

COMING IN? THE YANYUWA AS A CASE STUDY IN THE GEOGRAPHY OF CONTACT HISTORY

Richard Baker

They took them in there [to Borroloola], bunched them up, got them going and dumped them. (Steve Johnson¹.)

Introduction

Steve's quote reflects the Yanyuwa view that Northern Territory Government Welfare Officers were responsible for bringing the Yanyuwa in to Borroloola. This article examines in detail this move from bush to town life. In so doing I test the relative merit of conflicting views that Aboriginal people were 'rounded up' or came in to European settlements of their own volition. An understanding of the move from bush to town is of great importance as this move has been one of the most fundamental processes in Aboriginal history. A fuller understanding of this process is provided when oral sources are considered and used in conjunction with available written sources.

The Yanyuwa today number about 200 and mostly live in the Northern Territory town of Borroloola. The 1986 Australian census recorded Borroloola's Aboriginal population as 465 and the non-Aboriginal population as 182. This settlement is located 700 km south-east of Darwin by air or 1,000 km by road. Borroloola is located about 80 km inland from Yanyuwa traditional country, which is the Sir Edward Pellew Group of islands and the adjacent coastal areas of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Figure 2 illustrates the area the Yanyuwa say was the country of the different Aboriginal groups in the Borroloola area before European contact.

Borroloola was established as an European settlement in the early 1880s and for a brief period flourished as a staging point for Europeans and their animals. It was on the main overland droving route from Queensland to the Northern Territory and on to Western Australia.² The impact of Europeans in this period was focused on the Borroloola area and the Yanyuwa were mostly isolated from direct contact. Their contact was essentially optional: passing boats could be approached and those interested in having greater contact with Europeans could move into Borroloola. Those groups living closer to Borroloola however had no option but to be in contact with Europeans. European introduced disease

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- 1 1987 Tape 30A 26 min. This and all subsequent references to tapes refer to recordings I made which are now lodged with the Australian Institute for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies. In Baker (1989b) I discuss the methods used first to collect this material and secondly to transcribe it so that the location to the nearest minute on the tape is known.
 - 2 The largest number of Europeans ever to be in the region was probably in 1886, when many gold-diggers passed through on their way to the Kimberley gold fields. McMinn, the customs officer at Borroloola at the time, reported that, in three months of 1886, 1,500 people with 3,000 horses passed through Borroloola. South Australian Public Record Office, 566/41:6 of copy of letter sent by McMinn to Parsons, Description of social and economic conditions Borroloola: draft report to Government Resident.

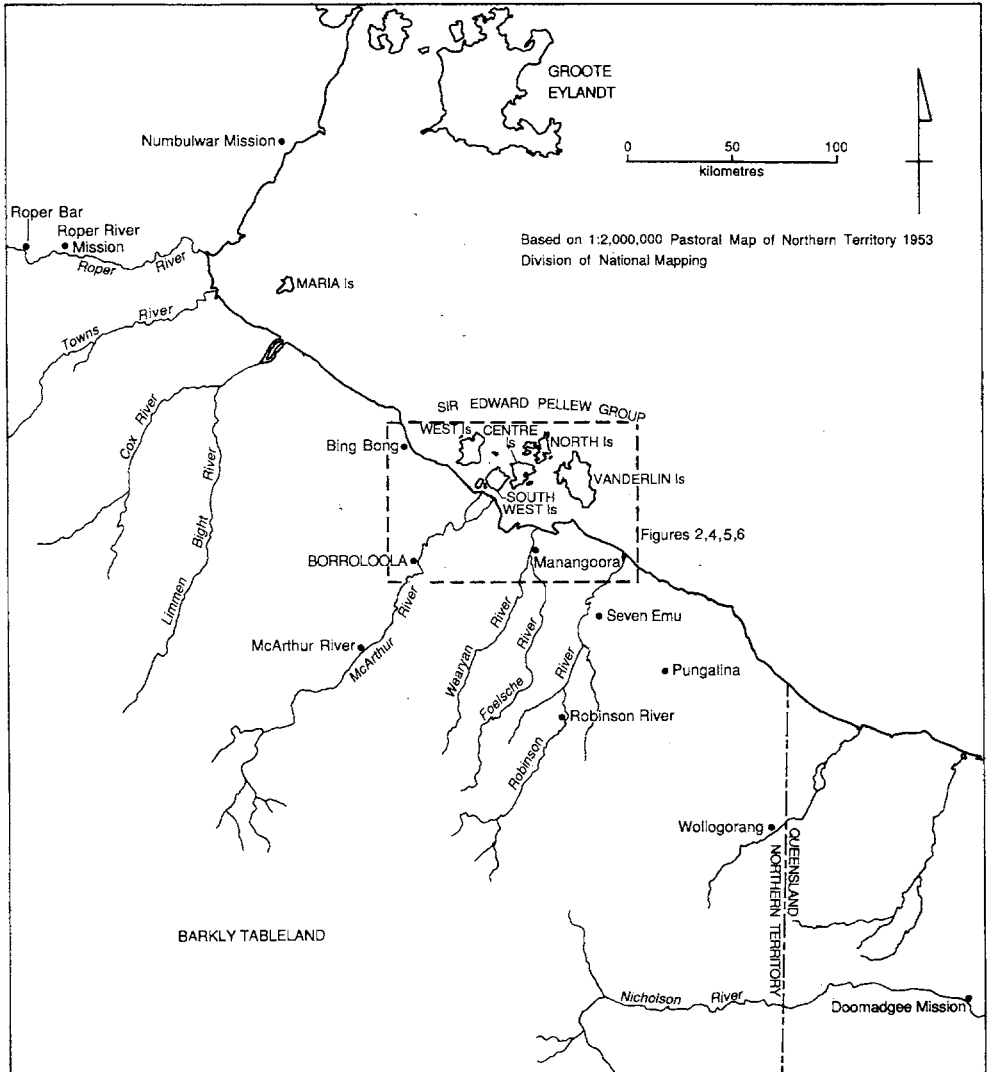


Fig 1: Borroloola region, NT. Maps and diagrams in this article were drawn by Debbie Canty, Geography Department, University of Adelaide, and Jennifer Sheahan, Cartography Unit, RSPacS, ANU.

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and violence led to a rapid decrease in the population of Aboriginal groups in the immediate vicinity of Borroloola. The Wilangarra people in particular declined in numbers and while there are a few people alive in Borroloola now who had Wilangarra ancestors the language is no longer spoken and the Wilangarra are no longer regarded by Aboriginal people in the area as a land-owning group.

The Yanyuwa as a result of their close links with the Wilangarra have assumed responsibility for what was once Wilangarra country. Borroloola itself is now regarded by Aboriginal people as Yanyuwa country although as figure 2 indicates this has not always been the case. As Annie Karrakayn notes³ 'other language properly for here now, Wilangarra little bit like Yanyuwa'.⁴

This article focuses on the history of a group of people who identify as Yanyuwa. It needs to be noted that in the area as well as linguistic based social divisions there is the mythologically based semi-moiety system that cuts across linguistic divisions. This semi-moiety⁵ system is outlined in figures 3 and 4. These two social systems are discrete but their members intersect. A good example of this comes from the Lurriyari Wubunjawa area (see figure 2) which is close to the boundary of Yanyuwa and Garawa country. This division is of little consequence as Aboriginal people who lived in the area would always have been at least bilingual. Many people describe themselves, as Rory Wurrulberranguu does,⁶ as 'me Yanyuwa-Garawa'. When discussing this area people were more concerned to impress on me that all the area is Mambaliya semi-moiety country.⁷

'Coming in' or 'letting the blacks in'

An expression that the Yanyuwa and many other Aboriginal groups use to describe the move from bush to town is 'coming in'.⁸ Loos in his discussion of European-Aboriginal relationships on the north Queensland 'frontier' uses the term 'let the blacks in'.⁹ In doing so he is writing about the European perspectives of the Aboriginal move from bush to town. I will concentrate on another view of the process. With the benefit of oral sources that Loos and other historians have often ignored¹⁰ it is possible to present Aboriginal perspectives on the move from bush to town.

The issues of people coming in and being let in have rarely been addressed by Australian historians. Reynolds briefly discusses how Aboriginal people came in and makes the point that 'these events have rarely been studied by Australian scholars although they

3 1983 Tape 19A 60 min.

4 On another occasion (1987 Tape 67A 34 min.) Annie noted the similarities between the two languages by saying 'Wilangarra that's mate for that Yanyuwa'.

5 As Layton (1980:8) notes from his field work in the nearby Cox River area (see figure 1), these 'semi-moieties are analogous with the father-son pairs in an eight sub-section system'.

6 1987 Tape 68A 26 min.

7 Tim Rakuwurlma, for example, makes this point (1987 Tape 19A 38 min.). Tim is fluent in both Yanyuwa (his father's first language) and Garawa (his mother's first language).

8 Whylo Widamara, 1986 Tape 15A 12 min., for example, talks of how the last Yanyuwa man remained living in the bush until 'this time when citizen[ship] been open he come in then'.

9 Loos 1982:161.

10 Anderson's 1983, 1984 use of oral sources in his work on part of the area Loos's work is concerned with, highlights the failings of Loos in considering such sources.

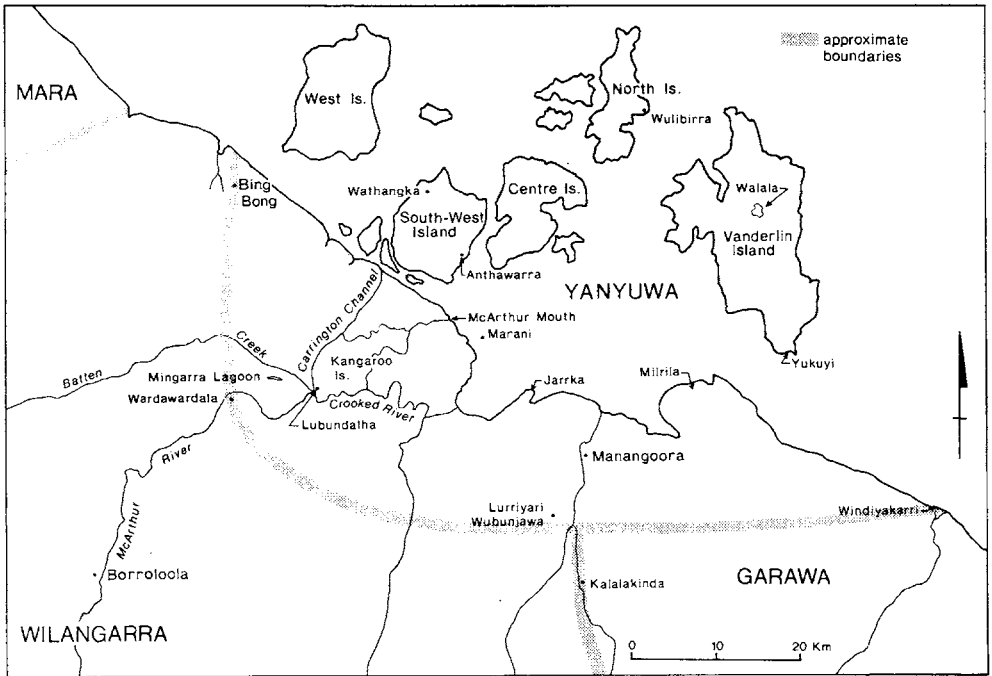


Fig. 2: Yanyuwa 'proper country', pre-European settlement.

YANYUWA SOCIETY			
Moiety A		Moiety B	
semi-moiety Wuyaliya	semi-moiety Wurdaliya	semi-moiety Rrumburriya	semi-moiety Mambaliya- Wawakarriya

Fig.3: Yanyuwa social groupings.

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must have been repeated a hundred times over'.¹¹ This article makes a step towards rectifying this situation. In providing a detailed case study of what was a common process, I raise many factors of wider relevance.

A fundamental issue in contact history is to what degree contact was the result of Aboriginal people coming in and how much resulted from Europeans going out into Aboriginal country. This issue is examined in detailed by Stanner who, from his field experience in the Fitzmaurice River area of the Northern Territory in the 1930s, notes that 'for every Aboriginal who, so to speak, had Europeans thrust upon him, at least one other had sought them out'.¹² Building on this view Stanner argues elsewhere that Aboriginal people 'co-operated in their own destruction by accepting a parasitic role which enabled them to live peaceably near the intruding whites'.¹³

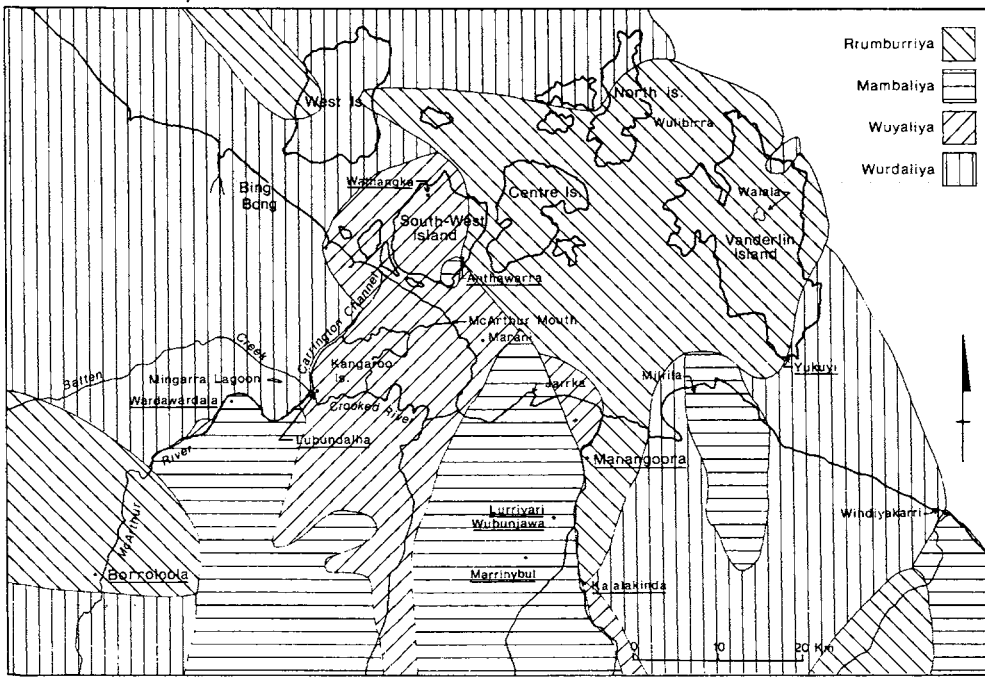


Fig. 4: Land belonging to each semi-moiety in the Borroloola area.

- 11 Reynolds 1987:63.
- 12 Stanner 1958:101. This article also appears in Stanner 1979 where this passage is on page 48. Sansom 1980b:11 coined the expression the 'Stanner corrective' to describe this equation of contact.
- 13 Stanner 1979:5.

The Yanyuwa example shows that there was not a single reason for Aboriginal people coming in. To hold such a view glosses over the fact that different groups came in for different reasons, at different times and in different places. Moreover, different individuals within groups came in for different reasons and indeed, as I will illustrate, some people came in on a number of different occasions for different reasons each time. Hence, when the group is considered as a whole, many factors were responsible for the collective move from bush to town.

As I will show, it is also important to go beyond asking *why* people came in and examine *how* people came in. To illustrate this, I will first analyse the move the Yanyuwa made from bush to town in terms of the more standard question of why they came in. I will then show that it is possible to map how the Yanyuwa came in.

Why did people come in?

From the life histories I have recorded from Aboriginal people in the Borroloola area¹⁴ it is possible to group seven major categories of reasons for people coming in. These are:

1. Longing for stimulants, for example, tea, sugar and tobacco. European tobacco was particularly important. The Yanyuwa had an appetite for this drug prior to European contact through the trade of Australian narcotic plants¹⁵ and the Macassan source of tobacco. A mild stimulant was also made by soaking pandanus nuts in bark coolamons.
2. Desire for staple foods. As well as new foods¹⁶ and stimulants, Europeans brought with them food, such as flour and sugar,¹⁷ which was essentially the same as existing food types. These foods were very attractive due to the volume they could be obtained in and the great saving of labour they represented. McGrath aptly describes flour and other such European foods as 'fast foods'.¹⁸
3. Economic necessity, due to environmental damage. This factor certainly needs to be considered for Aboriginal people in the Borroloola area because of the great damage cattle did to such important resources as water, water lilies, freshwater turtles and small mammals.
4. Curiosity about Europeans, their lifestyle and material goods.

¹⁴ Life history information was recorded from 54 adult Yanyuwa, 21 Garawa, 8 Mara, 6 Kurdanji, 2 Wambaya, 1 Arrente, 1 Alyawara, 1 Nunggubuyu, 1 Jawoyn and 1 Kunwingku people.

¹⁵ Mounted Constable R. Stott, who was stationed at Borroloola, collected a sample as part of the large ethnographic collection that he sent to the South Australian Museum in January 1910. Accession number A 1796, labelled 'Narcotic, native tobacco *Nicotiana suaveolens*'. The species identification was presumably made by Museum staff at the time the collection arrived.

¹⁶ The Macassans brought new food types as well, long before the arrival of Europeans. While one of my main informants, Tim Rakuwurlma, (1982 Tape 1B 38 min.) is disparaging about the Macassan lack of dress, 'he got no trousers only sarong', he concedes 'but he got proper good tucker' and mentions rice in particular.

¹⁷ Prior to European and Macassan contact, flour had been made from grinding a variety of seeds and fruits and the honey of native bees was collected. The latter was also added to a drink made from lemon-grass and water (discussed by Johnson Babarramila 1987 Tape 65B 7 min.), which represents a precursor to the sweet tea commonly drunk in the area now.

¹⁸ McGrath 1987:125.

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5. The fact that surrounding groups had already come in. This would have been a great attraction to those still out bush due to the social and ceremonial opportunities that large gatherings would have provided.
6. Disease. Introduced diseases may have considerably affected people still living in the bush and had a destabilising effect on traditional life, forcing people in to town.
7. Security, providing protection from both Europeans and other Aboriginal people. For example, people give one reason for leaving Vanderlin Island as fear arising from a traditional killing carried out by a Yanyuwa man, in 1928.¹⁹ Myers notes how a similar occurrence played a role in the Pintupi move into Haasts Bluff.²⁰ Through oral histories, Myers documents how some people came in attracted by food but others were 'fleeing revenge parties and others attempting to evade the repercussions of wife stealing'. This implies that people left through fear of both the toughness of Aboriginal law²¹ and the intervention of white law.

Of these categories, the first three are essentially economic reasons and could be labelled as categories of a 'super waterhole'²² theory. Such a theory argues that Aboriginal people always gathered at places of plentiful economic resources and that European settlements merely offered new and better waterholes. The last four reasons are all social. The fourth and fifth can be grouped together as part of a 'super ceremony' theory which stresses that Aboriginal people came together whenever possible for social reasons and that European settlements provided a new means for (or cause of) such gatherings.

Another distinction can be made between the super waterhole and super ceremony factors. In general, the former occurred first and the latter, in turn, was dependent on the first. That is, for people to be attracted into European settlements for social and ceremonial reasons there had to be Aboriginal people already there and those already there generally came in for super waterhole reasons. Many people came into Borroloola for the first time to attend ceremonies. Obviously, in such cases, others had already made the move in and in the process created a pull for others to do so. Clearly, then, super waterhole and super ceremony factors are interrelated. Each person who came in because of any combination of the above factors, or of one single factor, created a further incentive for others to do so.

The Yanyuwa view of 'coming in'

When asked directly why everyone had moved into town, Yanyuwa people inevitably replied along similar lines to Pyro, who said²³ '[welfare²⁴ went] mustering up all the

19 The Borroloola Magistrates book (Northern Territory Archives, F267) lists the case of 'Gilbry' on 14 April 1928. Harney (1946:128) also mentions this killing.

20 Myers 1986:34.

21 As the Yanyuwa police aide, Billy Rijirmgu, put it, the punishment for breaking Aboriginal law was often capital 'he's gone...[but] with white man law at least you get a chance'.

22 McGrath (1987:20) uses this term to describe the attraction cattle stations had for Aboriginal people. I use the term in more general sense to refer to the attraction various types of European settlements had for Aboriginal people.

23 1987 Tape 63A 30 min.

24 The term 'welfare' is used by the Yanyuwa to describe both individual Northern Territory Welfare Branch officers and collectively the Northern Territory Welfare Branch. I use the term in this same dual sense.

people there, old people from every station'.²⁵ However, during all my field work it was nigh on impossible to find anyone who was actually picked up by the welfare officers. It is worth exploring this apparent paradox.

It took several months' work, being referred from person to person, before I eventually found a number of Garawa people who actually were picked up from Wollogorang and Robinson River stations in the late 1950s²⁶ by a welfare officer and brought into Borroloola. However, even in these cases it appears that at least some of those picked up came in willingly. Those picked up from Wollogorang station for example told me²⁷ that they had been 'starving for tucker'. After further discussion,²⁸ it was explained that this situation had arisen because the station manager's wife had been 'jealous' of Aboriginal women and refused to give them any rations. Apparently her jealousy was caused by the relationships her husband was having with Aboriginal women.

If, in several months' work, I could only find a few individuals who were brought into Borroloola as they were 'starving for tucker', where does this leave the view that 'welfare been rounded up everyone'. It is worth breaking this statement in two.

1. Was it welfare?
2. What does 'been rounded up' mean?

In answering these questions a third question will be answered as well: was it everyone who was rounded up?

Was it welfare?

Patrol officer Evans lists the Aboriginal population of Borroloola in 1949 as 31.²⁹ He lists by name 28 people and all of these are Yanyuwa apart from one Queensland man who married a Yanyuwa woman. As outlined above, these Yanyuwa people had already come in for a variety of reasons. Annie Karrakayn describes³⁰ how many Yanyuwa people came in before the arrival of welfare and emphasises the role one Yanyuwa woman had in bringing people in:

All the families belong to island, they all up here now...[in] Borroloola...Banjo's daughter was married to whitefella here and that's the way they been come here and stay here.

²⁵ Others to use this or similar expressions in this way include Dulcie Walwalmara, who describes (1987 Tape 66B 34 min.) how welfare 'been muster him all about'; Roger Makaranyi, who says (1987 Tape 69A 18 min.) Aboriginal people were 'rounded up like a cattle' by welfare; Dinny Nyliba who told me (1983 Tape 9B 15 min.) that 'welfare been muster up all the people' and Musso Harvey, who describes (1987 Tape 51B 36 min.) how welfare 'started to muster all the people'. McGrath 1987:2 documents similar expressions from Aboriginal people in the Ord River area of Western Australia. She quotes Amy Laurie describing how a European 'started mustering all the blackfellers and quietening them all down...like horses'.

²⁶ Musso Harvey, who was working with the welfare officer involved, describes picking people up from these locations (1987 Tape 22A 25 min.).

²⁷ 1987 Tape 47B 15 min.

²⁸ 1987 Tape 47B 32 min.

²⁹ 'Report on visit to Borroloola District'. Report to Director of Native Affairs dated 9.8.49. Australian Archives, Northern Territory Region, CRS: F315 Item 49/393 A2 (a copy is also in F1 48/15).

³⁰ 1983 Tape 19A 88 min. Bella Marrajabu similarly (1986 Tape 15A 73 min.) discusses how 'they already been here'.

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Banjo's other daughter was later married to another European and Annie notes³¹ how people also came to Borroloola to see her and to obtain tobacco.

The police based in Borroloola and the rations they issued to the 'aged and infirm' were an important factor in people coming in before welfare's arrival. Lenin Anderson,³² who has lived virtually all his life at Manangoora and is therefore in a unique position to comment on the move of Aboriginal people from there to Borroloola, notes that people moved in before welfare:³³ 'the police started to drag them into Borroloola, give them ration, then the welfare took over'. Whylo Widamara recalls³⁴ how Ted Heathcock, the policeman at Borroloola in the late 1930s, came out to Vanderlin Island and told his father 'you got to shift to Borroloola, got all this kid'. Whylo remembers that they came in because of a promise of schooling but they had to 'wait for school, we never went to school...wait, wait, wait, wait, nothing. Not long [ago] that school been come...when I been working stockman'. He also recalls³⁵ that when questioned about when the school would arrive the welfare officer replied 'ah not long now [until you get a] school' and concludes that the welfare officer 'used to tell liar that old fella'.

Ruth Heathcock, who lived in Borroloola and Roper Bar in the 1930s with her husband, Constable Ted Heathcock, recalls³⁶ that Aboriginal people then were living in town in camps that

were established because people were getting old and there wasn't the care [out bush], their young ones were going away for work and things like that. So at least the Aboriginal Department established camps and they were near whatever police station,...but there wasn't schooling for them unless they were taken down to the mission...

Ruth goes on to explain that the missions involved were at Roper River and Groote Eylandt, and that a number of Aboriginal families moved to these locations if they had relations there, so that their children could go to school. She also notes³⁷ that the Aboriginal trackers employed by the police 'brought the old people' into Borroloola and adds that other old people came on their own accord as they were getting 'decrepit and they knew they would be supplied [with rations]'.

A common explanation given by Aboriginal people for first coming in to Borroloola was to attend ceremonies. This process was occurring long before the arrival of welfare. Rory Wurrulberrangu, for example, describes³⁸ how he first came to Borroloola for a ceremony when he was a young man (probably around 1920) and notes that Aboriginal people 'want to live here [in Borroloola]...people [from] every place no matter where from, they come up big fella business [ceremonies] ... I been come along my father'. Rory concludes by noting how he and his father 'been go back long country now, go home now'. Many others, however, once in town, did not make this return trip and those who did go

31 1987 Tape 37B 15 min.

32 Lenin's father was Andy Anderson, the European leaseholder of Manangoora Station from the 1940s until his death in 1972, and his mother was a Garawa woman. Andy's death is discussed by the Pollards (1988 Tape 5B 27 min.) who were the welfare officers at the time.

33 1987 Tape 67A 32 min.

34 1987 Tape 13A 3 min.

35 Ibid. 4 min.

36 1986 Tape 29B 28 min.

37 1986 Tape 30A 12 min.

38 1987 Tape 68A 30 min.

back had begun a pattern of return trips to town separated by shorter and shorter spells in the bush. The very last couple to come in did so in the mid-1970s and, like many before them, came in to attend a ceremony. Maisie Charlie in translating their description³⁹ of why they came in notes how relations went out to their camp and brought them 'here for that ceremony and they been stop here for good then'.

Before and after the establishment of the welfare depot at Borrooloola, periodic collapses of the small Gulf stations, due to bankruptcy or death of the owner-managers, led some Aboriginal people to move into Borrooloola. Ricket Murundu gives an example of this when he describes⁴⁰ the owner-manager of Pungalina and how 'soon as he died everyone shift from there'. An interesting aspect of this example is that, while Ricket moved west back to Manangoora, his sisters moved east into Queensland. He describes how they 'kept going to Wollogorang, keep going to Doomadgee'. His sisters are still in Queensland, having moved further east still to Burketown.

Two important points have been raised by this section. First, it appears that the only people to be physically brought into Borrooloola by welfare were the small group of Garawa people. Secondly, by 1949 as a result of a variety of factors at least 27 Yanyuwa people had already moved into Borrooloola.

'Been rounded up'

Yanyuwa people today use many European expressions that they have picked up from their long association with the cattle industry. Individuals have described to me how the police been 'quieten us down',⁴¹ how 'this [is] my country, this [is] my run',⁴² how when young they were 'like a green colt',⁴³ how someone was a 'little bit jackaroo',⁴⁴ how all the young people 'are very hard to wheel out now'⁴⁵ and how 'we're trying to catch him up and break them young boys in'.⁴⁶

The use of the terms 'been rounded up' or 'mustered up' are further examples of cattle work imagery being applied to people. To view 'been rounded up' as the welfare physically picking people up is to put mainstream Australian English connotations on an Aboriginal English term. Such an interpretation overlooks the way it works, like all the examples above, as a metaphor inspired by cattle times. Moreover, within this metaphor it needs to be realised that cattle can simply be rounded up by going to where they have gathered themselves. While cattle can be rounded up by whip cracking stockmen roaming the country, they can just as effectively be rounded up by stockmen going to the waterholes where cattle congregate in the late dry season.

Like cattle that are fenced up in yards, after they have rounded themselves up at a waterhole, the Yanyuwa have become aware of their decreasing independence only some time after they made the move into a central spot. Herein lies a core issue of the 'we been rounded up' view. It is, essentially, a retrospective perspective. Hence it is only after it

39 1987 Tape 49A 4 min.

40 1987 Tape 35B 13 min.

41 Nero Timothy 1983 Tape 14A 5 min.

42 Laura 1987 Tape 48B 33 min.

43 Don Manarra 1987 Tape 35A 21 min.

44 Musso Harvey 1987 Tape 52A 8 min.

45 Gordon Milyindirri 1987 Tape 17B 38 min.

46 Ibid. 42 min., he was referring to the need to get them to understand the old ways.

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happens that people can wonder, as Annie Karrakayn does,⁴⁷ 'how this whitefella came over us'.

The complex cycles of dependence that came with town life provide an answer to Annie's question. Reliance on European food, medicine, schooling and the associated loss of use of (and eventually knowledge of) Aboriginal equivalents, all led to increasing cycles of dependency on Europeans and their goods and services. The move into town *per se* did not change the Yanyuwa. For example, they attempted to keep up hunting and gathering from this new base. In pre-contact times people had come together in large groups and later dispersed. The Yanyuwa, like other groups,⁴⁸ regarded the move into European settlements, like pre-European moves to favoured locations, as temporary. Only with hindsight could they see that this was not the case and that things had radically changed. There were now too many people in one place for the surrounding bush to support. As Annie Karrakayn notes⁴⁹ 'too many people used to live around and not enough kangaroo, not enough anything, goanna because big mob...too many people'. Changes unforeseen at the time of the move were creating increasing dependence on European goods and services.

As well as being retrospective, the 'rounded up' perspective the Yanyuwa have of their history is a collective view. It is an explanation of what happened to the group and not to individuals, hence people say 'we got rounded up' and 'I got rounded up'. Herein lies the explanation of the apparent paradox that I mentioned above. While individuals were not rounded up, from a retrospective view the Yanyuwa as a group were collectively rounded up.

How did people 'come in'?

Introduction

The retrospective and collective Yanyuwa belief that they had been rounded up is essentially the result of the Yanyuwa asking themselves 'how did we end up where we are today?'. Much of the European analysis of the coming in process is based on a similar methodological framework. The question often asked is 'how did they end up where they are now?'. Reasons can be found and factors given such as the seven listed above. Researchers in some cases have argued about the relative importance of these different factors but some also have argued that a single reason has been *the* reason for people coming in.

It is possible, however, to go beyond such approaches and actually examine how people came in. This can be done by using life history information in conjunction with mapping both these lives and overall changes in settlement patterns. This mapping of settlement patterns needs to be done on two scales. On a large scale it is possible to map the changing patterns of where people were living and on the smaller scale it is possible to map the changing internal patterns of individual camps. As I will show, mapping the process of the Yanyuwa move from bush to town raises findings that necessitate a radical redefinition of the more usual question, 'why did people move in?'.

By asking people where they lived when, it is possible to map individual lives and build up a picture of how these people made the transition from bush to town. The resulting picture is a complex one. Not only did different individuals come in for different reasons, but many individuals came in many different times for different reasons. This pattern of coming in and going back out is best illustrated by an example.

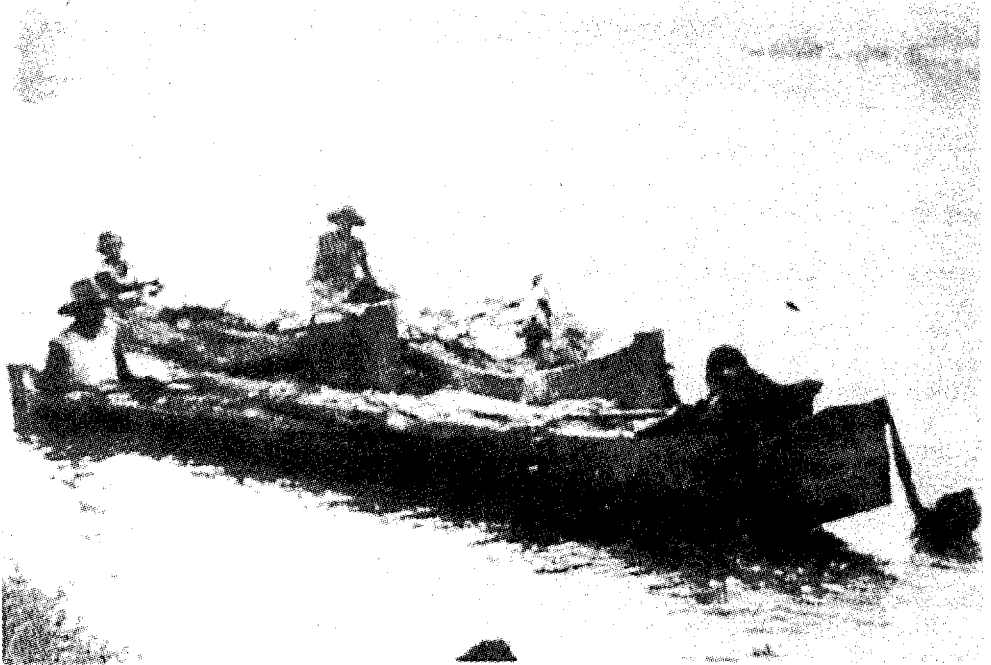
47 1987 Tape 48B 14 min.

48 See Read and Japaljarri 1978.

49 1987 Tape 48A 26 min.

An individual example: Tim Rakuwurlma

Tim Rakuwurlma was born late last century on Vanderlin Island. His childhood was spent moving around this island and nearby mainland. The Rrumburriya seasonal movements mapped in figure 5 are based largely on what Tim told me about this period of his life. Tim first came into Borroloola in about 1915. He describes⁵⁰ how he came in to attend a ceremony and ended up staying for a while with his sister, who had a job with a Chinese gardener. Soon after, he and an older brother got a job working with Captain Luff, a European trepanger. They worked for a number of years before returning to Vanderlin Island.



Dugout canoe carrying paperbark, c. 1955. (left) Tim Rakuwurlma. Ted Harvey collection, AIATSIS.

For most of the 1920s and 1930s, Tim remained on his island country. He and his brother and their families travelled in dugout canoes around Vanderlin Island and often visited nearby areas on the mainland. The time they spent at each location appears to have been longer than when Tim was young. Europeans had established settlements at two of the Rrumburriya favourite camping spots, Yukuyi and Manangoora. While he had visited these places often before Europeans went there, with the arrival of the Europeans he and his family spent longer of each year at these locations. At both places there was casual employment available (trepanging at Yukuyi and salt gathering at Manangoora) for which supplies such as tobacco and flour could be obtained. During this period Tim travelled by

⁵⁰ 1987 Tape 51A 8 min.

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canoe to attend ceremonies at Manangoora, Bing Bong, Wathangka, Anthawarra, Roper River and Borrooloola. As well as going to Borrooloola for ceremonies Tim made visits there to bring in turtle shell that he traded for tobacco and flour but Vanderlin Island remained his base. His contacts with Europeans at Yukuyi, Manangoora and Borrooloola appear to have been fuelled, in part, by the taste for European food he had developed while working for Luff.⁵¹

His two oldest sons spent their early years on Vanderlin Island but, as one of them recalls,⁵² their lives changed dramatically in about 1940:

We left that place because of the law, government, that policeman wanted everybody to stay in one place. I don't know why they never trusted [us] just to I suppose quieten us down, to know the law...my father couldn't stay out there he had to come in...he wanted to stay out there but...because that policeman said 'you want to keep them one place where he can look after them with rations and that' or send them out to work when the cattle station was...short of men. So my father went to work droving out to Queensland, Boulia...

On his return from droving, at the time of World War Two, Tim was based at Borrooloola as the army discouraged Aboriginal people from going bush. He lived in the Yanyuwa section of the Malarndarri camp (discussed in detail below). Tim, however, managed to keep visiting his country by working for the army, carrying supplies out to the army base at Anthawarra on South West Island in his dugout canoe. After the war he spent much of his time with his family moving by canoe between Borrooloola, Vanderlin Island and Manangoora. Manangoora was their most permanent base and when I visited the old camp site my Aboriginal guides could all point out where Tim's camp was (see figure 7). In the 1950s and 1960s, Tim lived in Borrooloola and his visits to the island occurred during the school holidays. His movements became more and more restricted due to the time his children spent at school and the work he did for welfare. Medical problems also made it increasingly difficult for him to paddle out to his islands.

Tim's life has always centred on ceremonies. In his younger days he made long trips by canoe to participate in ceremonies and, more recently, he has flown in light planes to other Aboriginal communities for ceremonies. A turning point in his personal history, and that of the Yanyuwa in general, was in 1950 when the last major ceremony to be held out bush in the Borrooloola area occurred. Since 1950, all ceremonies have been held in town and this has tended to reassert the importance of town at the expense of the bush. Whereas previously ceremonies involved those who had made the move into town returning to the bush, subsequently the few people left living out bush in order to keep up their ceremonial obligations had to make a trip into town. Once a person had made the initial step of working for Europeans, a cycle of increasing dependence on European goods and services was created that eventually led people into town. Once in town this process of increasing dependence was further intensified.

This brief summary of Tim's life has introduced three particular issues that need to be examined in turn:

1. People did not necessarily stay in town once they had come in; there was a lot of coming and going.

⁵¹ Tim describes (1987 Tape 36A 14 min.) how, while working for Luff, he became used to European food such as flour and jam.

⁵² Nero Timothy 1983 Tape 14A 6 min. This is the same incident that Nero's father's brother's son Whylo describes above.

2. Employment with Europeans was an important factor in bringing people in. People often entered the European sphere through a series of stepping stones of longer and longer periods of employment. In some cases such alignment was an important survival tactic during the 'wild times'⁵³ when Aboriginal people not associated with a European boss were often indiscriminately killed.

3. The locations in which the Yanyuwa took up employment and became aligned with European bosses are places where the Yanyuwa had previously seasonally congregated.

Coming and going

For a long period a number of people continued to live out bush when relations lived in Borrooloola and there was contact between town and bush people. The bush and town Aboriginal people came together particularly for ceremonies and to trade prized bush foods such as dugong⁵⁴ for prized European items such as tobacco. Musso Harvey recalls how, from about 1920 to 1940, his grandfather remained a 'bush man'⁵⁵ and occasionally walked into Borrooloola taking with him 'big mob of dugong on his head, take him to Borrooloola, half of the dugong...give it relation they give him tucker, ration, little bit tea, sugar, tobacco'. Musso notes that his trips to Borrooloola were limited to only a day or two.

Coming in involved a gradual process of longer and longer stays in town with an associated growing attitude that Borrooloola was home. A turning point in each person's life came when that person came to regard Borrooloola and not the bush as home. Steve Johnson, who has lived his whole life on Vanderlin Island,⁵⁶ is well placed to comment on the move from the islands into Borrooloola and the subsequent gradual decrease in return visits. His following quote shows how the cattle industry disrupted the learning about country that had previously been passed on from generation to generation. Steve can remember a period when older people continued to go out bush every dry season:

In the cold weather, like May, June...they'd all be out on their walkabout, most of them...the old timers like Tim [Rakuwurlma], Peter and all that mob, most of the young ones were away working [on cattle stations] of course but it is when those old fellers got too old, well that's it, all the young fellers never came down much.⁵⁷

Clearly the passing on of knowledge of country from one generation to the next was limited by the younger generation being away working. Steve goes on to say⁵⁸ that when he travelled up the McArthur River in the 1950s 'you could see where they had been,...camps on just about every bend...you could see signs where they had been just about everywhere'. With time, however, these trips became both less frequent and shorter. As Steve recalls people would say

53 This is the term Aboriginal people in the Borrooloola area use to describe the violent period that came with European settlement of the area.

54 This marine mammal is a particularly prized food source to the Yanyuwa (see Bradley 1988). It was hunted from dugout canoes (see Baker 1988) and today is hunted from aluminium dinghies.

55 Another fiercely bush-orientated man of this era earned the title 'bushranger' for his commitment to the bush.

56 Steve Johnson's father (also called Steve Johnson) was a European trepanger who lived most of his life there with Steve's mother, a Yanyuwa woman.

57 Steve Johnson 1987 Tape 31A 2 min.

58 Ibid. 6 min.

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'Oh well we've got to go back to Borroloola now'...that's common when they are out on a holiday trip...It has got into the state where they couldn't get out of Borroloola because they might miss something...because everyone else is in there and everyone watching one another and that's it. I think that is what they live on now...that's their life, they hang around so they don't miss anything...⁵⁹

Steve here notes a crucial shift in Yanyuwa political locus. Where people are is the centre that holds people and this local political geography clearly had shifted. It was a turning point in Yanyuwa history for Borroloola and not the islands to be regarded as home. Steve recalls⁶⁰ that this first occurred in the 1950s when people making the trip out to Vanderlin Island began to say things to him like 'ah, looks like we will have to stay in Borroloola now, that is our home'. Another factor limiting return visits to the islands is outlined in Reay's account of Borroloola in the early 1960s. She notes that while some old people continued to paddle canoes 'in the vicinity of Borroloola, they and their relatives thought it was risky for them to...undertake a long...journey in a dug-out canoe to the islands'.⁶¹

Another changing aspect of bush trips is the Monday to Friday working week introduced by welfare.⁶² Those employed by welfare obviously could only go out bush on the weekend or during longer holidays from work. Those employed tended to be the same prominent community leaders who owned dugout canoes and who otherwise would have been taking their families out bush. With time even those people not working tended to wait for the weekends to go out bush.⁶³

Ted Harvey, the welfare officer at Borroloola from 1954 to 1959, recalls⁶⁴ that by the time he was in Borroloola, Yanyuwa trips to their islands were only 'for a couple of weeks, but it was more like we go for a holiday'.⁶⁵ Steve Johnson, from the perspective of his island home, similarly recalls⁶⁶ how, in the late 1960s, 'they started to slacken off and stay in the Loo'.⁶⁷ All their trips got shorter and shorter and shorter and shorter until there were none'.

The decline in frequency and the duration of such trips was gradual. Ted Harvey could write⁶⁸ in January 1955, for example, that '75% of natives have left camp and are located at various points along the river as far as the mouth'. Welfare not only had a role in

59 Ibid. 10 min.

60 1987 Tape 26B 43 min.

61 Australian Land Commissioner 1977:1327.

62 Discussed by Steve Johnson 1987 Tape 31A 10 min.

63 This pattern of those with jobs, and therefore with the least time, making the most trips is continued today in Borroloola. It is those with jobs who own cars and boats that are needed to make trips. Billy Rijirngu describes (1987 Tape 55B 4 min.) how he uses his annual leave from his job as a police aide to go bush.

64 1987 Tape 3B 6 min.

65 One needs to be wary of European dismissive comments comparing Aboriginal trips to holidays because much of Yanyuwa pre-contact life could be seen by Europeans as a holiday. Fishing, travelling in boats and camping on beaches are all associated by Europeans with holidays.

66 1987 Tape 32A 13 min.

67 A local colloquialism for Borroloola.

68 Australian Archives, Northern Territory Region, CRS F1 Item 52/948 Pt 2, E.O. Harvey letter to Director of Welfare Branch, 31 January 1955.

encouraging people to make the initial move into Borroloola but as Annie Karrakayn notes⁶⁹ they played an active role in making sure people came back to Borroloola from subsequent bush trips:

Every time when we used to come down here to bush this way, that welfare used to come down too, follow us and take us back. 'You better go back. Might be kid might get sick.' And that we used to take notice.

Welfare, however, probably needed to do little to encourage a process that was self-generating. A major factor in this self-generating process of Borroloola becoming more important is the significance of birth and conception sites to the Yanyuwa. The growth in Borroloola's importance was further assisted by the reciprocal process of people losing touch with traditional country. As a result people lost some of the intimacy that they had with the land and today people often express a fear of country that has not been used as much as it once was.

Alignment

The move from bush to town life was a gradual process and not a 'one or the other' decision. Sometimes the stepping stones in this process were Europeans living away from Borroloola carrying out labour-intensive economic activities such as trepanging and salt working. These employers needed labour and in exchange offered both access to coveted supplies such as tobacco, tea and flour and the protection that involvement with a European gave. Such involvement enabled people to stay on their land and to avoid the larger adjustments that came with moving into town. Annie Karrakayn gives a good description of this stepping stone process describing⁷⁰ how 'all the people used to work' trepanging for Steve Johnson on Vanderlin Island 'first [and] then they used to work for that salt [for] Horace Foster' at Manangoora. Annie similarly speaks of⁷¹ how her father had progressed from 'first for the salt and for that timber [sandalwood cutting] and he [later] worked on cattle stations and droving'.

By working for a European one became known as one of 'their blackfellas' and so was set apart in European eyes from 'myall' relatives still in the bush. This view, that a dichotomy existed between 'myall' and 'civilised' Aboriginal people, embodies the assumption that 'civilising' was an irreversible one-way process. It was a view at the core of much official policy on Aboriginal people and was firmly embedded in the assimilation ideals of the Northern Territory Native Affairs Branch and the Welfare Branch which succeeded it.

This view may have had some validity for a society as a whole, in the sense that there was a general shift from bush to town life. For the individual, however, it was illusory. An individual on holiday from work could go bush and return to traditional patterns of life. One must then be careful in assessing European comments on the 'nomadic' state of Aboriginal people. In 1948 the Native Affairs Branch patrol officer Syd Kyle-Little⁷² visited the Foelsche River area and reported: 'When I reached the Fulche [sic] River I met a party of nomadic natives'. While these individuals were not working for anyone at that time there is no reason why they might not have been doing so previously; the nearby Manangoora salt

69 1987 Tape 33B 43 min.

70 1987 Tape 37A 9 min.

71 1987 Tape 37A 15 min.

72 Australian Archives, Northern Territory Region, F315 49/393A 2, Report on Patrol of Borroloola District.

works had been operating for 30 years⁷³ and there had been small-scale pastoral activities in the area for at least 40 years.

'Big places'

The European settlement of the Borroloola area was shaped in many ways by the existing Aboriginal land use and settlement patterns. While it is generally acknowledged that Aboriginal people moved in to European settlements it is important to note that the reverse process also occurred. Europeans often went to Aboriginal settlements and as a result most European settlements in the area are located on old Aboriginal camps. What were previously seasonally occupied Aboriginal camps became occupied year round and the first step of the coming in process was initiated.

Figure 5 reconstructs an idealised seasonal round for Yanyuwa bands. There were probably between 12 and 16 such groups before European settlement and these groups tended to travel around and live off the land belonging to the semi-moiety of the male members. This reconstruction is idealised in that each group probably did not visit all these locations each year and they would sometimes have come together for ceremonies at locations other than the ones indicated. Visits also would have often been made to visit relations who lived on other country. In recounting their past movements people often mentioned favoured camping spots. Ten locations are particularly stressed and are referred to as 'big places'. They are underlined in figures 4, 5 and 6.

Mapping details of individual lives illustrated the importance of these 'big places'. By plotting the location of births (see figure 6) areas that were foci for occupation can be highlighted. Births before the establishment of European settlements at these locations are shown and the approximate date of each European settlement is given. This bush births map indicates that every European settlement in the area is located where Aboriginal people had previously been seasonally concentrated. As well as this birth data, the amount of archaeological evidence at these sites also indicates their importance prior to Europeans settling there. Scatters of stone artifacts are found at all the 'big places'. Borroloola itself was a focus for Aboriginal activity before European settlement. Even though it was the first location of European settlement in the region, I was able to record information on two births there before the arrival of Europeans.⁷⁴

All of the 'big places' have specific features that made them favoured camping spots. Manangoora, for example, provided an important base from which the rich cycad resources of the area could be exploited. Manangoora also provided the location on the Wearyan River closest to the sea with fresh water resources and as such was an important base for the exploitation of marine resources.

The mainland 'big places' were all linked by well defined footpaths that followed favoured routes between these locations. Such routes usually linked a series of favoured camping spots (often lagoons). The two island 'big places', Wathangka and Anthawarra,

⁷³ A salt licence was granted by the Borroloola police (Northern Territory Archives, F275, Borroloola Police Letter Book, 15 October 1918).

⁷⁴ Information on birth places was collected by asking individuals with known birth dates about the location of ancestors' birth places. By examining known age differences between generations, an estimate of average generational age differences was made of 20 years for mothers and children and forty years between fathers and children. These figures are obviously only broad guesses. There can, however, be no doubt that 'big places' were big before Europeans came, as many births calculated by this system occurred many decades before Europeans arrived.

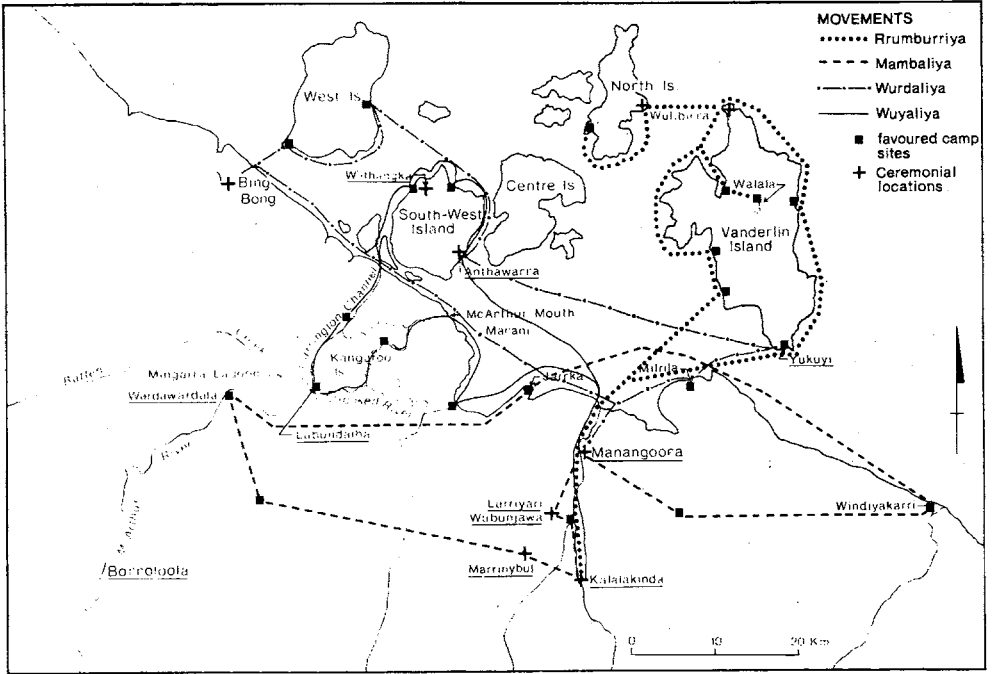


Fig. 5: Band seasonal movements.

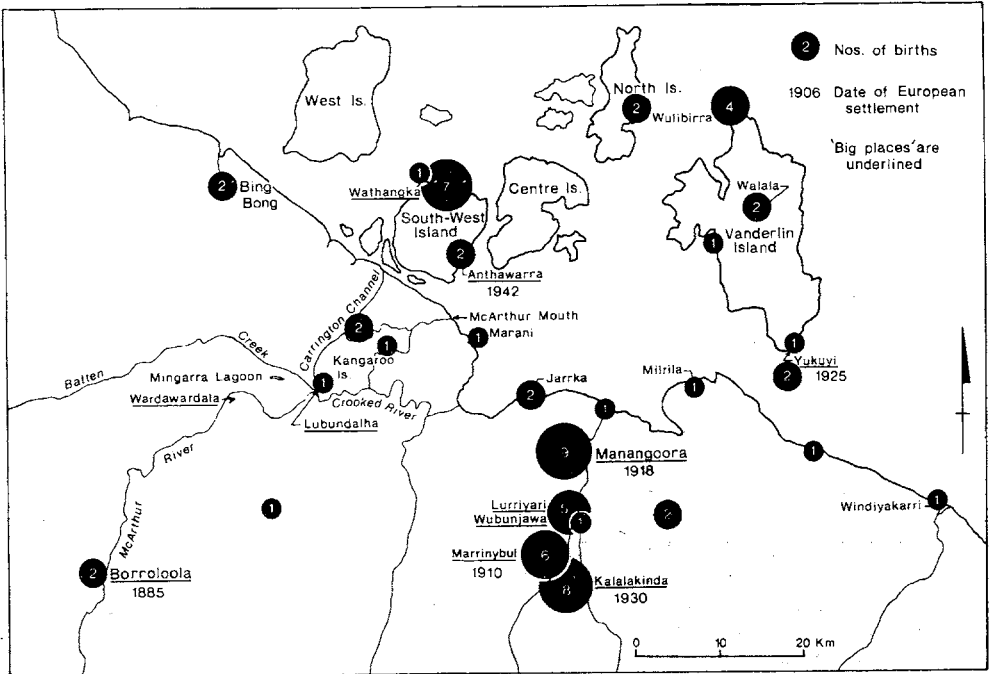


Fig. 6: Yanyuwa bush births.

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have two of the most reliable water supplies on the islands and are also both well located in open sea voyage by hugging the coastline of South-West Island.

The most significant locational factor for mainland 'big places' is the close juxtaposition of fresh drinking water and associated mainland food resources with easy access by river to marine resources. For the Yanyuwa such sites represent the best of both marine and mainland worlds. The conditions that made these sites attractive to Aboriginal people also encouraged Europeans to settle at them. From the earliest European settlement there was a need for lagoons for horses and cattle.⁷⁵

Figure 6 also shows how Aboriginal settlement was focused along the major rivers of the area. As well as being an important resource zone the rivers were the 'highways' along which Aboriginal people moved. Until recently, in the absence of all-weather roads, the rivers were also the main routes for Europeans. European settlement patterns and land use hence reflect the previous existing Aboriginal cultural landscape of the area.⁷⁶

This example also illustrates how European patterns of life influenced Aboriginal settlement patterns. The European use of the McArthur River in particular led to changes in Aboriginal settlement patterns. What had previously been favourite locations to camp at, butcher dugongs and maybe stay just for a day or two became more permanent camps from which contact could be made with Europeans travelling up the river.

An important process that occurred at 'big places' was the incorporation of Europeans, to varying degrees, into the Aboriginal economic and social sphere. As Anderson notes from his research in Cape York on Aboriginal relationships with European bosses, the degree to which bosses could be successfully incorporated into Aboriginal society depended on the length of time bosses stayed.⁷⁷ The two longest staying bosses in the Borroloola area lived at Yukuyi and at Manangoora. Both were successfully incorporated into local Aboriginal society.

Three 'big places': the stepping stones in the coming in process

Yukuyi

Steve Johnson (senior) came to the Pellews in 1910 and trepaned at a number of sites that the Macassans had used. In about 1925 he established a permanent base at Yukuyi on the southern tip of Vanderlin Island and brought up a large family there with his Aboriginal wife, Harriet Mambalwarrka. Harriet was a Wurdaliya woman from West Island and, once they started living together, it followed that Steve Johnson (senior) was given the skin which made him 'straight way' married to his wife. This meant that he became a Rrumburriya man which happens to be the land-owning semi-moiety for Vanderlin Island. In Yanyuwa eyes, his attachment to Vanderlin Island was illustrated by his long association with the area.

⁷⁵ Mingarra lagoon (see figure 2), for example, was a police horse paddock as early as 1889, Borroloola Police Records, Northern Territory Archives, F275, 31 August 1889.

⁷⁶ The 'cultural landscape' concept was developed by the American cultural geographer Carl Sauer. In his seminal 1941 article he eloquently argues for the importance of a cultural perspective in historical geography. Sauer saw the cultural landscape as the expression on the landscape of a given culture's economic activity, material culture and settlement patterns. Baker 1989a explores in detail the cultural landscape concept and the relevance it has to Aboriginal history.

⁷⁷ Anderson 1983:428.

The commitment of Steve Johnson (senior) to the area is stressed today by the most senior *ngimarringki*⁷⁸ for this country⁷⁹ in the following terms: 'Him been finish there again, along Vanderlin, never go to hospital long Darwin, go back long his country nothing'. His son, Steve Johnson (junior),⁸⁰ has lived his whole life on Vandelin Island and, as the only permanent occupant of the islands since the 1950s, has played an important role in 'looking after' the islands in the eyes of the Yanyuwa people now resident in Borroloola. He has continued traditional burning practices and has safeguarded various sites of significance.

An excellent example of the high regard in which Steve is held, is contained in the following quote from Irene Kanjujamarra. I was asking her how one couple⁸¹ managed to stay out on their traditional country by themselves right up to the 1970s and she explains how Steve was responsible for this by making sure they had the supplies they needed:

He [Tyson] stayed there all the time because if he needed sugar or tea leaf or something like that, flour,...Old⁸² Steve would...send order with them, Old Steve was really good for people, very helpful, helped people everywhere, you wouldn't get stuck out there with him around. Because we got stuck out there quite a few times, he'd come to the rescue all the time, yeah. That is why a lot of people like Old Steve, a real help, he'd do anything for people...he was born there.

As mentioned above in Tim Rakuwurlma's life history the arrival of a European 'boss' at Manangoora led Aboriginal people to spend longer each year at this location. Yukuyi became a regular stopping point in the seasonal movements of Yanyuwa people. Tobacco and other sought after European items were obtained either through trading items such as dugong meat or by working trepang for Steve Johnson. Johnson's resources were however limited and his supplies could support only a few people at any given time. If the two large camps that subsequently formed elsewhere in the region are examined in detail it is possible to see how Yukuyi was an early step in a gradual process of the Yanyuwa spending longer of each year camping in larger numbers at single locations.

Manangoora

Yanyuwa and Garawa mob they been come there, live there one mob...long that place, Manangoora, they all been come there for work for salt...all the Yanyuwa people been all come there, from island too, island mob they been come there live one mob, Yanyuwa and Garawa they're good mates (Ricket Murundu)⁸³

Manangoora became the biggest of the big places. As Ricket notes, Manangoora was a stepping stone in the move from bush to town. His comment on Yanyuwa and Garawa

78 This is the Yanyuwa term that is usually translated as owner. The Yanyuwa are *ngimarringki* for their father's country and *jungkayi* for their mother's country. The latter term is usually translated by the Yanyuwa into English as 'manager'.

79 Tim Rakuwurlma 1983 Tape 7A 33 min.

80 All references to Steve Johnson in my footnotes are to Steve Johnson (junior). His father died before I first visited the area.

81 Tyson Walayungkuma and Rosie Marikabalinya.

82 'Old' is a term of respect many people, including many older than him, use for Steve Johnson (junior).

83 1987 Tape 35B 20 min.

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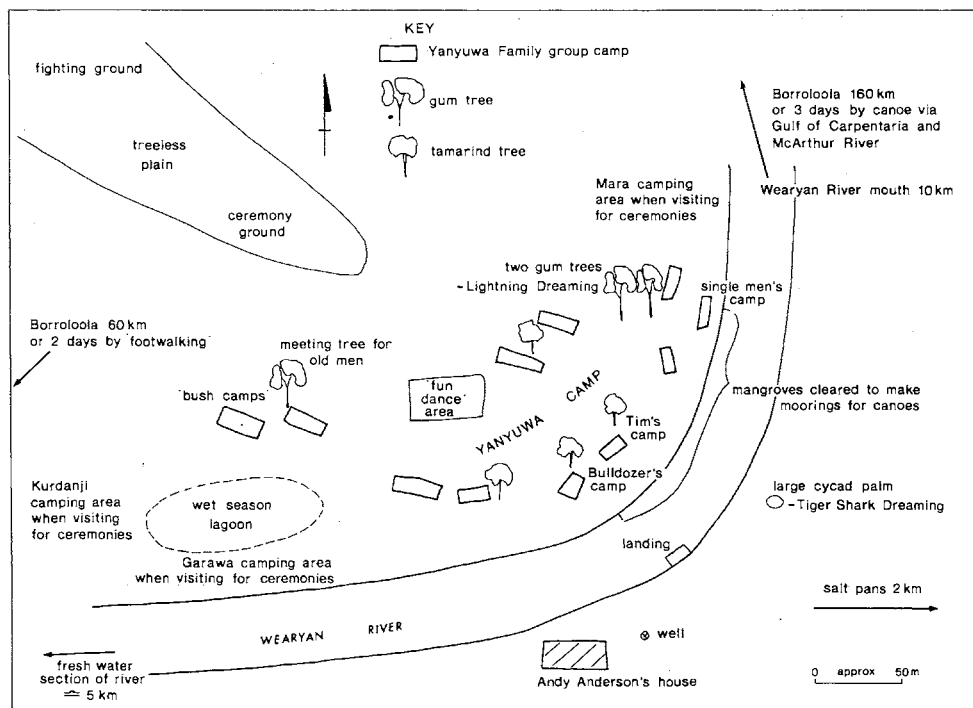


Fig. 7: Manangoora homestead and Aboriginal camp.

becoming 'one mob' at Manangoora illustrates how coming in involved the establishment of new alliances. Manangoora had been an important ceremonial site for both Yanyuwa and Garawa people long before the arrival of Europeans. The process of becoming 'one mob' was a development of a ritual association that already existed, rather than a break from tradition.

Manankurra is the Yanyuwa name for an area on the lower reaches of the Wearyan River. I will use the spelling Manangoora after the station of this spelling, which is located on the Wearyan River about 15 km from its mouth and about 80 km by road from Borrooloola. There are three major river crossings between the area and Borrooloola (the Wearyan, Foelsche and McArthur) and as a result the area can still be cut off from vehicle access for three to five months a year during the wet season. Due to this isolation there has been little European economic development on the coastal area east of Borrooloola. Pastoral activity has remained at little more than the subsistence level of producing cattle to eat⁸⁴ and capital improvements have been minimal. Another subsistence activity in the area was tobacco growing. It proved a great attraction to Aboriginal people and a number of people have described to me how they walked to Manangoora from surrounding areas when they were 'starving' for tobacco.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ As the current leaseholder for Manangoora told me (1987 Tape 28A 11 min.), most properties in the area are still run 'just for killer [bullock ready for eating] sake'.

⁸⁵ Isaac Walayungkuma, for example, (1986 Tape 11A 73 min. and 1987 Tape 38B 3 min.) describes walking to Manangoora from Seven Emu station to get tobacco.

The Manangoora area was of great ritual and economic significance to Aboriginal people before European contact. Dense stands of cycads in the area were a greatly prized food source and are still prominent in Yanyuwa mythology. Leichhardt passed within 15 km of Manangoora in 1844 and in doing so passed through the area that has dense stands of cycads. In his journal he gives a detailed description of the methods used by Aboriginal people in the area to remove the toxins from cycads.⁸⁶ The significance of the cycads as a food source lies in their seasonal dependability and the fact that, after treatment, sliced nuts could be stored until required and then baked into loaves. As a result, cycads formed an important part in the diet of large ceremonial gatherings in the area.

The Manangoora area is also ideally situated for the exploitation of both terrestrial and marine resources, it is just downstream of the fresh water limits of the Wearyan River. This enabled easy access in canoes, both upstream for fresh water resources and downstream to the rich dugong and turtle hunting areas formed by the shallow water between the mainland and the Sir Edward Pellew Group.

Patrol officer Kyle-Little, who passed through Manangoora on 8-10 October 1948, notes that nine 'natives of the Yanyula tribe were employed by Mr Anderson to work his salt pans'.⁸⁷ He also notes that Andy Anderson was living with an Aboriginal women and that they had two 'half-caste' sons. Kyle-Little records that 'approximately 60 natives (living a nomadic life)...were camped on the opposite side of the Wearyan River to Mr Anderson's establishment'.⁸⁸ Kyle-Little also stresses⁸⁹ the abundance of food there:

Manangoora is an old established tribal ground and all the natives of the Borroloola district visit this country when on walkabout or holiday period.

There is an abundance of native foods, i.e., cycad palm nuts, yams,⁹⁰ wallaby, unlimited supplies of fish, dugong, etc.

Archaeological remains indicate the long history of Aboriginal use of the Manangoora area. The concentration of ceremonial earth-works in the area gives an indication that Manangoora has long been ritually significant. A high density of stone artefacts similarly testifies to an intensive use of the area before Macassans and Europeans introduced steel and glass, which replaced stone as the raw material for tools. Middens of shellfish⁹¹ (some of considerable age as they are eroding out of river banks) in the area also testify to the long history of use.

Another indicator of the importance of the area before European settlement is the number of people born or conceived there before Europeans arrived (see figure 6). One such person was Tim Rakuwurlma's younger brother, Leo Yulungurri, who was conceived there in about 1905. Tim notes⁹² that his parents were at Manangoora then to 'get munja,⁹³ sit

⁸⁶ His journal was published in 1847 but original notebooks and journal held by the Mitchell Library in Sydney (accession numbers, C155, C159) have the most detailed descriptions.

⁸⁷ Australian Archives, Northern Territory Region, CA 1078, Native Affairs Branch CRS F315 Item 49/393 A2:1 of Report relative to mines and cattle stations employing native labour in the Borroloola district.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p.2.

⁹⁰ The Manangoora area also has an important 'yam dreaming' site. This is described by Annie Karrakayn 1987 Tape 40B 27 min. It is located at Lhurnunda, 3 km downstream of Manangoora.

⁹¹ As elsewhere in the region near the coastline *Kurruyuyu* (*Anadara granosa*) predominates.

⁹² 1987 Tape 51B 18 min.

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down long ceremony too, young man [initiation]'. The current leaseholder of the area has told me⁹⁴ that there must have been 'big mobs here' before Europeans arrived, because of the number of ceremonial earth-works in the area. Steve Johnson⁹⁵ also cites these features as evidence for the importance of the area before Europeans arrived. Ricket Murundu⁹⁶ describes how an ancestor of his 'lived that place [when] no whitefellas been before' and told me⁹⁷ how there was a 'big camp there...before that whitefella...Old Foster'. Jerry Rrawajinda similarly notes,⁹⁸ 'Manangoora we belong to that place, all this whitefella been come after, they're looking for bloody country'. Tim Rakuwurlma⁹⁹ stresses the mythological significance of the area before Europeans, stressing that his 'dreaming shark' made the well at Manangoora 'before that whiteman been come up'.

Ceremonies were an important reason why people came into Manangoora and often they remained there after the ceremonies had finished. Dinny Nyliba, when describing¹⁰⁰ how in his grandfather's times 'people been all come from every country' for Kunabibi ceremonies, says 'sometimes they been have them at Manangoora that is why people been sit down there, poor bugger, just work for bread and beef that is all'.

The first European to reside permanently in the area was Horace Foster, who commenced working salt at Manangoora in 1918.¹⁰¹ He set about organising the gathering of salt from a seasonally flooded salt pan using Aboriginal labour in this labour-intensive enterprise. The salt pan had been worked occasionally before by Steve Johnson (senior) but he did so from his base on Vanderlin Island and sailed across in a lugger to get the salt.¹⁰² A significant aspect of the salt gathering was that it was strictly seasonal. Steve Johnson told me¹⁰³ how people only worked 'from July to about October [when it] started to get too hot and the king tide used to come back into the salt pan'. The work was highly flexible also in that the quantity gathered depended on the amount of salt ordered. Annual salt sales varied, for example, in the years 1929 to 1942, between nil to 147 tons. The average annual figure was 26.5 tons.¹⁰⁴ The salt was gathered up by raking it with a flat

93 The local Aboriginal English term for cycads.

94 1987 Tape 57A 45 min.

95 1987 Tape 27A 9 min.

96 1987 Tape 69A 37 min.

97 1987 Tape 35A 46 min.

98 1987 Tape 13A 36 min.

99 1987 Tape 71B 39 min.

100 1987 Tape 8A 32 min.

101 He was issued the salt licence granted by the Borroloola police (Northern Territory Archives, F275, Borroloola Police Letter Book) on 24 June 1918.

102 Nora Jalirduma (1986 Tape 2A 21 min.) worked for Johnson at this time and describes working getting salt for him and also subsequently for Foster. Annie Karrakayn also discusses working the salt on 1986 Tape 37A 11 min. and Ricket Murundu on 1987 Tape 35A 40 min. An early European description of working salt in the region is in Tom Turner's Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney MSS 1336, letter of 26 July 1907.

103 1987 Tape 27A 11 min.

104 All figures are from report titled Darwin Salt Works, Australian Archives, Northern Territory Region, CRS F1 Item 43/89 dated 25 November 1943. The average figure has been calculated from figures given in this report. The report also notes that the boost in sales in 1941 to 147 tons was the result of 'Queensland buyers...lodging larger orders'.

hoe into large heaps which were then bagged. The bags were subsequently kept out of the rain under 'bough shades' until the arrival of the boat that carried them away.¹⁰⁵

It appears that Foster chose the location of the station to take maximum advantage of the existing concentration of Aboriginal people in the area. Foster stayed until his death in March 1941 when he accidentally shot himself.¹⁰⁶ Foster's presence at Manangoora dramatically changed Aboriginal settlement and movement patterns in the area. Whereas previously people had only gathered there seasonally, they now established a permanent residence. A large camp of people grew up on the opposite side of the river to Foster's house. Permanent settlement there had the advantage of safety from European violence, for, as Dinny¹⁰⁷ recalls, they 'never had trouble nothing...because [Foster] know people' who camped there. Ceremonial activity continued in the area after Foster's arrival with the more significant ceremonies being held a discreet distance away from the European homestead.

Economic life also continued much as before due to the abundance of bush tucker around Manangoora. Manangoora served as a base from which people could hunt. Annie Karrakyn recalls¹⁰⁸ how, when she lived there in the 1940s with her parents, they used 'to go up the river look for sugar bag, goanna...fish...camping out for one week, might be two week'. European items such as tobacco, flour, sugar and tea would have been added to the existing economy. The addition of flour would have reduced the labour-intensive work women did preparing cycads to produce the bush tucker equivalent of bread. The European boss at Manangoora, however, did not always have flour and when this happened he relied on Aboriginal people to provide them with cycad equivalents.

Figure 7 is a reconstruction of this camp as it is remembered by a number of individuals who lived there. It shows that a three-fold division of contact with Europeans developed. Women living on the European side of the river obviously had the most contact with Europeans. On the 'Aboriginal side' of the river, closest to the boat landing, lived people who worked the salt and assisted in the loading and unloading of stores when a boat arrived. As in other camps in the region of the European contact period, the more experience Aboriginal people had had with Europeans, the closer they lived to them. Significantly, the two closest camps to the European side of the river belonged to Tim Rakuwurlma and Sam Birribirikama¹⁰⁹ who both had a long history of working for Europeans. Other families lived near Tim's and Sam's camps but further back from the river. Another group of people who had less to do with Europeans and who typically spent more time away carrying out traditional hunting and gathering activities lived further still from the river in the 'bush camp'. The European-Aboriginal divide at Manangoora was such

105 Nora Jalirduma who worked the salt describes this sequence of work on 1987 Tape 13A 19-22 min.

106 Accounts of his death were recorded from Ruth Heathcock 1986 Tape 29B 3 min. (the European nurse who travelled from Borroloola in a dugout canoe to treat him), Bessie Kithiburla 1987 Tape 46A 2 min. (one of the Aboriginal people who took Ruth there), Steve Johnson 1987 Tape 27A 34 min. and 1987 Tape 33A 33 min. (he was there with his father) and Pyro 1987 Tape 63B 20 min. (who travelled with his father by foot to Borroloola to notify Heathcock). The *Northern Territory News* of 19 November 1983 has an article describing Heathcock's version of her role in the incident.

107 1987 Tape 8B 14 min.

108 1987 Tape 37A 10 min.

109 My informants described these camps as belonging to Tim and Sam respectively but also explained how their families also lived with them.

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that Lenin Anderson can state¹¹⁰ that his father, Andy Anderson, never went across the river. Anderson, like Foster before him, was, however, incorporated into Aboriginal life in many ways. He had a series of Aboriginal wives, relying often on bush tucker that they provided and he employed many Aboriginal people to gather salt on the nearby salt pan.

When the Yanyuwa recall their days at Manangoora they stress the seasonal round of movement that initially occurred from this base. People continued to visit the other 'big places'. It is significant, however, that those stressing the seasonal range from Manangoora are older individuals. With time people spent longer of each year at Manangoora and made fewer movements to other locations. The reminiscences of younger people stress the semi-permanent life-style that developed here.

When talking about their association with Europeans at Manangoora, Aboriginal people often mention the useful skills they obtained in the process. Aboriginal people chose to live there, so they must have made a conscious decision that the advantages of living there outweighed the disadvantages. In particular, they stress the opportunity to learn English. However, because of the sexual demands placed upon them, by the boss and other European men who visited, women are somewhat ambivalent about their time there. Eileen Yakibijna, for example, values what Aboriginal people learnt at Manangoora and describes how things were all right, at least for her, as she was not pursued by the European boss.¹¹¹

He been teach us English now...he used to teach us work, gardening and horse hair boil him, put it in sun and teach us how to speak English and cooking...good man all right but he used to be looking for girl all the time, not along me, he was good man along me, good friend, only for those other people.

Like other old camps, Manangoora has become a symbol for many Yanyuwa people of what was. Older people still hold it very dear and are keen to return to the area. Significantly, younger people (who have never lived in the area) do not share the passion of their parents. Ricket Murundu, who was camped at Manangoora with his wife for most of the period I have had contact with the area, told me¹¹² how Aboriginal people still want that country Manangoora, because we're not going to leave that country because we been born there...and all the white people been come push around Aboriginal people from that country...and people today scattered...the welfare scattered him...I don't know why...everybody been say 'I think we'll have to go, welfare got to cart people down Borroloola...we want that country really, because we been born long that country. And why them European been come and push everyone, pushing everyone, trying to claim that country. I don't know where he come from that bloke.

Adding potency to this view of Manangoora representing the past, is the fact that the last local ceremony to be held away from Borroloola took place there in early 1950.¹¹³ Ted Evans, the newly arrived welfare officer in Borroloola, writes that this ceremony left

110 1987 Tape 57A 26 min.

111 1986 Tape 26B 17 min.

112 1987 Tape 35B 2 min.

113 Patrol officer Ted Evans visited the Manangoora area in February 1950 and noted the gathering of people for this ceremony in his report Patrol to Wearyan River a Report to Director of Native Affairs dated 10 March 1950, Australian Archives, Northern Territory Region, CRS F315 Item 49/393 A3.

Borrooloola deserted. On visiting the Aboriginal camp, he found it 'had been almost abandoned except for about a dozen people'. Three of these people subsequently paddled Ted to the site of the ceremony, at the junction of the Wearyan and Foelsche Rivers, where he found 'some 300 Aboriginals had assembled there from places as distant as the Queensland border to the east and the Roper River to the north-west'.¹¹⁴ Queenie Ngarambulirri, who with her husband and children travelled in a dugout canoe from Roper River for this ceremony, notes¹¹⁵ 'only that ceremony now been bring us back' to the Borrooloola area. She also recalls¹¹⁶ how after the ceremony she and her husband decided to stay at Borrooloola: ' "We will have to stop here now, too far to go back " ' Queenie goes on to say that 'children been go school now' was a major reason why they stayed in Borrooloola. Subsequently ceremonies in the region have all been at ceremony grounds in Borrooloola. As Musso Harvey notes: 'that last one too that time...rest we had in Borrooloola'.¹¹⁷ For Ricket Murundu, this event represents the end of a phase in Yanyuwa history: 'everything finish, we been have last ceremony, finished no more'.¹¹⁸ And after that we been move'.¹¹⁹

The presence of Evans at the 1950s ceremony adds to the current symbolic significance of Manangoora and this last ceremony held away from Borrooloola. 'Ted Evan times' is a short-hand expression many people use for this time. It was from Evans, at this ceremony, that many Aboriginal people in the area first heard about the ration post the Natives Affairs Department had established in Borrooloola. Hence many people date their 'rounding up' from this time. The beginnings of my unravelling of the rounded up paradox occurred when I could find no one who was actually brought in by Evans. While numerous people spoke of this as the time of getting 'rounded up', Musso Harvey, who accompanied Evans, told me¹²⁰ that Evans 'didn't force them, to go. He just told them for old people...look after them for medicine...a lot of old people moved in and stopped [in] Borrooloola'. On another occasion Musso again stressed¹²¹ that 'no one picked up from Manangoora...they come up themselves'.

The lure of rations in Borrooloola was a major factor leading people to 'come up' themselves. Lenin Anderson describes how in the years following Evans's visit there, those few people who stayed at Manangoora were enticed into Borrooloola by the promise of rations. He recalls¹²² that those coming back to Manangoora for brief visits would tell those Aboriginal people still living there, 'oh ration now, the government giving us ration

114 Both quotes from Ted Evans come from a typescript he supplied me with. I have lodged this with AIATSIS as part of the Borrooloola History File. He also recounts details of his time at Borrooloola and his visit to Manangoora on 1987 Tape 44A 34 min.

115 1987 Tape 14A 19 min.

116 Ibid. 14 min.

117 1987 Tape 22B 11 min.

118 Ricket is revealing a Manangoora-centric view of the world here. Ceremonies did continue in Borrooloola but not at Manangoora, the place most important to him.

119 In 1988 the Yanyuwa with the help of John Bradley of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority organised a major walk from Borrooloola to Manangoora with the aim of educating younger Yanyuwa people of the mythological and economic resources of the areas traversed.

120 1987 Tape 51A 40 min.

121 1987 Tape 22A 25 min.

122 1987 Tape 57A 39 min.

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now, we don't have to work'. Lenin concludes 'so that's why they started to get led into Borroloola'.

The best way to illustrate the complexities of the coming in process is to give the example of the move one family made from Manangoora to Borroloola. Annie Karrakayn, who was a young woman at the time, describes¹²³ how she and her family had previously lived year round at Manangoora and says, 'only welfare now been make us go out there'. When I asked her how they did this she replied, 'Well I don't know, that's his job from government. I can't understand, just took us back'. Detailed questioning, however, revealed that welfare did not physically take her family back. Annie gives the following account of what Evans told people:

You better come up now, all your children you got to bring all your children back for school...no food in the bush you can come, bring your children and yourself you can get ration now in Borroloola.

Annie adds that

we didn't understand that time too we just been come we used to frighten for whitefella, to talk, to talk back to them...¹²⁴ He used to come in...his Land Rover and tell us you better come down to Borroloola for tucker. Anywhere they used to look for the people hunting around for the people...I been come along *libaliba*.¹²⁵

Annie here expresses the subtle nature of 'rounding up'. If people were not able to 'talk back' to welfare they had little option but to do as they were told. People were not directly brought back by welfare, they paddled their dugout canoes into Borroloola; however, they were indirectly brought back by the combination of welfare's authority and inducement of rations.

As already mentioned one couple did not come in and stayed living out bush in the Manangoora area until the mid-1970s. Annie explains¹²⁶ that this was because the husband was 'really bush man'. When I asked her if her father 'was a bush man too', she replied, 'ah nothing, my daddy been working [for Europeans] all his life'. Annie goes on to cite her father's work history (quoted above) as proof of his contact with Europeans. Herein lies another reason why Evans could 'round up' people so easily; most of them had already been in and out of the European sphere and in particular had a liking for the rations that came with life with Europeans.

A further reason why Annie's family moved in is that older relatives were already living in Borroloola. Annie describes¹²⁷ how when she was a young girl in the 1930s her family travelled regularly between the Sir Edward Pellew Group and Borroloola. On one visit they found out that the police were distributing rations to the aged and her father's parents decided to stay in Borroloola and live on these: 'when they get that ration now all the old people...used to stay there now'.

123 1987 Tape 37A 12 min.

124 Annie on another occasion described (1987 Tape 33B 19 min.) how people moved into Borroloola as 'we have to go there because used to take word for welfare'.

125 Aboriginal term for dugout canoe used in Aboriginal languages over much of the Northern Territory coast -line. The term is Macassan in origin.

126 1987 Tape 37A 15 min.

127 1987 Tape 39A 12 min.

Another factor in Annie's family's move in to Borroloola from Manangoora involves Annie's 'half-caste' brother. Annie describes¹²⁸ how Ted Evans told Annie's father that he had to bring this young boy into Borroloola and quotes Evans as saying ' "old man you've got to give me that boy now, so he can go to school so he can learn about for you " '. It is also possible that the increasing numbers of people at Manangoora was making it hard for the surrounding bush to support all the Aboriginal residents of the camp. Annie recalls¹²⁹ how 'in those days little bit of food used to be around the place, too many people'.

Yet another factor that needs to be considered in Annie's family move to Borroloola is a tidal wave associated with a cyclone in 1948 that destroyed the previously productive European-run vegetable gardens at Manangoora and for many years caused the previously productive soil to be too saline for vegetables.¹³⁰ Hence Evans's offer of rations in Borroloola came at a particularly opportune time as supplies of European food in the area to supplement bush tucker were limited.

Another reason for leaving Manangoora raised by Annie was the need Aboriginal women had to get away from European men. She recalls¹³¹ how when visiting Europeans arrived 'we used to be frightened for whitefella too, run away when I been young girl, we used to run away bush...when we used to see that whitefella come, we run away now'. She goes on to note how people used to say to each other, 'Maybe they want a girl all this whitefella coming here' and how 'old lady, maybe [safe from] white people, not young lady we used to run away'. Annie on another occasion notes,¹³²

Whitefella really greedy for all the girl...they used to go greedy for girl, just take away 'nother girl, 'nother girl, 'nother mob of girl used to run away in the bush. I saw this when I been kid. All the whitefella used to just come up 'hey can I take your wife, I'll give you this one [indicates smoking tobacco]'...and sometime rum.

Eileen Yakibijna, also attributes¹³³ the move in from Manangoora to Borroloola, at the time 'that welfare man told them to come for [rations]', to the need to 'run away from' the European boss of Manangoora who 'been want to marry young girl'.

Malarndarri camp

Malarndarri is the name for the old camp on the east side of the McArthur River at Borroloola. It was established as a camp in 1916, when the policeman moved all 'unemployed' Aboriginal people across the river. The policeman concerned noted how because 'the Blacks camped here are a nuisance...I have instructed all the blacks not employed to remove their belongings etc to the other side of the River'.¹³⁴ From this time until 1969 this was the home of all Borroloola's Aboriginal people apart from the very few

128 Ibid. 34 min.

129 1987 Tape 35B 46 min.

130 Discussed by Steve Johnson and Lenin Anderson 1987 Tape 26B 32 min.

131 1987 Tape 48B 16 min.

132 1987 Tape 48A 29 min.

133 1987 Tape 13B 20 min.

134 The Borroloola Police Records, Northern Territory Archives, F275, Letter titled Re Blacks Nuisance Town 4 December 1916. Only the very oldest Yanyuwa individuals can remember the move to Malarndarri. Jerry Rrawajinda who is in his late 70s and was in town as a young boy can just recall the move here (1987 Tape 13A 40 min.).

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who worked and lived in town. Malarndarri hence became the home of those Aboriginal people who came in to Borroloola.

This section focuses on the period from 1950 to 1970 when, as a result of Aboriginal people coming in to Borroloola, Malarndarri became a big camp. It was both much larger and more permanent than any of the 'big place' camps had been. By the mid 1950s in the wet season there were over 200 Aboriginal people in Borroloola and all but a few lived at Malarndarri. Before 1950 there were probably never more than 40 Aboriginal people living in Malarndarri but this figure rapidly increased in the early 1950s after the opening of welfare's ration depot.

Figure 8 was drawn by taking a variety of people to the camp and asking them about features still visible. Many frames of old humpies are still visible (see next page) and my informants could tell me who had lived in each. The huts were made from timber frames, flattened kerosine drums and paperbark. As supplies of paperbark soon ran out around the camp it was brought to the camp in dugout canoes from elsewhere (see p.36).

In recent years the lack of Aboriginal contact with the 'white side' of the river has been used against Aboriginal people trying to assert their rights over land here. In a public meeting when this issue was raised Musso Harvey forcefully made the point¹³⁵ 'we had to stay Malarndarri, that was our land over there. We could not come in this side. If we come this side policeman would say "no this not your place, your place over the other side. Stay out there" '. Malarndarri was the result of strict policing of a policy of segregation. Initially made by the police, this policy was subsequently enforced by the welfare officers. An illustration of how welfare continued the segregation is contained in a dispute between the welfare officer and the Borroloola missionary in 1954. The missionary was keen to hold evening services but was thwarted as welfare prohibited both the missionary from visiting the camp after dark and Aboriginal people being on the 'white side' of the river after dark. The District Superintendent visited Borroloola and reported on this dispute. He supported the welfare officers' upholding the 'unwritten law at Borroloola, that all natives must be across the river, in their own camps, before sundown'.¹³⁶

The time spent at Malarndarri is now seen by many as the good old days. The manner of the establishment of Malarndarri, and the strict policing of the rules on where Aborigines could and could not live that maintained the existence of the camp, are rarely commented on.¹³⁷ Instead positive aspects of the camp are stressed. It is only through examining the written records that the strictly policed segregation that defined Malarndarri becomes clear.

Malarndarri camp was on a high river bank. This location provided a vantage point to watch out for any strangers. There was plenty of time to prepare for visitors as the main route to the camp was by canoe across the river. When European men came across 'humberging'¹³⁸ for women, young women could disappear into the scrub. A long-time

135 1987 Tape 53A 36 min.

136 Les Penhall, report on Borroloola, 27 July 1954. Australian Archives, Northern Territory Region, F1 Item 52/606. The dispute outlined above is described in this report.

137 Musso Harvey's comment (see above) is the only one I have heard either publicly or in all my questioning, that European authorities compulsorily defined Malarndarri as an Aboriginal camp.

138 Aboriginal English term for sexual harrasment. It is usually used in the form 'humberging whitefellas'. Also used to describe the activities of other people who are making life difficult, for example, politicians, drunks, etc.

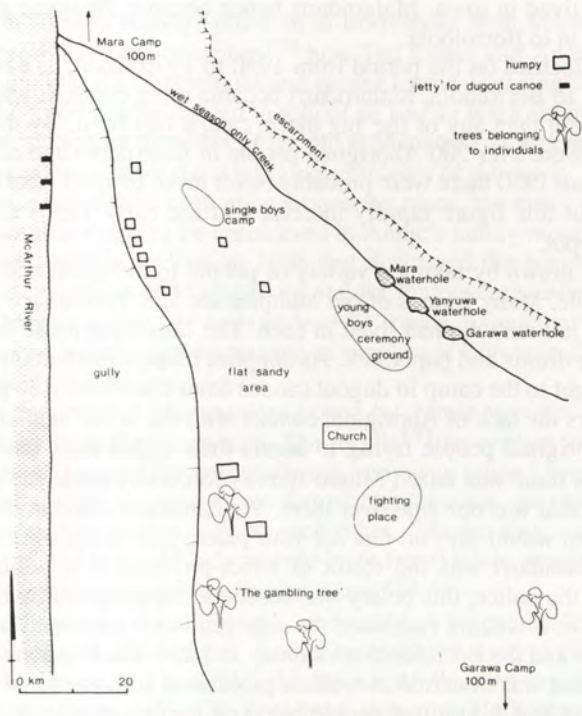


Fig. 8: Malarndari camp.



Malandari camp ruins, 1986: Rachel Muyurkulmanya, Eileen Yakabinja, Elizabeth Walngayiji. Richard Baker Collection.

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European resident of Borroloola describes¹³⁹ how, when they moved across the river away from Malarndarri, the Yanyuwa 'lost something very special, on the other side of the river they had their privacy' and then goes on to note how previously 'they could see if anyone was driving up to the side of the river' and that this allowed mothers to take daughters into the bush to hide from white men who would come across looking for women.

Like Manangoora, Malarndarri has become to many Yanyuwa people a symbol of what was. They often say 'things were good then'. It is significant also that a rock and roll band from Borroloola, that is particularly conscious of the need for the younger Aboriginal people in Borroloola to hold on to traditional knowledge, have called themselves the Malarndarri Band.¹⁴⁰ This symbol of the good old days is not what one would label 'traditional life'. Life at the Malarndarri camp was in many ways an artifact of contact with Europeans. Malarndarri represented a way of life that the Yanyuwa themselves developed to accommodate changing circumstances.

A significant feature of the camp was the autonomy of the people living there. Aboriginal people and Europeans alike have commented to me on the independence Aboriginal people enjoyed there and the authority of 'Aboriginal bosses' of this camp. Dinah Marrngawi recalls¹⁴¹ how her father had the nickname 'Government' because 'he boss for Aborigine...long Malarndarri camp'. European accounts also stress the control over their affairs that Aboriginal people had here. The film-maker Roy Vyse¹⁴² describes a 'council of old men' meeting to discuss a proposed marriage. Tas Festing, a former Borroloola welfare officer, describes¹⁴³ an 'Elders' Council' consisting of Tim Rakuwurlma, his brother Banjo and two other old men. Likewise, when I asked Ted Egan, the welfare officer at Borroloola briefly in the mid-1950s, if Aboriginal people 'were left to run their own show across the river', he replied¹⁴⁴ 'Oh totally'.

In the 1950s and 1960s, when the camp reached its peak in population, many Aboriginal people went across to work on the 'white side' of the river but would return each night to the camp. Traditional hunting and gathering was carried out from the camp and the daily running of the camp was mostly left to Aboriginal people. Eileen Yakibijna recalls¹⁴⁵ how people went from Malarndarri 'hunting, camping and they used to count like Friday, Saturday, Monday, they used to ... come back every ration day ... back from the bush'. This ability to keep hunting and gathering¹⁴⁶ is an important factor in the high regard that Malarndarri is now held in. Younger people who were brought up across the river after Malarndarri was deserted never learnt the same degree of bush skills as older generations brought up at Malarndarri.

139 1987 Tape 73A 6 min.

140 As well as being a conscious identification with the past, since most of the band was conceived and born at Malarndarri, this name follows the traditional pattern of names coming from the place where people are conceived or born.

141 1987 Tape 61B 20 min.

142 South Australian Museum, Archives, Accession Number 1676, *Diary of trip to Borroloola July 1954.*

143 1986 Tape 25 18 min.

144 1988 Tape 6B 22 min.

145 1988 Tape 2A 4 min.

146 As Amy Bajamalanya notes (1987 Tape 20A 7 min.) 'that time we been learn to go hunting'.

In 1969 Malarndarri was abandoned. The Yanyuwa moved across the river and their life changed dramatically. When I took people back to the camp to collect information about the times when people lived there, nostalgia and sadness about having left the camp often surfaced. Consider, for example, the comparisons made in the following conversation between life in the past at Malarndarri and life subsequently across the river.¹⁴⁷

Bella Marrajabu - We should camp long here... we don't like there amongst the whiteman.

Eileen Yakibijna - ... more better here we've got to come back soon.

Bella Marrajabu - ... too many white people... too many [Aboriginal] people too from [the Barkly] Tableland and Mara side all mixed up here.

Bella's comments on Aboriginal people getting 'mixed up' since leaving Malarndarri stresses the distinct Yanyuwa identity of Malarndarri. There were separate Mara and Garawa camps respectively downstream and upstream of Malarndarri. This spatial separation occurred in the directions of the respective countries of the Mara and Garawa and clearly defined the Yanyuwa as distinct from both. Eileen's comment 'we've got to come back' to Malarndarri highlights another important factor in the coming in process, that of closing options. Unknown to her Aboriginal people can no longer move back because Malarndarri is now part of the Borroloola township and sections have been subdivided and sold to Europeans.

Why did people stay in town?

It is pertinent to consider the bold claim Stanner makes:

Nowhere, as far as I am aware, does one encounter Aborigines who want to return to the bush, even if their new circumstances are very miserable. They went because they wanted to, and stayed because they want to.¹⁴⁸

This article has illustrated that such a statement is simplistic both in terms of why people went in and why they stayed. I have illustrated how many indirect reasons contributed to what might superficially be seen as an entirely voluntary process. Likewise, the question why people stayed is equally complex and to say 'they wanted to' ignores this complexity.

To understand why people stayed, once they had moved in, it is necessary to examine the cycles of dependency that were created by moving in to town. One facet of dependency that came from living in town is how reliance on European food meant a decrease in both the use and knowledge of bush tucker. Isaac Walayungkuma, for example, describes¹⁴⁹ how when people came in:

We're hungry now [for flour] we forget about that bush tucker, we don't think about that bush tucker...we lose all our everything...all this tucker here...we have been get that flour now, we been grow up that flour all the time...[before] we been tuck out that munja...bush tucker, but we been forget about it now...we been live on that flour now, whitefella tucker...and we don't think about bush tucker now, we finished now, lost him.

147 1987 Tape 74A 5 min.

148 1979:49 but originally published in 1958.

149 1986 Tape 11A 80 min.

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Musso Harvey also says,¹⁵⁰ 'when they got that ration that's when they got spoilt then, they had to be there [in Borroloola] all the time for ration'. Pyro similarly notes¹⁵¹ the significance of the pull of sugar and tea bringing people into Borroloola;

A lot of people couldn't go back bush, old people¹⁵² when they been eat that tucker for whitefella, they couldn't live in the bush...might be half a year out here¹⁵³ and go back long town, might be two or three weeks that's all.

The questions, how people ended up in town and why they stayed there, are ones some Yanyuwa people give great thought to. Consider Annie Karrakayn's response¹⁵⁴ to my question: 'Why do you reckon everyone stayed in town?'

Yes, because they like town...I don't know what they thinks, themselves...but I'm thinking all the way from way back, I'm thinking all the time when I go to sleep too, I'm thinking anything, everything, what was happening for people, when all this whitefellas came, might be other people just don't care about things, they are just doing their own business, not thinking about what good or what right or bad...[recently] first time when the people came strong, people to speak for white people...we tell him 'we got to go back to our land too all you mob white people, take our land away now, we've got to have half too for our kids, when we dies, so kids can live in our land'. That's the way we been talk about it...we been thinking, just from that welfare now. 'What we doing, all this welfare come over us...What we just let this people talking to us we got talk back to them too'. Me and Eileen was talking, nobody else.

Annie makes two particularly important points here. First, that people only retrospectively become aware of the consequences of coming in; it is something to ponder after the event. Secondly, people tend to act as individuals, 'just doing their own business' and do not at the time usually consider the collective results of their individual actions. As Annie so succinctly puts it, people tend to act as individuals without thinking 'about what good or what right or bad' about their actions.

It is also worth quoting from Musso Harvey about the reasons people came in and stayed in. He notes¹⁵⁵ how, once people moved into town, they 'got that way they could not go back in their way because they got plenty tobacco, plenty tucker, and free ration'. Musso, like many other Yanyuwa people, can now see very clearly the ramifications of easier access to rations that came with the arrival of welfare in the area. He remembers¹⁵⁶ how 'before only the old people get a ration when that policeman there, the old people, the old blind one, not young people'. Musso also stresses¹⁵⁷ that old people did not have young people to look after them 'because that's the only time, young people gone to work on the cattle station...all the old people stay behind, let the welfare look after him'. Clearly then, like the move many Yanyuwa people made earlier into Manangoora, the move into Borroloola had unforeseen consequences.

150 1987 Tape 22A 11 min.

151 1987 Tape 63B 13 min.

152 Meaning here 'those who moved in'.

153 This conversation was recorded on an outstation, so Pyro uses 'here' to refer to the bush.

154 1987 Tape 48B 4 min.

155 1987 Tape 24B 32 min.

156 Ibid. 33 min.

157 Ibid. 35 min.

Another important factor in people coming in and staying in is schooling. Schooling was a major factor in bringing in those individuals who attempted to stay out bush.¹⁵⁸ As Musso Harvey notes,¹⁵⁹ the school worked to 'draw the old people in' from the bush. Musso goes on to tell how a number of families 'used to come into Borroloola and go out in the islands, live around the islands' but that, as children reached school age, trips became restricted to school holidays.

An examination of one family's history shows the significance of school in bringing people in. Eileen Yakibijna recalls¹⁶⁰ how she 'been stay bush all the time' but eventually came into Borroloola after her eldest child was taken to Borroloola 'for welfare school' after a welfare officer 'been tell us to go back long Borroloola, take your kid'. Isa Yubuyu, Eileen's daughter, describes being brought in and remembers¹⁶¹ how her mother initially refused to come in and told the welfare officer 'no I'm not going there that's not my home, my home is Manangoora'. Isa lived with relatives in town for some time before Eileen came and took her bush again. They were, however, soon visited again by a welfare officer, who persuaded her to return to Borroloola. As Eileen recalls,¹⁶² 'I didn't like it but they been say "You've got sick kid¹⁶³ here"...I been come away then, with them. And I'm still here now, down here all the time, get a job'.

Another factor in keeping Aboriginal people in Borroloola, once they had moved in, is the attachment they have to the place of conception, birth and where people 'grew up'. The latter sort of attachment is illustrated in Isa Yubuyu's answer¹⁶⁴ to my question, why do so few people live on outstations: 'They like it in town because they grow up in town'.

After moving into Borroloola many Yanyuwa were recruited to work on cattle stations and were away from their 'proper country' for long periods. What young people learnt about Barkly Tableland country during this period was often at the expense of the passing on of knowledge about their own country. The resulting decline in knowledge about Yanyuwa country that came with spending so long away from it was important in making coming in a long-term matter and not a temporary event. When individual lives are examined it becomes clear that those who moved into Borroloola in welfare times did not stay long in town but soon went out to work on the large cattle stations of the Barkly Tableland. As many of these same people had previously been working on the small Gulf cattle stations, coming in involved a transfer of labour from small to large stations. On the small stations there had been greater scope for Aboriginal economic independence as a large proportion of the diet was still hunted and gathered by Aboriginal people. On the larger stations Aboriginal people were further incorporated into the European economy. There was much less chance for hunting and gathering skills to be passed on to the next generation.

It was the younger generation that got jobs on stations, while older people tended to stay out bush. Such a situation, however, was not tenable, as those out bush were getting older and no longer had the young people around to assist them. Moreover, the young

158 As Whylo's above quote illustrates the *promise* of schooling was a factor in enticing people to move in.

159 1987 Tape 51B 33 min.

160 1987 Tape 62B 4 min.

161 1988 Tape 4A 12 min.

162 1987 Tape 13B 6 min.

163 Eileen's daughter, Isa, describes (1988 Tape 4A 22 min.) how a health worker had visited Eileen's bush camp and reported the sick children to the welfare officer in Borroloola.

164 1987 Tape 69A 1 min.

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people were not learning all the bush skills that the older generation knew, so it was becoming increasingly difficult (even if they had chosen to) for them to return to the bush. Steve Johnson describes¹⁶⁵ how younger people working on cattle stations had the dual effect of making life more difficult for those out bush and making the return to the bush of those who had left unlikely: 'most of the younger people was away working and they never got a chance to get to learn how to live off the land like the old fellers did because they were away...and when [those left in the bush] got too old to hunt they gradually sort of got into Borroloola and stayed there'. Steve goes on to note how when the young people did come back to Borroloola 'it was too late anyway they didn't know enough to go back out'.

The questions, why people originally came in and why they are, or are not, going back to their country, are obviously inter-related and research into both the contemporary and the historical periods throw light on each other. In this examination of why people came in, I have a valuable information source in the very few people who stayed on their country until very recently. The last couple to come in did so in the late 1970s when they were too old to fend for themselves alone in the bush. Their plight, alone out bush, with no one to assist them in their advancing years, provides a highly symbolic ending to the coming in process. Their situation provides the extreme example of the fact that those who moved into town affected the viability of life for those left out bush. Ironically, this final stage in the coming in process occurred at the same time as a going back process had begun in areas closer to Borroloola with the outstation movement.

Conclusion

By using oral sources and presenting detailed case examples I have demonstrated the complexity of the coming in process. The view I came to early in my research that welfare physically brought everyone in from the bush was misleading. However, equally misleading is the view that Aboriginal people gave up their bush life out of choice. What actually happened involved a multitude of factors and the issue of control over land was crucial. It is not possible to delineate a single reason why people came in because there are many different reasons.

Initially the Yanyuwa did not come in at all, but Europeans went to the 'big places' where Yanyuwa were already camping seasonally. The Yanyuwa started to spend longer each year at these places and in so doing the gradual process of coming in was initiated. Nevertheless, in many ways the Yanyuwa move from bush to town was forced upon them. Their response to this situation was to attempt to shape for themselves the patterns of this process. Coming in therefore needs to be seen as an interactive process involving both changing circumstances resulting from European contact and Yanyuwa responses to these circumstances. Situations of created dependency play an important role in the first factor, and Yanyuwa attempts to incorporate the new into the old are important in determining the second factor.

The analysis of coming in presented has relevance to other times and places in Australia. It is vital that researchers examining Aboriginal history become more conscious of the value of geographic perspectives to their work. It is, for example, important that historians learn to 'read' the current cultural landscapes to see how past Aboriginal landscapes are often reflected in this landscape. The pattern revealed by the Yanyuwa case study of locations that were seasonally occupied by Aboriginal people becoming the foci of European settlement is likely to be repeated in many other areas of Australia.

165 1987 Tape 27A 2 min.

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