

The Gogo-Yimidjir People and the "Endeavour"

by

F. P. WOOLSTON

On 14 June 1770¹, just two days after recovering his ship from disaster on "a reef of coral rocks", Lt. James Cook personally buoyed the channel leading into the Endeavour River and went ashore with Joseph Banks to examine further the harbour where he intended to make repairs. Unable to enter the river because of adverse winds it was not until three days later and after further troubles that they were able to moor the ship in the harbour. In the *Journals* of both Cook and Banks², under the date 16 June 1770, while waiting to enter the river, brief reference is made to a group of people seen ashore. The Captain wrote, ". . . some people were seen ashore today". Joseph Banks had rather more to say: "fires were made upon the hills and we saw four Indians through our glasses who went away along shore, in going along which they made more fires for what purpose we could not guess". We know now that these "Indians" were members of a tribe or horde of people who spoke the Gogo-Yimidjir language³, and the sparse entries in the *Journals* were the first words ever written about them.

In this article it is proposed to discuss these people in relation to the visit of the "Endeavour" and more importantly to examine the problems which arose during this first European contact.

It is not surprising that the *Journal* of Joseph Banks contains more about the native people than Cook provides in his account. The Captain had his own worrying problems entirely related to the ship, while Banks was able to botanize and even spent two nights away on one particular expedition. On the day before the first sighting of natives, Banks wrote; "at night we observed a fire ashore near where we were to lay, which made us hope that the necessary length of our stay would give us an opportunity of being acquainted with the Indians who made it". Little did he realize that it was to be 3½ weeks before he met the Indians. Cook's entries are mostly about the ship but he did note twelve days after entering the river and after a party had been foraging on the north side that "they saw nobody, nor have we seen one since we have been in port".

Meanwhile Banks and his colleague Dr Solander had started their plant collection and had found the "frames of houses" and

the remains of shellfish but estimated that it had been six months since any occupation. Banks crossed the river and again found houses with some signs of usage but "not very lately"; some days later a food party also on the north side saw "many Indian houses". Banks out in the country saw a tree "notched in the same manner as those at Botany Bay". Cook seemed unconcerned about the natives. On Sunday, 1 July, he wrote, "a.m. a party of men one from each Mess went again a fishing, and all the rest I gave leave to go into the country knowing that there was no danger from the natives". This could have been a reasonable assumption as it was now three weeks since the "Endeavour" had come into the river and various parties had wandered about on both banks without sighting a native. The only comment regarding this came from Banks: "the Indians had a fire about a league off up the river".

Despite the non-appearance of natives it is certain that the "Endeavour" had been under observation from the very beginning. Cook's preoccupation was in repairing the ship and getting her away safely but he was also aware of the sickness of some of his people. Tupia, the Tahitian, and Mr Green, the astronomer, were recorded by Banks as being quite ill, and it was plain that Cook was concerned. On the day the "Endeavour" came to harbour the sick were transferred ashore and a boat was sent out "to haul the Sean which returned without success". From this time until leaving the river, parties continued to fish and others were away shooting and collecting food. The sick were always served first with the fresh victuals and it was only when large quantities were available that it was shared by all.

Many days later Banks made the statement that the burning of grass by the natives was in some way connected with the taking of kangaroos, but it is also certain that some of the smoke was from signal fires. The burning of grass both for hunting and for providing food for marsupials has been recorded many times. One such record close to the Gogo-Yimidjir country is mentioned by P. J. Trezise⁴. He recounts a legend from the Bloomfield River which tells of eagle-hawk men who went to hunt kangaroos; "they also burnt the dry grass to make it grow fresh and green for the kangaroos. In this way they kept the kangaroos fat and knew where they would be feeding".

As the time of the "Endeavour"'s visit was in the dry season this was the time for the burning of grass and the numerous fires which were seen by Cook would have been mostly for this purpose. The high ground especially on the south side of the river afforded good lookout points and sharp eyes would have seen the hauls of fish, which were as much as 213 lbs. on one day. The sounds of musket fire would have become slightly familiar and the tracks of the "Endeavour"'s men and the foliage damage caused by the pigeon shooters would all have been examined closely.

Cook reported that a party sent in the pinnace to look for a channel to the north had landed at night some nine miles north of the river and in so doing disturbed a party of natives who had been cooking "sea eggs". These were sea urchins for which Parkinson in his vocabulary gives words for two kinds⁵. The pinnace had brought back a large quantity of giant clams collected from a reef at low tide and Cook reasoned the absence of large shells in abandoned camps meant that the natives did not have boats suitable for venturing out to the reefs. He was incorrect in this case, as subsequent observations proved.

The ship was refloated after the main repairs had been completed but Cook on 5 July decided to beach her again for further inspection. Banks again went on the north side of the river collecting and observing. His party included the Tahitian, Tupia, who had mastered the art of handling a musket. As Banks wrote "[he] parted from us and walked away a shooting, on his return told us that he had seen two people digging in the ground for some kind of roots, on seeing him they ran with great precipitation". Thus it appears that the first close sighting of the Gogo-Yimidjir people was made by the Polynesian passenger.

The following day Banks and Lt. Gore with three men set off up river for a hunting and collecting trip. On the evening of the second day having covered some ten miles up river, they made camp and observed smoke just a few hundred yards away. Banks by this time was well aware of the timidity of the natives and being anxious to see them reduced his numbers to three, hoping that the "smallness of our party would induce them not to be afraid of us". Soon he came upon an empty camp showing all the signs of occupation of just minutes before and he was probably correct in saying that they had "discovered us before we saw them".

When Banks arrived back at the ship he must have been delighted to hear that two natives had appeared on the opposite side of the river. In the evening the pinnace which had been searching for a passage between the reefs returned without success but not empty handed; they had sighted many turtles and had captured three, using only a boat hook. The capture of the turtles was an exciting event for the "Endeavour"'s men. "This day, all hands feasted upon Turtle for the first time". It had been nearly eleven months since meat in quantity had been available, and Banks wrote: "the promise of such plenty of good provisions made our situation appear much less dreadful; . . . put everybody in vast spirits".

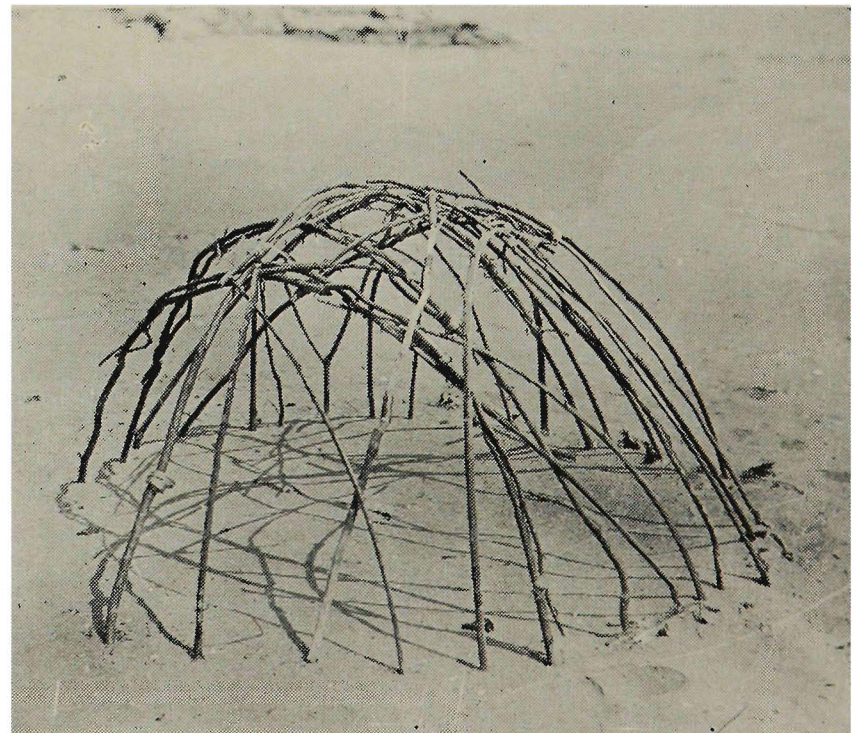
On 10 July, after twenty-three days in the river, natives appeared and approached the ship. Seven or eight natives were observed on the north side and two of them came opposite the ship but they all ran away when Cook tried to approach in a boat. Later in the day four natives again appeared, this time with a small outrigger canoe from which they appeared to be spearing fish. Cook decided to play a waiting game and soon two of them in the canoe approached the ship but stopped "at the distance of a long musquet shot, talking much and very loud to us". By signs and words they were gradually coaxed alongside but held their spears at the ready. Various gifts—cloth, nails, paper—were dropped but none of these seemed to make any impression upon them. Then, more by accident

than design, a small fish was received with "the greatest joy imaginable". The seemingly simple gift caused them to go over and bring their two friends. This time they landed near the ship, each man carrying two spears and a woomera. Tupia by signs persuaded them to lay down their weapons and come forward; this they did, and sat down with him. Then the "Endeavour" people came up and passed over more presents of beads and cloth. The natives appeared relaxed but made sure that nobody came between them and their weapons. They declined to dine with Cook and his men and then paddled back across the river.

At last they had met their "Indians". Cook described one as above middle age, the other three young. The tallest was 5'6" and their limbs proportionately small. All were naked, their skins the colour of "wood soot", hair was black, lank and short, neither woolly nor frizzled. Cook also said that all their front teeth were present thus differing from the natives seen by Dampier "on the Western side of this country".

The men had some body decoration in red, and one had some white streaks on his upper lip and breast. Their voices were described as "soft and tunable" and their appearance as being far from disagreeable. The last few words in Cook's *Journal* were that the natives could repeat any word said to them, but that none of their words could be understood.

Three of the natives returned the next day with another whom they introduced as Yaparico. Banks noted that one man had the nasal septum bored and was wearing a bird bone through the hole. It was then discovered that all four had the same nasal opening and also had pierced ears. They also wore upper arm bands of hair, and Cook noted that one man was wearing part of an old shirt, given the day before, as a headband. On this visit they passed over a fish which Banks thought was in return for the one they had received on the day before. This was the only object which was given to the "Endeavour" people during their stay in the river. The natives left rather hastily after one of Banks's men upset them by making a close examination of the canoe. It is interesting to note that Roth, when visiting Cape Bedford, found a Gogo-Yimidjir family



Banks saw something like this when he wrote: "Myself walking in the country saw old frames of Indian houses". This photograph by Roth appears in *Record of the Australian Museum*, Vol. VIII, 1910-1913, plate XVI. Such shelters on the northern coastline from Cape Grafton to Princess Charlotte Bay were about four and a half feet in height and were covered with bark and grass. They differed from other dome-type shelters in having the frame tied together and not woven.

with the name Yaborego which was taken from a camping place near Cape Flattery and these people could have been descendants of the Yaparico who met the "Endeavour"'s men⁶. A personal communication from Mr Gordon Rose who worked in close contact with the Gogo-Yimidjir people for 18 years, advises there is no family of that name in existence now, nor are there any people left with pierced nasal septums or ear lobes.

On the day after the hasty departure, no less than six men crossed the river and although they stayed most of the morning they did not venture more than 20 yards from their canoe. A woman and a small boy were seen across the river and through a telescope Cook saw that the woman was as naked as the men. Banks measured the men and the tallest by far was five feet nine inches, the rest being down to five feet two inches. They were slender but well proportioned and Banks wrote that at a distance of a quarter of a mile they seemed taller and larger than the Europeans. Some of the men who had been given medals the day before were wearing them on neck-ribbons which were now smoke stained and dirty. Banks thought they must have lain in the smoke to keep off the "musquetos"; Banks himself while up river with Lt. Gore had suffered from these pests.

Ornaments were few—necklaces of shells and upper arm-bands made by "strings lapd round by other strings". Parkinson described a shell necklace as "oval pieces of bright shells which lay imbricated over one another and linked together by two strings". The men wore hair belts composed of several strands no thicker than a "pack thread" and some had a forehead band of bark; they also wore, as Banks said, the "preposterous bone in their noses". The seamen on the "Endeavour" described this bone as the "spritsail yard". The spears or "lances" carried by the Gogo-Yimidjir men were of various kinds, some single pointed, others with a point of stingray barb and surrounded by smaller barbs of the same. It is suggested that the main shaft was of bamboo or the stalk of a plant like a bullrush but these could have probably been the flower stems of *Xanthorrhoea sp.* The head of the spear was made of a very heavy and hard wood. Sometimes a single barb of wood was used and Banks mentions spears with sharp pieces of shell set in resin; Cook described similar spears set with sharks' teeth. Although Banks admired the balance of the spears he said that they were sometimes clumsily made in three or four pieces bound together with the joints covered with resin. For throwing their spears they used a "lever" (woomera) and Banks has a simple drawing in his *Journal* showing one of the two types. One type had two oval pieces of bailer shell attached as a handle; Banks's drawing shows the lathe type described by Roth⁷ which had a wooden handle covered in a mastic. The woomera body was of hard reddish wood about two inches in breadth, flat sided and polished. Banks thought that the oval handle was formed of two pieces of bone but even the most observant man could have made this mistake. Both Cook and Banks thought that the shiny woomeras could be mistaken for swords or even clubs depending from what angle they were viewed. Cook said that they were able to throw their spears up to forty or fifty yards with almost the accuracy of muskets and certainly much more accurately than a ball could be thrown. Banks recorded a spear throwing demonstration and said that it flew swiftly for fifty paces at about a constant four feet from the ground.

The canoe with which they had ferried their party across river was about ten feet long and could carry four men only. It was narrow and had a single outrigger connected to the hull by eight booms on which they could lay their spears. The paddle was about four feet long and used in a two-handed way. Banks in describing the hull said that the ends were cut up from the under part leaving part of the upper side overhanging. A bailer shell (*Melo spp.*) was used for removing water and was described as the "Persian Crown" shell. During the whole stay in the river Cook only saw the one canoe and knew it belonged to the group of people whom they met.

Rock Art of the Gogo-Yimidjir

All of these paintings appear on the walls and ceilings of rock shelters of varying sizes; these places were occupied at irregular intervals by the Gogo-Yimidjir people.

These coloured drawings have been reproduced from the field books of P. J. Trezise who re-found most of the galleries and has recorded the mass of art by camera and scale drawings for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra. The shelters are no longer visited by the "people". It is certain that some of the paintings were in existence when Cook careened the "Endeavour" in 1770.

1. Bull Creek, Main Group Gallery.

This is one of a series of galleries in the middle of Gogo-Yimidjir country.

The group shows a simple overlapping of figures; in some places there are five super impositions. The crocodile, freshwater variety (*C. johnstoni*) and the emu are totemic figures but the catfish, which is a common subject in the area, is a "bad" figure causing evil.

2. Turnoff Galleries.

This group is the most recent and the four figures were executed contemporaneously. They represent a lugger (not the "Endeavour" as is commonly believed) and three sea creatures. The larger is no doubt a "cotton spinner" one of the Holothuriums. They would have been painted by a man who had worked in the beche-de-mer industry from the 1870s onwards.

3. Platform Gallery.

Male and female sorcery figures actually done in separate locations. This type of painting was usually done secretly whilst "singing" the person's name and with much cursing. Note the shell ornament on the female.

The author and P. J. Trezise conducted an archaeological excavation in the floor of this shelter during 1966. We obtained a carbon date from charcoal alongside associated artifacts of 6200 years B.P. (before the present) \pm 120 years. The dating was sponsored by the A.I.A.S. Canberra.

4. Turnoff Galleries.

These small linear monochrome figures are probably the oldest of this presented series. The two speared figures are pure sorcery to cause the death of certain persons.

5. Horse Gallery.

Isabella Gorge; one of several galleries at the head of Isabella Creek which runs into the Endeavour River.

The horse which dominates the gallery measures ten feet in width. Horses were certainly seen by Gogo-Yimidjir people at the time of the Hann expedition in 1872; in fact Kennedy's (1848) horses may have also been sighted by men visiting tribes to the west. From 1873 onwards horses were used in hundreds in the travels of the gold-seekers. This is not the only gallery to contain a horse painting; several larger have been recorded. The central male figure partly obscured is a bad or devil man and his evil exploits were told in the old legends.

6. Bull Creek, No. Three Gallery.

The human figures are probably ancestor heroes and the echidna is totemic. The small male figure with the raised headdress appears in other parts of Cape York.

7. Sloping Gallery.

A male figure wearing a nasal ornament (Banks's "preposterous bone in the nose").



Illustration No. 1

one foot.

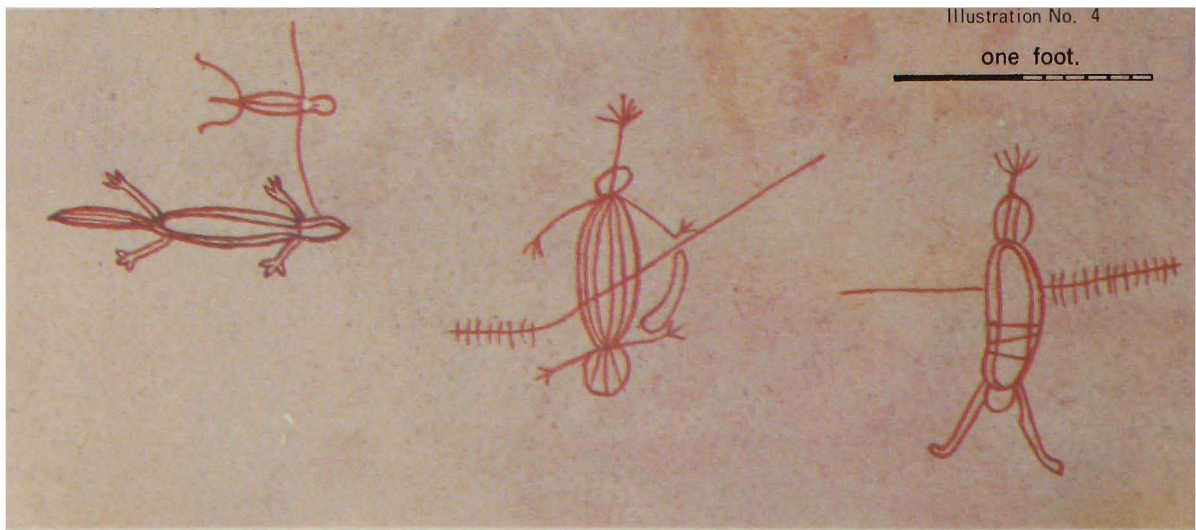
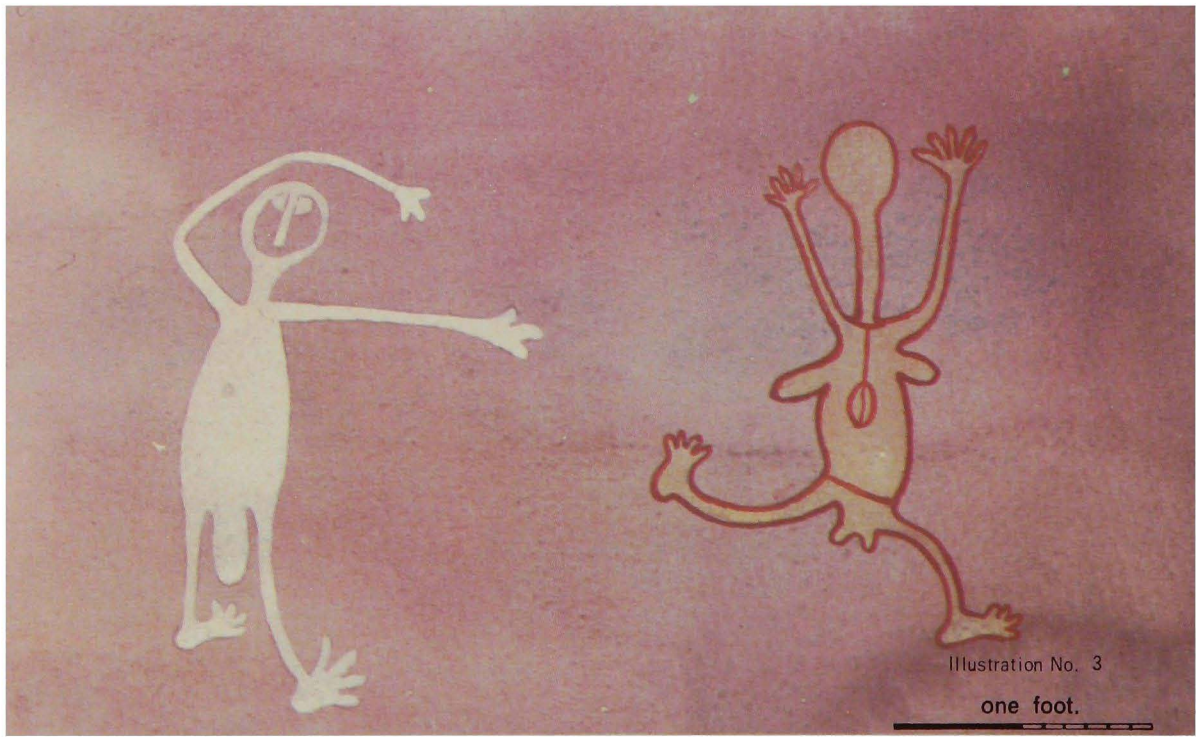
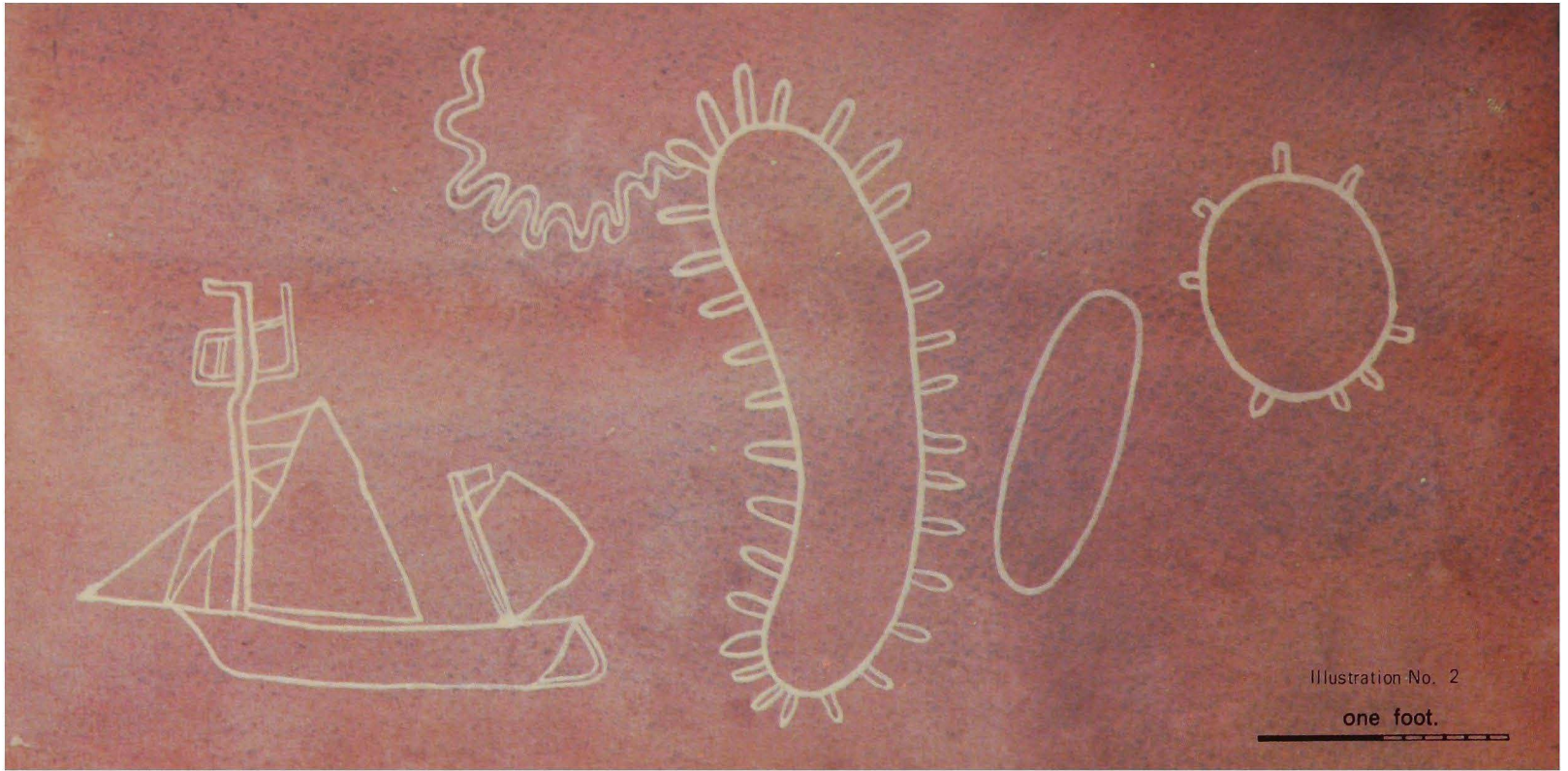
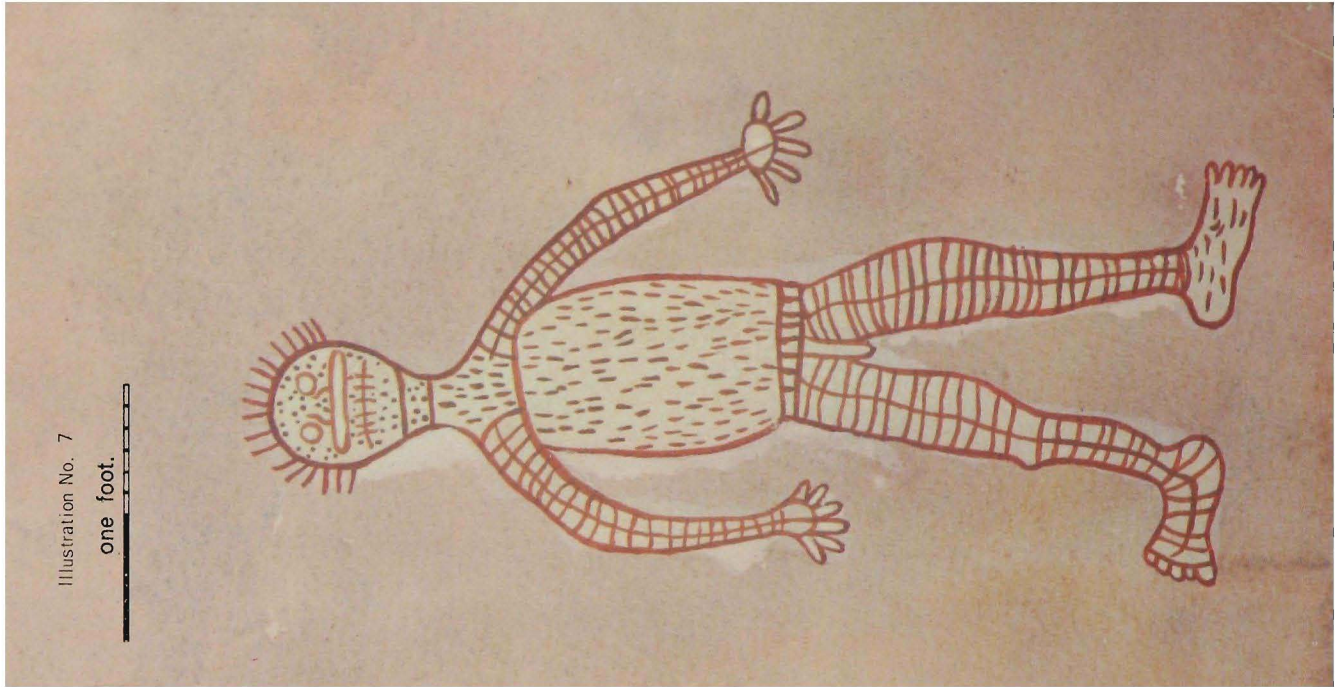




Illustration No. 5

one foot.



On 19 July, the "Endeavour" crew were completing their various tasks and were almost ready to depart. Turtle hunters had been busy and had amassed a number of these creatures and were keeping them alive on deck. The native people were deeply concerned about this, and had kept themselves well informed on such matters. Banks, on 13 July, wrote: "Two Indians came in their canoe to the ship, staid by her a very short time". Cook recorded on 18 July that, after coming back from an excursion on the north side, he ". . . found several of the natives on board. At this time we had twelve tortoise or turtle upon our decks, which they took more notice of than anything else in the ship, as I was told by the officers, for their curiosity was satisfied before I got on board and they went away soon after". It could not be expected that Cook could understand what was going on in the minds of the Gogo-Yimidjir people at this time. Had he known he would have taken immediate steps to prevent the coming storm. The situation developing is well explained by F. D. McCarthy, on Aboriginal property and ownership⁸; "the local group owns a portion of the tribal territory, including all of its resources in game, trees, plant foods, waterholes and raw materials, but there is a further subdivision where families within a group own certain areas such as a bay for camping and fishing, or a tract of land for hunting and collecting; in addition, individual hereditary rights over quarries, fish weirs and islands exist among the men". In other words, the turtles belonged to the Gogo-Yimidjir people, as did all the game which the "Endeavour" crew had collected. They were at a loss to understand why they had not been given their property. The first gift of the small fish which they received would have mislead them into thinking that the strangers understood their lore and they must have been dismayed when no further food was passed over. It is more than likely that they intended to keep out of the way of the "Endeavour" and it was probably the sight of the first turtle being put on board that caused the first contact. Twelve turtles to them would have represented an enormous quantity of food and the discussions around their camp fires would have shown an increasing firmness of purpose and indignation as to what they considered was a slighting of their age old rights.

The morning of 19 July produced the show-down. Ten natives came across the river landing near the ship and six or seven more (including women) were seen on the other side. Banks noted that the natives brought a larger number of spears than they had ever done before and these they laid up in a tree under the care of one of their number and a boy. The rest came on board. Even at this stage, the fact that they left their weapons on shore indicates that the natives imagined that they could resolve the situation peacefully, and so they simply attempted to remove some of the turtles. They asked first by signs and then became angry when they were refused and even pushed Banks in anger. They then grabbed a turtle and attempted to put it overboard and in fact tried this two or three times but were prevented by the seamen. Suddenly they got into their canoe, went ashore, and recovered their spears. Then in a flash they took some fire from under a pitch kettle and began to set fire to the grass on the windward side of the few things which were still ashore.

Cook and Banks now came on shore with others, and they all worked fast to prevent the burning of clothing and fishnets which lay on the grass. When the natives continued to light more fires in the tall, dry grass, both Cook and Banks grasped a musket each; Cook fired and wounded one of the natives with small shot, causing them all to run away. Cook loaded his musket with a ball and fired into the mangroves where the natives were running to indicate to them that they were not yet out of reach. Fortunately little damage was done and they followed after the natives whom they soon met coming towards them. Cook said that each of the men had four or five spears and in his *Journal* he says that "we seized upon six

or seven of the first darts we met with". There is no mention of this happening in Banks's *Journal* and this particular incident does not seem quite clear, but the natives went away again. Banks and Cook with three or four others followed them for nearly a mile when the two parties confronted one another about a hundred yards apart.

Earlier in the fracas a little old man had come up to the "Endeavour" party and had said something which they naturally could not understand. This same old man now came forward carrying in his hand a spear without a point. He came forward slowly and each time he halted he put a hand under his armpit, collected the moisture there and then drew his fingers across his mouth. Beaglehole's explanation for this incident is "for the salt so gained" but there was considerably more to it than this⁹. Sweat especially from under the armpits is considered to have tremendous powers by the Australian Aborigines. Roth says that the hand rubbed under the armpit was swung about to chase away a storm¹⁰; also sweat from the armpit was rubbed on the sick to induce a cure¹¹. R. M. and C. H. Berndt in a legend about a man who made a trip to the place of the dead from Bremer Island notes that when he arrived at the place his first act was to rub himself with sweat to give himself greater power¹². In personal communication with a Lardil man, (Goobalathaldin) Dick Roughsey, I have been told that when a man is released from the Damen language to his ordinary tongue of Lardil, he "squares off" to his tribal brother-in-law by presenting a stick for tasting, the end of which has been rubbed under his armpit¹³. Thus, it is suggested that the old man, acting as a go-between and possibly in fear of the dangerous strangers, was not only giving himself more courage by tasting his own sweat but may have been offering the powerful gift of a sweated stick. Cook and his party beckoned him to come forward and then they spoke to the others who lay down their weapons and came to them. There were some strangers in the party and these were presented to Cook and his men who gave them the few trinkets they had with them. Then they all went towards the ship and the natives made signs that they would not set fire to the grass again. Musket balls were distributed among them and by signs their effects were explained. When the ship was reached these men would not come on board. They stayed near the ship for two hours and then left. They did not see the men again and the following night all the hills around the river had been set alight.

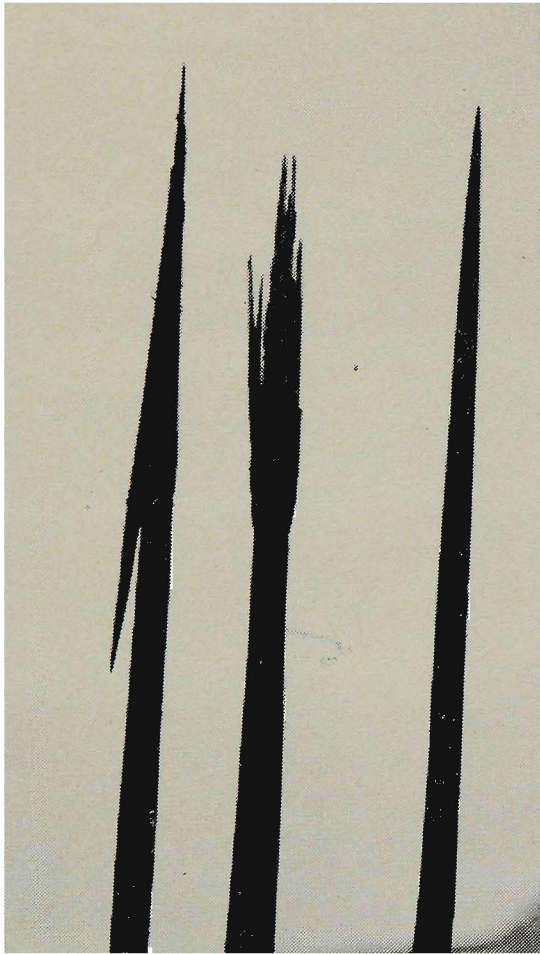
The only other contact made with the Gogo-Yimidjir people occurred when a seaman who had strayed from his party while out foraging met two men and a boy. He was afraid and offered them his knife but it was returned to him and they made signs that he might go and even pointed the way back to the ship. He said that there was part of a kangaroo and a cockatoo hanging up in a tree. Banks also noted that on 25 July Cook was up river and found the canoe "belonging to our friends, the Indians" and that their fires were seen five or six miles inland; no contact was made with them.

On 4 August 1770 the "Endeavour" left the river and we shall never know with what feelings the Gogo-Yimidjir people watched her departure. She was in their view for some days and then she was gone from them for ever.

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FURTHER DISCUSSION

Despite the fact that the contact with the Gogo-Yimidjir people was of brief duration, there is a surprising amount of information on their material culture and, to some lesser degree, their sociological pattern. The *Journals* of Cook, Banks and Parkinson have provided rich sources of material which, in the light of modern knowledge, have stood up particularly well. With regard to linguistics each of the three gentlemen provided a short vocabulary and Banks said that his list was compiled mainly from words that were checked by three independent people so that it would reduce the possibility of error. Roth



Three spear-types were described in the *Journals*:— left, single wooden barb, Cooktown, 1900; centre, multiple sting ray barbs, Cooktown, 1913; right, single wooden point, bamboo haft, Cooktown, 1900. All three are in the Queensland Museum (QE 4783/13, QE 4800, QE 4757).

in making a study of the language observed that “this Koko-Yimidjir language is the identical one of which Lieutenant Cook took a vocabulary”¹⁴. In the latest language study, de Zwaan confirms this¹⁵; “many contemporary words in Gogo-Yimidjir are similar to the ones recorded by Captain Cook, and may provide diachronic clues”. De Zwaan points out that Cook’s vocabulary represents the earliest attempt to record any Australian Aboriginal language.

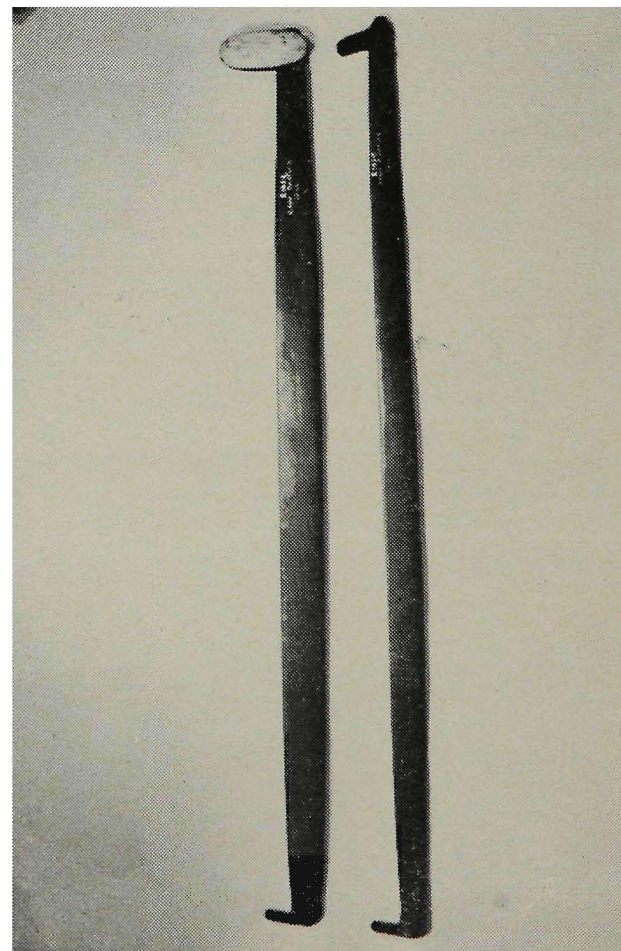
One of the first words which is mentioned in the *Journals* is “Carbanda” which was taken to be the white paint seen on the faces of the natives. Roth, however, corrects this—“Kapan-Da”, meaning “marks with”¹⁶.

Banks recorded that “they have a knowledge of plants as we plainly could perceive by their having names for them”. This is borne out by the twelve words applying to plants, which Parkinson lists. Cook observed that they had no cultivation but that they ate yams of two kinds and that they cooked most things on slow small fires. According to Beaglehole it is quite possible that the two kinds of yams are *Dioscorea triphylla* and *Dioscorea transversa* R. Br.¹⁷. In Cook’s urgent search for fresh greens and vegetable foods the leaves and the roots of *Alocasia macrorrhiza*, Schott were tried, with success for the cooked leaves, but with rejection of the roots as being too “acid”. The only one who was able to prepare the root stems of the *Alocasia* was the Tahitian, Tupia, who apparently had knowledge of these things; he cooked the roots for a long time.

The husks of a cycad had been seen around the camps and some of the fruit had been collected and tried by the people with the dire results of vomiting and diarrhoea. The nuts were also tried on some pigs which resulted in the death of two of them. Banks observed that the natives must have had some way of killing the poison. Quantities of pandanus husks were

noticed around the camps but Banks’s only comment was that it resembled a pineapple but the taste was disagreeable enough. Later on Banks described a wooden mallet which Beaglehole considered was probably an isolated example, if indeed it were an artifact. There is no doubt that Banks saw a wooden pounder which was used for many things, but particularly in the opening of pandanus nuts after they had been cooked on the fire. Roth recorded a number of these in the various parts of Cape York¹⁸. Banks said that a few men held in their mouths the leaves of a herb which they chewed. He was not able to find the plant from which this leaf came, but he thought it might be a kind of “Betele”. However, it did not seem to stain the lips or teeth. Beaglehole is of the opinion that the leaves were a narcotic commonly known as Pitjuri. Roth, who made a study of the trade in the area, listed various articles, but made no mention of Pitjuri and in the memory of whites who spent the greater part of their lives in Cape York the use of Pitjuri in that area was never observed. Roth¹⁹, in his listing of medicinal plants, noted that *Tribulus cistoides* Linn. was used between the gums and the cheek along the base of a bad tooth to relieve pain. This was used by the blacks of the Pennefather River, well north of the Endeavour River, and on the Gulf of Carpentaria side of the peninsula. The word for this was “dardatra”. Parkinson is the only one to list a word for the leaf chewed at the Endeavour River and his word is “dora”.

Other manufactured articles seen by Cook were various dilly-bags which were worn around the neck, a pleated bark container and a poorly made stone adze. Banks complimented their fish-hooks which were made of shell, “very neatly and some exceedingly small”. The various ropes and lines which were used varied from half an inch to almost the finest of hair. The dilly-bags were made in a series of loops something like



Two types of “levers” (woomeras) were described in the *Journals*. These two gathered by Roth at Cape Bedford in 1898 are in the collections of the Australian Museum E. 14318, E. 14315. The shiny blades are still evident.

knitting only very large and open and Banks said "in the very same manner I have seen ladies make purses in England"; Roth called this the "hour glass pattern"²⁰. These bags were carried down the back and the string handle was looped over the crown of the head. The contents of the bag consisted of such articles as a "lump or two of paint, some fish hooks and lines, shells to make them of, points of darts and resin and their few ornaments . . .".

The paint material was of two colours only. The red was "red ocre" and the white colour was a heavy, greasy material which Beaglehole notes as kaolin or pipe clay. Banks regretted that they were not able to procure a sample of any of the paint materials; in fact he said that the people had no idea of trade and apart from the one-half pound fish, not a person in the ship procured from the natives any article whatsoever. The polished finish to their weapons was achieved by the use of a rough leaf of the fig tree, according to Banks, *Ficus Radulo*. There are a number of *Ficus* species which have a rough sand-paper-like leaf. Banks observed that these leaves bit into the wood as keenly as the European shave grass used by joiners. The latter is possibly *Equisetum hiemale* Linn., now called "scouring grass" in England, but still called "shave grass" in America.

The fact that Parkinson records four words for turtle, *i.e.* turtle, male, female, tail, seems to prove that there was considerable discussion of these creatures by the natives. Cook said that although they discovered a harpoon head in one of their turtles the natives would not be able to manage the harpooning and handling of such large creatures from their small flimsy canoes. In this he was incorrect. We now know that the harpooning of turtles was in fact even performed from bark canoes in the islands south of Cooktown. Banfield at Dunk Island comments: "I have known blacks after harpooning a turtle to be towed six miles out to sea before it came their turn to do the towing. How they accomplish the feat of securing a turtle that may weigh a couple of hundredweight from a frail bark canoe, in which a white man can scarcely sit and preserve his balance is astonishing. In a lively sea the blacks sit back tilting up the stem to meet the coming wave, and then put their weight forward to ease it down, paddling, manoeuvring with the line and bailing all the time. The mere paddling about in the canoe is a feat beyond the dexterity of an ordinary man"²¹.

Banks's description of the gear for harpooning turtles is exactly similar to that given by Roth one hundred and thirty years later. The harpoon consisted of a head of hard wood with a barb. This fitted into a socket on a pole of light wood eight to nine feet long and as thick as a man's wrist. The head of the harpoon was attached to the thick staff by a line between three and four fathoms long.

Cook said that kangaroos were numerous; in fact the "Endeavour" crew always saw them whenever they went "into the Country". Unfortunately they did not have the opportunity of seeing the natives hunt them and although there was mention of shellfish, fish bones and other food remains being found around the camps, there was only one occasion when a portion of a kangaroo was seen cooking on a fire.

The use of stone ovens—the heating of stones for cooking game—was observed in many of the camps. Banks was impressed by the rapidity with which they were able to make fire by twirling a stick in their hands while pressing it against another piece of wood. They were able to make the smallest spark increase "in a manner truly wonderful", and the whole operation took less than two minutes.

One dog was seen around the camp near the ship but it is not quite clear whether this was a wild dingo or a partly tame one belonging to the natives.

The British visitors noticed that the natives bore on their bodies large raised scars in regular patterns. These occurred on the fleshy parts of their arms, thighs and sides, and across

their chests and they appeared to be the result of deep cuts. Banks thought that they were the marks of mourning for the dead but we now know that they were scars of initiation into adulthood. Parkinson said that they had flattish noses, moderately sized mouths and regularly set large teeth, tinged with yellow. According to Banks the wearing of the nose bones stopped up the nostrils so that they spoke in a nasal manner which he thought would make them scarcely intelligible.

As to their behaviour, they never attempted to take anything in a thieving manner. When they asked for something, a refusal was accepted with indifference; the one exception to this, was of course, the turtles. They showed some curiosity especially in relation to the bodies and skins of the Europeans, and this is reflected in a portion of Parkinson's vocabulary where he noted words for "uncover", "take off", "strip or uncover yourself".

The "Endeavour" crew did not have the opportunity of seeing Gogo-Yimidjir women at close range; they were observed many times across the river where they were collecting shellfish or carrying firewood. Their men would not allow any of the people to follow them to their camps. They were observed to have feathers stuck in their hair and by signs these were said to be fastened with lumps of wax.

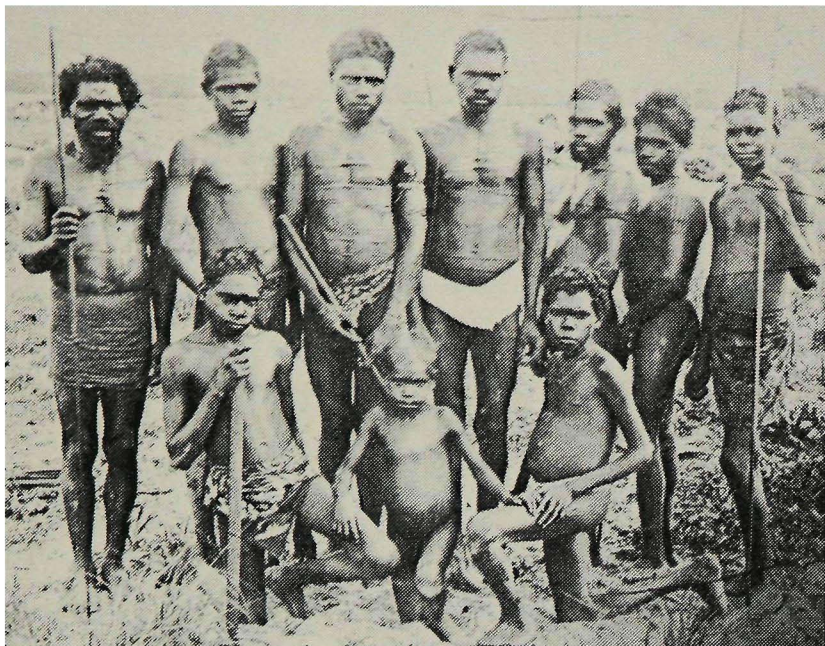
The native men were never seen without their spears and woomeas and Cook said that this habit was not so much because of enemies but because of their constant readiness for procuring game. It is now accepted that the Aboriginal male was at all times ready for either enemies or game.

Both Cook and Banks were of the opinion that the native people were not a numerous race; indeed, during their stay of six and a half weeks in the river they saw a total of twenty-one people comprising twelve men, seven women, one boy and one girl. There is no doubt that there were probably a few more in the group which was a family one, and that they "owned" a good portion of the land on the north banks of the river. It is possible that the Gogo-Yimidjir people were not at all impressed by the "Endeavour" and had intended to ignore her presence in their river. They did this successfully for weeks but were gradually forced into contact and action by the sight of the great quantities of fish and eventually turtles which the "Endeavour" 's men were taking. After one of their men had been wounded and they had realized the effect of the strangers' weapons they lost no time in disappearing from the scene. It is not inconceivable that, in fright and anger, they went to find the main mob of the Gogo-Yimidjir people. The Gogo-Yimidjir people roamed in an area from the Endeavour River northwards to the South of Cape Flattery and westward as far as Battle Camp and Welcome Waterholes²². Cape Bedford was one of their main centres and the pure language was spoken there but was understood for a considerable distance beyond the tribal boundaries. The derivation of their name is Gogo, speech and Yimidjir, the same²³.

The pattern of their living depended on the seasons for all things but was mainly controlled by the wet season. At this time, usually late January to early April, they moved from the lowlands to escape the rain, floods and mosquitoes and went to the high country where for a few months they lived in rock shelters. The rainfall in these areas was not so high as the lowlands and their stay was controlled by the water and food supply. They returned to the low country and lived there until the beginning of the next "wet".

In some of the shelters appear rock paintings which were done by the Gogo-Yimidjir artists. They comprise a number of subjects including love magic, sorcery and totemic objects. The influence of the coming of the white man is reflected in some of their paintings but this does not refer to the "Endeavour" 's visit but rather to the European invasion a century later when the Palmer gold rush commenced.

It is difficult to know the number of Gogo-Yimidjir people in 1770 but probably there were about 600, and these were



Taken near Cooktown ca 1880, this old photograph illustrates many of the things mentioned in the "Endeavour" Journals of 1770 — varying hair-types, short beards, body and arm scars, flat narrow bladed woomera, upper arm-bands, three necklaces, only one head-band. The man on the left has a spear haft-bound in two pieces. The newness of the cloth around the waists would indicate nakedness prior to posing. Banks said "cloaths they had none".

scattered over a very large area. We know that the Cape Bedford mission was first formed in 1886 and a census of Aborigines in the Cooktown Area in that year was 786 but there would have been other than Gogo-Yimidjir people included²⁴. To-day, the mission, called Hopevale, north from Cooktown on the right branch of the Endeavour River has among its people about 200 of the Gogo-Yimidjir and there are about fifty working in places beyond the mission²⁵.

Considering the problems which Cook had before him when he entered the river, and with due recognition to the short time that he was able to observe the Gogo-Yimidjir people, it is incredible to think that his perception of these people was so profound.

From what I have said of the Natives of New Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched People upon Earth; but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans, being wholly unacquainted not only with the Superfluous, but with the necessary Conveniences so much sought after in Europe; they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a Tranquility which is not disturbed by the Inequality of Condition. The earth and Sea of their own accord furnish them with all things necessary for Life. They covet not Magnificent Houses, Household-stuff, etc; they live in a Warm and fine Climate, and enjoy every wholesome Air, so that they have very little need of Cloathing; and this they seem to be fully sensible of, for many to whom we gave Cloth, etc., left it carelessly upon the Sea beach and in the Woods, as a thing they had no manner of use for; in short, they seem'd to set no Value upon anything we gave them, nor would they ever part with anything of their own for any one Article we could offer them. This, in my opinion, Argues that they think themselves provided with all the necessaries of Life, and they have no Superfluities.²⁶

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the following persons who assisted me in this article:—

Mr F. S. Colliver discussed the subject matter with me;
Mr P. J. Trezise allowed me to use his field books;
Miss Mary McKenzie prepared the coloured drawings;

the Trustees of the Australian Museum allowed me to photograph relevant artifacts, and to print several of the Roth photographs;
the Queensland Museum allowed me to photograph artifacts from the Cooktown area;
the Mitchell Library made available to me various photostats of Journals written on "Endeavour" and also allowed me to photograph portions of Parkinson's Journal;
the Oxley Memorial Library for many references and for arranging some of the forementioned;
Dr S. T. Blake for certain botanical information;
Mr Gordon Rose, late of the Hopevale mission, for discussions on the people.

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- In this context "squares off" means a gesture or gift wherein a person is discharged from some form of obligation.
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