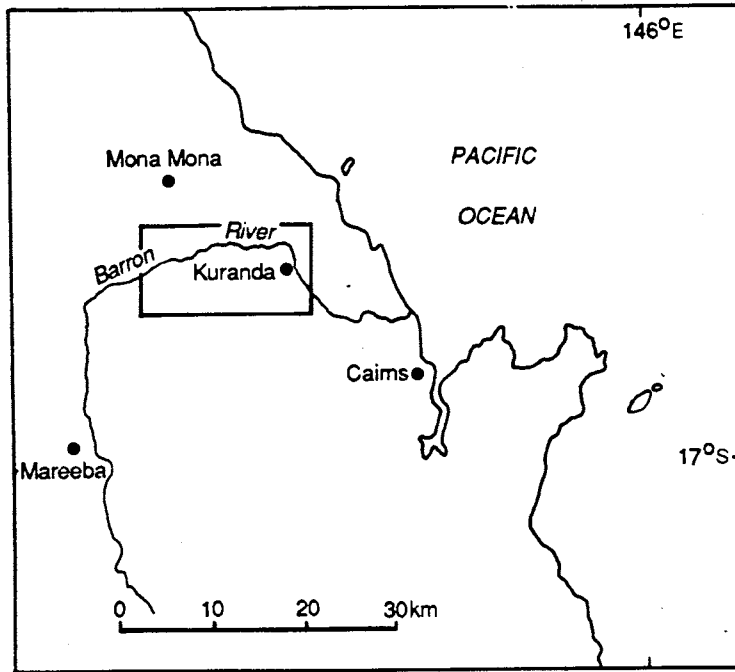


Figure 1. The Kuranda region

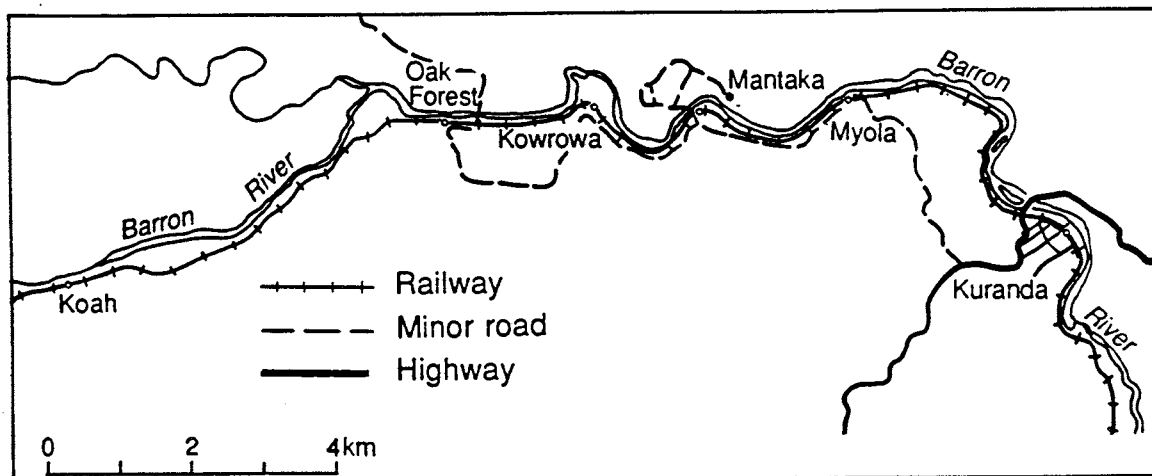


Figure 2. The study area

INTRODUCTION

In 1984 I lived in a rural Aboriginal community on the South coast of New South Wales while I undertook field work for a Master of Arts degree in social anthropology. Throughout my field stay in this community I lived as a member of two Aboriginal households and participated in the daily routines of domestic life. My experience of domestic life was the same as that of my fellow residents especially as our day-to-day routines were structured by the vicissitudes of a welfare-based economy. In the first household I was given a bedroom to myself since all the other household members both adults and children preferred to sleep together on mattresses in the lounge room. When I moved into the second household, I shared a room with a middle-aged single woman.

My everyday routines mirrored the patterns of mundane life throughout the domestic cycle of the household, and indeed, that of the tenor of the community. Social life focused on households as the context and locus of all action and as such framed my own activities. I helped with the cooking, and we used my car to go to town for shopping on pension day or to the beach fishing, or for longer trips to visit relatives. I watched television or sat on the verandah with other residents as we monitored life in the immediate neighbourhood. The subsequent M.A. thesis on Aboriginal socialisation and the maintenance of cultural identity in urban Australia grew directly out of my participation in the family and public life of this community.

Participant observation is an orthodox method of information gathering in social anthropology. It is a method which assumes that the elucidation and critical understanding of social life involves a lived experience together with a critical interpretation of the process by which people give meaning to their social world. Participant observation is not a method which draws on a positivist model of social process or culture. It is not a method which relies on the discovery of laws or principles which can be proposed prior to field work and then tested in the field as propositions, nor is it a method which sets up models of social action with the expectation of quantifiable outcomes as is

common in the physical sciences. I believed it to be essential to experience domestic life as it was lived in Aboriginal households as a conduit to understanding cultural meanings and perspectives of daily and family life. At the same time the analysis of the participatory experience involves a critical penetration of the internalised understandings Aboriginal people hold about their own culture and the meanings they give to their behaviour and interpretation of social action. Critical analysis is not an unequivocal reproduction of cultural views; if it were so, then the participant observer would merely replicate the cultural ideology of the community but fail to unravel it. Consequently I did not formally interview Aboriginal people or structure specific interactions from which verbatim data could be recorded. With a belief in the importance of participant-observation I also refrained from publicly recording conversations or observations. But I did keep a daily diary of notes of the experiences I shared in these households and these notes formed the basis of my later critical evaluation of the experience and the cultural milieu. Both my field work for the M.A. and Ph.D used participant-observation as the field methodology.

The Aboriginal community described in the present thesis was also geographically scattered. But all members of the ex-mission community identified as members of one community, despite living in different housing settlements within the district. I was interested in exploring further some of the issues which emerged from my time in households in southern coastal New South Wales, issues such as gender relations within welfare-based households. To explore these areas I developed relationships with individuals and families and spent most of my time in activities centred around household life. These activities ranged from fortnightly shopping, to dealing with unresolvable household concerns such as problems over rent, law and order, etc. Both my time and interests centred on the specifics of Aboriginal daily life and had less to do with the broader generalities of community social action.

When I undertook the field work in north Queensland there was no accommodation available in the rental market of the small rural town where many of the community lived and I was forced to find accommodation in a larger neighbouring town. But this was not a disadvantage in terms of participant-observation because I had a car. I was happy to put use of the car at the disposal of the households I

visited and we developed routines based on access to facilities and locations possible by car. For example, every pension fortnight I took a household of single, older women shopping in the neighbouring town about 40 km away. Previously they would have taken a taxi into the nearest town (about 14 km) to shop at the local supermarket before catching another taxi home. With my car at their disposal the women and I would make the trip to the major town, do the shopping and then use the rest of the day to visit people or to spend time watching television or simply talking at my house. In another household my car made it possible for the household administrator to get into town to pay household bills. Without this help she would have had the additional expense of a return taxi fare and the difficulty of avoiding requests for money from kin once she was seen walking about in town. Access to a car gave many of the households I visited the opportunity to extend their activities and better manage some of the basic domestic routines associated with their own and the household's quality of life.

During the slack week when few households had spare cash I took people from outlying villages into town, or to visit medical centres or merely to visit related households in order to have "a ride around" and break the cycle of boredom compounded by lack of funds. In times of crises or when people were stranded without money for public transport I was called upon to help out. I also gave lifts to hitch-hikers from the Aboriginal community when I saw them "walking the road". The car enabled me to meet a lot of people and it was also the means of reciprocating our friendship in a very immediate and practical way. The car was undoubtedly an invaluable asset to field work and a means for establishing social relations with Aboriginal people. Its value was emphasised by the fact that few people or households in the community had either a registered or roadworthy car. Yet access to transport was essential in such isolated rural communities for practical reasons as much as it was valued as a means to greater personal autonomy.

I mixed with a cross-section of families in the Aboriginal community as a close friend and regular visitor, but I did not only meet people through the services of the car. The households mentioned in the thesis comprised families of varying status some of whom were considered by others in the community to be "myall" (ignorant/uneducated) to families respected as leaders in the church and in community politics.

Some of the people and households with whom I was especially close often felt it inappropriate that I mix so freely with such a wide range of families. Subsequently, one woman tried to limit my interaction and contact with other households by refusing introductions to other community members, insisting that she decide who could ride in the car and laying claim to my friendship and the resources flowing from it.

Within households domestic arrangements and details were likely to be equally varied; some households consisted only of women; others comprised three generations of both sexes; and in yet other cases, household units of single people had banded together. There were also more conventional patterns based on extended families clustered around a core nuclear unit. Nevertheless, I came to recognise commonalities in the social arrangements of household organisation and in gender praxis. The commonalities I constantly encountered were the marked degree of mobility between households of the community; the communality and segmentation of domestic units; the negotiation of personal autonomy and dependency as a constant theme of social relations to be played-out partly through the differential contribution and responsibility to household maintenance by men and women. Finally, all households were tied to a cycle of material scarcity and plenty through dependence on welfare income for economic and social viability. Less than five households in the entire community had a regular wage earner.

Many of these points were only clear to me in the later stages of the eighteen months of field work. Perhaps this was because much of my field experience was consumed by the mundane routines of men and women's domestic lives. Initially I could see few of the larger issues around which I have centred the thesis. Each day my field notes reflected concerns over the details of household organisation and squabbles about money and food, and these details seemed petty and unimportant. Yet increasingly as I participated in these experiences I reached an understanding of the significance these issues had in social life and why people were so consumed with contesting or resolving them. Day-to-day involvement with Aboriginal households also taught me that Aboriginal people in this community have little direct or systematic contact with the wider society, despite the apparent ease with which they shop in the local stores, walk about town and so forth.

For these Aboriginal people the principal referents to their social meanings continued to be firmly embedded within their own households and community and marginal to mainstream society. But the recognition of this was a consequence of direct and sustained participation in people's everyday lives. The casual observer would overlook and miss the reality.

There was no "typical" day in my field work. However, there was a pattern to the activities caused by the impact of welfare dependency. Indeed the tie between domestic life and welfare dependency was a significant influence on all households; although dependency was culturally elaborated in social praxis. Domestic routines responded to these influences. Many of the cycles in social life were patterned to the ebb and flow of resources between slack and pension weeks. In households and settlements life was punctuated in pension week by excesses, whether in gambling, fighting, visiting, or eating, only to be followed by the emotional lull and paucity in household resources familiar in slack week. My activities also fell into the same pattern. There was a lot of "hanging about" in slack week such as sitting in front of television, talking, watching to see who still had money, going fishing, or collecting used drink cans for spare cash. What I began to see as I repeatedly participated in these routine activities were a number of important points about the content of social interaction. Yet few of these points were described in the sociological literature about the so-called matrifocal urban and rural Aboriginal households. Of course, the literature did describe superficial similarities: the relative involvement of men and women in domestic and family life, and the position of Aboriginal women as brokers with the wider society for Aboriginal men and their community. But what I also recognised was the significance of resource management in households and the constant negotiation over control and use of resources between men and women. I also realised that where income in households is entirely drawn from welfare payments the strategising to acquire another's resources is more intense although it would be misleading to interpret this as a "culture of poverty" syndrome. The behaviours I noticed did not seem to me to be a hallmark of the "culture of poverty" but resonated with deeper cultural views about the relationship of dependency between men and women and the constant existential battle of the individual to have her/his autonomy recognised. What I

saw in adult behaviour was the conclusion of a socialisation for gender and cultural identity begun in infancy. Yet whether for children or adults autonomous social action was an ambivalent condition.

These wider issues of social action and their reproduction in mundane activities has informed my analysis of the ethnography. I have identified the wider cultural issues embedded in ordinary daily life. In general, data from sociological surveys of Aboriginal households has failed to uncover these same issues. Admittedly, there is recognition of the relative status in households of men and women but without any interpretation of how to understand this and its significance.

The picture of urban Aboriginal households developed by survey questionnaires and sociological methods has been unable to expose the fine-grained details of domestic experience. After living in Aboriginal households (in coastal New South Wales) and having participated in the activities around which household life centres (in New South Wales and Queensland) I no longer agree with the model repeatedly found in the literature. These households are not necessarily matrifocal nor are they women-centred at the expense of Aboriginal men, even though they appear to be so. But it is only through constant and sustained day-to-day association with households which reveals the superficiality of survey interpretations of intimate social life. Participant observation also made it obvious that differences can and do arise between what people say they do, and what they actually do in social life. It is also a method which exposes the ideology of culture where the enculturated individual may find it difficult to critically analyse her/his own socialisation.

Survey data has, nonetheless, set the tone with regard to knowledge of domestic organisation and gender relations in urban Aboriginal households. One of the reasons for this is that as a means of information gathering it is easier than participant observation. Most Aboriginal people are extremely tolerant of the idiosyncrasies of individual behaviour in Europeans. But in states like Queensland, a white person living in an Aboriginal household is likely to cause curiosity and concern among both Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. Indeed I mentioned in the thesis the incident where a white man and his Torres Strait Islander partner were evicted from the

home of older Aboriginal women with the connivance of the local shopkeeper and taxi staff and the direct intervention of the police. Some Aboriginal people are hostile to constant intrusive contact from the "other". In Queensland institutionalised racism means that some Europeans continue to control and contain Aboriginal people by perpetuating their isolation from mainstream society. Again, I have illustrated this point with the story of the collusion between local shopkeepers over extending credit to Aboriginal customers.

These points make a difference in the acceptance of participant observation as a research method in urban Aboriginal communities compared with its use in remote Aboriginal communities. Another reason for the difference in the level of acceptance of participant observation is historical. Many remote communities have a long association with anthropologists and a familiarity with the nature of their enquiries. But urban Aboriginal communities until very recent were ignored by researchers under the misconception that these communities were acculturated.

In remote Aboriginal communities people have developed certain expectations about social enquiry. Often they feel that the anthropologist should be seen to be collecting their mythology and genealogy as they believe this is a means by which the community ensures wider society's recognition of their culture. In these situations many Aboriginal people may expect to see note books and tape recorders, if not videos for collecting data. The same is rarely true of urban fieldwork. Aboriginal people in urban communities are generally prepared to accept an outsider's participation in their lives and activities if the person is acceptable to them and the relationship involves some kind of practical reciprocity. Clearly, if decontextualised information about the exotic "other" were the only purpose of anthropology then the personal and intimate involvement with Aboriginal people would make participation observation ethically problematic. However I believe that the value of this field method is that the anthropologist is not just an observer but also a participant. In this sense there is little chance of the participant observer's disengagement from the process of understanding another culture. The constant daily involvement with people is an affective experience for both parties. The later analysis of the field experience is also an unravelling process for

the anthropologist in appreciating the commonalities of the human experience and the impact of culture as meaning and praxis in framing social action.

The field work in this thesis was based on participant observation and the conclusions I reached about urban Aboriginal households contrast with some of the central conclusions drawn from surveys and questionnaires as a method for understanding the process and practice of culture. However, surveys can produce useful information about the material context of people's lives measured by changes in social indicators of income, employment, education, and so forth. The work of Ball (1985) in Newcastle and Gale and Wundersitz (1982) in Adelaide are two prominent examples. Another major advantage of surveys over participant observation is the quickness with which information about Aboriginal material quality of life is accessible. Participant observation by contrast, requires lengthy research such as the eighteen months which I took for the thesis. It is time-consuming because you are learning how to live and act and make sense of another culture. Many of these cultural understandings are so deeply embedded in the socialisation of the individual's experience that culturally appropriate action seems "natural" and therefore unlikely to be critically evaluated. In practice not everyone can articulate the meanings and practices of their own cultural milieu. The task of the participant observer is to participate in the culture while unpacking the particular cultural construct of social experience.

My hope is that in this thesis the reader is able to see something of the nature and construct of Aboriginal culture as lived experience in shaping domestic life and gender patterns.

CHAPTER 1

PERSPECTIVES ON AUTONOMY IN GENDER RELATIONS.

This thesis explores the relationship of autonomy and dependence as they are played out in Aboriginal social life and argues that the sociological literature on the contemporary Aboriginal household and gender relations is flawed because of the limited understanding of autonomy and dependence in these kinds of studies. Conventionally, autonomy is understood as the freedom to make decisions and carry them out, coupled with control over the resources necessary to such purposes, but this thesis questions and revises this understanding in the light of ethnographic evidence from north Queensland. Much of the literature on autonomy in Aboriginal societies has focused on the relative control of economic or ritual resources by men and women concentrating on gender status and gender power, but fails to look at autonomy as part of a wider context in which Aboriginal people negotiate the terms of their independence.

An ethnographic view of autonomy contrasts with the conventional wisdom of the literature showing, paradoxically, that autonomy can also be exercised through dependence, as well as through freedom from dependence on others or their resources. Independence and dependence, as mutually related principles underlying Aboriginal social life are shown to have less to do with control over resources, than the ability to exercise command over another's goods and services through activating rights and obligations, whereas asymmetry in social life is usually presented in the literature as solely a difference of gender status and power. This is only part of the picture. Gender inequalities in domestic life arise in part because men and women have the potential to activate different sets of rights. It is the individual capacity to fully realize these rights which is unequal, because individual lives are shaped by variables such as personality, sex, family alliance and so forth. However, autonomy is more than an innate relative ability or

capacity of men and women to manage their domestic lives to advantage, as later chapters show.

Autonomy and dependence are discussed in three domains: within contemporary Aboriginal gender relations in the family; in Aboriginal social relations with the wider society, as seen in work practices and family structure imposed by institutional administrations; and finally, in contexts where internal Aboriginal cultural practices intersect with the dominant society's views on Aborigines during social interactions between them.

This chapter reviews the literature describing autonomy as a corollary of a structured relationship between men and women in contemporary Aboriginal families and households. It will be seen that some writers recognize that autonomy in gender roles is tied to the historical development of different structures of Aboriginal domestic organization. Yet, most discussions of gender autonomy in the organization of the family have on the one hand, ignored the historical perspective and, on the other, under-utilized the insights of ethnographic research. Further, some of the finer points of the structural relations within Aboriginal households are also ignored in the literature; in particular, issues about domestic mobility and status, where these reflect on matters of autonomy and dependence in domestic relations. The conventional representations of autonomy as largely a matter of sociological differences in the structural position of men and women contrasts with what is evident in men and women's experiences in contemporary Aboriginal households. It is on the basis of my field study in north Queensland with families who were formerly residents on Mona Mona, a Seventh Day Adventist mission, that this alternative view of gender in domestic life is drawn.

The literature on gender relations and the Aboriginal family debates aspects of autonomy in arguments about the nature of control, power and status in gender interaction in traditional domestic contexts, and in settings where Aborigines are cultural enclaves in the wider society.

The chapter begins by examining the literature on traditional male/female relations; the impact of colonial institutions on male/female relations; and the sociological evidence on male/female

relations in contemporary urban households. The chapter then goes on to discuss central themes in contemporary gender studies such as the influence of acculturation in shaping Aboriginal household dynamics and the impact of the welfare State on conventional domestic roles. The chapter concludes with the question, addressed in subsequent chapters, of the balance between historical influences and social change in forming present patterns of gender relations in Aboriginal households.

Traditional gender relations

Recent studies of the traditional Aboriginal family (see Bern 1979; Hamilton 1981(a); Bell 1983) are concerned with questions about differences in the nature and sources of male and female power and the consequences of these differences for other domains of sociality, particularly in ritual affairs and economic production. These writers emphasize the actualization of inequalities of power between men and women, although they fail to show how these differences influence people's everyday lives. Nevertheless, their contribution to the debate is in the recognition of power as a social process; a process itself often masked by an apparent separation between various aspects of social life. These writers reject power as a single domain of social action and in their analysis of power in traditional contexts they are careful to show how it permeates all levels of social relations. Despite this such distinctions give no clear impression of the role of power in men and women's daily life.

Two Marxist traditions have discussed power in Aboriginal social relations. The first tradition, of which Bern (1979) is an example, analyses relations in the spheres of ritual and production. Production in traditional Aboriginal society is discussed in terms of the relative subsistence contributions of Aboriginal men and women. Bern (1979) shows where power resides in traditional social relations by tracing the social consequences of converting a subsistence product into a social value. He recognises that the conversion process involves a transformation to gender asymmetry with benefits to gerontocratic men in support of their ritual hegemony. He argued that asymmetry was derived from appropriation of women's surplus subsistence production, although the actors themselves were unconscious of this because production relations were obscured by ideology and legitimated in

ritual. He also saw inequality duplicated in age relations. Thus, for him, the structure of production relations determined social inequality and power through their interdependence, but according to hierarchies which included both gender and age. Bern went on to challenge the argument that gender autonomy in ritual or production meant equality in social relations. This insight was an important theoretical development given a previous emphasis on power as the capacity to demonstrate independence. Although Marxist feminists expanded the concept of women's production to include women's role in the reproduction of social relations (see O'Laughlin 1974: 301) neither of these analytic tradition makes distinctions between equality, power and status; nor do they explain how these factors contributed to the conditions of autonomy or subordination in daily domestic experiences.

However in the second Marxist (Feminist) tradition Hamilton (1981(a)) reappraised the significance of gender separatism in social and ritual action, instead of concentrating solely on production relations. Using comparative ethnographic material, she examined Aboriginal women's status in several communities in Arnhem Land and central Australia. Her conclusions are made with the caveat that statements about Aboriginal women's position must be provisional in the light of regional cultural variation and incomplete ethnographic data. Her appraisal of Aboriginal sociality as "homosociality," because of the great deal of separation between the sexes in daily and religious life makes power, autonomy and status distinguishable. As a model, homosociality is attractive since it accommodates contradictory ethnographic evidence of Aboriginal women as both autonomous and subordinate. According to Hamilton's ethnographic model, gender inequalities and autonomy exist simultaneously as different aspects of social relations. Consequently, she suggests it is more appropriate to analyse inequalities of power within contexts of wider social relations than as an issue specific to gender alone.

While Hamilton talks more of status than of power or subordination on the basis of the ethnographic comparisons she too concludes that women's status in social life derives from their role as the "means of production" and as such women are esteemed objects in the marriage market and the means of continuity in social processes. Women's power is thus their potential as a group to manage and

perpetuate the social reproduction of Aboriginal society. In turn, this is mirrored in the political sensitivity of marriage alliances in traditional societies where the productive value of women's sexuality is central in the negotiation. Unfortunately, Hamilton's discussion of power remains at the level of gender categories and has little to say of power in mundane contexts.

The notion of power as the capacity for independent and separate action has been presented by other ethnographers of traditional Aboriginal societies. Some writers persist in seeing gender independence in one social domain as sufficient evidence of a general equality. Elaborating a view prefigured in White (1970), Bell (1983) draws on orthodox concepts of power by regarding evidence of autonomy in Aboriginal women's ritual as a sign of an esteemed ritual position; or at least, of a parallel and complementary position to the power accorded to positions in men's cosmology. White had argued that separate meant equal as "junior partners", and in these terms independence in women's ritual was evidence of the complementarity of their role to male ritual performance. Bell developed the idea of "different but equal" in analysis of women's status and power in another desert community. Women's ritual, in her argument, conferred status because the content as much as the activity conferred power. She claimed this was true irrespective of whether the content concerned spiritual matters or served mundane concerns like health, or physiological and emotional states.

In general these discussions of relative gender status in traditional contexts whether by Marxists or sociologists have not gone beyond the concerns over autonomy in subsistence production, or prestige in ritual life; although it should be noted that even on these points differences of interpretation exist. Few writers have shown little concern with the nature of power and status in relations within the family. Instead writers concentrate on discussing men and women as groups who articulate with each other, en masse, in specific ways. Thus Hamilton could describe the status of gender in a homosocial context without specifying the conditions of how exactly men and women interacted. Power in day-to-day social life failed to interest Marxists for the reason that gender status and power were seen as a function of the dynamic articulation between groups within social domains. The

experiential dimension of gender relations, such as in Aboriginal family relations were neglected in their everyday setting because they were thought likely to be obfuscations of the true relations. The analysis of power is unresolved.

Studies of gender in contemporary Aboriginal families suffer similar shortcomings in their analysis of status and power because they omit the significance of everyday life in preference to an emphasis on structural aspects.

The impact of colonialism on gender relations

Writers have discussed gender autonomy under colonisation from different points either by examining the new conditions of women's labour relations (Larbalestier 1977) or by contrasts with women's previous, traditional domestic status (see Hamilton 1975). In each Australian State, Aboriginal introductions to colonialism and capitalism were subject to different historical contingencies. (cf. Barwick 1970 with McGrath 1980; Hamilton 1975.) The literature examines both institutional lifestyles and colonial employment contexts. Aboriginal women, according to studies presented by these writers, were affected on several fronts: their traditional economic roles as mothers and nurturers were challenged, (especially through the institutional control and delivery of food) and dormitories and the State education system replaced a mother's role as primary socializer. Additionally, in the political contexts of institutional settings the new councils in reserves and settlements tended to be male dominated forums and ignored women's capacity to participate in community politics and decision-making.

Barwick (1970) used historical data to reconstruct the impact of government legislation and reserve life on gender relations and status in Victorian Aboriginal settlements in the late 19th century. According to her research, changes in the form of women's production on Victorian Aboriginal stations were instrumental in reorientating gender roles and their status in the reserve communities. Changes were imposed as corollaries of the institutional structure of reserves. However, she argues that Aboriginal men and women willingly participated in the new social forums. Indeed, she claims that Aboriginal men enthusiastically encouraged the womenfolk to take on

the new economic and social roles mapped out under Protectionist legislation. Barwick traces the pattern of legislative amendments affecting reserve life which ultimately enhanced the economic and social status of women at the expense of their Aboriginal menfolk. But she also points out that the prevalent imbalance in the sex ratio of adult men to adult women on the reserves helped women acquire status through the importance of their reproductive capacities. Moreover, women and children were favoured by the reserve system through legislative Acts entitling families to government rations and permanent residency on the missions. Simultaneously, the legislation undermined the role of Aboriginal men in family life on reserves and forced them into increasing dependency. Men were subject to removal or dismissal from reserves and as a government controlled labour force they were subject to imposed work-related absences from their families. Collmann (1979) noted that eighty years after the Victorian legislation, in the Northern Territory under the welfare system a similar bias in legislation promoted Aboriginal women and children as the core of domestic organisation to the exclusion and detriment of men. But on the Victorian reserves in the 19th century "part Aboriginal" men bore the brunt of the structural changes as they were severed from their families through the Aboriginal Acts to separate "full bloods" from "part bloods". In the process many families on the settlements were left without male household heads. Aboriginal women filled the breach left by absent men and consequently emerged as more than just *de facto* household heads. Women acquired economic power in their own right, something Aboriginal men had not succeeded at. They also accrued cash income from casual wage labour on nearby farms while their subsistence production in the mission gardens supplied their own households with fresh foods. Finally, women earned as much cash from selling their craft work, according to Barwick, as their men brought home from shearing and other seasonal employment. Women were favoured by the administration: unlike the men who were required by the administration to forfeit a proportion of their wage, the women kept control of the money they earned (Barwick 1970:55; see also Morris 1985; 1989; on the same issue of progressive stripping away of economic autonomy from Aboriginal men on the reserves in northern New South Wales).

On the Victorian reserves Barwick studied, the traditional skills of Aboriginal women as gatherers and craftswomen were successfully incorporated by the institutional structures, unexpectedly encouraging economic independence, while the reverse was true of Aboriginal men's experience. Attempts by Aboriginal men to retain ritual power, or use opportunities to provide economically for their families by traditional methods (e.g. hunting) were denied under the institutionalized restructuring of their roles and identity. That women escaped this kind of demoralization had much to do with the gender culture that institutional life deliberately created for them. Surprisingly, Barwick claims that Aboriginal men encouraged their women to embrace the new opportunities and she records explicit statements of approval of women's political action from Aboriginal men (Barwick 1978: 60-62).¹ But while Aboriginal women sustained their former positions of economic autonomy through continued use of traditional skills and crafts, men found it impossible to do the same. Barwick argues that the new agricultural skills required of Aboriginal men lowered their status and deprived them of the means to their economic independence. Paradoxically, the new skills of farming advantaged the reserve administration, but as she sees it such success subverted the potential for individual male achievement and robbed men of their potential for economic advancement as a group.²

Yet the picture described by Barwick of gender independence and subordination on the 19th century Victorian reserves is ambiguous. Although Aboriginal women successfully maintained domestic economic and social life in the absence of their men, they did so, Barwick suggests only with the blessing, even encouragement of Aboriginal men. The argument is not in fact clear; was it the case that whatever gains in power and domestic status Aboriginal women made, it was nevertheless, the need for approval by Aboriginal men which was final proof that they remained in charge; or is this an unintended

-
1. We can only speculate on the motivation of the men; although, at one point, Barwick (1978:60) mentions the "sheer low cunning" of the men as responsible for their enthusiasm.
 2. For a contrasting and positive view of Aboriginal men's achievement with farming as a living see Morris 1983; 1989; see also Goodall 1982.

conclusion in her argument? Whichever way we read her evidence, the conclusions are best treated with caution because the interpretations are retrospective views of the historical evidence.

Recent historiography of Aboriginal experiences on Victorian State reserves and missions by Attwood (1989) offers a further explanation for the relative differences in status and power of men and women's social and economic role. Accompanying an illustration of an Aboriginal woman fishing from Lake Tyres mission in Gippsland, Victoria, he writes,

Aboriginal women generally had less freedom of movement than their male kin because the missionaries sought to curtail their traditional roles. But customary economic practices like basket weaving and line fishing were akin to capitalist enterprise and so were sanctioned. The former was a useful source of income for Aborigines and the missions, and the latter pursuit gave an opportunity to women ... to get away from the missionary order and into a realm of space and time which mirrored their traditional past (Attwood 1989:67).

Contemporary observations of gender status in institutional contexts comes from Arnhem Land, where from 1957 onward Aboriginal people were progressively incorporated into settlement life. Hamilton (1975) identified the negative consequences for Aboriginal women, particularly the erosion of women's domestic role and power, under the newly imposed institutional lifestyle.

At Maningrida, in Arnhem Land, social change was implemented at different points in social relations. In production spheres, for example, subsistence labour had an increasingly minor role in the new cash economy. At the same time, welfare colonialism reversed the traditional importance of women's subsistence production since the cash economy removed subsistence production from the hands of Aboriginal women and made it an impersonal exchange transacted between consumers (Aborigines) and the market (the local store run by non-Aborigines). The traditional nexus between food and sociality suffered an additional blow with the opening of the settlement dining room and further invalidated women's role in production of food for daily consumption. Changes like these broke the established social context for the symbolic connection between food and nurturance, and the constitution of relationships by traditional social principles like

reciprocity and exchange of material goods. Institutional living made all members of the Aboriginal family dependent on the beneficence of the institution itself and by extension, in many aspects of their social relations with the State. The status of women's traditional knowledge, including that of bush foods which in the past they had passed on to their children, was downgraded by the emphasis within these new communities on agents of the State, whether the dining room or State education since neither recognized a place for traditionally-based knowledge systems.

Women in particular suffered, Hamilton says, by such instrumental change, in part because cultural concepts like mothering were substantially altered through disruption of previous socio-economic patterns. The organization of settlement life also rendered many of women's traditional domestic functions redundant. She illustrates the point by showing the impact of welfare support on women's role as providers in families. In the cash economy welfare cheques disrupted the traditional correlation between the social ideal of nurturance and supply of goods and services because payments were fortnightly. In turn, welfare recipients had now to manage food resources in a feast-to-famine cycle without a capacity to meet daily needs.

But claims that the organization of settlement life unequally affected gender, provide no details of how the status of women altered in personal interaction with their families, nor how women responded to challenges to their traditional roles. Indeed Hamilton gives no real idea of the impact of social change within families or between men, women and children. Once again, the dynamics of household experiences and gender relations in domestic life are closed to us and the extent of deprivation in gender autonomy and cultural integrity in this initial phase of colonial impact remain hazy.

People writing on the experiences of gender in the second phase of colonialism, as citizens of a welfare State, concentrate on issues of the general nature of Aboriginal engagement with the cash economy through the welfare system. Sansom (1980:1988) describes Aboriginal strategies to incorporate the cash economy. Aboriginal residents of the town camp where he lived convert money for purposes internal to the

group. By directing their cash to their culturally specific, internally generated ends, these Aborigines subverted their assimilation into the welfare State through the cash system. Other researchers examining traditionally-orientated Aboriginal communities at the crossroads of contact with the wider cash economy, present similar evidence of Aboriginal mechanisms to maintain independence from welfare colonialism (see Peterson 1977; Anderson 1982; Fisk 1985; Altman 1989). Of course, community management of cash economies is not necessarily self-consciously strategizing for independence. But often this is an unintended consequence of their social practices and the way it influences the use of money (see chapter 7 for discussion of this issue.)

Feminist commentators on the experience and position of Aboriginal women in the welfare State write within the perspective of a number of disciplines, including women's studies (Grimshaw 1981; 1987;) anthropology (Bell and Ditton 1980; Hamilton 1975; C. and R. Berndt 1987; Merlan 1988), history (Hunt 1986; McGrath 1980; 1987) and sociology (Gale and Wundersitz 1982; Baldcock and Cass 1983; Burns, Bottomley and Jools 1983; Connell 1987). Other writers discuss autonomy and dependence for Aboriginal men and women as predominantly a function of labour relations (see chapter 3).

McGrath's oral histories (1980; 1987) of Aboriginal women as employees on cattle stations address Aboriginal independence and status from the perspective of Aboriginal women's views of their own experiences. McGrath discusses the role and contribution of Aboriginal women's labour to economic development in the Northern Territory between 1911 and 1939 by challenging the biases in historiography which rendered Aboriginal women's contribution to Territory labour history invisible. McGrath confronts yet another bias in the notion, implicit in many studies of Aboriginal contact history, that Aborigines were helpless victims of historical circumstances lacking the capacity to actively respond to circumstances, or initiate their own social action.

McGrath suggests that contrary to conventional historical views of Aboriginal women under colonialism, in certain circumstances Aboriginal women achieved significant economic and social independence as employees. Alternatively, Ronald and Catherine

Berndt (1987) are equivocal about the effects of employment in the Northern Territory cattle industry on Aboriginal men and women in terms of their status as workers and their independence. Certainly, men and women's experience of employment differed, but women's relative "advantage" was their sexuality which provided a commodity they could use to gain additional access to European resources. Larbalestier (1977) refutes the idea of economic advantage for either men or women in wage employment or under welfare colonialism. She studied an isolated community in the Northern Territory where she saw issues of gender power and status subsumed under wider social problems concerned with race relations. In the context of contemporary life River Mob's former Aboriginal cattle station employees suffered a marked difference between the past and present value of their labour. As station workers they are now all permanently unemployed. Their present status she argues, is largely determined by conditions of racial exploitation where Aborigines, as a dependent group are not only dominated by the welfare State, but they are progressively robbed of the conditions for autonomous social action and economic independence.

Larbalestier suggests that whatever status Aboriginal women have in their own society, it is subsumed by the greater structural oppressions of racial inequalities. For this reason Aboriginal women have more experiences in common with Aboriginal men than with non-Aboriginal women. The inequalities of race and class experienced by the Aboriginal community, she says, outweigh the oppressions of gender. Thus, for Larbalestier the exploitative relationship is that between Aborigines and the dominant society which is reproduced, in turn, in gender inequalities within Aboriginal communities and marked by a circumscribed lifestyle. All of this is particularly evident in women's daily experiences which she illustrates in the process of oppression suffered by the women of River Mob.

The marginal involvement of River Mob with capitalism specifically disadvantages women because once welfare fails fully to meet Aboriginal consumer needs the Aboriginal family survives only through women's subsistence contribution. This establishes a structural relationship between Aboriginal women and the welfare State as a new form of socio-economic deprivation which shackles women, yet obscures the nexus between the cash economy and the need for

women's continued subsistence labour. The structural conditions of the community's relationship with the welfare State actually deepens both community dependence and gender inequalities. Although women's labour supports the group, it also perpetuates the inequalities in the relationship between the Aboriginal group and the resources of the capitalist State. Larbalestier concludes that welfare encourages exploitation through marginalizing Aborigines as a group in relations to the mainstream economy. Accordingly gender and race are analogous points of exploitation and dependence in cash-based economies and in Aboriginal communities these factors compromise their dealings with the wider society. Relative gender status is thus a secondary issue of problems of race and in the final instance it is colonial oppression which is determinative:

It is naive to assert ... that sexism in our society overrides the effects of class, ethnicity, racism, and colonialism, in determining people's life chances. Aboriginal women at "D" do not share a common "class" position with other white Australian women. As a colonized group they do share a commonality of oppression with Aboriginal men (Larbalestier 1977:52).

Larbalestier questions the options for Aboriginal empowerment and self-determination within Australian society, especially where loss of wage labour to Aboriginal workers and its replacement by welfare money has produced a steady decline in economic independence. She holds welfare colonialism accountable for the failure to encourage community independence where income is no longer the reward of labour.

The picture in River Mob Aboriginal community is dismal. A supposedly self-determining community is in fact, a community of welfare dependents barely subsisting on government granted land. Any moves toward independent decision-making by the community is further subverted by the intervention of government officials who administer State interests through welfare benefits and government grants on community projects. The process of diminished community autonomy is clear in the story of River Mob's desire to buy a tractor for community use, where the decision to purchase was ultimately made by officials in government departments, not by the community. This, says Larbalestier, is an example of how the rhetoric of self-determination hides actual community dependence and powerlessness.

Larbalestier credits interventionist policies and decision-making with detrimental effects on both Aboriginal women and men: although women, she argues, are most affected because it is their subsistence production which bridges the gap between pay weeks and slack weeks in welfare economies.

Larbalestier's argument misses the mark on several counts if our intention is to understand how status is arrived at in Aboriginal contexts and what role dependence and autonomy play in internal constructs of status. Discussions of status in her terms refers to structural interaction between cultural groups, while specific experiences of dependence as the condition of the individual man or woman's quality of life within the group are neglected. In Larbalestier's analysis Aborigines are hapless victims of colonial intentions and external agents. Nothing of the internal cultural mechanisms which might determine status or autonomy, nor the principles directing the internal Aboriginal economy are mentioned. Yet these factors actively influence social relations and are the means for personal independence and community autonomy (see Chapters 3 and 7). Studies which look from the outside in often fail to recognize that the internal dynamics of communities are just as powerfully shaping individual and community lives as government programs and policy decisions. Analyses which suggest Aborigines are victims of circumstance ignore the emic constructions and management of dependence and power. The internal cultural notions of dependence and power are discussed in Chapter 7.

Gender relations in urban households

The National Poverty enquiry (Henderson 1975) encouraged a new field of research on Aboriginal domestic organization amongst Aboriginal people living in urban situations in settled Australia, and in the process, broadened Aboriginal socio-economic studies beyond traditional contexts. Survey research was carried out in Brisbane (Smith and Biddle 1975), Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide (Gale and Wundersitz 1982) and two small towns in Western Australia (see also Eckermann, Watts and Dixon 1984; for a comparative study of Aboriginal family and community). The purpose of these studies was to evaluate Aboriginal socio-economic status in the light of wider social conditions. However, the information and its presentation returned to the argument of the relative socio-economic power and autonomy of

men and women in households. Researchers tried to standardize differences in the socio-economic diversity of the observed households in the different Australian States by sorting domestic groups according to typologies. Eventually, a matrifocal model of Aboriginal domestic structure emerged in the literature and was said to reflect the impact of social change on the contemporary Aboriginal family. The original matrifocal model referred to descriptions of some West Indian-American family arrangements, but it now increasingly appeared in sociological discussions of certain urban Australian Aboriginal families. Eventually the model became a diagnostic guide to the status and well-being of a domestic group's economic health. Aboriginal households headed by women appeared in sociological and anthropological analyses as families adapting to social change and therefore in transition from the concept of a normative domestic ideal of a male household head and bread winner. In fact some writers continued to use a notion of a "traditional Aboriginal family unit" as a normative yardstick without necessarily defining what this was or whether it was common to all Aboriginal societies. Furthermore, it was widely presumed that the matrifocal structure was a direct response to poverty, acculturation and assimilation, and its form was atypical of Aboriginal domestic life - representing a deviant form of household organization.

By combining gender and socio-economic status in households, these studies established a causal association between household income and the form of the domestic structure. Women's dominance in domestic groups was now seen as aberrant. The matrifocal model relies on the centrality of economics in sociality, yet begs the question as to whether gender status should be assessed by economic power alone. On the other hand, ethnographic studies raise the question as to whether the structure of the Aboriginal family is primarily an extension of economic motivations alone and the epiphenomenon of social change. Current ethnographic findings suggest that the dominance and elevated status of women in Aboriginal domestic life is anything but an epiphenomenon (Birdsall 1988).

Research into other than traditional forms of Aboriginal family structure actually began in the 1960s (see for example, Barwick 1962;

Beckett 1964; Calley 1959; Inglis 1964; Reay 1964) well before the Henderson Report.³ But in the 1970s research on the effects of social change and responses to acculturation intensified. Research was carried out on several fronts, including applied psychology where diagnostic assessments of acculturation and alienation were made on children in Aboriginal families (Lickiss 1971; Smith and Biddle 1975). Results in such studies tended to confirm the hypothesized connection between economic factors and psychological models. Acculturation amongst Aborigines was thought to be a consequence of family practices and socialization under conditions diverging from "traditional" Aboriginal domestic patterns and conventions. Changes in family practices were treated as either the coping or adaptive mechanisms which Aboriginal families resorted to in order to deal with the challenges of life in urban communities. These models said little about the content of Aboriginal family life because they stressed structural form to the neglect of the content of relationships within the domestic unit. Consequently, it was not until the literature on urban Aboriginal households published in the 1960s and the 1970s that descriptions or analyses of domestic structures proved more informative (see Kitaoji 1971). Until then a preoccupation with structure and form rather than an understanding of social relations themselves persisted (see Eckermann et al 1984; Eckermann 1988; Sutton 1981). Where economics continued to dominate explanations of form and behaviour in non-traditional Aboriginal family life the Aboriginal domestic group continued to be misrepresented.

Proponents of the matrifocal model failed to agree on the definition of the units in domestic groups; for example, how to distinguish between a household head and the practise of household leadership. The identifying criteria for the composition of the domestic group was thus open to different interpretations by different researchers; even to the question of co-residence as a basic element of domestic organization.⁴

3. See also Reay and Sitlington 1948; for work prior to the 1960s.

4. See Eckermann et al 1984; Eckermann 1988; Anderson 1982; Bryant 1982; Sansom 1988; on household organisation. Gale 1974, emphasises kinship as a

The characteristics of the matrifocal family

The matrifocal model, then, has an established place in the sociological literature of the contemporary Aboriginal family. The orthodoxy of the model is now subject to criticism. It is now recognized that the presumption of a standardized form of Aboriginal family organisation as "traditional" has little validity, nor can the effect of history or regional ethnographic variation continue to be dismissed, even ignored. Some studies acknowledge this and seek to document the way Aboriginal households have responded to social change with a variety of domestic structures (Inglis 1964; Bell 1965; Makin 1969; Barwick 1974; Eckermann 1977). Nevertheless, the conservative view of change with its assumption of the negative effects on family structure persists. Writers refer to cultural disintegration or acculturation rather than any process of social management when writing of Aboriginal people in changing socio-economic and political contexts. Recent material shows that clearer understandings of Aboriginal domestic arrangements arise when the economic organization of the household is separated from its social organization. However, the question of gender autonomy in domestic life continues to be addressed by economic evaluations of women's status in the pre and post-colonial situation. This has led many researchers to see gender power and status in contemporary contexts as pathological social adaptations or consequences of economic influences. Some researchers, however, have explored other interpretations of why Aboriginal households are so often run by women. Both Ball (1985:9) and Bryant (1983:16) for instance, accept in principle the materialist explanation for women's position as household head, but they also see matrifocality as a deliberate political strategy by the Aboriginal community to limit their incorporation as dependents of the welfare State. Ball (1985) summarizes Bryant's point:

Bryant interprets this change [in household structures] as part of an Aboriginal way of manipulating the capitalist mode of production by establishing and increasing numbers of matrifocal families who can claim social security benefits, while the men live separately, supporting themselves ... this change in the

primary determinant of household composition, while those writers mentioned above indicate the importance of other factors as well as kinship.

Aboriginal family structure from a patriarchal to a matriarchal focus may be an attempt to "manipulate the system" [but] it has unfortunate consequences⁵ (Ball 1985:9).

Without direct ethnographic evidence to support it, this explanation is, however, highly interpretative. The relationship of gender to household organisation, and the social and political consequences of particular forms is certainly a valid enquiry. But most attempts to explain the matrifocal family end by collapsing issues like gender autonomy and status as epiphenomena of wider economic forces, with statistical correlations between women heading family units and women with independent sources of income. The descriptions of categories has left little room for the ethnographic details of daily experience in family life.

The details of life in surveyed households is weak but the text of these studies are worth exploring for their definitions and understandings of Aboriginal household practice which stand in contrast with those definitions which arise from analysis of ethnography. Aboriginal domestic life has been described from the point of view of the form of gender relations. This has given emphasis to the role of gender in households and encouraged writers to look at the structure of relations with little appreciation of the content. The following sections therefore examine how some major studies have seen such factors as household organisation, the potential of Aboriginal women to become upwardly mobile in the wider community, and the influence of the welfare State, impinge on gender roles and relations in households.

Household constitution

Scholars disagree about the correspondence between the definition of a household and its representative units in ethnographic material. Gale and Wundersitz (1982:66ff) surveyed the Adelaide Aboriginal community and defined a household by four component structures: the

5. Ball identifies loss of self-esteem by Aboriginal men who can offer their families little economic or social security as one of the consequences. I think this reflects more the interpretative bias of the researcher's perspective than it explains changes in household structures.

primary family unit, secondary family units, individual boarders and visitors. Each unit was further defined as units based on the relationships between persons within a category. Smith and Biddle (1975:12) working in the Brisbane Aboriginal community, recognized households as units of people sharing common accommodation facilities. Their definition highlights the fluidity of households as family units of varying composition which fell within a range of associations based on consanguine or affinal ties.⁶ Gray (1987) further redefines Aboriginal household structures by a typology capable of accommodating the permutations found in domestic life and documented in field research. However, his basic types follow the standard typology of four groupings (nuclear, extended, single parent, and compound), although he redefined the extended family as a unit (of any type) which is "augmented". If Gray's recasting of household typologies represents any advance, it nevertheless continues to stress an orthodox notion of kinship relations as fundamental to domestic composition.

Ethnographic evidence (see Chapter 6) suggests other factors contribute to the constitution of households.⁷ Anderson (1982) for example, shows that in Wujalwujal community in north Queensland, households are formed by sets of people acting for a communal social purpose in daily life. These households, according to Anderson, are not necessarily exclusively kin-based.

Emic views of power in Aboriginal households can be viewed from two angles: either as control over others (seen as household authority) or as self-control (autonomy). In both cases, power is defined in terms of social relations and not simply as the corollary of control of material resources. Moreover, when we consider powerful roles in the household structure an initial distinction must be made between the role of the household authority and that of the household manager. In practice, the household authority may be either a man or a woman, while the household manager or administrator is generally a woman.

6. See Smith and Biddle (1975:12) who define these options as 1. person with no spouse/no children; 2. children in household with spouse; 3. children alone.

7. See the composition of residents in Mabel's household in Chapter 6.

Although the roles may be fulfilled by the same person, this is not usual. A further distinction needs to be made between the household manager and those women who actually do the household maintenance since these roles are not necessarily combined.

Welfare income

Many writers comment on the gender discrepancy in welfare benefits (see Bryant 1982; Ball 1985; Collmann 1979). Although both Aboriginal men and women receive unemployment benefits, few men meet eligibility requirements for pensions in other benefit categories while women, on the other hand, have a wider choice of social security pensions available.

Collmann (1979) sees the welfare State, with its varying criteria for pension eligibility as responsible for changes in the domestic status of Aboriginal men and the subsequent changes in domestic relations and household organization. Collmann argues on several fronts. He believes traditional domestic practises like marriage and kin-naming traditions are undergoing transformations because of the association between domestic organization and production modes amongst Aborigines in town camps in central Australia. Recent changes in traditions are induced by externally imposed structures like social welfare institutions and government welfare policies. Ongoing competition within the domestic unit for control of resources is exacerbated because of intervention by non-Aboriginal agencies who monopolize and regulate Aboriginal access to welfare resources such that competition between Aboriginal men and women is intensified. He has documented the history of the process.⁸ Collmann recognizes the practical implications of welfare policies in domestic life (see also Jones 1983; Sanday 1986). He claims that women, with help from policy-makers, acquire greater control of resources and personal

8. Collmann mentions particularly the Welfare Board's model for Aboriginal family life as a stress on a stable home life, regular employment for men as the principal bread-winner, unbroken schooling for children and a household cared for by a full-time wife and mother.

independence, at the expense of male dignity.⁹ Aboriginal women taunt men in a self-conscious recognition of their status and of their domestic autonomy. To illustrate the point he tells of Mt. Nancy women waving their pension cheques in men's faces and shouting angrily during domestic strife that they "no longer need " men. But present gender inequality is the culmination of a history of gender inequalities inherent in welfare policies according to Collmann. Under the Northern Territory Welfare Board policies Aboriginal women were forced to choose between their husbands and their children; policies which accorded Aboriginal men none of the personal options available to Aboriginal women in the choice:

... between two ways of provisioning the domestic group and ...
between two types of domestic organization (Collmann 1979:392).

The welfare State has fostered further gender inequalities through benefit payments. Collmann construes normative domestic relations as male centred and interprets changes in this pattern as directly attributable to welfare policies. But like Larbalestier, Collmann places a lot of credit on external forces for transforming Aboriginal lives with little attention to the internal influence of cultural practices operating in an Aboriginal household and community. For example, he mentions nothing of the system of reciprocity operating between kin to determine the flow of goods and services within the community and within individual households. Sansom's (1980) study of the internal dynamics of the Aboriginal town camp stresses such points. Collmann's interpretation also ignores the point made in oral histories like McGrath's (1987) of the importance of Aboriginal people's perceptions of their situation, according to their particular cultural views.

Despite these criticisms Collmann's discussion of autonomy in domestic life is of interest. He links it to the more general issue of social empowerment/disempowerment of Aboriginal men and women in relation to the wider society. In contemporary interaction between Aborigines and the wider community in central Australia, it is the

9. This seems to be an exaggeration of the consequences; for example, are we to assume the reverse is experienced by women when men are dominant in the domestic sphere?

particular organization of Aboriginal domestic life which acts as a buffer against interference and intervention from non-Aborigines and State agencies. Aborigines inhibit the degree of instrumental involvement from external groups through a domestic economy of limited aspirations. This practice is already familiar to Aboriginal men and women as a culturally appropriate strategy to limit demands and claims from people within their own community. Thus Collmann says that individuals and families deliberately construct specific domestic forms to diminish demands for resources, as well as to limit the intrusive involvement of the welfare State. In this way, a principle of "limited liability" maintains men and women's independence from the wider society while also operating successfully in other social contexts.

Collmann noticed that men strategized to maintain their independence from external relationships of obligation and debt with non-Aboriginal employers by accepting irregular employment on terms which suit their internal cultural purposes and plans. Admittedly they compromised their autonomy since employment on these terms meant irregular wages and periodic financial need. Women in the welfare State have, on the other hand, a guaranteed socio-economic independence as pensioners on a regular income; men have somehow missed out, and continue to be tied to employment although their actual employment opportunities are decreasing rapidly.

Supporting parent allowance, now called family allowance illustrates the differences in benefit conditions for men and women in the welfare State. Family allowance pays a higher income than unemployment benefit, requires no regular eligibility tests and is incrementally tied to the number of dependent children.¹⁰ The difference between payments for unemployment and family allowance represent a qualitative option for financial independence in men and women's daily lives. Consequently, in situations where welfare is the principal generator of domestic income significant economic inequalities occur. For instance, women, unlike men, have the option of dropping out of wage labour employment but still receive an income from the

10. These conditions may well have changed since the period of field research in 1985-1986.

State; since the welfare State will pay them as childrearers. Theoretically, the same benefit is available to males as childrearers. That Aboriginal men do not claim this benefit reflects cultural notions of nurturance as gender specific and women's work. By the same token, Aboriginal men continue to define their own options within welfare by conventional male gender roles of wage labour employment outside the domestic sphere. They do not see fatherhood as an acceptable economic role in the way the State has defined it for women. Collmann (1979) rejects the idea that these preferences are cultural and says instead that they are the effect of definitions of family constructed and imposed by the State on Aboriginal domestic groups.

It is economic independence above all which makes a difference, in Collmann's view, to the relative power of men and women's positions in households. Power, for him, is basically a question of who wields control in domestic life over resources for the whole group.

This relation between continuous and discontinuous incomes establishes the basic significance of the domestic group to fringe-dwellers and constitutes the conditions under which men and women negotiate access to the basic resources they all need to live (Collmann 1979:383).

Other researchers have also wondered about the impact of welfare on domestic relations. Bryant's observations (1982) in country Victoria suggested to her that gender inequalities are used in strategies of resistance in Aboriginal relations with the welfare State. She argues that women's dominance in households is deliberate. Aboriginal women and children constituted themselves as a domestic unit not in opposition to Aboriginal men, but in opposition to the income deprivations welfare enforces on nuclear families. Bryant's interpretation of matrifocality contrasts with sociological arguments of the domestic group as a by-product of pathological female assertiveness, or as the deleterious effect of social change. But her arguments also contrast with Collmann's. Where he sees the matrifocal family as the sorry outcome of a history of State policies and impositions, Bryant argues for conscious resistance to dependency under the welfare State. Both writers, irrespective of their differences, cite gender status in domestic life as part of the larger issue of Aboriginal self-determination in social life.

Gender and economic roles

The studies mentioned above discussed issues of gender in socio-economic roles. Gale and Wundersitz's (1982) Adelaide work noted the differences in the economic ability of Aboriginal men and Aboriginal women to contribute to households. Within the surveyed families, Aboriginal women emerge as principal income earners, while Aboriginal men have marginal roles and a limited inclusion in domestic life. Gale argued that the men in these families had a poor self-image and status. Barwick's (1964) earlier study in the late 1950s of Aboriginal households in Melbourne commented on a similar pattern in Aboriginal families:

Women of strong personality usually displace their menfolk in managing family affairs and in determining family status (Barwick 1964:27).

However, no studies confidently pinpoint the causes of gender asymmetry in urban Aboriginal households. The earlier interpretation of economic advancement secured through intermarriage was replaced by the argument of welfare income empowering women domestically and resulting in altered, non-traditional, family structures and gender roles. Writers saw a link between the welfare income and the families of grandmothers, mothers, and their dependent children, citing the common occurrence of families like these in many urban Aboriginal communities. Birdsall's (1988:137) work on domestic life amongst Nyungars in rural Western Australia argues for such a continued pattern of women's domestic visibility and the virtual invisibility of Aboriginal men in daily household life. She suggests that Aboriginal women's dominance in domestic groups is now an accepted and conventional form of domestic organization.

It is possible, however, that the original emphasis on economic factors in the sociological description of the Aboriginal domestic group was misleading. Sociological descriptions of Aboriginal households (e.g. Gale 1977; Smith and Biddle 1975;) have usually come from survey questionnaires and oral interviews with few ethnographic details. The sociological descriptions make typological distinctions on the basis of statistical representations, but ignore fine-grained differences in social relations and status relations within household structure.

Gale and Wundersitz (1982) drew attention to the statistical significance of families headed by women in the Adelaide survey:

Most of the single parent families were headed by females. In the main survey conducted in 1980, 45.5% of the family units contained a single female parent as head while in the secondary survey an even higher proportion (49.2%) did so Thus the survey of 112 families in Port Adelaide showed that exactly one-half did not have an adult male head in residence, while in the newer suburbs surveyed in the secondary study 49.2% lacked a male head. Females thus predominate to quite an overwhelming proportion at both the family and household level of analysis (Gale and Wundersitz 1982:71).

The men in these households were a nebulous group with marginal social status and poor economic standing. Gale could say little about their marginality or explain the centrality of Aboriginal women in domestic life, other than to see it as associated with patterns characteristic of social change and acculturation. Gray's (1987) statistical picture of familial lifestyles in rural New South Wales suggested another interpretation. From his interviews with Aboriginal households it is "high death rates in middle adulthood" (Gray 1987:16) which seriously affect the composition of households as family units. Both Aboriginal mothers and fathers die in their middle adult years such that in his study of 280 children, 19 children lost mothers and 25 children lost fathers, showing fathers to be the most statistically significant group absent from the household. Gray saw a general parental absence as significantly affecting household relations. He argues that prolonged parental absence has a marked impact on both the potential and life chances of children. Naturally, the death of a parent has debilitating social consequences in households, but he concludes from his data that in a household where no parent had wage employment there were equally devastating outcomes for the socio-economic and educational opportunities of the children. Gray draws no implications from this point other than to suggest the obvious; that in conditions of chronic adult unemployment social security benefits are an influential source of household income. In the following chapters I argue that household reliance on welfare income is crucial to discussion of present sources of power in Aboriginal families, and the discussion of men and women's potential for personal and structural independence in domestic life.

Social mobility

Another supposed feature of the acculturated urban Aboriginal family is households based on marriages between Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal men. These marriages are said to typify one avenue of social mobility and improved individual socio-economic options for Aboriginal women. Gale and Wundersitz (1982) favoured a view of the economic advantages of marriage with a non-Aboriginal male as an explanation for socio-economic changes in the Aboriginal family. Migration away from the small conservative rural communities to urban areas is another venue said to provide opportunities for social mobility. According to the findings of studies in Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney, the opportunities associated with marriage and migration favoured Aboriginal women (see Gale and Wundersitz 1982; also the film by Janet Isaac, Film Australia:1975 "Sister, if you only knew"). In interviews Aboriginal women were often explicit about the economic significance of their marriages to non-Aboriginal men (Gale and Wundersitz 1982:113). Indeed the 1960s studies of Adelaide Aborigines (see Gale and Wundersitz 1982) found that urban opportunities for socio-economic mobility were differentially accessible to men and women and that marriage was a particularly important factor in these options: for example, Aboriginal families with a non-Aboriginal spouse were more likely to be upwardly mobile and enjoy a higher standard of living. Gale also noted that these families usually operated according to domestic roles and ideals of gender relations held by the wider society. She found that in the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal household, the non-Aboriginal male was the sole income earner, (the typical male breadwinner). But ten years later, a study of the same families indicated the couples were revising their gender role models as a consequence of changes in the wider economic situation. In Gale's 1980 survey of the same Aboriginal community in Adelaide all households surveyed were adversely affected by the economic downturn, irrespective of the marriage pattern. The impact of unemployment crossed all socio-economic groups. Males were most affected by the depression such that non-Aboriginal men in households emerged as marginal figures in the same way as Aboriginal men. Indeed, on closer inspection men who had low educational standards, whether Aboriginal or not, suffered for the same reason. Intermarriage, said to be a popular option for socio-economic improvement for Aboriginal women between

1966 and 1973 had less to offer by the late 1970s (Gale and Wundersitz 1982: Table 3.13). Clearly what economic advantages a "white men" had were diminishing and the economic reasons Aboriginal women gave for marrying non-Aborigines in 1973 were no longer applicable (Gale and Wundesitz 1983:113).

Barwick (1974) disagrees with arguments of intermarriage as social strategizing and certainly questions views attributing importance to the socio-economic mobility theory. She hesitates when crediting marriage with the potential for social transformation and argues that Aboriginal families living in Melbourne persisted with established patterns of marriage and residence rather than create new alliances. Indeed, she claims marriage with non-Aboriginal spouses was likely to be an epiphenomenon of a choice only available in urban Aboriginal households.

Of course marriage as a means for Aboriginal socio-economic mobility was less important in the context of wider social and political opportunities for Aborigines in the late 1970s. In the Adelaide community, for example, socio-economic conditions in general had improved for Aboriginal families and communities over the ten year period between Gale's two surveys. Moreover, Aboriginal communities developed their own political profiles and lobbied for improved delivery of services in housing, education and health. The expansion of social security benefits to a wider range of Aboriginal groups also contributed to better standards of living; although men and women have relative experiences of the changes.

Differences in access to welfare services is important as an issue of gender. Until the 1970s a number of welfare support schemes were not equally available to men and women. Women were generally serviced more effectively by the welfare system, especially in family contexts. Supporting mother's incomes were available in the mid-1970s and enabled women to have economic independence in marriage and economic viability outside wage labour. A family allowance payment equally available to women and men came later.

This review of the literature on gender relations has addressed issues of the relative status of Aboriginal men and women in domestic life and how they maintain their independence in the face of differences

over access to resources. While researchers have focused on the relative economic status of men and women there has been little work done on this issue within the context of the welfare State. Moreover, there is neglect of a central and related question; that of the relationship between autonomy in gender relations and Aboriginal autonomy under the welfare State. Where writers do link the two contexts there is debate and uncertainty about the nature of the connection. Hence Bryant associates the matrifocal family with Aboriginal political action, while Collmann attributes it to the intrusion of the welfare bureaucracy.

Conclusion

There are thus two sorts of questions: those that relate to the nature of the contemporary situation and those that relate to its historical origins. In this ethnographic study from north Queensland I begin by looking at the historical background to the contemporary situation by showing how autonomy in internal Aboriginal contexts relates to Aboriginal independence in the wider community. Assessment of autonomy in terms of gender interaction in the literature on the Aboriginal family has not been adequate. While writers in the sociological traditions are aware that autonomy is also a matter of Aboriginal relations with the wider society, there is lack of clarity about the terms of the relationship. Consequently, views expressed by writers like Larbalestier and Collmann, on the one hand, see the State as interventionist, in line with an ongoing historical involvement. McGrath, on the other hand, presents Aboriginal men and women's experiences as self-directed and independent, even within the context of a regimented life as exploited workers in cattle station employment.¹¹

The subsequent chapters of the thesis address specific points about the nature and role of autonomy, power in domestic relations and dependence in the contemporary Aboriginal family. These points are dealt with by first looking at the historical situation, and second, by examining contemporary practices. Thus chapters 2 to 4 present the historical perspective, while chapters 5 to 8 are based on ethnographic data for an understanding of contemporary Aboriginal household life.

11. See also Holthouse (1989) on the position of Aboriginal workers on cattle stations in north Queensland from the European point of view.

Chapter 2 examines the role of the church and State in shaping Aboriginal families and in chapter 3 I examine the influence of labour relations on gender roles. Chapter 4 describes the experience of mission work and family life from the perspective of some Aboriginal inhabitants. Chapters 5 to 8 focus on contemporary household life and the principles by which men and women manage domestic life.

CHAPTER 2

MONA MONA MISSION: VEHICLE OF CHURCH AND STATE.

This chapter considers the historical background to Aboriginal interaction with the wider society in early 20th century north Queensland and together with the one that follows describes the process by which Aboriginal people became dependent on the wider society. In north Queensland this is the history of deliberate State intervention in Aboriginal lives for social change, by "taming and training" Aborigines for a specific social niche in Queensland colonial society. The process unwittingly entailed Aboriginal socio-economic dependency as Aboriginal experiences of work and family demonstrate (see chapters 3 and 4).

The conscious and deliberate recasting of Aboriginal social relationships and cultural reproduction by Mona Mona mission was in line with State and church initiatives in Aboriginal affairs throughout Queensland in the first half of the 19th century. Queensland missions were equally active with State agencies in the transformation of Aboriginal cultures. Despite the apparent consensus in the objectives of the transformation, missionary work was dogged by conflict and ambiguity. On the one hand, there was a desire for independent Aboriginal workers which sat uneasily with a basic disbelief in Aboriginal abilities; on the other, a refusal to allow Aborigines to live with any degree of self-determination or scope for effective decision-making, alongside policies to encourage independence from State welfare.

Both church and State were ambivalent about the outcome of Aboriginal self-determination as the history of Aboriginal employment shows. There was a desire to foster economic independence and self-sufficiency in Aboriginal workers, yet the State increasingly curtailed their independence through the legal system. This Chapter is an

overview of the background to the establishment of Mona Mona rather than a comprehensive history of the mission. The chapter focuses on the general structure of relations between church and State and the emergence of missions like Mona Mona as instruments of State policy. The discussion is a framework for the analyses of mission life and the social transformations imposed on Aboriginal residents covered in chapters three and four.

Responses on the frontier.

The establishment of Queensland government reserves for Aborigines and the encouragement given to missions to do the same, was a direct response by the government to the social problems of co-residence between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in frontier towns between 1860 and 1890 (see Loos 1988; Chase 1988; Edwards and Clarke 1988).

By the mid-1870s the full impact of colonial interest and exploration was evident in Cape York. Inevitably investors and townspeople on the northern frontiers pressured the Queensland government to revise their laissez-faire attitudes toward Aborigines by initiating solutions to the problems of incompatibility of Aborigines' co-residence. Not all entrepreneurs were content to wait on government decisions. In the Mackay district in the 1870s settlers were impatient with government initiatives for solutions to frontier contact and preferred to implement their own programs of social management for successfully dealing with local Aborigines. Astute businessmen promoted contract, or indentured labour, as a model accommodating mutual socio-economic interests. The Mackay settlers organized the scheme themselves (see Rowley 1972(a);171-72). These sugar farmers were the first European employers to recognize the potential of the Aboriginal labour force for the labour intensive sugar industry. Loos (1970) comments on the mutual benefits in the contract relationship where protection of Aboriginal communities was important for a secure labour force and the continuation of the profitable income European farmers earned in the Bowen-Mackay district during the 19th century.¹ Loos recognized the intention of the Mackay businessmen to pacify, as

1. See Loos 1970. His thesis deals with the relations of initial contact and the fluctuation in policies between "letting Aborigines in" and "keeping them out".

well as protect Aborigines, by providing food and shelter during the process of disinheritance from their traditional lands and its occupation by Europeans. The sincerity of the sugar farmers' concern to maintain peaceful relations and interracial stability was largely driven by economic motives. Their first priority in order to secure suitable farming conditions was to preserve the peace and to establish an available work force. Interestingly, the farmers first task was to protect district Aborigines from the excesses of the Native Police who had a reputation for notorious methods of instituting "peaceful relations" in the Mackay district as elsewhere.

The relationship between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in Mackay was one of the few successful 19th century experiments in community management of race relations. Elsewhere in North Queensland provision for displaced Aborigines was an afterthought of conquest largely because the pace of frontier development caught government unprepared and with no systematic policy on Aborigines. Rowley (1972(a):175) reports that by the mid 1880s the last frontiers in north Queensland were conquered and industries were developing in fishing, mining, pastoralism and forestry, all of which benefited from extensive capital investment by colonial entrepreneurs. Once the success of the industries was established European settlement spread rapidly (see Loos 1982). Money, as Rowley points out, followed exploration and the search for new markets:

Successful miners in the Charters Towers area invested their earnings in the pastoral industry after 1870. Graziers moved into the Cape York Peninsula with the prospect of new markets for meat, following the gold rush to the Palmer (Rowley 1972(a):175).

In some of the most northern districts of Queensland developers and pastoralists were aware of the success of the Mackay sugar farmers in dealing with local Aborigines. On their own initiative they followed suit by supplying blankets and rations to Aboriginal people in the newly settled districts. These entrepreneurs also hoped to pacify the displaced Aborigines and thereby avoid battles over land. Rowley points out that in other frontier districts the Mackay experiment in race relations was repeated in the hope that the policy of "letting in" the Aborigines would make conquest of land a transition with mutual benefits:

... [it was] the beginning of a new hope, in a new possibility of Aboriginal welfare and settler self-interest lying in the same direction (Rowley 1972(a):172).

In the absence of government legislation to regulate relations a number of pastoralists in north Queensland negotiated informal agreements between themselves and the district Aborigines:

Robert Christison of Lammermoor Station established real contact with the local group, in the manner of E. D. Ogilvie on the Clarence half a century before: there was an understanding, as in Ogilvie's case, that they should hunt on the station but not attack stock. John Fulford of Lynhurst, west of the Bellenden Ker Range and scrublands, established terms which enabled him to use Aboriginal station labour when the white stockmen went to the Palmer rush (Rowley 1972(a):178).

Informal agreements had practical advantages. Displaced Aborigines were provided with blankets, food and protection in exchange for their labour. Entrepreneurs were advantaged by Aborigines settling at specific locations and the immediate Aboriginal need for food and shelter in the face of starvation and homelessness was assuaged by inclusionist policies. However, contracts of this kind were not widespread and the developing pattern on the northern frontier was, by 1900, for dispossessed Aborigines to camp as paupers on the fringes of the frontier towns. In most districts, investors and businessmen wanted Aborigines removed from the areas of profitable economic development if they showed signs of hindering economic progress.

Cheap Aboriginal labour tempted townspeople, as well as farmers, miners and timber-cutters (see Fitzgerald 1982; Evans, Saunders, and Cronin 1975). Yet as towns developed, the presence of such a pauperized labour force was viewed as a mixed blessing. There were complaints to government about the nuisance of dispossessed groups hanging about. Rowley (1972(a)) reports that Aboriginal groups were such a "nuisance for the first towns in the north ... [that] ... Cooktown imposed a formal curfew after dark in 1885" (Rowley 1972(a):178).

Access to resources available from conciliatory settlers or through the facilities of the towns inevitably fostered socio-economic

dependence on European society. This was not necessarily a choice since dependence on European staples such as tea, sugar and flour was often proportional to the diminishing supply of local game and bush foods and the local group's increasing pauperism. Addiction to drugs like opium, tobacco and alcohol also followed contact with European and Chinese settlements and in some cases, employers capitalized on Aboriginal interest in these substances by deliberately creating dependencies whereby Aboriginal labour was exchanged for opium or alcohol (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 2; see also Parliamentary Records 1917, vol. 3).

Aboriginal pauperism eventually became an issue of Aboriginal employment conditions and was included in contemporary political debate on general matters concerning labour. Trade unions, for one, argued that cheap Aboriginal labour was a political matter and they demanded government regulation and control of Aboriginal working conditions to prevent competition with European labour. One option for standardizing employment relations was to recruit Aborigines, but the Unions were given no encouragement to explore this from government (see Queensland Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 2).

Response to Aborigines in Kuranda

Contact between Aborigines and Europeans in the Cairns-Mareeba district was well-established by the latter decades of the 19th century. New frontiers in trade fuelled development in the rainforests of the Atherton-Evelyn Tablelands and on the coastal fringes. A port opened at Cairns in 1870, followed by Cooktown in 1873. These ports facilitated economic links between the northern frontier regions and the southern districts of Queensland and boosted the facilities of the exporting industries; like the timber industry on the Atherton Tableland which boomed once wood could be moved successfully to southern markets. In the Cairns-Kuranda district, foresters were systematically working the rainforests for cedar by the mid-1880s and destroying Aboriginal living space and its resources in the process. However, until the 1890s agricultural developments in the Barron Valley and Atherton Tablelands were slow to prosper as a direct consequence of Aboriginal resistance to settlement. The rainforest Aborigines were reluctant to share their homelands and periodically attacked selectors' camps killing and robbing. In spite of continuing trouble between Aborigines

and settlers on the Atherton-Evelyn Tablelands, by 1893 the railway between Cairns and Mareeba was running and a rail head to the coast for agricultural produce was established. The railway made consolidated settlement of the southern Tablelands a possibility. At the same time the train increased European presence in the ranges around the Barron Valley. Small villages like Myola, Hill End, Oaklands (later known as Oak Forest) and West Road, sprang up beside the railway line and served as railheads for district enterprises in dairying and agriculture.

In the late 1880s the Queensland government established ration depots in the Kuranda district to ameliorate the living conditions of the increasing numbers of disinherited and reportedly starving rainforest Aborigines. The idea of private depots funded by government was also tried with a request in 1895 by a settler for a ration depot at Myola.² A government depot operated at Kuranda township and for a camp nearby at Barron Falls. Rowley (1972(a):181) reports that Archibald Meston, the first Southern Protector of Aborigines, visited the area in 1895-6 to review government assistance programs and noted that three ration stations served the whole of the Tableland district; two on the Barron River at Kuranda and Atherton, and a third at Thornborough.³ Collins (1984) mentions that Meston recorded between 50-60 Aborigines in the Kuranda district during his 1896 visit. Many local Aborigines were on good terms with the newly settled Europeans and worked on local maize or dairy farms. The cordiality of this association is confirmed by the fact of many present Kuranda people using local European surnames; names first assumed by their grandparents in pre-mission days when they were under the paternalistic care of these farmers as their workers. However, relations between Europeans and Aborigines were not always cordial. Meston reports persistent conflict over women here as in other districts. At the Kuranda, Atherton and Thornborough depots,

2. See Loos 1982:114.

3. In 1896 Meston was acting as a consultant on Aboriginal conditions throughout north Queensland to the state government. He was engaged to report to the then Colonial Secretary, Horace Tozer, on government welfare and possible improvements in the conditions of the state's Aborigines. See Loos 1982:172 ff.

He heard from the police how Aborigines would come in at night and beg for protection against white men who came to their camps with guns and demanded the women (Rowley 1972(a):181).⁴

Meston's report of such incidents and the lack of effective protection for camp people by the local police accords with a similar report on such events, about twenty years later, from a local Aboriginal woman. She remembered when a European man, who repeatedly visited the Granite Creek Aboriginal camp in search of women, was both tricked and taught a lesson. An Aboriginal man from the camp dressed as a woman and successfully deceived the would-be lover. When the deception was revealed he was properly frightened. (This event happened in the early 1900s.)

The camps Meston visited during his 1896 trip were official distribution points of government welfare. They were first established in the mid-1880s in response to settlers' demands for assistance with Aborigines, but in his review Meston questioned the continued effectiveness of the depots and their ultimate purpose. Meanwhile the Kuranda camp delivered relief rations to the value of 10 shillings per month to "aid the indigent natives" (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 3).⁵ Like Meston, the Queensland government was ambivalent about supplying welfare long term. The costs of welfare and the poor economic return on maintaining dependents were arguments against continued funding. By 1915 the State government used the cost of "war demands" as a legitimate reason to cut the supply of blankets to Aborigines at the Kuranda depot (see Queensland Parliamentary Records 1916-17, vol. 3). In 1917, two years later, the second relief depot at Barron Falls closed. However it was also realized that some provision for the Aboriginal populations within the districts had to be made and the government preferred to assist other agencies in such work. In Kuranda, aid to Aborigines was assumed by the newly

4. See also Daniels (ed.) 1984; Evans 1975; Hamilton 1989; on Aboriginal women and prostitution on the colonial frontier.

5. The Records do not specify whether the 10 shillings is per capita or for the community as a whole.

established Seventh Day Adventist mission, Mona Mona, through a government land grant.

Throughout the late 19th century and early 1900s the Queensland government was especially concerned with opium addiction in Aboriginal communities on the north-east coast. Meston's 1896 report associated the spread of opium amongst Aborigines with the spread of Chinese settlement in these districts. Meston's 1896 survey exposed the use of opium throughout Queensland as:

a work incentive and ... to tie the restive Aboriginal worker to the enterprise (Rowley 1972(a):181) .

Meston also noticed that opium dross, the ash left from smoking, was traded in deals between Chinese and others who were in daily contact with Aborigines. By 1914 government alarm over these associations became acute when opium was found in use amongst Aborigines in Cardwell, Cairns, Cooktown, Herberton and Innisfail. All these communities had considerable Chinese populations (see Queensland Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 3). In this atmosphere, the government welcomed interest from church organisations to establish missions, isolated in the bush, for Aborigines in the Cairns area. The government viewed missions as responsible monitors of the opium traffic amongst Aborigines and as agents for quashing further access to opium in the Barron Valley and Atherton Tablelands in particular. Both districts had considerable Chinese communities and the segregation of the local Aborigines from the Chinese was highly desirable and would be possible once missions were founded. In 1913 the government expressed the hope that Mona Mona "will assist greatly in suppressing the traffic in these districts" (Queensland Parliamentary Records, Protector's report to Parliament 1914, vol. 3). The Protector's report for the following year repeated the same point. Church and State had a contract; Mona Mona would assume responsibility for preventing Aboriginal access and addiction to opium and in exchange the government would grant land. The government nevertheless required guarantees that (1) the church spend 1,000 pounds in its first operating year, (2) that the mission be self-supporting, and (3) that Aboriginal workers be paid by a coupon system (see Collins 1984). Mona Mona was established on a grant of 4000 acres, bounded by Flaggy and Rooty Creeks north of the Barron River at Oak Forest; 700-

800 acres of the grant was scrub and the property included a timber reserve and vacant unsurveyed land. A small government grant was provided to assist with establishment costs.

Other church-sponsored missions had earlier been established on the northern Queensland frontiers with government help, mainly before the turn of the century. There were five missions operating as early as 1891: Marie Yambah, Cape Bedford, Bloomfield, Mapoon, and Yarrabah. Mona Mona, like these missions, took over from the government the care of increasing numbers of destitute Aboriginal women and children camping in poverty on the edges of towns. In fact the initial populations for the new missions were usually provided by clearing Aborigines from the local town camps. The Protectorate records for 1915, for example, report that twenty-four women and sixteen children were removed to Mona Mona because of destitution (*ibid*). Mona Mona records show that these women and children were remnants of a group removed under police orders from the Mareeba camp at Granite Creek. Further details of removals show that the police, who acted in many districts as local protectors, took fifty-six men, women and children to Mona Mona. According to the police records the adults concerned were addicted to opium.⁶

Opium addiction was one symptom of the increasingly obvious social dislocation in Aboriginal communities in north Queensland. Although the Aboriginal camps in the Kuranda-Mareeba area supplied district towns and farms with cheap adult manual labour, dependent women and children were not necessarily included in the work contracts.⁷ These were the groups most in need and predominated in the town camp populations seeking assistance at the ration depots.

6. Archival material on Mona Mona mission from Seventh Day Adventist church archives. The Mona Mona archival material is held by the Seventh Day Adventist church and housed in the Heritage Room at Coorombong College, New South Wales. There are only a few holdings, all of which I consulted. The material is eclectic: roll books, copies of genealogies of Mona Mona families, the mission marriage register and some financial documents.

7. See Loos 1982. Some groups of rainforest Aborigines were forced into the territory of other groups due to food shortages, etc. War between themselves exacerbated their problems with settlers and developers.

Extensive clearing of rainforest on the Atherton Tablelands, for agriculture and dairy farming increased the numbers of people seeking government aid because traditional food resources were destroyed. Women and children bore the brunt of the dislocations and sought refuge in town camps. Camps and depots were generally filled with Aboriginal people from different districts as all suffered the destitution and impoverishment accompanying European economic development.⁸ At the Barron Falls depot Aborigines from areas around Kuranda, Speewah and Redlynch camped together, while Tableland camps had an even greater regional diversity. The three camps at Mareeba gathered people from territories ranging from the southern reaches of the Atherton Tablelands, including Ravenshoe, west to Mt. Surprise and Chillago.⁹

Although depots dispensed rations, there was no recognition of the cultural differences between the Aboriginal residents. Legislation to remove Aborigines from camps also failed to acknowledge cultural distinctions and lumped together disparate groups from different districts into missions and reserves without regard for cultural continuity, or the negative effects of deliberate dislocation of family groups. The policy of mixing people together from different areas is clear in entries in the Mona Mona register of incoming residents.¹⁰

By 1900 the direct causes of government concern about Aborigines in Queensland were problems euphemistically termed "social

-
8. See Loos 1982:97. Aboriginal men were often uncertain about settlers' reception to their women and so were reluctant to bring them into sustained contact with settlement or work situations.
 9. Pers. comm. Mrs. Lucy Levers. Lucy and her parents lived at the Granite Creek camp. She and her family walked between Atherton and Chillago to visit kin and have access to the resources of a member of the family working on a station near Chillago.
 10. Entries in the book recording arrivals to Mona Mona mission show that in 1916 a woman and two children were sent down from Kurumba in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Aborigines were removed from a wide area; from Mt. Carbine, Mowbray Valley, Chillagoe, Tolga, Edmonton, Mt. Mulligan, Georgetown, Malanda, Atherton, Ravenshoe, Cairns, Redlynch, Pt. Douglas, Mossman, Mt. Molloy, Mt. Garnet, Mareeba and Gordonvale. There were also transfers between Palm Island and Mona Mona.

evils", but specifically defined as opium use, transmission of sexual diseases, miscegenation and exploitation of Aboriginal labour.¹¹ Any or all of these reasons were cited for removals of individuals and communities to isolated missions and reserves. No camps of Aborigines on the edges of towns were left alone under the removal scheme. Removals to Mona Mona were usually justified in terms of Aboriginal welfare. Reasons entered alongside the names of the new inmates in the Mona Mona register included the following; "too old to care for herself"; "will not sign on [a labour contract];" hangs about hotels"; "for their own good"; "uncontrollable, troublesome"; "addicted to opium"; "as a correction".

The effects of the arbitrary removal policy are poignantly illustrated in the personal history of a resident who joined Mona Mona in the first years (see also Thomson 1989; for the similar experiences of Aboriginal people at Yarrabah mission.) Mary's husband Harold, arrived at Mona Mona from Tolga on the Atherton Tablelands in 1916 as a young man. He and his siblings were separated as small children and some of them were taken to missions further north in Cape York. Harold's brother was sent to Yarrabah Church of England mission at Cape Grafton, and his sister to Hopevale Lutheran mission, near Cooktown. As a teenager Harold earned a living as a farm labourer on the Atherton Tablelands and assumed the European surname of the family who employed him. However by adopting a new name it was impossible for his family to find him; a complication compounded as he later discovered by the fact that his brother and sister had also assumed different surnames. Years later the two men recognized one another as brothers and verified their ties by revealing the Aboriginal bush names they had as children.

11. Mona Mona archival documents fail to indicate sexually transmitted diseases as a significant problem on the mission, but Protectorate reports in the Parliamentary Records from elsewhere in north Queensland show concern about the widespread nature of this problem.

Mission administration of government policy

Distribution of government aid to Aborigines facilitated some control over scattered Aboriginal populations. But legislation to establish a Protector's office in every government administrative district, together with welfare regulations circumscribing Aboriginal lives decentralized State control.¹² Local Protectors were accountable to two chief Protectors who administered the two major administrative districts of the State. In 1896 Archibald Meston and Dr. W. E. Roth were appointed to the newly created positions of southern and northern Protectors. However, in remote districts police officers generally had the additional duties of the Protector, but in some circumstances petty local officials or prominent citizens also acted in the capacity of Protector. In situations where police acted as Protector the job involved discharging mutually incompatible responsibilities; on the one hand, a protective, paternalistic guardianship over the local Aborigines, while on the other hand, the administration of State legislation to control and curtail their freedom. Protectors who were also police faced the dilemma of protecting Aborigines from punitive or exploitative action which they personally agreed with, or were accessories to. The State also empowered mission superintendents after 1896 to act on the basis of a similar combination of roles. Eventually State legislation put Aborigines into the protective custody of missions and made missionaries quasi-officials of the State.

Closing the ration depots and encouraging the churches to assume care of Aborigines was the first step in the process of devolution of responsibility. The government's ration depot in Kuranda continued only until the point when Mona Mona could fulfil the role.¹³ Mona Mona's first residents came from the camps at Barron Falls depot

12. From the Queensland Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 2 and 3 it is obvious that a Protectorate operated in Cairns, Mareeba and Pt. Douglas. Before its establishment the local police superintendent administered Aboriginal concerns. Rowley 1972:177 talks of missions established on the frontier areas of north Queensland as early as 1896.

13. There may have been more than one Aboriginal fringe camp at Kuranda. See Queensland Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 3 which shows pictures of a "native camp at Barron Falls" and a "native camp at Kuranda."

and Mareeba. While Aboriginal dependency on rations continued the costs of increasing dependency was viewed with alarm. By sharing the care of Aborigines with churches, missions could carry the greater financial costs of the assimilation program and help educate them as workers.

Politically the pacification of the rainforest Aborigines, which was never totally successful under the rationing system, made containment and segregation of whole communities an attractive proposition in troubled agricultural electorates. Government belief that a grateful, pacified Aboriginal work force was compatible with massive European development in Aboriginal territory depended however, on "the willingness of the Aborigines to accept such a scheme" (Loos 1982:116). In some districts Aboriginal compliance was enforced.

Aborigines sent to Mona Mona grouped together according to cultural preferences and patterns established in pre-mission communities. There were enough district Aborigines in the first intakes to form two camps on Mona Mona. One camp comprised mainly Muluridji speakers from the Mareeba town camps, Mt. Molloy and Mt. Carbine; and the other camp included Tjapukai/Bulway language groups from the Kuranda ranges, Redlynch Valley and Port Douglas. As cultural groups these camps persisted on Mona Mona because the administration was not in a position to restrict or disband them at that stage. Indeed, staff favoured the bush camps with special exemptions from strict mission practices in order to attract other Aborigines in the district to join the mission. The administration also realized the advantages of easing the transition for residents from the freedoms of town camps to institutional life. In time, the mission bush camps were progressively alienated from involvement with the central activities of mission life enacted in the dormitory or village. Collins (1984) reports that camp life on Mona Mona at first resulted in the continued reproduction of cultural traditions such as mourning rituals and singing, and some hunting and gathering was possible. However between the early 1920s and the mid-1940s, the population of up to 40 adults living in the Tjapukai/Bulway camp had dwindled to a mere

handful of people.¹⁴ Indeed, mission staff never forced the camp dwellers to conform with the standards set for other residents; camp residents continued to smoke tobacco, although along with tea, coffee and alcohol, these were denied to other residents. Staff allowed use of tea and tobacco in the hope of softening the resistance of recalcitrant older people, and even some young people, to mission life with its numerous restrictions (see Collins 1984:49).

Mona Mona and Yarrabah missions in the Cairns region operated separately but for government intent and purposes their objectives were common. Yarrabah was established in June 1892. Aborigines from the disbanded Fraser Island reserve joined the Yarrabah community in 1904 (see Thomson 1989:14) and residents from distant frontier towns in Cape York were also sent to Yarrabah. Moreover the government ketch "Melbidir" worked the eastern coast of the Cape York Peninsula to convey "half caste" people to Yarrabah (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1916-17, vol. 3).¹⁵ By 1915 Yarrabah was known to government administrators as a centre for "half caste" people; consequently, at least forty different tribal groups contribute to Yarrabah's present polyglot community (see Craig 1979; also Thomson 1989). However some residents of Mona Mona believe Yarrabah was reserved for the "dark skinned people".

Mona Mona mission

Pastor P. B. Rudge, the foundation superintendent of Mona Mona, had previous mission experience with Aborigines in southern Queensland, although the mission he came from had closed as a result of economic problems and a lack of success with converting the Aborigines. Rudge's first mission recruits at Mona Mona were Aboriginal children and he followed established missionary practice in collecting as many Aboriginal children of both sexes as possible to start the first dormitories. The official records show that children were often

14. Collins (1984) mentions that in 1938 Tindale collected examples of material culture used to process bush foods and this material is still held in the South Australian Museum.

15. Pers. comm. the late Mrs. Charity Mango whose father came from Fraser Island reserve to Yarrabah reserve. See also Thomson, 1989:9-30.

unaccompanied; for example, eight children were sent under police orders to Mona Mona in 1913, although children also came as dependents of their mother or female kin (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 3).

Correspondence from Mona Mona to the Seventh Day Adventist church administrators outlines Rudge's organizing principles and his vision of the mission's objectives. In the church journal, *The Australasian Record* (26/1/1914) Pastor Rudge informed readers that mission staff would run the domestic side of the mission as much as possible along family lines, concentrating primarily on the communality of life both in worship and at table. Their primary responsibility was religious conversion. Concerns over the living conditions of the district Aborigines were thus secondary. Feeding and clothing their charges was a means to the religious end. Mission staff worked with the hope that each Aboriginal resident would accept Jesus as his/her personal saviour, for this was the only means by which an individual could reserve a place for themselves in the "coming kingdom" (*The Australasian Record* 27/9/1915). However for many years religious ideals were subsumed by the practical considerations which ultimately determined the mission's success.

Yet the missionaries realized that religious conversion was a potent means for enforcing social segregation, not least because it both privileged and denied Aboriginal access to mission power. Power was constituted in mission terms alone and involved the deconstruction of sources of power meaningful in Aboriginal social relations. Reserves and missions intervened in Aboriginal cultural processes for such purposes, although not all administrations agreed about which sphere was the essential source of Aboriginal power. Thus, on government reserves, Aborigines were allowed to perform corroborees and use "native" weapons for approved purposes such as warding off the evils of gambling and immorality. On the other hand, Mona Mona made Christianity the requisite foundation of all progress and insisted that residents submit to mission discipline in thought and action. In doing so, displays of rituals were not sanctioned however innocuous, but were actively discouraged and often prohibited (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1927, vol. 1). Individuals who persisted with tribal practices,

for example, or who continued tribal disagreements were sent elsewhere, usually to Palm Island.¹⁶

The possibility of backsliding in religion or morality was monitored with vigilance by staff. The missionaries set high standards for residents. When close to 150 Aborigines attended church, staff continued to focus on the large percentage who professed no interest in religious worship. After 40 years of isolated mission life, argued constantly by church and State as the conditions best suited to social transformations, Mona Mona missionaries felt that religious conversion had not been a success. Despite 80% of residents attending Vespers, only 33% of them attended the Sabbath services and staff believed that however impressive the rates of voluntary church attendance were, heartfelt conversions were the signs which really counted. It was only then that staff were confident that,

Devil dances, and indeed, all ceremonial dances are cherished no longer, and "Gwengin," the devil, is not respected at all (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1955, vol. 2).

The most distinguished conversion on Mona Mona was the qualification of an Aboriginal couple as volunteer missionaries to Papua New Guinea in 1932 (see Queensland Parliamentary Records 1932, vol. 1). Although a shining example of conversion, few Mona Mona residents followed their example. By the 1950s missionaries were increasingly dismayed over the lack of lasting results from conversions and their years of missionary work. Mission life was peppered with religious rituals in twice-daily Church services (morning and night), prayer meetings, weekly community hymn singing, Sabbath school, and a young people's missionary society which met on the Sabbath. But none of these activities produced the number of Aboriginal converts the missionaries hoped for (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1954-55, vol. 2).¹⁷

16. Mona Mona mission, like other north Queensland missions had a mixture of Aboriginal people from different districts, not just a local area. Yarrabah was an example of a very mixed group with Aborigines from Cape York, Cairns region and Fraser Island. Mona Mona was not as heterogeneous as this.

17. In the Seventh Day Adventist calendar the Sabbath is from 6.00 pm Friday night to 6.00 pm Saturday.

Hope for Aboriginal conversion and assimilation nevertheless continued to motivate Mona Mona's administration. Aboriginal women's involvement in self-help movements were publicised as signs of possible success and staff were enthusiastic about the outlook of the young people who were "most easily trained to the new life" (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1927, vol. 1). Indeed, the young, more than other sections of the Aboriginal population, carried the burden of staff hopes.

But the process of cultural assimilation, aside from the issue of religious conversion, were not without difficulties. In his annual report for 1928 Pastor Branford, superintendent between 1914-27 and again in 1930-31, reported that activities associated with "race suicide" persist. He referred specifically to people eating clay.¹⁸ Branford also mentioned the need to protect children at risk from Aboriginal cultural practices. He reported that missionary staff took protective measures where a woman was pregnant but had an older child not yet weaned. Occasionally, staff raised an orphaned child in their home.¹⁹

For acquiescent Aboriginal residents, a share in the power and status of the mission hierarchy was possible by adopting Christian beliefs and "civilized" ways. The secular school offered positions of status for men and sometimes women. But it was in the church activities that the opportunities appeared to be richest. Indeed, Aboriginal residents helped conduct the service reading of scripture, playing music, and singing in the choir.²⁰ Religious activities always had a high priority in mission life and much status accrued to those individuals selected to performed special roles in church services. However, the status of the Aboriginal preacher and teacher remained subservient in status to that of the European church leaders. At the same time, membership in the lower ranks of the administrative

18. Eating clay was also a common problem amongst some groups on Yarrabah in the early years (see Thomson 1989).

19. Betty, who figures in later chapters of the thesis, was raised by a missionary couple.

20. This policy was also true of other missions in Queensland where Aborigines were encouraged to take an active role in services as lay assistants. See Queensland Parliamentary Records 1927, vol. 1.

hierarchy (helping in the store, cleaning dormitories, acting as community police) promoted particular Aboriginal families within the mission community. Some families were able to realize the advantages of these positions and they have monopolized the more prestigious occupations requiring semi-skilled labour.

Converts were the group of Aboriginal residents most valued by the church. But other acts of conversion were also highly valued. Thus Aboriginal couples who were married by the church were applauded for the example they showed to the "bushies" of the camps (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1931, vol. 1). However while the church accepted Aboriginal believers, they made it clear these people had a social responsibility to proselytize others. Converted Aborigines had active public roles in church services.²¹

Perhaps the poor record of religious conversions was one factor which led to the changes within mission life after World War Two. Certainly, the 1950s was a turning point in the style of mission administration on Mona Mona. The administration clearly felt that conversion by example was a more effective means of reaching residents and helping them to assimilate to a different cultural and religious lifestyle. Many residents remembered staff of this period as happy to mix with Aboriginal people and to work alongside them. Restrictions on residents' lives were relaxed and steps toward independence in decision-making implemented.

However, internal changes of this kind were in line with government policies for Aborigines and Islanders throughout Queensland's missions and reserves. The government no longer wished to "convert its coloured people into a poor type of white" (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1951-52, vol. 2). The change in policy failed to lessen State intervention in Aboriginal communities. Indeed, the State adopted a mandate to intervene in all mission administrations by seeking uniformity in the conditions of Aboriginal experience in education, health and employment. The State hoped to develop in the

21. The first conversion among the Aboriginal residents was in 1916 when 5 girls were baptized in Flaggy Creek on Mona Mona mission.

Aborigine "an appreciation of his own race, history and worth, through self-determination" (ibid.).

But in 1913, the establishment phase of the mission, Mona Mona's first official report to the Queensland Chief Protector explained the mission's development plans in terms which reflected a conservative approach to Aboriginal assimilation. Moreover, mission life was likely to be dominated by practical concerns. Land had to be cleared before crops or buildings were possible. In the first year the Aboriginal residents cleared by hand seven to eight hundred of the four thousand acres granted. All available labour had to help and this limited the time staff could dedicate to religious work. Full-time pastoral work was only possible in later years once rudimentary accommodation was built and enough land cleared for food production. Government interest in Mona Mona's work focused on the mission's ability to fulfil the terms and conditions of the land grant.²²

The early mission staff expected no external help in establishing the enterprise. They brought basic farming equipment and tools with them, tents for staff accommodation and a spring dray. The administration had to involve the Aboriginal residents and their labour continued to underpin the mission's economic situation thirty to forty years after the initial settlement. But from the beginning the mission faced difficulties. Agricultural self-sufficiency in a tropical climate was difficult and precarious, and finding a dependable economic base took time. Experiments with a number of primary industries for local markets were tried but with mixed success. Eventually timber and cattle proved the most practicable for a regular cash income. Eventually the mission vegetable gardens helped to supply most of the residents' needs.

Mona Mona was isolated. It was thirty-six miles by rail from Cairns and eight miles from the nearest rail siding at Oak Forest on the Kuranda-Mareeba railway line. The rail was the mission's only reliable link with Cairns, the nearest service town and shipping port. From the

22. Problems of survival monopolized mission energies in all missions in remote areas during the first years (see Swain and Rose 1988:77-338 includes articles of relevance).

Oak Forest railway siding, goods were carried by horse and dray along a track through the bush to the mission. Eventually, as mission facilities improved, a truck replaced the horse and dray, although the isolated social conditions remained. In basic household items like rice, flour, sugar and salt, the mission was never self-reliant and products like these had to be regularly ordered from Cairns' stores and railed to Oak Forest.

Eight months after Mona Mona opened Pastor Rudge had 72 Aborigines living on the grant area.²³ Residents were fed in the communal dining room, but although the older dormitory girls helped with preparation, a white woman prepared and cooked the food because "native women are very wasteful" (*The Australasian Record* 28/9/1914). The administration based its survival on frugality. Both government and church were aware of the costs of welfare and problems of supply figure throughout reports of Mona Mona's development. Twenty years after 1912, staff and residents still had to eke out their existence on meagre rations of European foods. There was not enough hunting and gathering to supplement mission rations in any systematic way. Collins (1984) estimates that bush foods never contributed significantly in food value to a resident's diet. However, the fraught economic conditions on Mona Mona and the inadequate diningroom fare encouraged residents to use their leisure to collect what bush foods were locally available. Residents in the bush camps had more opportunity to do this because they were less integrated into full-blown mission routines than were village and dormitory residents. Some people in the bush camps continued to use traditional hunting methods, although others had access to guns.

A former dormitory resident recalled how dormitory girls made the most of their limited leisure time to collect vegetable foods.²⁴ During "bath times" at Flaggy Creek, the girls collected pig weed, boiled it and flavoured it by adding fat. An alternative preparation used salt and

23. Although the land grant was made in 1912, the first mission residents did not arrive until 1913.

24. Mrs. Lucy Levers who was one of the inhabitants of the first girls' dormitory about 1914.

spiced chilli leaves to heighten taste. Apart from pig weed, pumpkin tippings were also cooked as a vegetable, after first stripping them of their bristles. These girls applied their ingenuity to developing other subsistence strategies such as using a sewing pin for a hook and cotton for a fishing line to catch fish such as "big mouth," which was boiled with pig weed to make a soup. They also gathered wild yams which became a staple in their supplementary diet. Since the mission could not adequately feed the residents traditional foods continued to have symbolic importance in residents' lives.²⁵ Thus in spite of the fact that the administration was committed to a program of social change, Collins (1984) reports that residents retained a limited freedom to indulge in traditional economic strategies. Unlike other missions in north Queensland Mona Mona never enforced a rule of food in return for work (see Chase 1988:121-139).

The administration also had to rely on residents' knowledge of traditional skills in other areas where they were unable to provide. Many of the first Aboriginal residents lived in the houses they built themselves out of lawyer cane and grass, or humpies of sheet iron and timber. But even after the first European-style timber dwellings were constructed, older Aborigines in the bush camps refused to move out of their dwellings. The inability of the mission to incorporate all residents under their administrative authority in the early stages of mission life proved a loop-hole for Aboriginal independence and older people clung tenaciously to this. Resistance to change was not easily overcome. Years after the mission was established one superintendent wrote to the Queensland Protectorate Board of the persistence in opium smoking, general disobedience and persistence of Aboriginal customary ways. Indeed, it is questionable if customary preferences were ever effectively or completely subverted by the mission structure, however well their expressions were suppressed.²⁶

25. Compare with Chase 1988:131 who talks of Lockhart mission in Cape York where the mission deliberately encouraged Aboriginal families to live out bush in the "Dry season holiday" as an economic measure. These groups lived off the resources of their traditional lands.

26. As late as the 1950s Aborigines at Mona Mona turned to "magic" in a moment of crisis when the then pastor was seriously injured and metaphysical help was sought for healing.

Control over residents and systematic efforts to change their cultural orientation was reflected in the organisation of mission life. By 1915 the superintendent's house, the dining room and kitchen, a girls' dormitory, a barn and nine "native houses" were built and in use. The spatial arrangement of these facilities marked social differentiation on the mission and supported other principles of mission social control. Manipulation of space for social ends was common in institutional life and the layout of missions like Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers, in Gippsland, Victoria, were expressly planned for the purpose (see Attwood 1989.) Attwood comments on the Moravian mission at Ramahyuck in the 1870s, that the superintendent, Hagenauer,

... drew upon Moravian religious tradition and the practice of the other missionaries both in the Pacific and in other Australian colonies who had devised model villages for their missions, while this in turn reflected the character of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, an age marked by a much larger bourgeois strategy of social and cultural reform designed to reshape and control both themselves and various social groups defined as the "other" (Attwood 1989:8).

He adds,

The landscape of this [Ramahyuck] mission station provides the historian with a text to be interpreted, a series of messages which can help us understand the social and political relationships inscribed upon it and decipher the meanings these assumed for the missionaries and the Aborigines (Attwood 1989:8).

On Mona Mona mission as on Ramahyuck, spatial differentiation distinguished the categories of residents: Aboriginal children in the dormitories were differentiated from married couples and old people in the bush camps, from Christian couples in the "native houses" of the village. The deliberate, considered arrangement of the mission community expressed the mission's vision of social relationships, most particularly between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. Each socially distinct spatial domain on Mona Mona was governed by a set of rules to define social use and to mark status distinctions. For example, the missionaries' homes were out of bounds to Aboriginal residents in general, although certain categories of residents on specific occasions, crossed the boundary (women domestic workers, engaged couples on a chaperoned evening, or Aboriginal church workers). Apart from meal

times the communal dining room and mission kitchen were prohibited to Aborigines. Even the seating of residents in the dining room was deliberate: dormitory girls and boys sat opposite one another along the sides of the tables, with staff and married couples seated at opposite ends.

The administration's definitions of social space were rigidly enforced as part of a general approach to social control and community management. These definitions were practically enforced as a means of restricting communication and social interaction between residents; hence children and parents could only meet in areas monitored by staff. On most missions the spatial differentiation complemented the segregation in social relations of particular groups. Yarrabah mission instituted similar patterns of segregated social relations, especially between the sexes. Dormitories were organized to preserve the mission's view of socialization as well as to monitor contact between the sexes. The dormitories were out-of-bounds to everyone but their residents (Thomson 1989:40).

We were under the supervision of the missionary - pretty tough too. We were all glad to get married and get out of it. ... They were very strict with us. With boyfriends you had to go and get permission from the superintendent and every Sunday we were allowed to meet until we got married (Thomson 1989:41).

Even relations between older dormitory residents at Yarrabah were strictly controlled by staff. Missionaries singled out girls, particularly, for restrictions on their movements and lifestyles in order to protect and control their sexuality.

The dormitory was like a barrack. The girls' dormitory had wire netting around it so they couldn't get out at night. They had a big fence around them and there used to be a matron down by the gate that was locked. They boys weren't locked in like the girls (Thomson 1989:45).

On Yarrabah, all children went through the dormitories. They legitimately left the institution only on marriage.

I lived with my parents until I was ten years of age [1936], when all the children had to be sent to the dormitories. The dormitories were quite big. There were all different ages, like they had the senior girls in their own room and then there was the intermediate, then the junior (Thomson 1989:45-46).

These experiences were equally familiar to residents of Mona Mona.

Conclusion

Government sponsorship of missions to Queensland's Aborigines developed from motives of concern and economic expediency. In part there was a desire to mediate the detrimental social interaction between Aborigines and Europeans, to shelter Aborigines seen as exploited and help those dying from diseases. But the State also wanted to shoulder less responsibility for the increasing expense of welfare dependency. The idea of transforming Aborigines into a work force, suitably coached for a specific class position and work role in the wider community, had general appeal. Moreover, segregation and isolation in mission and reserve communities was believed by church and State to be the best method of achieving social change and dealing with the problems of evident Aboriginal social dislocation. From the 1900s, government directives to missions were explicit that Aborigines must adopt European norms and conform with behaviour appropriate to their likely status in the wider community. The missionaries' strategies for social change involved the suppression of Aboriginal socialization, family life and work practices through religious conversion and social conformity.

The transition from State welfare to church welfare produced different experiences for Aboriginal recipients. The State's interest was initially to quell demands from vociferous settlers for legislative action on Aboriginal obstruction of economic development. The distribution of rations in the form of food and blankets through the depots and by some private individuals was government's ad hoc response in areas of identified discontent (see Loos 1982:88-117).²⁷ By 1900 State welfare was a major expense for Treasury and it had solved none of the problems of social dislocation such as substance addiction, pauperism and unemployment. Contact left Aboriginal communities diminished. The failure of State aid was the failure of a cohesive policy and a tendency for government to oscillate between efforts to ameliorate

27. Reserves with ration depots had been first established in north Queensland by 1874 in the Mackay district and on Bribie Island (Rowley 1972(a):174). See also Loos 1982:187 where he lists all the Queensland government relief or ration depots in the Cairns-Atherton Tableland district for 1898-99.

conditions and to condone the violence done to Aborigines by groups like the government's own Native Police force. However, it was Meston's 1896 report which provided a basis of recommendations for an effective State-wide policy and legislation.

Mission responsibility for care of Aboriginal dependents marked a shift in the government's approach. Missions gathered Aborigines from towns and farms into closed institutional settings where they were schooled in the disciplines of work and worship. The State intended funding Aboriginal welfare but the burden of costs fell on missions as self-supporting bodies. Mission Aborigines would become semi-skilled or manual workers in the wider community. Mission rules and routines were enforced to inculcate in the residents the values of the imposed social structures and cultural practices. Indeed, mission and State intended that traditional Aboriginal socialization and daily life be transformed, even forsaken. The State bolstered the role of the missions in this process by enacting laws to arbitrarily shift Aborigines around the State, and to confine them to institutions. The authority of the State was invested in each superintendent as the local Protector of Aborigines and thereby reinforced the structural relationship between authority and the law.

Mona Mona's establishment combined the mutual interests of the church and State. Both argued for dramatic social change as the only viable alternative to the continued degradation of Aborigines as displaced encumbrances reliant on the State's welfare. However, as later chapters show, the highly regimented and directed life of missions and reserves failed to produce people who were competent in the wider community; ironically these practices only bound Aborigines more deeply into patterns of structural dependency. The failure of institutions to reform Aborigines and to transform them, emerge in the debates about the value of Aboriginal labour. The debates reflected the larger issue of whether reserves and missions succeeded in tutoring their residents for assimilation in spite of efforts to minimalise any effective Aboriginal resistance to cultural change. Chapter three explores these debates in the work place and the role of Aboriginal labour in Queensland colonial society.

CHAPTER 3

ABORIGINAL LABOUR RELATIONS IN NORTH QUEENSLAND, 1890s-1950s.

This chapter looks at relations between Aborigines and the State as employee and employer, and the effect this had on gender roles within the Aboriginal family. The history of legislation in relation to Aboriginal labour in Queensland between the 1890s and 1940s provides the context for this discussion.

The present economic status of Aborigines in Kuranda was shaped by institutions established at the turn of the century and informed by State legislation and church values.¹ In turn, these factors helped to shape Aboriginal employment roles in Queensland. Case studies in the latter half of this chapter are used to illustrate the experiences of Aboriginal people working in the closed worlds of missions and government institutions, and to provide a context for the contrast in work histories from those of Aborigines employed in the wider society. Of course the industrial profile of the Aboriginal worker was in part a function of his/her work place. On missions and reserves, Aborigines worked for food and keep and the rewards were minimal, despite the dependence of these administrations on Aboriginal labour for economic viability. Aboriginal labour was the foundation of the internal economies of reserves and missions. Yet the wider labour market also had the advantage of their cheap labour.

The work histories of two former Mona Mona residents illustrates differences in the industrial experience of Aboriginal employees and the effect this had on the socio-economic status of men and women in the family.

1. See Morris 1983.

For the missionaries of Mona Mona religious conversion included the benefits of the Protestant work ethic in honest, manual labour (see chapter 4). But the implications of institutionalised labour differed for Aboriginal women and men in north Queensland. The difference is important. Eventually the context of Aboriginal women's domestic work influenced government policy decisions on the promotion of specific ideals of gender relations within institutionalised Aboriginal families. The work Aboriginal women undertook in European homes challenged the wider society's notion of a social order where Aborigines were socially and economically subordinate.

Aboriginal labour in north Queensland

The Queensland Native Labourers Protection Act legislated employment conditions and industrial practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander labour as early as 1884. This was the beginning of a series of legislative attempts to regulate the wages and employment conditions of Aboriginal employees throughout the State and by 1896 these efforts culminated in the Government's commissioned report by Archibald Meston on the condition of Queensland's Aborigines and the delivery of government aid to them. Meston's report recommended a plan of management aimed at specific problems associated with Aboriginal communities including strategies to control the economic and social exploitation of Aboriginal workers. Following the tabling of Meston's report in 1897, an immediate implementation of the recommendations was to legislate to protect Aborigines through social segregation and the promotion of separate development as a basis of the welfare policy.

By acknowledging Meston's recommendations the 1897 Act concentrated on Aboriginal employment. Legislation required Europeans to have permits to employ Aborigines, and Aborigines also needed a permit of entitlement to work. The Act codified Aboriginal working conditions with respect to wages, payment (whether in rations, clothes, tobacco), accommodation and sickness benefits. Legislators were clearly ambivalent about how to protect Aboriginal labour from exploitation and considered that work in controlled, isolated

environments would achieve this.² Outside major urban centres the Act was enforced by the local Police Protectors. However legislated conditions were not always practised. Despite specifying cash wages in the legislation Aboriginal workers were rarely paid cash. Instead, it was a general, if informal practice, to pay Aborigines with rations. The consequence of segregation was to restrict Aboriginal economic opportunities and to harness their cheap labour to capitalist enterprises (such as the cattle industry) and to institutionalise them as workers. Enforcing the legislation actually deprived Aborigines of a market value for their labour.³

In hindsight, the legislation on conditions and wage rates appears poor. But at the time the Queensland legislation was in the forefront of social reform (see Rowley 1972(b)). In fact, from the 1890s until the 1940s Queensland was one of the few State governments to legally guarantee certain categories of Aboriginal workers a minimum working wage. Other States considered the Queensland model of labour relations and conditions for indigenous workers both enlightened and progressive, and it was adopted in Western Australia (after 1905) and the Northern Territory of South Australia in the 1920s. These States adopted the Queensland system after Dr. Roth reviewed existing industrial conditions for Aboriginal labour and made recommendations for change. Queensland's legislation, as Rowley points out, was at that time in the forefront of "colonial style arrangements for protection of native labour" (Rowley 1972(b)).

-
2. Concern over opium proliferation amongst Aborigines was a primary motive in the desire to protect and isolate. One informant was told by her father that some of the adult men at the Granite Creek camp, Mareeba, smoked opium. A Mona Mona resident originally from Pt. Douglas, confirmed that he knew opium was available from incoming ships to the port. Protectorate reports to the Queensland Parliament were concerned over Aboriginal involvement with opium. See Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 11. They were particularly worried about opium use by Aborigines in north Queensland around Cardwell, Cairns, Cooktown, Herberton and Innisfail; all towns which had Chinese populations. The Mona Mona mission was opened amid government hopes that it "will assist greatly in suppressing the traffic in these districts". Chief Protector's Report 1913:1023.
 3. See Rowley 1972(a):157-187 who provides a good history of the state bureaucratization of Aboriginal labour in Queensland through the Act.

Segregation and exploitation

In the previous chapter I explained how Mona Mona combined assistance from church and State in dealing with Aboriginal displacement and the subsequent impoverished lifestyles of town camps. Most legislators in the late 19th century believed that Queensland's Aborigines were not likely to survive the present changes to their traditional lifestyles and that missions and reserves on the frontiers of settlements would mediate the hardships of this final phase. However, by the 1920s the Queensland government's own statistics showed that the State's Aboriginal population was far from dying out. Indeed, the government statistics for 1918 recorded a population growth amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders which outstripped that of Queensland's Europeans. Fears developed of the State's Aborigines swamping the smaller European population and policies were formulated in which Church and State collaborated to remove and contain Aborigines at specific locations, under the control of either the State, or agents empowered by the State.

Fear of racial inter-mixing was also a factor in the removals. Indeed, in Queensland's rural frontier towns daily contact between Aborigines and Europeans was already a fact of life by the late 19th century. Concern about inter-racial contact surfaced in the 1914 Protector's Report, although Meston had earlier commented on the same problem.⁴ By 1914 government statistics fuelled alarm by quantifying the imbalances in the Aboriginal sex ratio which suggested that in some protectorates not all Aboriginal men could have Aboriginal wives. With this evidence the State government argued that sexual relationships between Aboriginal women and European men were likely to increase. Concern over miscegenation was mixed with disquiet over costs to government of welfare where aid was incrementally linked to the size of the Aboriginal population. An increase in dependents amongst the Aboriginal population would pose additional financial problems on Treasury. In 1919-1920 Queensland had a total of 13,000 Aborigines; 4000 of this figure were supporting themselves in employment, 4000 lived on reserves and missions and the remaining

4. See Queensland Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 2.

5000 were the dependents of workers, or lived as "nomads."⁵ By 1925 according to the census, the State's Aborigines numbered a total population of 17,914, with a "full blood" population of 15,075 and a "half caste" population of 2,839. Of the 15,075 "full blood" Aborigines in the State, 3,505 were children under 12 years old.⁶ Not only did these statistics firmly contradict the notion of the Aboriginal population dying out, but they fuelled other fears of social disorder associated with a rapidly increasing Aboriginal population.

By 1914 legislation enforced racial segregation through strict control of racial intermarriage. Marriage between Aboriginal women and men of other races was only legally possible under a permit system.⁷ But in fact marriage between different cultures was prohibited as a general rule; only a limited number of exceptions were granted. The restrictions on marriage were supposed to curtail growth in the "half caste" population; although most births were not the result of legitimate or even welcome relationships with European men. Indeed legislation to prohibit intermarriage had little effect on social practice. Hence, between 1920 and the 1940s the size of the "half caste" population continued increasing dramatically. By 1940 the Protector's Report on the total Queensland Aboriginal population of 15,149, listed "full bloods" as 8,985, with 6,164 "half caste" Aborigines (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1940).⁸

Control of Aboriginal reproduction was also an important corollary of European control over Aboriginal physical labour. From the 1890s onwards Aboriginal men were in high demand as pastoral workers. In 1919 legislation for a special minimum wage of 40 shillings per week was introduced for male Aboriginal pastoral workers. At the same time, female Aboriginal cooks on pastoral stations were entitled to

5. See Queensland Parliamentary Records 1919-20, vol. 2.

6. See Queensland Parliamentary Records 1925, vol. 1.

7. See Queensland Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 3.

8. In 1940 for the first time a separate census was taken for Torres Islander people.

between 15 and 25 shillings per week.⁹ However both wages were only two-thirds that of the Queensland pastoral award for non-Aboriginal pastoral workers. Moreover, the wage was negotiated independently of the Aboriginal workers by the Department of the Chief Protector and the Australian Workers' Union. There was no direct consultation between these bodies and Aboriginal workers.¹⁰ The negotiations revealed the industrial powerlessness of the Aboriginal worker, even in the pastoral industry where their labour was at a premium. Although legislators hoped to serve the interests of Aboriginal workers, they were confused as to the best means of doing so. Administrators believed, on the one hand, that Aborigines needed protection because they were less responsible with money, and on the other hand, that Aboriginal labour was of a lower standard than that of the European worker. It was thus unclear what a guaranteed minimum wage and regulated conditions were designed to do for the status of the Aboriginal worker.

The district protector regulated Aboriginal employment conditions at the local level. Employment terms were specified in contracts, although "Sign on" agreements were the usual basis of male Aboriginal employment in Queensland under the 1905 Act and had the official support of Roth, then the Chief Protector. The stipulations of the contract system were: ¹¹

1. A signed contract with the individual worker as the basis of the labour exchange;

2. Single men were to leave their village, community, reserve, or mission for the period of the contract; they would receive by way of remuneration, a minimum wage, rations and issue of certain goods. At

9. Even by 1966 in Western Australia and the northern South Australia no cash wage or base rate was required for Aboriginal employees. By contrast, the weekly wage scales for Queensland Aboriginal workers exceeded those paid to plantation workers in P.N.G.

10. This hailed the start of a tradition of separate negotiation of industrial awards for Aborigines worked out by the relevant industrial authority and the State government department administering the Aboriginal communities.

11. The conditions of the contract were the same as those operating in Papua New Guinea. See Rowley 1972(b):226-241.

the termination of the contract they had to return to the reserve, mission, etc.

3. Contracts in Queensland were of 12 months duration and negotiated through the superintendent or Protector.¹²

However legislated wages and conditions covered only Aboriginal men. Neither Aboriginal women nor Aboriginal children, including young boys, had any form of industrial protection in their conditions of employment. Compulsory contract agreements were not necessary for either boys under 18 years or for women.¹³ Even where women worked alongside Aboriginal men in the cattle industry or in fisheries they seldom had the benefits of wage Awards. Writers such as Hartwig (1978) have pointed out other anomalies in this practice of industrial protection.

Hartwig (1978:134) argues that institutionalized Aboriginal labour in Queensland was a situation where Aborigines "performed some of the functions of a colonial migrant labour force on a casual basis". He likens Aboriginal labour on these terms to "a system of migrant labour with the contract of service and the single man's wage" (Hartwig 1978:350). Certainly legislation did little to limit informal exploitation. Cash wages were rarely directly paid to the Aboriginal worker; instead pay in hand was commonly rations (tea, sugar, flour, meat) with additional items like clothing and blankets sometimes added as a bonus. Hartwig (1978) argues that the context of power in labour relations has changed little for Queensland Aborigines since State legislation of Aboriginal employment persists in the post-colonial context. He argues that the same principle of indirect payment in the State's use of social services to Aborigines continues while welfare is considered a form of "indirect wages". He believes the wider society in Queensland perpetuates the colonial attitudes in their negotiations with Aboriginal employees. Furthermore, while the State provides all the usual social services to Aborigines, (family support, unemployment benefit, educational grants and so on), these are actually paid for by

12. In a mission community like Mona Mona the superintendent was also the legal Protector and guardian of the Aboriginal residents.

13. See Rowley 1972(b): 234 ff.

Aborigines on "single wages" through income tax. Hartwig claims that until 1965, contributions to the Welfare Fund for Aborigines in Queensland were not only compulsory, they came from gross earnings and were billed as a tax. The same Fund also accrued income from sales in stores on settlements; produce sold on reserves and from fines imposed on Aborigines on reserves. In this way, Queensland Aborigines effectively and directly subsidized their own welfare programs.

A similar story of exploitation by appropriation of unpaid Aboriginal wages is documented amongst pastoral workers in the Northern Territory. As in Queensland, the government required the cash earnings of part-Aboriginal workers to be held in a trust fund as a protection from mismanagement by the worker or misappropriation by non-Aborigines. Often the fears were conflated as an innate Aboriginal vulnerability to greed, whether of their own or that of relatives. Few Aboriginal people had real access to their earnings once it was deposited into the State trust account. McGrath (1980:1987) points out how lucrative the system became for the Treasury in the Northern Territory:

In 1918, with 500 Aborigines' wages unclaimed, 1202 pounds was consequently transferred to Treasury; in the 1930s the credit balance totalled over 3000 pounds. Aborigines were unaware that anything other than food and clothing was available to them ... The trust fund did distinguish itself by being one of the few schemes where the Territory government made a profit (McGrath 1987:138-139).

Without wages Aboriginal workers were powerless in the wider society where their position could only be that of an impoverished dependent. Unfortunately, it seemed to be in the interests of many administrators to have them remain so. Some Queensland Aborigines were unhappy with such control over their earnings and in 1917 individual Aboriginal workers protested to the Queensland Chief Protector against the restricted access to their own wages. Many of these workers accused the government of using their wages to maintain the missions and reserves. Although the accusation was denied by the Chief Protector, he did admit to Parliament that in a case of death with no dependents or beneficiaries, the estate of the individual is granted to

the Aboriginal Benefit Fund (a State government agency).¹⁴ Nevertheless, the control over Aboriginal lives under the contracts was absolute. As late as 1966 after Mona Mona closed, the bank accounts of Aboriginal workers were still handled by the local Protector who decided on the deposit individuals should make each week. Withdrawals, then as before, were only possible through the Protector.¹⁵

Employers were also unhappy with the regulated wage system, although their reasons differed from those of their disgruntled employees. Employers flaunted government regulations on rates of pay and working conditions. Where some tried to renege on wage agreements they bound their workers to them through other means; for example, in some of the remote areas employers argued that it was impossible to attract Aboriginal labour without the inducement of alcohol. Moreover in the fishing industry it was an established practise to pay men, women and children with alcohol.¹⁶

In fact most classes of Aboriginal workers continued to be vulnerable to industrial exploitation in spite of legislation. For both men and women the status of their labour was a fraught issue. In 1919 the Chief Protector commented to Parliament on the low value placed on Aboriginal labour by many European employers who treated their staff no better than "stock or working plant". Conditions for male Aboriginal workers were never good, despite the high demand for their skills. Pastoral work attracted many Aboriginal men, but like other contracted employment they had little job security because work was seasonal and the demand for labour fluctuated. In the long-term, the isolation of pastoral work limited the employee's access to industrial education and opportunities to improve their economic status. Men were also

-
14. In 1986 this rule was invoked in a case in Kuranda, where an Aboriginal woman who was reared by adoptive parents was denied an inheritance.
 15. Although Mona Mona residents were no longer living under mission rule by 1963 their local pastor performed a similar function of banking for individuals and families. The local police and government were keen to appoint him as Protector, but the Seventh Day Adventist church was far from keen and refused to participate.
 16. Like opium, the addictive property of alcohol was used to the advantage of employers to keep Aboriginal labour on side.

separated from their families for long periods by pastoral work. But while the separation between the male Aboriginal worker and his family was especially common in Queensland pastoral work, it contrasts with the situation McGrath describes for Aboriginal pastoral workers in the Northern Territory (see McGrath 1987).¹⁷

Aborigines with work permits numbered 263 Aboriginal men and 78 women during 1914-15 in the Cairns-Mareeba district. All of them were in permanent employment. In 1915 the figures for employed men had increased slightly (to 291 men) and decreased for women (to 74 women).¹⁸ By the 1920s in the Kuranda, Mareeba and Mt. Carbine districts, Aborigines on pastoral properties were employed under indentured labour contracts arranged through Mona Mona mission, although Collins (1984:40) says that this was never a common practice of the Mona Mona administration. Aboriginal labour on Mona Mona was usually fully employed within the mission, hence in 1938, only three men and their families from Mona Mona were working elsewhere under agreements. Generally, the contracted worker's family remained behind in the care of the mission.

Aboriginal workers with Exemption tickets were entitled to live outside the missions and reserves and to receive cash wages. Exemption tickets were awarded by the local Protector to individuals who were thought capable of living as an assimilated Aboriginal in the wider community. Very few Aborigines in Queensland were given Exemptions between 1915 and the 1930s. However, during the Second World War Exemptions were used to free pools of Aboriginal labour from reserves and missions and place them at the service of the State and the wider community. Labour shortages in agricultural industries particularly were solved in this way. Mobile gangs of Aboriginal men were assigned to work in areas around the State. Yarrabah men, for example, worked on the Atherton Tablelands harvesting crops. While other gangs of Aboriginal workers covered an area from Atherton to

17. Collmann (1978) argues that Aboriginal men had personal and social problems because of long-term separation from their families because of working conditions.

18. See Queensland Parliamentary Records 1916-17, vol. 3.

Murgon. In 1944-45 the Protector's Report estimated that half the number of Aborigines employed in agricultural work for the war had a majority of workers from government reserves.¹⁹ During this time exempted Aborigines filled the population gaps of small rural towns caused by enlistment.

But work outside the institutions made for Aboriginal discontent with the status quo. If Aboriginal workers wanted better opportunities for themselves, the State was also forced to concede the increasing importance of their labour to the economy of the State. The value of Aboriginal labour can be gauged through comparison of an Aboriginal worker's earnings prior to World War II and by the end of the War. After 1946 improvement was also evident in the decreasing gap in savings-bank balances between Aborigines and European workers; on average, an Aboriginal worker now had £20 in his bank, while an average European worker in a primary industry, had £57.²⁰ Yet the majority of Queensland Aborigines were expected to return to institutional life once the war finished. Some exempted Aboriginal servicemen were forced to return their Exemption tickets in order to be able to live on reserves with their families, since consorting between exempted Aborigines and those under the Act was still illegal. Of course within the institutions there was no effective cash economy and Aboriginal earnings were circumscribed.

Queensland Protectors' Reports between 1900-1940s show mixed feelings about the Aboriginal worker. It was clear that the protective legislation of 1897 had created two kinds of Aboriginal workers; those under the Act and those freed from the Act. The basic difference was that Aborigines employed outside the conditions of the Act were entitled to the wage Awards won by unions. On the other hand, Aborigines under the Act were subject to individually negotiated labour contracts according to standards and conditions set by the State government. But enforcement of industrial law was not always practicable. Distance from administrative centres hindered government effectiveness, while the employer's power to determine conditions was greatest where the

19. Queensland Parliamentary Records 1944-45.

20. Queensland Parliamentary Records 1946, vol. 2.

Aboriginal worker and his family lived on the property, or where the terms of contracts were negotiated through a third party, as was common on missions and reserves. On Mona Mona between 1920 and the 1940s the administration dealt with requests from the district for rural workers or domestic staff.

Apart from Award wages, workers' compensation was another pressing issue for Aboriginal workers. Aboriginal employees on missions were disqualified from making claims under workers' compensation on a technicality whereby missions were considered to be providing relief and industrial instruction, and this made Aboriginal workers government employees. Divisions like these, alongside the separation of union and non-union labour established Aborigines as a different class of worker from non-Aborigines. Unions showed some concern about the role of Aboriginal labour in the wider community. In 1914 unions tried to enrol Aborigines as members but were discouraged from doing so by the colonial government.²¹ Union concern, however, was partly a fear about cheap Aboriginal labour under-cutting existing industrial gains. Cane cutting, for example, was regulated by an Award wage. Hence, work for Aboriginal men in the sugar cane industry was "closed shop" (that is they were excluded) by 1922 due to union action and the application of an Award wage. Cane farmers, on the other hand, wished to continue using cheap Aboriginal labour. In 1925 the Queensland government commented that "some Aboriginal house boys were used illegally for chop chop on sugar farms" (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1925, vol. 1). Both the government and the unions considered Aboriginal cheap labour to be "scab labour" and set about discouraging it in the sugar industry.

21. Queensland Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 2.

Resultant social change

The social impact of Aboriginal women working in European homes was not anticipated by either government or church. The employment of women as domestics had repercussions for government policies, although the impact on conventional patterns of gender relations within the reserves and missions was particularly pronounced.

Work outside reserves and missions fundamentally challenged both church and State models of Aboriginal gender relations. Limited though such work was, Aboriginal people had contact with new social possibilities and many Aborigines, especially women, were not content to resume the roles assigned them on the mission or in reserve communities mapped out as wives to Aboriginal men and mothers of families. Both church and State were conservative about Aboriginal independence and in various ways set out to impose their own class views of a "proper" order in the relations between men and women in Aboriginal social life.

What disturbed government administrators was the potential in women's employment for social mobility through marriage; a potential not available to Aboriginal men. By the end of the First World War the differential benefits of employment were obvious. But changing the demand for Aboriginal labour was not so easy. The labour shortages in primary industries in Queensland during the 1914-1918 war created a lasting public demand for cheap labour. Many employers found Aboriginal labour essential to their industry and were loathe to concede their reabsorption into the missions and reserves after the War.²² In the western districts of Queensland stock owners were willing to pay double rates for Aboriginal workers, so necessary was their labour. Popularity and demand only increased the ambivalence of government administrators about the status of independent Aboriginal workers. While administrators acknowledged the justice of a standard wage for Aboriginal stockmen, they continued to suggest that Aborigines should

22. See also Berndt C. and R. (1987) where they show the importance of the Aboriginal labour force to the Vestey's pastoral enterprise in the Northern Territory.

not be paid wages which allowed them to compete with white workers if the latter were available:

As a rule, the demand for Aboriginal labour only arises where white labour is not available, as it is only in odd cases it is equal in value ... (Protector's report to the Queensland Parliament 1917, vol. 3).

Of course, the low cost of Aboriginal labour accounted for much of the popularity. Where wages paid to Aboriginal employees were not required to conform with those paid to Europeans, employers capitalized on the savings. They ignored the uniform scale of wages instituted in 1915 to reduce anomalies in Aboriginal wages and paid as they saw fit. Government was not however blameless. Their concern for the status of the Aboriginal worker had its own mark of economic self-interest.

Apart from standardization of rates of pay, the introduction of wage banking for Aboriginal employees was expected to defray government costs of Aboriginal welfare through the concept of self-support.²³ Banking was supposed to help with the process of social change and eventual Aboriginal assimilation. The Protectorate report of 1917 to the Queensland Parliament explained the objective to "educate and raise (Aborigines) to higher planes in the social scale" (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1916-17, vol. 3).

In 1917, just two years after the introduction of the wage-banking package, the government proudly estimated that 34% of the total Aboriginal population in Queensland had wage trust accounts.²⁴ Such a high proportion of wage-earning Aborigines was hailed by government as a measure of Aboriginal self-sufficiency. Whether this

23. Banking wages was not successful in helping Aborigines get off government sustenance because their access to the income was not freely available. Generally the amount of cash a mission or reserve worker received of their earnings was equivalent to "pocket money" (see Thomson 1989:66). Moreover, one writer concluded that "wages rose slowly but by the 1936, it was estimated that in Queensland about seventy per cent of the cost of administering the Department of Native Affairs was paid from wages collected and held in trust" (Lockley 1957, quoted in Thomson 1989:87).

24. Queensland Parliamentary Records 1917, vol. 3.

was so in fact has to be assessed against the actual practice of the benefits scheme. Of the wages collected and deposited, 60% were returned to Aboriginal depositors as withdrawals for clothing, property relief, amusement, etc.²⁵ However, all withdrawals were subject to the approval of the local Protector and his discretion as to what was a legitimate request or expense. Given that local Protectors were often policemen, mission superintendents or station managers, safeguards against manipulations of the banking system were not water-tight. Indeed, on stations and missions with stores, cash earnings could be off-set against shopping on credit.²⁶ In this way, both missions and property owners had further potential to increase their incomes at the expense of Aboriginal debt. Aboriginal wages were also likely to be manipulated, even appropriated as income by struggling missions or stations.²⁷ The process was relatively simple. Station owners, for example, could deduct clothing costs, etc from wages they held in trust. Inevitably the cash proportion of earnings was rarely seen by the Aboriginal worker.²⁸ State officials justified similar appropriations with the argument that "natives have a well-known habit of squandering their money often before it is earned" (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1915, vol. 3). These arguments sit uneasily with the claims for the success of the banking and wage package. Few Aboriginal workers from Mona Mona interviewed about their experiences of work and

-
25. We also have the example from Yarrabah of a common practice of paying Aboriginal workers through accrued credit in the station or mission store. See Thomson 1989:66. See also Queensland Parliamentary Records 1917, vol. 3.
 26. McGrath, 1987:138 discusses this issue of wage labour particularly with reference to cattle station workers in the Northern Territory.
 27. Specific complaints about the use of Aboriginal wages for such purposes were made by Aborigines to the Chief Protector, but the accusations were denied (see Queensland Parliamentary Records 1917, vol. 3).
 28. A woman who grew up as a child at Mona Mona said her father was exempted before World War 2 and had worked at different jobs, on the railways, farm labour, etc. The money he earned was supposedly banked by his employers. However, when he died in 1972 he only had \$9.00 for each of his children. She wondered what happened to the rest of the earnings.

wages could remember reaping such benefits, even those who worked during the 1940s.²⁹

Aboriginal women as domestic workers

Gender experiences of the work place differed according to how their labour was valued. Sometimes the differences were mirrored as differences in the wages and conditions of Aboriginal employment. Yet Aboriginal men and women shared commonalities based on their essentially powerless and dependent industrial positions.

In Queensland the employment of Aboriginal women in intimate domestic settings eventually undermined the model of social stratification and differentiated gender roles outlined by legislators. Their idealized vision of Aboriginal men and women included sets of relationships based on the middle class ideal of the nuclear family. But the vision was both arbitrary and foreign to Aboriginal social life. It failed to take account of the incorporation by Aboriginal women of the new social and gender patterns familiar to them in their domestic employment. Domestic work did not "civilize" Aboriginal women in the way church and State intended. Queensland Protectorate reports of the 1920s repeatedly question the best way of dealing with rebellious female domestic workers refusing to return to their assigned places on missions and reserves. The socio-economic position these women wanted was one which neither State nor church was enthusiastic about. Both institutions rejected the idea of emancipation for Aboriginal women. Their opposition to women's social freedom centred on prohibiting marriage between Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal men.

In time legislators were aware that many Aboriginal women refused to rejoin their menfolk on reserves and settlements, but they associated the resistance with the development of mixed race communities. The conclusion is surprising given the knowledge which should have been available about Aboriginal lives through the system of Protectors across the State. The Queensland government saw

29. People from Yarrabah mission quoted in Thomson (1989) similarly failed to receive their rightful wages. See Thomson (1989: 66, 83).

Aboriginal social problems as resolvable through political processes. This is clear in their legislation about employment for Aborigines.

The Queensland government considered labour as morally instructive. Honest work was thought to be a legitimate means of educating and assimilating Aborigines for a useful place in the wider community. Eventually the State government recognized that the kind of work Aboriginal people were doing was not ennobling; indeed unskilled manual labour had little or no scope for formal education or training. Work failed to help Aborigines assimilate because the status of the Aboriginal worker in colonial society remained that of a social outcast. The failure of work to benefit individuals was the failure by government to institute educational standards for Aboriginal workers. The Aboriginal male especially was equipped only for the most basic tasks and efforts to regulate industrial conditions had little effect because his labour remained nondescript and without industrial weight. Neither missions nor reserves endowed their charges with either the necessary skills or education to gain a place of any worth in colonial society. In most cases, including Mona Mona, education was often sacrificed for the benefits of Aboriginal labour. Queensland Parliamentary reports questioned how much Aboriginal employment in the wider society was in the best interests of the employees. In the Northern Territory the story was the same.

Very few attempts were made by stations to educate their workers in anything but job skills. Literacy, numeracy, money handling and such capacities would have enabled them to cope better in the towns ... Pidgin English was spoken to black workers, even though employers knew they could understand ordinary English. This was an effective mechanism to ensure that blacks stayed in "their place" in the wider world (McGrath 1987:104).

Whatever immediate costs to government relief were met by non-government institutions educating Aboriginal residents, government increasingly realized that the social costs of the process had been ignored.

Throughout the 1920s the problem of Aboriginal employment exercised administrators. The limitations of existing employment policies were illustrated by women's work experiences. Neither the Queensland nor the Territory governments found that work necessarily

"civilized" Aborigines in the way they hoped. McGrath (1987) writes of the vision domestic work was supposed to offer Aboriginal women on Northern Territory cattle stations: ³⁰

Domestic training was considered an ideal means for "uplifting" the part-Aboriginal woman, for it taught black women the observance of British white cultural norms and middle-class etiquette - at least while in the employer's home (McGrath 1987:60).

The same gap between the vision and the reality occurred in both States. This may have been a consequence of both States adopting the same legislation to regulate the conditions of Aboriginal employment. Other similarities occur. Northern Territory administrators had the same fears as Queensland officials about inter-racial unions and their consequences for the relative size of the European and Aboriginal populations:

In 1911 there were 58 "half-castes" and 3310 white and Asian people and by 1922 about 500 "half-castes" and 3729 other non-Aborigines in the Territory. Growth in this sector of the population was out-stripping the whites (McGrath 1987:90-91).

Between 1900 and 1920s in Queensland Protectorate reports constantly assess the State's ability to control Aboriginal women's labour and reproductive potential. Although the State had not anticipated the social problems of domestic employment, social change was likely given the context of domestic work. Many Aboriginal women were employed to live and work in a European family and as they reared children and cared for the home they were exposed to the values and practices of middle class European culture. This knowledge enhanced their own opportunities for education and social mobility. They enjoyed relative independence in these households and had access to some of the goods and services of the dominant society. In many respects, their positions in service paralleled that of other non-Aboriginal women working outside their own class (see Hunt 1986).

30. McGrath's comparative research is also appropriate because the biographies of Queensland Aborigines are less accessible and less publicly documented than similar material from the Northern Territory.

Some Aboriginal women were conscious of the personal opportunities domestic work offered. A former Mona Mona woman recounted with evident pride, the story of her mother who was in domestic service on a cattle station around Georgetown and Normanton in western Queensland. Although her mother was formally unschooled she was a skilled woman in domestic arts and crafts. These skills were acquired in domestic service. On the stations where she worked her mother was responsible for the household washing and cleaning. These jobs was considered prestigious and higher in status than domestic jobs such as cooking, or general kitchen work.³¹ The daughter was proud of her mother's achievements and the status she achieved in the station hierarchy. As children the woman's daughters helped with the less demanding household tasks like dusting, but their mother also taught them the household skills and knowledge and in this way they acquired some of her skills. (Later when their mother died in childbirth the children were sent to Mona Mona mission. This was about 1932. Their father was a station cook and moving about with his work which made it impossible to maintain a settled family life.)

In this family story we can see, in a simple way, a contrast between women's working conditions and that of their menfolk. Men worked in circumstances which kept them apart from European life and in working conditions reminiscent of bush life. Although it can be said that life in the bush offered independence to the individual, even status in the stock camp, pastoral work did not improve the structural position of Aboriginal male labour. Nor did it educate them in knowledge of the wider society. McGrath (1987) noted a similar dichotomy for gender in work experiences in the Territory.

[Women] ... had greater chances of mobility than the men, for they were allowed into the homestead, the bastion of white domination, and had the opportunity of sometimes useful unions with white men (McGrath 1987:54).

31. Thomson (1989:110-111) and McGrath (1987) tell of the hierarchy which existed amongst the Aboriginal employers on stations according to the jobs they fulfilled. Also see Holthouse (1989) for historical background on Aboriginal workers on cattle stations in north Queensland.

Comparatively speaking, women's work was empowering because it gave women greater access to the source of European goods and power. However, their new status in the European household sometimes involved a compromise in personal freedom. Aboriginal domestics on Northern Territory cattle stations faced this dilemma:

Jobs with more status and responsibility often meant less personal freedom. "Kitchen girls" helped the European, Chinese or Aboriginal cook, their main boss. "Cook" and "main Cook" were positions of high status, and women such as Elsey of Willeroo and Chapman were proud of their cookery skills. Such women ... knew little of their traditional culture because most of their lives were spent with white families (McGrath 1987:66).

The Queensland government was well-aware of Aboriginal women's potential for social and sexual intimacy with European men. The sexual dimension of Aboriginal women's domestic work was often a significant factor in their ability to access resources and to gain status outside the Aboriginal community. McGrath comments on this in the Territory where,

Aboriginal women learnt how to manipulate the system: they were astutely aware of the extra personal and family advantages of being the boss's "stud", for it could mean protection and economic security (McGrath 1987:82).

Aboriginal women who were able to use such opportunities were reluctant to return to their former impoverished institutional lives. The Aboriginal women McGrath interviewed were, in retrospect, ambivalent about the sexual associations between themselves and white men. Yet McGrath paints an advantageous picture of a relationship with the boss; a view which contrasts with other historical models of Aboriginal domestic work as wholly exploitative of the female Aboriginal worker. McGrath's informants revealed the extent of Aboriginal self-interest as workers in the pastoral industry, including the conscious knowledge amongst Aboriginal women of the gains they, as women, could make through their position in the station household and as sexual partners to white station managers (see McGrath 1987:68-123; Evans 1975).

McGrath acknowledges the ongoing dialogue between Aboriginal women and white men about the nature of the sexual partnerships:³²

Men and women alike explain how they helped organize prostitution for profit. It is more common for men to speak of violent resistance used against the white men rather than of the advantages of the trade. This is probably because women gained more from the transaction than the men: economic rewards for the family plus personal extras and an alternative to their Aboriginal husbands. In more long-term relationships it meant many things were ensured: the right to remain on tribal territory, security for children and older parents. The men have less to reminisce about (McGrath 1987:89-90).

Domestic work and the mixed race issue

Between 1920 and 1940 the majority of Aboriginal women in Queensland were employed principally in the domestic service industry. They were employed to work for families in private homes, or in the residential quarters of hotels.³³

The 1920s saw the peak in the demand for Aboriginal domestic workers. It was not unusual to find, as in the Chief Protector's Report for 1927 that the demand for Aboriginal domestic servants exceeded their supply.³⁴ The Protectorate was in favour of sending Aboriginal women to country appointments as a protection against the vices of town life. But the constant demand for their domestic services eventually made administrators uneasy about their continued employment even in rural contexts. To the administrator these working women were potentially responsible for the "half caste" population.

-
32. There is some room for criticism of the term "prostitution" for the relationships between Aboriginal women and European men since subjective ascriptions of the sexual relation had a range of interpretations from rape to a gift of hospitality and even genuine affection.
 33. For example, the managers of the Pacific hotel in Cairns hired a domestic worker from Mona Mona. According to the informant, the manager and his wife went up to Mona Mona and chose a woman from amongst a bevy of women. The local doctor and jeweller in Cairns also hired women from Mona Mona.
 34. By comparison, non-Aboriginal women employed as domestics received a salary of between 15/- and 30/- per week, depending upon status position.

Even more worrying was the threat to the established social order of Aboriginal women becoming the respected partners of European rather than Aboriginal men. Legislators were adamant that women's "only legitimate future [was] marriage with men of their own race." But cases appear in the Protectorate reports of Aboriginal women who, after years of domestic service, preferred not to marry Aboriginal men and some refused to marry altogether. The original intention of protecting Aboriginal girls from exploitation by placing them in domestic service was not working out as planned. Domestic service was a responsible act by government to counter the cruelty of the tribal marriage system which wed young girls to old men. It was also hoped that by removing Aboriginal women from the conditions and life of fringe camps, exploitation by unscrupulous white men would be avoided. However, experience showed that women were just as vulnerable to sexual exploitation in domestic service, with the added danger of the exploitation taking place in the privacy of the man's own home.

Other hopes pinned on domestic service to solve social problems were soon dashed. Domestic work did not improve women's skills and fitness for marriages with Aboriginal partners. Although the State considered Aboriginal men to be women's natural partners, these men were working on cattle stations and in remote rural areas and could match neither the increasing sophistication of their women working in towns and cities, nor women's knowledge of the wider society. Young women in domestic service showed "a taste for town life" and rebelled at the idea that they should be meek and mild, and dependent on their menfolk. Administrations floundered in the face of women's challenge to the ordered model of an institutionalised social world determining gender relations. Women, as the administration realised had a pivotal role in the anticipated social change:³⁵

Aboriginal women will be of greater benefit to the State as clean, healthy wives of men than as solutions to domestic servant problems ... Such a system [domestic service] does little towards improving the social condition of the race as a whole, for the individual though useful as a worker, still remains a pariah and

35. "Him" is used here in the generic sense; although I also think there is evidence of the Aboriginal worker only construed as male in the Protectorate's reports.

exposed to the evils from which it is desired to protect him (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1917, vol. 3).

The independence of Aboriginal women workers had detrimental consequences for Aboriginal men. The 1919 Chief Protector's Report claimed that Aboriginal woman's "natural mate has no real opportunity to raise himself " and every effort should be made to implement further policies of stringent isolation from the wider society in which such inequities could be rectified.³⁶ Government confronted their failures in the unsuccessful incorporation of Aboriginal labour into mainstream industrial relations: a growing "half caste"³⁷ population and women's social rebellion. Restrictions on intermarriage, mentioned earlier, was one legislative response to these challenges. Concern over control of sexual relationships between Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal men persisted in reports tabled in the Queensland Parliament between 1920-40. Desperation led to outrageous solutions like the suggestion to sterilize Aboriginal women. ³⁸ The Aboriginal Prostitution Act ³⁹ was tightened. Relationships between Aboriginal women (of full and mixed descent) with non-Aboriginal men were classified as sex offences. ⁴⁰ None of these actions made any appreciable change in the general situation of contact between the races. Thus in 1932 about 30% of all Aborigines of mixed descent had European parentage, with people of Asian, Polynesian and Kanaka parentage comprising the other group.⁴¹

36. Queensland Parliamentary Records 1919-20, vol. 2.

37. "Half caste" is an historical term which in the Parliamentary Annuals refers to Aboriginal people of mixed descent as different from those Aborigines who were of full descent. At that period government statistics often made even finer distinctions about race through racial inheritance. Such definitions are best viewed as historical curiosities.

38. Queensland Parliamentary Records, 1932, vol. 1.

39. See also Evans, R. 1984. "Soiled Doves:" Prostitution in colonial Queensland. In Daniels, K. (ed) *Too Much Hard Work*. Sydney: Fontana pp. 127-162.

40. Queensland Parliamentary Records 1935.

41. This division was defined by the Queensland government for the purpose of its census records. The division seems arbitrary and meant to separate European from non-European people.

On closer scrutiny the increasing population of "part Aboriginal" people was the result of wider definitions in the category of "Aboriginal" in Amendments to the Act. By 1934 legislated categories defining Aboriginality included "half castes" and "coloureds" who were not previously under the control of the Act.⁴² The Act now included any person of Aboriginal or Islander extraction living or associating with other Aborigines (and Islanders) or who warranted protection, in the opinion of the Protector. Amendments to the legal definition of "Aborigine" were also used to deepen the divisions and segregation. Administrators referred to "the half caste problem" as a "social blot" and argued that complete segregation of the races was the only suitable means of dealing with the situation. While restrictions increased, government faced public pressure to allow further Aboriginal employment. Government thus had to juggle their policy of Aboriginal segregation through isolation with demands from the electorates for Aboriginal workers. By World War II the demand forced government to once again redefine their typology of Aboriginality. Exemptions were also introduced under the Aboriginal Preservation and Protection Act of 1939 to free labour. Under the 1939 Act individuals of not more than 50% "Aboriginal blood", who were not associating with Aboriginal people or communities, could live and work as quasi-Europeans outside the legal restrictions associated with reserve life.

Little documentation of Aboriginal women's employment experiences appear in any detail in the Queensland Parliamentary Records between 1900 and 1940. Nor is there statistical material on their employment.⁴³ The dearth of information contrasts with the general interest from government and unions in male Aboriginal employment. Aboriginal women continued to work in circumstances where they were neglected, unregulated and non-unionized. However some attention was paid to their situation. A female Protector was first appointed in Queensland in 1913, but the position never had an effective role.⁴⁴ The position lacked the capacity to ameliorate

42. Queensland Parliamentary Records, 1935.

43. Chapter 3 dealt with discussion of the conditions of women's employment in north Queensland.

44. See Queensland Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 3.

conditions through legislation, nor was it possible to provide effective services for many female Aboriginal wards placed in domestic service. The appointment was understaffed given the size of the jurisdiction and the variety of situations on missions and reserves. In practice, the female Protector's effectiveness extended only to Aboriginal women in the Brisbane metropolitan area. With limited resources it was impossible to better the situation for women working in remote frontier districts. The Protector's office was not a service likely to be welcomed by Aboriginal women. Often the brief to supervise female employment terms and conditions was achieved only by intruding into a woman's personal life.

Case histories of Mona Mona women

Below are the stories of the working lives of several Aboriginal women from Mona Mona. Some worked on the mission and others held positions as domestic servants in European households.⁴⁵ These women speak of their own experiences and help fill gaps in the picture we have of Aboriginal women's work from the official records. Unfortunately, the paucity of the Seventh Day Adventist archives of Mona Mona's history were little help in piecing together the administrative background to their stories. However, first-hand accounts of Aboriginal women's experiences as domestics and stock workers in the pastoral industry⁴⁶ and on the colonial frontiers⁴⁷ show the commonalities of women's work experiences.

Of the three case studies, two show how work itself was defined by an external authority such as the mission and used to bolster their social control. In the other context discussed below Aboriginal women worked in conditions which were only possible because they held an Exemption ticket which gave them a kind of honorary European status.

45. I acknowledge with thanks the details of their own experiences supplied by Mrs. Lucy Levers, Mr. Lyn Hobbler and Mrs. Marita Hobbler, Mrs. Dulcie Newbury and Mrs. Elaine Chookie, Mrs. Enid Boyle and the late Mr. Jimmy Boyle, the late Mrs. Charity Mango and many others.

46. See McGrath (1987); also Berndt, R. and C. (1987) for the Northern Territory; also Barwick 1970; and White et al 1985.

47. See Hunt (1986) for Western Australia.

The material in all the case examples are personal descriptions and perceptions of work in northern Queensland in the period between 1920 and 1950.

Work on Mona Mona

On Mona Mona mission education for work began in the dormitory where the association between discipline and work was established in a child's dormitory routines. The mission placed importance on the role of the dormitory in socializing Aboriginal children into Protestant Christian values and world view. The dormitory also harnessed children's energies to the mission economy by involving them in tasks necessary to the daily life of the mission and through the morality of accepting responsibility for oneself and others. A child's apprenticeship began with small tasks such as setting the communal table and as they grew older further responsibilities were added such as housework in staff homes. Unmarried dormitory girls were expected to help with care of younger dormitory girls and the cleaning of their quarters. By the time they were 15 or 16 years old girls were engaged in full-time work on the mission doing manual labour in various areas of mission production and ranging from work in the kitchen to "grubbing," (the clearing of tree stumps from felled areas). Later, some of these women recalled that as young women they were expected to "work like men," referring to the heavy physical labour they had to do. For most mission girls, the transition from girlhood to womanhood was simply the transference of their labour from one group to another: from the mission "family" to a woman's own family. Tasks in the dormitory were part of the socialisation for the transition and emphasized the virtue of service to others and responsibility to the group. Hence, when the older dormitory girls cared for those who were younger than them, their later care of a spouse and children seemed a natural progression in their care of others.

Life on Mona Mona was organised according to a strict regime of work, discipline and worship. Several women declared they married to get away from the restrictions of dormitory life. Those who were fortunate enough enjoyed the freedoms of work outside the mission where they were employed with local Kuranda farming families. Work options on the mission were limited to repetitive, unskilled occupations (such as cleaners and gardeners), although selected women were

entrusted with supervisory positions in the dormitories as deputy matrons. The contingencies of establishing a mission meant that in the early years no positions of authority were available to Aboriginal people and labour shortages often subverted segregated work roles.⁴⁸

Geographic isolation and racial segregation was an important basis in Mona Mona's socialisation of residents and the emphasis placed on the centrality of family and Christian community. Sexual segregation was part of the mission's organizational pattern for daily life and work. The different occupations of mission men and women described men's work as manual, external and primarily agricultural activities, and for women work was centred on domestic activities. Men on Mona Mona were assigned to the different mission farms (e.g. Pineapple Hill, Bean Tree Hill, Hershy Farm, Piggy Farm and Kyber Farm). These farms were located on the northern fringes of the mission boundary. Some men cut and hauled timber for local markets. Both enterprises were important sources of income to the mission. Women's production activities centred on support and maintenance of domestic groups. They sewed and cooked for their families, tended the family's vegetable garden at the rear of each cottage and from the household cow processed the milk products for their kitchen table. Men and women's daily lives were separated by their round of assigned work. The pattern was deliberately created in conformity with the mission's standards of sexual virtue and Christian marriage. Falls from grace such as illegitimate pregnancies were treated as moral problems and firmly dealt with by exiling the women involved or quickly and quietly marrying them to the offender, thus preserving moral and religious ideals.⁴⁹

Changes in the life cycle were also used to demarcate work roles; for instance after marriage a woman's work focused on her own household and efforts to provide for them. Selected married women had

48. Litster (1975) in his history of education at the Mona Mona school, mentions the economic necessity of using the school-age children as labourers.

49. How the distinction in treatment was made I have no clear idea. The whole issue, 40 years later, continues to be treated with a good deal of shame for many of the individuals involved.

a public role, such as an assistant in the mission store or helping with the dormitory children.

A sexual division of labour also applied on cattle stations in the Northern Territory. However an important difference between Aboriginal women's roles on pastoral stations and on missions was that in the former, women workers often had a wide range of work options. Tasks for an Aboriginal domestic worker on cattle stations included heavy labouring such as carting water by hand as well as housework. Fencing and menial labouring was also considered a normal part of Aboriginal women's work:

On stations, no white person performed menial jobs, and "housework" was a blanket term referring to virtually any work distinct from the stock camp (McGrath 1987:53).

McGrath argues that work divisions amongst the Aborigines reflects a pre-colonial notion of sex roles maintained and perpetuated by Aboriginal men. In mission life there was less opportunity for Aboriginal men to assert such influence since the mission administration enforced their own division of labour for all workers according to sex, age and status. These distinctions were in addition to racial distinctions of "full bloods" and "half castes" as a basis for assigning people in a hierarchy of occupations. The more responsible or prestigious occupations (e.g. blacksmith or policeman) were monopolized by families who were not full-descent Aborigines. The tendency for the same families to monopolise these positions may have stemmed from their ability to politic successfully or from definite preferences shown them by the mission staff; how the pattern was established is not clear. However the consequence of the practice is the status hierarchy within the present Kuranda population. Resentment about the issue often surfaces in political rivalry amongst families and is played out in debates in community organizations like the Housing Co-operative and church over the distribution of resources (see chapter 5).

Norman Tindale's interviews with Mona Mona residents in 1938 record how unhappy many of them were with their working

conditions.⁵⁰ Rose, Grogan and Courtney expressed their anger at the devalued status of their labour on the mission. Mission "wages" paid lip service to the value of Aboriginal labour, although even in the wider economy the problem of differential value existed since Aboriginal men were paid only a third to half the white worker's wage despite their predominance in certain industries.⁵¹ Few of the industries employing Aboriginal labour were protected by awards or regulations.⁵² The extent of resident disaffection with the mission's manipulation of labour conditions was general as Tindale's notes show. Robert Rose explained that he had worked for a doctor in Atherton and only left his employ to join his father at Mona Mona. He earned seven shillings and six pence per week plus keep with his employer but told Tindale he had "no prospects now".⁵³ Robert's children were in the dormitory and the mission asked him to pay 1 pound per week for their keep. He felt this was exorbitant. Outside the mission he claimed to have maintained 4 children on ten shillings per week when wages were thirty shillings per week for food and family. Rose offered Tindale his own interpretation of the tie between the levy and the dormitory; "they won't let me take them [his children] because they get the money". There was certainly some truth to this. Apart from individual levies, Mona Mona, like other missions and reserves, claimed the endowment payment for each child in the dormitory as a contribution to defray living expenses. Individual payments accumulated as a lump sum and contributed to general mission revenue. The practice of the administration collecting endowment rather than the child's mother continued until 1956.

-
50. See Tindale's notes from the Harvard-Adelaide University Expedition, 1938-39. See Tindale's notes, vol. ii.
 51. Protector's Report 1951-52, vol. 2 estimated 60% of Aboriginal males in the state were employed in the cattle industry. A Chief Protector's Report 1946, vol. 2, estimated the value of Aboriginal labour prior to the Second World War as a third to a half a European wage.
 52. See Rowley, 1972(b) for discussion about the Aboriginal awards paid in the Queensland cattle industry as a benchmark case, adopted later by the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Mention of this has been made elsewhere in the chapter.
 53. Compare the rates of pay between Rose's 7/-6 per week with the 10/- monthly allowance given by the mission to their male timber workers-the most profitable revenue source of the mission economic enterprises.

Those men like Rose who earned a small cash wage (as the timber workers under contract to external businesses did) were likely to have expenses deducted. The majority of men and women earned only their keep. Apart from Rose the only other case to come to my attention of payment to the mission for care of children concerned a man employed as a blacksmith and stockman.

Phil Alpin expressed a philosophical frustration with mission lifestyles. He complained to Tindale:

I'd like to get out from this place and live like a white man but they won't let me go. I'd like to try it though (Alpin's comments recorded by Tindale).

Percy Courtney reflected in his complaints upon the contrasting quality of life between mission and non-mission living. He spoke openly to Tindale of the poor living and working conditions of Mona Mona. When he had access to cash he spent it on supplementary foods (bread, fruit, tea). The diet of the mission kitchen was restrictive:

Religion stops us from drinking tea; we get poor food ... the bread is rubbish, does not rise ... (Courtney's comments recorded by Tindale).

He felt mission conditions enforced impoverishment:

Clothes to be bought with 10/- per month we get for working in the scrub. The scrub tears them so badly we are never dressed properly, it is hard to keep money enough for other things (Courtney's recorded by Tindale).

Only one man spoke positively to Tindale about mission life. Toby Brim, living on the edge of the mission scrub, enjoyed a high standard of material life beyond that provided by the mission kitchen. For him the bush supplied "plenty of fruit and everything". His situation was likely to be an exception rather than the rule.

In 1938 all occupations on Mona Mona contributed to the mission's economy. Occupations recorded by Tindale emphasised the predominance of unskilled domestic or rural labouring: residents worked as timber-getters, ploughman, axe-man, lorry-driver, horse-breaker, carpenter, cattle-workers, mission-baker, and mission policeman. A few men worked under contract often on a seasonal basis,

as manual labourers outside the mission cutting cane on farms around Redlynch and Smithfield, near Cairns; harvesting tobacco near Mareeba or working as stockmen on pastoral stations. Some men had contracts to cut lawyer cane for furniture in return for a small cash wage. No Aboriginal workers received their full wage in cash, the greater percentage was banked on their behalf and held by the local Protector. At least one Aboriginal worker was aware of industrial exploitation and sought Tindale's help with redress. The man had worked as a stockman at Southedge station, in north-central Queensland but received no cash wage and no compensation for the lack of pay from his employers. The mission superintendent had no success in the recovery of the lost earnings although the man was assured that enquiries to both the Protector and to the district police had been made.

Originally the State government wanted Mona Mona to operate a coupon system for "paying" Aboriginal labour with the intention of helping people gain a sense of the value of their labour and to develop discriminating purchasing skills. The scheme never eventuated; in fact a cash wage was not paid on Mona Mona until the mid-1950s although some men on the mission earned a small cash wage by the end of the 1930s.⁵⁴ For the first forty years it was impossible to pay all workers in cash on Mona Mona because the mission's economy was so fragile. All manual labour was paid with rations.⁵⁵ However in more affluent times ration payments continued because mission staff lacked confidence in an Aboriginal ability to handle money correctly and so deliberately delayed schemes for the handling of cash (see Collins 1984).

54. The idea was quoted in the Cairns Post, 28/3/1913. But the program was never instituted.

55. See Thomson (1989). Yarrabah operated a system of credit for labour.

Work outside Mona Mona

A small number of Mona Mona women had employment contracts as domestic workers to middle class European families in the Atherton district and towns around Cairns prior to World War II.⁵⁶ Residents who worked outside the mission benefited the mission by lowering the costs of an individual's upkeep and job training.

Two women I interviewed had worked as domestics. They lived-in as household staff for the middle class families of business people in towns like Atherton, Cairns and Mareeba. Visiting the town as old women, one of them declared that "this town was nothing to us" (i.e. they were not intimidated by the town's sophistication) in the hey-day of their employment. The mission superintendent held the major portion of their wage and controlled their savings accounts for them. They received a small portion of the wage as cash in hand. The terms of the employment contract were not always understood by the employee. Thirty years later one woman still had no idea what happened to her wages. Neither contract conditions nor payment procedures were explained to her by the mission superintendent at the time of her engagement.⁵⁷ Moreover, she felt inhibited from asking questions or seeming to disagree with the superintendent's authority or with established procedure.⁵⁸

Employment contracts were usually negotiated for periods of 12-24 months and settled after discussion between the mission administration and the prospective employer. The employee was cursorily consulted only in the latter stages of the process immediately prior to their actual placement. One young woman, born on Mona Mona and going straight from the dormitory into external employment for the

56. I met one woman who developed a close familial relationship with her employers, so much so that 44 years later she still "worked" for them even taking holidays with them.

57. Contract employment as a way of hiring Aboriginal women as domestic servants was especially popular in the 1930s in Queensland.

58. I was told by former Mona Mona residents that individuals who disagreed or challenged the authority of the superintendent in any way, were shipped off to Palm Island as a disciplinary measure.

first time, remembered how frightened she was during her first days with her employer. She cried constantly, but was told that she would "just have to get used to it."

Mabel first left the mission for domestic employment in Atherton at 20 years of age. Often marriages between young men and women from the dormitories occurred at this age. Mabel, however, preferred to work and was one of the first women from Mona Mona to be employed outside the mission. She kept house and cared for children of middle class shop-keepers and professionals, in both Atherton and Cairns. She considered that she raised the children of her employers and boasted of the complaints from parents that the children listened only to Mabel and wanted to sleep in Mabel's bed in preference to their own. Apart from child-care she also cooked the evening meal, cleaned and did general housework in these homes.

Exempted labour

The following experiences of an exempted Aboriginal worker from Mona Mona refer to the period between the 1950s and the early 1960s. The woman concerned married on the mission in 1943 and her first son was born in 1944; by 1950, she had three children. Before her marriage Janice had worked on farms in the Atherton district milking dairy cows and helping with other manual work such as fencing and digging holes for posts. The mission had arranged her employment. When her youngest child was 5 years old she decided to leave Mona Mona.⁵⁹ This was about 1954/5:

Well I'm getting fed up with the mission. Well I wanted to work. I wanted to bring my kids up my way. If you wanted to go fishing, well, you had to ask to go to town and you have to come home a certain time and if you don't, well, you get into trouble. So I thought I'd leave the mission, and I got exempt.

Once she received her Exemption she lived with her parents, also Exemptees, in Kuranda. Janice worked as housemaid in one of the local hotels.⁶⁰ One of her sisters looked after her children while she

59. Leaving the mission coincided with her marital breakdown.

60. Her parents gained their Exemptions in about 1950.

worked. Janice paid their board. Initially she was frightened by the world she encountered in Kuranda. The way people spoke to her in the work place made her aware of her status as an Aborigine in wider society. For example, she remembered that European employers were always addressed as "missus/mister" whereas Aborigines were addressed by their first name only.

In the 1950s Kuranda was a popular spot with tourists, day-trippers from the immediate district and couples honeymooning. Hotels were busy work places.⁶¹ Kuranda's top hotel, "Fitzgerald's," enjoyed a reputation for fine food and excellent service and this is where Janice was employed after leaving Mona Mona. The job demanded basic domestic skills in washing, ironing and cleaning. She recalled the work routine for hotel domestic staff:

We used to do all the washing by hand. We used to boil all the sheets by copper. Then you had to fold them all up and make the beds and then you have to start work in the kitchen. That's a whole eight hours. Sometimes we had to go back at night to do the kitchen work. Washing up the dishes. It used to be terrible.

Later she added cooking to her list of domestic skills. Janice earned about three pounds per week at the hotel from which she had to pay her parents board as well as cover the costs of her child care. By 1958 she held the position of second chef to the hotel cook at the other hotel in Kuranda known to locals as the "Bottom" hotel. Her cooking skills were self-taught and gleaned largely from the instruction of her parents:

There was top hotel and one bottom hotel and we used to work at the top hotel ... (my sister) ... used to wait on the tables and it was a tourist hotel. We used to have about two hundred people coming in. Every Monday was my day to cook.

Her wages were paid as cash in hand. Although Janice earned a good weekly wage, she knew from experience that not all jobs were well-paid or as comfortable. She commented on her salary,

61. See Holthouse (1989). Evelyn Maunsell spent her honeymoon in Kuranda in 1910.

Thirteen pound a week. No, sorry, it used to be six, and then I used to get cranky because I used to cook and then I ended up getting thirteen pound a week. It was good for those days. When I used to scrub floors, I used to get three pound a week. You scrub on your hands and knees all day. Polish them.

Janice spent 6 years working at the hotels in Kuranda and finally left to work in Cairns. She continued with domestic work, but found cleaning in private homes was a lot easier than she was used to at the hotel.

Then I came down to Cairns and I used to push a bike here and there. I ended up working and got a house in ... Edge Hill and from one house I used to push a bike to another in the afternoon and I earned about four pound a day.

Eventually she left Cairns for Townsville where she cleaned the rooms of the police station. The job didn't work out:

I used to clean up their home or rooms and I didn't trust them. I only lasted there about two days. They thought that you were there for their convenience. Me and one policeman wrestled there. Just as well I was young and strong. I sat on him. So I left the job.

Adventurous, she tried a different line of work. She took her youngest child and spent the next seven years working as a cook on cattle stations in western Queensland. She explained what the experience was like:

You work hard. You didn't count the hours then. You would work from early morning till late at night. When I first went out there, they thought they would treat me like any other black person, but I told them that I went up with a union ticket and I wanted a cook's wage. I got it at the end. They used to take all the blackfellows' money and leave you about five bob and put the rest in the bank. That's at Mt. Garnet. You might draw twenty pound and the rest, and where the rest would go, I don't know. Somebody else's' pocket. That's how all those blackfellows got treated out there. They work all their lives and when they finish up, well, they have no money. They used to take money off them all the time you know and put it in their bank. Well then, I used to get my money because I would growl too much.

Janice's wages were twenty pounds per week when she started in 1963 for a seven day working week and a ten hour working day. At the

end of her stint at station cooking she earned a salary of 125 pounds per month.

You get up early in the morning, five o'clock and then you work till late at night. All depends on when the drovers came in and when the men come in with the cattle. They have their meals there.

Janice talked with pride of her working life and the achievement of bettering herself through employment opportunities. She reflected on the kind of work she undertook in her youth "we used to scrub floors. The jobs that white people don't want to do" and compared this with her present situation:

I teach leather craft at the T.A.F.E. college now. I have been teaching it for about four years now ... Since my children grew up I have been doing a lot of travelling. I have even been to New Guinea. I went out to Alice Springs, right out in the desert with all those people there.

Her view of life on Mona Mona was ambivalent; on the one hand, she remembered as a youngster saying she would "never leave Mona Mona until she died", but increasingly as an adult and as a mother she felt she would "never let her kids have that kind of life" (referring to the lack of personal freedom on Mona Mona.) Part of Janice's self-confidence about working as an Aborigine outside the mission was inspired by advice her parents gave her to "stand up for yourself if you feel right". However Janice felt there was little scope for practising the maxim on the mission where talking up for one's rights was considered "cheeky" and liable to incur punishment, and in serious cases exile to Palm Island. However, Janice did stand up for herself in her position as a cook on the pastoral stations. The union ticket she acquired while working in the kitchen of the Bottom hotel at Kuranda stood her in good stead as a claim for industrial equity. But other Aboriginal workers in the pastoral industry, even as late as the 1960s were not as fortunate in the workplace as she was, which Janice recognized from her experiences on the stations.⁶²

62. See also Thomson (1989:110-111).

Some domestic servants rebelled at demands they considered outrageous, even where there was no union protection. Mabel was employed in a European home located near Taylor's Point, one of the beaches north of Cairns. Her employer asked her to undertake a job in an area close to the junction of the river outlet with the sea. Mabel refused. Not only did she consider the work more appropriate for men to handle, but she felt the task placed her in immediate danger from crocodiles. When the employer insisted she undertake the work, Mabel left and walked up the mountain range and back to Mona Mona. (At that time there was only a bridle trail through the range from Cairns up to Kuranda.) The superintendent ordered Mabel to return to her place of employment which she did once relations were restored by a mutual apology.

Mabel was Exempted in the early 1940s although she had first worked outside Mona Mona in the 1930s. When she married in the 1950s it was with notable style for an Aboriginal couple. Her husband, an Aboriginal man from Hopevale mission near Cooktown, bought her a wedding gown and ring for the ceremony in a Protestant church in Cairns. Compared with the manner most marriages were celebrated on Mona Mona, Mabel's wedding reflected her relative affluence and social mobility. (For weddings on Mona Mona, couples were never dressed in a complete set of fully appropriate wedding clothes. Usually the bride and groom were barefoot and bouquets were made of large bunches of ferns and local flowers. Mission staff generally organised the costume and celebrations).

Following their marriage, Mabel and her husband moved to Cooktown. She held several positions as a cleaner, working at the courthouse, the Catholic church and the local bank. She saw these positions as ones of responsibility and status. At a later stage, and as confirmation of her perception of her status, Mabel acted as a "bulliman" or "policeman" accompanying Aboriginal women travelling to Cairns on medical or legal matters. Both Mabel and her husband were very independent people. On retirement, they purchased a small four-roomed timber house in Mareeba with their earnings and shifted it to a site close by Top and Bottom Kowrowa Aboriginal communities outside Kuranda (where other former Mona Mona people were living). Home ownership is rare amongst Kuranda Aborigines and the achievement of

Mabel and her husband represented examples of successful, assimilated workers the Queensland government hoped missions and reserves would produce. In another case of a successful Exemption a former Mona Mona woman still lived and worked for the European couple with whom she was first placed as a domestic servant service forty-four years previously. Not only was she their general housekeeper, but she accompanied her employers on their holidays, although more in the capacity of a family member than as an employee.

Aborigines who obtained Exemptions were not necessarily success stories because of mission education. While Janice valued her own labour and her capacity to earn a living the sentiment was acquired from her parents, not from the mission. Unlike other missions Mona Mona never enforced a rule enforcing residents to work for food. Janice's parents were, however, in a privileged position on Mona Mona and this influenced her opportunities as a child. Her father ran the mission's blacksmithy in the 1940s. This was one of the few skilled jobs on the mission which paid a cash wage to the Aboriginal employee. Her father also worked outside the mission from time to time, whereas for other men employment options were circumscribed. Her father had also acted as a mission policeman. Her parents' position in the mission community was therefore exceptional in its privileges and advantages. A contemporary of her parents commented on the relative status of Janice's family:

They're very cheeky ... because they've got a lot of white blood in them ... They're not our tribe, our mob; we don't act that way.

Here is the rub; Janice received an Exemption because her own family background set her apart from other Mona Mona residents; and her subsequent experiences in the workplace as an Aboriginal worker were determined, in part, by the relative advantages of an Exemption ticket.⁶³ Exempted workers were in a different position from those whose labour was arranged between mission and employer without the worker's knowledge or ability to structure his/her own terms and

63. Some families at Mona Mona never managed to be exempt, and in the difficult times when the mission administration knew it must close, these families were sent to Palm Island for another stint of institutional care.

conditions. Employment was even more limited for mission workers who were not paid in cash and had little opportunities to work in the wider labour market (see Collins 1984:40ff). Yet whatever advantage Exemptees had they also had to shake off the stigma of being a "coloured" person for before they could enjoy full industrial equity (see also Thomson 1989:104ff).

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with the historical context in which the work experiences of Aboriginal employees from an institution such as Mona Mona mission could be understood in particular some of the experiences Aboriginal workers had in north Queensland between the 1890s and the period after the Second World War. For the State Aboriginal labour was a desirable way of providing for the costs of Aboriginal aid. The State was equally keen to promote hard work as a moral virtue and to develop Aboriginal saving as an associated policy.

Ultimately the State expected labour to promote Aboriginal assimilation, but by 1920 these hopes had soured. Indeed, the "Aboriginal problem" had shifted from concern with a dying race to questions of how to curb the booming "mixed race" population. The shift profoundly challenged both the existing social assumptions and the State's policies on Aboriginal matters. Government solutions followed administrative formats and produced further refinements to the Acts promoting racial segregation.

The case examples of women's work experiences give some insight into their employment conditions and terms. Women's experiences differed from Aboriginal men's, not least because of the influence from unions and State legislation to establish Awards and standard conditions in industries where Aboriginal employment was strong. Their working conditions received little attention from government until their working conditions were thought to contribute to particular social problems. Women's own increasing discontent with the limited futures mapped out for them by institutions, also brought their employment conditions to the attention of the State legislators. State and church were alarmed by the close contact Aboriginal women had with non-Aboriginal people in their employment. Moreover the contact opened new social horizons for Aboriginal women in a way that

isolated bush work failed to do for Aboriginal men. The context of men's work on pastoral stations and in remote rural locations continued the isolated social conditions familiar to life on missions and reserves, and in these contexts their work posed few threats to the existing social order. The opposite was true of Aboriginal women who lived and worked in European homes.

Aboriginal women's employment evoked various responses from government. Unlike their handling of male employment issues, government floundered with the problems presented by women's industrial status. While these issues exercised policy-makers employers pressured the State for a continued supply of cheap Aboriginal labour, which sat uncomfortably with government's hope of protecting Aboriginal workers from exploitation by the wider society and from what was thought to be the vulnerability of the "Aboriginal nature". In the end, the Queensland government settled for a compromise with legislation aimed at encouraging education for assimilation but through increasingly segregated settings.

Ultimately, industrial control over Aboriginal workers was handed to institutions who used segregated conditions to impose and insist on European cultural values and practices in family life and in work routines. The State government conferred on missions the freedom to re-socialize Aborigines for assimilation as the organization saw fit. How this was achieved was not subject to government enquiry until after World War 11 when government curiosity about the rehabilitation of Aborigines on the missions and reserves increased (see Collins 1984). Responsibility for shaping a new Aboriginal social identity, beginning with the family and in conformity with the wider society's ideals for Christian marriage, family and gender roles was left to the discretion of the closed institutions. Chapter 4 analyses the vision of Mona Mona as one such institutions in north Queensland which deliberately set out to reconstitute Aboriginality.

CHAPTER 4

FAMILY AND MISSION.

This chapter focuses on the structures of autonomy and dependence that existed in the relationship between mission and the Aboriginal inhabitants. These structures elaborated the tone of relations between Aboriginal people and the wider society, and permeated the organisation of Aboriginal families and mission life generally. In this chapter discussion centres on the transformation of the Aboriginal family and the reproduction of the conditions of inequality and subordination for Aborigines as a marginalized group. This transformation was brought about in part through mission appropriation of maternal and paternal roles.

Analysis of the family on Mona Mona covers two domestic contexts: that of the mission community as a family and that of the individual Aboriginal domestic unit. The administration reified "family" as a desired form of familial and domestic structure by attempting to develop the ideals of a European class-based social vision of socialisation, work and worship as behavioural patterns for mission residents. Traditional Aboriginal praxis and beliefs were frowned upon and the new cultural forms were encouraged by segregating the Aboriginal family according to age, gender and social status (e.g. single/married; young people vis-a-vis older people, church adherents, etc.) The segregated domains of the dormitory, the village and the bush camps were organised to inhibit Aboriginal cultural continuities and to promote a Christian-based cultural homogeneity which would result in Aboriginal assimilation with the wider society.

The camp, dormitory and village were stages in the process. The ultimate goals were made clear to all residents as Christian marriage, sexual fidelity, and the social and economic demarcation of gender roles such as male bread-winner and female home-maker. For Aborigines to

reach this point the mission systematically de-constructed indigenous social and economic practices, and in some cases, repression, violence and oppression was used to ensure success.¹

Mission aims in social transformation

From the beginning, missions like Mona Mona altered traditional Aboriginal social life by concentrated primarily on reorganising family relations. Their objectives were informed by Western Christian models of a social and moral order which linked domestic life and gender patterns with duty and responsibility. Loos points out that religious conversion was combined with cultural imperialism in missionary enterprises in north Queensland; missions "confused their salvation with their culture and both with the civilization" they tried to impose on Aborigines" (Loos 1988:115). Hamilton explains the objective in more detail:²

The missions hoped to produce obedient, well-behaved, literate Christian Aborigines who would cheerfully accept employment as labourers and kitchen maids, would marry one another, baptise their children and manifest a bourgeois cultural code utterly inappropriate for their social stratum (Hamilton 1989:238).

To convert Aborigines to Christianity it was necessary to reconstruct the Aboriginal family. The success of both transformations required segregation. Indeed the missionized family necessitated the separate socialisation of family members through segregation (child from parent from grandparent), and definitions of work roles which supported Christian views of men and women and their respective contributions to family and society.³ Conversion was therefore a dual process and sought to combine a religious message with cultural

-
1. I refer to repression of the normal parental contact between children and their natal parents, the violence done to those who transgressed the dominant mores and oppression in the will of the superintendent in pairing together many couples for marriage.
 2. See also Attwood 1989 where he documents the personal impact such socialisation had for Bessy Flower).
 3. See also Sackett 1990: 202-203 where a Seventh Day Adventist mission at Wiluna still separated the generations for purposes of social and religious conversion.

denigration on the one hand, with continued justification for the socio-economic inequalities of Aboriginal lifestyles, on the other. The inequalities Aborigines experienced in their daily life were supposedly managed on many missions by the apparent lack of distinction between religious and secular transformations. Trigger (1988) explains how one mission handled the process:

It is plausible to argue that Christianity has operated hegemonically, in that it has led a small number of Aboriginal residents to attribute legitimacy to a system of authoritarian administrative control which has been antipathetic to their broad interests as members of a colonized minority within Australian society ... Furthermore, the active collaboration of many Christian Aborigines has assisted European missionary authority in its dominant role over the majority non-Christian Aboriginal population (Trigger 1988:230-231).

Inequalities were deeply ingrained in the missionary objectives. Hamilton describes the factors which influenced the organisation of the conversion process and contributed to Aboriginal marginalisation:

First, colonial governments repeatedly refused to provide finances and other resources adequate for the particular needs of missions working among the Aborigines. Second, missionaries themselves were unable to comprehend Aboriginal society other than through a quasi-Darwinian analysis which provided justification for seeing them as fitted only for menial tasks and a servile social relationship with settler society. Third, and most importantly, missionaries and their philanthropic supporters could not or would not confront the actual social relations on an uncontrollable frontier and the consequences of Aboriginal women's value to white men for the reproduction of the Aboriginal family and kinship structure (Hamilton 1989:241).

Missionaries on Mona Mona used religious dogma and ritual as a catalyst to changes in the cultural and social practice of Aboriginality. In common with missionaries elsewhere staff "appear to have trusted in the transformative power of Christian conversion" in order to achieve these goals (Hamilton 1989: 239.) But not entirely. Their incorporation of social and religious objectives in conversion showed the mixture of concern and condescension Queensland missions had for Aboriginal life styles and beliefs:

Christian missionaries....were determined to change not only the religion of the Aborigines in its narrow sense but also other

aspects of their culture which the missionaries found unacceptable to their cultural value system (Loos 1988:101).

Missionaries believed in the omnipotence of the Word as the means to personal and community salvation. Constant reference to the Bible was necessary for contact with the transformative power of the Word:

... constant preaching of the gospel was seen as the most important duty of the missionary, and the gospel itself was believed to possess profound powers of transformation. Hearing the Scriptures was in itself deemed sufficient for enlightenment and consequent acceptance of Christianity (Hamilton 1989:241).

In 1914 Pastor J. L. Branford, a foundation superintendent, informed the wider Seventh Day Adventist community of the hopes for the new mission:

We are of good courage and are enjoying our work, and although these souls are steeped in darkness and error, we know that there are those who will respond to the Saviour's call, for he will gather some out of every tribe and nation to inherit His kingdom.⁴

However strongly missionaries relied on the power of the Word to manifest change and transform Aboriginal lives, they also took practical steps to precipitate the process. Missionaries at Mona Mona optimistically measured their gains for spiritual conversion by deviations from usual Aboriginal cultural practices. By 1915 they saw a measure of their progress in the success of five men in voluntarily giving up smoking. Pastor Branford subsequently reported to the Chief Protector that:

In the superintendent's opinion there are many proofs of the civilizing influences of Christian teaching in the lives of these dark people.⁵

4. Quoted in the Seventh Day Adventist magazine, *The Australasian Record* 29/11/1914.

5. See Pastor Branford's report in the *Queensland Parliamentary Records* 1916-17, vol. 3.

While religious instruction and pastoral care was the first priority of Mona Mona staff, social conformity was seen as the mark of religious enlightenment. Loos comments that all missionaries in north Queensland refer to success by the degree of conformity to the religious and social values of the dominant society:

All the missionaries believed that civilizing the Aborigines was only possible through Christianity. By civilization, they meant Aboriginal conformity with European social and cultural practices which included the Western European concept of morality which they espoused freely (Loos 1988:110).

Missionary effort in Melanesia and Polynesia focused on the household in their program of conversion and transformation, but the traditional structure of family and kin in Aboriginal societies failed to offer success by the same means (Hamilton 1989:245). Nevertheless, the family was still subject to rigorous reorganisation. The religious rhetoric upheld the nuclear family as paramount, and loyalty and obedience to the administration was presented in terms of a familial model where the mission superintendent, also the pastor, was "father" and the residents were his "children" (see also Attwood 1989:25). As a paternalistic father, the pastor made decisions in the best interests of his children; an assumption of good intent which forestalled discussion, challenge or revision of decisions. Authoritarian power was thus exercised in the guise of paternalistic concern for family relations. Admittedly, European staff on Mona Mona were equally subject to the pastor's dominating authority, but the lack of Aboriginal autonomy in decisions over details of household organisation, family life, or work, fostered qualitative differences in daily life for staff and residents. These distinctions mirrored the basis of wider social relations between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. Neither Mona Mona's administration nor that of other missions were socially innovative with their conversion programs. Instead, they unquestioningly reproduced the existing hierarchical basis of relations between race and class within the dominant society. At the same time the goals of conversion continued to conflate religious and social ideals. However Hamilton (1989:248) suggests that missionary endeavours were largely irrelevant to both Aboriginal experience and the conduct of social interaction in the wider society. She claims that the social vision missionaries promoted was anachronistic in terms of the problems confronting Aboriginal

communities; indeed it was equally inappropriate for the government to see missions and reserves as helping to save the remnant tribal groups.

But missionary practice created and reinforced its own reality through routine and repetition. Daily routines of mission life supported by religious rhetoric and Biblical injunctions made the power of the mission visible and the subordination of the Aboriginal resident explicit. Certainly, analysis of decision-making processes exposes both the basis and relations of power in these institutions as characteristics common to the organization of mission relations with Aborigines throughout Australia. Attwood (1989:44) writes, for example of Ramahyuck mission in Victoria where cordial relations between superintendent and Aboriginal staff existed only if the Aborigines accepted their prescribed, subordinate roles in the mission hierarchy. Loos (1988:114) also describes how missionaries created their communities on terms where authority and power were the prerogative of the European staff. The same processes distinguished mission life on Mona Mona and inequalities between missionary and resident were "naturalized" through a quasi-familial relationship. The pattern of this interaction was modelled on the relationship of protection between a father and child. Indeed, the concept of such paternalistic care was already embedded in Seventh Day Adventist social practice where both family and household acknowledge the guiding hand of Christ as Head of the household. Ideally, domestic relations should reproduce the religious hierarchy of power and authority.⁶

Missions in remote locations had a good deal of flexibility in their clerical practices because of distance and the problem of communication with their headquarters or government offices. However, it was incumbent on reserves and missions in receipt of State funding to provide an annual report to Parliament. Those dependent on funding were rarely remiss about submitting annual progress reports. Despite the incentive, records from Mona Mona show a lack of direction or official instruction on clerical procedures from either church or State. Thus even the recording of basic sociological information was

6. This is part of a benediction Seventh Day Adventist families display in their family home.

inadequate. Marriages, for example, according to the Chief Protector, could combine "the tribal ceremony with an appropriate church ceremony" (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1914, vol. 3). But this caused confusion in the clerical records. Consequently the register of births and marriages on Mona Mona is incomplete and a generation of former residents have no birth certificates.⁷ Government removal added to the documentation problems. When unaccompanied children were brought to the mission they were often given new names, especially if several children shared the one European name. But in assigning new names, the individual's Aboriginal identity and place of origin was often lost.⁸

The historical sources on Mona Mona are far from complete and far from comprehensive. Records kept by the administration are equally poor. Consequently, this chapter relies on the published reports by mission superintendents' to the Chief Protector (see Queensland Parliamentary Records) with the addition of archival material from the Australian Headquarters of the Seventh Day Adventists in New South Wales. To supplement these sources the chapter also draws on field reports and interviews with residents recorded by Dr. Norman Tindale during the visit by the joint Adelaide and Harvard University Expedition to Mona Mona in 1938.⁹

Segregation

The principle underlying mission organization was segregation which took religious, racial and gender forms: a distinction between residents who were "saved" from those who were still vulnerable to Satan,

-
7. This continues to cause real problems in Kuranda people's lives, such as making it difficult for some people to get a passport for overseas travel.
 8. Aboriginal people generally had an English first name. Surnames were assigned according to a geographical location, e.g. Minnie Georgetown, or by adopting the surname of a European employer, e.g. Edward Smith.
 9. See also Collins (1984). His history was an important source of data, but he too, relied on oral material to flesh the bones of the administrative record. This material was read with the kind permission of the South Australian Museum where it is now held. The records include extensive genealogies and records of interviews with Mona Mona residents, together with Tindale's personal observations of the mission administration.

between races (staff and resident) and between men and women. The religious distinction further separated Europeans from Aborigines, but as Trigger (1988) suggests, it also structured relations among Aborigines themselves. Attwood (1989:91ff) outlines a similar process of separation and segregation on Ramahyuck, adding that class differences deepened divisions.

Mona Mona made racial difference fundamental to all expressions of segregation. The daily proximity in which staff and residents lived together was not ignored; indeed, the administration instituted qualitative differences to demarcate the groups from one another to maintain separation and discourage identification with the "other".¹⁰ The structural relations of mission life emphasized the dependence of Aborigines in contrast to the conditions of autonomy enjoyed by Europeans. These distinctions permeated the simplest aspects of daily life; for example, Aborigines had to eat in the communal dining room, while staff enjoyed the freedom to prepare their own meals and dine in the privacy of their own homes.¹¹ Aboriginal residents were similarly denied other avenues of control over their domestic routines and conditions of family life. The dormitory system separated children from parents and aged family members living in bush camps were hindered from free association with kin living in the mission village or resident in the dormitory. None of these impositions were suffered by European staff. Indeed, they had their children live with them in the familial household.

-
10. The close association was only relative since spatial separation of groups was a distinct feature of mission organization and mission staff homes were never built near the Aboriginal quarters. See Collins, 1984, who has looked at the archaeological layout of the community.
 11. Chase (1988:130-131) speaks of Lockhart River mission where, in the 1920s, Aboriginal residents were not entitled to food from the community store unless they brought produce in exchange. This contrast with Aboriginal residents view of the freedom of the superintendent's access to food and the control he exercised as power over people's daily necessities. Rowan, the superintendent was said to kill meat only when he ran out himself, irrespective of how many residents were starving. This is the kind of qualitative difference I am referring to.

Trigger (1988:213) argues that Christianity in Aboriginal mission experience is best analysed as the "the operation of power relations". He explores contradiction as the outcome of ambiguity in mission power, suggesting that missionaries were caught between legitimating their "domination of Aboriginal society, or provid[ing] a basis for forms of Aboriginal resistance." By institutionalizing differences, such as those mentioned above, contradictions and inequalities of power in relations between residents and staff were formalized.

Segregation established social interaction according to sets of oppositional groups. In this process the institutional practices of missions merely formalized the already arbitrarily created inequalities between people. Analysing Ramahyuck mission Attwood writes that:

... it can be argued that the missionary order became consensual, that it was based to a considerable degree on the Aborigines' consent (although this was never qualified). Consequently, this minimised any need for physical coercion or legal authority, at the same time disguising the crucial key to the missionaries' power. It also ensured that the seeds of oppression came to lie *within* Aborigines as well as *without*, making the task of liberating themselves even more herculean (Attwood 1989:29).

Attwood's argument is equally convincing for social relations on Mona Mona: in both cases, the power of the mission,

... was embedded in the 'whole machinery' of the mission-its productive forces and relationships which shaped the world in time and space and structured the very souls of its Aboriginal inmates (Attwood 1989:29).

The administration operated the mission as a "positional" family (Bernstein 1971). The roles assigned to Aboriginal residents in this family were subordinate positions in the hierarchy of responsibility and authority organized by the superintendent. In fact the administration appropriated all the major family roles beginning with the decision-making prerogatives in family and work contexts. These roles gave them the power and a means to social control over residents. Control over speech was included in the systematic appropriation and substitution of the symbols of cultural difference. Consequently, for Aborigines communication became an exercise of power with residents disenfranchised through the mission's insistence on English as the lingua franca. Dormitory life actively encouraged residents to adopt

English as the lingua franca. Speech between certain individuals, between camp and dormitory residents for example, was restricted as part of the control over residents. Moreover, Litster's (1975) history of the education system on Mona Mona reports that no classroom teaching was conducted in a native language, despite slow progress in formal learning because of this. Control and regulation of social relations was as deliberate as it was instrumental in contributing to a hiatus in Aboriginal socialization and cultural practices. Furthermore, mission insistence on English limited residents' protests against the mission lifestyle through the inability to express resentment and resistance except by direct action.¹²

Religion was a fundamental basis of social segregation on Mona Mona. Staff placed conversion and Christian development at the central focus of their work. But religious conformity was part of a rampant cultural imperialism (see Loos 1988:115). The combination of social conformity with religious conversion is evident in the following biography of a mission "success" story. Indeed, as one of the first mission conversions to Christianity on Mona Mona in 1916, the history shows how success in the mission community was also measured in terms of a conversion and commitment to mission social and economic values.

Mary went to Mona Mona as a teenage girl. Prior to this she and her parents lived in Granite Creek, an Aboriginal town camp outside Mareeba. The camp was one of the first settlements in the district to be disbanded under the State government's removal policy, and in company with other residents her parents were taken to live on Mona Mona in 1914. At the time Mary left for Mona Mona, she was working as a domestic servant in the home of a Mareeba businessman and Pastor Branford, recruiting residents for Mona Mona, requested Mary's release from her employment contract. Mary joined the dormitory where she lived until her marriage at age twenty years. She and her parents were kept apart at Mona Mona, especially since her parents lived in a grass "humpy" in one of the two bush camps on Mona Mona. The bush camps were linguistically distinct groups of people with the

12. An example of the politics of communication is in the control over freedom of communication. During Pastor Borgas' second period as superintendent (1934-40) he opened and read the residents' mail, or as my informant put it, he "was stealing words and coveting others' mail".

Muluridji camp comprising Mareeba-Mt. Molloy-Mt. Carbine people, and the Tjapukai camp combined people from town camps around Kuranda, Barron Falls, Speewah, Redlynch and Port Douglas.

Mary was baptized in 1916 and in 1922 her marriage to another convert was arranged by the superintendent. Happily, this was a love match. Individual negotiation for a marriage partner was possible, but final decisions rested with the pastor. Mary's parents had also wanted her to marry a suitable partner according to traditional practice and they tried to organize such a marriage while the family were living together at Granite Creek. Mary rejected their choice and took refuge in domestic employment. While her parents had some hesitations about her marriage at Mona Mona, they nevertheless gave their approval. Of the children Mary and her husband raised on Mona Mona, the first born contracted an infectious disease and was sent, in keeping with government directives, to Fantom Island close to Palm Island, where he died, still a young man. Patients with infectious diseases, particularly T.B. and leprosy, were sent to Fantom Island from reserves and missions throughout Queensland. Meanwhile, Mary and her family settled in Kuranda in 1940 as the first family of Exemptees from Mona Mona. Her children attended the local school in Kuranda and her husband worked at a district saw mill. Out of their savings they bought land in Kuranda and built their family home, using timber cut and milled on Mona Mona.

This biographical account was constructed from conversations with Mary. The broad outline of her story follows a pattern mission staff held up to all their residents as the desired example of independent assimilated Aboriginal people. But her marriage, her son's exile and the mission's necessary consent to Exemptions, are indicative of the more general condition of submission of the part of Aborigines to external authorities whether on the mission or as Exemptees. In Bernstein's terms (1971) the relations between mission staff and residents replicate the power and status relations in the positional family, especially with responsibility for decision-making in the hands of others.¹³ Dormitory children were taught values commonly attributed by Bernstein to a positional family organization, with a denial of other behavioural possibilities or social values in a regimen of strictly supervised daily

13. Collins' history (1984) of Mona Mona draws on Goffmann's theory of closed institutions as a model for understanding lived experience on Mona Mona.

routines. Personal autonomy, under this system, was possible only as a reward for conformity.

Disciplining for dependence and conformity

Residents had limited opportunities for decision-making, or for effective action since the pastor made most decisions. Loos explains how cultural and religious ethnocentrism justified the external appropriation of individual decision-making:

All the missionaries thought Aboriginal life was suffused with satanism. They also believed quite literally that the power of Satan confronted them when they observed beliefs, actions, and behaviour patterns that did not accord with their concept of Christian belief and behaviour (Loos 1988:108).

The State government gave missions a mandate to effect radical social and religious change.

... the decisions of the Queensland government in 1897 to utilize Christian missionary societies as agents of their "native" policy depended largely on their perceived effectiveness (Loos 1988:105).

It was widely believed by church and State that successful solutions to Aboriginal problems were best achieved through the cultivation of home and work in complete isolation from wider society (see Queensland Parliamentary Records 1920, vol. 2). Church and State shared assumptions in their promotion of social change:

... the Aborigines constituted a problem; they should be saved (both physically and spiritually); and it should be possible to achieve this by showing them how to carry out menial tasks, how to cultivate the soil, to marry monogamously and to have their children baptised so that they could constitute independent Christian communities or become labourers among the rest of the working class (Hamilton 1989:244).

The head of the mission family, the superintendent, was arbiter of Aboriginal and European interaction and the authority to enforce his views was supported by the threat of physical punishment. Individuals who rebelled or contravened the dominant social mores of the mission community were subject to public ridicule and other punitive measures. Dissent from the superintendent's views and decisions were severely dealt with and recalcitrance punished with exile to Palm

Island. Aboriginal community police dealt with moral and criminal offences and helped control law and order on the mission (see *Mona Mona's report to the Chief Protector, Queensland Parliamentary Records 1925, vol. 1*). However by the late 1940s, the community police were subject to direction and the advice of the residents' council in disciplinary matters (see *Queensland Parliamentary Records 1948-49, vol. 2*).¹⁴

An ex-resident remembered punishments she received for misdemeanours, "then I went to the dormitory. It was a real hard life. If you did anything wrong, then you went into jail. They cut your hair baldy." She suffered this indignity several times. "I don't know how many times. Three times I think. I used to swear all the time." Another former resident mentions that a person's family was held responsible for doling out physical punishment to the extent of publicly administering twenty cuts with a stick to the back of the legs for misbehaviour. Exile to Palm Island was common. One woman, as an unmarried, pregnant teenager was sent to Palm Island. She was confined to the dormitory there, but when a further pregnancy occurred her marriage was hastily arranged. For some *Mona Mona* residents transfers to Palm Island are still associated with a deep a sense of shame.

Threats of physical punishment encouraged discipline and adherence to the mission's ideals in the conduct of daily life. Trigger argues that the congruence between religious values and secular lifestyles produced a political hegemony which made Aboriginal converts complicit in their own domination by the mission:

These people [Aboriginal converts] have conceived of the practices of non-Aboriginal authority as intricately entwined with the practice of Christian doctrine, and as they quite avidly embrace the latter it becomes very difficult to reject the former ... Thus, in the case of converts, Christianity has partly operated as a powerful legitimating ideology for non-Aboriginal authority (Trigger 1988:230).

14. Unfortunately, it is not apparent in the report how much real power this body had, or over what issues in mission life. Nor is it clear whether the superintendent sat on the council or whether he had power to overrule their decisions.

Many rules and practices governing daily activity were a means to control sexuality and another basis for segregation. Sexual virtue and Christian marriage was encouraged as the only legitimate basis for sexual relations. Pre-pubescent and adolescent children were particularly subject to constraints focused around this belief. Girls were strictly supervised; "we used to get locked up night time. Five o'clock till six in the morning." Both boys and girls received a limited sex education in the context of a strictly enforced moral code. No touching or kissing of the opposite sex was allowed. Social interactions were handled with care and monitored with vigilance by staff. One night a week, courting couples were allowed to sit on the verandah of the superintendent's house and talk, but these occasions were organized by the superintendent and always took place under his supervision.¹⁵

When illegitimate pregnancies did occur, offenders were made into public examples for the edification of all mission residents. The unfortunate couple were further punished by separation from family and community; often the woman was sent to Palm Island.¹⁶ Marriages to regularise the situation were held in private and without any public celebratory rituals.¹⁷ No family members were allowed to attend. Indeed, a woman's moral culpability was emphasised by the emblems of shame she was made to wear as the bride. She was dressed in sack cloth with her hair cut "baldy".¹⁸ In exceptional circumstances, a couple had a choice between exile to Palm Island or marriage. However, this only happened where the parties involved were quite young. In one such case, the groom, thought to be about 14 years old at the time,

-
15. See Thomson (1989:31-49). One informant from Yarrabah made the control of the mission over residents through the dormitory clear: "You just can't leave the dormitory if you're not married. You're there for life" Thomson (1989:41).
 16. A Mona Mona woman was sent to Palm Island because she "had her first baby in single time".
 17. How the distinction in treatment was made I have no clear idea. The whole issue, 40 years later, continues to be treated with a good deal of shame for many of the individuals involved.
 18. According to Lynne Hume (pers.comm.) who did field research at Yarrabah in 1985-86, women who were pregnant before marriage on that mission were made to participate in "rag weddings." These occurred at midnight with the bride dressed in sackcloth and their heads shaved.

was not exiled from his family on Mona Mona because of his youth. Minor moral transgressions were punished by shaving the hair "baldy", a beating or a stint in the community jail. Public beatings and jail sentences in the mission prison were used as standard punishments for adultery.

Not all residents were prepared to accept without question the right of the mission staff to mete out punishment. Some female residents claimed the administration sanctioned double standards in the morality expected of staff and Aboriginal residents. Administrative attitudes to out-of-wedlock pregnancies brought criticism about different standards when an unmarried daughter of one of the mission staff workers became pregnant and left the mission to give birth, but later returned to marry the child's father. Although some of the women in the church confronted the superintendent about the difference in treatment he had no satisfactory explanation.

Aboriginal residents of Mona Mona held a strike in protest at having to eat in the communal dining room. Their action expressed a bitter resentment of the different standards determining the conduct of mission life. To most adults the communal dining room perpetuated and symbolized their lack of status and their position as dependents:

Everybody used to have their meal all in one, in a dining room until all the men had a strike. They wanted everybody to have their own meal. You know, cook at home. The men used to have one slice and a half [of bread] in the dining room, and a cup of coffee and the ladies only had one slice. We used to get hungry and then the men had a strike. The superintendent said, "If you want your own meals like that then you have to do away with all the dogs." Poor dogs, they had to shoot all the dogs. They think that you are going to waste your food on the dogs. We felt sorry for all our dogs that got shot you know, poor things, and then we started to have our own meals then.

Staff were adamant that all mission residents eat together as one, united family, but the occasions were not welcomed by residents. The description of the dining room strike vividly illustrates the process and balance of power in decision-making on Mona Mona and the passive role residents were expected to play. Whatever wish the Aboriginal community had to cook for themselves and to assume individual responsibility for households, the administration was dismissive of

their desires for independence. Residents were thought incapable of managing responsibility. The administration's attitude to the strike emphasised their view of residents as irresponsible and inept; in their opinion people who cooked in their own homes were silly enough to give priority to their animals over their own needs. The reluctance to allow self-government in this instance, as in others, was part of a general scepticism about Aboriginal competence in work as well as in the home. Aboriginal success, in the administration's view, was entirely the outcome of mission direction and intervention to shape and order their lives. Such views were not, however, unique to missionaries, but part of the wider community's view of Aborigines and upheld the structural inequalities of conditions for Aboriginal people and their necessary assimilation to the dominant culture. The political importance of mission life for social change was its preparation of Aborigines for a submissive, subordinate role in the wider world, by replicating the contexts of inter-racial contact as they would encounter it beyond the mission boundaries.

Work

The missionary concept of work for Aboriginal men and women rejected indigenous patterns of economic activity.¹⁹ Further, this rejection was a deliberate strategy to undermine indigenous cultural patterns more generally. Loos (1988:108;110) argues that missionaries saw little worth in the Aboriginal economy and were ready to undermine and replace this domain along with other areas (e.g. social behaviour, religious and moral values) in Aboriginal culture. The European work ethic and Christianity were ideals derived from a sedentary agricultural economy and supportive of the nuclear family as an organisational unit. For church and State, religious conversion accompanied a vision of social and cultural transformation (see Chase 1988; Trigger 1988).²⁰

In common with State agencies of social change, missionaries at Mona Mona believed that Aboriginal socio-economic behaviour had to

19. In an earlier chapter reference was made to a similar phenomena (see Barwick 1978) where Aboriginal men's labour contributed substantially to reserve coffers, but was invisible in the economy of their own household.

20. Attwood (1989) also mentions a similar process for a Victorian mission.

be restructured through family, labour and gender roles.²¹ The desired vision centred on male wage labour to support the nuclear family while women maintained and sustained the domestic unit with their unpaid labour. Chase says of the vision:

All the Protestant missions saw their task, as not just to evangelize, but to actually teach Aborigines the elements of Protestant virtuous living ... hard work, a clean and settled village life routine, and the desirable pattern of monogamous nuclear family life.(Chase 1988:127).

Attwood's study of gender and mission work patterns suggests that notions of class were equally influential. The segregationist policy of the Victorian Protection Board was, for instance influenced by:

... a middle-class Christian view of working class male sexuality; [where] they believed that Aboriginal women would be exploited by rapacious European men unless kept within the sanctuary of the reserves and under missionary protection (Attwood 1989:95).

Class-based gender roles operated on Mona Mona in the allocation of particular occupations.²² In general, both Aboriginal and European women assumed the domestic, family orientated roles in work, with men in public, authoritarian positions (e.g. European Pastor, Aboriginal lay preacher; European superintendent, Aboriginal policeman, etc.). In families, particular roles were made the focus of administrative attention in the interests of fostering social conformity. Conventional European domestic roles, such as the superior position of men and the acceptance of their authority in the household, was promoted by the administration in their organization of family life in direct opposition to Aboriginal domestic practices.²³ In the process of

21. Some of the State agencies I refer to are government reserves, educational institutions, employment contracts, etc.

22. In Queensland, missions like Mona Mona sent Aboriginal women out to work in European households; although government was concerned about Aboriginal women's experiences in domestic work. See chapter 3.

23. See Hamilton (1989:245) where she writes of missionary failure due to the lack of hierarchical stratifications in traditional Aboriginal social relations as a basis for missionaries to built on: "They had no fixed abodes, fields or flocks, nor any internal hierarchical differentiation such as would lead them to accept the authority of the missionaries as supplanting that of an indigenous elite."

reorganising domestic patterns, dormitory socialization was used to educate children into the specific socio-economic patterns of gender differentiation in relationships, work and worship approved of by the mission. They were expected to reproduce these patterns in their own lives.

Work roles provided a means for social segregation in mission life. Areas of work were differentiated as external (male) and internal (female), and as paid, skilled labour (by the administration) or unpaid, unskilled labour (by the residents).

While church and State hoped Aborigines would become independent people, institutions tended to increase their dependency on institutions, and the social and physical isolation of mission life served to reinforce their alienation from the wider society. Over the years, Mona Mona's administrators remained unaffected by calls from groups in the wider community about the mission's direction for Aboriginal socio-economic development. Community development at Mona Mona remained an issue of practical concern about how to strike a balance in everyday life between subordination to authority and Aboriginal independence. In contrast, debates were already common amongst members of the Victorian Aboriginal Protection Board in the late 19th century over the relative merits of segregationist and inclusionist policies, and the consequences for Aboriginal interaction with the wider society. Some Board members challenged views about the outcome of a protectionist policy, by arguing that segregation meant institutionalized dependence, while other members thought the isolation of protectionism a viable road to assimilation (Attwood 1989:81ff). In the 20th century missions increasingly faced Aboriginal demands for a legitimate place in the wider society, and a market value for their labour (Hamilton 1989:250). However, few missions were prepared to concede to Aborigines the independence of a life uncontrolled by church or State. Missions educated both children and adults in submission to external authority and made Aboriginal residents aware of their lack of control over their personal circumstances.

Opportunities for Aboriginal residents to exercise economic self-management were limited by the administration even in minor

economic matters. Before the mission paid wages for work, residents earned small amounts of cash by producing Aboriginal artefacts as a cottage industry. The cash sums were the equivalent of pocket money. Women made baskets from grasses and pandanus and these were sold to tourists visiting the mission. The souvenirs were popular with tourists and by the 1950s Mona Mona regularly appeared on tourist itineraries of the district (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1947, vol. 3). The 1950s was also the period in which Mona Mona's administration first paid mission workers a small cash wage and opened a store for purchase of household items. Mission wages were deliberately paid at a higher rate than the value of the rations and above the wages of negotiated contracts with external employers. The administration hoped by these measures to keep workers and their labour within the mission. At the same time, residents still had to prove themselves to the administration. For example, only after residents were seen to be spending their cash wisely in the mission store were other entitlements and options for Aboriginal self-determination introduced such as the payment of endowment to Aboriginal mothers. Whatever negative views of Aborigines still determined mission practice, staff noted the general improvement in morale associated with the moves to independence (see Queensland Parliamentary Records 1956-57, vol. 2).

Yet none of the advances provided residents with experience of dealing with money. Wage labour was introduced as a work incentive to keep labour on the mission. But by 1952, Mona Mona's ability to offer residents work within the mission was constrained by severe financial problems which curtailed an ambitious building program of renovations to the older mission buildings because loan money to finance the project was unavailable. Although the mission survived the crisis it did so only because Aboriginal labour was so poorly paid. A consequence of the cutback in mission work was the increasing number of Aboriginal men seeking external employment contracts. Their desire for better industrial conditions and the benefits of the wider employment market made it clear to the mission staff that there was a limited future for Aboriginal labour on Mona Mona. Nevertheless, administrative attitudes were slow to change. Access to wages by Aboriginal workers, for example, continued to be controlled by the pastor. One superintendent was adamant that Mona Mona's Aboriginal workers

were still behind "general European standards" (see Queensland Parliamentary Records 1952-53, vol. 2). In his opinion, the Aboriginal worker accomplished only about a third of what the average European accomplished; a surprising attitude given that what economic success the mission enjoyed was built on the contribution of unpaid, untrained Aboriginal labour.

Although cash was never commonplace for mission work, the Commonwealth government's introduction of social service benefits made cash accessible to certain categories of individuals. From 1946 onwards Aboriginal women in mission and reserves were legally entitled to child endowment at the same rate as that paid to European mothers. But administrations were still entitled to withhold the cash as compensation to cover the costs of dormitory child care. On Mona Mona over the next ten years endowment payments continued to be collected by the administration to defray dormitory costs (see Queensland Parliamentary Records 1956-57, vol. 2). In the first year of payment to Aboriginal mothers Mona Mona's administration claimed for 118 children in the dormitory.²⁴ Since the superintendent as Protector had the legal responsibility of handling Aboriginal earnings and savings, scope existed for administrative manipulation of personal incomes and was justified on the grounds of community benefit. Their right to do so was legitimated by the State government's requirement that mission and reserve staff oversee and approve the spending of endowment money (see Queensland Parliamentary Records 1946, vol. 2). Mona Mona's administration justified their appropriation on the grounds that they had the duty of caring for Aboriginal children. But the appropriation of maternal roles reinforced women's alienation from child care in mission life. On balance, the reality of work and family life for Aboriginal people on Mona Mona were poor representations of the publicized ideals.

24. Child endowment to "half caste" European/Aboriginal women was first paid in Queensland in 1930 (see Queensland Parliamentary Records 1930, vol. 1). But maternity allowance was paid to "half caste" Aboriginal women, dispensed through the Protector, in 1927. (See also Queensland Parliamentary Records 1928).

Transforming the family

A radical separation of children from parents was an important principle in the missionaries' process of social transformation and was widely practised by different mission administrations (see Tonkinson 1990:131; Sackett 1990:202). By segregating the generations, the new social order made a systematic break with the continuities of previous Aboriginal socialization practices. Segregation of family members was a deliberate effort to reconstitute the basic contexts of social experience in daily life and in the organisation of the family. Changes in the structure of the Aboriginal family were achieved through the institutions of the dormitory and the communal diningroom. Both institutions were used to subvert established Aboriginal cultural practices in family life by replacing family members with outsiders who assumed parental roles and fed and socialized children; and by implementing routines which created individual and group dependency on the mission for physical necessities and social life.

Pastor Rudge saw "the family" as a symbol for sets of relationships along a continuum which included individual Aboriginal familial relations, to Aboriginal interaction with European staff. But his continuum acknowledged no qualitative difference between the concept of an institution as family and the intimate social and emotional context of family life between natural parents and their children. Thus it was deemed acceptable for Aboriginal parents to have access to their dormitory children on one afternoon per week and for parents and dormitory children to speak to one another with permission, across a barbed wire fence dividing the dormitory from mainstream community life. Social interaction on the mission was thus shaped by sets of distinctions which segregated people and cut across former social patterns familiar in Aboriginal social relations.

From the first encounters between missionaries and Aborigines, the structure of the family and the role of children captured the missionaries' imagination and became the focus of their future hopes. All missions assumed the key to thoroughgoing social and spiritual change was children's malleability. Children were thought of as unformed and easily re-socialized (see Jacobs, Laurence and Thomas 1988:140-156; also Hamilton 1989:246-247). In their hopes for the wider success of the dormitory system missionaries took their

inspiration from the Biblical promise that a child taught by the church from birth to age seven years was likely to be an adherent for life. Hence, the dormitory assumed an importance to the mission over other forms of family life:

The chief aim of all the missions was to induce the adult Aborigines to leave their children, or the orphaned children of relatives, at the mission. A boarding school system was then established enabling the missionaries to achieve encouraging results at training and indoctrinating the children (Loos 1988:113).

Dormitories were equally important in gaining the balance of power and establishing hegemony in mission life:

The aim of the Christian missions in north Queensland was to create a theocracy. The members of the Aboriginal community would lead good, useful lives where they would be "made to live by rule" ... On all missions, to accomplish the aim of creating a new society, a pervasive system of education of children and adults was necessary not only to continue the process of religious education but also to produce the skills necessary for this first missionary generation (Loos 1988:115).

The structure of all social relationships on Mona Mona, including those between Aborigines and Europeans were modelled on that of the European nuclear family. In this model the father was head of the family and his wife enjoyed a higher status than that of the children, but below that of her husband. The concept of familial obligations and duties between members was part of the model, and was used to structure the context of work and religious interaction on Mona Mona; for example, in the context of labour relations paternalism excused the administration's involvement with Aboriginal wages and close supervision of their work and leisure activities. Social relations in the family model involved dependence and autonomy, and while this helped maintain mission hegemony, it also became a mark of Aboriginal dealings with the wider society (see chapter 7). In these patterns of interaction Aborigines of all ages were treated as childlike and were placed under the care of paternalistic authorities (whether missionaries, Protectors or European employers). Their status in such relationships fitted comfortably with contemporary social views of Aborigines as childish and as needing instruction and supervision. It also justified a persistent refusal from European society to consider

Aboriginal self-determination or independence as either possible or desirable. However, Aboriginal work in the wider community gave them a vision of greater social freedom than was possible on missions or reserves, and this in spite of paternalistic employment conditions (see Tonkinson 1990:134).

Mona Mona deliberately separated children from their parents and limited their contact with their cultural background as necessary steps in a social and religious conversion presented as preparation for a "place in the coming kingdom". Other missions and reserves followed a similar process for social change (see Swain and Rose 1988). It was essential for children to break with "myall ways". Dormitories were organised to physically and morally protect children from contact with "myalls" and to ensure alienation from their mother's culture. Superintendents were aware that continued contact with the bush people would hinder the progress of individual Aborigines to develop as Christians. The "retarding influence of the old myalls" had to be limited (see Queensland Parliamentary Records 1923, vol. 1). On the other hand, residents were not always in agreement with the superintendent's opinion. One woman recalled the wonder of visiting the "myall" camps as a child in the 1930s.

They had a Kuranda camp, gunya, it was wonderful to go in and sleep in there with all the old people. I used to love being with old people and they would have a fire in the middle and cook potatoes and yams. They used to kill flying fox, cook them and it used to taste like chicken. It might be black and dirty now, but when you cook it, it's nice.

Even in the details of daily life prohibitions such as the use of any language other than English were tailored to support a thoroughgoing cultural conversion. Furthermore, by restricting the use of Aboriginal languages, administrations could break cultural continuities expressed in communication styles and insist on English to progressively introduce children to the meanings and concepts of the new, dominant culture. One man commented on his experience at Yarrabah mission where the use of native languages was also prohibited:

They [the missionaries] told the people to cut out your language and all speak English. That was one of the downfalls. It was very sad - so it goes back to the mid 1920s that we can't speak our

own language. Just a few words that you can pick up like in some of the languages (Thomson 1989:53).

Segregation of children and parents fostered the best conditions for assimilation of the new cultural praxis. Apart from religious conversion segregation made it possible to transform and reorganise Aboriginal secular life. I have mentioned above that staff assumed maternal and paternal roles, but they also constructed the peer group as an important agent in socialisation for dormitory children.

Attwood's (1989:34) biography of a young West Australian Aboriginal woman raised by Anglican missionaries illustrates some of the wider issues in the relationship between Aboriginal children and the missionaries who raised them. From his examination of Bessy Flower's life, Attwood argues that in the absence of their natal parents Aboriginal children transferred their affection to their European benefactor:

Bessy cleaved to the Camfields [the missionaries who raised her] and depended on them both for affection, a sense of place and security, and affirmation of who she was. She had the deep sense of obligation children often feel towards their parents (Attwood 1989:34).

Betty was orphaned as a child and was raised by a missionary family on Mona Mona until adolescence when she lived full-time in the dormitory. Her relationships with Europeans in adult life did not parallel Bessy Flower's experiences, but Betty was certainly familiar from early childhood with Europeans and comfortable in her dealings with them. Bessy Flower, from Attwood's account, apparently looked upon the male superintendents she lived under, as both father and patron. After she left Western Australia to assist in the missionary work at Ramahyuck, Bessy was initially homesick for her former "family". However, in time she transferred her affections to her new patrons, superintendent Hagenuaer and his wife Louise. Attwood writes:

... in a little over a year he [Hagenuaer] and Louise had displaced the Camfields in Bessy's affections and Ramahyuck ... had become the centre of her world (Attwood 1989:40).

Close emotional relationships between missionaries and Aboriginal people do not appear to be a feature of social interaction on

Mona Mona. However, individual Aboriginal people were distinguished above others by mission staff because of their conversion and religious devotion and the example they set for other residents. Mission staff held such families and individuals in high regard. As a mark of esteem the local Seventh Day Adventist church hall was named after one such Aboriginal man who was also an early Exemptee from Mona Mona.

The changes to work routines and the organisation of the Aboriginal family were intended to serve the wider economic needs of the mission community rather than the particular concerns of a specific family. People worked to support the whole community, not just themselves. In later years, once the mission's economy was firmly established couples were encouraged to provide for themselves from home gardens. Barwick (1970) discusses the consequences of restructuring Aboriginal family life and assigning different economic roles on the basis of gender on Victorian government reserves in the 19th century. Her study dealt with institutions of an earlier period than Mona Mona, but the same pattern is recognizable in men and women's work experiences on Mona Mona. In other institutional contexts administrations in the mid-20th century in both Queensland and the Northern Territory effectively changed indigenous social relations by restructuring aspects of daily life (see Hamilton 1975; Swain and Rose 1988). Hamilton (1975) saw the consequences in Aboriginal communities in Arnhem Land in the 1960s where the role of food in reserve life became a symbol of the new order. Insistence on the use of introduced European foods conveyed the power of the administration to define "food" and the means of succour. The correlation between new foods and the new order was imposed in community dining rooms, and the choice of goods stocked in community stores. In Aboriginal households the increasing incorporation of the new foodstuffs changed traditional social roles of child-rearing and patterns of economic reciprocity. At Maningrida settlement in Arnhem Land the administration operated with a view that change was likely to be effectively achieved only if the patterns of everyday experience were restructured (Hamilton 1975). Long (1970) discusses the association between administrative structure and social relations in his typology of Aboriginal communities around Australia. In his typology Mona Mona

and Aurukun communities share structural commonalities because they are isolated, self-contained and self-supporting settlements.²⁵ The basis of his typology is a stress on structural factors as determinative of community social relations between Aborigines and Europeans. Most missions seem to have been consciously aware of this association.

Mona Mona's administration made women central to the structure of domestic life and accorded them status as nurturers and managers of the nuclear family. The contribution the mission expected of women was loyalty and participation in the new family where their role was that of private, unpaid domestic labour and contrasted with the public, productive and in some cases cash labour of Aboriginal men. The missionaries encouraged men to identify their labour in the mission scrub with a common good rather than a personal benefit. The economic survival of the mission depended on male labour, yet the reality was that everyone had a valued economic role to play on the mission. Children too, worked for the benefit of the community. Their dormitory experiences progressively prepared and included them in the work regimes and taught them the Christian virtues of discipline, hard work and worship (see also chapter 4).²⁶ Christian values were the basis of gender interaction in work and family relations. Gender roles paralleled the hierarchically ordered roles commonly found in relations between Aborigines and Europeans. Attwood points out that this occurred even where Aboriginal residents attained a certain status and proficiency in their work. They were never treated as social equals by the administration. His account of Bessy Flower's experiences in mission life demonstrates the pattern. Bessy had married another Aboriginal missionary, Donald, and both of them held important

25. This is not totally true of Mona Mona and I suspect also needs revision for Aurukun as a consequence of social change. Mona Mona tried hard to be self-supporting, but was reliant on economic interaction with the wider community, through selling produce and exchanging labour, to survive. Moreover, government grants through welfare were essential aspects of the plan for economic independence.

26. Tasks like tending the vegetable gardens, milking the cows, working in the dining room and community kitchen, fencing, etc. were the province of the younger workers.

positions in the mission administration, but the real source of power and control remained wholly with the mission superintendent:

Bessy and Donald found Hagenauer reluctant to delegate to them much power, for while they were regarded as a "better class" of "black" none was exempt from his policy of "patriarchical superintendence" (Attwood 1989:44).

Not even a small measure of autonomy, such as guaranteed privacy in correspondence, was ever extended to mission residents at Mona Mona or on other missions, where letters had to pass through the hands of the superintendent before they were posted (see also Thomson 1989:66). Autonomy for Aboriginal residents was usually illusory. Nevertheless, for some Aboriginal residents the changes involved in mission life produced personal satisfaction. An older woman who first joined Mona Mona as a teenager described the impact on her of the changes in lifestyle:

Mona Mona, it was the best place we'd ever been sent to. When you stay out before you go to Mona Mona you don't know nothing, you just roam around and go up to town and back again to a humpy. You had nothing to do. When you went out to Mona Mona it was good, you know, they used to teach you cooking, and sewing and washing, and working in the garden. First of all we used to work in the morning, and in the afternoon we have our schooling. Then we come home at 4 o'clock and go and do our ironing and all.

For adults in later years there was the possibility of some measure of independence from mission life through Exemptions. The Exemption ticket represented a kind of "coming of age" or achievement of adult social status for Aboriginal wards of the State. Exemptions were handed out to selected residents of Mona Mona from the late 1930s and into the 1960s and moved Aboriginal families into mainstream society to make their own way. Simultaneously Exemptions helped the mission cut down the number and expense of their dependents. However, the patterns of interracial social relations, whether operating in communities segregated from the wider society or those incorporated to some degree with the wider community, continued to follow the familial model established and promoted in their mission experience. Contemporary Aboriginal interaction in the welfare State conforms to many of the same patterns (see chapter 7).

The dormitory

The dormitory was established to provide an alternative context to that of the Aboriginal family for socialisation of Aboriginal children. Not only did the dormitory ensure an environment where children were physically and emotionally separated from the cultural background and practices of their Aboriginal family, but the isolation of the dormitory made it possible to educate and discipline children in the social values, language and work patterns of the dominant culture, as part of a deliberate strategy to alienate them from the cultural milieu of their parents and grandparents. Dormitories were the crucible for cultural transformation.

An ex-Mona Mona resident recalled a typical daily routine for a dormitory girl in 1914 (see Collins 1984:45ff; Attwood 1989:23; also Thomson 1989; Tonkinson 1990:132-133) for similar descriptions of mission routines.) The day began with an early rise to wash, then breakfast in the communal dining room which seated 200 people.²⁷ Breakfast consisted of porridge and one slice of bread with treacle. Morning worship and prayers preceded the working day. All the dormitory girls were assigned jobs appropriate to their ages by staff. Some girls made butter in the mission's dairy, putting the cream into empty syrup tins and shaking it vigorously until butter formed. After salt was added the lumps were shaped into blocks for use in the dining room. Other girls worked in the mission's domestic vegetable garden where there was always weeding and watering to be done. A range of vegetables were grown for home consumption such as potato, cassava, beans, cabbage, tomatoes, and the variety increased with improved agricultural knowledge and skills.

By the late 1920s and early 1930s the dormitory system was fully developed. Collins (1984) reports that in 1926 the dormitory was divided into three groups of girls: girls under 13 years, girls 13-20 years, and girls 20 years and older. In the mid-1930s the dormitory combined different facilities for the different age groups.

27. Pastor Branford's report to the Chief Protector in Queensland Parliamentary Records 1916-17, vol. 3.

In the little girls' part, they used to have like a big bunk on top and everyone would lay down side by side, that's the way they had beds for them. No mattress. Just a board and blanket. Things were differently arranged for the older girls. In the dormitory life, there were fifty four of us in the dormitory, all had bunks, one on top of each other. Two on top of one another (former Mona Mona dormitory resident).

For some of the older single women, work as housekeepers in the dormitory or in staff homes gave them a measure of independence. These women had separate living quarters adjacent to the dormitory. Although Aboriginal women were no doubt curious about the lives of the staff, the intimate contact of Aboriginal women in the homes of white women was not always happy, nor was the contact necessarily welcomed by missionary wives. One Aboriginal woman recalled that a particular superintendent's wife was not liked by the mission residents. The woman held herself aloof from residents and had a reputation for severity in her dealings with her domestic staff. She treated her housemaids harshly. The informant recalled that the woman used to push open gates with her foot to avoid the contamination of touching things Aborigines had handled.

For dormitory children the afternoons were allocated for rudimentary schooling. Before the 1920s, both school and church met in the communal dining room. Mrs. Roy and her daughter Pearly Roy held classes, concentrating on the "3 R's" - reading, writing and arithmetic. However, standards were not high. In 1927, the maths standards were assessed as below that of Queensland State schools, although the standard of handwriting was commended (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1927, vol. 1). The Mona Mona curriculum emphasized skills for life: boys learnt manual arts and girls were taught domestic skills and housekeeping. The superintendent's report to the Chief Protector in 1916-17 confirms this; girls were learning domestic science after school, and the senior girls and women sewed their own clothes as well as the men's shirts and trousers (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1916-17, vol. 3).

In the mission school Aboriginal assistants who proved capable and responsible were appointed to positions of minor status. In the absence of properly trained staff who were often difficult to find, "native" assistant teachers and monitors were necessary support

staff.²⁸ In the 1920s, the Mona Mona school followed its own guidelines and was not inspected by the Queensland Education Department, nor was it accountable to them until after the 1930s (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1929, vol. 1). The curriculum emphasised an education appropriate to the student's circumstances, and in practice this meant an emphasis on rural and manual skills (Queensland Parliamentary records 1932, vol. 1). The centrality of manual subjects in teaching was such that by 1937, with 36 boys and 37 girls enrolled at the Mona Mona school, the administration sought a qualified manual arts teacher (Queensland Parliamentary Records 1937, vol. 3). Although the number of students attending the mission school varied little, by 1947 the curriculum offered students a wider choice in skills and subjects; for example, three mission girls studied the piano. But generally speaking, mission education continued to stress manual skills in the curriculum of both sexes to the detriment of intellectual subjects (Queensland Parliamentary records, 1947, vol.2).

The period after school was set aside for children's personal chores such as bathing, and washing and ironing their clothes. Dormitory girls wore long dresses made for them by mission staff. Friday was not a school day, but allocated to preparation for the Seventh Day Adventist Sabbath (Saturday). Saturdays and Sundays were leisure time for dormitory children and possibly the only occasion for them to visit their family. Once a child entered the dormitory they no longer slept in their family home, although with the requisite permission they could spend a day with their parents.

We used to go for Saturday walks through the bush. But you have to be home a certain time. On Sundays they used to let us out at one o'clock ... we used to go down the range, and went for a swim at Hartley creek and walk back again. And we had to be home by five o'clock.

Manual work was an ever present demand on the time and energy of dormitory inmates. A dormitory resident explains how their day was structured around work.

28. Many of the early mission workers were dedicated church members but unqualified, particularly those who taught in the school.

We all had to be put into the dormitory and we worked on a farm.²⁹ Doing the ploughing. We used to carry water in a bucket to water all the plants ... by two girls, you know, with a stick in between. Then we used to work on a banana farm, pineapple farm, potato farm.

Since few missions could afford the luxury of only men working at manual tasks, no sections of the able-bodied workforce remained exclusively in the home or the school room (see Loos 1988; Chase 1988). One woman remembered that as a dormitory girl of around fourteen years old her day was divided between school and farm work.

Then in the evening when we finished on the farm, we used to go work in the dining room. Then for our bath ... we used to run down the creek and have a bath.

By the 1930s, missionary controls over the details and routines of dormitory life were more relaxed. The very young children were not required to live in the dormitory after the 1930s. Janice, for example, lived with her parents in the village until she was 13 years old and moved into the dormitory at puberty. She was eighteen years old when she left to marry. By the 1950s dormitory children were allowed to accompany family members in hunting forays on the weekends or at night. One girl learnt to hunt in the bush around Mona Mona with her parents.³⁰

We all had a shanghai. We used to kill pigeons and parrots and cook them in a fire. We used to get fish and cook it in the ground on top of coals. Open it up like a book and take all the bones out.

Many adults associated life in the dormitories with hunger. The inadequate diet was a constant concern to residents. Meal times also became forums for ritualised displays of status and segregation in the mission hierarchy:

They had a big dining room. One side was the boys, where they would eat and the other side would be for us. We used to have

29. The mission established a number of different farms to produce food for home and market consumption; some farms grew potatoes, another pineapples, another bananas, etc.

30. Thomson 1989; also refers to informants' from Yarrabah mission struggling with the problems of lack of food and having to improvise with bush skills.

syrup, bread for breakfast with coffee no sugar, and at dinner time we might have soup or potato. One little potato. We were hungry all the time.³¹

Residents supplemented the dining room fare with seasonal bush fruits such as bush cherries, bush tomatoes and "cocky apples", although Collins (1984) suggests bush foods were incidental contributions to mission diets. He argues that the highly regulated pattern of life prevented people devoting any substantial time to hunting and gathering; and by 1936, he estimates that 100 of the 250 Mona Mona residents lived in the dormitories. But for residents food symbolised the qualitative differences in mission life between staff and residents:

We used to cook in the kitchen³² in a big drum boiler. Mainly soup or sweet potato. We had to serve that to all the village people. We used to bake our own bread, then each person had a cup, and they all bought their own plate and that, get their food and then go back their own little hut. Everyone had like a little oven at the back of their yard. There wasn't much to eat in the depression times. Even before the depression time, that was what we used to eat in the dormitory. They used to come around every year and kill a lot of dogs. They hurt a lot of people's feelings. They had no food for the dogs so they had to kill them. They thought that people were giving their food to the dogs and not to themselves. The white staff, they all had good gardens, because the black people used to work there. You couldn't work in your own, you couldn't even fix your soil up. We were living in a small house with one bedroom, sitting room and kitchen.³³ We used to call it a box house. All the kids had to sleep together on the floor.

-
31. The boys dormitory was run on similar lines to that of the girls. They too left their family to join the dormitory where older boys cared for younger ones and all boys contributed their labour to the mission. Boys learnt woodwork and other gender specific skills.
 32. The informant is speaking of the communal kitchen.
 33. This is a description of the village housing built by the mission for married couples. When the mission closed in 1962 many of these same house were shifted to locations outside the mission lands for families to continue living in. Many of these now substandard houses were not replaced until as late as 1988 at Hill End.

Conclusion

The story of the Aboriginal family on Mona Mona is one of radical social transition. Under the mission social interaction between Aborigines and Europeans was formalized into systems which reproduced European cultural attitudes to work and family. The objectives of transformation were familiar in the institutions of church and State. In practice the reality of daily mission life failed to conform to missionary ideals and rhetoric. Aboriginal dependence and submissiveness was seen as contributing to the Aborigines' best interests; especially where the whole community was "one" family, with "one" father.

The administration appropriated the paternal and maternal roles of the family. It shaped these roles through the authority of the church, supported by State legislation, as legitimate avenues of intervention and control of residents. The mission used the circumstance of the already dislocated traditional Aboriginal family structures to advantage their own purposes. With no coherent traditional family structures the mission used spatial and social isolation of Aboriginal family members and the reification of differences to distinguish between social and racial groups.³⁴ Lack of autonomy kept Aborigines as quasi-children, economically and socially. Entitlements as adult workers were ignored and Mona Mona's administration compounded Aboriginal social status as "children" by directing their activities in their homes and organising their productive labour. The State concurred in the mission's creation of Aborigines on Mona Mona as dominated, subjugated people and supported in principle, in the early decades of the mission especially, socialisation for compliance with a system of social relations based on Aboriginal subordination to European superordination.

Dependence was the corollary of institutionalized dominance. However residents of Mona Mona were not totally complacent about institutionalized dependence, as the strike confirmed. Furthermore,

34. It is difficult to know all dimensions the impact segmentation of family life had on the remaining unit-the husband and wife. It is not unlikely that large families of this period were as much the product of pre-contraceptive practises as desire to maintain [even if unconsciously formulated] a family unit inclusive of children.

complaints to Tindale were frank and forthright and specifically mentioned the devaluation of Aboriginal labour in mission work practices and the institutional dependency Aboriginal people were forced to live with. Chapters 6 and 7 take up the theme of dependency in Aboriginal lives as it effects their contemporary relations with wider society.

CHAPTER 5

THE KURANDA ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY

The previous chapters have centred on the historical development of relations between Aborigines and Europeans and the structures used to assimilate Aborigines to the dominant culture. In this chapter discussion focuses on the contemporary contexts of life and the sociological composition of the Aboriginal village settlements and households of the Kuranda community.

The Kuranda Aboriginal community is an umbrella term covering between 200-400 people grouped together in geographically distinct residential areas. The present community includes Aboriginal residents in Kuranda township; Aboriginal residents of outlying settlements or villages; and some households of Aboriginal people living in the neighbouring towns of Mareeba and Cairns. These separate residential groupings and households are linked by past commonalities of historical and social experience and the continuing relevance of these in their present lives. These associations encourage people to continue to identify as a single community. This identification persists over several generations because the former mission is seen as their cultural and territorial "home" and despite the cultural and regional diversity of the background of the first Mona Mona residents.

Some Aboriginal groups in the present Kuranda community are, however, actively striving to establish an independent stance and reject continued intervention from agents in their past such as the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Although the present Kuranda Aboriginal community is no longer under the control of the mission, some sections within the community still see the church as an important and beneficial agent in contemporary social life.

Other sections are determined to break their ties with the past. They identify their future with the pan-Aboriginal political movements. The Kuranda Aboriginal community is now struggling to accommodate

these two views as becomes obvious in the confrontation between the competing interest groups and their claims to represent a homogeneous community.

When I began my fieldwork in the mid-1980s cultural differences based on historical associations or attachments to traditional territories had little impact on community political life. Such homogeneity is partly a legacy of the mission's construction of the settlement as a "family" discussed in chapter 4. However, the nature of daily household life in the village communities suggests a lack of continuity with traditions established under the mission and a strong influence of distinctive Aboriginal cultural values and practices (see chapter 7).

The basis of community

The closure of Mona Mona in 1962 was accompanied by the State government's acquisition of the mission property. Mona Mona residents still living at the mission were relocated in groups around the district to areas (discussed below) where they continue to live. Each of these village settlements is constituted differently but usually comprises a cluster of households with their own self-conscious identity often expressed in terms of behavioural differences and oppositional notions of the self and "other" such as gamblers / non-gamblers; drinkers / teetotallers; educated / uneducated; or small scale / big villages etc. One woman characterised the differences between Hill End and Valley Heights villages by their behavioural responses to confrontations with outsiders and a readiness to engage with the wider world. People at Valley Heights seemed to her to be "going into the stone age," whereas Hill End people are different; for example, Hill End folk are curious about the wider world and "they ask questions when people pull up" (on the fringes of the village). The same woman outlined other points of behavioural difference: Hill End village was forward looking, the residents were not afraid of strangers, but in fact were keen to improve their knowledge of the wider society and to improve their quality of life. By contrast, people in the Valley Heights village were, in her opinion inward looking, afraid of strangers, and both unconcerned and uninterested in improving their socio-economic position.

Aborigines in Kuranda also operate with an oppositional notion of community based on their separation and difference from the non-

Aboriginal people in Kuranda township. They also see themselves as different from other Aboriginal communities in the area.¹ In Cairns, Kuranda people often remark on how many strangers there are "all staring". The remark refers to other "Bama" (i.e. Aboriginal people) and not to the non-Aborigines in town. Kuranda people see themselves as separate and different from other Aboriginal groups in both the immediate district and from Cape York Aborigines visiting Cairns. At this level there is no comprehensive vision of belonging to a wider Australian Aboriginal community nor is there a regional sense of being part of the Aboriginal population of north Queensland. Thus, although Aboriginal people from Yarrabah may be related to several families in the Kuranda community, they are never classified as belonging to the Kuranda community. The notion of community is therefore of a bounded, familial and inclusive world derived in large part from common historical experiences on Mona Mona. All ex-Mona Mona people, whether from Mareeba, Mossman, Yarrabah or Cairns, who choose to identify with their past associations are classed as members of the Kuranda community.²

Church

The sense of a shared personal and communal history provides a strong basis for continuity in contemporary social relations. In 1986 only one generation had been born outside the mission and the preference for endogamous marriage amongst ex-Mona Mona families continues.³ Such marriages reinforce existing community bonds. A past in common highlights the sense of social difference Kuranda people have in their dealings with others. But the continued presence and role

-
1. See Tugby 1973 on the concept of Aboriginal culture and identity as constructed by oppositional stances and attitudes from the dominant culture.
 2. Some villages contain individuals who have no background or connection with Mona Mona. Such people are not seen as part of the community, but remain outsiders and this is so for the Europeans living with Aboriginal women as well as for Aboriginal men from other communities in North Queensland or from interstate.
 3. There are exception(s) to this generalisation, and they tend to be Aboriginal women partnering non-Aboriginal men; and less commonly, non-Aboriginal women with Aboriginal men.

of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in the community is also a reminder of the past. Older people tend to be the majority of adherents, although there are also a number of younger members. The active presence of the church in the Aboriginal community supports the concept of community as a religious and social fellowship. The church administration promotes their relationship with the community as an ongoing relationship, although they recognize the need to accommodate Aboriginal desires for self-determination. The Pastor appointed to the Mareeba and Kuranda ministry receives special training for working with indigenous congregations.⁴ The present ministry emphasizes a program of social and pastoral outreach. The church is active in community development projects and lobbies State and Commonwealth governments for services and funding of an Aboriginal women's shelter, pensioners' home, family counselling rooms, community recreational facilities, and so on.

The Adventist church stresses the importance of Aboriginal participation. From earliest mission days the staff at Mona Mona trained Aboriginal assistants for church services.⁵ Today services in the Kuranda church are led by Aboriginal church elders and the format encourages Aboriginal involvement. Thus, all the major offices for the service, such as the organist, preachers, ushers, etc, are filled by Aboriginal members of the congregation.⁶

The central religious symbols in the interior of the Kuranda church were painted by a man from the Kuranda congregation and shows the racial unity of true believers as they approach the "coming Kingdom". The panel behind the dais depicts three angels from three different racial groups; dark skinned Aborigines, white skinned Europeans and yellow skinned people, presumably Asians. These three angelic representatives of mankind are circling the globe, united in their work of bringing the Word to the world.

4. The Pastor is non-Aboriginal.

5. See Queensland Parliamentary Records 1927, vol. 1.

6. The only non-Aboriginal members are people who also have a long historical association with Mona Mona.

The role of Mona Mona as a mission continues in the present work of the church in Kuranda. The continuity of the church in the community is a major theme in public rituals. This was clear during the seventy-third anniversary celebrations of the mission's opening (26/7/1986). All former residents, irrespective of their standing with the church were invited to participate. The celebrations relied on the older generation of ex-mission residents speaking publicly about their experiences of mission life and the benefits it brought them. The speakers had been carefully selected by the organizers beforehand and most of them were staunch adherents. The pastor made every attempt to involve the whole Aboriginal community with the celebrations, although the activities were specifically devoted to church concerns, including the baptism of two adults. Sentiment was used to advantage; for the first time in sixteen years the former Mona Mona band played together and the mission choir sang. The latter was a triumph because it brought together ex-residents who were no longer church adherents nor followers of church values.

There was a serious note to the celebrations. The audience was reminded of unfulfilled promises to disseminate the Word. The Pastor spoke of the pledge Kuranda people made at the 1969 church Camp to work as missionaries amongst other Aboriginal people and to maintain their own faith.⁷ What had happened to these intentions? He had expected to see the fruition of this promise, not the backsliding which was characteristic of the present situation in Kuranda.

The Church tries hard to merge its interests with the concerns of the Aboriginal congregation and to foster a basis for common concerns. The claim of continuity and commonality is played out in personal relations. Whenever ex-mission staff and their adult children come to the district on holidays they attend church or ask in town about their former charges. A retired superintendent returned to see what progress his former charges had made under self-determination. He recorded a video of his visit to the now abandoned mission site where he

7. The Seventh Day Adventist Church holds an annual regional prayer and study meeting and in Christmas 1985-86 Mona Mona was the site of the north Queensland camp. The annual camp is a regional meeting of adherents for prayer and study.

interviewed people about their aspirations and the future direction for the community and the Mona Mona property.⁸ In the light of what he saw as the results of independence the ex-superintendent obviously thought Aboriginal independence was inappropriate. From his perspective, little of what the mission administration had encouraged in values and life style had survived with Aboriginal community self-management. Instead of progress, he saw social chaos.

Some residents resent the church's attempts to perpetuate their continued relationship with the community. They argue that the church, through its local representative the Pastor, is still determining Aboriginal affairs and doing so without community consultation. These critics see the church as an organisation which cannot relinquish its desire to control Aboriginal people and to direct their future involvement with Mona Mona. Not all Aborigines in Kuranda consider the church an appropriate vehicle for community aspirations. Nor do these people want a continuing relationship between the church and the community. Ex-Mona Mona families tend to divide their loyalties between the two bodies since they also represent the divergence in Aboriginal community interests. Moreover, semi-government organisations like the Aboriginal Health Service also contribute to political divisions in the community. Clashes between church and community have been exacerbated since Aboriginal community management. Resentment toward the church is hardly surprising since it is remembered as a theocracy and suspicions persist about their present motives and actions.

The Ngoonbi Housing Co-operative

The Co-operative has a practical and immediate role in the day-to-day life of Kuranda Aborigines. It also works as an umbrella organisation by providing the skills necessary to administer community projects funded by government. The Co-operative has shop premises in the main street

8. A film was made in 1955 by an Italian Film company on the "savages" at Mona Mona mission. This was during Pastor Turner's administration and at a time when Aboriginal residents enjoyed a high profile as exotica. Tourist buses regularly visited the mission on a weekend. See Queensland Parliamentary Records 1955, vol. 2; 1956-57, vol. 2.

of town and during weekdays they sell Aboriginal artefacts to tourists visiting Kuranda.⁹ The shop includes a museum with a permanent display on the material culture of the rainforest Aborigines, and the history of Mona Mona mission and contemporary Aboriginal lifestyles in the district. Unfortunately, the museum exhibits suffer from disinterest and neglect by shop staff. The consequence is that few tourists are interested in the museum and it fails to pay its way. Community members regularly visit the shop to file unemployment claim forms, seek information about eligibility for various social welfare benefits, or visit for social reasons such as chatting to staff or borrowing money. Families renting Ngoonbi housing are also likely to drop in to the office to resolve accommodation problems.

The Ngoonbi Co-operative board of directors have responsibility for a number of community projects. While the Co-operative's primary aim is local housing, as an incorporated body it legitimately receives and administers funds for other community-based projects, such as Ngoonbi Farm, or Commonwealth education programs in gardening, orcharding and home mechanics. In 1985-1986 Ngoonbi had the additional administrative responsibility for Mona Mona as a lease-back arrangement through the Department of Community Services. But under the arrangement the community has no secure tenure over Mona Mona, and both the church and the Co-operative are trying to resolve this by initiating projects which encourage land use and involve periods of living at Mona Mona by Aboriginal families.

Mona Mona

Mona Mona is the focus of community sentiment and interest in their past.¹⁰ Some Aboriginal people camp on the property at weekends and during school holidays, while others have built holiday-style accommodation for themselves. Two families live at Mona Mona full-time. Camping at Mona Mona is often an opportunity for a respite from

9. The shop is not open on the most popular day for the tourist trade, Saturday, because this is the Seventh Day Adventist Sabbath. The closure of the shop was a Board decision.

10. Mona Mona was leased to Ngoonbi Co-operative as agents of the trustees of the land, D.C.S., in 1984.

the pressures and routines of town life. The archaeological branch of the Department of Community Services with help from a group of older ex-residents recorded the burial sites of the first grave yard on Mona Mona. They identified and mapped the location of the graves, together with archaeological data on mission buildings like the dormitories, the village houses, the school and store, etc. These activities remind people of the close tie between their own biography and mission history and provide a channel for ex-residents to define and distinguish themselves as an Aboriginal community in the district. Moreover, such historical and emotional associations tend to supersede any prior notion of a traditional cultural background with particular regional alliances for many people.

Adult education courses in gardening, fencing and running a sawmill are held there. In 1984 the Aboriginal Development Commission funded a study for the proposed development of the Mona Mona property as a self-sufficient, independent Aboriginal community. A six year development plan was drafted which included:

... the development of a small village, with a camping and caravan area, central services area, housing area, and industrial area (Mona Mona Development Plan, April 1984. Tropical Resource Management Pty. Ltd.).

The project designers anticipated funding from several Commonwealth government departments including A.D.C., D.A.A. and C.E.S. The feasibility for developing Mona Mona was encouraged by the leasing agreement of the early 1980s and the work to restore the property's assets.¹¹ Summary recommendations in the development plan stressed the historical and emotional importance of the property to the Aboriginal ex-residents:

The work activities on the mission in late 1983 were complemented by a strong resurgence of interest in re-developing Mona Mona within the community. Committee meetings relating to Mona Mona activity were held at least weekly, and numerous well-attended public meetings were held. The number of

11. During the early 1980s fencing was repaired and the bridges over Rooty and Flaggy Creeks mended. There were also recreational visits to the area. See Tropical Resource Management, Mona Mona Development Plan, 1984:13

recreational visits to the reserve increased to the point that an influx of some 30-50 people visiting the site during weekends was not unusual. Despite differences within the community on the pace, nature and administration of development activities, almost all share an over-riding emotional attachment to the mission as a homeland, and desire to see the land being re-developed by and for ex-Mona Mona residents and their families (Mona Mona Development Plan, April, 1984:13).

However, in 1985-86 none of the development plans were implemented and the level of interest in general discussion about the development was negligible.¹² Admittedly, the sawmill was temporarily re-established, but after the machinery broke down through negligence the enthusiasm for milling declined. The enthusiasm for other economic ventures at the mission also evaporated; the market gardening scheme which supplied the villages with fresh vegetables failed because of infighting about who could use the community truck. (The truck was essential for collecting all the women workers in the market gardening course because few women had access to a car or owned their own vehicle and the mission is at least 14 km from any of the villages, and an even greater distance for women coming from Kuranda.)

The former mission is used for many community projects; for example, the annual church camp meeting was held there; an oral history group visited the property to record material, and it is also a place for leisure and recreation.¹³ Whatever the differences of these groups in their activities and purposes, they all observe the one rule on Mona Mona prohibiting use of alcohol.

Ngoonbi Farm

Ngoonbi Farm began as a project to develop a marketable retail product. A farm manager and his family were appointed from the

-
12. Since my return from field work the Seventh Day Adventist Church has tried to revitalize plans for the development of Mona Mona as a place for Aboriginal settlement and employment. However, these plans are still under discussion and development.
 13. By cultural history I refer to such things as the mapping and site protection of the former Mona Mona cemetery and the old camp sites of the earliest inhabitants. These activities were undertaken with the help of Aboriginal field personnel from D.C.S.

community and they live on the property in the joint capacity of manager and caretaker. The orchard was planted with various tropical fruits such as lychees, pineapples, etc. to supply local fruit shops. In 1985-86 many of the trees were still young and the fruit was too undersized for local sales. As an alternative to finding a market, the fruit was shared amongst households in the Kuranda villages.

Ngoonbi Farm has also been a focal point for community social activities. Because it has a big shed and toilet facilities it was an ideal location for community activities whether celebrations of wedding anniversaries, jam session with the local Aboriginal group "Hill End", or the venue for community business meetings, and adult education courses.¹⁴

The assertion of a community identity by ex-Mona Mona residents is partly an assertion of their individual and historical distinctiveness, especially vis-a-vis other Aboriginal groups. But the Kuranda community also functions in contemporary social life according to other points of distinction mentioned above. One such point of difference centres on membership in community organizations such as the local Ngoonbi Housing Co-operative and the Kuranda Seventh Day Adventist church. Both institutions were intended to serve Aboriginal interests in Kuranda, but in practice an individual's membership in one organization tends to preclude involvement with the other. Aboriginal people argue that the basis for exclusion is philosophical differences over political issues such as Aboriginal self-determination. The church sees Aboriginal advancement as measured by improvements in the socio-economic and spiritual standards of local community life. They seek to help the process by setting up social services, like old aged homes, counselling for domestic violence and child-care facilities, and so forth. The Housing Co-operative members, on the other hand, align their platform with the wider Aboriginal political agenda for land rights and self-government. Their view of community concerns focuses on the common socio-economic problems and lack of political rights of Aborigines throughout Australia.

14. In 1990 Ngoonbi is an abandoned project. The shed, formerly the site of so many community activities, is now leased to a non-Aboriginal panel beating business.

Some individuals hold joint membership in the two organizations. The Housing Co-operative board has always included senior church members and these individuals try to influence the Co-operative's activities with the directions in community development adopted by the church pastor and elders. Thus to many Aborigines in Kuranda the influence of the church is seen to extend to the Co-operative's business. Any intrusion is resented by the Co-operative members as yet another effort to rob Aboriginal people of independent community action. In practice, the influence of the church is subtle rather than direct; for example, the Jilli Binna shop operated by the Housing Co-operative is never open for business on a Saturday, the Seventh Day Adventist Sabbath, despite this being the best trading day with tourists. In addition, all business meetings of the Housing Co-operative begin with a moment of silent prayer. Such observances perpetuate symbolic continuities with church practice and mission protocol and some Aboriginal people argue that the organizations do indeed work according to patterns embedded in mission experiences.

Apart from disagreement about the continuing role of the church, community opinion is also divided on the role of interest groups within community organizations. The notion of a community, and community representation as homogeneous, is problematic. Partisan interests create divisions through the competition between community organizations for government funding and support for community-based programs. But the church, like the Housing Co-operative is an umbrella organisation. The church certainly recognizes this and attempts to override partisan feeling with proposals which satisfy the interests of several groups.

The diversity of political and social aspirations within the community is clear in the account of events to re-start timber milling as an industry on Mona Mona land. The Aboriginal Development Commission provided funds for capital equipment such as machinery and for wages for the project. These funds were channelled and managed by the Housing Co-operative as the incorporated body for all government funded community projects. The church, meantime, lobbied the State government for funds to establish buildings on Mona Mona and to initiate small-scale income generating schemes to alleviate local Aboriginal unemployment. After a short operating period the

timber scheme failed because of poor management. This left the Co-operative with limited credibility amongst the funding bodies involved. On the other hand, the church's development projects consistently looked to the wider issue of land ownership of the former mission with proposals for community enterprises at the mission. But this has caused resentment where individuals interpreted the church's actions as a sign of grasping interference. Some Aboriginal people claim the church persists in casting Aborigines as dependents by making decisions on their behalf without due consultation. One man characterised the church's efforts as "just like mission times".

This does not inhibit the regular appearance of partisan groups in local politics, especially in the form of competition for power by family groups. Occasionally partisan politics is a response to the perceived dominance in community affairs of powerful and influential families. In many cases the influence of family groups over others stems from particular historical contexts and is directly tied to the role these families had within the mission's hierarchy as discussed in the previous chapter. Today, it is generally the same families who are power brokers, or the acknowledged authorities; and where these families act as mediators in interaction between the Kuranda community and government organisations their power base is consolidated.

Irrespective of their partisan concerns, all the Kuranda community organisations share a desire for independent Aboriginal action and self-management. In some cases this is phrased in the rhetoric and objectives of wider Aboriginal political campaigns to advance local concerns in terms which break with their immediate historical past and identify with the pan-Aboriginal past. This is an active attempt to recast the institutional experiences of ex-Mona Mona people by asserting a different basis for independent and autonomous relations with the wider society. Whether this is achievable is not yet clear in daily social interaction and family life. Thus Ngoonbi Co-operative's community truck became a focus for factional struggles within the Co-operative which eventually paralysed some of the community projects to such an extent that they were abandoned.

The Residential divisions (Villages)

Some of the Aboriginal population lives in Kuranda township, but the majority lives in the fringe villages outside Kuranda at Hill End, Valley Heights and Picnic Point, West Road and Gumtree Flats.¹⁵ The four outlying major villages were originally surveyed and gazetted as townships for European railways workers during the construction of the Kuranda-Mareeba rail-line in the late 19th century.

Aboriginal people living in Kuranda rent accommodation through the local Aboriginal Housing Co-operative, Ngoonbi. The handful of Kuranda families living in Cairns also rent their housing, but their homes are owned by the State Department of Community Services. Former Mona Mona residents in Mareeba comprise two groups: those co-resident with a "mixed up mob" of Aboriginal people at the reserve (see Anderson 1981:20-36) and a smaller group of families who are scattered through residential sections of Mareeba township as individual households.

Statistical Profile

The 1981 Census estimated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were 31.6% of the total population of 661 people in Kuranda.¹⁶ The 1986 Census did not give percentages of the total population, but estimated there was an Aboriginal population of 242 people in the Kuranda district with a sex ratio of 105 females (5 female persons with race not stated) to 129 males (4 male persons with race not stated).¹⁷ The other major residential group in Kuranda are Europeans with a sex ratio of numbering 191 females to 204 males in a total population of 395 persons.

-
15. The exact figure differs with each D.A.A. profile in Cairns.
 16. The following population profile and figures for community housing density in the Kuranda Aboriginal communities rely mainly on published data from the Commonwealth census and government sources. Statistics on the community are not always reliable because population fluctuations are part of the household and intra-village mobility characteristic of the community.
 17. I have not included Torres Strait Islanders living in Kuranda. Their numbers are almost insignificant.

A 1984 development plan of the Kuranda community gives figures for the total population of each village, the number of families in each and the number of dwellings.¹⁸ (These figures are discussed elsewhere.) Surveys of household numbers in the village populations are routinely made by government departments for annual reports, but these are usually estimates and not very reliable.¹⁹

In 1984 plans for Mona Mona's redevelopment were collated by a local Cairns firm for approval by A.D.C. This study estimated the average number of persons in the Kuranda Aboriginal family as 4.98 persons and the average number of persons per dwelling as 8.37 persons, making the average number of families per dwelling 1.67 families. However the study does not specify a diagnostic description of the family.²⁰ Indeed, their description of a domestic group is not clear and makes no distinctions between the nuclear family or extended family, or between a domestic group and a residential group (see chapter 6 for a discussion of the sociological definition of units in households). Distinctions of this kind are important for comparisons with domestic units in other sociological surveys of Aboriginal households in rural/urban communities. Eckermann's (1988) survey of a total of 77 households in rural and urban New South Wales and Queensland shows major differences in Aboriginal family structure between the two States. In her survey of Aboriginal households in rural and urban Queensland she found there was a higher percentage of extended families (of three generations in the household), a smaller percentage of nuclear families and more single parent families than any of these features appeared in Aboriginal households in New South

18. See Tropical Resource Management, 1984. *Mona Mona Development Plan*. Cairns.

19. I am thinking particularly of the D.A.A. community profiles which are rough estimates whose accuracy depends on the individual research officer and his/her method of collecting the data.

20. The definition of family when discussing households can be problematic where more than one family group lives together. See Smith and Biddle (1975) for definitions of the family.

Wales.²¹ The issue of definitions in methodology is important as it also affects the descriptive profile of the Kuranda community in government publications which is used as a basis for policy decisions about service delivery, such as housing and so forth.

Age distribution also affects analysis of Aboriginal household composition. The 1986 Census figures for age distribution amongst Kuranda Aborigines showed 103 children in the 0-14 age group of whom 58 were female and 56 were male. In most age grades in this census the sex ratio of females to males is balanced; although in the group of 20-39 year olds, there are fewer females than men (28 females to 46 males). The years 20-29 are the major child-bearing years for Aboriginal women and the years in which both sexes are likely to be involved in a stable relationship and family life; thus the predominance of men has implications for the structure of families, household economies and socialization of children discussed later in the chapter.

Table A describes the distribution of household incomes in the Kuranda Aboriginal population from material I collected during 1985-86. Although the 1986 Census details household income in Kuranda it fails to specify income according to race so it is impossible to compare Aboriginal incomes with those of the wider Kuranda community. On the other hand, the majority of the Aboriginal community are dependent on welfare benefits which means Aboriginal people are likely to have an annual income in the Census category of \$0- \$2200 which shows a total of 96 persons.

21. See Eckermann, 1988. In Queensland, 15% of families were extended compared with 12% in N.S.W.; 10% of the surveyed Aboriginal households in Queensland were nuclear families compared with 43% in N.S.W.; and 16% of families surveyed in N.S.W. were single parent families compared with 42% in Queensland.

Table A. Household income sources, November 1986²²

Household	Total persons	Number children ⁻	Employed (all male)	Unemployed M & F [*]	Supporting mothers [@]	Pensions [#]	Other ⁺
1	5	2	1	0	2	0	0
2	12	4	0	6	1	0	0
3	9	3	1	0	1	0	0
4	6	0	0	3	1	1	0
5	6	2	0	2	1	0	0
6	20	6	0	12	0	0	0
7	16	8	1	6	1	0	0
8	9	3	1	1	1	0	0
9	12	4	0	4	2	0	0
10	8	3	0	2	1	1	0
11	14	10	0	0	1	0	1
12	3	1	1	0	0	0	0
13	4	2	0	0	1	0	0
14	4	2	1	0	0	0	0
15	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
16	2	0	2+/ ⁺	0	0	0	0
17	6	3	1	0	0	0	0
18	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
19	5	0	1	2	0	1	0
20	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
21	6	2	0	1	1	0	0
22	6	4	1+/ ⁺	1	0	0	0
23	12	8	0	4	0	0	0
24	4	2	0	1	1	0	0
25	4	0	0	2	0	0	0
26	9	1	0	5	1	1	1
27	4	0	0	1	1	1	0
28	6	3	0	0	0	2	1
29	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
30	5	3	0	1	1	0	0
31	6	2	0	3	0	0	1
TOTALS	210	78	13	58	18	9	4

22. Households not included in this table are those at Valley Heights, West Road and Gumtree Flats, and some at Picnic Point. Thus, the table does not include the whole range of households in the Kuranda Aboriginal community.

Source: Records of tenants with the Ngoonbi Housing Co-operative and my own records of houses I was familiar with. 1986.

- ^ Children are defined in this table as those under 16 years (age of receipt of unemployment in 1986).
- @ Supporting parents also receive a Family Allowance payment incrementally adjusted to the number of children in the person's care. I have not included this in the table.
- # includes Old Age and Invalid pensions.
- * Unemployed persons (not all of whom received Benefits).
- +/ In both these cases the figures include women who had full-time (16) or regular part-time work (22).
- + Other refers to Aboriginal tertiary student allowance: \$78.96 per week plus \$5.25 if under 25 years old in 1987.

One of the most interesting features of Table A is the discrepancy between the number of people in a household and the number of income earners. Most households are "carrying" individuals who have no source of regular cash income. The presence of individuals with no means of support is one reason for the high mobility in the Kuranda population as people move not only between households, but also between villages.²³ It is not uncommon for an individual without income to deliberately move into a household where he or she can receive assistance (as shelter, food, cash, goods) from a particular domestic group on the basis of obligations entailed in their relationship.²⁴

Details of the economic resources of Aboriginal households in Kuranda is clear from data in Table A where collated information comes from several sources, including the Housing Co-operative files and my own research. The Co-operative supplied information on household structure and income for 16 houses and 2 flats of the 31 households in the sample (see Table A). Of the remaining households making up the 31 households in the sample, three households are located in Cairns,

-
- 23. One young woman, not yet in receipt of unemployment, but who had left school, was supported by the income of her boyfriend. However, when he went to jail for a time her "home" followed the cycle of one night in a relative's home at Valley Heights, one night at her mother's in Hill End and 3 nights in Cairns with her grandmother. Where she spent the two remaining nights I'm not sure.
 - 24. A group of young men will raid a house drinking another's wine, eating the meat in the fridge and "cooking up" while others are asleep, and taking clothes which they later "lose".

while the others consisted of households I knew personally in Picnic Point, Hill End and a household located on its own between the Valley Heights and Picnic Point villages. Of the 31 households in the survey there were 6.7 people on average, per dwelling with an average of 2.5 children per dwelling. These figures breakdown with respect to the number of children in each household: nine households had no children at all; two households had one child; seven households had two children, and six households also had three children. Three households had four children, one household had six children and three households had eight or more children in them.

The following picture of Aboriginal income, household leadership and household structure is based on the available data. In 1986 twenty-four of the 31 households surveyed were jointly led by a male-female couple, while seven of the 31 households had single women as household leaders. Of the total households, 19 were constituted as extended families and 12 were nuclear families.²⁵ Eighteen women were on Supporting Parent benefits in the total of 31 households; five women claimed the Deserted Wife or Widow's pension in a combined total of twenty three women in receipt of pensions other than Unemployment Benefits. (The five women on the Widow's pensions were also household heads.) It was not possible to distinguish by sex those 58 people receiving Unemployment Benefits. Of the 31 households there were just 11 men (and 2 women) regularly earning a full-time wage. Only nine people of the 31 households collected the Age or Invalid's pensions.

Not surprisingly, given the high level of unemployment and the need to depend on welfare, most households contained more than one income earning unit.²⁶ For example, some households have two women

25. These figures might be compared with Eckermann's (1988) survey of a total of 77 households in rural and urban households in N.S.W. and Queensland where Queensland showed slightly more extended families (15%) than did N.S.W.(12%) and where nuclear families were generally more common in N.S.W. (43%) than they were in Queensland (10%).

26. I have followed Smith and Biddle (1975:12-13) for definitions of households and family units. As they point out (1975:30), "The proportion of family units with a woman at the head is, of course, larger than that made of women who head households."

on Supporting Parent incomes and an individual on Unemployment Benefits. In another household, one woman received Supporting Parent benefits and six of the other adult residents received Unemployment Benefits.

Hill End

Hill End is the first Aboriginal village on the Myola road to Gumtree Flats. The Myola Road skirts the railway line linking Kuranda and Gumtree Flats and is about 10 km by road from Kuranda.

In 1986 the six houses of Hill End settlement were dilapidated weatherboard shacks, at least 40 years old. They previously used to accommodate married couples in the village quarters of Mona Mona mission but were moved to the present site when the mission closed. Originally each house had two rooms, although most householders found this inadequate and have improvised by adding their own makeshift additions to create extra space. Reticulated water was first supplied to the homes in 1986, over twenty years after the houses were first moved there. A single water tap fed by a bore was positioned outside each house. Prior to this, Hill End residents carted all water for domestic and personal use from the Barron River; indeed, some residents of the other villages are still doing this (for example, Picnic Point). There is no electricity at Hill End.²⁷

Hill End village has been continuously occupied for over 24 years. The State assumed the cost of relocating the houses as part of the compensation paid to the Seventh Day Adventist church when the land was resumed by the State. Residents then rented their individual holdings from the Queensland Lands Department at a nominal fee with the understanding that eventual ownership was possible if the rent were regularly paid. Over time a number of families accumulated rental debts; the oversight seriously disadvantaged the residents in their relations with the State.

27. In September 1989 Hill End and Picnic Point had electricity connected and new brick homes with all amenities were under construction by the Department of Community Services.

In the mid-1960s the Queensland Department of Native Affairs (later the Department of Community Services) systematically consolidated its control over the State's Aboriginal and Islander communities by replacing church administrations with State control.²⁸ The Pastor assisting the ex-Mona Mona residents to assimilate into the wider community advised the Hill End people to accept the State's offer of help. The consequence of this was that the villagers lost the option to own their land; a loss for which they held the Pastor responsible. With several families in debt to the Lands Department, the Queensland government suggested to the Pastor that debts could be discharged in return for State control, through the Department of Native Affairs, over their property interests. Guided by paternalistic concern for his newly emancipated flock and with little confidence in their capabilities for self-management, the pastor advised the villagers to accept the offer. The Department of Community Services sweetened their offer with free rent of the homes (although residents already had this) and government responsibility for household repairs and maintenance.

These events were instructive. At that stage the Pastor still had legal authority over people. He also had much of the same respect from ex-mission residents that he had previously commanded. People were therefore equivocal about asserting their independence by offering different opinions or by openly disobeying him. Some people felt the Pastor pressured them by his force of personality into accepting the government's proposal. But the episode is remembered for the lesson learnt; namely that in spite of the formal end to church involvement in their lives, church agents continued to determine them.

Over the next decade the issue of government responsibility for maintenance of Hill End's housing was a contentious matter. Hill End families became dependents of the State as they had been under the church. In both situations, Aboriginal people were subject to the decisions of others on issues as basic as their immediate living

28. Both Mona Mona mission and the Church of England's involvement with Yarrabah were replaced by Queensland government bureaucracies in the early 1960s. Many churches were facing financial difficulties by continuing to support missions and there was no doubt some reappraisal of how relevant such activities were as the best way to serve Aboriginal people.

conditions. Hill End has fought the bureaucratic neglect of their need for better housing with direct political action. They invited a national television team to publicly report on their living conditions. The women and children of Hill End also staged a sit-in at the Cairns office of the Minister for Community Services to protest about the allocation of housing funds to Torres Strait communities when their community was in need.²⁹ The woman who organized the protest explained that she would not repair her home at Hill End because it would enable the government to say she was managing and use this as grounds to refuse help. Hill End people stand out amongst the villages as a group who consistently refuse to be treated by the State as powerless and dependent. On more than one occasion they have organized campaigns to publicise their needs as a community.

Hill End people see themselves as an assertive, coherent group with a positive self-image. Their views of Aboriginal residents in the neighbouring villages is not as positive: "we ask questions if someone's poking about. At Valley Heights they just stare and say nothing!" Hill End residents claim Valley Heights villagers "behave like simple children". They also say Valley Heights residents are apathetic about themselves and their futures. A Hill End woman wondered why this was: Why didn't the younger generation of Aboriginal people in Kuranda who had more options than their parents, like a good education, learn to help themselves?

In 1986, 50 people lived in the 6 households in Hill End.³⁰ Each dwelling comprised more than one family unit in each dwelling and was headed by a male-female partnership.³¹ The main source of adult income was welfare benefits, although one woman was employed part-

29. The weatherboard houses need structural repairs, there are no windows with glass in them, no bathrooms or toilets attached to houses and no garbage service. Winters in Kuranda can be quite cold due to the altitude and decent shelter is important.

30. In 1984 Tropical Resource Management, the firm which compiled the Mona Mona Development Plan estimated that a total of 59 people lived at Hill End, made up of 10 families in 6 dwellings.

31. The definition of "family unit" I am following in this chapter comes from definitions used in Smith and Biddle (1975).

time with the Aboriginal community health team; one adult male was a full-time T.A.F.E. student in Cairns and another man had casual employment timber-getting in the former mission forests (work which was sporadic and unreliable).

Surprisingly, the appalling material conditions of Hill End have not overwhelmed people. The following description of the home of one couple was not untypical of the general condition of homes in the Hill End community in 1986. The three roomed house was made of particle board and in a very decrepit condition. The permanent residents consisted of a married couple who lived in one room where they also stored their personal possessions. The other room was sparsely furnished with only a bed where the two small girls in the woman's care slept. (These girls were "under her," that is the woman had custodial responsibility for them and received Family Allowance benefits for them.³²) Apart from the bed in the second bedroom, there were a few broken toys, a suitcase and some old newspapers scattered about the room. In place of a wardrobe the woman hung her clothes over a piece of string connected between two points in the room. The floors were bare and the windows without coverings.

There was no electricity. In the kitchen food was stored in a safe and in open cupboards. In the middle of one kitchen wall the leaking flue of an old wood stove filled the room with smoke. The interior of all rooms was blackened by smoke from the kitchen fire. There was no sink, no running water, no bathing facilities and only a pit-toilet outside the house.

Conditions were much the same in a neighbouring house which was older than the first home and was first built as married quarters on Mona Mona. The house had three rooms: a bedroom, kitchen and lounge. The permanent residents were a couple with their three children, and sometimes the wife's sister. All window panes of the house had disintegrated long ago and sheets of blue plastic now covered the open spaces as protection against rain and wind. In the lounge and kitchen some of the floor boards were missing or damaged. The one and only bedroom was used by the couple while the lounge

32. These girls were not her own children.

doubled as sitting room and sleeping quarters. The kitchen was small and dark with a wood stove placed in a tiny tin alcove to prevent the spread of kitchen fires burning down the whole house. The family washed from a tap supplying cold water at the back door of the house. Because there was no electricity, all hot water for washing or cooking had to be heated in the kitchen on the wood stove. The residents took a pride in their home, despite its dilapidated condition. They had decorated the interior with religious icons (in the bedroom) and football memorabilia (in the lounge). A small cane table in the corner of the lounge room was covered by a cloth and a vase of artificial flowers sat beside a photo of the couple on their wedding day.

Neither households paid rent. The couple and their children in the second house had previously lived in the better housing provided by DCS at Valley Heights where residents paid rent of \$70.00 a fortnight in 1986. The family deliberately chose to return to Hill End because the quality of life at Valley Heights was poor; [there was] "too much gambling and drinking ... and [it was] a bad place for kids."

Security of tenure to their land is an issue of equal concern with demands for better housing by Hill End residents. There has been a land boom in real estate for country homes in the area adjoining Hill End. Russet Park, for example, is a new land development located immediately across the Barron River from Hill End. People fear developments of this kind because of the intrusion, but also because of public pressure to move them elsewhere once property values begin to rise.

Picnic Point

Picnic Point is further west along the railway track from Hill End. It is about a 15-20 minute walk along the road, although people tend to walk the railway line because it is a more direct route. Walking along the rail line on the other hand, cuts down the possibility of hitching rides with passing cars. All the villages are situated close to Myola Road and residents identify cars they can hitch rides with and speculate on the movements of those who are travelling.

The 1984 survey of Picnic Point for the Mona Mona development proposal estimated a population of 17 people amongst 7 families in 4

dwellings.³³ This village consists of four wooden ex-mission homes of the same design as those at Hill End.³⁴ Only three of the four houses are in permanent use. The fourth house is used by different people according to their circumstances, but as the house belongs to no-one in particular, it is often uninhabited. At one time, an itinerant white woman and her children lived there rent free until the authorities had the police turn them out.³⁵ Another time, a single man established a household consisting of his sisters and their young children, and an older single woman who was not a relation. The household was viable for a time, mainly because all inhabitants were homeless and had no means of constituting an independent household. A variety of reasons kept them together: unstable relationships with partners, rental arrears with D.C.S., or the need for respite from difficult domestic circumstances. A male-female couple headed the three other households in Picnic Point. All households depend on welfare benefits for income.

Housing at Picnic Point is also on land owned by the Department of Community Services. But residents do not pay rent as services to homes are minimal, for example, there is no sewerage or water supplied. Unlike Hill End, Picnic Point had no water taps provided by D.C.S. Residents fetch water from the Barron River by climbing down a steep embankment to the river below their settlement.³⁶ One home has a usable water tank, but most householders use water from the Barron River for washing, cooking and drinking. Two of the four houses had electricity which made them the focal point of neighbourhood activities whether for watching television and videos or for use of cooking

33. Tropical Resource Management, 1984. Mona Mona Development Plan Table 3.1.

34. This refers to the village in 1985-1986.

35. My informants were not sure who had moved the white inhabitants on, but people generally felt it was likely to be D.C.S. personnel operating with the police in Kuranda.

36. The Barron River is subject to pollution from chemicals used on tobacco farms upstream from the villages. Following heavy rains there is always a good deal of soil washed into the river which makes it muddy and undrinkable. Fishing in the Barron is a regular food producing activity sustaining many households during "slack week".

appliances. Without electricity people rely on the open fire in front of the house for all cooking and heating.³⁷ None of the four households had a major domestic electrical appliance like a refrigerator, since the capital cost even of secondhand items was prohibitive for households on welfare. Moreover the goods were only available in Cairns (36 km away) or Mareeba (about 60 km away) and transport costs would add to the expense.

Mobility is endemic in households in Picnic Point as it is in community life in general and has varied causes. In one household at Picnic Point an older couple with poor health required daily domestic help with food preparation, housekeeping, and so on. The man's son from a first marriage, and his daughter-in-law, lived with them in return for housekeeping responsibilities. The younger couple moved between their residence in Picnic Point and another household in Mareeba. During their absence from Picnic Point a single woman with no permanent home of her own moved in and earned her keep by housekeeping. In a neighbouring household constant marital strife led to the wife staying with her mother in Cairns for weeks at a stretch. On other occasions she moved in with a sister in Valley Heights. Major determinants of changes in residence, irrespective of whether for a few days or a longer period, are usually a response to conflict over 'love business', boredom, or for reasons directly associated with drinking or recovery from heavy bouts of drinking. However, there are also sections of the Aboriginal community which are highly mobile as a common pattern of their social life. Children, for example move regularly between households and family groups (see chapter 6).

There is constant daily social exchange and interaction between residents of Valley Heights and Picnic Point. Kinship ties account for some of the interaction, but pragmatism also influences time spent in Valley Heights since Valley Heights has facilities the other villages lack; hot and cold tap water, sewerage, electricity in the houses, and a shop and laundramat close by. Given the distance from Kuranda (the nearest

37. The ability to cook in private is desired because it prevents other people from assessing how much food one has and what can be had for the asking.

shops) and the few cars in the villages, the value of these resources in daily life is high.

Valley Heights

Valley Heights is the furthest village from Kuranda. The twenty kilometre journey from Kuranda makes return taxi trips expensive.³⁸ The cost of taxi fares, one way between Cairns and Kuranda was \$20.00 in 1986; and for a return fare between Cairns and Valley Heights, people paid \$30.00. The taxi charged \$13.00 for a single trip from Kuranda to any of the other Aboriginal villages.³⁹

The estimated population of Valley Heights in 1984 was 99 people divided into 10 families in ten houses.⁴⁰ The average number of people in each dwelling was reckoned to be 9.9 persons.⁴¹ Valley Heights had the same historical background as the other settlements as former mission housing and in minimal access to services. In the mid-1970s DCS replaced the housing at Valley Heights with its own design of ten terrace-style town houses snugly arranged around a central public square. All the houses have adjoining walls with their front doors directly opposite the front yards of their neighbours. The layout ensures lack of privacy and brings the fights and disturbances of one household into the public view and hearing of all the other households.

Valley Heights has a reputation amongst other villages as a place "where things happen". A sense of excitement in otherwise mundane daily routines draws residents of other villages to Valley Heights, as much as it drives them away. The potential for excitement is heightened by high density living and few options for privacy. Drunkenness and

38. Some men own cars, although not all are registered. Sharing of cars is far from common and rarely are they considered a communal asset. Women may aspire to, but are unlikely to succeed in car ownership. A train passes the villages every day. It is rarely used because of its inconvenient time table, passing the communities at the extremes of the day.

39. The cost escalated during field work.

40. These figures come from the Tropical Resource Management's plan for the re-development of Mona Mona and were valid in 1984.

41. See Tropical Resource Management Mona Mona Development Plan, 1984, Table 3.1

sexual jealousy are fuelled by accusations about neighbours and fights often involve a number of households as protagonists or intermediaries.⁴² Unemployment is high in Valley Heights. Occasionally work is available for men with skills in timber-getting and milling, and a Community Employment Development Program (CDEP) scheme employed four men to construct a play ground in Valley Heights for the children.

Locally available consumer facilities help to cut down the number of shopping trips by villagers to Kuranda.⁴³ At Valley Heights there is a privately run small general store which stocks a variety of grocery items, fresh foods like bread and milk, and for children, lollies, ice-cream and soft drinks. Without transport to Kuranda local householders have no option but to pay the inflated prices of the shop.⁴⁴ One source estimated that a 500% mark-up is placed on essential items of daily household use, like soap.⁴⁵ Adjoining the shop is a coin laundramat.⁴⁶ Behind the shop, further into the bush, are small units rented by the proprietor to single non-Aboriginal men many of whom are invalid pensioners, on limited incomes and for whom rented accommodation in Kuranda or Cairns would be difficult to find.

The shop owner exercises her jurisdiction over the leasees by prohibiting fraternization between the male tenants and Aboriginal women. In one case she attempted to control interaction with the help

-
42. Three or four non-Aboriginal men living with Aboriginal spouses are resident here too. Most of them are habituated to alcohol or other drugs.
 43. This does not automatically follow of course, since many people had large credit debts at the Valley Heights shop and therefore could not shop there. Moreover, people enjoy visiting town for the excitement and social interest of the visit, as much as they may need to use the other services, e.g. the doctor, the post office, banking, hotel or butcher.
 44. Credit is available to select customers but it is a dubious advantage to customers in communities where there is a thin line between liquidity and debt.
 45. Comments from Mr. Les Hines, Management Consultant to Ngoonbi Co-Operative.
 46. In 1986 it cost 60 cents for use of the drier and 60 cents for a load of washing. The flats for single men at "Rainbow Village" were rented at \$30.00 per week.

of the local police. She encouraged the police to intervene in the household of a group of older Aboriginal women who were not residents of Valley Heights because one of her tenants was staying there with his girlfriend, a Torres Strait Islander. The Aboriginal women claimed the man was "very nice" and made them tea early in the morning. He always made the first fire of the day and generally helped with domestic chores.⁴⁷ But all this stopped when, as the old women told it, the shop owner intervened. Then the police "came and hunted" both him and his girlfriend away from the house.

Actions of this kind demonstrate the basic structural powerlessness of Kuranda Aborigines in their efforts for independence. Despite the disappearance of any formal constraints over their lives of the kind familiar from the mission, their actual everyday experience with Europeans has changed little. Thus Aborigines in Kuranda villages remain dependent on the good graces of particular Europeans for equity. In the final analysis the arbiters are people like shopkeepers, D.C.S staff, the police and taxi drivers. All make it clear to Kuranda Aboriginal people that their social and economic interaction with the wider community is circumscribed (see Morris, 1989; also chapters 6 and 7 in this thesis).

The relationship between the owner of the Valley Heights shop and her Aboriginal clients repeats a familiar theme in interactions between Aborigines and the wider society. The shopkeeper exploits her Aboriginal patrons by charging high prices to customers without the resources to shop elsewhere. These customers are dependent on the shop, not only for goods and services, but also, importantly, for credit to tide them over during the pension fortnight.

I have no detailed description of the structure of households in Valley Heights because I did not have the entree to this community I had with Hill End and Picnic Point. In general, Valley Heights community kept aloof from visitors and kept their affairs private. As a group they kept to themselves although the issues they faced (child-care facilities, control of social problems, transport to town, etc.) were

47. The women cooked on an open fire just outside the front door of the house.

pertinent to all the villages. Nevertheless, their women initiated their own community organisation to meet monthly.

Household heads in Valley Heights range from a male-female couple to a single woman. A number of "outsiders" (non-Aboriginal people) also live in Valley Heights. These individuals are peripheral in their households and in community life and without exception are all European men living with Aboriginal women.⁴⁸ They are usually dependents of the women they live with. However, in general, household structure is formally controlled through the leasee relationship with D.C.S which gives the department a mandate to intervene in households and determine the composition of residents. To supervise leasing arrangements, a Liaison Officer from D.C.S visits the households fortnightly. A Valley Heights householder showed me a letter from D.C.S. about her rental arrears and asked me to explain the import of the letter. The leasee was \$108.00 in arrears (a little over 3 weeks). The writer pointed out that the leasee must pay the outstanding amount next pension day, as she had a responsibility to keep her side of the bargain if Aboriginal people wanted self-management. The leasee never absolved her debt. Instead she and her young children left the house and circulated between the different households of her kinsfolk both in Valley Heights and in the other villages.

The Liaison Officer visits the Kuranda community once a fortnight to check property maintenance and so forth. The Liaison position carries a good deal of authority over people's lives and is cause for resentment, especially when an officer intervenes in areas of social relations people consider private. Sometimes individual discontent and frustration with the officer's constant interference led to elaborate fantasies where the officer was "bashed" or ticked off by the residents. Such events never occurred, but the hope of retribution showed the intense resentment against the the power of the Department and their

48. The men of this kind I met at Valley Heights are best described as "drop-outs" from mainstream society; they are usually involved with drugs (alcohol or marijuana) and tend to be drifters. This is not true of one or two European men who have long-standing relationships with Aboriginal women. Moreover, there are a small number of white women married to Aboriginal men living in that section of the community in Kuranda itself.

interference in people's lives, as the following case illustrates. A woman and her young adult sons were evicted from the Valley Heights community because of drinking and fighting in the family and their damage to property. She and her children were subsequently installed in a D.C.S. house on the edge of Cairns where they were geographically isolated from the Kuranda community and other members of the immediate family.⁴⁹ The Liaison officer stipulated that only certain family members had Departmental approval to stay in the house long term. The household head was incensed by this and was equally resentful when she was told to clean her yard and garden. Her reaction was to talk defiantly about her meeting with the Liaison Officer and to contemplate moving elsewhere. The latter is a common response to trouble, especially where an individual has no means to control or change their circumstances but wishes to act "as if" they did so.

Apart from DCS, Valley Heights is served by other organizations from the wider community. A trained pre-school teacher from an Aboriginal-Islander group in Cairns visits the Valley Heights settlement once a week to help organize activities for mothers with young children. An Aboriginal health worker from the Aboriginal Health Service in Cairns checks on community health problems (such as diabetes, heart disease, breast cancer, smoking, etc.) and organises relevant community education programs. Valley Heights, unlike the other villages, has a high level of interaction with government service agencies. The idea of the village as a place where "things happen" is not confined to residents' involvement with these agents alone. Within the village gambling schools are a regular feature of social life. A European woman selling second-hand clothes holds a fortnightly stall at Valley Heights. She spreads a blanket on the ground and piles the used clothes and shoes on to this. Although her sales methods are casual, the clothing is neither especially good nor cheap. One customer showed interest in a pair of shoes, but at \$10.00 the pair she decided they were too expensive.

Generally speaking, social life in Valley Heights is internally generated. Domestic arguments are common and the spectacle of the

49. The woman pays \$98.00 per fortnight for the D.C.S. house in Cairns.

fight provides community excitement, and later, a rich topic for gossip. Many fights and gossip arise from jealousy over the opposite sex. Often there is a cycle to domestic fights; emotions are aroused, fights break out, and the tensions are resolved sufficiently for life to settle down. In a short time the cycle repeats itself, often with the same actors, but perhaps with a different cause. One woman stabbed her de facto husband during a fierce argument at Valley Heights. He had taunted her by calling the name of another woman he showed interest in. Although the man was neither seriously injured nor hospitalized as a consequence of the attack, he prosecuted his de facto wife. She received a two year good behaviour bond. Yet between the time of the stabbing and the court prosecution, the two lovers smoothed over their differences sufficiently to be "loving up" on the grassy area at Valley Heights.

Alcohol was another cause of many fights in Valley Heights. One woman, who lived alone, drank a lot and entertained other drinkers, including men, in her home at Valley Heights. Other women in the village were angry about their menfolk drinking all night in her home. These women decided to beat her as a reminder to keep away from their men. The woman sought help from an older sister who was both a teetotaler and a renowned fighter. In most situations the older sister came to her assistance. But the alliance was under severe pressure when the teetotaler sister found her own husband not only drinking in the house, but also sleeping off his alcoholic bout in her younger sister's home.

West Road

Because the fourth village, West Road, is geographically isolated from the other villages communication between them is minimal. West Road inhabitants have limited participation with the wider Kuranda Aboriginal community. However, the Kuranda Seventh Day Adventist church is a focus for one of the older members of West Road who joined the Mona Mona seventy-third anniversary celebrations in a testimonial to her time on Mona Mona and her present involvement with the local church.

In 1984 West Road's population was 30, with 7 closely related families spread between 4 houses.⁵⁰ By 1985-86 West Road was much smaller than this and I suspect the estimated population in 1984 was inflated. West Road is best described as a community of one extended family.

Gumtree Flats.

This village comprises a single household on the northern bank of the Barron River at Gumtree Flats. The only permanent resident is a blind, unmarried man who sometimes has relatives from Kuranda to stay for short periods, or over an extended weekend.⁵¹ Another unmarried Aboriginal man lived with him on a semi-permanent basis. The household is closely linked through kinship and historical ties with families in all the villages mentioned above.⁵²

Kuranda

In 1986 the Ngoonbi Housing Co-operative in Kuranda rented 18 properties to Aboriginal families in Kuranda township. All the homes were new, standard house designs of three bedrooms, and in some cases four or five bedrooms, supplied with town amenities like water, sewerage and electricity. While the houses are located in clusters of two or three in a street, there has been no attempt to confine Aboriginal homes to a particular area of the town.

Tenants of the Co-operative houses must be members of the Co-operative. They pay a low rent of \$40.00 per week for a three bedroom house.⁵³ In 1986 all the houses were located within Kuranda township

50. See Tropical Resource Management, 1984. Mona Mona Development Plan, Table 3.1

51. In mid 1989 this man died.

52. I detail all these communities because this way they align with the D.A.A. community profiles on the composition of the Kuranda community. However, the outlying villages D.A.A. terms fringe camps or town camps.

53. In 1986 it was estimated that rent from the Co-operative houses in Kuranda totalled \$50,000.00 per year. This money was re-cycled into the maintenance of the homes and the society's transport. Source: Mr. Les Hines, Management Consultant to Ngoonbi Co-operative.

and each household contained between 20-25 residents.⁵⁴ It is estimated that in 1986 each Aboriginal Co-operative household had an average weekly income from social security payments of \$500-\$600.⁵⁵ If 15 of the 20-25 residents are adults, the average weekly income of each person would be about \$40.00 per week. Of course, payments to household members are not evenly distributed as people qualify for different benefits and receive different payments accordingly; nor is there is any reason to assume that residents of a household combine their income to support the unit. Indeed, Eckermann's (1988) survey of Aboriginal households in rural/urban N.S.W. and Queensland found that income in households definitely was not shared, nor was it a public resource. Yet without a contribution from all residents, making rental payments is problematic. To help resolve this problem the Ngoonbi Co-operative, by prior arrangement with a local bank, automatically deducts rent from a tenant's welfare benefit.⁵⁶ The Co-operative found the arrangement made a significant and positive difference to their finances. Prior to this, arrears were high and the success rate for collection of debts very low. Under the new scheme at least 95% of rents were successfully collected. But the corollary was that some local businesses in Kuranda, notably the hotels, felt the pinch with the change in patrons' spending. Indeed, one hotel lost an estimated 8% of their gross turnover per week, about one thousand dollars.⁵⁷

-
54. These estimates were given by a management consultant hired by A.D.C. to help the Co-operative sort out their financial problems. He estimates 14-16 adults per Co-operative home. Tropical Resource Management's survey in 1984 calculated there were 253 Aboriginal people living in Kuranda who comprised 58 families in 31 dwellings. This figure has remained relatively stable; in the 1986 Census there were 242 people in Kuranda.
 55. Source of information: Mr. Les Hines, Management Consultant to Ngoonbi Co-operative.
 56. Deductions by the bank have only been possible since the Department of Social Security began paying welfare benefits into an account. Before this change, welfare cheques were collected from the local Post Office.
 57. Source of information: Mr. Les Hines, Management Consultant to Ngoonbi Co-operative.

Kuranda households in Cairns

Many ex-Mona Mona residents have also settled outside Kuranda and the villages. Nevertheless, they maintain active links with friends and relatives in the Kuranda community through formal associations like the local Seventh Day Adventist church, or membership in Aboriginal community organizations, or through domestic mobility and social life.

Most ex-Mona Mona families in Cairns rent homes from the Department of Community Services. The costs of renting houses on the private rental market limits their choices of alternative accommodation, as much as the racial attitudes of local European people restricts their options. The following description of two households provides a background for discussion of the features of Aboriginal domestic life in the wider Kuranda community.

Agnes' household: Agnes' house is on the outskirts of the Cairns. She rents the house from the Department of Community Services for \$95.00 per fortnight.⁵⁸ The three bedroom house is of plasterboard construction and is situated on a small residential block bounded by the Cairns International and local airports, the Bruce Highway and a light industrial area. The location is noisy from airport traffic especially, as the house is close to the flight path. Access to services like shops and public transport is difficult. No-one in the household has a car. Although a private bus runs public services between the northern beach suburbs and Cairns their timetable is not always convenient for the household, nor is the train timetable any better since it offers two services daily, but at either end of the day. In pension weeks, Agnes and her family use taxis to travel in and out of Cairns and sometimes up to Kuranda.⁵⁹ But in the "slack week", people walk into Cairns which takes a minimum of one hour in the cool of the morning.

58. By mid 1989 Agnes and her family had segmented and left the house near the airport. Most of them were living in the Kuranda villages in other people's households.

59. In 1986 taxi rides from Cairns to Agnes' house one way cost around \$10.00. The cost of a taxi journey between Cairns-Kuranda-Hill End (where Agnes' eldest daughter lives) was \$60.00 one-way in 1986.

For daily household items like milk, bread, tea and cigarettes Agnes and the other residents visit the local shops across the highway. Prices are always high in these convenience stores. However, the householders are unable to take advantage of a nearby "cut price" grocery with cheaper prices because of lack of transport; no-one is interested in walking 2-3 kilometres along a very busy highway with a load of groceries. Sometime after Agnes moved into the house, a service station was built opposite. The shop stocked basic necessities such as like bread and milk when the management realized there was a consumer demand. The service station also had a public telephone and the household made frequent use of it.

The usual municipal services such as electricity, water and a rubbish collection were available to the house. The costs of living were higher than in Kuranda since apart from rent and electricity costs, Agnes also had to pay excess water rates. Within the house facilities were basic and the interior was sparsely furnished. Over the two year period I visited Agnes' household the furniture and general physical condition of the fittings deteriorated considerably. The major pieces of furniture, like the beds and deep freeze, were gifts from the local Seventh Day Adventist pastor when he and his family took up an appointment interstate. The lounge was furnished with a three seater couch, supported by upturned powdered milk tins because the legs were broken. A coffee table sat in one corner of the lounge. Sometimes they had the benefit of a working television. Important pieces of current documentation such as the recent T.V. guide, photographs, a calender, a social security form, etc., were stuck on the lounge room walls. The kitchen adjoined the lounge. Apart from the freezer, there were no major items of kitchen furniture and only a few cooking utensils. The house had no washing machine and no public laundry near by. All laundry was done by hand.

Material comforts were limited. Poor ventilation made the house hot and cockroaches abounded in the tropical heat. Without flyscreens on doors and windows Agnes had to close the house in the early evening to prevent cane toads, snakes and mosquitoes entering. A ceiling fan operated throughout the day and night to give some relief from the heat. But the design and orientation of the house exacerbated the problem as the lounge and two of the three bedrooms faced the

western afternoon sun. In the lounge a sliding glass panel door and ill-fitting curtains added to the hotness of the house, along with carpet on the floor.

Personal belongings, including food were considered private property and kept in cardboard boxes under the individual's bed. Bedroom cupboards were rarely used.

The front yard of the house was predominantly grass. Agnes had tried to establish a small flower garden under the lounge and bedroom windows, but the project was abandoned after the children and dogs destroyed her seedlings. In the backyard guinea grass and bush threatened to engulf the cleared areas. In fact the backyard merged with the restricted areas of bush bordering the Cairns' airport. The cleared spaces in this bush were used as domestic rubbish dumps for household rubbish. Once the drum under the kitchen window was full the rubbish was emptied into these clearings.

At one time electricity to Agnes' house was cut off for over 6 months because the bill was unpaid. There was no hot water for washing or personal bathing, no lighting or fans, and no cooking or recreational facilities. People adapted. Agnes cooked outside on the open fire. At night she used candles to light the house and eventually this stained the carpet with wax from dripping candles. The household adjusted to the change by going to bed when the sun went down. This time represented a low period in the household's prosperity, evidenced by the physical signs of wear and tear in cracked doors, broken windows and holes in the walls.

Like other Aboriginal households in the Kuranda community, Agnes' household illustrates what Sansom (1980) called the "concertina household". The term refers to the expansion and contraction in household members and income levels over time. In Agnes' household, for example, she shared the house with her young grand-daughter for whom she had guardianship, two adult sons aged 34 and 39, and the boyfriend of one of the sons.⁶⁰ She also provided a home for two teenage grandsons. For female companionship, Agnes relied on Martha,

60. I refer to a homosexual couple.

a deceased sister's child whom Agnes had raised. Martha had a daughter, but the girl lived with Martha's cousin in Picnic Point. These individuals were the permanent residents of the household during the first 12 months I knew them. At weekends visitors from the Kuranda villages came down to stay or visit Agnes' household. One weekend sixteen adults stayed in the house. Such visitors were likely to be family seeking a change from their own domestic settings. Visitors who stayed for a "long weekend" made little contribution to the costs of running and feeding the household.

Agnes had other visitors whose presence further dented the already fragile domestic economy. The house was a convenient half way point for her nephews and nieces who were highly mobile and moving between households in Kuranda and Cairns. One of these nephews stayed at the house with his wife and children for several weeks. The adults slept in their car in the yard, and the children on the couch in the lounge. When space was available, they had the use of one of the bedrooms. When Agnes' daughters had problems paying their rent, they also moved in for a month or more and brought their young children with them. Agnes once complained to a woman friend of similar age about the problems of having grown children living with her. Both women agreed they did not want their children "following them" and living with them and they imagined the pleasure of finding a house away from family with the address kept secret. However, as Agnes pointed out, this did not ensure anonymity since Agnes never gave out her address, but her family still "smelt her". Visitors from other communities like Yarrabah and Palm Island who knew Agnes, also sought her out for temporary accommodation.

Members of Agnes' household made irregular contributions to general household expenses. Within the household there were several sources of welfare income: one woman was on Supporting Parent Benefits, another received an Invalid Pension, 5 people received Unemployment Benefits, and one person had a student's Tertiary Allowance. Despite the apparent affluence of the household, in practice Agnes was the one who had to ensure payment of the rent and light bills by cajoling money from other residents. People were neither keen

nor conscientious about helping with the costs of general household expenses.⁶¹ For this reason, Agnes was often in the position of having to cover such expenses herself while still providing for herself and the child she supported. Moreover, the men of the household frequently demanded sums of money from her pension, irrespective of their own income.⁶² No-one in the household had regular wage labour. However, when seasonal work such as strawberry picking at Myola was available, one of the older sons and his boyfriend moved to Picnic Point to earn some cash.⁶³ The same men collected empty aluminium cans from hotels for money to buy small necessities like smokes and bread and milk.⁶⁴ Cooking was usually done on an individual basis and each resident had their own supplies of food. Martha, for example, had a hoard of bread, butter, tinned milk powder, soup packets, tomatoes and sugar, as well as cigarettes, which were not common property.

Economic deprivation and interpersonal strains show up in household life as cycles of prosperity and impoverishment. For example, overcrowding and poor ventilation contributed to Agnes' massive electricity bill. Yet without the economic flexibility to pay the bill (to "wipe it out") the power is cut off and a gradual economic spiral into further problems occurs. It is a common pattern. Economic problems in households are also in part a consequence of the social composition. Households like Agnes' which have a lot of young men in them were subject to outbreaks of violence. The following incident was not unusual. Two male cousins were ferociously fighting in Agnes'

-
61. In 1986 Agnes received a fortnightly pension of \$247.00 from which she paid \$98.00 rent (per fortnight) and had an electricity bill of \$132.00 per two months.
 62. Two of the young men demanded \$5.00 from Agnes at the taxi rank in Cairns. They refused to get in the car without the money and put on a tirade of abuse and shouting. Agnes hit both of them to try and make them "see sense." Meanwhile the white public looked on. No doubt one of the tactics the men were using was the prospect of "shaming" Agnes into giving up the money. She held onto it; at least at that stage; later she gave them money in the form of food she paid for.
 63. They said the first day picking you could earn \$26.00.
 64. Two men in the household collected half a sack of Alcoa drink cans and received \$3.50. This they said was "enough for bread and tea."

house. In desperation she sought help from the police to intervene. At that stage, one of the men had also wrecked the garden of the service station opposite the house. The police response was not particularly helpful to Agnes; in fact they threatened to have her and her family evicted if they were called to the house again.

Peggy's household: Mary and her late husband Harold were Mona's "success stories". Both husband and wife received Exemptions in the early 1940s and moved from the mission into Kuranda township where they raised a family of seven children. Harold died thirty years ago and his invalid wife now lives with her daughter in Cairns. Mary is the matriarchal head of her large and well-respected family. Her only daughter, Peggy, was widowed early in 1986 so the description of the household refers to the period after this event. During his life Peggy's late husband earned a creditable work record with the Queensland railways and at the time of his death he was eligible for long service leave. This was an achievement point given the number of men in full-time employment in Kuranda households (see Table B). Bert's record of employment caused another Aboriginal man who also had a reputation for hard work to comment that while Bert "liked his drink, he also liked his work. Not too many Aboriginal men leave their wife with a car and a house." Thus the greater part of the household's income came from Bert's regular full-time wage employment.

However there were other income units in Bert and Peggy's household: Mary, for instance, contributed to board (\$80.00 per fortnight in November 1985) from her Old Age pension;⁶⁵ a daughter in high school received an Aboriginal education allowance; and small sums were earned from baby sitting, or board from adult children. All these sources were independent of the income earned by Peggy's late husband, and compared with Agnes' household, Peggy's domestic circumstances were affluent. Moreover, Peggy had a job as a part-time cleaner for an Aboriginal organization in Cairns and for her local Seventh Day Adventist church. Her eldest daughter works and Peggy cares for her younger children during the working day. Peggy earns

65. This was a new rate in November, 1985.

about \$50.00 per fortnight. She minds the children even when the children's father is home, unemployed.⁶⁶

Of Peggy's other children, a second daughter lives and works in the Northern Territory; while the oldest son followed his father into the railways and works as a ganger on the Atherton Tablelands. A younger brother worked on a cattle station but did not like the work and soon returned to Cairns where he has been unemployed and adopted a lifestyle which distresses his mother. Although he lives at home, he refuses to pay board and pleases himself in the household. His grandmother is equally distressed by his behaviour and his demands for money. Once Mary deducts her board and church tithe, she has few expenses and is at liberty to dispose of her pension as she wishes. However, having available cash made Mary subject to her grandson's demands for "loans". Her response was to return from a shopping trip with no more than \$2.00 in her purse and thus avoid the nagging for her money. If she returned with any substantial sum in her purse she felt it was impossible to refuse a request. Thus her only defence in the absence of a direct refusal, was to spend the cash herself. But the grandson was not the only family member who asked her for cash "loans" of up to \$50.00, many of which were never repaid.⁶⁷ Other adults in the family also "borrowed" money from her and Mary constantly worried about the "stand-over merchants" who demanded "loans". Worries over money associated with pressure from family members to part with one's money is a common concern in many Aboriginal households, especially for older people as Age Pensions pay highly in comparison with Unemployment Benefits. Mary felt the injustice of the different standards by which residents of the household were treated. While her board was increased to \$150.00 per fortnight, a grand-daughter and her boyfriend lived in the same house for \$50.00

66. Mary commented on this arrangement whereby her grand-daughter worked while her husband remained unemployed. "Jill's got to keep working to keep Harry going; to pay for light, car, home and food."

67. On one shopping trip I recorded the following expenditure for Mary. \$51.00 in K-Mart, \$25.00 on cassette tapes, \$10.00 in the craft shop (she did craft work to keep busy), \$15.00 in the chemist, and \$20.00 as incidentals.

per fortnight.⁶⁸ The boyfriend came from Yarrabah Aboriginal settlement and although the couple had their own home there, they preferred to live with Peggy in Cairns for several months. Mary commented that it was obviously "cheaper to live on others". Other Aboriginal people stayed with Peggy. A former Mona Mona dormitory girl, now a middle-aged woman, spent every weekend with them over a six month period. She and Peggy and Mary shared a present commitment to church as well as a common past as ex-mission residents. Another visitor was one of Mary's sons. He had marital trouble and stayed with his mother and sister in times of crisis.⁶⁹

Peggy and her brothers helped each other; for example, everyone chips in to meet household expenses like electricity; or to cover a mortgage debt, or personal expenses such as fines, car registration, even travel money for church activities. One of Peggy's brothers fell behind in his mortgage payments after his wife left him, and his siblings and other kin who could afford to, collected money to help him meet the over-due payments.⁷⁰ Peggy's household, like other Aboriginal households, develops fall-back arrangements to cope with periods of financial strain. Borrowing money is a common means of dealing with scarcity. Members of Peggy's household borrow from Mary; but Agnes' household borrows from a source outside the immediate family. Agnes looks for help from a household in Cairns where many of the residents are ex-Mona Mona people. However, the head of the house is a European in regular work. Agnes relies on the kin tie of her daughter's marriage into this family to legitimate her requests for financial assistance, and their obligation to help.⁷¹

Moreover Peggy's house, unlike Agnes' is well-furnished, comfortable and pleasant. The sturdy Besser brick house is located in a

68. Unfortunately, it was not clear whether this was \$50.00 per fortnight or per week.

69. In 1989 two of Mary's adult sons were living in Peggy's home after a marital breakdown.

70. Peggy donated \$200.00 and Mary gave \$100.00

71. In desperate moments they also borrowed from the anthropologist for basic food items like bread, tea, milk and sugar. In lean times in Agnes' household, adults and children lived on "meals" of bread and hot tea.

quiet suburban street and shows the interest in gardening Peggy and her late husband shared. During their marriage they made additions to the house by converting the garage into a lounge, kitchen and bedroom which is mainly used by the men. The additions have helped to create the separate male and female domestic domains characteristic of this household. Within the domains different behavioural codes are countenanced; for instance, neither Peggy nor Mary ate meat from deference to Seventh Day Adventist religious beliefs, whereas the men particularly liked meat. The women hated the stench of flesh cooking, so they refused to prepare any meat. They also abhorred alcohol and tried to ban drunken men from inside the house proper. For these and other reasons, the men and women of the household maintained their separate living and sleeping spaces. However, the possibility of separate or private space was not a usual practice in other Aboriginal households. Indeed, in most other households there is a problem of demarcating the boundaries of private space and individual ownership. It was thus a common event in Agnes' household for residents to "steal" each others' goods. Two young men, for example, ran off to Kuranda with another's cigarettes and a flagon of wine while he slept. The same men constantly rob Martha of her cigarettes by rummaging under the mattress where she hides her personal belongings. These men were also notorious for cooking other people's fishing catches late at night, when the successful and unsuspecting fisher was asleep. On one occasion they cooked and ate the prawn bait left in the fridge for the following day's fishing.

Originally, Peggy's house was rented from D.C.S. but later converted to a scheme where a mortgaged house could eventually be purchased by the residents. Peggy paid a low rent of \$165.00 per month on the house; but after her husband died she paid off the full amount of the mortgage. The householders have the benefit of expensive consumer goods (colour television, stereo, electric organ, dish washer, freezer) and decorative objects (cabinet of sentimental mementos, precious glass, family photographs, wall paintings etc.). Furthermore, Peggy's household was one of the few in the Kuranda

Aboriginal community to have the telephone connected.⁷² Yet despite the apparent affluence the cycle of household spending followed the pattern of all Aboriginal households with dramatic swings between periods of "boom and bust". Indeed, oscillations of this kind indicate the importance of borrowing and the role of someone like Mary, whose income tides the household through the low points.

Kuranda Households in Mareeba

Other ex-Mona Mona residents live in Mareeba on the gazetted Aboriginal reserve at the western edge of the town.⁷³ The reserve community is administered by a local Aboriginal Housing Co-operative which is trying to replace the existing accommodation with new homes and to alleviate social problems exacerbated by alcoholism and neglect by the Department of Community Services. The reserve houses are small and overcrowded; many tenants have built lean-to additions for extra space. But the members of some families continue to sleep in cars because of problems with overcrowding. The reserve homes were designed for nuclear families, but even so they are small and poky. The only bedroom opens into a kitchen-lounge, and a short passage separates the bathroom and bedroom from the kitchen-lounge. In most cases the open veranda at the front of the house has been enclosed to make a second "bedroom", although the lounge also doubles as an extra bedroom.

Unlike ex-Mona Mona people in Cairns, few ex-Mona Mona people in Mareeba are involved with the Kuranda community. Although there is a Seventh Day Adventist church in Mareeba, the Kuranda and Mareeba congregations operate independently of one another which encourages the existing separatism. The reserve community is a mixed population of local Aboriginal people and those from further afield, such as Cape York or New South Wales. Ex-Mona Mona residents with strong kin ties to the Kuranda community maintain connections and

72. Ball (1985) surveyed the economic position of Aborigines in Newcastle in N.S.W. in 1982 and saw cars and telephones as indications of economic prosperity in a household.

73. According to my informant, Mr. Les Hines who has acted in a consulting capacity for the Co-operative, there are 26-30 homes in their portfolio.

regularly move between households in Mareeba and Kuranda (including the villages) and Cairns. For instance, an older woman with a large family of adult children living in households spread between Kuranda, Cairns and Mareeba spent several weeks at a time in the homes of her offspring. Kin ties also keep Mareeba and Kuranda ex-Mona Mona families in touch with the gossip in each community.

Eileen's household : Eileen lives on the Mareeba reserve. Reserve homes are fenced and some yards have gardens. The reserve is located on a flat, open plain and in the summer it is swept by hot winds which sear vegetation.

Eileen grew up in the dormitory at Mona Mona and has a brother and sister-in-law who live in Kuranda township. Her house is one of the older reserve houses and her family has outgrown the accommodation available. She and her family have extended the house by enclosing the verandah with sheets of plastic and timber boards to create a third bedroom. The lounge already doubles as a bedroom, so some of the young adults in the family sleep in a panel van in the backyard. The house has reticulated water and sewerage, as well as electricity. There is an indoor bathroom. Yet despite the cold Tableland winters none of the houses have heating facilities for warmth. In the summer the house is hot. Eileen's husband is Maori and both of them receive the Invalid pension. He suffers from substance abuse which his family actively attempt to discourage by periodically threatening to bash him, to make him "see sense".

Eileen fishes in the Barron River to supplement the household stores. The quality of household life seems prosperous and this must, in part, be attributed to the fact that all residents are adults on welfare incomes and that there is little alcohol consumed by the residents.⁷⁴

Occasionally Eileen comes down to Kuranda, but her brother and his wife keep in close contact with her and sometimes visit as regularly as once a week. News of Kuranda comes through Eileen's kin.

74. On an imaginary continuum of socio-economic status Eileen's house would be between the extremes of Agnes' at the bottom end, and Peggy's home at the other extreme.

Although Eileen's interests and that of her household largely centre on the Mareeba reserve and township she attends the special functions held in Kuranda by the church. However, reliance on public transport inhibits regular travel.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the principal features of the Aboriginal community in Kuranda and the concept of community as a focal point of identification for a geographically dispersed population. Community in Kuranda refers to Aboriginal households with commonalities based in historical and cultural practices, many of which owe much to the experiences of life on the mission (see chapter 4). By 1986 one of the legacies of Mona Mona was the virtual elimination of many of the specific cultural and regional distinctions once evident in the background of the first mission residents. Cultural and religious assimilation of Aborigines to particular traditions in Western Christian praxis were strengthened by intermarriage between resident mission families. These ties of association remain, in spite of the mission's closure and changes in lifestyle. In this sense State government attempts to assimilate ex-Mona Mona people into the wider community have failed.

Mission life only prepared residents for interaction with Europeans in terms of the sociality practiced on Mona Mona. Aboriginal life outside Mona Mona reproduces patterns of interaction with authority and the wider European society which suggests that power relations between Aborigines and Europeans remain unchanged. For example, many ex-Mona Mona people see the church's continued involvement as an issue of whether Aborigines are indeed independent of the mission. Aboriginal autonomy is also called into question in relations with shopkeepers (as at Valley Heights), with government officers (especially from D.C.S. who control their housing), and with individuals who provide particular services (such as the taxi, the secondhand clothes seller, etc.). Furthermore, the structural determinants of Aboriginal daily life are not controlled by Aboriginal people. The housing, for example, of all the villages and many other households is control by a State government bureaucracy with power to remove people from their homes, define household residence and pressure residents to maintain property in a particular way. The power

to do this is not merely in name but is ever-present and effective in people's lives. The "feast to famine" economic cycle of Aboriginal household spending and the necessity for credit fosters Aboriginal dependence by increasing their marginality within the wider society. This is explicitly discussed in later chapters. At the same time, Aboriginal people are creating a domain of autonomous action within the terms of their dependence and these actions contrast with a view of Kuranda people as responding to the dominant society through the creation of an oppositional culture (see Tugby 1973; Cowlshaw 1988).

Irrespective of the geographical setting the relationships between Aborigines and the wider community repeat a common theme of inequality and marginalisation. What is true of interaction in Kuranda is also true of Aboriginal experiences with Europeans in Mareeba. This can be illustrated. Two shops with a long association of serving Aboriginal clients are located close to the Mareeba reserve. The shopkeepers collect and cash welfare cheques and provide purchasing credit. On one occasion a Kuranda man made a trip to Mareeba to draw on the credit of his brother-in-law, an individual who lived at the Mareeba reserve from time to time, but who also stayed with his sister and brother-in-law in Kuranda. The two men went into the shop where they were greeted enthusiastically by the shopkeepers; they had collected Alf's social security cheque they told him and held it for him until he collected it.⁷⁵ The shopkeepers made a point of telling him that they would surrender the cheque only to him and in person; otherwise they held it over. A box of groceries was put together for him, consisting of canned meat and fish, bread, fruit, cake and some vegetables. When the shopping was over we drove to a house in Mareeba where Alf got out. His box of groceries and his brother-in-law stayed in the back of the car. Three points can be drawn from this example. First, the same relationship between Aborigines and businesses common in Kuranda also operates in Mareeba (see chapter 7). Second, the relationship between the shopkeeper and the Aboriginal man is not one between equals. By collecting and cashing the individual's cheque and extending consumer credit, they both patronize him and extend their business.

75. The Aboriginal man concerned had drinking problems and tended to move about quite a bit.

The principle behind these commercial transactions is the same as that operating in Kuranda between the taxi service, the butcher, and their Aboriginal clients (see chapter 7).⁷⁶ Third, ties between Aboriginal households in the two towns do provide economic flexibility in the "feast to famine" cycle. While the man from Kuranda had probably overextended his personal credit at the Kuranda shops he succeeded in appropriating his brother-in-law's resources for use in his own household.

This chapter has presented a picture of the structural and cultural similarities shared by all households within the Kuranda community. These patterns, it will be shown in chapters 6 and 7, are based in part on common cultural processes which have developed from mission experiences and are now strategies to maintain a sense of cultural integrity in an often difficult social world. The struggle for independence and autonomy according to the community's own standards, is yet to be fully realized in daily life for Aboriginal families.

Chapter 6 examines the internal structural relationships of Kuranda households as a prelude to the wider discussion of independence and autonomy in social relations first, in domestic relations, and second, with the community.

76. In Kuranda the taxi service collected social security cheques from the post office, cashed them and deducted expenses accrued through credit, usually at the taxi service and sometimes at the butcher. The remaining money was given in cash to the individual.

CHAPTER 6

HOUSEHOLD ORGANIZATION

The question of whether the organisation and management of social relations in Kuranda Aboriginal households represents a transformation set in motion by the mission or indicates a continuity in Aboriginal cultural practices bears on the wider issue, prefigured in other chapters, of the relationship between power, autonomy and dependence in Aboriginal households during periods of social change.

This chapter describes two households from the wider Kuranda community over a 24 month and 15 month period respectively. The pattern of social relations and economic well-being in these households demonstrates general themes in Aboriginal domestic relations, especially the cycle of socio-economic construction and disintegration in domestic life. The households described are representative and with slight variations are repeated throughout the Kuranda villages. But whether such household cycles are the consequence of assimilation into the wider society or marginalisation is not entirely clear. The patterns and practice of domestic life in Kuranda households, what Sutton (1981) terms the "content of the relationships", seem a mixture of styles of interaction learnt on the mission, and Aboriginal cultural attitudes. Sutton (1981) and Eckermann (1988) suggest that it is values associated with the family which must be the subject of research in a move away from concern with the impact of socio-economic changes on Aboriginal family relations and household life (compare with Gale and Wundersitz 1982). Certainly, an understanding of the content of domestic relationships in Kuranda households suggests a different view of the nature of the household and its social dynamics from that presented in the literature reviewed in Chapter 1.

Research by Eckermann, Watts and Dixon (1984) suggests that conventional views of urban and rural Aboriginal households as a network of "extended kin" is a misrepresentation where this is

understood to mean three generations of residents of female descent. In the Aboriginal households studied in northern New South Wales and southern Queensland by these researchers there were no nuclear families as such, although households did consist of kin. Eckermann (1977; 1988) prefers calling these households "compound families" and defines them as any number of different combinations of relatives united by either the status of being a guest or by paying the household head.¹ Household A from Kuranda is an example of sets of domestic relations similar to the compound family. Household B, however, is not constituted primarily from kin relationships, although the basis for household composition conforms with Eckermann's definition of the compound family as "a group of people where the household head, whether male or female, whether single or married, agrees to accept a boarder or to foster a child who may or may not be a close relative, with or without payment" (Eckermann 1988:32).

While Eckermann, Watts and Dixon's study improves on the matrifocal model of household dynamics with a clearer understanding of the complex economic and social relationships in Aboriginal households, some points of contention remain. First, many researchers, including Eckermann et al. do not differentiate between the household and the physical dwelling. In Kuranda a household consists of the people living in the dwelling at any given time. The household will always comprise residents who are core members, together with those people who are short-term visitors and those who stay for specific periods of time. An Aboriginal household may therefore contain, and usually does, a number of economic units which may or may not link across dwellings. Thus, the mobile sections of Kuranda society (young men and women, children and old age pensioners) are frequently members of a number of economic units in different households; for example, Topsy, an old age pensioner, in Household B (described below) was linked with households in Mareeba and Cairns as well as

-
1. Compare Eckermann's definition with Smith and Biddle's (1975:8) distinction between the household unit and the family unit. The household was understood to be "a group of people who stated that they lived with one another at the same address or dwelling". The family unit, on the other hand, emphasised the relatedness of people within the household units, irrespective of whether the basis of their relationship was consanguineal or by orientation.

qualifying as a core member of Mabel's household. Other writers like Anderson (1989) have described similar arrangements (see also Birdsall 1988; Sansom 1988). He defines households (in part) as people who eat together regularly while not necessarily sleeping in the same dwelling. The difficulty of describing relationships in Aboriginal households, especially in ascribing status, or defining autonomy, is the mobility of household residents and the fluidity of household relations.

In coming to terms with these variables Eckermann (1988) emphasised the importance of examining values associated with domestic relationships in Aboriginal households. She differentiates between the domestic role of men and that of women:

My own research (Eckermann 1979) indicates that a man's role is perceived as that of a provider, a woman's role as that of a mother. Men generally do not interfere in the running of the household. Consequently the woman's role in domestic affairs is dominant, and, as Beckett (1964) points out, increases with age as her influence over the maturing children grows. However, this influence is generally confined to family matters. (Eckermann 1988:33)

She also suggests that a male is only entitled to the role of household head as long as he successfully performs his economic role of breadwinner.

While descriptions of Aboriginal households assert the dominance of women in Aboriginal families, Eckermann argues further that in practice both men and women believe in and support a division of roles in domestic relations. However, the problem for Aboriginal men (and here Eckermann agrees with Gale and Wundersitz 1982), is that the basis for entitlement to the role is increasingly precarious given the nature of male employment in the wider community:

Economic depression, inability to find employment, illness and accident may undermine the man's role of "provider" and consequently his status as household head (Eckermann 1988:33).

Contemporary gender relations in Kuranda Aboriginal households suggest contrary points about Aboriginal domestic relationships and role divisions. To begin with, continued emphasis on external economic factors as crucial to the domestic role of Aboriginal

men and their interaction with their family is misplaced; especially if a normative male role is defined as that of provider of a regular income through wage employment. In Kuranda wage labour for men and women ceased with the closure of saw mills and timber-getting, and domestic work. Today, income in the Kuranda community is almost exclusively from welfare for men and women. Thus, an argument about male esteem in domestic domains tied to wage employment makes little sense given the current economic basis on which Aboriginal men and women in Kuranda negotiate domestic relationships. Moreover, while men and women may relate to each other according to the ideology of their domestic role; are men actually the providers, and do women nurture their children? This question is addressed in the ethnography discussed in Chapter 7. However, if the gender model for men ever included the role of provider in domestic relations in Kuranda, it is no longer the case. Aboriginal men now have, in practice, a primary role as a claimant or dependent whose domestic experience is shaped by their expectation of nurturance from women. Moreover, it is also clear that not all men or women live up to the ideals in the model of gender roles.

The Kuranda ethnography also indicates that households are not organised according to any determining principle such as the communal sharing of resources. Eckermann et al. (1984) also remarked on the absence of any such ethic in the observances of household economics. The Aboriginal household is subject to fission and fusion in the domestic relationships of its residents and in the cooperation between members. In part, these dynamics are the result of fluctuations in the material fortunes of the household members. However, the impact of such economic fluctuations on household relations is a significant point in the discussion of how gender role and economic status affect the position of gender in domestic life. In Kuranda it seems that the changing fortunes of the economic unit(s) determine the dynamics of a household cycle more than does the presence or absence of a person assuming the formal role of a provider. In times of plenty a household tends to segment into economic units which maintain a tight control over their resources. But during times of scarcity there is greater cooperation between the economic units of a household with the likelihood of contribution to the general need. However, it should not be assumed that such contributions are necessarily voluntary. Indeed, it is at this point that dependency is

asserted in order to mobilise another person's resources, and generally, this form of social coercion is greatest between men and women.

Eckermann et al. (1984) are critical of the analytical notion of the sharing ethic from their study of Aboriginal households. However the economic situation in the 77 households interviewed by them differs from that in the households I was familiar with in the Kuranda community. In three-quarters of the 77 households Eckermann and her colleagues surveyed, there was at least one income earner and there were at least two income earners on average (Eckermann 1988:33).² However, the number of income earners is not necessarily an index to economic responsibility or the level of contribution of members in households.

Analysis of resource sharing and allocation clearly indicated that not all income was shared by the whole household ... Our information on non-household head adults ... indicated that they, as well as the families to which they belonged, considered all moneys, beyond their household contribution, as their own (Eckermann 1988:33).

The general thrust of these comments accords with patterns in the behaviour of residents of Aboriginal households in Kuranda. In some households, as for example in Peggy's household, (described in Chapter 5) different economic units within the dwelling pay different amounts of board, as determined by the household manager. In Mabel's household the same principle applies as different forms of contributions are made; Betty and her sons, for example, pay a cash amount and Topsy pays with food. On the other hand, Betty and her sons often spent all their fortnightly welfare benefit on themselves in the expectation that their host, Mabel, would provide for them. In Agnes' household the different economic units considered their welfare income as their own and to be disposed of privately. Although core household members might share some of their food items with others, usually items such as household staples like tea or bread, they nevertheless kept their own supplies of meat, powdered milk or other tinned and fresh foods. Any fish caught by members of a household were considered private property and

2. Unfortunately it is not stated by Eckermann whether these incomes are from wage employment or from welfare benefits.

others did not expect to share in the eating of it. The only time when exceptions might be made in these practices was during the slack week when everyone's income was low. At these times, women especially were prevailed upon to "share" their resources. However, when two male members of Agnes' household made some extra income from collecting used drink cans and selling them for scrap during the slack week, the money earned was their own. It was enough to buy them cigarettes, milk, bread and tea to tide them over the poverty of the "slack" pension week.

These points relate to a number of issues in the ethnography of Kuranda households and contrast with views of Aboriginal household life discussed in Chapter 1. I argue for a revised typology of domestic relationships in Aboriginal households on the basis of Sutton's (1981) suggestion, also followed by others (Sansom 1988; Birdsall 1988; Macdonald 1988; Anderson 1982; 1989;) that the content of domestic relationships is critical to an understanding of relations in Aboriginal households and that such an emphasis should be highlighted over a concern with the form of domestic relationships. Indeed, a concern with the form often hides the bases on which domestic relations are constructed.

Households

Kuranda households are best described as combinations of separate economic units sharing a common residence. This description runs counter to the popular image of Aboriginal households as primitive "communes" with all members pooling their resources as "one family". It also contrasts with Gale's (1975) view that Aboriginal people share households not just because they value kinship, but because of economic necessity. Of course, there is some truth to the economic argument for communities on welfare incomes. However, in Kuranda, economic necessity is not a sufficient reason for household members to share their individual incomes or pool them for group benefit; as Eckermann et al. (1984) also found in Aboriginal households surveyed in New South Wales and Queensland. Indeed, analysis of household relationships and household mobility in Kuranda suggests that the combinations of economic units in dwellings has more to do with social factors than with economic issues.

In Kuranda households the economic units are discrete groups of people jointly contributing in some form to the maintenance of the household; for example, with cash to cover communal costs like rent and electricity, or by contributing labour to maintain the dwelling. Contributions vary from individual to individual; in fact Eckermann et al. (1984) found that in the households they studied the amount of board varied between \$20.00 and \$80.00 per week. This is also a common pattern in Kuranda households.³ Furthermore, the contributions of men and women to households differ. Women tend to give both their labour and cash, while the contribution of men is often confined to cash and then only irregularly. Hence when Agnes' household was dominated by men the debts accumulated for rent and electricity. Although these men were core members of Agnes' household it is apparent that even amongst core residents joint contributions are not regularly or conscientiously given. Furthermore, some of Agnes' sons took the attitude that their welfare money belonged exclusively to them, and expected, on top of this money, that Agnes should also give them some of her own welfare benefit. If at all possible Agnes strategised against these demands. But inevitably her income often had to carry the debts of the whole household with rent and electricity.

Eckermann's interpretation of the discrepancies in the financial contribution between core residents is that they function as a control mechanism:

... contributions to the household depended on the level of control the household head wished to retain/exert over boarders ... contributions to the household were often kept relatively "low" so that boarders would not attempt to "take over" or "reckon that they be the boss" (Eckermann 1988:34).

Establishing and obtaining a regular form of contribution from household residents presumes a level of cooperative agreement between the household manager, household authority and household residents. In practice these relationships are often fraught, generally fragile and subject to continuous negotiation. In many Kuranda households even a 'low' contribution was not always honoured. Moreover, the alliances

3. See discussion of Peggy's household (chapter 5) where Mary paid more board than the young couple.

formed within a household between economic units do not always extend beyond that immediate unit. In Agnes' household therefore, economic alliances sometimes formed between core household members and someone who was staying in the household temporarily. Economic units do not necessarily co-operate with other members of their immediate household.

Chapter 7 deals with the issue of control and autonomy in Kuranda households. A household manager, a kind of administrator of domestic organisation, does not always succeed in collecting rent from all household residents. In fact their capacity to control other residents is insecure and uncertain. Autonomy in households works by other principles in Kuranda, notably through a complex interaction of obligation and exchange between a boss and their dependent(s) (see Finlayson 1989). Autonomy in domestic life is only possible if a resident has few material resources and can contribute very little to the household or economic unit. As a dependent person he/she can legitimately claim the services and patronage of the household head on two counts; through kinship and through the boss-dependent relationship.

In Kuranda the composition of a household usually shows an overlap between residential and economic units, but not all core members or long-term visitors assume a financial responsibility toward the common household expenses. In fact the difference between the resident economic units and those who are visiting in a household is more than just a difference of financial contribution. Differences between core residential economic units and other household residents are mentioned in other ethnographies of Aboriginal households. However, it seems that in Anderson's case study the core household members did maintain the wider residential group. Anderson (1982; 1989) reports that households in Wujalwujal, north Queensland, have a stable core of people regularly contributing to the household economy, together with a "floating" population of predominantly young single people who circulate between households. The stable residential group in these households sustains the wider group economically, since their labour and cash also supports the non-contributing residential members. Bryant's (1982; 1983) study of Aboriginal households in Robinvale, Victoria, described the same phenomenon, but the "floaters"

were mainly single men moving between households of nuclear families and irregularly contributing to general costs. Households in Kuranda can illustrate both patterns.⁴

Recruitment to households is sometimes a simple matter of kinship. However, kinship is open to liberal interpretation; for example, within one particular Kuranda household all members were kin, but they were not all members of the same family. Consanguinity is thus important but not essential, which explains the inclusion of non-Aborigines and kin who are not "close up" (see also the description of the relationship between members of Mabel's household.)⁵ In daily domestic life people usually function as separate units or preferential groupings. An economic unit tends to be small, perhaps a couple, or a single parent with one or two of their children. But these groups, whatever the social impetus behind the alliance, are in some degree the product of economic necessity. Yet alliances are informal and the economic and social bonds between members are brittle and subject to the domestic pressures associated with competition for scarce resources. As Sansom expressed it;

The social field in which Aborigines move is characterised by structural indeterminacy (Sansom 1988:169).

Several economic units or groups may form a household and tend to cluster together according to ties of kinship or consanguineal links. Thus a household may comprise a number of economic units such as a mother and some of her children; childless couples; single individuals; or a group allied through marriage, or by commonalities of gender or biographical history (see the genealogies for residents of Households A and B). All these combinations are possible and found in Kuranda households.⁶ Researchers have discussed the various forms of

-
4. This is illustrated by the mobility in Agnes' household described in chapter 5.
 5. I knew a number of households which were not kin-based; in one household there was no genealogical relationship between any of the units in the household. In another case, a white man had lived with the family for years and called the elderly woman of the group "Mum". There was no biological tie between them.
 6. Alliances between young single males are examples of this kind of association.

residential recruitment. Sansom (1988:171) writes of the domestic group or hearthhold as a "self supporting commensality" where the "hearthhold" is identified as the "essentially self supporting" domestic group in the Aboriginal town camp. He argues that households in town camp are only functional when economically viable and capable of providing its members with basic necessities such as food. He implies that certain residential patterns, like marriage and the nuclear family, are authenticated in these terms alone.

But for some researchers Aboriginal domestic groups remain primarily kin-based both in residential recruitment and orientation (see Barwick 1964; Reay and Sitlington 1948; Eckermann 1977; Lickiss 1971; Birdsall 1988). Although Anderson (1982; 1989) also mentions kinship as important for recruitment it is one of a number of possible qualifying factors. Ultimately, he argues against the view that households are exclusively constituted by kinship. In Wujalwujal, households are linked domestic groups sharing economic resources and providing each other with mutual support to maximize their options in subsistence activities. They also act as a political group. Anderson (1989:83) defines a household as those residents who permanently eat together and contribute goods or services on this basis. But it is not essential that members of a household should sleep in the same house. His definition recognizes that ethnographic evidence must take priority in definitions of the structural components of Aboriginal domestic life. These definitions must include a recognition and identification of the differences between a household, dwelling and economic units, and an appreciation that residential mobility is endemic in Aboriginal households, even in those households said to enjoy stable socio-economic conditions.⁷

I argue here and in chapter 7, that relations in households in Kuranda are patterned according to social principles of obligation and claim and that these are associated with the responsibilities of nurturance which dominate social relations, especially between genders, in households. Household life is the art of managing

7. The matrifocal model argues that mobility in Aboriginal households is a response to economic marginalisation under the impact of assimilation.

competing claims, but in doing this, domestic and social inequalities between men and women develop as people battle to assert or maintain their personal autonomy.

The family

Family in Kuranda Aboriginal usage has several meanings: it may be used to refer to the nuclear family; a kin network beyond the nuclear family; or as an umbrella term for a political group united by a common interest (see also Birdsall 1988; on the family as community). Anderson (1989:68) describes Aboriginal families at Wujalwujal community in north Queensland as "mobs" whose spheres of influence are both social and economic. Mobs are constituted through a number of identifiable factors (Anderson 1989:69) including kinship, descent, residential proximity, neighbouring estates and so forth. Membership in a mob is fluid and subject to change during the life stages of a mob member. Mobs, or household collectivities, of this kind are not a feature of domestic life in Kuranda. However, the idea of family as households of kin who form a political interest group is certainly commonplace in Kuranda's community life (see Chapter 5).⁸

Households in Kuranda comprise a number of discrete economic units which over time segment and regroup with other units in response to the social and economic pressures in the cycle of poverty and prosperity. However, I do not want to imply that economic influences predominate in domestic relations. Clearly they impact on the material viability of a household, but social factors are equally important in the life cycle of domestic relations.

The economic cycle associated with welfare affects both the establishment and contraction of households sustained by welfare incomes alone. Once the core household disintegrates the other economic units either join existing households or form new ones. Sometimes the units themselves dissolve and re-group with different

8. See also Eckermann (1988:35) where she argues that a distinction be made between "group" and "community" because family groupings dominate "communities" in rural and urban Aboriginal communities. Eckermann's view of family alliances share some commonalities with Anderson's mobs. See also Sullivan (1987) on the definition of "community."

membership (for example, Betty from Household B joined up with two men from Household A when their respective households dissolved). Household membership is changeable because households are part of a wider social network and subject to the vicissitudes of the human condition where partnerships break up, children need protection, individuals suffer from substance abuse, disagreements cause friction and so on. For these reasons and others, residential mobility is a common condition of domestic life in Aboriginal families and households.

In Kuranda immediate family members do not always reside in the one community nor do they confine themselves to one household. Children, for example, are often raised by other female members of the mother's family. Some of Agnes' older children were grown up by one of her sisters, while Agnes raised the daughter of a sister who died and several of her grandchildren. Helen raised the children of her brother's daughter. Reasons for children's mobility vary. In some cases working conditions precluded women from raising their own children; for example, women who worked as domestics or cooks on remote stations often left younger children in the full-time care of a sister or grandmother.⁹ A first child of a young, inexperienced mother may be raised by an older kinswoman. Some children are taken into a kin-related household temporarily in order to satisfy welfare protection agencies, as indeed happened with some of Agnes' grandchildren who stayed with her for about six weeks (see diagram of Household A).

Thus it is not essential in Aboriginal families for all members to be co-resident. Consanguinity may be a primary basis for co-residence, but ultimately, active membership in the household requires demonstrative evidence of social commitment or what Sansom (1988:172) terms "performative kinship". Martha, for example, had a kin tie which qualified her for residence. However, when she was constantly absent from the household and made no ongoing contribution to household costs, she was told quite firmly that unless she "put in for food" she could no longer live there. Because Martha was

9. See chapter 3 where an Aboriginal woman left her children with her sister while she worked as a cook on Queensland cattle stations.

not displaying "performative kinship" her familial household could legitimately exclude her.

Economic units

Economic units in a household are active alliances of friendship, marriage or consanguinity. They determine much of the daily pattern of household life. Food often signifies the nature of household alliances. In Agnes' household alliances were obvious by the proprietorial control exercised over specific consumer foods. When Agnes received gifts of food for general household consumption her position as household manager was publicly recognised. Her acceptance of the goods gave her the right to dispense or withhold them. Food given to one person, however, is not necessarily shared with other household members; at least in theory. Hence, when one of the children opened the bag of food given to Agnes and delved inside, he was smartly reminded by another adult to "keep out of that food ... it belongs to Mum". Agnes' right to control access to the goods were based on two important points. First, she was the household manager; other adults present acknowledged and confirmed this in their comments to the inquisitive child. Second, because the food was a gift presented to her, in theory it remained Agnes' private property to dispose of as she pleased. But in practice, as a mother of dependents and as a woman in an acknowledged position of responsibility for others, Agnes is bound to share the goods. Here is a fundamental principle of household life, namely, that household relations are expressed in terms of claims centred on other people and their actual or potential command of resources.

Some household staples like tea and bread are communal property. Although what is public and what is private household food varies within households to some extent. In Agnes' household, items like powdered milk and sugar are purchased by individuals and kept in nominally private areas, such as bedrooms. In another household, cooked food from the communal meal was stashed in bedroom cupboards for delayed consumption and private gratification; or a grocery order was initially withheld from communal use because it was claimed as private resource. Fish, as a desired and culturally valued food also had the status of a private food in many Kuranda households, although when someone is hungry the niceties of property rights or personal boundaries are ignored. While all economic units in

households may occasionally club together to maximize their economic options it is misleading to characterize households as communal economies of shared resources.

Household cycles

In the Kuranda communities a common feature of households is the cycle of domestic disintegration and reformulation. This is characterized by fluctuations in the membership of core residents, irregularities in the number of financially contributing members, the appearance and disappearance of short-term visitors, and a cyclical pattern of prosperity and poverty experienced by the resident economic units. The mobility of residents plays a significant role in this process of disintegration and reformulation as people take their welfare benefits with them; at least, they try to do so. In fact people who move between households in different locations, for example, between a household in Cairns or Mareeba, and households in Kuranda or one of the villages, usually disqualify themselves from entitlement to a welfare income given the bureaucratic rules about registration and evidence of efforts to find employment. Most Aboriginal people in Kuranda are not skilled managers of these bureaucratic requirements and forms entitling applicants to receive welfare benefits tend to lag behind their changes of residence. Inevitably this affects the quality of domestic life in households as those people without income are "carried" to a certain extent by others. If the household is not keen on supporting them, these individuals tend to live a maverick lifestyle where they depend on members of a number of households for food, money, cigarettes and so forth. In this situation the members of the impoverished economic unit may form alliances across several households and in contexts where they can activate a flow of resources through their dependency. In the long-term such behaviour strains relationships with members of the primary household. Young men particularly, are prone to loss of welfare income through mobility and Mabel, in Household B, aware of this and the potential for demands on her resources, made it plain to Betty's sons that they "must not depend on me ... I'm a widow woman."

Household A

Over the two year period I visited Agnes' household, residential membership changed several times. Initially, in early 1985 core

household members consisted of Agnes, her two adult sons, an adult male (not related), a sister's daughter, two grandsons (one of whom was the household authority) and a grand-daughter in Agnes' care.

About the middle of 1985 three adult daughters, temporarily separated from their spouses, moved in and brought their four small children with them. These women brought a relative prosperity to the household as recipients of Supporting Parent Benefits since their benefits are relatively better paid than the Unemployment Benefits men receive. The women, unlike the men, also enhanced the quality of life in the household because they were willing to "help Mum out" financially and to lend their domestic labour to the household. Moreover, women, unlike the men, were less likely to be heavy drinkers, or drinkers who brought fights home with them. Men, on the other hand, had a reputation for violence when drunk. Alcohol not only led to domestic fights and tension between residents, but most houses were physically damaged during skirmishes. Windows were broken, furniture smashed and walls had holes in them where feet and fists went through. Agnes was a teetotaller and publicized her rule that anyone drinking in her house would be turned out and told "to walk the road." Yet in spite of her resolve, damage to the house showed her inability to enforce such rules. During the period when men rather than women were the core residents much of the household furniture was progressively destroyed. At times Agnes called the police for help. On other occasions, the ambulance took the injured to the district hospital for treatment and life was quiet for a while.

The three single mothers and their children stayed with Agnes for no more than three months before returning to households in the Kuranda villages. In some cases relations with spouses were restored and this explained their departure, but in general these young women found Agnes' household isolated from the gossip and fights of community life in the Kuranda villages which made life interesting and involved issues of concern to them.

By November 1985, a fourth daughter and her small son had moved in as a result of the daughter's separation from her husband. They stayed for at least 8 months. At weekends the daughter and her son, along with Agnes, would return to one of the Kuranda villages to

visit other people, to fish and to enjoy a break from their usual lives. This is a common feature of most households. Indeed, on one weekend, Agnes had sixteen people stay with her from the Kuranda villages for exactly the same reasons. People describe such visits as "a bit of break" and sometimes the term is a euphemistic description of the need to get away from difficult domestic relations. During the eight months of her daughter's stay in Cairns, the grandson went to school very little. Sometimes he stayed on in a village household after a weekend visit and went to the local primary school in Kuranda. However, it concerned no-one in the household that his formal education was neglected. Indeed, the child had early learnt the importance of sticking close to his mother, the source of his supply of goods and services.

This daughter did contribute financially to the expenses of the household. Her son's behaviour did not always show a respect for the fact that goods are not necessarily communal resources; he found Agnes' store of mangoes under her bed and despite them being green and unripe, he scoffed the lot.

A grandson and a son moved between Agnes' house and households on Palm Island and in Townsville during a twelve month period. Their presence in the household was not always a benefit since both were heavy drinkers and often at the centre of fights. In the past Agnes had been asked to leave houses because of the trouble they caused. In addition, one of the men was a "stand over" and constantly demanded money from Agnes, even threatening her physically.

Amongst the core residents of Agnes' household several people spent time elsewhere; although usually this was only for a weekend, or at the most several weeks.

Household affluence is measurable by the number of facilities operating in a house. In Agnes' household throughout 1985 and into the middle of 1986 the electricity was connected and residents enjoyed television and video. Most rooms had basic household furniture. Outside Agnes had established a garden from cuttings acquired from friends and relatives. But eighteen months after May 1985 the downward spiral from household affluence to household poverty was obvious. All the women had left and the number of residents who were contributing economically had declined. Men were in the majority as

permanent residents and they made minimal financial contributions. During this period the household was very clearly composed of separate economic units as people orientated themselves to their own domestic goals of looking out for themselves in order to find ways to supplement the resources of their own unit. Any traces of former domestic affluence had disappeared. The electricity had been disconnected for over 5 months because of an unpaid bill of about \$500. Residents coped by improvising, but there was none of the convenience of electricity in domestic life. Making a cup of tea became a major task since all cooking had to be done on an open fire at the back of the house. People progressively adopted a careless attitude of "not worrying for food" because of the difficulties involved in preparation and cooking without electricity. Moreover, without power, food preservation was impossible. However, with little money in the household residents at this point did pool their resources as a strategy for economic survival. Thus, one of the adult men cooked for the entire household; he concocted "stews" of packets of soup combined with tinned meat and eaten with a slice of bread.¹⁰

The only housework unaffected by the lack of power was the washing of clothes which continued to be done by hand. But in general the dwelling showed all the signs of socio-economic deprivation associated with the marginal status of its residents. Nothing of Agnes' joy and the household's former prosperity, such as the flower garden, remained.

Domestic management in Agnes' household increasingly relied on residents accepting their personal responsibility to participate (to show in Sansom's words "performative kinship"). Threats from the household authority, Alf, were sometimes necessary to achieve co-operation. But in general Agnes had to accept that "people were boss for themselves" and her efforts to co-opt residents over contributions for rent or electricity needed the support of the household authority to be effective. When Agnes' household finally disintegrated it was in part because the

10. Another sign of poverty in these households is the food children eat. During times of economic hardship, such as in the slack week, everyone eats the same meals of bread and tea. Young children are fed a variation of this in milk tea (put into their bottle) and a piece of bread.

household authority had left and Agnes declared herself "too tired" to bother any longer with "those boys".

Communal pressure against recalcitrant individuals was sometimes successful. In general Agnes acted in the self-appointed position of household manager by assuming responsibility for punctual rent payments and for coaxing money for household expenses from the core household members. Despite their claims to be "boss for themselves," most residents were in fact happy to have their domestic life organised by someone else. When Agnes was effective in her role as household manager it was partly because of the support she had from a grandson who acted as the household authority. He backed up her decisions and by force of his personality helped maintain some order and stability. However, on other occasions only the police could enforce order. Drunken brawls, the most common disputes Agnes had to deal with, were such occasions. All core household members were expected to abide by certain "rules" such as respect for the private stores of food, and regular contributions to the household in labour or cash; although practising these rules was not easy. Power in households and assertions of autonomy were often linked with violence between household members. Domestic violence was not actually condoned by the household manager, although the household authority was prepared to use violence and kept a weapon for such purposes. In the long-term preventing outbursts of violence and the resulting broken furniture and physical harm to individuals proved difficult.

Twenty-four months later Agnes had left the house to live with a daughter in Picnic Point because the boys "make too much noise." Respite from difficult domestic situations is often solved in this way simply by moving house or disappearing from the household. Hence when Agnes' left, the household disintegrated, without either a household authority to keep order or a household manager to organise domestic life, and the residents separated into their earlier economic units where, as individuals or as couples, they joined other established households; and so the cycle began again in another context.

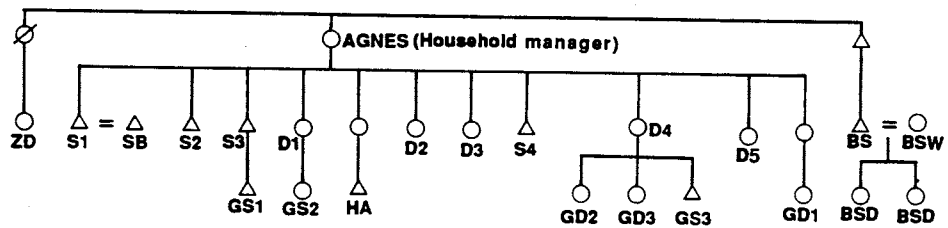
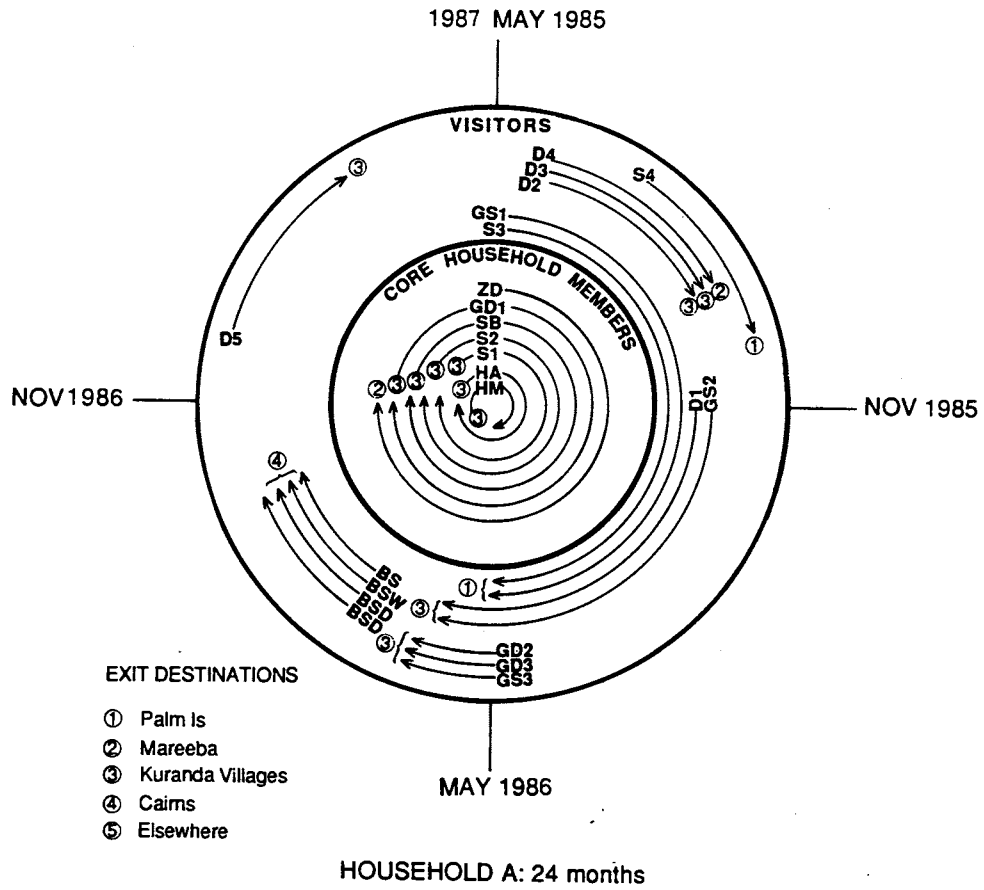
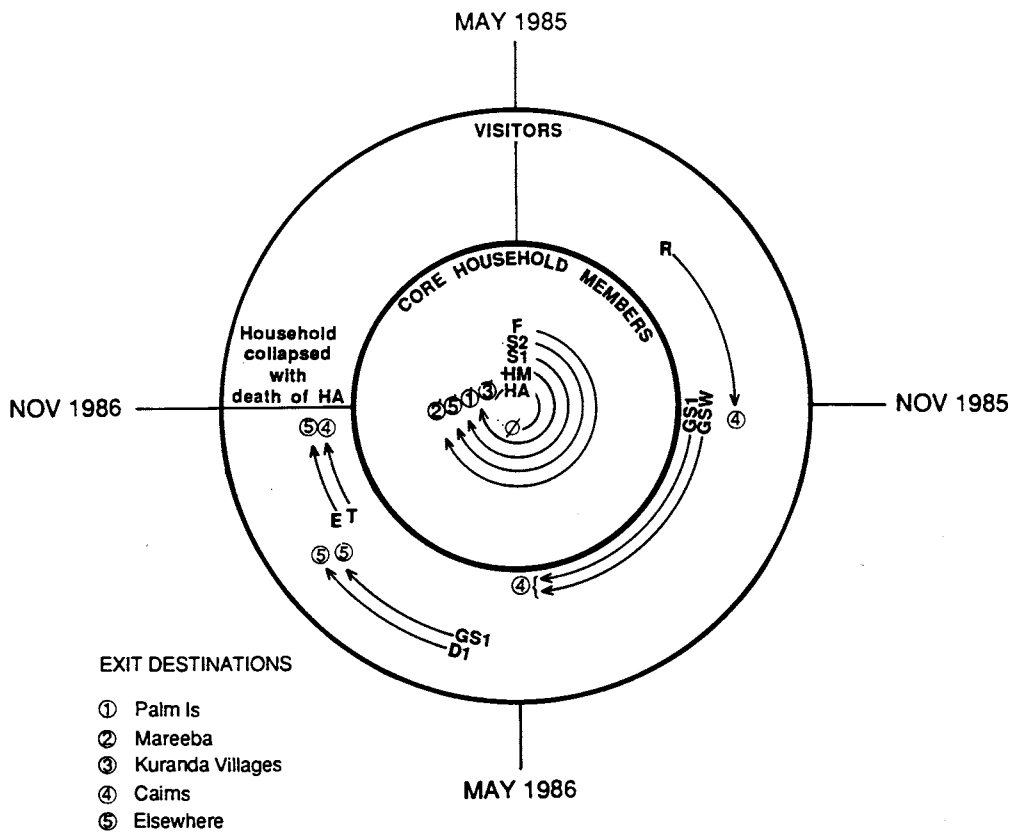


Figure 3. Residential cycle, Household A



HOUSEHOLD B: 15 months

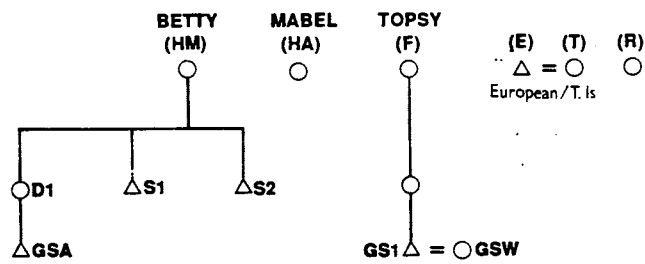


Figure 4. Residential cycle, Household B

Household B

Patterns described from Household A are also familiar to residents in Mabel's household. Mabel and her late husband bought a four-roomed timber house in Mareeba and had it moved to its present location near Valley Heights community. Mabel is the undisputed household authority. She now shares the house with two older women and the adult male children of one of the women. These people are the core members in the house. None of the women are kin, although they share a companionship established during childhood at Mona Mona. All residents in Mabel's household are expected to pay their own way and board to Mabel. Betty is the reluctant household manager (appointed by Mabel), and she and her two sons pay Mabel \$20.00 a fortnight rent. The relationship between Mabel as household authority and Betty as household manager is largely an unresolved power struggle between them. Betty does not have the usual flexibility in household management associated with the position, but is under strict orders from Mabel to perform certain tasks in particular ways. In fact Mabel dominates the domestic life of all the household residents with her power as household authority. Her power is based on a number of factors: she owns the dwelling; she is prepared to use violence and verbal abuse against other household members; and most significantly, Betty and her sons, the brunt of Mabel's exercise of power, are marginalised people in the household and in the community. Their inferior position is the result of their personal histories and the fact that they come from another community.

Betty's household responsibilities include cooking meals for the household and doing some housework such as cleaning and sweeping the house. These jobs are not easily managed. To cook Betty has first to gather firewood which is difficult because wood is not accessible in the area, yet the household relies on wood for fuel. If Mabel was absent for extended periods, Betty also had the responsibility of feeding Mabel's many dogs ("son-dogs") and cats; all of whom Mabel insisted were to be kept inside the house at all times.

Topsy, the other older woman in the household paid no rent. She discharged her financial obligations by providing groceries during the "slack" week in the pension cycle. Topsy was regarded as an asset to

any household because of her ability to supply a household with food. It was general knowledge in the community that Topsy and the owner of the supermarket had a private arrangement entitling Topsy to have groceries at any time; the manager of the supermarket was in fact Topsy's boss. Although Topsy's relatives believed that the shopkeeper was "robbing poor Topsy" this was disguised disappointment at not having control of Topsy's income and a share in the benefits of her relationship with the supermarket staff.

Food was supposed to be a domain of personal responsibility in Mabel's household and each core member was expected to organize their own pantry. At least this was Mabel's point of view. Mabel chided members of the household to be self-sufficient. She practised what she preached and hoarded her own food supplies. But in fact, the women generally cooked together or Betty prepared their meals from food provided by Mabel. The men in the household often ate elsewhere in households where their kinship or friendship was valid currency. They preferred to do this in order to avoid a tongue-bashing from Mabel about their lack of responsibility in contributing. Furthermore, Mabel expected Betty to provide for her sons, but Betty often had no resources to spare and saw Mabel as her boss and therefore her source of supply. Her sons could, and did, fend for themselves.

In daily life few of the "rules" about self-sufficiency or insistence on contributions were enforced. One of Topsy's grandsons came to live in the detached kitchen at the rear of Mabel's house in December 1986. He and his girl friend moved up from Cairns and lived there rent-free for several months.¹¹ Mabel was happy about the arrangement as she felt Sammy Joe provided male protection against possible physical

11. This case should not be seen as an example of communal sharing. Topsy, Sammy Joe's grandmother was often exploited by her family for the resources she had available to her, especially during the slack week. She was also very forgetful and thus easily taken advantage of by others. Sammy Joe and his girlfriend were successful in their relations with Mabel where Betty's sons were not because Sammy Joe played by Mabel's rules, at least he sufficiently convinced her that he did, that she welcomed him to her home.

threats to the women from external sources.¹² The arrangement was equally satisfactory for Sammy Joe, as he and his girlfriend had the advantages of free rent and access to his grandmother's food supply. However, Mabel was not in the habit of encouraging temporary residents and was wary of potential of visitors who might drain household resources or pilfer her resources. (The number of visitors who joined the core residents in Mabel's household should, therefore, be compared with those moving in and out of Agnes' house). For a few weeks toward the end of 1986 Mabel welcomed a European man and his Torres Strait Islander girlfriend into the household (this episode is mentioned elsewhere). If the couple contributed little cash to the household the man was certainly remembered for his help with lighting the first cooking fire of the day and bringing the old ladies a cuppa. These labours were appreciated by the women. But the idyll was stopped by the Valley Heights shopkeeper who had the local police move the couple out of the house.¹³

Residents of Household B rely on welfare benefits. Betty and her sons received Unemployment Benefits and Topsy and Mabel claim the Old Age Pension. The Age Pension makes the older women relatively wealthy by comparison with residents on other welfare payments. In daily life this disadvantages the women because instead of making them "better off" it puts them in a position of potential responsibility for dependents (the less financial residents) and limits any sense of financial autonomy the income might have given them. Indeed, Betty and her sons "mismanaged" their own affairs in the full knowledge that Mabel would inevitably rescue them because of their dependency and impoverishment. Betty and her sons were notorious for spending all their money, often before rent was paid or their groceries bought. They usually went on drinking sprees in town which lasted as long as their

-
12. This is a common fear amongst women. Agnes once asked if she could sleep at my home because she did not feel comfortable sleeping alone with her granddaughter and niece with no men in the house.
 13. The shopkeeper asked the police to remove the couple because the man was currently renting a flat from her and if he continued to live with Mabel the shopkeeper would lose a tenant. Moreover, as all her tenants were men the defection of one to a neighbouring Aboriginal household might set an example to her other male tenants.

cheque was good. Consequently, two days after pensions were paid they were likely to have spent the full fortnight's benefit. Thus, without any means of support they expected Mabel and Topsy to feed them. However, Mabel tended to use her extra resources for her much loved cats and dogs such that one of the residents complained that Mabel bought meat to feed them "over us".¹⁴

The arrangement by which Mabel and Topsy's resources provided for dependents was interrupted when Mabel spent two months living in Cairns. Other members of Topsy's family quickly moved her into their household in Mareeba leaving Betty and her sons to manage with their own, less expansive resources. The withdrawal of these resources had a significant impact on the remaining residents who now faced the challenge of keeping enough money in reserve from their usual drinking sprees to buy food in the following week. Mabel and Topsy both had sources of credit with several businesses in Kuranda, and without them both animals and humans faced lean times. Mabel particularly, had strict ideas about housework and domestic management and coerced other residents to live according to these ideas. Betty and her sons cooperated to some extent because Mabel had the material resources needed to keep them afloat between pension payments. But in Mabel's absence the household unit disintegrated. Betty's sons spent their days and nights elsewhere, in households which were functioning effectively and where they could demand a share of resources as dependents. Betty quit the house too. Neither she nor her sons had any useful experience of operating together as an economic unit and they were not able to do so at the moment when they most needed to.

Little cleaning or tidying of the house was undertaken. The animals were left to themselves and went hungry. Mabel, well-aware of the potential for dissolution of this kind, returned at unexpected intervals to see if her home was properly cared for in line with the instructions she had given Betty. She did not find a well-cared for house or healthy animals. When she returned permanently to her home a heated argument between the two women followed. Mabel publicly upbraided Betty as "the lowest woman under the sun" and told her to

14. At one time Mabel had 13 dogs and 3 cats.

leave the house. Betty attempted to counter the criticisms through dissimulation and supplication, but whatever spirit she had was soon broken. Betty had nowhere else to go and was totally dependent on Mabel for food and shelter. She knew she was powerless in the face of Mabel's credentials of ownership of the home, her age and her strong will.¹⁵ Further, Betty was publicly censured for defying an old lady. These factors compounded Betty's sense of her own personal failings and contributed to the final capitulation. At that point the personal struggle for power and autonomy between the two women evaporated. Once Betty acknowledged Mabel's superior status and her right to determine the conditions of household life the status quo in the household was re-established. The continuity and viability of this particular household was only possible when each actor played their particular role. From Betty's perspective it was her dependence, which made her powerless and exploited. In other contexts her dependence could be an advantage as a claim on the right to care and resources from others. But in Mabel's household Betty is a claimant in another person's "food line" and while her dependence is socially legitimate, it also has a dark side.

This became very clear when Mabel died in November 1986. Betty's sons had left the house some time prior to Mabel's death; one man had returned to Palm Island and his brother had established a relationship with a woman at Yarrabah. Topsy was also living elsewhere at the time, spending the weekdays in a daughter's household in Mareeba and the weekends in Cairns with another of her several daughters. Alone in the house with Mabel at the time of her death, public opinion amongst both Aboriginal people and Europeans blamed Betty for somehow contributing to Mabel's death. Moreover, there was public discussion about who would inherit Mabel's house. Despite

15. Betty was well-aware of the public ideology of respect for elders and in fact she was later criticised for being "cheeky" to Mabel as an older woman. One of Mabel's grandsons threatened to bash Betty for her insolence. On the other hand, younger people have little time or concern for elders. Few people in the community care anything for Mabel and Topsy and showed little help to two old women without a car for transport. People who had cars drove straight past Mabel's door with never a thought of stopping and giving them a lift to town, even for community meetings.

Betty having lived there with Mabel for over 17 years she was thrown out of the house when one of Mabel's nieces with her European partner and their children announced they were moving in. Betty's two suitcases of clothes and personal belongings were thrown onto the strip of grass at the front of the house. She then moved into another household in Picnic Point and earned her right to food and shelter by taking on the work of household manager under direction from the couple who lived there.

Mabel had maintained her authority in the household through force of personality as much as through circumstances. Residents were forced to support her regime because they had few resources of their own and were in no position to disagree or challenge their benefactor, although Mabel relied to some extent on Betty's manual labour to realize her plans.

In these two households the epiphenomenon of construction and destruction of household units was internally generated, although the external factor of dependence on welfare incomes profoundly affected the nature of the domestic economy. Domestic life in Household B was based on the functional role of each household member, the hierarchical organization of domestic tasks and decision-making. Such role demarcations were argued in household rhetoric, but in practice not everybody carried out their assigned roles. Many of the practices and values Mabel tried to enforce on other core household residents reiterated mission values and mission styles of "family" organization. In Household B there was only one household authority and manager. Other household members were assigned particular roles according to decisions made by Mabel. Changes in domestic role were not open to discussion or negotiation. If Mabel wanted to spend 2 weeks elsewhere it was Betty's job to stay home to keep house and care for the animals. As household authority and manager, Mabel bought the food and managed the cash of others. She decided who drank alcohol in the house and who did not; and which Aboriginal visitors from other villages could come inside the home and who could not. With the same authority she asserted her right to determined the morals of the other residents and when Betty's sons had women in their rooms she threatened to have the boys "bashed" because she "wasn't having any rude business in her house". Mabel also took it upon herself to seek

help from external authorities when household members were especially truculent; informing the taxi driver when the boys fought with her, and the police when she suspected they were drinking her kerosene. She also asserted power in the household by physical abuse and threatened other residents with brooms and sticks.

Mabel repeated the patterns of domestic power and control she knew from her years in the Mona Mona dormitory and as matron of the girls' dormitory. Other residents were often upset by her actions, but agreed to them partly because they were rules they understood and were familiar with, and partly because they had few alternatives in the long term.

Mobility in households

Mobility is a significant internal factor affecting the cycle of household wealth and poverty and household composition. Three groups are highly mobile in Kuranda households. These are young children, youths and older people; although virtually everyone is mobile at some stage in their life cycle. What distinguishes the groups from one another is the degree of mobility and the reasons for it (see also Sansom 1988:170-171 on children's mobility).

Of the three age-groups in the community older people are generally the most stable. Young children are highly mobile and move from one household to another in the care of different kin for varying periods of time. Matrifocal models argue the significance of male income and mobility in households, but in welfare economies it is actually young children and the income tied up in their care which is important. Of course, the same is true of Old Age pensioners who are well paid under welfare. Moreover, a number of the older people in the Kuranda community had European bosses who helped them out with extras in food, clothing, cash or transport. Topsy, for example, had the supermarket manager as her boss. Mabel had bosses in the female owner of the taxi service and in myself. The mobility of adults, on the other hand, may be pertinent to economic cooperation in households; although it would seem that the welfare income associated with children is probably less problematic for a household manager than is the presence of a large number of adults.

The literature on rural and urban Aboriginal households treats mobility amongst adults as socially aberrant and as a response to the culture of poverty (see Gale and Wundersitz 1982). Yet transience and mobility are commonplace in Aboriginal households in remote Aboriginal communities and in stable socio-economic conditions.¹⁶ Moreover, while men in Kuranda may fail to contribute either cash or labour to the domestic economy they certainly maintain a presence in households as co-residents. But assessing their role by economic indicators alone fails to represent the often dominant social influence of Aboriginal men in domestic life. The reality of domestic life in Kuranda Aboriginal households contrasts with models of household life and male domestic roles repeated in the literature on Aboriginal family organisation and household structure (see Gale and Wundersitz 1982.) There is no evidence to support the notion of mobility as a phenomenon of male activity alone for in Kuranda a wider range of residents move between households and communities.

A young woman and her boyfriend lived temporarily in a number of households in Valley Heights. When he was in prison she stayed in households where they had spent little time as a couple. Over seven nights she slept one night at Valley Heights, three nights in Cairns with her grandmother, one night in her mother's household in Hill End and the remaining two nights with sisters in Picnic Point. In another example, a couple left their house in Picnic Point and moved into a unit with a single person in Valley Heights. In turn, the couples' former home was used by a group of single, itinerant women, one of whom was from an Aboriginal community in Cape York and currently visiting kin in Kuranda and Palm Island. They used the house for a few weeks and then moved into an established household once their personal resources were depleted.

Young single people are constantly on the move for excitement and adventure. These young men and women travel between different

16. See Young, E. and Doohan, K. 1989 where mobility amongst Aboriginal people in Central Australia is covered under a number of reasons all of which are seen as normal activities, including mobility directly associated with the fortnightly welfare payment. See also Rowse's review of Young and Doohan in *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 1990 No. 2 :73-76.

towns and households in search of partners and recreational amusements (see Birdsall 1988). For household managers and household authorities these people are the least welcome as visitors. Other writers have identified the same group and called them "floaters" (see Bryant 1982; Anderson 1982; 1989). Such young, restless travellers usually bring few, if any material resources, to a household. Often their extended travels have led to their disqualification for Unemployment Benefits and they may wait for their next Benefit by staying several weeks in the one household, wearing out their welcome in the meantime.

Martha, for example, lived permanently with Agnes in Cairns. Sometimes she went into Cairns for an evening, only to return about a fortnight later. Her intention on these occasions was to find a boyfriend, preferably a European with money to spend. She came home after the money ran out, or when Agnes found her. She was absent for a fortnight because that was the period between social security payments. On another occasion, Martha went to Townsville for a short visit to see relatives on Palm Island. But more than six months elapsed before she returned. She had in fact spent the entire six months in Townsville never having made the crossing to Palm. In another case, a young couple had their own house in an Aboriginal community about an hour's drive from Cairns. The community is geographically isolated from the facilities of a large town and clearly the couple found it more convenient to live with kin in Cairns. Their visits to the parental home lasted from a few days to several months at a stretch and only lessened once they had children; although then the children were left with the grandmother while the couple made trips to other communities.

Children are often ignored in discussions of mobility. This neglects the fact that they are commonly raised in domestic groups where neither their natural father or mother resides. In Agnes' household for example she had the primary responsibility for care of a grand-daughter. The child was aged about 5 months when she first joined the household as a permanent resident. Other children appeared and disappeared for short or extended stays with Agnes. Few of these children had a biological parent living with them in the house. Dorothy's history illustrates patterns common in a child's chronology of domestic residence. Until she was about 12 months old, Dorothy was in

Agnes' constant, full-time care. She considered Agnes her mother and as her language developed she always referred to Agnes as "Mum." (Dorothy also recognized her natural mother and sometimes spent a weekend with her in another household outside Kuranda). As her language developed Agnes made sure Dorothy was familiar with the names of the other members of the household and her social relations with them. Less attention and importance was given to teaching her the names of objects in everyday use.

Once Dorothy showed an increasing emotional independence from Agnes a new phase began in the child's life. Independence is encouraged in Kuranda children after they turn four or five years old. Dorothy's ability to move between households confirmed her status as an independent person. Indeed the mobility of children between households and communities is tacit recognition of the end of babyhood. Preparation for social independence begins in small ways. At 15-18 months old Dorothy could defend herself in scraps with other children (by biting, punching and grabbing other children about the throat) and her competence to defend and assert herself was increasingly read as a sign of maturity where she no longer needed solely Agnes' care. Dorothy spent more time, from this point on, in the care of a wider circle of kin which meant a three day weekend in one of the Kuranda villages, or in Mareeba in company with kin but not necessarily with her biological parents.

The patterns in Dorothy's babyhood are repeated in other cases. Martha's 9 year old daughter was brought up by her mother's cousin. Lena visits her mother's household on weekends and holidays. In another case, Clyde, a boy about 4 years old, lived in Agnes' household for almost a month. His uncle and the uncle's boyfriend looked after him. At other times, two or three of Agnes' grand-children stayed for several weeks when their mother, a single parent, was in trouble with Children's Services over child care conditions. None of the older children attended the local school, nor was it thought by Agnes to be important for them to do so. In another situation a small baby was handed into the care of his maternal grandmother when the child's mother could no longer cope alone. Despite her difficulties, the mother was reluctant to part with her child knowing she was forfeiting income from a Supporting Parent benefit. The mother told me she was well

aware there were plenty of kin willing to rear the child, but in her opinion they only wanted the child because they "want my money".

In a number of Kuranda households, older women are rearing their grandchildren, and in one case, a woman reared her brother's daughter's children. For a teenage mother the responsibility of caring for her first child was assumed by a kinswoman in another town.

Aboriginal children's needs are often confined to their physical care. People dismissed the notion of emotional well-being as irrelevant to personal development. In a family discussion about the future of some of Agnes' grandchildren several people thought that the children should go into a children's home since it would "make them strong," i.e. they would receive three meals a day and somewhere pleasant to live. Agnes was not so sure. She remembered the experiences of her older children who had already spent time in children's homes and who came out "silly". But mobility between Aboriginal households is certainly not seen as detrimental to emotional well-being.

Children made few demands on household resources in terms of food and this contributes to the ease with which they become mobile. Children generally eat whatever is served to adults. Additional children in a household is rarely a cause for concern. The household staples of tea and bread are supplemented for children with a special category of food (lollies, soft drinks, ice-cream, i.e. heavily sweetened foods) given as a means of expressing love between adults and children. Finally, in households dependent on welfare income children are vital economic resources and for this reason are often welcomed in a household. Their presence contributes directly to household prosperity. Every Aboriginal child under sixteen years qualifies under the welfare State for economic benefits which make an impact on economies of limited resources, as most Kuranda households are. Yet in household surveys like that of Gale and Wundersitz (1982) children tend to be invisible because they are not recognized as directly contributing income to the household. Children bring income through their association with a care giver (usually female), and a willingness to look after another person's child acknowledges the tie between care and cash. The extra income a

woman earns may also make her position central to the economic viability of the household.¹⁷

The mobility of other age or gender groups follows patterns mentioned above. The cycle of domestic prosperity and poverty in Agnes' home was affected by the impact of transient visitors. Visitors are best described as friends and relatives wanting short-term accommodation. Transient residents, on the other hand, are semi-permanent members of the household. They are distinguishable from visitors by their rights to activate sets of kin-based claims to household resources. People in this category vary from adult children, to siblings' children, to adult grandchildren. The accommodation they seek may be short-term, over a week or so, to a couple of months. Transient residents can be single individuals or domestic units; that is, a group of people, perhaps parent and children, who function as a separate economic unit although they are economically interdependent (see Sansom 1988).

Some individuals in the Kuranda communities are permanently transient. These people move between two or three households of kinsfolk in a "run" between Cairns, Kuranda and Mareeba. While transient residents do have some rights in the household, for example to a bed and blanket, they do not necessarily enjoy rights to the labour of others. The host household expects transients residents to be self-sufficient and independent from the core household. Of course, this is not the reality. The consequence is that in an already fragile domestic economy, hordes of visitors and non-contributing transients can devastate a household's resources.¹⁸

The transients and core residents are distinguishable, although their differences are not always clear-cut since there is often a good deal of mobility amongst core residents too. The latter group include

-
17. It should not be automatically assumed that individual income is circulated into the general household expenses. But it does mean that in an emergency pressure can be exerted on an individual known to have a higher income for rent, or "light" bills, or to borrow for a trip to Palm Island or Townsville.
 18. One weekend Agnes had a total of 16 adult visitors down from the Kuranda villages. Her visitors had come for a "bit of change" and to fish in the sea.

household figures like Agnes and Mabel who manage households on a daily basis, but also include people like Betty and her sons who periodically spend days and nights elsewhere, although they claim Mabel's house as home, where they "stop one place". Martha's residential pattern increasingly illustrated that of a transient resident, despite her permanent home with Agnes. She slipped between these categories after she spent 6 months in a household in Townsville, 2-3 months in a household in Mareeba, and stints of several weeks (adding up to 3 months) between two different households in the Kuranda villages. Over that period she also slept nights in other places not identified; for example, she had a "good time" in Cairns and was away for 3-4 days.

Gender is important in discriminating between claims to hospitality from transient and core household residents. For example, despite her long absence Martha was re-established in the household through her role of helping Agnes with domestic work. Her labour was her entitlement to a continuing place in the household. Agnes' son, Tony, on the other hand, was not expected to contribute through domestic labour, but to give money to help with household expenses. Moreover, his rights to household resources and accommodation were already established in principle through his birthright as Agnes' son. If, as was likely, he spent all his money on himself and gave none to the household, he still had a basis for access to household resources. Additionally, as his mother's dependent, with no resources of his own, she could not refuse him. By the same claims of birthright Agnes' daughters would not be refused access to help either, but there would be strong pressure on them to legitimate their entitling rights through domestic labour, just as Martha kept her place under this qualification.

Researchers offer different explanations for why children, young adults, and older people as the three principal groups are so mobile. However, it is clear that in the main they only see one group as the mobile sector of the population. Anderson (1982) and Bryant (1982) identified young adults aged between late teens and the mid-twenties as the group most noted for domestic instability and high levels of residential mobility. Birdsall (1988) suggests Nyungar youth follow "runs" between country towns in Western Australia with excuses to

visit or engage in love business. Young people in Kuranda also travel between households where they can activate claims to shelter while searching for a "good time," a euphemism for activities involving alcohol and love business. Martha's six months stay in Townsville was extended from the original few weeks because she got involved with love business. Once the relationship finished she returned to Cairns. Several months later, she was happily settled in Mareeba, thanks to love business. Martha's movements are typical of many younger members of households. Ellen, for example, spent her time circulating between households in the Kuranda villages, Mareeba and Cairns. One morning I met Ellen sitting on the curbing outside a service station in Cairns. She had just come from spending the night with relations in Cairns. The previous evening, she told me, she was riding around Mareeba in a car with several other people including a well-known Aboriginal sporting personality. He had taken the group to a hotel and "shouted" them exotic drinks. Later, Ellen boasted to another woman about her evening. The two women talked of the male personality in terms of "my *minya*" (meaning my meat/flesh in the literal translation, but in this context with an overt sexual emphasis). This is exactly the kind of adventure Ellen, Martha and other young people seek in their travels.

Other reasons for a transient life are not glamorous; nor are they essentially economic reasons. Men and women have reason to want respite from domestic life because of personal tensions of some kind. Mary was forced to live in her daughter's household because of poor health. It was impossible for her to live in her own home without daily help. However she constantly wished aloud for such an event. She refused to sell her home as it represented her last hope for personal autonomy. Keeping the house had symbolic importance. Her desire to move often coincided with outbreaks of "trouble" in the family and her feeling of lack of control over the situation, either to avoid it or to be left in ignorance. Transience for adults can offer escape from domestic tensions and violence. It is also a means of subverting pressures to meet unreasonable personal demands from others. Mobility is thus less an epiphenomenon of economic circumstances than it reflects cultural and social patterns in the biography of both sexes.

Although mobility is accommodated in Aboriginal communities, there is little sympathy or understanding of the phenomenon from housing authorities. Indeed, intervention by the authorities over the number of residents often contributes to the final stages in the breakdown of households (as it did in the case of Household A). State housing authorities actively impose their own domestic structure on Aboriginal households by restricting the number of visitors to a rented premise and limiting the length of a visitor's stay.

Matrifocality: the evidence from Kuranda

Matrifocal models hypothesize an association between gender, income and household organization. In Kuranda households, domestic prosperity is a boom-to-bust cycle connected with welfare payments in which households with adult women and their higher welfare incomes do show signs of relative socio-economic stability. Yet it is false to imagine that income in households is necessarily shared for the benefit of all household members. When Pauline and her children came to stay with her mother in Cairns she claimed she was "helping Mum with the rent". She still maintained her altruistic intentions as she caught a taxi into town to join the fortnightly gambling school in the local park. As she drove away she called out that if she won she'd "buy Mum a washing machine". Needless to say, she returned with no winnings and certainly with less cash than she set out with. Ultimately, it was her mother's income which supported Pauline and her children on a daily basis.

The inequality in power between men and women in domestic life is said to be an attribute of matrifocal household relations and an imbalance in economic resources. Some writers see an association between power and women's centrality in domestic life. Birdsall (1988:137) for example, outlines the route to women's power through domestic and familial contexts in contemporary Aboriginal life. Others (Collmann 1979; Gale and Wundersitz 1982) stress that the source of women's authority and domestic power requires the exclusion of men from full participation in the domestic world. Women's independence is supported by regular income from the welfare State. Yet in Kuranda, power in domestic life is usually shared between two, often distinct roles, even in households which appear to be dominated by women. There is no fixed "rule" about which gender fills these roles, nor are the

roles directly tied to an individual's command of income. But although the personnel in each role may change, the eligibility for such roles is not necessarily open to all.

The domestic roles in Household A illustrate a familiar pattern in the separation of position and authority in domestic life in Kuranda. A young man on a student endowment of less income than many of the welfare incomes of other male residents acted as the household's judicial authority. He arbitrated in domestic disputes, put drunks out of the house by forcing them "to walk the road," and women deferred to his authority to pressure a negligent young mother to provide better child-care. Agnes, acted in concert with him as "administrator" or household manager. She ensured regular payment of rent and electricity, and organized someone (usually a woman) to "do a clean up" each morning. In some households the roles are combined. When the young man in Agnes' household shifted, Agnes assumed both roles, but not very successfully. Neither the household manager nor the authority figure are positions necessarily held because of economic status or power. Indeed, the kudos and authority Alf held, despite being younger than the other men in the household, suggests that status in households often has surprisingly little to do with material resources. Alf's reputation as a fierce fighter, someone who was quick to get "gooley up" (i.e. to show temper) enhanced his claims. He also moved comfortably in both the Aboriginal and European worlds which made him an authoritative and charismatic person amongst other Aboriginal men. On these grounds he could exert authority while the junior of many of his male co-residents. Power in domestic life is actually founded on a wider range of factors than economic status alone.

In another example the household authority was also the chief income earner, but also someone who was often absent from the household. Income came from several sources in Mary's household. Several residents received welfare benefits, although wage income was also represented. While Peggy had her own income it was Bert's wage labour which made him the principal bread winner. He was often away from home for several weeks at a stretch, but his pay was always sent to his wife. He had a reputation for violence and quickness of temper and when he was home he determined the activities of other residents. Fear of the man by his womenfolk meant he was indisputably a

dominant authority in the house. Yet his profile in the house was ambiguous. Although the women's acquiesced in his position as household authority they simultaneously resisted his incorporation into the family's emotional life. His physical presence in the household was organized by the women to mirror the position of an outsider. Hence his domestic life took place in marginal areas of the house, so that while the women cooked and ate their food in the body of the house, Bert and an adult son who emulated his father's behaviour, cooked and ate their meals in a section of the original garage, now converted to living space. Household management, through demarcation of space, control of food resources and the daily routines of domestic existence, remained firmly the prerogative of the women.

In this case, as in the others mentioned, the potential for income to be used as a basis for power and status in households may be secondary to other factors. This view contrasts with the sociologists' interpretation of the impact of income status on household position. Bert was well-known for his temper and its violent consequences, and public awareness of this factor bolstered his claims to authority and control. However, women's administration of the domestic details in the household limited the areas of domesticity under his control. In this way women gained some measure of domestic independence. Thus separate food preparation, segregated leisure areas, and different and antithetical cosmological beliefs expressed in daily domestic activities, combined to undermine Bert's assertions of hegemonic authority in the household.

In Household A, Alf's power to coerce others was also based on his reputation as a fighter. But his hegemony was more often effective as a threat than in action since most people in the household were aggressively resistant to infringement of their right to autonomous personal action. Bert, on the other hand, actually used physical violence to maintain his authority and to structure the behaviour of others.

Personal factors influence an individual's status within households. Betty acted as a "servant" in Mabel's household because she had no close kin in the immediate community and had joined Mabel's household fifteen years previously as a dependent. Betty had

left her husband and was seeking refuge. She therefore had few rights to assert claims over another for help or labour. Indeed, her marginal position in the Kuranda community and in Mabel's household, forced her into the position of using her labour to guarantee accommodation for herself and her children. When Mabel died, Betty and her belongings were literally thrown out of the house. A woman Mabel had reared as a child, moved into the home with her European boyfriend and their children. Betty eventually found shelter in a household in another Kuranda village, but her position remained marginal. Once again, she paid her way with domestic work. Betty's experiences show the fate of people with no significant structural status in the wider Aboriginal community. Betty was unable to improve her status because she lacked the social resources, such as kin, to support her. Her sons were in a similar position after the death of their mother's benefactor. One son went to Yarrabah to live and the other returned to kin on Palm Island. Without Mabel's patronage Betty's own domestic group disintegrated completely.

Matrifocality in Kuranda households is not commonplace, even where the male partner is apparently absent from daily domestic life. In fact, matrifocal domestic groups are a minority (see also Eckermann 1988). Men often have an influential role in households, despite their irregular residence. The ethnography also suggests that household power is not necessarily a concomitant of the formal structure of household organization, but is embedded in the relationships between residents and has several guises in domestic life. For example, domestic power is often shared through the separation of domestic authority from domestic administration. Furthermore, power in households is referenced to factors other than income which of itself is no guarantee of status, contrary to the argument of some researchers (see Gale and Wundersitz 1982 that gender status in Adelaide household flows from economic factors). My evidence from Kuranda and that of elsewhere suggests that power in Aboriginal households is not determined by economic factors alone. Charisma or the force of an individual's personality may enhance or not the capacity for status (see Birdsall

1988).¹⁹ Bert and Mabel succeeded as household authorities in part because they had this quality. Sometimes one individual wears both hats as household administrator and household authority; Mabel for example, combined both positions. She exerted her strong personality in all spheres of household life. But she also had structural advantages to strengthen her dominance, ownership of the house for instance, which entitled her to determine the wishes, routines and roles of other household residents.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed some principles behind the organization of domestic sociality in Kuranda households. Studies by Gale and Wundersitz (1982) and others of urban Aboriginal households based on questionnaires have focused on mobility and economic status as central issues for gender and power relations during social change. Status, according to the matrifocal view, is a function of income. Domestic life in Kuranda suggests that the matrifocal view of a causal link between power or status and income should be re-evaluated. Questionnaires however do not give evidence of the subtleties of domestic sociality. The lived experiences of household relations shows a complexity of factors affecting domestic organization. For example, the concern over the mobility of men in households is misplaced in communities living on welfare income. In these situations the mobility of young children is important; yet along with the mobility of young adults of both sexes these groups are invisible in matrifocal interpretations. Life in Aboriginal households indicates a man's physical presence is not his only source of influence, hence to interpret his absence as a sign of marginality is too narrow an explanation of the situation. There are, in fact, a number of explanations for mobility in households, just as there is more than one mobile age and sex group.

19. Birdsall (1988) comments that Nyungar women have authority on the basis that "a mother is boss for her children." However, she also points out that while women as a group have the potential to emerge as a boss in domestic life, variables such as the individual personality, the strength of family power and so forth, influence the rise to a position of status.

In Kuranda households there was little emphasis or importance given to income differences of itself, as a basis for domestic hegemony. Power was more complex than this; in social relations it was often a shifting potential whose realisation was subject to a number of social and personal variables. The exercise of power in domestic life was often split between individuals who acted as the household administrator/manager and the household head or authority figure. Some people combined both roles. But in general the potential for power, as control over others or as the determination of domestic life, was neither fixed nor arbitrary. Thus the Kuranda ethnography challenges the matrifocal assumptions that domestic relations are fixed, hierarchical and based on economic status.

Power in domestic life warrants redefinition. It is best understood by the concept of rights or entitlements to exert claims over other people and their resources. This is a view of power as embedded in social relations and therefore a fluid process, rather than as static. People claim the right to act as "boss for themselves" by denying the capacity of others to hold sway over them.

The individual is born with specific rights in social relations which can be activated according to different criteria such as age, sex, personal disposition; add to these natural endowments, the accretion of material advantages including status through the power of one's family, and differences in individual capacity to mobilise rights appears. Some individuals succeed in realizing or actualizing all their entitlements to claims while others only succeed partially, and thus inequalities occur in household life. Some of the entitlements to claim are also genderized according to cultural mores; hence women legitimate their claim in households through their labour, while men often legitimate their position through their social or kin relationships (for instance, as a son, or husband.) Moreover, by realizing claims over another person, social links are forged and sustained, and avenues for the circulation of goods and services opened. Thus, power is a repertoire of possible claims an individual can succeed in realizing. Studies evaluating status and power have often ignored the cultural constructs by which power is exercised in domestic life and instead have reified the importance of external factors familiar as status indicators in the wider community.

Exerting power by coercing people to act in certain ways and conform to behavioural norms is difficult in practice. A formal structure for exercising power disappeared with the mission. As one woman said, "the mission gave us discipline, but young people have nothing." This is not only a comment about self-discipline, but it also points out the basis of contemporary domestic sociality as a negotiated relationship, albeit with its own tensions and contradictions. Individuals negotiate to secure the best advantages for their circumstances. If women like Mabel succeeded in imposing their domestic order on other residents it is in large part because they can take advantage of the dependence of these residents, as well as their willingness to engage in this kind of relationship. Gender relations in Kuranda households are neither mirrored reflections of the mission's aspirations for men, women and family life, nor can they be explained in terms of matrifocal units resulting from social change.

CHAPTER 7

NURTURANCE RELATIONS

As suggested in the last chapter, power in the Kuranda Aboriginal community is the realisation of a potential to make claims over other people. Moreover, this power is associated not with autonomy as a characteristic of individual self-government, but with autonomy through dependence. Such interpretation seems like a contradiction in terms; certainly the exposition I argue for reverses conventional meanings of the terms as they are understood in non-Aboriginal society. Power is realised for Kuranda Aboriginal people through entitlements to claim another's time, labour and resources. Within Aboriginal families, and between Aborigines and non-Aborigines in the wider community, the same principles of social interaction are used. But not all individuals are capable of actualising the full extent of claims. This chapter describes how individuals exercise their claims within households.

Nurturance is the dominant idiom of the exercise of autonomy and dependence. Ideally, nurturance is expected to resonate in social practice with moral rules about obligations and duty to others. The extremes of these ideals are clear in expectations for the conduct of relations between mothers and children, and between men and women. However, Kuranda Aboriginal people also structure their relationships with non-Aborigines according to the same principles, only to find this has unintended consequences which exacerbate their already marginal status.

Nurturance in the mother-child relationship

Through the physical tie of motherhood, the symbolic association between women and the reproduction of care for others in social relations is established and affirmed. Thus it is no surprise that it is only with the birth of a woman's first child that she acquires adult status in the community. Women are aware of the status change and

will refer to their children in order to reinforce a claim for personal freedom. Betty, for example, was upbraided by Mabel for drinking in town. She retorted that as a "grown woman with seven kids" she could make her own decisions and she justified her position by asserting the terms of her proven status as an adult. But Betty also recognized, as would other women in Kuranda, that the responsibilities of adulthood for women are analogous with motherhood and remain so for a lifetime. If a woman was drinking in town as she was, then she must expect to face criticism for failing to set an example of appropriate, although idealized, behaviour for her sons. At the same time, her behaviour left her open to adverse comments about her neglect of her domestic responsibilities. Betty defended herself by repeating to Mabel the opinion of a local taxi driver:

Taxi said no good stopping home all the time. I should go out and do something.

By defending herself on these grounds she tried to persuade herself and Mabel that the issue of a mother drinking was simply a question of personal choice, rather than one of social responsibility to dependents. Women of all ages receive reminders from others, including from other women, of their responsibilities as adults and as mothers. Agnes and other women from her household sought Ellen in Cairns. Ellen's child, Dorothy, (aged 9 months) was left in Agnes' care several days prior to this, while "party-ing up" kept Ellen too busy in town to worry about coming home. Eventually, Agnes went looking for her to remind Ellen that,

This is not our baby! ... is yours! We don't lie [i.e. have sexual intercourse] with Ian! [the baby's father].

In another case, Belle left her small son aged 3 years in the temporary care of a group of other young mothers. She said she would be absent for a few hours but several days elapsed before her return. By then it was clear that Belle was enjoying herself in Mareeba without another thought for the child. The women left to care for her child were angry. They told Belle's mother they intended to bash her daughter for leaving them with the boy. Moreover, this was not the first occasion on

which someone else had had to take responsibility for her child.¹ Belle often failed to come home at night and her mother had to assume responsibility for the boy's care.

A woman's first pregnancy is likely to occur in late adolescence. The State recognises the status change by offering the new mother welfare payments which in turn become the means to social and material freedom. Moreover, in a community totally dependent on welfare as income, social security payments are a stable and desirable wage. Women with dependent children receive more in benefit payments than welfare recipients in other categories such as unemployed men and women, and women with children no longer in their care. In this way State welfare schemes reinforce the association between women and nurturance and unwittingly encourage the reproduction of this pattern. Interestingly, research on the impact of welfare in the wider society suggests the welfare State is fostering a similar association for non-Aboriginal women (see Baldock and Cass 1983). Amongst non-Aboriginal single parent families there has been little breakdown in cultural sex-stereotypes of parenting, with few men acting as a sole parent. In this sense the welfare State is encouraging a consensual view of parenting for women in both European and Aboriginal communities.

Parenting practices in Kuranda indicate that nuclear family life is neither an ideal nor an imperative. Indeed, the nuclear family is more likely to be an exception than the rule. Families, in a child's daily experience, often seem to be households of resident women such as mothers, grandmothers and kinswomen of their mother's generation. Men may also be members of the same household, but for reasons explained in Chapter 6 they are not always present or active participants in domestic life in the way women are. Often, a woman's

1. Bashing people is a very common way of trying to bring people's wayward behaviour into line and is applied in other circumstances too: to stop people drinking alcohol, to stop a spouse running around with someone else, to teach a mother better care of her children. Compare this interpretation of fighting with Macdonald (1988) who argues that amongst the Wiradjuri people fighting affirms social meaning and maintains social order with its contradictions and ambiguities.

first child is reared by a more experienced nurturer such as a young mother's mother, and this is particularly common if the new mother is very young. In practice children of both sexes are likely to have the closest familial relationships with women rather than with men.

Men do, however, figure in a child's life and men are just as keen as women to pet and cosset a young child. But men do not see themselves as nurturing children like "mothers" do. One hot afternoon I called to take a group of women down to the river. A grandmother in the group had been left to supervise her daughter's young children while their mother was in town shopping. The grandmother was prepared to bring the youngest child to the river with her, but wanted the children's uncles to look after the others. Loud objections from the men followed. They refused to be left with "any of the kids". They swore at the older woman and accused her of neglecting her responsibility. It was "not their job" they claimed, "to watch the children".

Clearly men have a different notion of their parental responsibility from what they see as women's duties in child-care. In an Aboriginal family where the husband and father was European and unemployed, and his wife worked full-time, the children were in the daily care of the woman's mother. Sometimes I passed the couple's home en route to visit the children's grandmother and I saw the man sitting under the verandah of the house drinking and talking with a mate. His two children were being cared for by their maternal grandmother who also had responsibility for an invalid mother and a part-time cleaning job. The children's mother felt she could entrust their care to no-one as responsible as her own mother, not even the children's father. No doubt the arrangement also suited the father and it was only during emergencies that he agreed to care for them for a few hours.

A man's day is unlikely to include any significant parenting activities. Pauline, with two small children in tow, asked her male cousin to take charge of the youngest child and take him down to Cairns. She promised to collect the child later when she came down to Cairns in the rail motor. Alf refused outright. He said he wasn't "carting babies around". Pauline tried another approach. Alf refused a second

time. Finally, Pauline's mother reminded her that asking her male cousin for help was out of line; she had to "watch her own child".

Men spend the greater part of their day with their peers, drinking and talking, watching action-packed videos, and in private recreational pursuits. Their relationships with their children are likely to be distant and coloured by the role of the father as a disciplinarian. Desperate mothers sometimes threaten their children with the spectre of a father's wrath. This is interesting as it disassociates "fathers" from the kind of nurturing indulgence expected and contingent with the ideal of "mothers". On the other hand, parents rarely admonish children of either sex. Most adults take the attitude that children "won't be told". Consequently, children as young as two or three years old are openly defiant and rebellious and make rude gestures in response to parental requests. In many respects parents are not concerned with disciplining children. Instead, children display an aggressive individualism based on a sociality where no-one dominates another person because each individual is "boss for [my]self". Patrick, aged three, constantly walked in front of his mother while she watched television and made rude gestures to her with his arm and finger cocked. When the same child was asked by his mother to move over in the car so she had room to sit, he told her straight out, to "fuck off."

Although there is a notion of boys separating from their mothers, no direct intervention is taken to assist the transition. It is assumed that in the normal course of maturation boys will relinquish their habitual dependence on their mothers. Heather was getting fed up with Trevor, her 8 year old. He was always "crying to follow mother". She shouted at him, "Stop it or I'll scream". Agnes, Trevor's grandmother said, "It's silly for a boy to follow his mother". She was worried that Trevor would continue to behave this way into manhood. Whatever views of male independence exist as part of the ethos of Aboriginal maleness, in fact most men in the generation raised after the mission closed continue to behave as dependents of their womenfolk.

For single men, or men in unstable domestic relationships, mothers continue to provide emotional and physical security. Agnes' eldest son, Lou, had a de facto wife and 10 year old son living on Palm Island. Apart from a few months when he moved to other households,

Lou lived permanently with Agnes. She organized his unemployment forms to ensure regular payments and provided a stable household environment from which he was free to please himself how he spent his time. Domestic life in his mother's household contrasted with the domestic experience he had with his *de facto*. His mother pointed this out to him and added that after all, his wife "only wants you for rent money". Lou was ambivalent about the domestic benefits of marital, as opposed to parental companionship. He told me once of his youthful hopes to box with Jimmy Sharman and how these plans changed; "Ah, Julie," he sighed, "once you get in with a woman, life changes". Another man who had spent most of his life droving in western Queensland and living at Woorabinda and Palm Island reserves, said he'd never married "because life is better if you are single." Despite Lou's regrets, it remains the intention of most men to "get in with a woman" (and the same is true for young women).

Ambiguities in socialization

Ethnographers of other Aboriginal communities have written of the centrality of concepts of nurturance and dependence behind ideals of appropriate social behaviour for gender and age grades (see White, Barwick, and Meehan (eds.) 1985; Myers 1982; 1986). It is also noted that nurturance responsibilities are not shared equally by men and women and Cowlshaw (1978) suggests from her research in Arnhem Land that Aboriginal women have ambivalent feelings about child-rearing.

In Kuranda women as mothers are expected to nurturer their dependent sons. This is an idealized statement and expected to remain an ideal of their relationship with their sons throughout life. Girls are also nurtured by their mothers, but unlike boys there is nothing in their socialisation to encourage them to persist as dependents beyond childhood. Girls between 8-10 years old are discouraged from making displays of egocentric behaviour. Boys of the same age are not curtailed in this way. Hamilton (1981a) noted that socialisation of Anbarra children in Arnhem Land favoured such differences. She observed that in children between 18 months and 5 years,

Girls have a higher frustration tolerance than boys do, or alternatively, that boys get away with things through hysterical behaviour where girls do not (Hamilton 1981(a): 89).

Apart from differences due to age and regional cultural practices, much in Hamilton's description of Anbara socialisation resonates with the patterns of socialization common in Kuranda communities. Adolescent girls in Kuranda are actively encouraged to move from being a dependent to someone providing nurturance to others. The transition is effected through increased involvement with female care-giving activities such as child-care, housework and other domestic activities. By contrast, an indulgent childhood is perpetuated for boys who are never pressured by adults to contribute their labour to domestic life. Hamilton says these differences are expressions of adult expectations of Anbara children:

Adult expectations of younger girls are somewhat different. Not only their older women relatives, but men too, make demands on their time and energy. Today they are expected to wash clothes at the tap, hang them to dry, change, dress and wash infant siblings, and carry babies (Hamilton 1981(a):105).

Differences in the expectation of boys' and girls' contribution to domestic life is true for socialisation in Kuranda too. However, there are some major differences from the situation Hamilton observed. To begin with, in Kuranda there is no prolonged boyhood marked by the dramatic process of man-making and the responsibilities of male adulthood, as there is for Anbara youth. Males in Kuranda experience no sudden dislocation or interruption to the pattern of their daily life and routine in their transition from boyhood to manhood. For them the status change fails to make any apparent distinction between the irresponsibility of childhood and the responsibilities of adult life. On the other hand, a girl's transition to adult status is characterised by additional social and personal responsibilities within the household.

The social construction of sexual experience is also an area of gender difference. For both sexes, emotional and sexual partnerships involve the individual in a complex web of conflicting and ambiguous emotions. Alf, for instance, had a successful career studying art at the Cairns T.A.F.E. He spent little time joining in with male recreations of his Aboriginal peers drinking, smoking and moving between households. Alf was always smartly dressed. He had a reputation as a strong character and was undertaking study to qualify as an Aboriginal Justice of the Peace on Palm Island. Although he had family on Palm,

he now lived with his grandmother who had raised him and whom he called mother.

After graduating from T.A.F.E. his future direction was unclear, despite his obvious talent in art and his studies for work as a J.P. Alf chose another course with parallels in the aspirations of his male Aboriginal peers. He left Agnes' household and set up his own household in an abandoned ex-mission house in one of the Kuranda village communities. He decorated the house with items he valued, such as a reproduction 18th century clock. Agnes' visits to him were taken up with "working" for Alf by sweeping, tidying and cleaning up the house. Months passed and no plans were made for working as a J.P. on Palm Island. The next time we met, about 12 months later, Alf was planning to marry a non-Aboriginal girl from Western Australia. Alf was 21 years old.²

"Getting in with a woman" as Alf (and Lou) did, are important turning points in the male life cycle. For Alf, the decision represented another step in his choice of an Aboriginal life path over the options his education and future career may have offered for a non-Aboriginal lifestyle. In the light of cultural expectations of Aboriginal manhood, Alf made the appropriate and only choice open to him. A wife symbolizes a man's status as an adult and within the relationship he acquires the exclusive use of her social and sexual labour.

Wives are expected to look after husbands as they did their sons; and adult sons, like Lou and Alf, know they can rely on a mother's help even when adults with wives of their own. Amongst themselves older women often spoke of men being "boss" for them. This is the clue to the inequality rather than reciprocity of the relationship.³ In fact

-
2. This marriage never eventuated, as the woman returned to Western Australia. However, on a visit 2 years later (1989) to Kuranda, Alf was said to be in Brisbane and getting married in another month to an Aboriginal woman.
 3. Hamilton perceived that Anbarra girls learn compliance with male wishes as part of gender role: "When a man makes an unreasonable request a woman's usual response is compliance, and children of both sexes are constantly exposed to this pattern.." What children of both sexes learn is the inequality of gender position (Hamilton 1981(b):107).

nurturance and dependence is a more complex interaction than the simple exchange of men's rights in a woman's resources for women's expectation that men protect them from danger.⁴

Emotional dimensions of intimacy

The boss-dependent relationship is one variation in the social expression of autonomy and dependence. While other variations exist, all are underwritten by a common understanding of nurturance as a central principle of Aboriginal sociality. This centrality is particularly true of the metaphors and practice of gender relations in Kuranda and begins with the emotional repertoire of nurturing relationships learned in childhood and discussed below as *crueiling*. The emotional expressions of nurturance in intimate adult relations are often violent and show the same ambiguities surrounding acts of love and care evident in relations between children and adults. Thus the public expression of love for a spouse or partner is often signified by an outburst of sexual jealousy and interpersonal violence; usually by a male lover against a female partner (although the reverse is also found). It is said that such violence demonstrates the partner's "care" for the victim. Undoubtedly it also demonstrates the importance of interpersonal claims over another's body, sexuality and affections.

A similar sense of caring for another person is used by Kuranda people to explain why one member of a family will physically abuse another family member; especially in cross-generational situations. People who behave in an extraordinary way may be beaten up by those with a deep concern for them, in the hope that reformation is possible by literally "beating some sense" into an individual. Violence in such circumstances is generally understood as a means to curbing aberrant behaviour and exerting social control.

4. The notion that men will, and do, protect women is in itself ambiguous. Fighting in households is often caused by men drinking and fighting other residents. On the other hand, sometimes a whole household wanted protection from the possible invasion of the home by white men following Aboriginal women home.

Nurturance in intimate contexts not only takes a number of forms, but includes violence as a forceful expression of concern for the individual and for the community.

"Cruelling"

Violence and loving are complementary, although opposing emotions learned in childhood. "Loving" as an emotional style is often expressed in physical violence and pain. Small children and babies are very much the centre of adult interest. They are showered with affection; kissed on the mouth and given treats or "love food", such as lollies and other sweet foods, as an expression of affection. A small child is indulged and petted and encouraged to demand what they want, but loving is also expressed through the infliction of pain.

The physical expression of emotional love between an adult and child is colloquially termed "cruelling". Children between birth and about five years are subject to this violence expression of affection. Babies in particular, are popular targets for cruelling. Ostensibly a loving gesture, cruelling causes pain to the recipient; indeed, it is meant to do so. A baby who is cruelled has their face pinched and squeezed; or if asleep the baby is repeatedly slapped lightly on the face until it is awake. Babies are also kissed hard on the mouth. The ambivalence in "cruelling" as a style of physical loving is repeated in teasing. Teasing is another form of "cruelling" experienced by older children. It similarly causes personal distress, amid public laughter at another's expense. Teasing is also an ambiguous emotion in the same way as "cruelling" excites both joy and pain. Martha was "cruelling" Dorothy, her 12 months old niece. She pinched her cheeks hard and grabbed the "toy" (a set of keys) Dorothy was playing with, calling to her as she did so, "mine! mine!" Dorothy soon began to cry. Everyone laughed. In a similar example of teasing Dorothy was "cruelled" by her mother. Ellen left Dorothy with her own mother, while she stayed in town for a few days. Agnes took Dorothy with her in order to encourage Ellen to come home. When Ellen came to the window of the car where Dorothy was sitting she repeatedly asked her daughter, "where's Mumma? where's Mumma?" and then ducked behind the rear of the car out of Dorothy's vision. Each time Ellen disappeared from sight, Dorothy broke into wails. The adult onlookers merely laughed.

Teasing sometimes serves as a didactic technique for socialising children. The pattern is for adults to mock small children in the way Martha grabbed the keys from Dorothy and impressed upon her the difference between "yours" and "mine". If a child is playing with food or drink, it may be snatched from him by an adult who then ostentatiously proclaims it "mine" and pretends to eat or drink the food. The adult repeatedly announces to the child that the object is "mine!" in order to make the point that if you have food, eat it or someone else will take it from you. In another example of the same point the child was dilly-dallying over his food. His Aunt chided him, "Eat up quick! What, you think you're a white man?" [i.e. with the time and luxury to eat slowly]. As a strategy for demarcating property ownership, this kind of teasing also encourages children to stand up for themselves and assert their individual rights. "Cruelling" in these contexts is a game about love and strategies for survival in households with many people and few resources.

Eventually children learn to respond in kind to both forms of "cruelling". Learning to respond appropriately promotes individual assertiveness. However I do not wish to make a functionalist argument by implying that adults consciously "cruel" and tease children to elicit a particular social response. Yet, as they get older, children react with a developing repertoire of gestures and language which emphasize that in family life they are "boss for themselves". Thus it is not uncommon to see a child poking a clenched fist in the face of a persecutor; or verbally defending themselves by telling an adult adversary to "fuck off".

"Cruelling" produces physical as well as emotional pain. Emotional ambivalence is repeated in patterns of adult loving where the intensity of sentimental passion is often juxtaposed with displays of deliberate cruelty. Hence adults sometimes pinch the arm of another adult they feel some affection for or wish to engage with sexually. The softer side of love is expressed symbolically through the giving of designated items such as "love foods" or gifts of money. But in general the most common expressions of love in adult relationships involves violence and jealousy.

Sexual jealousy

Jealousy is an extreme emotion in a relationship of claim. It can and does erupt into physical violence, although it is also played out symbolically. A young couple were discussing the contents of "People" magazine. Jeff said he enjoyed the challenge of the crosswords. However, "People" is best known for the photographs of buxom semi-nude women rather than for its crosswords. Jeff liked the girlie photographs and he had pinned some of them to the bedroom wall. Elsie, his de facto wife, immediately tore them up. Jeff responded in kind when, in turn, Elsie pasted photos of sexy young men on their wardrobe doors.

The jealousy of men is notorious in gender relations. I mentioned above the parallels between an exclusive relationship with a boss, and men and women locating a sexual partner. Both sexes refer to each other in sexual contexts as *minya* (the Tjapukai word for flesh, or meat foods which are hunted). People also talk about "looking around for a fresh one" with reference to a new partner or sexual affair. A woman noticed a tall, good looking man walk past and commented, "look! hey, lot of *minya*".

Male jealousy is a common feature of gender relations and is usually expressed in physical violence. Martha's ex-de facto was now living in a new relationship. Nevertheless, he made a point of visiting Martha's sister's house whenever Martha was present to taunt and provoke her. Martha managed to resist the provocation and found herself other boyfriends, including a European soldier from Sydney who gave her money and didn't hit her and promised to write to her. In another situation a woman was stabbed in the knee by her de facto spouse during a jealous rage.

Yet women will also fight other women over men if there are grounds for jealousy. A single woman, also known to be a heavy drinker, was bashed by a group of women from the same village after their husbands and partners were drinking all night in her house. A woman explained why the woman was thrashed, "you know, blokes get drunk and look about for other women." Neither sex is prepared to allow the other out of their sight because "they might get away". A woman explained how her sister jealously guarded her boyfriend when

he visited the family; "Martha gets jealous and says she'll split his lip on this side, like she did on the other side, if he talks to other women. But Roberta [the sister] was only talking friendly." Interestingly, Martha would direct her violence at her partner, not her sister. In this sense violence represents the ongoing dialogue between a couple.

In an extreme case of sexual jealousy the husband suspected his wife of 30 years of sexual infidelity every time she wore "good" clothes such as when she attended church. At these times the husband sulked and refused to talk to her since he believed she was planning to meet other men. She tried to calm him by offering to wear clothes of his choice. But irrespective of her offers the woman could never placate him. There were always words (such as talking to a male neighbour), actions (like playing the guitar in public), or situations which aroused and provoked his jealousy.

Sexual possessiveness often appears to be an overwhelming desire to possess a spouse, even to literally lock them into a claustrophobic relationship. Such desires are more often a feature of men's relationships with women than the reverse. During the early years of Betty's marriage her husband locked her in their house all day while he was at work. She was not released until her husband returned in the evening. Her husband's family criticised and censored her. Eventually, she left him and managed to take some of the children with her.

Possessing people may have little to do with sexual fidelity and more to do with control of resources or rights to claim resources. In a relationship between two alcoholic people, the woman of the couple boasted to other women of her relationship with her man. The woman, aged beyond her years through a combination of drink, poor health and violence, was pestered for money by a relative of her de facto husband. The older woman resisted all claims for money and put an end to the conversation with the comment, "I got your uncle not you!" The message was clear; as the man's spouse she alone had first claim to his money, even in the face of claims from relatives. Both the man and his de facto were publicly known to be in receipt of substantial pensions (as aged pensioners) and they were thus under constant pressure to share their resources amongst a host of relatives. Jealousy, as a claim over

another person, is encouraged in childhood and exhibited in the kind of teasing accompanying "cruelling". Whenever Dorothy sat on the lap of her aunty, the woman's 8 year old son was extremely jealous and tried to push her off. The small child defended her position by letting out what the adults called her "whistle scream." The scenario of the two children competing to sit on the woman's lap amused the adult audience so much that the adults sometimes deliberately set up such situations to rile the small boy.

In moments of interpersonal violence it is claims and rights over another's resources, time and so on which are at issue. When the women thrashed their neighbour several matters came to a head. This was not the first time the woman had received a thrashing from her female neighbours. But previously the victim's sister, a renowned fighter, had protected her. "Where were you when those cunts were bashing me?" the victim demanded. But help was contingent on the sisters keeping faith with one another. "I wouldn't do that to you," [i.e. sleep with her husband] the single sister assured the other. Without help from her sister, Dell escaped her female neighbours only by seeking protection from a male cousin several houses away. The dispute between Dell and the other women touched a number of themes including the matter of sisterly support. But help from kin depended on Dell's commitment to "performative kinship". Uncontrolled drinking by men and women was a community concern in Dell's village because of its effects on marital relationships. By thrashing her, Dell's peers were trying to curb her attempts to subvert the claims of kinship and marriage. The violence Dell experienced was provoked by personal jealousy, although it reflected public censure of non-conformist behaviour.

Violence as social control

Jealousy and possessiveness are integral to all domestic relationships and engender a level of personal violence considered normative in Aboriginal gender relations. Indeed, the extent of its acceptance caught one woman unawares when she found to her surprise that white women were also bashed by their spouses; "I thought it was only us got that."

Violence in "loving up" goes hand-in-hand with jealousy and desire for sole appropriation of the sexual and emotional services of a spouse. The possessive quality of many marital relationships is almost an established tradition. Possessiveness is also associated with knowledge of another individual's access to resources. Betty's decision to leave her possessive husband and gain her freedom was at the expense of her status as a married woman. Dell's dependence on her sister for protection and her liminal social status amongst the women in her village points out the rugged path of single women who adopt controversial lifestyles.

Women openly joke about not letting men out of their sight, or too far away, but this is certainly a lighter touch to the possessive restrictions men use to encumber women.

Single women and single men who lack the protective status of marriage are forced to operate within an ambiguous social position. People who do not follow conventional social practices assign themselves, however unwittingly, to a liminal social status. Consequently, in moments of social crises these individuals are looked upon with suspicion.⁵ The importance of possessing and negotiating a partnership within normative sociality is thus underscored by the treatment marginal individuals, such as Dell, receive from the community. Success in social life depends to some extent on establishing some form of a nurturance relationship whether this is in the form of a "boss" relationship or in the more conventional domestic relationships.⁶

Social control is often exerted through interpersonal violence. Again, Dell's case is instructive. The wives of the men Dell drank with made their feelings perfectly plain to her. In private, the women in

-
5. This is exactly what happened to Betty when Mabel her boss, died. Betty's social position in the Kuranda community was always liminal and so many people held her responsible for the old woman's death. Spending time alone or travelling alone is also viewed with suspicion.
 6. Small children are used by women as protection against male overtures. After a man pestered me, my Aboriginal patron made a point of leaving a small child in the care with me if she could not stay herself.

Dell's family were equally concerned about her behaviour, especially as it affected her young children and brought their lack of responsible parenting to the notice of welfare agencies. Indeed, Dell's children were likely to be taken into institutional care.⁷ Agnes instructed one of her sons, (Dell's brother) "to give Dell a belting, to make her see sense".

Violence to enforce social conformity is common. It is learned as a child. A group of children ranging in ages between 2 years and 6 years old were playing aggressively with one another. There was a lot of biting and several of the children were hitting one another. Some of them tried to gain the adults' attention by wailing loudly when they were hit. The adult response was to call on the older children to punish younger children who were playing up or tormenting another; "hit her, Mopsy!" The pattern of childhood is repeated in adult life. An older woman complained to her male relatives that a middle aged woman (also a woman of marginal or liminal status) was "giving her cheek". A grandson threatened to "belt her for it."

An old woman with strict views on social propriety was determined to stop the young men in her household from bringing young women home for the night. These boys, had lived in the old lady's home in Kuranda for close on 10 years, but in such moments she referred to them as "Palm Island boys", marking them as "others," who are not only different from herself, but outside the immediate community. She told the men she would have no "dirty games" in her house; they could go down to the local "moll shop where they'd be free and welcome". She then threatened to have them beaten up by "men from Kuranda". On another occasion, she called on the men from a neighbouring village to belt up the young men in her house because they brought alcohol into her house.

7. Vera had been hitting and punching her 10 year old son. She was said to have bruised his rib. Agnes instructed one of her sons to stay the weekend with her and hit her if she hits the kids. Agnes felt that Alf, the male authority figure in her household and in the immediate family, should put Susie "through the courts for child abuse". Needless to say, the friction between Vera and her children was averted by a solution common to many, similar domestic tensions-moving residence. The children were dispersed amongst their aunts and grandmothers for a week or two.

A marital dispute centred on a woman's drinking habits and her neglect of the household duties and child-care. Her husband, according to the woman's mother-in-law, was forced to hit her to make her see "sense." This was considered a conventional solution where an individual abnegated their social obligations and personal responsibilities. However, violence is no guarantee of social conformity or control. A man who tried to remonstrate with his wife by kicking her found that violence served no effective purpose: "Stan can't do nothing; tried to kick her and she fell over. But can't do anything."

Violence for the sake of a display of temper is not openly condoned, whether the disputants are spouses or kin. Freddie, at 16 years old, was brawling with his mother in the main street of Kuranda. Several people, including non-Aboriginal Kuranda residents were watching from the safety of shop verandahs. Agnes, Freddie's grandmother, attempted to intervene by reminding him: "Freddie! You can't hit her! She's your mother!"

Freddie might have been acting "like a man" in belting a woman, but as the woman was also his mother, his behaviour warranted interference and remonstrance from others. Admittedly Freddie's mother was lapsing in her care of the other children, but violence against a mother by a son is not generally condoned as a method of remonstrance. However, it is considered a reasonable, although extreme response, for a husband to use violence to curb outrageous behaviour from a wife and mother.

Domestic violence whether as an expression of "loving up", or as a means of encouraging social conformity, is also the exercise of power over others.

Violence in "loving up"

Just as "cruelling" is an expression of ambivalent love for young babies and toddlers, so violence is sometimes said to be the consequence of passion. Thus adult care of small children is a fraught emotional response of joy and anguish. "Loving up" as bodily praxis is also charged with emotional ambiguity whether in the context of "cruelling" babies and children or in the domestic violence used to promote social

conformity amongst wayward adults, or even in the difficult intimacy between spouses.

Ellen and her de facto have three young children. Neither Ellen, Ian nor their children live together. The members of this family live in kin-related households in different towns in the district. The marital life Ellen and Ian share is restricted by their lack of a home. But however attenuated their marital circumstances, Ellen is marked with physical signs of the relationship whether as scars, wounds, black eyes or pregnancy. By physically marking the body of a woman, or indeed of a man, a public sign of possession is made. Thus the physical body becomes a map tracing the possessive history of a relationship.⁸ Martha, for example, had tattooed the letter "H" for Henry on the inside of her arm as a public acknowledgement of her relationship with him. But marking oneself by choice is not the same as physically marking someone else as a result of domestic violence; although there is a view that violence by a man against a woman is a sign of his passion. In practice, physical markings which are visible on the body are read by the Aboriginal public in the same way, irrespective of the distinction made above.

Nancy was staying with her mother in Valley Heights. Her de facto husband was living in another community some distance away. He sent men in a car to collect Nancy and bring her home. When she returned to her mother a week or so later she had a bad burn mark on her upper arm made by her husband.

When Freddie began his first romance the relationship was violent. He was living with his girlfriend and it was generally known that he "flogs her about too".

On the other hand, some Aboriginal women are aware that violence need not be an aspect of "loving up". The awareness is often expressed in their comments about the differences between Aboriginal men and non-Aboriginal men as partners. Although it is equally true to

8. Martha stabbed her ex-lover and left a mark of the intense emotions generated in their relationship. She also wore his name tattooed on her arm which showed she belonged to him.

say that many women imagine that domestic violence is relatively unknown in non-Aboriginal relationships. It is a surprise to find, as mentioned above, that men beat women in European households too.

Violence in intimate relationships follows predictable patterns. Martha and her de facto had lived together in a stormy relationship for several years. The final break in the relationship came after Martha stabbed Henry and he pressed assault charges. Martha was placed on a good behaviour bond by the court. Encouraged by her family, she kept to herself and away from Henry's side of town. Of course, she knew Henry's new "wife" and warned Ella that she'd end up with the same treatment he had dished out to her, Martha. Ella did, indeed, suffer several bashings from Henry just as Martha predicted.

As a single woman Martha adopted a new lifestyle. Although she had a permanent place in a household in Cairns she took to spending up to a week each month living elsewhere. During that period she had a good time drinking, looking for boyfriends and dancing. As her kinswomen openly, and jokingly acknowledge, Martha preferred non-Aboriginal men as companions on these excursions. However, her interaction with non-Aboriginal men follows a familiar patterns of sexual intimacy. If, for example, Martha is jealous of her boyfriend's attentiveness to other women she will "split his lip". Moreover, Martha's choice of a sexual partner from outside the Aboriginal community is unusual and there is a general ambivalence about whether it is a good thing or not.⁹ When an Aboriginal Liaison officer with the State government was known to have a non-Aboriginal partner this was used as an additional reason to dislike her.¹⁰

9. Romantic and sexual companionship with partners outside the Aboriginal community can be a source of jealousy and friction. An Aboriginal woman who also had a preference for non-Aboriginal men and eventually married one had to learn to rebuff taunts from her peers.

"Are you a white woman now?"

"Yes. I'm not a black woman any more."

10. Aboriginal women interpreted the choice as a sign of snobbery: "Does she think she's better than us?"

In sexual terms, Aboriginal men equate "loving up" with maternity and paternity. Both men and women tend to see pregnancy as evidence of a "good" relationship. Of course not all Aboriginal women hold this view of "loving up". A woman who had three babies between her 20th and 24th birthdays decided on surgery as a method of contraception; "I didn't want to be a baby-making machine for any bloke". Prior to the surgery she had never taken any contraceptive devices to control fertility; a pattern of non-intervention which is common to the sexual experience of both men and women.

Bob and his wife were considered to be a "lovey" couple. In part this impression rested on the fact that they were so often in each other's company when a more usual behaviour pattern is for segregated gender relations, even amongst marital couples. Bob and Stella had thirteen children. Bob dismissed the need for contraceptives since Stella, according to her husband, "doesn't mind" (i.e. the pregnancies).

Yet not every Aboriginal woman's experience of pregnancy indicated a loving relationship. Betty discriminated between bearing children to her legal husband and the first child she had to her teenage sweetheart. Of her husband she said, "I had children by him, but I wasn't with him". An elderly couple raising the three youngest children of their deceased daughter explained how the son-in-law had "killed" their daughter. After nine difficult pregnancies, the woman had been advised by her doctor to have no more children. He counselled a hysterectomy. But the husband refused to allow this saying, "she is human; she'll just have to go on."

Accepting the story in good faith, two points stand out: first, men and women perceive the social meaning and experience of pregnancy differently; and secondly, while the latter example is an extreme case, it seems that Aboriginal men associate paternity with male self-esteem. On the other hand, there is sufficient consensus between men and women to say that there is an ethos of "loving up" as the genre for expressing romantic sentiment. Moreover, "loving up" has conventional expressions like pregnancy, an imperative on sexual faithfulness, often segregated companionship, and separate domains in family life. In practice, the experience of these conventions have different consequences for men and women and later in the chapter, I discuss

how Aboriginal women are developing new patterns of social relations out of the conventional sexual and romantic practises.

Nurturance in domestic relations

Above I described some of the emotional dimensions of intimacy between adults and children, and between men and women. A common thread in these relationships is the see-saw between autonomy and dependence. It appears that there is an implicit cultural model underlying all the above relationships. This is a model of nurturance which although experienced differently for men and women, is based on an idea of claim and obligation to others which stems from the primary cross-sex relationship - that between mother and son. Chodorow (1974:42-66) believes the mother/son relationship to be a universal mode for self-other sexual and social differentiation irrespective of the cultural setting. Indeed the mother/child bond is a primary relationship for elaboration of other social relationships. Studies of several Aboriginal societies suggest that cultural views of nurturance and gender role elaborate the primary pattern of social interaction established between the nurturing parent (mother) and the dependent child. This is certainly true in Kuranda. Hamilton (1981(a)) confirms that it is a common elsewhere in Aboriginal society. Indeed, Bell (1987) suggests that Aboriginal women's ritual persists in contemporary contexts despite social change, precisely because of the emphasis on corporate social responsibility through nurturance and solicitude for others. Other writers discussed in Chapter 1 mention the role of sustenance and nurturance as a metaphor for expression of ritual authority and power in Aboriginal societies in remote areas.

However, the persistence of nurturance metaphors in styles of social interaction in Kuranda owes little to continuity with traditional ritual activity. Yet the nurturance paradigm for autonomy and dependence is dominant and may be attributable to the fact that in contemporary Aboriginal societies like Kuranda sociality is now centred on domestic relations. This is partly the outcome of chronic unemployment and household reliance on welfare payments whereby the notion of a separation between a public and private sphere of action in sociality no longer exists in practice. Lack of opportunity for wage labour outside the household has meant the uneasy incorporation of men into Aboriginal women's domain of domestic work and

childrearing. Formal distinctions between men and women's worlds have largely disappeared confining Aboriginal men and women alike to family contexts and household settings as the principal forum of social interaction.

Hamilton (1981b) argued that in the Western Desert Aboriginal community where she worked men and women's interaction in formerly segregated domains of gender action produced "ideological dominance" expressed as integration and consensus (see Hamilton 1981b). But the intrusion of men into women's domestic life in Kuranda has produced neither straightforward social integration nor ideological hegemony by one gender over another. There is, nevertheless, a shared view of sociality. Social relations are seen as determined by ideas of nurturance and gender specific praxis.¹¹ The mother-child bond is reproduced in the speech forms for figuring social relations. In answer to a question about another person's identity, the usual expression for identification of the relationship is "Robert Collins **by** Betty" (i.e. the son or daughter **by the mother**).

Kuranda is a community where families are organized around women and women's activities, and this makes public discussion of mothering skills and practice common in conversation between women. Ideally, children are expected to respect their mother; while mothers must behave responsibly and with circumspection. Some older women felt many Kuranda women failed as mothers; they were "real low". The mothers they criticised were improvident and drank all their money. As one woman expressed the criticism, "they're on drinking line" and should keep their children on "food line". Though Mabel considered Betty neglected her maternal duties to her two single adult sons, Betty certainly tried to provide for their needs. She asked if I had seen any secondhand televisions in Cairns which could run from a battery. At that stage the house had no electricity connected. Betty believed a television might keep the "boys" at home, "stopping one place," instead of always going out with their friends drinking or roaming about.

11. As for example in the incongruity between men and women's experience of the gender system/order, i.e. in the symbolic and experiential gulf between pregnancy as biological process and pregnancy as symbolic fecundity connoting maleness, sexuality, just discussed.

Diffidence about one's mother is cause for comment. Two women responded to criticism about a mother's behaviour in terms of the ideal;

... (you) mustn't talk cruel; you mustn't say that; your mother loves you, ... she can't help it; we always love our mother.¹²

A mother's care for her children is usually construed in physical terms alone. Hence people tended to view institutional care (whether children's homes or prison) as places where individuals benefit because of access to food and shelter, and in the case of prison because of "work in the sunshine".

Ambivalence in nurturance relations

Some mothers do not prepare their children for competent negotiation of sociality in the wider community. Sometimes this is because a woman is on "drinking line, instead of food line" and not likely to give her children due care and attention. But for some women the nature of motherhood as a nurturing role itself is problematic (see also Cowlshaw 1978). Parents struggle most with their children over sexual matters and in directing young adults to purposeful activities which keep them away from hotels. All forms of the nurturance relationship give rise to problems about autonomy and dependence, and this is especially true in liminal relationships where children and adults symbolically swap roles.

Betty and her daughter, Nancy, about 27 years old, were caught in the dilemma of how to effectively nurture a teenage girl. Betty's namesake, her fourteen year old grand-daughter, had been put into a home to "keep her safe from man". Her grandmother considered this wisdom. It was "best to get pregnant at 18 or 19 years, close to 20 years, when she can please herself."

Agnes had a similar concern for her 15 year old grand-daughter. Linda had an established relationship with a young man and despite a miscarriage she was pregnant again. She was then 16 years old. Agnes

12. I cited above the case of a boy reprovved for striking his mother. Normative ideals of behaviour abhor violence by a son against his mother. In exceptional circumstances a brother may hit his sister, e.g. Dell was hit by her brother in order to make her act properly as a mother.

was at a loss to stop her "rolling with Tony" and exclaimed that you "can't tell young people anything." One of Agnes' daughters reminded her that as teenagers Agnes' efforts at preventing pregnancies was limited to chasing her daughters and their lovers from their trysting places on the beach at Palm Island.

Despite a mother's concern for the social well-being of her daughters and sons there is an inherent assumption in parenting, and indeed in social life generally, that individuals ultimately remain "boss for themselves". Good intentions coupled with limited interference in another's life results in Kuranda in much the same frustrations with young people that Tonkinson (1982) noted in the post-mission community of Jigalong in the Western Desert. Helen felt dismay over her daughter's lack of a future and that of other young people in Kuranda. She reckoned they needed a "push on", but concluded that what inhibited their success was grog and unsettled ways (such as constant mobility). Helen's son had managed to "push on" and was the office manager in the local Aboriginal organisation. Bruce received a regular wage, owned a car and was paying off a mortgage on a house in Cairns. Helen clearly felt she was entitled to some of the benefits of her son's "pushing on" and sought loans of money from him. She was always successful. Bruce tried to deflect her requests by emphasizing his independence from her; "Look Mum, I've told you, don't come in here asking for money!" Helen made her request on the basis of her rights as a mother, while Bruce tried hard to deny them. Meanwhile, Helen's husband was waiting hopefully outside the office during these delicate negotiations. Mabel was equally successful with Bruce over requests for money. Her grandson made her a loan of \$20.00 when she told him she was desperate during "slack week". The bond between mothers and children is fraught with ambiguity and contradiction as Helen's attempt to invoke her claims over Bruce indicate.

Betty arrived at a public festival a little worse for drink. Her daughter Nancy was annoyed and told her mother straight out, "I don't like you coming here Mum when you're drinking!" Betty mumbled to Nancy to "fuck off," whereupon Agnes warned Betty to be careful as Nancy was stronger than her and a better fighter. In this case there was a reversal in the adult-child relationship with the adult as a powerless

individual while their child wielded an authority supported by physical force.¹³

A similar situation of a shift in the balance of power between parent and child occurred in the relationship between Maud and her mother. Maud was reared by her mother's sister and this, along with other points of contention in a bitter family dispute, was a constant source of irritation and conflict between mother and daughter. Maud railed against her natural mother, Irene, for abandoning her as a child. Irene hoped for better relations and implored her daughter, "don't growl me all the time! You growl too much! I'm not a dingo!" Irene was in a sorry state. She was a heavy drinker and her marriage was unhappy. Irene wanted sympathy and support from her daughter. But Maud refused to help her. Many of these tensions came to a head on the day of Maud's birthday party.

While Maud was in town buying food for the party, Irene was drinking and had come over to Maud's house shortly after Maud's return. Maud was already tired and irritable from the shopping and party preparations and she was in no mood to humour her mother. Irene was whispering to various people in the lounge about personal resentments she had and about a particularly bitter family disagreement. Maud was incensed by her mother's behaviour. "My family always has to spoil it! I knew this would happen!" She ordered her mother from the house. The onlookers were hushed. They watched in silence as Maud not only ordered Irene from the house but started to throw stones after the retreating figure.

Nurturance tends to flow in one direction only as in the relations of adult to child or from boss to dependent. In the examples above neither Nancy nor Maud felt any filial loyalty toward their mothers. Rather they were annoyed and embarrassed with mothers who humbugged them. Bruce was equally irritated by his mother and rejected her insinuations for favouritism and loans of money by

13. Perhaps an argument could be made for the view that adults are always powerless before the demands of children in Aboriginal communities; that is the source of many present difficulties, e.g. at Jigalong, (see Tonkinson 1982) and to lesser extent, in Kuranda.

pointing out that not only did he reject her claim, but he was not prepared to give her special treatment. In his view his mother had no right to claim favoured treatment by virtue of their kin relationship. Many adult children refuse to nurture or support their parents. These children wish to be "boss for themselves" and see parental claims and demands as a bond of dependence likely to inhibit their autonomy. However, a desire to dispense with the obligations of filial dependence is not confined to children alone. Mothers are unhappy about the constant demands of their children but they are generally unable to circumvent requests. Women may even be complicit with their children in perpetuating these bonds. Nevertheless, the community ideal is for mothers rather than fathers to nurture their children and thus it is women, not men, who are caught in these relationships of claim.

Two grandmothers were discussing the problems of negotiating the constant demands of their adult children. Both women agreed they didn't want the children to "follow" them or live with them. But it seemed impossible to maintain any sense of social "invisibility." As one woman explained, although she never gives out her address "they [the visitors] always "smell her". Action, independent from the obligations of nurturance is clearly an ongoing problem throughout a woman's life.

Agnes was having trouble with the boys in her house fighting. The Cairns police had visited and warned her that if any more trouble occurred they'd evict her. Agnes euphemistically described these problems as the boys making "too much noise" and said "I want to go somewhere else. These boys make trouble." She felt she had little actual control over them. While she claimed that she "doesn't do things for them" the boys always want to stay in her house and "follow" her. "Following" is always an emotive term associated with claims to someone and their resources.

Nurturance in social life

Nurturance is both a metaphor for social and ritual relations in anthropological literature on Aboriginal societies. Myers (1986) and Bell (1983) argue that nurturance is a central "think" concept in social relations in two different desert communities. Nurturance is associated with conception, pregnancy and birth as transformation (by making boys into men in men's ritual); the mediation of the psycho-social world

(in women's ritual); and incorporation into the sociality of kinship (through socialization). Nurturance is a framework for expressing relationships of different order. Nurturance may be the corollary of authority, or a pre-condition of personal autonomy. It is also allied to gender. Although in Kuranda nurturance is closely associated with women, in some desert communities it is a behavioural style of both men and women. In Kuranda nurturance is a convention for expressing male-female exchanges.

Some writers suggest Aboriginal people negotiate obligations and claims amongst themselves and with non-Aborigines through the medium of nurturance (see Myers 1982; Hamilton 1972). Peterson (1985:90) comments on nurturance in strategies for cross-cultural interaction arguing that Aboriginal people on Northern Territory cattle stations attempted to incorporate non-Aborigines into their systems of social reciprocity through relationships structured around nurturance behaviour. He summarizes two Aboriginal views of how nurturance operates in relationships with non-Aborigines:

As Hamilton (1972:42-43) has argued, they converted to a "ritual authority" model in which they supplied labour as a group in return for the whites "looking after" them, as they saw it. Subordination and dependency, as Myers has pointed out (1982:89-94) are disguised as nurturance, with the consequence that generosity becomes the complement of authority (Peterson 1985:90).

Amongst Aboriginal people in Kuranda nurturance empowers those who are nurtured or who are structurally dependent in the relationship. Such dependence brings individual autonomy, and contrasts with the position of a boss or someone called upon to nurture others. This is certainly true of social relations within the Aboriginal family and community. However, nurturance as a means to power and autonomy through dependence is a culturally constructed behavioural style and as a basis of interaction with the wider Australian society it has few advantages for Aboriginal people. In institutions such as missions and reserves, autonomy and dependence were conditions of existence vested in the administration. Aboriginal cultural styles were not freely practiced. Tonkinson (1982:115-131) outlines the problems faced by Jigalong people after the administrative separation of power between the Aboriginal camp and the mission settlement during the

closure of the mission. Jigalong community had to juggle the ideological and cultural problems of community control in contexts where autonomy and nurturance had once been separate. A fundamental problem was control of children. Without the mission's structure for nurturance relations and in the absence of mission authority, control of children became a social problem for the whole community.

Today, the absence of the non-Aboriginal enforcer role and a prevailing Aboriginal reluctance to interfere with children's autonomy and their development of self-control prevent the Aborigines from acting to fill the gap left by the missionaries. Adults now feel the need to bring their children under control in the settlement environment (Tonkinson 1982:125).

The post-mission lifestyle at Jigalong promotes indigenous cultural ideals of nurturance in the socialization of children:

... parents remain reluctant to take on the mantle of disciplinarian. Adults rarely chastise the children of others either, since this invariably provokes a strong negative response from the parents concerned and often leads to physical violence among the adults ... The traditional stress placed on self-reliance and independence among children has carried over (Tonkinson 1982:123).

Tonkinson argues that in the absence of the mission and their means of social control, Jigalong people have returned to a cultural notion of personal autonomy as paramount in social relations. The same pattern seems true of sociality in Kuranda, despite years of missionisation.

Nurturance is a notion of reciprocity for promotion of resource management within the Kuranda communities, as well as a principle for interaction with the wider society. In the latter context, nurturance is part of relations with a boss. Aboriginal workers in the pastoral industry in the Northern Territory constructed a history of boss relationships. In Kuranda, Aboriginal people have constructed relationships with local businesses on the same principle. The nurturance quality of boss relationships characterise Aboriginal interaction with Europeans in businesses like the taxi service, supermarket, butcher, the hotels and so forth.

"Soft" talk: claim talk

Making a claim for a share of another's resources or services involves a speech style emphasising close personal associations. Indeed, the style is reminiscent of endearments between a mother and child; perhaps even talk between lovers. "Soft" talk is usually a prelude to asserting a relationship of claim. Heather made requests by addressing me in soft talk such as calling me "darling", "lovie" and other terms of endearment. Betty did the same. On the particular occasions when my time or goods were at her service she addressed me as "my darling". Annie, the Kuranda community worker, toured the Co-operative homes to check on conditions with the women tenants. All the women prefaced their complaints with "soft talk" calling Annie, "Bubbie" and "Lovie".¹⁴

Helen complained of living in town in a position close to the local hotels. Her daughter was a heavy drinker and when the pub closed at night she often brought others in her party home. Helen was annoyed about it. Not only did these visitors always managed to disturb her sleep, but she felt she "couldn't say anything, or turn them away because they went to school together" (i.e. they were either relatives or close friends from mission days on Mona Mona). Helen did not like giving up her blankets for the visitors. Nevertheless, she did in deference to the obligation she felt to behave correctly. The obligation Helen felt to accommodate people she "went to school with" is equally compelling for women in families who are constantly inundated with claims from others.

Mary spent all her cash whenever she went shopping. This was her way of forestalling demands from adult children. (Ironically, Mary's daughter felt she bought too many things and often criticised her mother about her spending).

14. "Cruel" talk occurs when ideals of kin behaviour are violated in some way. "Hard" talk or "talking hard way" usually refers to the conversation of non-Aboriginal people who often assume inappropriate speech styles in conversation with an Aboriginal audience; talk by government officials is a clear example of this. Compare also the "soft" term of address to my first encounters with Aboriginal people when I was addressed as "Mrs." a common speech style in mission relations with white women.

Mary declared she "can't hold anything" whether cash or possessions from the family. She was unhappy about the situation and felt harassed by demands for money and goods. On one occasion Mary had accumulated two unspent pensions and was determined to return from shopping with only \$2.00 in her purse. Such a strategy was an attempt to deal with the demands of an improvident grandson. She felt helpless to deny a request from kin or to exert effective control over her own resources. Her powerlessness was evident when another grandson stole some of the money she had put aside for her son. The robbery made her feel "sick in the stomach ... but can't say anything."

When I called to take a couple visiting to another town they spent some time in their bedroom getting ready. Finally, their adult daughter called out to hurry them on. Later, the couple explained the reason for their tardiness; they were trying to hide \$50.00 in a place in the room where their daughter would not find it.

It is not always possible to avoid claims, although it is possible to defer claims by adopting particular strategies. Claims for money or objects, are activated on the basis of personal rights in kin. Agnes wanted to avoid meeting her adult daughter. It was pay week for Agnes and she had her pension money ready to pay rent and "light" (electricity). Ellen knew her mother had money; she also knew Agnes would find it difficult to refuse her. The solution Agnes adopted was to give the money into my care as someone outside the system and thus not vulnerable to claims. Agnes asked me to hold sums of money for her on other occasions in order to circumvent persistent requests for cash from men in the household. Asking other people to "hold" money is a common strategy for protecting one's cash. However, it is always women who hold money for other women. Men did not seem to be entrusted with this responsibility.

Claims on women

Women, because they are cast as nurturers, are subject to claims over their goods and services. As Mabel passed a village house a man who was not a relative called out, "Hey! Mumma!" The man knew that he could legitimately channel a request through her as a woman and that embedded in the protocol of claiming are the implicit rights and obligations entailed in a mother/son relationship.

The pressure to accept claims and comply with them is experienced unequally by Aboriginal men and women in Kuranda. Women are the most vulnerable to demands from others and constant claims for goods and services causes personal distress. Hamilton (1981a) noted that young Anbarra girls are socialized into a life of service. They are expected to meet the demands of others whether the demands come from older women or men. In contrast there is no such expectation for boys. The inequality thus begins in socialisation. Moreover, the cultural ideal of women as nurturers of the domestic world encourages them to provide for others as a social responsibility and in ways men fail to achieve.¹⁵

Mary, an elderly invalid, lived with her adult daughter and her daughter's family of adult children. Aged pensioners receive a higher welfare benefit than do those on Unemployment Benefits. The difference made Mary "fair game" for individuals on lesser benefits who saw her resources as a way of topping up their own income. Mary constantly complained about her inability to "hold anything" when members of her immediate household helped themselves to her goods, food, money, etc. Sometimes they acquired the resources by request and at other times by stealth. Mary responded to pressure for cash loans by spending every cent of her pension while shopping.¹⁶ This was her way of mediating the personal obligation to assist kin, while also looking after her own needs. Sometimes demands for money were obfuscated as requests to borrow cash. Mary knew the true situation however and had little confidence that the borrowed money would ever be returned. Mary's pension soon disappeared with requests for cash loans. Apart from paying her board Mary's pension also helped others such as helping her daughter to cover the electricity bill, and to supplement her grandson's petrol money. When her daughter "borrowed" money it left Mary short for her own shopping needs which included the regular

-
15. Exceptions are worth mentioning: when Peggy's husband died it was publicly acknowledged that he was an excellent provider and a steady worker. But his record of employment and domestic responsibility was considered unusual for Aboriginal men, as another Aboriginal man suggested to his widow.
 16. Pensions in 1985-86 were between \$190-210 per fortnight. Mary paid \$80.00 per fortnight in board, later increased to \$100.00 per fortnight, leaving her with at least \$110.00 to spend on personal items.

purchase of expensive pharmaceutical items; "but can't say anything, don't want to make an argument or upset the family."¹⁷

Elderly women and some marginalised men, are vulnerable to the claims of kin for money. Mary was at a further disadvantage because she did not live in her own home and therefore had no grounds for effectively subverting demands on her from others.

Children learn early about their rights in claiming relationships with their mothers. As adult children they continue to invoke their claim relationship and their access to a mother's resources and labour. Peggy took her first holiday in 30 years of marriage and visited a daughter then living interstate. She left her three grown up children aged between 16-24 years to look after themselves. During her absence, two siblings fought with each other over the use of the family car and demanded money from each other for sundry household expenses. In the end, unable to resolve their differences, one of them moved out. Unaware of the problems at home, Peggy was enjoying herself and commented on how "free she was on her holidays; no responsibilities for family." The illusion of being free from the claims and responsibilities of dependents was shattered when she telephoned her daughters. They were adamant, " Tell Mum to come back tomorrow! There's no food, we're starving here!" These young adults had not only neglected to feed themselves, but they had also left the household pets to fend for themselves. The household was totally dependent on Peggy's skills as household manager. In her absence the adult children coped by moving into other households with relatives who would take responsibility for daily household organization.

When Betty was not at home, her unmarried adult son sought help from a mother figure whom he expected to provide and care for him. Although Mabel was not a kinswoman he considered her as occupying a parallel position with Betty, his mother. But Mabel refused to acknowledge the claim to her resources and labour. In Betty's absence Mabel had considerable household work to do such as collecting firewood for cooking, fetching water, seeing to her dogs and

17. Mary managed to go through 100 panadeine per fortnight to cope with headaches and pain from arthritis.

so forth. She told Betty's son in no uncertain terms that she could not look after him; that was "his mother's job".

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed nurturance as a central cultural idea in Aboriginal social relations in Kuranda. Several ethnographic points are clear. First, the concept of nurturance is deeply embedded in Aboriginal socialization and second, that a characteristic of nurturance in social life is the tension between dependence and autonomy. A caring mother who rarely denies her children in time or goods is actually subject to the child's domination by virtue of its dependence. Third, such nurturance by a woman establishes a pattern that underwrites gender roles in adult domestic relationships. Thus women tend to "work" for men, rather than the reverse. Furthermore, in intimate personal relations ambivalence about the exercise of power and the individual's autonomy contributes to tensions in social relations. Thus the question of showing love and affection to small children is fraught, and displays of affection may be violent because they are compromised relations. Expression of emotional feelings is tangled up with an ambivalence not unlike the sentiment of "loving someone so much you could hug them to death." Adults show few signs of resolving the ambivalence; thus a woman's body is abused to signify her man's ownership or sexual rights in her. Affection as an aspect of nurturance is ambiguous because of the implied power by one individual over another. During socialisation the individual, especially men come to expect access to women's time, labour and resources as part of women's nurturing role in domestic life and in wider social relations. However, socialisation processes also develop and encourage a behavioural style of "being boss for oneself" with an emphasis on personal autonomy and resistance to social constraints. However while the two styles of interaction occur as complimentary opposites, the practice of nurturance and boss behaviour is fraught with ambiguities. Thus women are expected in Kuranda to nurture others and in doing so the conditions of nurturance makes it impossible for them to be "boss for themselves". Moreover, because women as a group are expected to nurture men and children, their structural potential for personal autonomy is restricted. However, being "boss for oneself" necessitates a structural dependence which involves the ability to monopolise the

resources of another and to manage them for one's own purposes, yet without "standing over" another. Macdonald (1988:188) describes views of autonomy amongst the Wiradjuri people of New South Wales, as resisting interference from others and as standing up for oneself. Such interpretations of autonomy resonate with similar expressions of a personal and Aboriginal independence amongst people in Kuranda. Yet herein lies the ambiguity in the Aboriginal concept of autonomy; that while people resist interference from others, to attain independence in social life the individual enters into a relationship of structural dependence.

However, autonomy is exercised through the successful management and negation of claims and demands for goods and services from others, while manipulating the goods and services of another (the boss) under the legitimate entitlement of a dependent. Within Kuranda Aboriginal community people invoke the principle of nurturance to establish relations as a dependent with a boss, and this interaction is commonly seen between men and women, although it is also a relationship practiced amongst women within the community and in their relationships with members of the wider society.

The ambiguities of nurturance relations whether in domestic relations or between a boss and their dependent(s) is manageable within the Aboriginal community because people share a common history of socialization for these behavioural practices and cultural styles. But when Aboriginal people base their interaction with Europeans on the same social notions, such as a boss nurturing a dependent, then misunderstandings flourish.

CHAPTER 8

NURTURANCE RELATIONS WITH THE WIDER SOCIETY

Boss relations

In social relationships the notion of boss is a common interpretation of a bond of claim where one individual (or sometimes a family) dominates others and seeks to appropriate and control their resources. Such bonds entail an asymmetry of power. More than any other form of Aboriginal social interaction in Kuranda, such a relationship parallels the structure of relations between Aborigines and the mission administration on Mona Mona. It is therefore not surprising that Aboriginal people should manage their relations with members of the wider society in this way, but it is interesting that they also conduct social relations in domestic life by the same principle.

However, the practice of this principle within the Aboriginal community and cross-culturally differs. While people openly refer to a particular person within the Aboriginal household and community as their boss, the non-Aboriginal boss is rarely addressed as such either publicly or personally. Evidence of a boss-dependent relationship between an Aboriginal person and a non-Aboriginal is marked by the demeanour of the dependent and such signs are clearly read and understood by the Aboriginal community. Yet the situation and its significance is not so plainly read by the European boss.

In Kuranda European women often act as a boss to an Aboriginal woman. Mavis is the European manager of the local supermarket. She collects Topsy's pension money and manages it for Topsy by providing groceries and contributing to a funeral fund. Because of these activities Mavis was accepted by the community as Topsy's boss. However, it is only in private (within the Aboriginal community) and not in front of Mavis that Topsy and her friends refer to Mavis as boss; "Look Topsy,

your boss is staring [at] you," "There's your boss (or Mrs)!" [referring to Mavis as she passes]. It is highly unlikely that Mavis has any idea that she belongs to Topsy as her boss. From her point of view, Mavis, (and Gladys) see themselves performing necessary social services to individuals "neglected by their family." Thus Mavis provides Topsy with material help as a form of caring support for someone she sees as dependent and helpless. Indeed, the goods and services Mavis provides are available to Topsy specifically because their relationship is an individually contracted arrangement. However, points like these mean the form of the relationship seems to conform with a mutual understanding of the arrangement when in fact, there is little of a common interpretation shared by them.

On the other hand, when Aboriginal women establish boss-dependent relationships amongst themselves both parties fully appreciate their rights and obligations. Mabel, for example was boss for Betty. This gave Mabel the right to determine Betty's mobility, her role as household manager and to control her general behaviour. Boss-dependent relationships are, in fact a conventional form of social relations within the Kuranda community. Moreover, the full implications of what such relationships entail is best seen in domestic life where a boss-dependent relationship is presented as an expression of nurturance and links individuals in an obligatory, but asymmetrical flow of goods and resources.

Betty did a lot of the household cooking for herself, her two sons and Mabel, the household head. The house, at that stage, had no electricity, and all cooking and heating was done on a wood stove. Betty constantly needed firewood to carry out her domestic chores. Unfortunately, the best firewood was no longer obtainable in the vicinity of the house and a vehicle was needed to gather wood from further afield. When Betty telephoned me to ask about using my vehicle for this purpose she couched the request for assistance as if it were a message from Mabel. She did this deliberately, in the full knowledge that a request must be honoured if the right relationship is invoked. In this case, Betty saw me as Mabel's boss and thus the person who must help her dependent. If, on the other hand, she had conveyed the request as her own need for additional wood, I would not have been bound to help because I was not Betty's boss. Nevertheless Betty

sometimes made requests to me about her private wishes.¹ But these requests were the stuff of wishful thinking and could not carry the force of a request or demand presented on behalf of her "boss".

Boss-dependent relationships involve proprietorial claims to control of goods and services. When Mabel saw Agnes riding in my car she was very angry. But she directed her annoyance at Agnes, railing at her and making it clear that Agnes had no right to my services or bounty; "she's not your *"migaloo"* (meaning European; non-Aboriginal person).

On another occasion before I fully understood the responsibility of a boss for their dependent, I decided to give Agnes and some of her household a lift to the villages. I knew they would welcome the opportunity to get away from the house and to see family. Agnes was happy with the arrangement and wanted to visit her mother, Topsy, who at that stage was staying with Mabel.

Mabel, Betty and Topsy live in a house close to the edge of the road and in clear view of all passing traffic. On arrival we called out to the residents. Betty was outside by the open fire. Agnes' mother, was dozing on her bed inside the house and Mabel was sitting on the floor of her room sorting through odds and ends in cupboards and old cardboard boxes. She had recently decorated her room with coloured pictures cut from magazines and pasted on cardboard backing. Most of the pictures were of flowers, landscapes, animals, and scenes from consumer advertisements for household goods. She greeted me with surprise and pleasure and immediately seized the opportunity to start talking about where we might go in the car, "let's go for a ride around!" At that moment, Agnes appeared in the doorway. Mabel's attitude changed dramatically; "I don't want you visiting me" she barked at Agnes. Thereafter, Mabel refused to speak to me and deliberately ignored me. She started vigorously sweeping the house. All attempts to make conversation with her were ignored while she sulked. Meanwhile she was growing more and more angry and finally she vented it on Topsy. Mabel asked Topsy if she wanted to stay with her daughter in

1. Betty's wishes were for nail polish, small cash sums, or jewellery. All of which were attempts to add some sparkle to her life.

Cairns. Topsy said she did, but mindful of Mabel's wrath and her position as the household head asked, "what you gonna say?" Mabel's anger was no longer under control. She blurted out;

You're stupid in the head! They're going to put you in a hospital with doctors! [At this stage, Topsy got quite upset and confused]. You're a stupid old woman! Go on, you can go! I don't want you here! No-one wants you here! You can go! You'll have to miss church and God though ... down there with those heathen!

Later, thinking about the encounter it seemed that Mabel was jealously guarding me as her boss or resource from encroachments by other potential dependents. She did not want her own position as a dependent jeopardized. Nor did she want to share her boss' resources or her right to dispense them. Moreover, I had not kept faith with the terms of the boss relationship. Indeed, I was sharing my (her) resources, such as the car, with other people. In retrospect, I realised that the tongue-lashing directed at Topsy was actually meant for me. To add insult to injury, I was consorting with Aboriginal people Mabel considered "*myall*," that is, uneducated and uncivilized; specifically, people who did not go to church and who were drinkers in her estimation. In Mabel's mind, there was a social hierarchy in the Kuranda community. Naturally she put herself somewhere close to the top of the ladder as a teetotaller, church attenders and house owner, and she placed the likes of Topsy and Agnes' family at the bottom of the social pecking order.

Mabel treated me as her boss from early in our relationship. The basis of our relationship was an exchange of knowledge in return for material goods and services. During our first meeting, Mabel taught me some Tjapukai and Kuku-Yimidji (Cooktown) words. Subsequently, she acted as a tutor matching Tjapukai words to objects. She also took me to old camping places, favourite fishing haunts, old mission sites and so on. One afternoon, Mabel wanted to explain the Tjapukai words for male/female sexual parts. She instructed her female householders to help. However there was some embarrassment on their part about this since talking of sexual matters ran counter to their early socialisation of the appropriate code of conduct between Aboriginal women and European women. Nevertheless, Mabel persisted. She chided one of her

companions, "she's got to know! It's the language! Don't be silly about it Topsy!"

Mabel organized the terms of our boss-dependent relationship with a good deal of careful thought. While knowledge of cultural objects and local Aboriginal places were always forthcoming she attempted to screen me from access to other people in the community and deliberately ignored occasions on which she might have introduced me to other people. In this way she blocked one avenue of access to wider social entree in the community. On the rare occasions she did introduce me to other people she always marked her prior rights in me, "this is **my** best friend."

Boss relationships involve a cultural inversion of the conventional non-Aboriginal meanings of power and the exercise of autonomy. Thus while I was Mabel's "*migaloo*", her boss and best friend, it was her right to decide which "*bama*" (Aborigines) would ride in the car (i.e. have access to the services); not my right as the boss. Boss relationships invert what is the expected pattern in a patronage relationship, namely that a boss has independence and displays his/her power through largesse. Amongst Kuranda people, the boss is controlled by his or her dependent and it is they who determine a boss's time, labour and use of resources. The exercise of power is on the side of the dependent, not the person with the resources. But boss-dependent relationships must be exclusive relationships if they are to work successfully for the dependent as the rumpus with my principal dependent Mabel, over Agnes' visit shows. By making separate arrangements I broke with protocol and failed to acknowledge my dependent's rights in the situation; I was after all, her "*migaloo*". Agnes was complicit in the act of subversion since she knew the full implications of rights a dependent has over a boss. Perhaps she hoped to gain from the situation and also develop a relationship with a "*migaloo*". Mabel's attitude to the boss-dependent relationship showed a definite sense of "catching" a resource in the person of a European over whom the successful individual then had exclusive personal rights in the use of their boss's goods, time, knowledge and so forth. Moreover, the notion of "catching" someone as a boss resonates with the expression men and women use when discussing how they find a sexual partner. A sexual conquest is often referred to as the capture of a "boss".

Although both Agnes and I had upset Mabel because we behaved on that occasion outside the normal pattern of the boss-dependent relationship, other people showed particular care about following correct etiquette. Topsy and I were driving in Cairns when we saw one of her daughters and her family walking home. We stopped and invited them to ride with us in the car. However, they were reluctant to do so and gave the impression that they recognized that as I was Topsy's boss they should not intrude.

Other examples of the nature of the bond between a boss and dependents illustrate how the relationship operates as a principle of Aboriginal sociality. The language used to deal with requests or demands often stresses helplessness. In doing so they defy any grounds for a refusal to help. Mabel often used the language of dependency: "I've got no-one to help me." When she felt particularly in need of help over the small details such as locating her pension card or sorting out personal papers in her handbag, she prefaced requests with "me *myall*; me *binna gari*" (meaning not fully hearing; understanding). Apart from material resources a boss may also provide a focus for emotional support and security. Isabel lived in a hostel for Aboriginal people. When the couple who managed the hostel left for a short holiday in their campervan, Isabel watched the van disappear down the road and then burst into tears; "My boss is gone", she sobbed.

The relationship between boss and dependent is often symbolically displayed. The control over who could ride in my vehicle and where they could sit was Mabel's prerogative as my dependent. Mabel always sat in the front passenger seat. But some individuals, in particular young people, were often ignorant of the symbolic importance associated with the seating arrangements, and generally unschooled in the etiquette of a dependent's entitlements with their boss' resources. Offenders against the dependent's rights were soon reminded by others to literally and metaphorically "take a back seat" in the car.

Nurturance, and its corollary of dependence, is a cultural convention for transactions of services and resources between people. As an idiom for exchange, nurturance emphasizes personal indebtedness or obligation and thus masks the basically economic objective of the process. However the same idiom is also applied in

interactions with non-Aborigines, but fails because there are cultural differences in the understanding of the relationship between a boss and dependent, and these understandings are not held in common. Yet Agnes' hopes of negotiating rides in the car outside of Mabel's prerogatives suggest that commitment to the principle of rightful claims in relationships like that of boss and dependent, may not be uniform amongst all Aboriginal participants.

The "business" of nurturance

Commercial concerns ultimately dominate the scope for nurturance in boss-dependent relationships between Kuranda's European entrepreneurs and their Aboriginal clients. The difficulty is that while Aboriginal people set out to establish the same kinds of dependency relationships familiar from their own households and community with individual Europeans in the wider society, the desired results fail to eventuate. There are a number of explanations for this. First, few Europeans understand or assume the full responsibilities of their position as boss as this is accepted within the Aboriginal community. Second, the Europeans with whom Aboriginal people are establishing these relationships are certainly interested in dispersing their resources, but for commercial gain. Third, boss-dependent relations with Europeans are predicated on an asymmetry of power. Hence, there is little flexibility for withdrawing from a relationship with a European boss. Mabel, for example, needed the credit of the local Kuranda butcher to help her through the household poverty of the slack week. However, when the butcher realised she was purchasing her meat (and more cheaply) in Cairns, he refused to give her further credit. The situation was impossible for Mabel since she was structurally dependent on him and his willingness to extend credit. Mabel had no car and no cash to buy meat in Cairns during the slack week. Without his credit she, her animals, and the other members of her household, had little to eat. Strictly speaking the butcher was not Mabel's boss; Gladys from the taxi service had this role. However, in the feud which developed between Mabel and the butcher, Mabel found, to her consternation, that Gladys supported the butcher. In effect her boss helped to cut off her access to goods and resources. By acting this way Gladys was not behaving as a boss should, indeed, she was failing to look after and support her dependent. Unfortunately, Mabel was

powerless to change the basis on which the butcher could cut off her credit, or to stop the collusion between her boss and the butcher. Mabel was certainly angry enough to want to shop for meat elsewhere and to withdraw her friendship and reliance on Gladys. Ultimately Mabel had no choice but to acquiesce to the butcher's demands.

With only marginal access to the goods and services of mainstream society Aboriginal people like Mabel need, and rely on, the help of a European boss to mediate their position in the welfare State. Although Mabel is no longer coerced by external authorities like the mission administration to behave in particular ways, she is beholden to others in matters of daily survival and for this reason she cannot withdraw from her European boss and continue to survive. This point reflects the essential difference between boss-dependent relationships amongst Aboriginal people and those between Europeans and Aborigines. Too often the latter centre around both an Aboriginal desire and necessity for access to commercial goods. As welfare beneficiaries Aboriginal people become further locked into a binding commercial dependency with their entrepreneurial boss.

These relationships inevitably centre on the use of cash and the manipulation of credit by Aboriginal people in transactions with the wider Kuranda economy. Cash from Aboriginal recipients of welfare benefits circulates widely in the Kuranda community because most Aboriginal people shop locally. Few transactions between Aboriginal people and the wider society are relationships of equality; and this is true of Kuranda as it is of other Aboriginal communities. Myers (1986) discusses the Pintupi perspective of relations with outsiders. He argues that Western Desert Aborigines accept unequal relationships with non-Aborigines because they believe reciprocity, as negotiated rights and obligations, to be the basis of social interaction. Reciprocity is possible in hierarchical relationships since interaction is mediated by acts of nurturance by the boss or patron in an ongoing social relationship. For Aboriginal people in Kuranda relationships based on claiming amongst themselves are expression of social connection and affirm the individual's place in the social world. But in the context of a wider social practice it is often difficult to distinguish relationships based on claiming from acquisitive strategies; and this is certainly a common

view by Europeans of the Aboriginal person's attempts to establish a boss-dependent relationship.

Claims to the resources of non-Aboriginal people are transacted in highly personalized styles which serve to emphasise the dependence of the supplicant. The shopkeeper at Valley Heights had a soft spot for Mabel. Perhaps it was Mabel's age which the shopkeeper was respected. Or it may have been a certain charm Mabel exercised over non-Aboriginal people. But most probably the shopkeeper found Mabel charming because she was one of the few Aboriginal customers who made conscientious efforts to repay outstanding credit bills. Aboriginal customers at Valley Heights were not generally good credit risks, as the shopkeeper soon discovered.² Most of the village people called the shop owner "old lady", and only occasionally used her personal name. Mabel on the other hand, always referred to the woman as "Mumma" and requests for extension of credit were always prefaced with this term. "Mumma" kept her side of the bargain and entered into a relationship of reciprocity by slipping Mabel a few extras in food (even though it was yesterday's leftover bread). Mabel's use of the term "Mumma" invoked connotations similar to those adopted by the man (referred to above) who addressed her as "Mumma" before outlining his request.³

The association between women and nurturance is also assumed in Aboriginal interactions with non-Aborigines. Mabel's relationship with the shopkeeper at Valley Heights illustrates this. However, in most of Mabel's dealings with non-Aboriginal people in the local businesses she preferred to deal with women rather than men. Such a preference is common in most Aboriginal interactions with outsiders. The relationship between Gladys, part-owner of the Kuranda taxi service and Mabel is another case in point. The taxi service has an almost exclusively Aboriginal clientele and a major proportion of their income earnings was fares on credit. To offset the extent of the bad debt problem from credit customers the taxi service acted as an informal

-
2. At one stage Mabel owed the Valley Heights shop \$270.00 although she tried to pay something off the bill each fortnight.
 3. "Mumma" I suggest, is a request form specifically referring to women, whether Aboriginal or not. Betty sometimes addressed Mabel as "Aunty" or "Mumma" when making a request.

financial broker to many Aboriginal customers. Each pension-fortnight a taxi travelled to the villages to bring in the aged pensioners whose cheques were collected by the staff of the taxi business. (At the time welfare cheques were not paid into bank accounts as they now are, but were sent instead to the local post office). Taxi staff collected the pension cheques of these people and converted the cheques to cash. Then they deducted the amount of credit accrued over the previous fortnight where people had shopped locally and run up debts.⁴ The credit allowed taxi clients was only extended to certain Aboriginal customers and depended on how much the staff trusted them to repay debts. Mabel had a good credit rating and therefore was entitled to run up large credit debts. At one time she owed more than \$200.00 in credit fares while other people with less leeway were dodging taxi staff when they owed between \$60 and \$100.00 dollars. The credit system, whatever its headaches for business people, operated through a mutual dependence between Aboriginal customers and the non-Aboriginal patrons. The pattern of mutual dependence is clear in the dynamics of Mabel's shopping.

As an animal lover Mabel feeds a large number of cats and dogs. She supports both herself and all too frequently other members of her household on her aged pension. In pension week she always pays cash for any purchases of meat. But by the following "slack" week, meat is still needed and this is purchased with credit from the Kuranda butcher. She has a standing order of mince for the cats, a chicken for the household, and a bag of dog bones. This costs between \$30 and 40.00 per fortnight. After the purchase of the last order of meat and immediately prior to pension day, the butcher hands Mabel an itemised bill on a slip of paper under the title "Butcher". Mabel takes the docket across the street to the taxi office where, after cashing her pension cheque and deducting the amounts owed to businesses in town, she is given the remaining portion of her pension as cash in hand. Although Mabel's living costs, which do not include rent, electricity or water rates are low, credit is as important for her as it is for every other Aboriginal household in Kuranda. It is the means of bridging the gap between the

4. The taxi also collected the cheques of other Aboriginal people, apart from those of aged pensioners.

boom of pension week and the poverty of the "slack" week.⁵ As it turned out, the butcher was also dependent on Mabel's custom.

During 1986 ownership of the Kuranda taxi service changed hands. Mabel's good name for honesty and reliability in meeting credit deadlines was passed on to the new partners, who were yet another husband and wife team. Mabel was proud of her status as a valued client. "They know they can trust me, Mrs. Maloney. I always pay. Ask butcher too."

Initially Gladys drove one of the two taxis.⁶ Mabel developed an intimate relationship with "my Gladys". Mabel was charmingly dependent. In time Mabel was sufficiently intimate with Gladys to borrow money for food in the "slack" week. I was privy to an example of how this relationship was managed.

Mabel needed kerosene for her household lamps. A drum of kerosene cost \$14.00 and she intended borrowing the money from Gladys. As it happened Gladys was at the service station at the time we were passing. Mabel had already decided to deal with Gladys, as Gladys' husband was less sympathetic and unlikely to accede to requests in the way Gladys had begun to do. The success of her claim depended on Mabel speaking with Gladys; although she conceded that Barnie (Gladys' husband) was "alright", he just "didn't see things the way Gladys did". I sat in the car and watched Mabel deal with Gladys. The two women approached one another. Mabel put her arm around Gladys' neck, and with her other hand on her arm she whispered to Gladys her request for kerosene money. Everything about Mabel's body orientation reminded me of a supplicant acknowledging the differential status between herself and her provider. Indeed, the relationship was

-
5. In 1985 an aged pensioner received \$188.60 per fortnight. Initial expenses in the boom week totalled \$109.70 leaving \$78.90 for the following period. But this calculation did not include taxi expenses which can be considerable given that a return ride between Mabel's house and Kuranda is \$26.00. Divide this sum between a number of passengers and the cost of the fare might not seem so exorbitant, but Mabel preferred to wait on noone. Moreover, with no refrigeration Mabel, like many other villagers, was forced to shop daily.
 6. After the female taxi driver was propositioned several times by male passengers she soon gave up driving and looked after the office.

not unlike that between a mother and daughter. Gladys smiled and talked briefly with Mabel. Then, taking Mabel's hand, she led her to the service station office where the attendant placed a drum of kerosene in the rear of our vehicle.

Gladys' dealings with Mabel and several other old women made it difficult to see how personal concern was distinguished from business interests. Both parties seemed to share a mutual understanding of the claims and obligations of the relationship; but in fact this was not the case. Gladys was concerned about the health of the old women and their lack of warm winter clothing. She bought the women warm singlets and underclothes. Unknown to Gladys these items were either passed on to others, or treasured as gifts and kept in pristine condition in battered suitcases under beds. The old ladies were appreciative of Gladys' presents, but continued to shiver. Gladys could not understand why the women did not wear the singlets.

Gladys' personal relationship with Mabel extended to occasions when Mabel's health was precarious and Gladys called on her as she passed the house during taxi trips. Gladys also "held" money for Mabel. Yet, despite the taxi driver's personal concern for Mabel and for some of the other women, in the final analysis business determined the relationship. In the same way Mabel's cultural perspective determined her behaviour with Gladys. However, Gladys and Mabel had sufficient common understanding of their relationship for it to be functional, whatever their cultural interpretations of the situation.

Transactions between Aboriginal customers and non-Aboriginal businesses were not without their problems in Kuranda. With regular access to a car Mabel decided to rearrange her shopping to coincide with visits to Cairns. Non-Aboriginal Kuranda residents shopped in Cairns because of cheaper prices, but without their own transport the majority of Aboriginal customers were confined to shopping locally.⁷ Prices of everyday household items were noticeably higher in Kuranda than the competitive prices in Cairns. The only advantage some

7. Kuranda hotels allowed Aboriginal customers to "tic up" and thus got control of welfare cheques, just as the taxi service did. No mail was delivered in Kuranda to Aborigines or to Europeans; all mail was collected at the post office.

Kuranda shopkeepers offered certain Aboriginal customers was the possibility of credit.⁸ I have mentioned the story of Mabel and the butcher elsewhere in this chapter. Withdrawal of essential credit services has severe effects in Aboriginal households. By the same token, credit binds Aboriginal customers and local businesses in difficult relationships of interdependence.

Betty discovered that Europeans keep their personal relationships separate from commercial transactions with Aboriginal people. She had a few too many drinks and needed a taxi home. Betty claimed that she had asked Gladys for a taxi ride out to her house only to be refused because she was drunk. Betty was annoyed and angry at the refusal. She felt she had suffered an injustice; other people were given rides when they were drunk, so why was she different? In her resentment she kicked the car and demanded to know why Gladys took others in the same condition? Gladys' response was to call the police who subsequently locked Betty in a police cell overnight. Next morning Betty was released with this advice from the police officer on duty ... "Come on now sweetheart, go and apologize to Gladys." Having been told by the sergeant to do this, Betty did apologise. Gladys accepted the olive branch with poor grace. She reminded Betty, "Don't let it happen again". Betty replied in kind, "Don't you let it happen again!"

Betty's interactions with taxi staff left little doubt about who held the balance of power in the relationship. Her experience, like Mabel's encounter with Kelvin the butcher, showed the network of alliances between the Europeans in the Kuranda community and the role of the police as a determinate force in the community.⁹ The incident also

-
8. Mabel borrowed \$5.00 from Gladys for bread in the "slack" week. Familiarity with patterns in other households suggests that bread and tea are staples in lean times and Mabel would subsist on this too.
 9. The Kuranda police did not have a good reputation with the town's Aborigines. They were known to bash people in the cells and often turned up to investigate complaints from white neighbours about "noise" when community functions were held at the Co-operative farm. They usually closed these functions down, including a wedding anniversary at which I was present. In 1989 members of the Kuranda Police Force were involved in a complaint to the Human Rights Commission for assault. The complaint was made by local Aboriginal people with the backing of the local doctor in Kuranda who treated the victims.

showed that Aboriginal self-determination only exists as far as European authorities are prepared to recognise it as appropriate for Aboriginal people. When the taxi staff, the butcher or the police decide that individual Aboriginal people are out of line in any way they curtail Aboriginal consumer choices, the ability to travel by public transport and the right to culturally determined forms of self expression. There is no meaningful discussion or even negotiation of the imposed changes. The Kuranda butcher was not interested in Mabel's reasons for buying meat elsewhere. He wanted to penalize her for exercising a consumer's choice by denying her any further credit. Gladys, in collusion with the local police staff, wanted to "teach" Betty what was acceptable behaviour and what was not, and through disinterest they denied any legitimacy in Betty's complaints about how she was treated. While both Mabel and Betty were angry about the treatment they received from the Europeans concerned, the structure of the relationships and the exercise of power were familiar from life on Mona Mona. Thus, in the final analysis they accepted and acknowledged that there was nothing they could do to change the situation. Indeed, both Betty and Mabel were structurally dependent on the credit of the butcher and the transport of the taxi service.

Collusion between the Europeans to treat Aboriginal customers according to consensual views of Aboriginality was evident in Mabel's incident with the butcher, and repeated in Gladys' collusion with the policeman against Betty. Other Europeans substantiated the butcher's right to insist that Mabel was entitled to credit only if she purchased all her meat from his shop. Gladys and the butcher's wife were good friends and the taxi staff ensured that Mabel paid the butcher's bills. During the embargo on Mabel's credit, Gladys had advised her to stop purchasing meat in Cairns and return to her former trader. The shopkeepers, business people and police reinforced and legitimated their structural dominance and exercise of authority over Kuranda Aboriginal people. Many of these Europeans disguised their interference in people's lives under the pretence of assuming a social and moral responsibility for members of the local Aboriginal community, when in fact their action was often directly attributable to self-interest. The most invidious social control over Aboriginal lives in Kuranda is through the appropriation and management of Aboriginal incomes by European business people. The taxi service to a major extent, and the hotels, the

store at Valley Heights and the Kuranda supermarket to a lesser extent, intercept the welfare payments of individual Aboriginal people and without consultation decide on the amount of cash a recipient gets after deductions.

What the ethnographic material shows is that while Aboriginal people frame their relationships with Europeans in terms of their own cultural paradigms, like the boss-dependent relationship, this behavioural model has disastrous consequences in cross-cultural situations. Inevitably, Aborigines are taken advantage of, even where the Europeans involved are well-meaning in their interference. Although the idea of nurturance as a social medium for the distribution of labour and resources operates well enough within the Aboriginal community, partly because everyone understands and practices the cultural rationale behind it, as a behavioural model for interaction with the wider community it usually has disastrous consequences for Aboriginal people.

Mabel's experience in the following situation indicates how the boss-dependent relationship can go wrong without either party really understanding why. Her experience shows again the power of the Kuranda business people to withhold both services and an individual's money and in doing so, impose their economic, even moral views on an Aboriginal client. Such interaction between Aboriginal people and Europeans in Kuranda repeats themes in the historical relationship between Aboriginal residents of Mona Mona and the Seventh Day Adventist staff.

The economic relationship between Mabel and Gladys was masked to some extent by a personal relationship evident in Gladys' favouritism for Mabel and her commendation of her behaviour as a customer. Aboriginal people in Kuranda tend to personalize the context of their commercial interaction with Europeans and do so through the boss-dependent relationship. While this relationship is cast as a form of close personal interaction it is also, broadly speaking, a strategy for economic gain.

There came a time when the personal relationship between Gladys and Mabel was sorely tested. Mabel was invited to a relative's wedding in Brisbane and she wanted to muster as many financial

resources for the trip as she could. She gleaned money from various people. Her grand-daughter gave her \$20.00; and Gladys offered her \$100.00 out of her pension, although Mabel wanted \$120.00. Mabel had a "high food bill" as the result of borrowing money for food from Gladys. Because of this Gladys refused to negotiate beyond \$100.00 although Mabel still felt certain of her credentials with the taxi service as "the only one they trust to tie up." While Mabel said nothing to Gladys about the negotiated money she was clearly disappointed with the lesser amount. She rationalized her disappointment, "I want to be honest with people".¹⁰

Mabel left Cairns for Brisbane in high spirits. She returned a month later with a tale of woe. During her absence from Kuranda her pension had been collected by Gladys as usual. Gladys refused to forward the pension cheque because Mabel had debts owing in Kuranda to the taxi and at the local shops. She told Mabel over the telephone that \$200.00 was owing in Kuranda and reneged on any agreement made earlier to forward the cheque or a portion of it. Mabel was incensed and swore at Gladys, "it wasn't a nice word" [fuck off!] but she had to say it because "it wasn't right that Gladys kept her cheque". Gladys was prepared to send Mabel a mere \$30.00. With her niece's help Mabel secured a second, substitute cheque in Brisbane and this was paid directly into her bank account on the understanding that the original cheque had to be returned. Her niece had opened the bank account in the hope of providing Mabel with some financial independence from Gladys' intervention. Unfortunately, the bank did not have an agency in Kuranda. To withdraw money Mabel had first to get down to Cairns.¹¹

Mabel was very angry about the affair, but she was not prepared to confront Gladys or any the taxi staff herself. Eventually she

10. At that time Mabel also had an outstanding credit debt at the Valley Heights shop of about \$233.00. But she had managed to reduce this to \$183.00.

11. All banking in Kuranda is handled through bank agencies operated by commercial traders; for example, the newsagent, the dry-cleaners and the post office double as banking agencies.

convinced the Aboriginal manager of the Housing Co-operative to negotiate with them on her behalf. Mabel called this man grandson and requested his help as his dependent. Her choice of negotiator also conformed with the cultural model of an appropriate negotiator for conflict and dispute settlements; he was male, a kinsman and a figure of authority. When he returned from discussions with the taxi staff, he repeated their claim that Mabel owed \$50.00 to shops in Kuranda and \$250.00 to the taxi for money borrowed to finance the trip. The taxi service said that Aboriginal people must pay the full amount owed through credit. But they did not acknowledge the fact that this would leave people with insufficient funds to manage and merely encourage further credit debt. Mabel's niece in Brisbane had given her more realistic advice. She told her to pay off \$20.00 per week until the debt was wiped out.

For some time Mabel struggled to maintain her financial independence from the taxi service. But she still needed small sums from time to time to tide herself over the poverty of a "slack week". Inevitably, the relationship settled back into former practices, although the personal relations were cool. Mabel re-established her credit relationships with Gladys and with her other credit sources in Kuranda.¹² It was not unusual for people like Mabel to have their financial affairs managed for them by an enterprise with a vested interest in their custom. It was also common to find first, that Aboriginal people in Kuranda try to establish personal relations with a European who can supply them with credit (in whatever terms, cash, vehicle, recreation, free drinks, etc.); and second, that many Aboriginal people find it impossible to break their dependence relationships since for them these relationships represent a cultural means for the distribution of resources.

Despite the Commonwealth government's decision to pay all welfare benefits into a personal bank account, a number of Aboriginal people in Kuranda have no fixed address and use the local post office as their contact address. Apart from the taxi service, at least one of the

12. Eventually the bank account was changed from the National Bank to a banking institution with an agency in Kuranda.

two hotels gave individuals credit in return for written permission to collect their benefit cheque. The business people then cash the cheque and deduct what amount is owed. Betty had a credit debt of \$95.00 for taxi fares between Kuranda and her home. She was surprised at the size of the debt and preferred not to pay out the total debt in one week. However she was prepared to pay half. (In 1986 Betty received unemployment benefits of \$108.80.) The taxi staff were not satisfied with this offer. They became very angry with Betty and demanded full payment. Betty recognised how the taxi service manipulated her and other Aboriginal people in Kuranda through the credit system; "I told her [Gladys] not to come bludging off Blackfellas in Kuranda for their money".

Aboriginal people who already owed the taxi service money were not always keen to have their cheques cashed by them. Some people worried about taxi staff collecting their welfare cheques from the Kuranda post office before the owners had a chance to do so. If the manager of the taxi service saw individuals collecting their own cheque after having given their assent for the taxi office to do so, he berated the person in no uncertain terms. A man who was now living on Palm Island still had his welfare benefits collected in Kuranda by the taxi staff. His mother collected the cash from the taxi service and sent it on to Palm Island.

The power of the taxi service had a practical base. Few Aboriginal people had cars or a licence and the distance between the Aboriginal villages and Kuranda township made people dependent on some form of public transport. The power of the taxi staff to intervene in Aboriginal lives increased with their claims and belief that they were "helping people". An alcoholic couple with associated health problems were advised by the local doctor to cut down on their drinking and to eat sensibly. The taxi staff felt they should enforce this advice and without consulting or advising the couple concerned they restricted the access of this couple to town to two days per week. Attempts to hire the taxi for rides into town outside the designated days were refused. The local supermarket collaborated with the plan to change the couples' drinking habits. They already had some sway over the couple as the manager of the supermarket collected and cashed their cheque. Thus they refused

to give the couple their money for alcohol unless they had first bought their groceries.

In another example of their involvement the taxi staff asked me to tell Mabel that she must change her bank. Mabel died suddenly in the last months of my work in Kuranda. A few days after her death I received a message that the taxi manager wished to speak to me. They were concerned that the woman Mabel had shared her house with was rummaging through her belongings looking for a cash hoard. Indeed, they claimed to have a witness to the event.¹³ According to the taxi staff the deceased had told them she had a lot of cash hidden under her mattress. Yet no money was found there. Despite their apparent concern for Mabel's belongings it is probable that at the time of her death she still owed the taxi as much as \$200.00. Even at the moment of death it seemed that external groups continued to involve themselves in Aboriginal lives in efforts to determine the shape of these lives for their own ends.

Power is associated with the flow of resources in a relationship and signifies an investment in social relations (see Peterson 1977:145). Social bonds are confirmed through the exchange of goods and services, or what Myers (1986:115) calls "matters of affect". In Kuranda, social relations activate the distribution of goods and services in nurturance relationships. But the capacity to participate in the distribution is not shared equally by men and women either within the community or within the household. However, in relations between Aborigines and the wider society, Aboriginal women from Kuranda are often more successful with a European boss than are Aboriginal men.

Conclusion

Aborigines in Kuranda try to extend their notion of nurturance to relationships with Europeans by incorporating them into a boss-dependent relationship in order to mediate the structural inequalities. Aboriginal women have been more adept at this because they better understand European behavioural styles than Aboriginal men and they

13. In all probability the witness to the event is likely to have been the local policeman who visited the house shortly after Mabel's death.

use this knowledge to their advantage. Aboriginal men have not been so culturally adept for a number of reasons. First, because historically Mona Mona hired out Aboriginal women residents to live and work in local European homes where the women were socialized to some extent in European mores. Second, women's relationships with Europeans often extended kin networks which gave wider access to European goods and services (see Hamilton 1972:42). Third, Aboriginal women in Kuranda continue to be the principal participants with the wider society. Such gender differences are obviously a consequence of the history of Aboriginal men and women's relationships in the wider society. It is also possible that Aboriginal women move more freely into the wider society than do Aboriginal men. Perhaps this is due to their tacit acceptance of the asymmetry of power involved for an Aboriginal person and for a woman in making their way in the wider world. In Kuranda few Aboriginal men have relationships with non-Aboriginal people, outside the formal context of employment. Indeed, it is rare for an Aboriginal man to establish a boss-dependent relationship with a European man or woman. However, in managing their socio-economic marginalisation both Aboriginal men and women are subject to discrimination and deprivation from the wider community which robs them of opportunities to realise independence. In part, boss-dependent relationships between Aboriginal people and Europeans mediate their marginalised incorporation of Aboriginal people into mainstream society.

Nevertheless, the capacity to successfully activate claims over another's goods and resources also involves inequalities in social power and status for everyday life. From the Aboriginal point of view, power in boss-dependent relationships lies with the emphasis on nurturance and belongs to the individual without the resources, not as in the more conventional European notions of power where the patron or person of property dominates others. The difficulty in cross-cultural contexts with the notion of nurturance in the boss-dependent relationship, is the potential for inequality and misunderstanding of the relationship. Parties do not share a mutual understanding of the other's role in their social interaction and eventually the relationship breaks down as it did with Mabel and Gladys over the pension money. I suggest that both Aboriginal people and Europeans in Kuranda persist with their inappropriate notions of the "other" partly through ignorance of each

other, but also because there are different, but nevertheless mutual material and social advantages for them in doing so.

CONCLUSION

The argument in this thesis is based on ethnographic evidence of Aboriginal household life in an Aboriginal ex-mission community in north Queensland. The thesis challenges the view that contemporary Aboriginal domestic organisation and gender relations are essentially matrifocal and primarily the outcome of a response to the process of acculturation and social change.

Chapter 1 reviewed the literature on Aboriginal gender relations with respect to questions of power and status. Many writers evaluate these issues within the context of the structural relationship between Aboriginal people and the wider society. Their assessments of the nature of autonomy in gender relations is often referenced to the socio-economic status of Aboriginal men and women in the wider society and the effect of this on familial relationships within Aboriginal households. Two views of the structural position of Aboriginal people emerge from these writings. Aboriginal people are seen as either the passive victims of policies of an interventionist State; or their lives are interpreted as independent, self-directed, and largely free from any deleterious effects of engagement with the wider community. The discussion in Chapter I moves on therefore to consideration of questions about the development of contemporary patterns of gender interaction first in the context of the historical circumstances of employment, and second, within specifically Aboriginal interpretations of autonomy and power.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4, address these questions by considering the terms of Aboriginal employment during the development of colonial industries on the north Queensland frontier. These chapters also examine the other major historical influence on Aboriginal lives in the cumulative effects of segregation in a mission, and the impact this had on gender through work practices and ideals of domestic organisation.

Chapter 2 deals with the instrumental role of the mission in the transformation of Aboriginal cultural practices. Attention is focused on the process of replacing traditional Aboriginal gender roles with the missionaries' conventional, class-based Christian ideals of family life.

Mona Mona, like other Queensland missions, acted as an agent of the State government by helping to institute government policy on racial segregation. Although both church and State had lofty aims for the incorporation of Aboriginal people into the wider society, Aboriginal integration depended upon a detailed program of cultural assimilation. A major, but unintended effect of this was the marginalisation of Aboriginal people in mainstream society. Yet both church and State were adamant that Aboriginal participation in mainstream society was only possible through a radical transformation of their cultural mores and the internalisation of Christian values, Christian marriage, the nuclear family, and a work ethic.

Chapter 3 is a detailed description of the employment conditions of Queensland Aboriginal people in the early 20th century. While it is clear that the State assumed a paternalistic responsibility for establishing the working conditions and wages of Aboriginal men, it neglected to provide any protective legislation to regulate employment conditions of Aboriginal women and children. However the employment of Aboriginal women as domestic servants in European homes had profound effects on State policies on the integration and assimilation of Aboriginal people. Work in the homes of European families presented Aboriginal women with fresh and alternate views of social and economic possibilities for themselves. Many of these views were based on assumptions which challenged and rejected the vision of gender roles deemed appropriate by the church and State. But the resistance of Aboriginal women against embracing the careers mapped out for them was not followed by Aboriginal men. Their work on remote cattle stations kept them in social isolation from mainstream society, and resistance from the unions to their employment in a range of semi-skilled occupations limited their economic potential. Nevertheless, while Aboriginal men did enjoy a range of economic opportunities denied to them in institutions, their wider social experiences were highly circumscribed compared to those of many Aboriginal women. Thus Aboriginal men tended to be more complacent about the gender paths marked out for them by missions, although men on Mona Mona who spoke to Tindale objected to the mission's emasculation of their economic status as providers for impoverished families.

In the minds of government administrators the reluctance of Aboriginal women to welcome a life of marriage and motherhood within the confines of the mission was linked with an alarming increase in Queensland's "mixed race" population. The government's response to resolve both problems was legislation to segregate all Aboriginal people within closed institutions. Any subsequent social or economic contact between Aboriginal people and Europeans was regulated and controlled through the system of privileged access known as Exemptions. Segregation was also thought to be the best conditions for transforming Aboriginal culture. Under these conditions the contexts of Aboriginal cultural reproduction and perpetuation could be managed and Aboriginal people brought to assimilate the attitudes and practices of the dominant society.

Chapter 4 describes the process by which the mission imposed its own cultural and religious perspectives on the Aboriginal inhabitants. Much of missionary endeavour was the social transformation of Aboriginal family life, beginning with the socialisation of children. The mission dormitory was directly responsible for socialising and educating Aboriginal children away from their parents' influence and in a context where they learnt to identify with the Christian church and the social conventions of life in a nuclear family. Daily life on the mission was structured to complement the new family. This was achieved through the demarcation of social roles, the use of social space and the hierarchy of relationships, beginning with the superintendent as a quasi-father to the Aboriginal residents.

However, the transition to assimilation was neither as simple nor without compromise. Indeed, the conditions for transformation were themselves flawed. The Mona Mona missionaries found, for example, that the economic survival of the mission was so tenuous during the establishment years that they had no choice but to leave Aboriginal people to their own practices and domestic life. The difficulties of ensuring that the mission paid its way made it necessary to coopt Aboriginal men and women and even children in the dormitories, to work-roles often at odds with those taught as ideals; for example, young women were expected to help with grubbing (the removal of stumps in the newly cleared paddocks). Furthermore, while children were taught the sanctity of the nuclear family, they were reared in the

company of their peers and in the absence of any normal family relationships.

Hamilton (1972) is one of a number of writers to argue that the work roles associated with missions and the relationships they fostered with Aboriginal people perpetuated other, already established relationships:

What the mission endeavour saw as the provision of employment and training for the people, they [Aboriginal people] interpreted as working for a new boss, and the mission bosses were like any others save that they usually had their own women and did not require Aboriginal ones (Hamilton 1972:44).

It is evident that Aboriginal people in Kuranda continue to relate to the wider society through personal relationships with individual Europeans. These relationships remain important points of access to the goods and services of the wider society and external systems of knowledge. The structure of domestic life and work roles on Mona Mona mission encouraged Aboriginal residents to regard Europeans not only as superior, but as a protector and patron, even as an intermediary between the closed institutional worlds Aboriginal people inhabited and mainstream society. Mona Mona took the ideal of the Christian nuclear family as the template for all social relations. In such a family, the father's role carried social authority and a mother was known for her care and familial concerns. These qualities have been incorporated in contemporary relationships between Aborigines and Europeans in Kuranda; just as Aboriginal women continue to look after their men and children.

Chapter 5 turns to a consideration of the contemporary circumstances of gender in Aboriginal domestic organisation. The chapter introduces contemporary Aboriginal life with a description of the Kuranda community and the bases of its composition. Some institutions, such as the Seventh Day Adventist church and the Mona Mona property, have historical associations which people feel comfortable with and which they continue to see as appropriate organisations through which to channel their concerns and aspirations. However, some of the new Aboriginal representative organisations compete with the established loyalties and community members

struggle to amalgamate the circumstances of their collective past with the present situation.

On the basis of an understanding of the present nature of Aboriginal life in the Kuranda community, chapter 6 describes Aboriginal household organisation in the post-mission setting. The ethnography suggests a typological distinction between a dwelling, a household, and economic units within a household as the principal diagnostic features of domestic organisation. All households have varying numbers of short and long term visitors. Households usually function with a set of core household residents, a household administrator to handle the details of rent, cleaning, and so forth, and a household authority. The latter role is a support position to the household administrator and usually involves the difficult work of managing residents or enforcing "rules". Status in domestic relations is shown to be a matter of role and participation, but not necessarily of gender.

Life in a Kuranda household follows a cycle of wealth and prosperity. The cycle is the result of the convergence of several factors including the fortnightly income payments of the government welfare system, the social mobility of children and certain other groups and the indigenous cultural patterns by which men and women interact in domestic life. Some of these factors are well discussed in the literature describing contemporary Aboriginal domestic life. But there has been a general failure to show the complex interaction between these factors and their impingement on the actualization of power and status for gender. Contrary to a view of gender power and status as a corollary of economic independence and social status, this Chapter suggests that in fact such factors are not contingent upon one another. Both power and autonomy in domestic life are an outcome of structural dependence. This dependence results in a freedom from claim relationships whereby goods and services are appropriated by others. It is a dependence which empowers and leads to autonomy in domestic life. But because of cultural expectations about the behaviour of men and women in domestic life, men are structurally advantaged over women. Thus a man will attach himself to a woman (usually a kinswoman) in order to exert personal claims over her time and her resources. He becomes her

dependent for whom she has the material and sometimes emotional responsibilities of a care-giver.

Chapter 7 looks in more detail at nurturance practices in socialisation and at moments of adult intimacy to flesh out the tie between the relations of adult domestic life and behaviour developed in childhood.

Nurturance relations between men and women illustrate the complex interplay between power, autonomy and dependence and how men monopolize the process of establishing claims over others. But the interaction of claiming, dependence and power exposes a paradox of Aboriginal social life and gender relations. While people disclaim interference from others because they are "boss for themselves", it is only through structural dependence that autonomy in social life is possible. Although Aboriginal men and women establish relationships akin to a form of the "boss-dependent" relationship common between Aboriginal people and Europeans, a man does not publicly acknowledge a woman as his boss. Indeed, the conventions of these relationships between Aboriginal people disguises the power base and renders the relationship as simply a normative gender role where a woman, naturally, looks after a man. Outside the Aboriginal community a boss-dependent relationship is rarely established between men, although it is not uncommon between an Aboriginal woman and a European woman (nor historically between an Aboriginal woman and a European man).

The details of Aboriginal interactions with Europeans forms the subject of the final Chapter. Here, nurturance relations are dealt with in a cross-cultural perspective as they underlie relationships between Aboriginal clients and European business people. Aware of the socio-economic marginalisation of their position vis a vis the wider community Aboriginal people see their access to the goods and services of the wider community as limited. Moreover access is constrained by factors specific to the Aboriginal community, such as personal mobility; limited formal education; no private transport; lack of property rights; a flawed knowledge of the wider world, and so forth. These factors increase their powerlessness in dealings with the wider community, a

condition which is obvious to Aboriginal people in their dealings with many of the town's business people.

Aboriginal people, in order to subvert the domination entailed in their situation often attempt to set up dependency relationships with a European who can channel goods and services to them, as their boss. The Aboriginal person is interacting with the chosen European in terms familiar from life in Aboriginal households. By the terms of this relationship, the European as boss is obliged to look after them and provide for them. However, in cross cultural contexts it is Aboriginal women, rather than Aboriginal men who tend to set up such relationships, and who do so with some success. There are historical explanations for this; some of which are factors relating to the different work experiences of Aboriginal men and women. But whatever goods or services an Aboriginal woman receives from her boss, or can command from her, these acquisitions are no necessary means to power or status within the Aboriginal community. Any goods accrued outside the community would of course be subject to claims from others within the community.

In the final analysis neither men nor women gain any advantage from such relationships with Europeans. This is partly because there are no shared or mutual understandings amongst Europeans of the role of a boss toward an Aboriginal dependent; furthermore, major social and economic inequalities underlie the relationship between Aboriginal people and Europeans.

This thesis began with an examination of what constituted power and autonomy in gender relations in Aboriginal domestic life. The ethnography from Kuranda indicates that gender relations in contemporary Aboriginal households proceed by social principles which have received little attention. Further, the interpretation of relationships in Aboriginal domestic life has not been especially representative of actual social relations. It is clear that gender roles in Aboriginal households have been affected by the circumstances of contact, through work roles and through institutional lifestyles.

However, continuities with a past on the mission has been disrupted by socio-economic factors. Men no longer earn the principal income; although they still have a significant profile in family life

despite the loss of economic status and irregular commitment to a stable form of domestic life. The loss of wage employment opportunities and the dominance of the welfare State in the lives of both men and women has had an impact on the pattern of social change. But perhaps the more important point is that Aboriginal men and women continue to structure and negotiate their relationships in terms which focus on meanings common to the history of the community. This is the crux of the issue; autonomy and dependence in Aboriginal lives are thus contextually bound by meanings which differ from those commonly held in the wider society. It has been the intention of this thesis to show that any assessment of Aboriginal gender relations must account for their views of power and autonomy in social life, while acknowledging that Aboriginal lives are touched by the State, just as they carry the baggage of their particular past.

REFERENCES

- Altman, J. C. (ed.) 1989
Emergent Inequalities in Aboriginal Australia. Oceania Monograph 38, University of Sydney.
- Anderson, C. 1982
 The Bloomfield community, north Queensland. In E.A.Young and E.K. Fisk (eds) **Small Rural Communities. The Aboriginal component in the Australian economy. Volume 3.** Centre for Development Studies, Canberra: A.N.U. Press. pp 89-157.
- 1989
 Centralisation and group inequalities in north Queensland. In Altman, J. C. (ed.) **Emergent Inequalities in Aboriginal Australia.** Oceania Monograph 38, University of Sydney. pp 67-85.
- Attwood, B. 1989
The Making of the Aborigines. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Baldock, C. and Cass, E. (ed.) 1983
Women, Social Welfare and the State. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Ball, R. E. 1985
 The economic situation of Aborigines in Newcastle 1982. **Australian Aboriginal Studies.** 1:2-22.
- Barwick, D. 1962
 Economic Absorption without Assimilation? The case of some Melbourne part-Aboriginal families. **Oceania** 33(1):18-23.
- 1964
 The self-conscious people of Melbourne. In Reay, M. (ed.) **Aborigines Now: New perspectives in the study of Aboriginal communities.** Sydney: Angus and Robertson. pp 20-32.
- 1970
 And the lubras are ladies now. In Gale, F. (ed.) **Women's Role in Aboriginal Society.** Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. pp 51- 64.
- 1974
 The Aboriginal family in south-eastern Australia. In Krupinski, J. and Stoller, F.A. (eds) **The Family in Australia.** Sydney: Pergamon. pp 154-167.

- Beckett, J. 1964
Aborigines, alcohol and assimilation. In Reay, M. (ed.) **Aborigines Now: New perspectives in the study of Aboriginal communities**. Sydney: Angus and Robertson. pp 32-48.
- Bell, D. 1983
Daughters of the Dreaming. Melbourne: McPhee Gribble and George Allen and Unwin.
- 1987
Aboriginal women and the religious experience. Edwards, W.H. (ed.) **Traditional Aboriginal Society: A reader**. Melbourne: Macmillan. pp 237-57.
- Bell, D. and Ditton, P. 1980
Law: the Old and the New: Aboriginal women in central Australia speak out. Canberra: Aboriginal History.
- Bell, J. 1956
Economic life of mixed blood Aborigines on the south coast of New South Wales. **Oceania** 26 (3):181-199.
- 1964
Assimilation in New South Wales. In Reay M. (ed.) **Aborigines Now: New perspectives in the study of Aboriginal communities**. Sydney: Angus and Robertson. pp 59-72.
- Bern, J. 1979
Ideology and domination: towards a reconstruction of Australian Aboriginal social formation. **Oceania** 50:118-32.
- Berndt, C. and R. M. 1987
End of an Era: Aboriginal labour in the pastoral industry. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.
- Berndt, R. M. (ed.) 1969
Thinking about Aboriginal Welfare. Perth: University of Western Australia.
- Berndt, R. M. (ed.) 1977
Aborigines and Change: Australia in the 1970s. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.
- Berndt, R. M. and Tonkinson, R. (eds) 1988
Social Anthropology and Australian Aboriginal Studies: a contemporary overview. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.
- Bernstein, B. 1971
Class, Codes and Control. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Birdsall, C. 1988

All one Family. In Keen, I. (ed.) **Being Black: Aboriginal cultures in "settled" Australia**. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. pp 137-158.

Bryant, J. 1982

The Robinvale Community. In Young, E. A. and Fisk, E. K. (eds) **Town Populations. The Aboriginal Component in the Australian Economy. Volume 2**. Development Studies Centre, Canberra: ANU Press. pp 27-107.

----- 1983

Aboriginal Housing in Victoria: a hidden agenda? Paper presented to the Symposium on Urbanization in South East Asia and the Pacific, 15th Pacific Science Congress, Dunedin, New Zealand, 8th February, 1983.

Burbank, V. K. 1988

Aboriginal Adolescence: Maidenhood in an Australian Community. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Burns, A. Bottomley, G. and Jools P. (eds) 1983

The Family in the Modern World. Sydney: George Allen and Unwin.

Calley, M. J. 1959

Social Organisation of Mixed-blood Communities in North-Eastern New South Wales. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. University of Sydney, Sydney.

Chase, A. 1988

Lazarus at Australia's gateway: the Christian mission enterprise in eastern Cape York Peninsula. In Swain, T. and Rose, D. (eds) **Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions**. South Australia: The Australian Association for the study of Religions. pp 121-140.

Chief Protector's Reports. Brisbane: Queensland Government Printer.

Chodorow, N. 1974

Family structure and feminine personality. In Rosaldo, M.Z. and Lamphere, L. (eds) **Woman Culture and Society**. Stanford: Stanford University Press. pp43-67.

Collins, S. 1984

Mona Mona: a culture in transition. Unpublished Thesis for Graduate Diploma in Material Culture. James Cook University of North Queensland, Townsville.

- Collmann, J. 1979
Women, children and the significance of the domestic group to urban Aborigines in Central Australia. **Ethnology** 18:379-397.
- Connell, R. W. 1987
Gender and Power. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Cowlishaw, G. 1978
Infanticide in Aboriginal Australia. **Oceania** 48:262-83.
- 1982
Socialization and subordination among Australian Aborigines. **Man** (N.S.)17 (3) September:492-508.
- 1988
Black, White or Brindle: Race in rural Australia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Craig, D. 1979
The Social Impact of the State on an Aboriginal reserve in Queensland, Australia. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. University of California, Berkeley.
- Daniels, K. (ed.) 1984
So Much Hard Work: Women and prostitution in Australian history. Sydney: Fontana/Collins.
- Eckermann, A-K. 1977
Group organization and identity within an urban Aboriginal community. In Berndt, R. M. (ed.) **Aborigines and Change: Australia in the 1970s**. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. pp 288-320.
- 1979
Employment patterns among Aboriginal people in rural town, south-west Queensland. **Australian Economic Papers**. December, pp 362-82.
- 1988
Cultural vacuum or cultural vitality? **Australian Aboriginal Studies**. (1):31-39.
- Eckermann, A-K., Watts, B. H. and Dixon, P. A. 1984
From Here to There: A comparative case study of Aboriginal rural-urban resettlement in Queensland and New South Wales. Canberra: Report submitted to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Mimeo.

- Edwards, B. and Clark, B. 1988 From Missions to Aboriginal churches: the Uniting church in Australia and the Aboriginal missions. In Swain, T. and Rose, D. (eds) **Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions**. South Australia: The Australian Association for the study of Religions. pp 185-201.
- Evans, R. L. 1975
Aboriginal women in colonial Queensland. Harlots and helots: the exploitation of the Aboriginal remnant. In Evans, R. L., Saunders K., and Cronin, K. (eds) **Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination**. Sydney: Australian and New Zealand Book Company. pp 102-112.
- Fink, R. 1957-58
The caste barrier- an obstacle to the assimilation of part-Aborigines in north-west New South Wales. *Oceania* 28(1):100-110.
- Finlayson, J. D. 1989
Welfare incomes and Aboriginal gender relations. In Altman, J. C. (ed.) **Emergent Inequalities in Aboriginal Australia**. Oceania Monograph 38. University of Sydney. pp 95-119.
- Fisk, E. K. 1985
The Aboriginal Economy in Town and Country. Sydney: George Allen and Unwin.
- Fitzgerald, R. 1982
From the Dreaming to 1915: A history of Queensland. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press.
- Gale, F. 1974
Urban Aborigines. Canberra: Australian National University.
- 1975
Poverty among Aboriginal Families in Adelaide: Commission of Inquiry into Poverty. Canberra: AGPS.
- 1977
Aboriginal values in relation to poverty in Adelaide. In Berndt, R. M. (ed.) **Aborigines and Change: Australia in the '70s**. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. pp 327-331.
- Gale, F. and Wundersitz, J. 1982
Adelaide Aborigines: A case study of urban life 1966-1981. Development Studies Centre, Canberra: Australian National University.

Gale, F. (ed.) 1983

We are Bosses Ourselves: The status and role of Aboriginal women today. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

Goodall, H. 1982

A history of Aboriginal communities in New South Wales, 1909-1939. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. University of Sydney, Sydney.

Goffman, E. 1961

Asylums. New York: Doubleday.

Gray, A. 1987

The "death bird": aspects of adult Aboriginal mortality. **Working paper No. 7. Aboriginal Family Demography Studies.** Canberra: Department of Demography, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University.

Grimshaw, P. 1981

Aboriginal women: a study of culture contact. In Grieve, N. and Grimshaw, P. (eds) **Australian Women: Feminist Perspectives.** Melbourne: Oxford University Press. pp 86-94.

----- 1987

The Australian family: an historical interpretation. In Burns, A. Bottomley, G. and Jools, P. (eds) **The Family in the Modern World.** Sydney: George Allen and Unwin. pp 31-49.

Hamilton, A.

----- 1972

Blacks and whites: the relationships of change. **Arena** (30):34-48.

----- 1975

Aboriginal women: the means of production. In Mercer, J. (ed.) **The Other Half.** Harmondsworth: Penguin. pp 167-79.

----- 1981(a)

A complex strategical situation: gender and power in Aboriginal Australia. In Grieve, N. and Grimshaw, P. (eds) **Australian Women: Feminist Perspectives.** Melbourne: Oxford University Press. pp 69-85.

----- 1981(b)

Nature and Nurture: Aboriginal child-rearing in north-central Arnhem Land. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

----- 1989

Bond slaves of Satan: Aboriginal women and the missionary dilemma. In Jolly, M. and MacIntyre, M. (eds) **Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic contradictions and the colonial impact**. Cambridge University Press. pp 236-258.

Hartwig, M. 1978

Capitalism and Aborigines. In Wheelwright, E.L. and Buckley, K. (eds) **Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism**. Sydney: Australian and New Zealand Book Company. pp 119-141.

Henderson, R. F. 1975

Poverty in Australia. Committee of Inquiry into Poverty, First main report. Canberra: AGPS.

Holthouse, H. 1989

S'pose I Die: the story of Evelyn Maunsell. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.

Hunt, S. 1986

Spinifex and Hessian: women in north-west Australia, 1860-1900. Perth: University of Western Australia Press.

Inglis, J. 1964

Dispersal of Aboriginal Families in South Australia. In Reay, M. (ed.) **Aborigines Now**. Sydney: Angus and Robertson. pp 115-32.

Jacobs, J. Laurence, C. and Thomas, F. 1988

"Pearls from the deep." Re-evaluating the early history of Colebrook Home for Aboriginal children. In Swain, T. and Rose, D. (eds) **Aboriginal Australians and Church Missions**. South Australia: The Australian Association for the Study of Religions. pp 140-156.

Jolly, M. and MacIntyre, M. (eds.) 1989

Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic contradictions and the colonial impact. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, M. A. 1983

The Australian Welfare State. Sydney: George Allen and Unwin.

Kitaoji, Y. 1971

Contemporary Aboriginal Families in the Lower Macleay Valley. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. Australian National University, Canberra.

Keen, I. (ed.) 1988

Being Black; Aboriginal cultures in "settled" Australia. Canberra: Australian Studies Press.

- Krupinski, J. and Stoller, F. A. (eds) 1974
The Family in Australia. Sydney: Pergamon.
- Larbalestier, J. 1977
Black women in colonial Australia. **Refractory Girl** 13-14:42-53.
- Lickiss, J. N. 1971
Aboriginal children in Sydney: the socio-economic environment.
Oceania XLI(3):201-228.
- Litster, W. 1975
The Seventh Day Adventist Church and Aboriginal Education.
Unpublished M. Education Thesis. University of Newcastle,
Newcastle.
- Lockley, B. 1957
Queensland Native Policy. Unpublished B.A. Thesis. University of
Queensland, Brisbane.
- Long, J. 1970
**Aboriginal Settlements: a survey of institutional communities
in Eastern Australia.** Canberra: ANU Press.
- Loos, N. 1970
Frontier conflict in the Bowen District 1861-1874.
Unpublished M.A. Thesis. James Cook University of north
Queensland, Townsville.
- 1982 **Invasion and Resistance: Aboriginal-European
relations on the north Queensland frontier 1861-1897.**
Canberra: ANU Press.
- 1988
Concern and contempt: church and missionary attitudes towards
Aborigines in north Queensland in the nineteenth century. In
Swain, T. and Rose, D. (eds) **Aboriginal Australians and
Christian Missions.** South Australia: The Australian Association
for the study of Religions. pp 100-121.
- Macdonald, G. 1988
A Wiradjuri fight story. In Keen, I. (ed.) **Being Black: Aboriginal
cultures in "settled" Australia.** Canberra: Aboriginal Studies
Press. pp179-201.
- McGrath, A. 1980
Spinifex fairies: Aboriginal workers in the Northern Territory,
1911-39. In Windschuttle, E. (ed.) **Women, Class and History,
Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978.** Fontana. pp
237-268.

----- 1987

Born in the Cattle. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Makin, C. F. 1969

The Aboriginal family in a metropolitan region (Perth). In Berndt, R. M. (ed.) **Thinking about Aboriginal Welfare.** Perth: University of Western Australia. pp 10-13.

Merlan, F. 1988

Gender in Aboriginal social life: a review. In Berndt, R. M. and Tonkinson, R. (eds) **Social Anthropology and Australian Aboriginal Studies.** Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal studies. pp 15-77.

Morris, B. 1983

From underemployment to unemployment: the changing role of Aborigines in a rural economy. **Mankind** 13(6):499-516.

----- 1985

Cultural domination and domestic dependence: the Dhan-Gadi of New South Wales and the protection of the state. **Canberra Anthropology** 8(1&2):87-115.

----- 1989

Domesticating Resistance: The Dhan-Gadi Aborigines and the Australian State. Oxford: Berg.

Myers, F. 1982

Ideology and Experience: the Cultural Basis of Politics in Pintupi Life. In Howard, M. (ed.) **Aboriginal Power in Australian Society.** St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press. pp 79-115.

----- 1986

Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

O'Laughlin, B. 1974

Mediation of Contradiction: Why Mbum women do not eat chicken. In Rosaldo, M. Z. and Lamphere, L. (eds) **Woman, Culture, and Society.** Stanford: Stanford University Press. pp 301-321.

Peterson, N. 1977

Aboriginal involvement with the Australian economy in the Central Reserve during the winter of 1970. In Berndt, R. M. (ed.) **Aborigines and Change: Australia in the '70s.** Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. pp 136-147.

----- 1985

Capitalism, culture and land rights: Aborigines and the State in the Northern Territory. **Social Analysis** (18):85-101.

- Queensland Parliamentary Records.** Brisbane: Queensland Government Printer.
- Reay, M. (ed.) 1964
Aborigines Now. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.
- Reay, M. and Sitlington, G. 1948
Class and status in a mixed-blood community (Moree, N.S.W.).
Oceania 18(3):179-207.
- Rowley, C. D. 1972(a)
The Destruction Of Aboriginal Society. Ringwood: Penguin.
- 1972(b)
The Remote Aborigines. Ringwood: Penguin.
- Rowse, T. 1990
Review of Young, E. and Doohan, K. 1989. **Mobility For Survival: A Process Analysis of Aboriginal Population Movement in Central Australia.** Australian National University North Australia Research Unit Monograph, Darwin. In **Australian Aboriginal Studies.** 1990 (2):73-76.
- Tropical Resource Management Pty. Ltd. 1984
Report on Mona Mona Re-development Plan. Cairns.
- Sackett, L. 1990
Welfare Colonialism: developing divisions at Wiluna. In Tonkinson, R. and Howard, M. (eds) **Going it Alone? Prospects for Aboriginal Autonomy: Essays in honour of Ronald and Catherine Berndt.** Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press. pp 201-219.
- Sanday, W. 1986
Access, Administration and Politics: the Australian Social Security system and Aborigines. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. Australian National University, Canberra.
- Sansom, B. 1980
The Camp at Wallaby Cross: Aboriginal Fringe Dwellers in Darwin. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.
- 1988
A Grammar of Exchange. In Keen, I. (ed) **Being black: Aboriginal cultures in "settled" Australia.** Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press. pp 159-179.
- Seventh Day Adventist church
Australasian Record and Advent World Survey. Official weekly periodical. Warburton: Signs Publishing Company.

- Smith, H. M. and Biddle, E. H. 1975
Look Forward, Not Back: Aborigines in Metropolitan Brisbane, 1965-1966. Canberra: ANU Press.
- Sullivan, P. 1987
Aboriginal community representative organisations: intermediate cultural processes in the Kimberley region, Western Australia.
East Kimberley Working Paper No. 22, Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, Australian National University, Canberra.
- Sutton, P. 1981
Land rights and compensation in settled Australia. **Social Alternatives** 2 (2): 6-10.
- Swain, T. and Rose, D. Bird (eds) 1988
Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions. South Australia: The Australian Association for the study of Religions.
- Thomson, J. (ed.) 1989
Reaching Back: Queensland Aboriginal people recall early days at Yarrabah mission. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Tonkinson, R. 1982
Outside the power of the Dreaming: paternalism and permissiveness in an Aboriginal settlement. In Howard, M. (ed.) **Aboriginal Power in Australian Society.** St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press. pp115-130.
- 1990
The changing status of Aboriginal women: "free agents" at Jigalong. In Tonkinson, R. and Howard, M. (eds) **Going it Alone? Prospects for Aboriginal Autonomy: Essays in honour of Ronald and Catherine Berndt.** Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press. pp 125-149.
- Tonkinson, R. and Howard, M. (eds.) 1990
Going it Alone? Prospects for Aboriginal Autonomy: Essays in honour of Ronald and Catherine Berndt. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Trigger, D. 1988
Christianity, domination and resistance in colonial social relations: the case of Doomadgee, north west Queensland. In Swain, T. and Rose, D. (eds) **Aboriginal Australians and Church Missions.** South Australia: The Australian Association for the study of Religions. pp 213-236.
- Tugby, D. 1973 (ed.)
Aboriginal Identity in Contemporary Australian Society. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press.

- Wheelwright, E. L. and Buckley, K. (eds) 1978
Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism.
Sydney: Australian and New Zealand Book Company.
- White, I. 1970
Aboriginal women's status: A paradox resolved. In Gale, F. (ed.)
Women's Role in Aboriginal Society. Canberra: Australian
Institute of Aboriginal Studies. pp 21-29.
- White, I. Barwick, D. and Meehan, B. (eds) 1985
Fighters and Singers: The lives of some Aboriginal women.
Sydney: George Allen and Unwin.
- Young, E. A. and Fisk, E. K. 1982(a)
**Town Populations. The Aboriginal component in the Australian
economy. Volume 2.** Canberra: ANU Press.
- 1982(b)
**Small Rural Communities. The Aboriginal component in the
Australian economy. Volume 3.** Canberra: ANU Press.
- Young, E. A. and Doohan, K. 1989
**Mobility for Survival: A process analysis of Aboriginal
population movement in central Australia.** Darwin: Australian
National University North Australia Research Unit Monograph.