

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

MISSION BEACH

An initiative of FNQ NRM Ltd



Produced by : **The Djiru Traditional Owners in conjunction with Giringun Aboriginal Corp.**

October 2007

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This project was an initiative of and funded by FNQ NRM Ltd. Giringun Aboriginal Corporation wishes to acknowledge the assistance and support of that organisation in promoting the involvement of Indigenous Traditional Owners in the development of culturally appropriate cultural and natural resource initiatives to better protect and manage their country.

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SUMMARY STATEMENT

Mission Beach is a place of great beauty and its tourist appeal has underpinned an accelerated degree of residential and resort development in recent times. The natural and cultural environmental values of the area are consequently being put under pressure. In order to appropriately plan for the future a detailed inventory and understanding of those values is needed. This report assesses the significance of the Indigenous cultural values and landscape of the area.

The Djiru consider themselves and their neighbours to be part of a wider group of coastal rainforest people who shared a common lifestyle. Researchers support this view and while ethnographic and ethno-historic information particular to the Djiru people is limited valid comment on their way of life can also be made from sources referring to the wider coastal rainforest region.

The rainforest people adapted their cultural system to fit the rainforest environment. The seasonal availability of food resources governed their pattern of movement over country. During the dry season when plant foods were scarce they were in smaller highly mobile groups living in temporary camps close to seasonally predictable resources. Towards the end of dry season when the majority of rainforest trees fruit they would congregate in larger more permanent camps. This was a time of plenty when food was stored for the coming 'wet' and social life intensified; a time of frequent inter-tribal dance ceremonies and fighting corroborees where huge wooden swords and shields were wielded in ritual duels to settle disputes.

Their highly specialised material culture reflects features of their rainforest habitat. Processing of toxic nuts and seeds as a staple food required a specialised tool kit such as shell slicers, nut-cracking and grinding stones and sieve baskets and containers. Their wet season huts were large and waterproof.

According to the various historic sources early contact with European maritime explorers and surveyors was amicable enough. With the arrival of timber-getters and European settlers in the 1860's frequent contact soon brought hostility by the indigenous people and retaliatory action by the European police and settlers. By the 1880's active resistance to the invasion of their traditional lands resulted in acts of atrocity that, combined with starvation, cultural dislocation and disease reduced indigenous population numbers by perhaps 80%. In 1897, legislation put all Aboriginal people living in Queensland under government control and over the next few decades most were forcibly removed to government reserves or missions such as the Hull River Aboriginal Settlement that was established at South Mission Beach in 1914. After it was destroyed by a cyclone in 1918 most of the survivors were again rounded up and sent to the newly established Palm Island Mission. Some Djiru people still live on Palm Island where their houses are generally grouped together facing their home country. Many Djiru have family affiliation in other traditional owner groups and live in towns or Aboriginal communities close by to Mission Beach.

A body of cultural knowledge specific to the Djiru people and their country has been recorded from diverse sources: early ethnographic and ethno-historic accounts, settlers and administrators' diaries and journals, research by historians, linguists, anthropologists, archaeologists, scientists and from

Djiru people living today. Cultural values important to the Djiru people include places, environments, events and oral history and tangible archaeological evidence of their connection to country.

While there are difficulties inherent in the process of ascribing quantitative significance to indigenous cultural values, some useful measure can be achieved:

- The Djiru people's sense of identity as 'rainforest people' is very strong and is demonstrated by their relations with their rainforest neighbours and their affinity with the rainforest environment.
- Clump Point is universally seen by the Djiru people, both young and old, as a core place in their homeland, a hub of traditional life in pre-European times and a place today that they enjoy for its beauty, for its natural benefits and for the sense of connection to tradition and country that it brings to them.
- The cultural components within the Clump Point area are seen as tangible expressions of connection. The fish traps on either side of Clump Point and the ceremony ground are seen to be very significant as they invoke potent images of traditional life. Shell and artefact scatters recorded in the area are seen as lesser though still significant evidence of connection. These oral history and material items have significant value to researchers.
- The natural estate of the Mission Beach area is extremely significant to the Djiru people. There is a unique affinity between the people and the rainforest that provided food, shelter and spiritual regeneration to their people. An integral part of this relationship is the highly visible and ubiquitous *gunduy* (cassowary) which is important to the health of both the people and the rainforest.
- The Clump Point coastal basalt formations and their ecosystems are unique to the Wet Tropics Bioregion of North Queensland and are of extreme significance to the Djiru people as land managers and to researchers.
- Places such as the Hull River Aboriginal Settlement and Tam O'Shanter Point, that connect with the Djiru people through historic incidents are also seen by the traditional owners as significant. They feel however that the wider community places an importance on these places that might subtract from other parts of their history.
- Historic places which are seen as predominantly European constructs, such as the Cutten Brothers Walk and the historic jetty are seen as less significant. The Djiru recognise that these are places of significance to the wider community.

European settlement ushered in an era of severe cultural dislocation for the Djiru people. They have unavoidably lost a good deal of knowledge along the way but not the responsibilities and obligations to look after their traditional land. They regularly return to country to practice traditional fishing and hunting and to fulfil their rights and responsibilities as custodians and land managers. They are actively engaged in passing on their culture to the younger generations, introducing them to country through fishing, camping and collecting materials for continuing traditional practices such as basket weaving and shield making. They are confident that some parcels of land will be soon returned to them through two registered native title claims, allowing them improved access to land and an increased and more meaningful engagement in assisting with the protection and management of Djiru traditional country.

While this report does not attempt to impart a complete account of events, or a complete description of Djiru lifestyle, a comprehensive bibliography is provided.

Table 1: Assessment of cultural values – Mission Beach area

| CULTURAL ITEM | SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT (Indigenous) | SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT (Scientific) |
|--|---|---|
| Cultural values | | |
| Djiru – part of unique rainforest culture | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Clump Point area | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE |
| Clump Point fish traps | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Clump Point ceremony grounds | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Shell and artefact scatters | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE |
| Nth Mission Beach shell & artefact scatter | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Natural values | | |
| Clump Point Basalt formations | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Cassowary | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Rainforest precinct | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Seagrass | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Historic values | | |
| Hull River Aboriginal Settlement | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Tam O'Shanter Point | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE |
| Cutten Brothers Walk | LOW SIGNIFICANCE | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE |
| Historic jetty | LOW SIGNIFICANCE | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE |

1. INTRODUCTION

Three reports have been commissioned by FNQ NRM Ltd as part of an initiative to list and describe the attributes and values of the natural/cultural environments within the Mission Beach area. This report will describe and assess the indigenous cultural attributes within the traditional country of the Djiru people. Other reports will describe and assess the biodiversity and aesthetic/lifestyle components of the district. Many of these values are under continued threat from accelerating residential and tourist development. The development of these reports will inform planning bodies that are seeking to implement improved environmental protection, management and restoration at Mission Beach and may be used to raise community awareness of the area's significance.

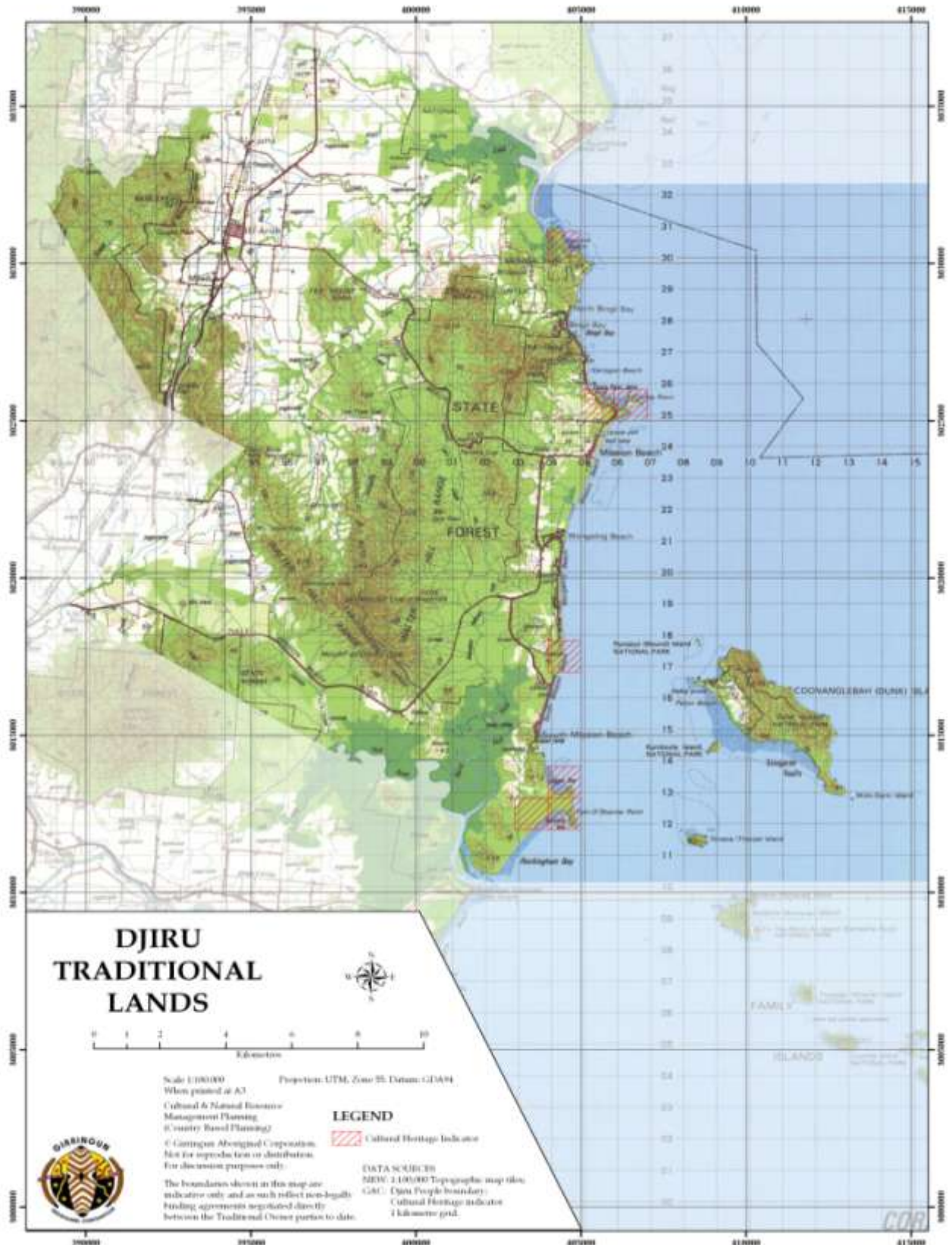
2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AREA

2.1 LOCATION

The project study area is situated, generally speaking, in the Mission Beach area of the humid wet tropics of North Queensland about 120 kilometres south of Cairns. It encompasses coastal land and the adjacent sea between Maria Creek in the north and Hull River in the south and extends westward to take in the Mission Beach hinterland as far as El Arish on the Bruce Highway. As such it falls within the boundaries of both the Cardwell and Johnstone local shires.

Along the coast the townships of Garners Beach, Bingil Bay, Mission Beach (commonly known as North Mission Beach), Wongaling Beach and South Mission Beach have experienced a period of accelerated development over the last 15 -20 years and have almost become conjoined as one large conurbation. Major roads connect the coast to the towns of El Arish in the north and Tully in the south.





Location map of the study area

2.2 ENVIRONMENT

Topography and geology

The topography of the area consists of a narrow coastal plain backed by a series of ridges running generally parallel to the coast and forming the Walter Hill Range which, in the west, rises to over 1000 metres. This granite massif rises to about 400 metres in this area and abuts the coastline at Bingil Bay. Stream catchments in the close vicinity of Mission Beach are only minor. The two largest watercourses, Maria Creek in the extreme north of the study area and Hull River in the extreme south of the study area, enter the sea through extensive areas of mangrove swamp and wetland. The Mission Beach hinterland is thus low-lying at its northern and southern extremities but mountainous in the centre. South of Clump Point, the narrow coastal plain consists of beach sands and old shorelines of quaternary age (Bird 1994:5).

The early geology of the area is dominated by the Barron River and Barnard Metamorphics formed by intense folding and faulting during the Carboniferous period. These high grade metamorphics show in outcrops along the coast between Tam O'Shanter Point and Maria Creek and on the offshore islands as schists, gneisses and migmatites. These were intruded by basic igneous rock and simultaneously overlain by Glen Gordon Volcanics over a long period of time (de Keyser 1964). These granites are exposed in places at South Mission Beach and Tam O'Shanter Point and on Dunk Island. The lava flows and pyroclastic deposits of the Atherton Basalt laid down during the Late Tertiary and Quaternary periods are extant on the coastal plain and are particularly in evidence at Clump Point and South Barnard Island. Recent sediments in the form of alluvial deposits, beach sands or lagoonal deposits have been laid down on the coastal plain. To the south of Clump Point and along Rockingham Bay old shorelines are still extant up to 10 kilometres inland. In many areas they

"...have formed a physical barrier between the streams and the ocean. Several streams terminate in delta which form where they discharge into the extensive swamps which developed to the rear of or between the beach ridges. Isolated lagoons in the beach ridge plains are where past rivers and streams have cut through to former coastlines"
(Cannon et al 1992).

The offshore islands are considered to be parts of the ranges which were partly drowned by a post-glacial sea rise in the order of 140 metres. The sea level reached its present position about 6000 years ago (Chappell 1982) but at times during the next 2-3000 years was possibly up to 4 metres higher than the present level (Hopley 1980). These sea level changes translated into major coastline shifts across the relatively level continental shelf during the late Pleistocene and the Holocene. Much of the cultural record is thus under the sea and probably buried by marine sediment. Even the cultural record on the relatively stable shoreline of the past 2500 years would have been impacted upon by minor sea level fluctuations combined with the effects of storms and cyclones (Bird 1992b).

Geologically the Clump Point shoreline is regionally very significant as it is the only area within the Wet Tropics Bioregion where basalt formations extend to the coast. It is composed chiefly of basalt boulders of varying sizes with some pyroclastic deposits. Boulders extend into the sea on either side of Clump Point. Boat Bay, adjacent to the northern side of Clump Point has, according to Bird (1994:5), 'a mud substrate with basalt boulders and coral reef-rubble'. Most of the bay is exposed at times of very low tides. Bird maintains that long-time local residents have said that the bay originally 'had a sandy substrate with living coral reef' and that the apparent siltation in later years

has been partially caused by vegetation clearing and subsequent sediment erosion. Certainly sandy beaches are still extant in areas immediately to the north and south of Clump Point.



Basalt formation on the coast just south of Clump Point

Climate

The Mission Beach area is part of the humid wet tropics. Annual rainfall at Clump Point is 3037mm (Bureau of Meteorology 1988). There is a marked wet season in the summer months and 85% of the annual average falls between November and April. The relatively dry season can be pronounced enough from May to December 'to induce some water stress in the forest vegetation' (Harris 1978:119). Average maximum/minimum daily temperatures range from 21/30°C in summer to 15/26°C in winter. Mean humidity levels range from 80% in summer to 40% in winter but are generally lower on the ranges inland.

In summer rainfall is controlled by three factors: the reliability of the southerly migration of monsoonal depressions, the arrival of tropical cyclones and the orographic effect of the moist and predominantly easterly airflow over the coastal ranges. Climate in winter is dominated by the south-easterly air stream circulating around the semi-permanent anti-cyclonic cell of the South Pacific, generally associated with fine weather (Lee and Neal 1984). Two tropical cyclones have crossed the coast in the vicinity of the study area in recent times (Cyclone Winifred in 1986 and Cyclone Larry in 2006).

Vegetation

Vegetation in the study area falls within 3 main types:

(1) Rainforest communities

Prior to European settlement the dominant vegetation types in the Mission Beach area were mesophyll vine forest (rainforest) communities (Tracey and Webb 1975). According to Tait (1994) these communities consisted of: gallery rainforests on well drained alluvial soils adjacent to the major drainage channels, mesophyll and notophyll vine forest on the mountain slopes, and rainforest with eucalypt emergents on areas of the floodplain and coastal plain that were protected from fire. While large areas of this vegetation type still survive in the 'protected' uplands of the Walter Hill Range only remnant patches still exist on the coastal plain. Mission Beach is one of only a few areas in North Queensland where mesophyll vine forest still abuts the coastline. At Clump Point a community of complex mesophyll vine forest is growing on basalt adjacent to the coast; the only such example within the Wet Tropics of North Queensland. Its significance is regarded by researchers as extremely high.

(2) Forest communities

Generally speaking, in pre-settlement times, well drained areas on the floodplain and coastal plain contained mixed open eucalypt forests while areas of poorer drainage contained a predominance of swamp forests consisting mainly of *Melaleuca quinquennervia* and mixed open woodlands with ti-tree and swamp mahogany. Today most of these communities have been severely depleted because of intensive agricultural pursuits and the expansion of coastal residential communities. Along the north Queensland coast up to 80% of Broad-leaf Paperbark communities have been cleared for pasture, viticulture, agriculture, aquaculture and urban development. These communities are host to many unique and endangered species. Braby (1992) stresses that fire regime appears to be a critical factor in the management of these communities and Lavarack (1994) maintains that a fire frequency similar to that practised traditionally by Aboriginal people of the area ie, 1 in 3 year burn, may be optimal (in Tait 1994:18).



Mission Beach hinterland east of El Arish

(3) Mangrove communities

Broad areas of complex mangrove communities within the saline littoral zone still exist around the mouths of the major waterways, Hull River and Maria Creek. These areas have remained relatively undisturbed by European settlement. Of major concern is their continued maintenance as viable habitat areas because of the impact of intensive agriculture. Tait maintains that 'Mangrove and freshwater wetlands..not only require protection from clearing, but also need appropriate sized buffer zones to be maintained adjacent to them' (1994: 32).



Mangrove community – Lugga Bay

Fauna

The tropical rainforests of north Queensland are areas of great biological diversity. In pre-contact times the resources of this environment as well as the coastal, riverine and wetland environments provided a plentiful and diverse resource base for exploitation by the indigenous people. Faunal studies in the wider area (Harrison 1962; Nix and Switzer 1991) show a large variety of marsupials, rodents and bats as well as a large variety of birds including larger edible species such as cassowaries, megapodes and Torres Strait pigeons. The cassowary (*Casarius casarius*), while primarily a rainforest dweller, also inhabits and relies on a variety of habitats including eucalypt forests, mangroves and paperbark forests. It is an indispensable for the maintenance of biodiversity within a range of rainforest communities through its function as a seed dispenser for many forest species. Clearing of their habitat and their depletion through traffic strike and dog attack has seen their numbers dwindle within the study area. The cassowary has a special significance to the indigenous people of the area.

2.3 ETHNOGRAPHY AND ETHNOHISTORY

The boundary project conducted by Giringun Aboriginal Corporation from 2000-2003 showed that the Djiru elders and elders from the adjacent tribal groups (Mamu, Jirrbal, Girramay and Gulgnay) agreed that the indigenous inhabitants of the Mission Beach and adjacent hinterland were the Djirubagala (Pentecost 2000). Reliable research sources (Roth 1900; Dixon 1972, 1976; Tindale 1974,) support this view. Roth states that

“The scrub blacks in the neighbourhood of the Lower Tully River are known as mallanpara...Occupying the coast-line from the Tully to the Murray River are the Walma...Kirinja blacks occupy the coast-line from the Tully to the Hull. The boys at Clump Point are known as chiru” (1900:1).

Their language was known as Djiru and people today refer to themselves by this term. Dixon places Djiru ‘geographically and linguistically between Mamu and Dyirbal’(1972:24). He maintains that all the above mentioned tribal groups spoke dialects of the same language in that their grammar is almost identical and their vocabularies have a marked commonality. Unfortunately, when he conducted research in the 1960’s and 1970’s he could find no reliable Djiru speakers, although a few people retained some knowledge but spoke a mixture of Djiru and Jirrbal (1972:24, 1976:212).

The Djiru consider themselves and their neighbours to be part of a wider group of coastal rainforest people who shared a common lifestyle. Researchers support this view and while ethnographic and ethnohistoric information particular to the Djiru people is limited valid comment on their way of life can also be made from sources referring to the wider coastal rainforest region. Harris believes that

“there is no doubt that the Aboriginal populations of this region were in many ways physically and culturally distinct from the occupants of the open-woodland habitats inland” (1978:114)

and that they utilised a specialised toolkit adapted to their unique subsistence strategies and social organisation. Dixon (1976) also states that they had a distinctive Aboriginal rainforest culture and Horsfall and Fuary (1988:14) summarise the characteristics of rainforest societies in the wet tropics of North Queensland thus:-

1. A high population density with frequent gatherings of people, often for ceremonial purposes;
2. Heavy dependence on plant foods including several species of toxic plants;
3. Establishment of seasonally-based, semi-permanent huts and camps;
4. Unique weapons for settling disputes by dueling;
5. Widespread use of traps for game and fish;

6. Some degree of food storage;
7. Extended trading links and specialization in trade.

Social organisation

Individuals had affiliation with three main groups: tribe, local descent group and section. The tribe had a population of around 500 people (Pedley 1994) and was the major political unit (Kumm 1980). People within the tribe spoke a common language, generally married within the tribe according to section rules, and were free to reside and travel anywhere within its territory. Inter-tribal contact was frequent; inter-tribal marriage was practised though of a more formal and reciprocal nature and inter-tribal trade and ceremonial gatherings conducted. Communication was facilitated by a system of walking tracks (McCracken 1987; Pentecost 1994) and a mutually intelligible language.

The local descent group according to Kumm, was 'the basic socio-economic unit of the region' (1980:2-2). Harris estimates that such groups were made up of 7 or 8 family or hearth groups each of 7 or 8 individuals (1978:128). Each local group had a particular run or territory although they were not tied solely to it: hearth and local group membership could change. The local group was organised around paternal descent lines. Each member of a group was given a sacred name, story place and responsibilities to look after that place that is associated with country belonging to their father or paternal grandfather. Where knowledge survives these traditional customs and laws are still widely practiced today, and each family belongs to a certain area and sites and places of significance within this area belong to individuals as well as family groups.

Section affiliation was the least important (Dixon, 1976:213). Each tribe had 4 sections each having a distinctive totem. Marriage rules depended on section membership and were usually strictly enforced (Dixon 1972:31).

Settlement patterns

Harris (1978:124) maintains that the lowland tribes, whose economies focused on coastal as well as on forest resources, show higher population densities (an average of almost 3.3 km² per person) than – with the notable exception of the Ngatjan – the upland tribes (an average, excluding the Ngatjan, of 10.5 km² per person).

The degree of seasonal movement presumably depended primarily on resource availability. There was necessarily a greater impetus for movement during the dry season as plant food resources were more scarce at this time.

“A majority of rain-forest tree species fruit towards the end of the dry season and early in the wet season (November-December). They include most of the species that provided the edible nuts on which the Aborigines, to a large extent, depended” (Harris 1978:119). Although most wet-season camps were probably located near rivers, the harvesting of particular foods, such as the sweet nuts of the Queensland almond, led to the temporary establishment of more casual camps close to such spatially and seasonally predictable resources (Woolston and Colliver, 1973:106). Wet season movement was necessarily restricted by flood events. Oral history evidence indicates that in areas or where major camps offered access to a range of environments (coastal, swamp, riverine, forest) they were occupied on a semi-permanent basis. Girramay elder Davey Lawrence (pers. comm.) referred to them as ‘old people’s camps’ where resources were so easily obtained that the elderly stayed there all year round. Accounts by early explorers and settlers (Carron 1849; Dalrymple 1873) refer to extensive camps with large dwellings.

Harris provides a plausible summary, stating that the

“pattern of adaptive behavior that linked the cultural system with the rain-forest ecosystem found expression mainly in the actions of family groups and bands. They selectively exploited the generalized ecosystem, with its “fine grained” distribution of component species, by following an annual cycle of aggregation and disaggregation and which meshed with the seasonal reproductive cycles of the principal rain-forest biota that were used for food. Mobility, maximized in the dry season and minimized in the wet season, was an integral part of this pattern of adaptation. But partial sedentism existed, in the sense of the wet-season occupation of home-base huts by the whole band, with a tendency for some of the less mobile individuals to remain at or near the home base all the year round” (1978:131).

Ceremony

The late dry/early wet season was a time of plenty when social life intensified, especially during the fighting corroborees which brought bands together for two to three days at a time on perhaps three or four occasions each wet season (Lumholtz 1889, p. 127). To the rainforest people these fighting ceremonies, known in some areas as *bruns*, were an important part of their traditional lifestyle. While their primary purpose was for dispute resolution, they were also important venues for social interaction and for trade (Kumm 1980). While it appears that most of the disputes were over women (Banfield 1974; Woolston and Colliver 1973:93) they also occurred over people’s access to and distribution of food resources. Ceremonies were held every couple of weeks during the season

and were attended by many hundreds of people often from other tribal groups several days distant. Local settlers commented that ...'one thousand at a time are remembered at such times' and Mrs Sparval (daughter of Isaac Henry) speaks of seeing Aboriginal people stretching as far as the eye could see crossing Bellenden Plains in single file on the way to a corroboree (Jones 1961). They are testament to the degree of inter-tribal interaction and communication that was practiced. They also required advance organisation and energy expense on the part of the host groups who had to provide food supplies.

Disputes, usually over access to women or resources, were settled by use of duelling weapons, the rainforest sword and shield. Chris Wilsoet, who saw them used in fighting ceremonies or *bruns* (in Woolston and Colliver 1973), describes use of these weapons in some detail. His description suggests that the fights were part ritual combat and partly unstructured brawls involving spears and sticks as matters sometimes got out of hand. Dance ceremonies were generally held after the disputes had been resolved.

"They're different mobs see, they fight over womenfolk, They have a feed up at night. They fetch one another tucker see, and give it all around and have a feed up, just a bit of a spree, and then they'd have a bit of a sing-song, and a bit of a corroboree, then they'd go and you'd hear them howling after, some of them happy, some of them singing" (Woolston and Colliver 1973:99).

Dance ceremonies were a valued recreation and a form of transmitting law and custom. Men decorated their bodies and wore headdresses. Dance was always accompanied by song and usually to the rhythm of clap sticks. . The song poetry provided a view of the environment, customs, laws and traditions of the Djiru people and their neighbours. Hundreds of songs were recorded by Dixon & Koch (1996) in the 1970's from elders of the day. They are powerful tools for passing down traditional knowledge through the generations. Some songs are instructive (Dixon & Koch 1996:137-141):

Crocodile (Jirru language)

Yuba dumburru garambarri

Buru binda-nu gabigabi

This song, recorded by Pompey Clumppoint (born at Bingil Bay) describes how when a crocodile

is at rest, his back legs are always bent and cannot be stretched out flat.

Some songs are spiritual:

Spirits Going Home (Jirru Language)

gulay yinin-gu buna-n yimanyiman

gulay yinin-gu buna-n dulumbal-gu

This song, recorded by Pompey Clumppoint, comes from the Clump Point/Bingil Bay area and tells of a spirit descending to the spirit home *yinin*.

And others are educational, directed at children who are painted with white clay when they are sung the stories:

Jingalbari Spirit (Jirru language)

Gama yuba-nu yildayyilda

Gama yuba-nu jingalbari

Pompey Clumppoint performed this song so that everyone would sit quietly and be warned of the Jingalbari spirit.

Economy and Material Culture

Coastal rainforest people expertly used the opportunity to exploit a wide range of environments: marine and mangrove communities; coastal swamps and rivers; lowland and upland rainforest, and in the study area, grassland and mixed open forests. These habitats provided a rich and varied source of plant and animal food and of materials used for shelter, tools, weapons, traps, food processing and ornament. Roth's (1900) report provides a detailed account of the material culture and procurement strategies of the Lower Tully River people, just to the south of Djiru country, that is testament to rainforest Aboriginals' depth of interaction with the natural environment (and see Brayshaw 1975, 1977, 1990; Harris 1978; Kumm 1980; Horsfall 1987; Horsfall and Fuary 1988; and Pedley 1992, 1993, 1997).

Many of the subsistence strategies and material culture are unique to the rainforest environment. Fruit, seeds and nuts formed a staple part of their diet for much of the year. Nuts such as the Queensland almond (*Elaeocarpus bancroftii*), the Yellow Walnut (*Beilschmedia stupefyi*) and Black Walnut (*Endiandra palmerstonii*) were cracked on specially prepared nut-cracking stones, some containing scores of holes to increase processing efficiency. Many of the seeds used, eg Blackbean (*Castanospermum australe*), Zamia (*Lepidozamia hopei*), Cycads (*Cycas media*) were toxic and required sophisticated processing in order to render them edible. Roth describes how after steaming in a ground-oven, they were sliced up very fine with a snail-shell knife ingeniously adapted for the task then put in lawyer-cane dilly bags to be washed in running water. Some yams and tubers were also toxic and required similar processing (1900:19). Storage of certain foods was also practiced.

Their huts were principally designed for use in the wet season. They were dome-shaped and thatched with paperbark making them rain-proof. They were often large structures lasting for several years and often might be connected by low passages. Temporary huts of simpler design were less sturdy and were constructed when necessary (and see King 1827; Carron 1849; Dalrymple 1874; Meston 1904; Roth 1910; Mjoberg 1918). Bark blankets were made by hammering the inner bark of the fig tree. Containers were similarly made from fig and *Callophlyum* bark. Lawyer cane (*Calamus spp.*) had a variety of uses. It was used for the manufacture of a range of baskets which were vital possessions, for animal traps, for use as a binding, for sawing wood and climbing trees. Huge wooden swords were made from hard water gums. Shields were made from the buttresses of the Green Fig and decorated with designs which indicated clan affiliation.



Traditional mija building



Hammerstone and basalt waisted ground-edge axe – Boat Bay

Stone tools included waisted and ground edge stone axes (some almost 40cm in length); millstones, some with parallel grooves incised into them (*morah*), top grinders (*mugi*) often used also as hammerstones and firestones, anvil stones, fine-gained sedimentary and metamorphic flakes and cores and clear and milky quartz flakes. Not far to the south, at Jingalingua Beach, a quartzite backed blade was recorded. It had possibly been traded in from Central Queensland.

2.4 HISTORY

Early maritime explorers were the first Europeans to comment on the occupation of Mission Beach by Aboriginal people. King 1827; Lee 1925; Stokes 1846 and Wharton 1893 all attest to the smoke rising from Aboriginal campfires on the mainland and offshore islands along Rockingham Bay. King wrote that

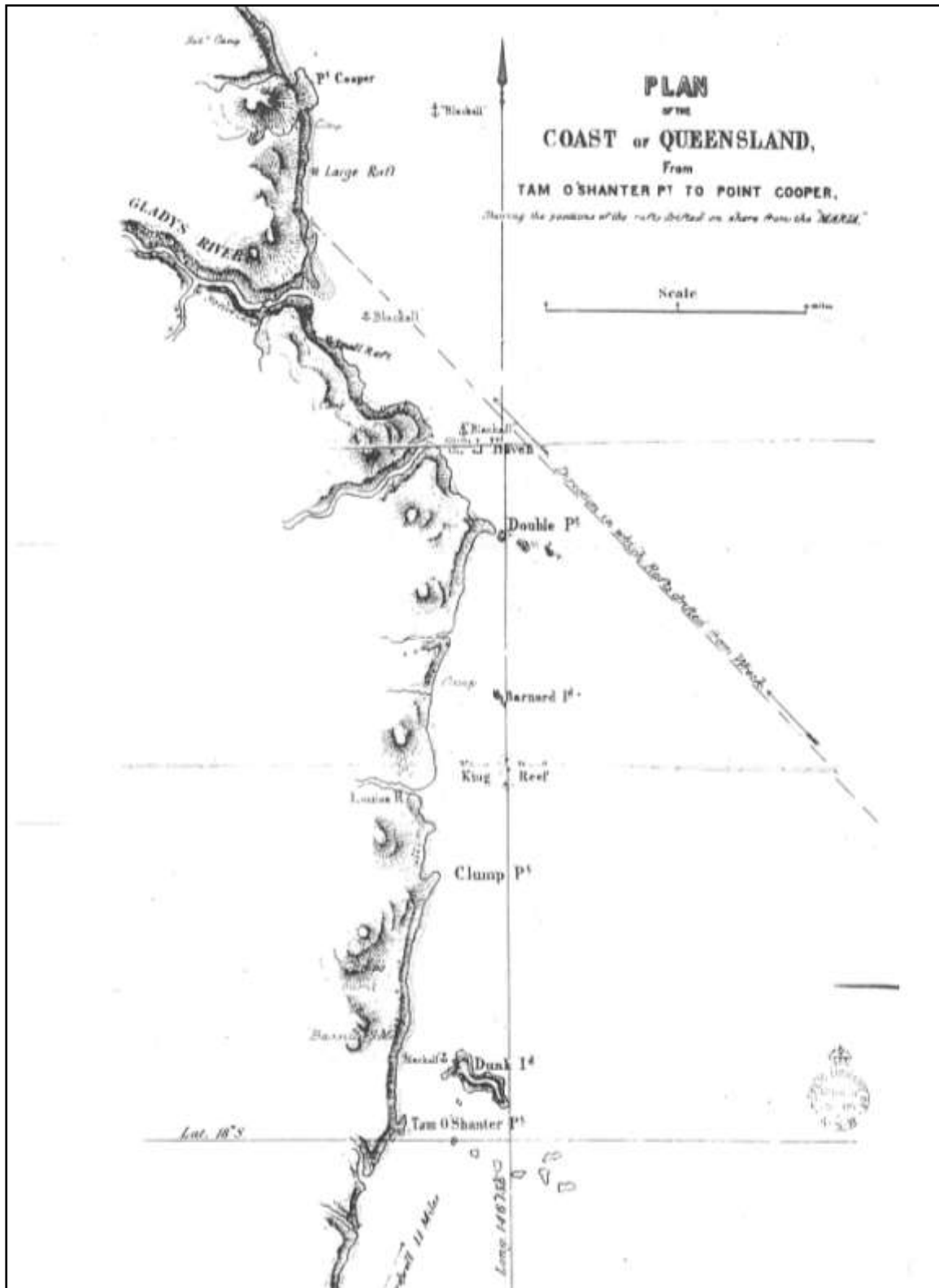
“Dunk Island, a little to the northward, is larger and higher, and is remarkable for its double-peaked summit. No natives were seen in passing these islands, but the smoke of their fires, as usual, lined the coast....” (1827).

McGillivray, on H.M.S. Rattlesnake, after landing Edmund Kennedy and his party in Kennedy Bay, stayed to survey the area for some time and had several encounters with the local Aboriginal people. He observed that

“soon after the ship had come to an anchor, some natives came off in their canoes and paid us a visit, bringing with them a quantity of shellfish (Sanguinolaria rugosa) which they eagerly exchanged for biscuit. For a few days afterwards we occasionally met them on the beach..... I saw nothing in the appearance of these natives to distinguish them from those of Gould Island, and the canoes are the same. The men had large prominent cicatrices on the shoulders, and across the breast and belly, the septum of the nose was perforated, and none of the teeth had been removed. I saw no weapons, and some rude armlets were their only ornaments” (1852).

Beale (1970), Jukes (1847), Brierly (1848), Carron (1849) and Huxley (1935) were also present on this expedition and provide valuable comment as does. Generally these initial encounters were friendly. Carron wrote that

“During the time occupied by landing the horses, a number of aboriginal natives assembled on the beach; they had evinced no symptom of hostility, but appeared much surprised at our horses and sheep. White men they had frequently seen before, as parties have landed on the beach from surveying vessels. These natives appeared to be very fine strong men, varying much in intelligence and disposition” (1849).



Map showing where the rafts from the wreck *Maria* landed. Note position of the notation 'camps burnt' at Wongaling Beach and South Mission Beach.

After Cardwell was settled in 1864 and settlers, cedar-getters and prospectors began to invade the area, relations became progressively more strained and hostile acts on both sides more frequent. When the brig 'Maria' was wrecked on Bramble Reef in 1872, three ships boats and two rafts carried the survivors to shore. The larger raft landed north of the Johnstone River (called Gladys River at that time) where the survivors were treated well by the Aboriginal people and eventually rescued. The smaller raft landed to the south of the Johnstone River where all the people were killed. The captain and six men landed near Tam O'Shanter Point and their boat was immediately attacked. Only two survived to reach Cardwell with the news. A boat sent from Cardwell to retrieve the captain's boat was similarly attacked and the Cardwell Police Magistrate convinced Captain Moresby of H.M.S. Basilisk to render assistance to a punitive expedition to punish the offenders. Men from the Basilisk and a detachment of Native Police under Sub-Inspector Robert Johnstone surprised the camp and in the words of Captain Moresby of the *Basilisk*

"the tribe was surprised before daylight and several unfortunate blacks were shot down by the native troopers, who showed an unrestrained ferocity that disgusted our officers..."(Jones 1961:171).

Chris Wilsoet, who lived in the district since 1883 and spoke the language fluently, related the Aboriginal version, given to him by one of the five survivors of the raid, to researchers. He states that the raiding party cut the tribe off at the narrow neck of Tam O'Shanter Point 'and they drove them out to sea and they shot women and kids and all – only five survived (Woolston and Colliver 1965:11)'. According to the map drawn up during the search and rescue efforts, probably by Lt. Gowland of the *Governor Blackall*, several camps at Wongaling Beach and South Mission Beach were burnt.

In the 1870's cedar-getters began work in the area, leading to the establishment of temporary camps near Clump Point by the Fresney brothers and Heinrich Scheu. The increased European intrusion into their territory resulted in an increase in hostility by the indigenous inhabitants and by the arrival of the first permanent settlers, the Cutten brothers, in 1882, conflicts within the wider area were commonplace. Several ships were attacked and two white sailors killed on Dunk Island, while in the wider region open hostilities generally took the form of cattle killing and the raiding of homesteads. These incidents invariably resulted in reprisals by Native Police and settlers and are preserved in the diaries and journals of early settlers (Craig 1896; Banfield 1908; Wildsoet in Woolston and Colliver 1975; Mackness 1983) and the reports of Government officials (Johnstone 1903; Heydon 1875). Heydon lived in the Cardwell area in the 1870's and reported that he

“...had opportunities of becoming acquainted with the state of public opinion in North Queensland with regard to the blacks. I heard white men talk openly of the share they had taken in slaughtering whole camps, not only of men, but of women and children. They would defend it thus:- they said that the gins were as bad as the men, and that the piccaninnies, all their tribe being killed, would die of starvation if not also put out of the way” (1875:2).

Meston (1896) estimated that for every settler in Queensland that was killed, fifty Aboriginal people died.

European settlement gradually extended north from Cardwell in the 1860's and 1870's and as land was taken up for grazing and small-cropping the indigenous people were gradually dispossessed of their own land. 'Dispersals', starvation and disease began to impact on their population. Banfield (1908) maintains that there were 400 indigenous people living on Dunk Island in the 1860's but by 1900 only five remained. Mackness (1983:22) reports that there were about 400 aboriginal people at their Bingil Bay camp when the Cuttens settled there in 1882. Parry-Okeden estimates that by 1897 the Djiru only had a population of around 50 and Roth (1900:1) speculates that the coastal tribes living at the northern end of Rockingham Bay totalled about 300 individuals. These figures concur with Dixon's (1972:34) estimates, that by the mid-1880's, the local rainforest tribes had been reduced to 20% of their pre-contact numbers. This of course resulted in such a large degree of social disintegration that by the turn of the century many had abandoned much of their traditional lifestyle and were living around the fringes of European settlement. Craig (1896) reported that

“they are so terrorised by the fate of their companions who have disappeared that they will not go out hunting...but gather around the houses of the friendliest settlers”.

By 1900 Aboriginal people no longer had the capacity to continue open conflict. Many were working for settlers or had been removed to government reserves and missions. Archibald Meston's report to parliament in 1896 had advocated the maintenance of Aboriginal reserves for their own protection and improvement and Commissioner of Police Parry-Okeden (1897) also advocated the building of more mission stations. These reports resulted in the implementation of the 1897 Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act. Most Aboriginal people now became wards of the state (Kidd 1997:48), and could not drink alcohol, marry a white person, keep their own savings bank book, move around or work without permission of the local police and could be forcibly removed to a reserve. They were 'under the Act'.

At Mission Beach it seems that they lived together harmoniously enough and that many were employed as unskilled labour (Jones 1961; Mackness 1983). It is probable that the high demand for Aboriginal workers was one of the main triggers for the establishment of the Hull River Aboriginal settlement in 1914. Many Aboriginal people were employed by Tully River Chinese market gardeners who paid them in opium charcoal, a cheap, poisonous and addictive substance. The monopoly of Aboriginal labour by the Chinese and some European settlers was a bone of contention with some settlers who could not obtain cheap indigenous workers. At Mission Beach, isolated from the rest of the community except by water, Chief Protector of Aborigines, Mr. Howard, on his annual visits, found that the situation was not satisfactory (1908-12). At Maria Creek, to the north of Mission Beach, Aboriginal people generally prostituted their women in order to obtain opium from the Chinese. Inspector Galbraith found that Mr. Cutten of Bingil Bay employed people 'not under agreement' and paid them in rum for wages. He concluded that '...the blacks at Clump Point, Maria and Liverpool Creeks are not under close enough police supervision'(1910).

The Hull River Aboriginal Settlement was established in September 1914 and by the end of the year 41 Aboriginal people, 21 from Clump Point were living and working there. By the end of 1915 forced removals throughout the region had increased the settlement's population to 400, most working on the reserve itself but 139 working outside. People continued to be removed to the settlement from all over North Queensland; altogether more than 1000, 400 of them from the local region. Many ran away. In 1917 a 'fever', possibly malaria, measles or whooping cough, struck the settlement and some 200 people died (Jones 1961:305). In 1918 the settlement was destroyed by a cyclone and abandoned. Most of the Aboriginal inhabitants were removed to a new settlement on Palm Island although many disappeared into the scrub and lived for the next few years avoiding recapture. Palm Island 'round-ups' became a feature of everyday life. Pedley states that

"the people spent many years avoiding police by disappearing into the hills and rainforests. Some of the white settlers found the bureaucratic requirements for administration of the Act impossible, and preferred to make private arrangements with their workers. These arrangements often included early warning of police raids" (1998).

After this final disruption to their way of life few of the people of Mission Beach, as the area came to be known, were left in the area. Some continued to wander the scrubs of the Tully and Murray Rivers intermingled with the survivors from other mobs.

Circumstances did not permit a return to the coastal areas where opportunity for sanctuary and employment was limited. Presently many Djiru continue to live on Palm Island or in towns such as

Innisfail, Tully or Cardwell, not far from their home country. They continue to visit to enjoy the resources of area and introduce their young people to their spiritual homeland.



Mother and child at the Hull R. Aboriginal Settlement



Old men at the Hull R. Aboriginal Settlement



Superintendent's quarters at the Hull R. Aboriginal Settlement

2.5 PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

In the wider local area early archaeological research has been mainly driven by academic interests. This research often has a more pronounced focus on excavation and resulted in the development of a temporal framework for indigenous occupation of the North Queensland coastal plain has been established by the work of Campbell (1982a; 1982b) who dated shell middens on Hinchinbrook Island at 570BP, Horsfall (1987) who achieved a date of 5700BP at Jiyer Cave west of Innisfail, Brayshaw (1990) who excavated a rockshelter in the Kennedy Valley (685BP) and Crothers (1997) who found probable continuous usage of a former mound in the Kennedy Valley from 1940 BP to the present.

Regional surveys funded by public institutions have also produced a wealth of recorded cultural heritage sites in the wider local area. Almost all of these surveys have been conducted on protected lands such as State Forests and National Parks due to the difficulty of obtaining access to private land. Border (1987,1988), Bird (1992) Pentecost (1994) and Crothers (1997) have carried out surveys in the Cardwell and Kirrama Ranges, in the Herbert River, Kennedy and Tully/Murray Valleys, recording shell midden/scatters, rockshelters, art sites, artefact scatters, quarries, campsites initiation sites, and ceremonial grounds. Pedley (1994) recorded hundreds of oral history sites in the Tully/Murray Valley. The Girringun Aboriginal Corporation's site database contains well over 700 oral history and archaeological sites on the coastal plain and adjacent islands between Innisfail and Ingham.

The results of 25 years of research endeavour show that in the wider area:

- (1) Aboriginal people have been exploiting the rainforest habitat in North Queensland, in some areas almost perennially, for at least the last 5100 years (Horsfall 1987).
- (2) There has been continual use and occupation for the last 1700 years on the offshore islands (Brayshaw 1990) and for the last 2000 years on the floodplain (Crothers 1997) and continual use and occupation of the upland rainforest for the last 700 years (Brayshaw 1990). Aboriginal people have had access to the coast for at least the latter period of this time.
- (3) Their easy access to and their ability to exploit an extensive diversity and quantity of resources within a relatively limited area allowed them to pursue a semi-sedentary lifestyle. For example, the large camp complex in the Kennedy Valley excavated by Crothers (1997) was within 1/2 day's walk from open plains, swamp and wetland areas, lowland and highland rainforests, as well as a range of coastal environments. An expansive network of

walking tracks facilitated access to these and more distant areas for resource exploitation and social and ceremonial activities (Pentecost 1994).

- (4) Population densities in coastal rainforest areas were significantly higher than in drier inland regions (Harris 1978; Rowland 1989; Horsfall and Hall 1990). Family 'runs' were thus smaller.
- (5) Rainforest Aboriginal people had a relatively high reliance on toxic food resources such as cycad and black bean seeds and developed sophisticated methods of preparing such foods in this region at least 2000 years ago (Horsfall 1987). They also possessed unique weapons for and methods of, dispute resolution.
- (6) The presence of post-contact material in many sites reveals that Aboriginal people within region continued to occupy and use their traditional lands well after non-indigenous contact while, at the same time, incorporating new materials and techniques into their subsistence strategies.
- (7) It is expected that future dates will provide further temporal evidence and probably earlier Holocene use.

Within the study area several regional surveys have been conducted along the coastal margins. Rowlands (1987) examined the coastline between Mourilyan and Tam O'Shanter Point. He recorded two small shell middens with associated stone artefacts at South Mission Beach and a low density shell and artefact scatter at Clump Point. By 1989 this site had disappeared (Rowlands 1989). Rowlands (1989) argues that the marked paucity of sites in comparison to the historic and ethnohistoric evidence of high population densities is mainly attributable to environmental factors. Bird's study of a cyclone affected coastline south of Townsville supports this view (1992b). Simmons (1993) recorded the location of a ceremonial ground at Clump Point. Pentecost conducted coastal surveys along between Clump Point and Rollingstone in 1998, recording shell/stone artefact scatters at South Mission Beach (1), Tam O'Shanter Point (3) Kennedy Bay (4), Hull River (1). Subsequent monitoring revealed that several of these sites had been eroded away or covered up. Archaeological research has also been conducted through development driven archaeological assessments. Bird (1994, 1996) recorded 2 stone alignments (probably fish traps) in Boat Bay south of Clump Point as well as a stone artefact and recorded valuable oral history evidence for sites at Clump Point. Pentecost (2004) recorded a deflated shell midden and a shell/artefact scatter at North Mission Beach (part of a large campsite), and a stone artefact scatter at Boat Bay (Pentecost & Pentecost 1995).

Observations on the archaeology of the study area have also been contributed by early settlers and by historians. Just off the coast on Dunk Island, rockshelters with paintings of animals such as echidna, turtles and lizards were recorded by Banfield (1908, 1911, 1974) and Tresize and Wright (1966), as well as shell middens containing stone artefacts and shell fish hooks. At Narragon Beach Mackness (1970) reported that the creek beds were full of shells and stone artefacts from old Aboriginal camps. Jones (1973) relates how stone artefacts including axes, morahs and nut cracking stones have been exposed by ploughing throughout the Innisfail district. Horsfall's (1987) observations of former rainforest areas support this.

Recorded cultural heritage values

Oral history places

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Pentecost (2004) | Clump Point fish traps, Clump Point ceremony ground, walking track, story places |
| Simmons (1993), Bird (1994) | Clump Point ceremonial ground and oven trees Clump Point ceremonial ground, Boat Bay stone formations, Clump Point fish traps |

Stone formations (fish traps)

| | |
|-------------|----------|
| Bird (1994) | Boat Bay |
|-------------|----------|

Shell midden/stone artefact scatters

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Rowlands (1987) | Clump Point, South Mission Beach |
| Pentecost, (1998, 2004) | North Mission Beach, South Mission Beach, Tam O'Shanter Point, Kennedy Bay |

Stone artefact scatters

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Bird (1994) | Boat Bay |
| Pentecost (2004) | Boat Bay, Kennedy Bay, North Mission Beach |

3. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The principles of cultural heritage significance were laid down in the *The Australia ICOMOS Charter for the conservation of places of cultural significance* (The Burra Charter). Significance refers to its 'aesthetic, historic, scientific or social significance, or other special value, to the present community and to future generations' (Marquis-Kyle and Walker 1992:73).

It is only the relevant traditional owners who can appraise the significance of Aboriginal cultural sites. Through their inextricable links to the land they have the responsibility of maintaining the health and well-being of all its component parts. The natural features of the land are linked to the people through their mythology, their traditions and through their use of it. The land to them is a cultural landscape that cannot be quantified in terms of its singular parts. Aboriginal people have a concept of cultural heritage that is significantly broader than the material or tangible archaeological record and therefore embraces native flora and fauna and geological and geographical features. Their concept of cultural heritage also 'incorporates relationships between places and people, both in a spiritual sense and from a perspective of the resources which the landscape supplies' (Ross 1996:9).

Scientific significance examines the research potential of a site or place. The Burra Charter states that:

"The scientific or research value of a place will depend upon the importance of the data involved, on its rarity, quality or representativeness, and upon the degree to which the place may contribute further substantial information..." (The Burra Charter: Guidelines to the Burra Charter: Section 2.3)

Sites that are unique or uncommon are judged to be of higher significance. This may also be extended to the attributes or components of a particular site. Sites which are judged to be of greater age or are very well preserved are often given greater significance. Representedness refers to the ability of a site or a sample of sites to accurately represent the range of attributes and/or site types in an area. Sites may also be judged on their potential to contribute to the development of a regional archaeology.

3.1 SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT - *Cultural values*

1. DJIRU – PART OF A UNIQUE RAINFOREST CULTURE

The Djiru are part of a unique North Queensland rainforest culture that has **high significance** under National Heritage Criteria (d) *the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of: (ii) a class of Australia's natural or cultural environments.*

The Djiru consider themselves and their neighbours to be part of a wider group of coastal rainforest people who shared a common lifestyle. Researchers (see Section 2.3) support this view and while ethnographic and ethnohistoric information particular to the Djiru people is limited valid comment on their way of life can also be made from sources referring to the wider coastal rainforest region

“The rainforest Aborigines ... are distinctive physically, linguistically and culturally, and have developed a unique material culture and economy adapted to the rainforest environment... Oral traditions... tell of the naming of the mountains, islands, waterfalls and other natural features of the country, and recall the time when volcanoes were still active and surrounded by open scrub which must refer to a time in excess of 8,000 years ago. This appears to be the oldest accurate oral tradition of a non-literate indigenous culture in the world.”
(Australian Heritage Commission 1990)

Horsfall and Fuary (1988:14) summarise the characteristics of rainforest societies in the wet tropics of North Queensland thus:-

1. A high population density with frequent gatherings of people, often for ceremonial purposes;
2. Heavy dependence on plant foods including several species of toxic plants;
3. Establishment of seasonally-based, semi-permanent huts and camps;
4. Unique weapons for settling disputes by dueling;
5. Widespread use of traps for game and fish;
6. Some degree of food storage;
7. Extended trading links and specialization in trade..



Photo of Clump Point man holding shield

2. CLUMP POINT

Nina Andy (young Djiru person) - *I just think of the beauty and the...just a place I can go and say I'm from that beautiful area. At the moment I feel just connected to the area the way it is, but if you get a resort and all in there that's not really connection...that's the way I feel.*

Clump Point is a low, narrow promontory that protrudes about 750 metres into the sea and covers about 20 hectares. On its northern side lie Boat Bay, Clump Point Jetty and Narragon Beach, and to the south lies Mission Beach, a main focal point of commercial and residential activity. The tenure of the point itself is almost all Reserve. The land at the base of the point is Special Purpose Reserve and freehold land. Boat Bay itself is both State and Commonwealth marine park and WTWHA.

There can be no doubt that Clump Point area has long been a place of special significance to the Djiru people. The sheltered waters of Boat Bay with its fringing reef, sandy beaches, mud flats, mangroves, swamps and adjacent rainforest ensured its value as a primary resource area. A prominent headland, abundant water and ease of access to the hinterland and adjacent coast conferred on the area natural advantages that made it a focal point for a range of Aboriginal activities even within the wider region. Evidence for this exists in the oral history accounts and in the recorded archaeological values of the place.

Oral history evidence attests to the existence of a ceremony ground at the base of the point. A house has since been built on the site. Emily Purcell (Mamu elder, now deceased) passed information on through her son (Peter Purcell pers. comm.). She remembered, as a young person, coming to Clump Point from Innisfail by canoe to attend ceremonies attended by large groups of people. Simmons reported that there are two 'oven trees' associated with the site that were used to hold the embers for fire-starting during the ceremonies (1993:18). Willie Massina (Jirrbal elder) recalls walking to a large ceremony from Tully River when he was a boy (Willie Massina pers. comm.). Davey Lawrence (Girramay elder) said that the main walking track from the Tully area reached the coast just to the north of Clump Point (Davey Lawrence pers.comm.). Material evidence of use by Aboriginal people has been recorded by researchers. Fish traps, stone alignments, shell midden/scatters and artefact scatters have been recorded along the foreshore on both sides of the point and in Boat Bay, attesting to the former habitation and use of the place. For details of recorded archaeological sites see Section 2.5

From a Djiru traditional owner viewpoint and from the viewpoint of the wider community, the Clump Point area holds **very high** significance and cultural, social and spiritual value for a number of reasons (from Pentecost and Pentecost 2005).

- it is an area that possesses great social, spiritual, educational, recreational and cultural value to them. The presence of a suite of cultural heritage sites and places, as well as a relatively undisturbed natural environment, provides the Djiru people with a valuable place within their traditional country where they can visit and camp, practice and teach their laws, customs and traditions and collect traditional resources.
- The area also has **high** aesthetic value to the Djiru people and the broader community.

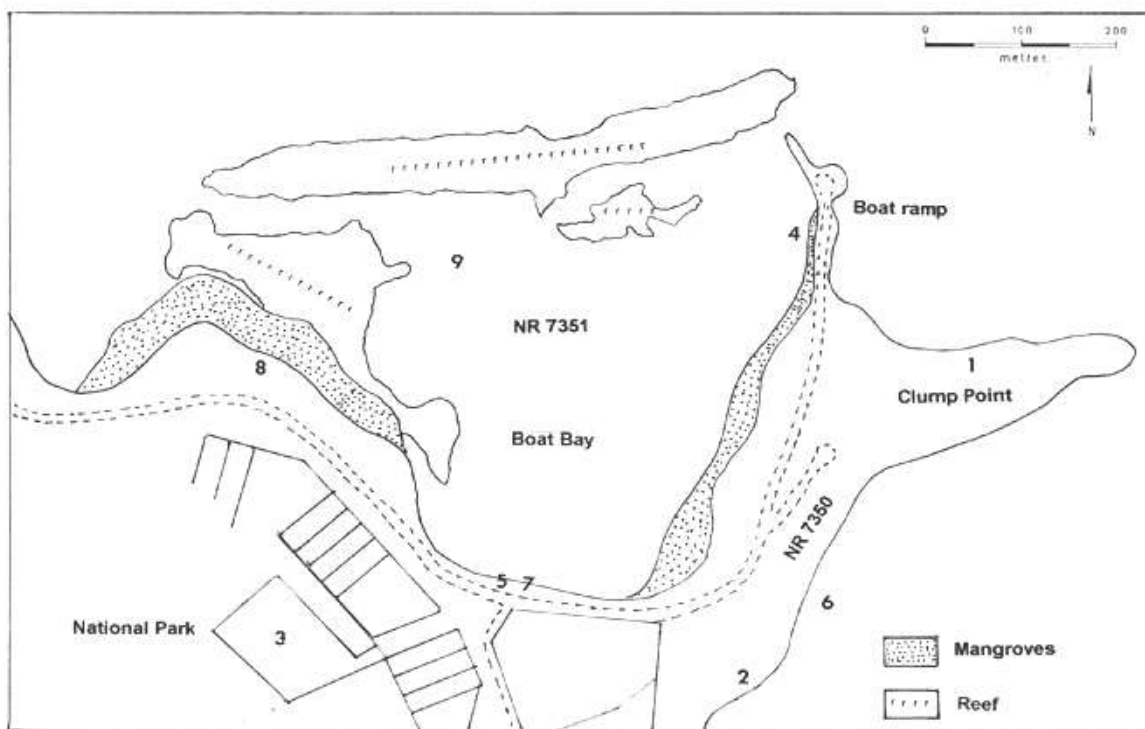
- The historic value of the Cutten Brothers track and the old jetty is **high** to the general community as they are early extant relics of European occupation of the region.
- The archaeological value of the Clump Point area is considered to be **medium-high**. The recording of waisted (or grooved) and ground-edge basalt axes on the coastline is a **rare** occurrence and gives rise to the possibility that Clump Point was a traditional quarry area. While the area does not exhibit a wealth of recorded sites, this is primarily due to the large amount of ground surface disturbance resulting from urban development and from natural forces.
- The number and diversity of archaeological sites located in the Clump Point area is **high** compared to adjacent areas of coastline. While this is partly a construct of the larger amount of archaeological work performed, it also supports the oral history evidence that this area was a focal point of Aboriginal activity in the region.

The Clump Point area contains **endangered** regional ecosystems and **rare** plant species and is the only mainland Atherton basalt headland in the region. The Boat Bay area supports many significant species and botanic communities including sea-grass beds, corals, turtles, dugong and dolphins. The area therefore has a **very high** natural and environmental significance and value to the community and to environmental scientists.

Rae Kelly (Djiru elder) - *I feel my grannies there, I feel their presence there when I go there. I feel fury, yeah. It's really spiritual for me...I can see it as a real cultural value because of the natural fishing traps and how it can be an advantage to everybody who still want to use that type of fishing.*



Clump Point and Boat Bay looking south



Map of Clump Point and Boat Bay area showing places with identified cultural values

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 shell & artefact scatter | 2 shell & artefact scatter |
| 3 ceremonial ground | 4 2 stone alignments |
| 5 isolated artefact | 6 stone fish trap |
| 7 artefact scatter | 8 Cutten Bros. walking track |
| 9 historic boat jetty | |

3. CLUMP POINT FISH TRAPS

Mullet Fishing

Walmbi-nu guya balngarraygu

Yirrbal-gu mungu girri-nu-gu

Yirrbal-gu mungu jinbi-nu-gu

Wanju bajulu jirrnanjirrnan

Wanju bajulu muynga-muynga

This song was recorded by Pompey Clumppoint in 1964 in Djiru language and describes fishermen catching a traveling mullet shoal using a coastal stone fish trap. The incoming tidal waters lift the striped fish into the trap (Dixon & Koch:122).

The Aboriginal fish trap on the southern side of Clump Point and the stone alignments in Boat Bay (probable indigenous fish traps) are considered by the traditional owners to have a **high significance**.

The former is a natural, circular shaped embayment about 50 metres in wide and 40 metres deep. It has a sandy bottom and is enclosed by basalt boulders except for sections on the seaward side. Michele Bird was told by an Aboriginal elder, Bill Tinkum, that people placed nets between the boulders and trapped fish and crustaceans on the falling tide (1993:18).

The stone alignments in Boat Bay were recorded by Bird in 1993. Information from Aboriginal people (Bill Tinkum pers. comm., and indirectly, Bill Joyce) indicated to her that they are the remains of Aboriginal fish traps built by their ancestors. Certainly, ethnohistorical evidence from Roth (1900) and Banfield (1908) shows that fish traps were widely used in this area. Aboriginal fish traps have been recorded nearby at Hinchinbrook Island, Goold Island and South Barnard Island (Bird 1993). Bird (1993:17) says, however, that there is some evidence that at least one of the alignments was constructed by Europeans to hold wire-netting fish traps (Doug Campbell pers. comm.).



Natural fish trap on southern side of Clump Point



Stone alignment at northeast end of Boat Bay

Dawn Hart (Djiru elder)- *When I went down to look at the jetty, after they had cemented it and everything, I thought, look at this, the whole environment is gone, where are the rocks? Where are the mangroves and everything that was there too? It was lovely before with those big rocks and now they just cemented it. Its like a concrete jungle. Right on the Point, it was lovely just there. And I like to go and look at that stone alignment, you know. I reckon it was natural....I knew where it was – my brother used to say that because they went diving there, he said when the tide was really low, you could see the water how it [hand movement indicating rippling]....and I always looked for that....they might have just added a bit on to it.*

4. CLUMP POINT CEREMONY GROUND

Lenard Andy (Djiru man) - *Yeah, probably Clump Point [is a special place]. Because of its location...sheltered waters, mangroves. Good fishing. But also because of the ceremony practiced there...people gathered there.*

Located at the base of Clump Point and now the site of a bed and breakfast establishment on Perrier Walk, the ceremony ground (*buya*) is considered by the traditional owners to be of **very high significance**.

Indisputable oral history evidence (for details see 2. CLUMP POINT) confirms the existence of this site. The immediate area has been a focal point of indigenous activity since pre-contact times, and remained so after European settlement. The Cutten Brothers had a sawmill and coconut plantation close by and constructed a track through to their homestead at Bingil Bay (part of it now is a scenic walkway). Djiru people have continued to travel here up to the present day to camp and fish and to introduce their children to country.

5. SHELL AND ARTEFACT SCATTERS

In 1987 Rowland surveyed selected coastal areas between Cowley Beach and Tam O'Shanter Point. He recorded 3 sites, one at Garner's Beach with a significant depth of shell deposit, He recorded two sites at Clump Point including a low density shell and artefact scatter (mainly *Andara* shells) on the Point itself. On his return in 1989 he could not relocate the site and speculated that it had been destroyed by erosion. He also recorded a small low density shell and artefact scatter south of Clump Point. Subsequent surveys by Bird (1994) failed to relocate the site. He also recorded an artefact scatter containing a hammerstone and grindstone at South Mission Beach. In 1998 Pentecost

recorded shell and artefact scatters at South Mission Beach (1) Tam'OShanter Point (3) and Kennedy Bay (4) and Hull River (1). Subsequent monitoring revealed that several of these are no longer visible. Bird (1994) and Pentecost (2004) also recorded stone artefacts on or close to the shoreline at the southern end of Boat Bay. The raw material of several was fine-grained basalt, available nearby. Pentecost (2004) recorded a deflated high density shell scatter (possibly a deflated midden) and a well preserved high density quartz scatter at the southern end of North Mission Beach, possibly part of a large campsite.

As a whole, these sites are relatively uncommon, probably as a result of the dynamic forces acting upon archaeological deposits in humid coastal areas. They are consistent with other coastal sites within the wider coastal region in their components, distribution and state of preservation. They therefore constitute a body of knowledge that contributes to the greater understanding of archaeology in the region. From a scientific perspective these sites could be considered to be of **medium significance**.

Because of its relatively good state of preservation and its location the shell and artefact scatter at North Mission Beach is almost certainly the remains of an extensive campsite and can be considered to be of **high significance**.

The traditional owners ascribe a level of **medium significance** to the shell and artefact scatters presently recorded in the Mission Beach area. They see these remains primarily as proof of their connection to and use of the place rather than interesting examples of a tool type.



Djiru traditional owner Lenard Andy recording an artefact scatter at North Mission Beach

3.2 SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT - *natural values*

Cultural values held by the Djiru people are localized within the landscape of their land and sea country. Djiru people consider that the responsibilities and obligations to care for country include caring for plants and animals (Bock 2007).

1. CLUMP POINT BASALT FORMATIONS

Geologically the Clump Point shoreline is regionally **very significant** as it is the only area within the Wet Tropics Bioregion where Atherton basalt formations extend to the coast. It is composed chiefly of basalt boulders of varying sizes with some pyroclastic deposits. Basalt boulders extend into the sea on either side of Clump Point. Coastal vegetation complexes growing on krazonem soils derived from basalt are quite rare. Clump Point contained three main regional ecosystems consisting of:

1. Mangrove forest on coastal lowland saline alluvial soils,
2. Complex Mesophyll Vine Forest on very well drained basalt lowlands. The community is about 7 ha in extent and its status is of concern both under the *Qld. Vegetation Management Act 1999* and to the Environmental Protection Agency. One plant species

within the complex mesophyll vine forest community is listed as vulnerable – the Arenga Palm.

3. Forest red gum tall open forest on moist basalt uplands and highlands. This vegetation complex has now disappeared from Clump Point.

Areas of *Themeda triandra* grass have been recorded on the point, which is one of only a few places where it can be found along the coast intact. This grassland was once relatively extensive and was described by Dalrymple as far back as 1873 'Clump Point descends from these coast hills to a rocky bluff to seaward in a long grassy open [area] dotted with clumps of trees, which give it a park-like appearance' (Dalrymple 1873). It has since been highly degraded by human activities and invasion by exotic grasses (mainly Guinea Grass). The precise reasons for its occurrence in this location are unknown but it is one of the most restricted communities in the Wet Tropics Region. If one adds to this fact its unique occurrence on basalt, then its presence becomes a matter of **outstanding significance** from the conservation viewpoint (Nat. Resource Assessments 2004:11). The traditional owners in the wider area weave small baskets using grasses similar to *Themeda triandra*. They believe that it was used for a similar purpose and would like to see this vegetation community saved before the last section is irretrievably lost.



Grassland area at Clump Point



Grassland area above basalt foreshore – Clump Point

2. CASSOWARY (*Gunduy*)

Lenard Andy - *Probably because I've lived with them [cassowaries] a bit. They're probably going through what we went through... with loss of habitat...and like after the Cassowary Recovery Plan when they were relocating them, it's like their version of the stolen generation. There's evidence of them around...you see them and the signs of them, droppings and their daytime nests. People today tend to label things...you see all the cassowary signs...but when you walk around a lot you see all the other road kill. I think more green frogs die than cassowaries, when the rainy season starts. At Clump Mountain I counted 15 or 16 when I went for a walk.*

In pre-contact times there was a unique relationship between gunduy, the Djiru people and their rainforest environment. Gunduy was not only an important food source from hunting (traditional owners stress that protocols were in place to avoid over-exploitation) but also played a key role in the health of the rainforest. According to Tindale (1974:109), cassowary chicks were tethered and tamed by some rain-forest Aborigines until large enough to provide food for a feast, but whether this was done in pre-European times is not certain. The Southern Cassowary (*Casuarius casuarius johnstonii*) is integral to the continued regeneration of many rainforest plants. It is well established

that a significant number of rainforest plants will not germinate until they have passed through the cassowary's digestive system.

Much of the cassowary's habitat in the Mission Beach area has been cleared since European settlement. While, in recent times this has slowed in the hinterland, urban development along the coastal strip continues to further deplete the cassowary's living space and its access to food resources. Deaths from vehicle strike, dogs and starvation and disruption to its breeding regime have reduced cassowary numbers to the extent that its continued existence in this part of North Queensland is endangered.

The Djiru traditional owners consider the cassowary to be a **very significant** part of the natural environment and a key figure in their cultural connection to their homeland. The Djiru through their 'Caring for Djiru Country' Plan have expressed concerns about the actions of management agencies "in removing and relocating of cassowaries off-country and bringing other Cassowary from outside into Djiru country....and DNA sampling of cassowaries for scientific research (Bock 2007)". The Traditional Owners wish to implement a Cassowary Management Strategy for Mission Beach. They have recently produced a DVD with Elders and Traditional Owners from the region aimed at highlighting the cultural and ecological significance of cassowaries (Girringun Aboriginal Corporation 2006).

3. RAINFOREST PRECINCT

Seen as having **very high significance**.

The Djiru people consider themselves to be 'rainforest people', an environment that provided them with shelter and sustenance and shaped their laws, beliefs and customs. The maintenance of the rainforests as a viable system which sustains its inhabitants is seen by the traditional owners as consistent with the good health of both the Djiru people and the wider community.

While large areas of upland rainforest are still extant on the protected areas of the coastal ranges, much of the lowland coastal rainforest has been cleared. This is of particular concern to the Traditional Owners who see the loss of and increasingly fragmented nature of the lowland rainforest as a major contributor to the loss of species numbers and species diversity.

The Djiru people are signatories to the Wet Tropics Regional Agreement for the involvement of Rainforest Aboriginal people in the management of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WTWHA). This Agreement promotes a set of principles and guidelines for the more effective involvement and engagement of Aboriginal people in the management of the WTWHA. It is the wish of the Djiru people that these principles and guidelines be translated into practical, on-ground measures.

4. SEAGRASS

Seen as having **very high significance**.

The health and maintenance of seagrass meadows is integrally linked to traditional and contemporary cultural practices and subsistence activities. In particular, the Traditional Owners are very concerned about the levels of sedimentation present within Boat Bay, an area that supports seagrass beds. The Djiru people hold concerns about the health and future preservation of marine protected species found in the Mission Beach area which are dependent upon seagrasses, especially turtle species and dugong.

Under the terms of the Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreement (TUMRA) between the Djiru people, Great Barrier Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and Queensland EPA the Djiru have identified restricted hunting areas and annual take numbers of green turtle and dugong.

3.3 SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT - *Historic values*

1. HULL RIVER ABORIGINAL SETTLEMENT

While the Djiru people see the history of the settlement as a significant part of the history of their dispossession of and removal from their country, they do not place as much significance on the specific place. Rather, they would prefer that less emphasis was placed on the history of the settlement and more on their place in the overall history of the area.

Lenard Andy - *That's because of the label the place [Mission Beach] has now. You'll never be able to get away from that. The label has become like a marketing thing now. It would be good if they had more recognition of the [entire] history of Mission Beach.*

2. TAM O'SHANTER POINT

Lenard Andy - *Today it would be [highly significant to Djiru people] but in the past it would have been like a small Clump Point.*

Tam O'Shanter Point is a headland between South Mission Beach and Kennedy Bay. It is a resource rich area, having a sheltered bay with mud flats, fringing mangroves and good fresh water on its northern side (Lugger Bay) and rainforest and open forest adjacent. There are historical reports of many camps along the northern end of Lugger Bay in the early days of settlement. It was at Tam O'Shanter Point where the massacre of Aboriginal people took place subsequent to the death at their hands of some of the survivors of the *Maria* shipwreck in 1872 (see Section 2.4). It is also the place where Edmund Kennedy's expedition began its journey, disembarking just to the south in Kennedy Bay.

To the Djiru people the place is **highly significant** because of historical circumstances. In the past it would have been **significant** as one of their major coastal resource areas, a place they still use for fishing and diving today. Tam O'Shanter Point is **significant** to the wider local community because of its location as the starting point of Edmund Kennedy's expedition.



Tam O'Shanter Point looking south from Lugger Bay

3. CUTTEN BROTHERS WALK

The Cutten Brothers Scenic Walk was developed from the bridle path which connected their homestead and plantation at Bingil Bay (Bicton) to their sawmill and breakwater jetty at Clump Point. It is of **low significance** to the traditional owners but of some greater significance to the wider community and probably of high significance to local historians.

4. HISTORIC JETTY

The breakwater jetty was built early in the 1900's by the Cutten Brothers for the shipment of their timber, fruit and general produce to the southern markets. Jones says 'goods were run out onto the breakwater jetty by a tramway made principally of wood with steel rails on the curves' (1961:239). It is of **low significance** to the traditional owners but of some greater significance to the wider community and probably of high significance to local historians.

Table 1: Assessment of cultural values – Mission Beach area

| CULTURAL ITEM | SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT (Indigenous) | SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT (Scientific) |
|--|---|---|
| Cultural values | | |
| Djiru – part of unique rainforest culture | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Clump Point area | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE |
| Clump point fish traps | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Clump Point ceremony grounds | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Shell and artefact scatters | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE |
| Nth Mission Beach shell & artefact scatter | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Natural values | | |
| Clump Point Basalt formations | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Cassowary | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Rainforest precinct | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Seagrass | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE | VERY HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Historic values | | |
| Hull River Aboriginal Settlement | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE | HIGH SIGNIFICANCE |
| Tam O'Shanter Point | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE |
| Cutten Brothers Walk | LOW SIGNIFICANCE | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE |
| Historic jetty | LOW SIGNIFICANCE | MEDIUM SIGNIFICANCE |

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