Yvonne Cadet-James
Robert Andrew James
Sue McGinty
Russell McGregor

Gugu Badhun

People of the Valley of Lagoons



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Preface

The Gugu Badhun creation story of Numunali the bronzed-winged pigeon and Bunbunba the pheasant, that has been handed down from one generation to the next in our oral history, marks a 20,000-year-old geological event. The story explains how the lava flow from the Kinrara Volcano created the Gugu Badhun landscape. It is an important creation story which explains how the Gugu Badhun universe was formed. It is our cosmology.

The ancient lava flow caused the creation of the mountains, valleys, and permanent spring-fed creeks that are the beginning and the source of the Burdekin River — the life giver to the Gugu Badhun plants and animals. The upper Burdekin — or the black Burdekin — River gave sustenance and life to country and our people for millennia. The same ecology and natural resources that supported and maintained Gugu Badhun people for thousands of years were also attractive to the colonisers. The permanent spring-fed creeks, lagoons and open grassy woodlands of the area were regarded as prime grazing country and, in the late 1800s, the pastoralists moved in.

The arrival of the Europeans saw Gugu Badhun people dispersed throughout North Queensland, with some forcibly removed to reserves and missions, some Gugu Badhun staying on country to work with the pastoral industry and some Gugu Badhun moving away to engage in the broader education and employment opportunities which were emerging across North Queensland at the time. Colonisation irreversibly changed the landscape of country and the lives of the Gugu Badhun people. While the story of the Gugu Badhun Nation is one of dispossession and disbursement, it is also a story of resilience, survival, adaptation, kinship, and community.

The first of August 2012 — the day of Gugu Badhun No. 2 Native Title Consent Determination — will be marked in Gugu Badhun modern history as an important occasion for our people. It was on this day that the Federal Court of Australia finally recognised something that we have always known: our people, the Gugu Badhun people, are the original inhabitants of the upper Burdekin region of North Queensland. Eighteen years after we lodged our initial application, the Federal Court of Australia affirmed within

the Australian legal system that Gugu Badhun people have maintained an on-going, unbroken cultural and spiritual connection to the land which we call Gugu Badhun country. The Native Title Consent Determination, *Hoolihan (and others) on behalf of the Gugu Badhun People #2 v State of Queensland* recognises the Gugu Badhun people's native title rights and interests in over approximately 650,000 hectares of land.

Some of our Gugu Badhun people live on country today; however, a large number of Gugu Badhun people now reside and are engaged in employment within major regional centres across North Queensland (off-country) and within other states and territories of Australia. While some Gugu Badhun have migrated outside our ancestral lands we have, as an Aboriginal Nation, maintained our cultural identity and spiritual connection with our traditional lands through regular, purposeful visits to Gugu Badhun country, exercising our right to access our country to camp, to hunt, to gather traditional foods and medicines, as well as participate in decision making as a community on matters relating to our country, culture, laws and customs.

Continuing the cultural and spiritual connections with country that have been forged over millennia, the Gugu Badhun people are working to maintain a modern identity that has its foundation in country and tradition but is forward-looking and adaptive to our ever-evolving culture. In the true spirit of self-determination, we are working to ensure prosperity for the Gugu Badhun people that enables the protection, maintenance, care and development of our community, culture and country.

It's been a long journey to where we are at today and it is because of our elders' knowledge, strength and determination. It is now the responsibility of our Gugu Badhun young people to carry on this work into the future.

Janine Gertz Dale Gertz

Acknowledgements

The greatest thanks are due the interviewees, both Gugu Badhun and others, who enthusiastically recorded their stories and unfailingly supported the project.

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies provided funding for the early travelling and much of the digitisation of video tapes done by Dianna Hardy. An Australian Research Council Linkage Grant provided further travel costs and a half-time salary for a year.

On the technical side, thanks go to Ralph Rigby who was the camera operator for some of the early interviews. Other camera operators were Ben Southwell and Bradley King. In addition, Agnes Hannan both conducted and recorded several interviews as did Robert James, Sue McGinty and Paul Turnbull. Dianna Hardy digitised the early interviews and Bradley King the later ones. Bradley also transferred the interviews onto DVDs.

Those who directly assisted with the research include Margaret Reid and Andrew Walker at Community and Personal Histories, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy. The staff at the Queensland State Archives, the Eddie Koiki Mabo Library at James Cook University and the John Oxley Library were most helpful. No outsider contributed more positive scholarly and emotional support than Dr Jonathan Richards of Griffith University. The support staff at the School of Indigenous Australian Studies at James Cook University, particularly Bradley King, Agnes Hannan and Ralph Rigby, have unfailingly supported our work and are owed a large debt of gratitude. Thanks, too, to Melissa Lyne and Anthony McMahon who edited the manuscript and to Adella Edwards for drawing the maps.

Finally we'd like to thank the referees of the manuscript that became this book and the team at Aboriginal Studies Press who worked so diligently to ensure its timely publication.

Townsville, March 2017

About this book

I would like to acknowledge the partnership we have with James Cook University and sincerely thank the authors and contributors of this book. The Gugu Badhun people are very grateful for the work that has gone into documenting our history, culture and language. This work began when our elders Dick Hoolihan, Harry Gertz (Snr), and others, recorded our language back in the early 1970s with then fledgling anthropologist Peter Sutton and archaeologist Helen Brayshaw. Gugu Badhun elders, understanding the importance of continuing this work, were generous in sharing their life stories and recording their histories within a digital history project funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in 2004 and an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant in 2005. This work resulted in Robert James' Masters Research (JCU) Thesis: A modern history of the Gugu Badhun people and their country in 2009.

This book and the information contained within it is a modern story, but it is a story that began many thousands of years ago.

Dale Gertz Gugu Badhun Chairperson

Language Usage

As this history is based largely on interviews with the intention to represent the voices of the interviewees, the spoken interviews have been reproduced with minimum alteration. The quotations therefore contain the language used for listening rather than for reading.

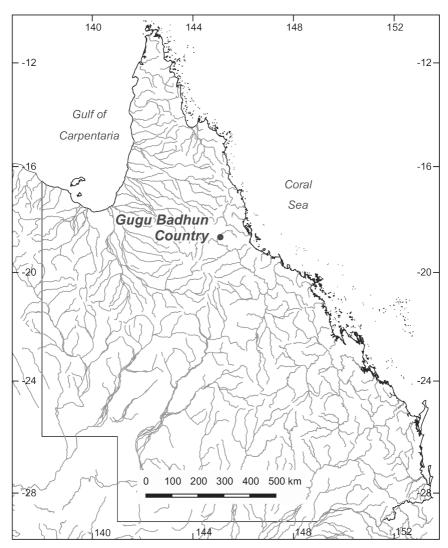
Both written and spoken sources contain outdated language including language some may consider offensive.

Introduction

This is a story of achievement in the face of adversity. It is the story of the Gugu Badhun people from the upper Burdekin River in North Queensland: an Aboriginal group which, like others, experienced the anguish of invasion, dispossession and discrimination but still maintained its solidarity, identity and connectedness to country. In the aftermath of colonisation, the Gugu Badhun successfully negotiated new roles for themselves and established new niches in a radically transformed social order. Theirs is a story shot through with tragedy, though with a stronger theme of triumph; a story of hardships and injustices met with resilience, courage and determination.

The Gugu Badhun story has never been publicly told before. It is told here with the full cooperation and participation of the Gugu Badhun people themselves. Much of the narrative has been taken from interviews with Gugu Badhun people, interspersed with commentary and analysis by the four co-authors. The fact that one of those co-authors (Yvonne Cadet-James) is herself a Gugu Badhun elder gives special value to our account of the Gugu Badhun experience. This is an innovative and collaborative enterprise, bridging the worlds of historical scholarship and Aboriginal oral tradition through personal relationships, tribal affiliations and collegial connections. For further detail on the genesis of this book, see Appendix 1: How this history was written.

Some elements of the Gugu Badhun story will be instantly recognisable by anyone acquainted with the history of Australia's colonisation. These include the violence of frontier days, the exploitation that followed Aboriginal people being 'let in' to the pastoral stations, the subjugation of Aboriginal people under Queensland's notorious Act, and the experiences of workers denied access to their own earnings. But here, those familiar elements assume new and sometimes surprising shape as our story focuses on the experiences of a single language group, whose ways of confronting the challenges of colonialism were not necessarily the same as other groups. In this — pin-pointing the particularity of a specific group's encounters with the colonial, and later the national, state — lies one of the book's many points of originality.



Map I. Queensland, Australia, showing location of Gugu Badhun country

This level of particularity is timely. The broad parameters of Australian Indigenous history are now well established and widely known, so it is time to get down to a more specific level of engagement, a level that recognises differences, as well as similarities, in Indigenous groups' experiences of colonial domination and the manner in which they exercised agency.

The Gugu Badhun people are particularly appropriate for such explorations of diversity. Their country is a long way from Australia's capitals, although not so far from the regional cities of Cairns and Townsville; it

lies away from the coast but not in the remote interior; it is in an accessible, though not commonly visited, part of North Queensland. So, the Gugu Badhun occupy a position somewhere between that of the remote communities of the north and centre on the one hand, and the urban peoples of the capital cities on the other, both of which have been the commonest focus of previous histories of Aboriginal groups.

The Gugu Badhun were among the first Aboriginal groups in inland northern Australia to encounter European intruders, specifically Ludwig Leichhardt's exploratory party in 1845. After the pastoral invasion in the 1860s, the Gugu Badhun were among the Aboriginal groups that held out longest against the squatters, the rough and fissured character of their country facilitating a lengthy resistance. Following their incorporation into the pastoral economy during the 1860s, the Gugu Badhun continued to assert their autonomy and members of the group were among the first Aboriginal people in the district to leave the pastoral stations to seek employment and opportunity in local towns in the 1940s. A Gugu Badhun man, Dick Hoolihan, became one of the most outspoken Aboriginal political leaders in North Queensland in the 1950s and 1960s. Those traditions — of autonomy and activism — are still cherished and maintained by Gugu Badhun people today, as this book explains.

The story we tell is multi-faceted. It lays bare the violence and oppression experienced by Gugu Badhun people, but also acknowledges the inter-racial cooperation and friendships that were equally part of their experience. It tells of a people whose options were limited by state power and popular racism, but also of a people who remained proud and undaunted, making their own decisions for their own collective and individual benefit. It conveys new understandings of Aboriginal–European interactions and of how Aboriginal people maintained their identities and exercised agency. This is a timely book for an Australia in which notions of Indigenous autonomy and self-determination are being re-imagined and re-configured.



Ernie Hoolihan, 2006 (From video by Ralph Rigby)



Richard Hoolihan, 2006 (From video by Agnes Hannan)



Ernie Raymont, 2005 (From video by Agnes Hannan)



Jeffrey Kennedy, 2006 (From video by Bob James)



Flora Hoolihan, 2004 (From video by Ralph Rigby)



Harry Gertz Jnr, 2006 (From video by Ralph Rigby)



Don Atkinson, 2005 (From video by Agnes Hannan)



Hazel Illin, 2006 (From video by Bob James)



Ailsa Snider on country at Reedy Brook station on the Burdekin, 2004 (Photo Sue McGinty)



Alan Atkinson, 2007 (From video by Bob James)



Frank Gertz, 2006 (From video by Ralph Rigby)



Sisters Beryl Buller and Kathy Edwards, 2006 (From video by Bob James)



Noel Gertz, 2005 (From video by Ralph Rigby)



Elsie Thomson, 2006 (From video by Bob James)



Vincent Snider, 2006 (From video by Bob James)



Margaret Gertz, 2005 (From video by Agnes Hannan)



Dale Gertz, on country, 2008 (Photo Lachlan McMahon)



Yvonne Cadet-James on country at Reedy Brook station on the Burdekin, 2004 (Photo Sue McGinty)

Notes

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- 156 Hazel Illin, Segment #2.
- 157 Narda and Beverly Kennedy and Patrick Boyd, #2.
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- 161 May, 1994, 115.
- 162 Frank Gertz, #10.
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- 174 Flora Hoolihan, #2.
- 175 Flora Hoolihan, #9.
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- 204 May, 1994, 206.
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- 226 Don Atkinson, #9.
- 227 Don Atkinson, #9.
- 228 Don Atkinson, #10; Phoebe Atkinson, audio interview, Townsville, 4 March 2005.
- 229 Phoebe Atkinson.
- 230 Henry and Sue Atkinson and Coralie Sondermeyer, #2.

- 231 Frank Gertz, #1.
- 232 Frank Gertz, #2.
- 233 Frank Gertz, #3.
- 234 Don Woodhouse and Anna Hassett, #11.

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- 239 Noel Gertz, #1.
- 240 Elsie Thompson, videoed interview, Townsville, 23 November 2006, Segment #2.
- 241 Harry Gertz Jnr, #5, #18; Frank Gertz #3; Yvonne Cadet-James, audio interview, Reedy Brook, 27 September 2004, Part 1.
- 242 Ernie Hoolihan, 2006, #8; Margaret Gertz, #1.
- 243 Ernie Hoolihan, 2006, #3.
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- 245 Hazel Illin, #1.
- 246 Dickman family interview, #1; Hazel Illin, #1.
- 247 Ernie Hoolihan, 2005; Flora Hoolihan, #9; Gover, 2000, 275.
- 248 Ernie Hoolihan, 2005.
- 249 Letter from Protector, Charters Towers, to Chief Protector of Aboriginals, 10 April 1920. Copy from Queensland State Archives in possession of Elsie Thompson.
- 250 Flora Hoolihan, #9.
- 251 Harry Gertz Jnr, #5.
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- 257 Bolton, 744.
- 258 Henry, Ernest and Eric Gertz were in the 23rd Regiment of the Volunteer Defence Corps, Queensland from 7 December 1943 until 21 October 1945. Source: www.wwdroll.gov.au
- 259 Frank Gertz, #9.
- 260 This was Henry D Atkinson of Wyandotte station. Refer Mount Garnet Police Letterbook 29 May 1943. Item 281585–A/35063/191/43.
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- 262 Margaret Gertz in Frank Gertz, 2005, #9.
- 263 Margaret Gertz, #7.
- 264 Margaret Gertz, #5.

- 265 Ernie Raymont, #3.
- 266 Ailsa Snider, Part 1.
- 267 Frank and Margaret Gertz, unrecorded follow-up interview; Malanda, 20 December 2006.
- 268 Harry Gertz Jnr, #12.
- 269 Nielsen, 57, 141.

Chapter II

- 270 Noel Gertz, #1.
- 271 Noel Gertz, #3.
- 272 Noel Gertz, #4.
- 273 Ernie Hoolihan, 2005.
- 274 Govor, 274-5.
- 275 Richard Hoolihan, #1.
- 276 Richard Hoolihan, #1.
- 277 Margaret Gertz, #7.
- 278 Frank Gertz, #4.
- 279 Hazel Illin, #4.
- 280 Hazel Illin, #5.
- 281 Hazel Illin, #5.
- 282 Elsie Thompson, #1.
- 283 Yvonne did not see her country for more than forty years, from two years of age until her return to Queensland from Darwin. Yvonne Cadet-James, Part 1.
- 284 Yvonne Cadet-James, Part 1.
- 285 Yvonne Cadet-James, Part 2.

- 286 'Book tribute to "bush lawyer", The Herbert River Express, 18 January 2001.
- 287 Ernie Hoolihan, 2005.
- 288 QSA: CPA, Correspondence files 1901–1944, Bundle A/58692, Complaints 1933, 33/3789, Re: Dick Hoolihan, in Govor, 275.
- 289 QSA: CPA, Correspondence files 1901–1944, in Govor, 275.
- 290 Ernie Hoolihan, 2006, #3.
- 291 Ernie Hoolihan, 2006, #3.
- 292 Nikolai Illin was the father of Leandro Illin and brought Leandro to Australia from Russia.
- 293 Richard Hoolihan, #5.
- 294 Noel Gertz, #2.
- Noel's grandfather (Frank's father) 'bolted' and was never known by Noel or his father. This led to Harry filling the gap, so he is sometimes referred to by Noel as his grandfather, even though he was in reality Noel's great-grandfather.
- 296 Noel Gertz, #2.
- 297 Noel Gertz, #3.
- 298 Richard Hoolihan, #3.
- 299 Harry Gertz Jnr, #1, #11, #14.
- 300 Harry Gertz Jnr, #8, #9, #12.
- 301 Noel Gertz, #7.

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- 307 Richard Hoolihan, #2.
- 308 Noel Gertz, #5.
- 309 Noel Gertz, #5.
- 310 Cairns Post, 2 May 2009, 12.
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- 312 Sutton, 1973, 20.
- 313 Federal Court of Australia: Hoolihan on behalf of the Gugu Badhun People 2 v State of Queensland [2012] FCA 800.

- 314 Yvonne Cadet-James, Part 2.
- 315 Alan Atkinson, #3; Jeffrey Kennedy, #1.
- 316 Ailsa Snider, Part 1.
- 317 Noel Gertz, #6.
- 318 Frank Gertz, #1; Harry Gertz Jnr, #13; Noel Gertz, #3; Yvonne Cadet-James, Part 1; Ailsa Snider, Part 1.
- 319 Noel Gertz, #6.
- 320 Ailsa Snider, #6.
- 321 Frank Gertz, #9.
- 322 Frank Gertz, #10.
- 323 Richard Hoolihan, #3.
- 324 Noel Gertz, #6.
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- 326 Noel Gertz, #3.
- 327 Ailsa Snider, #5.
- 328 Ernie Hoolihan, 2006, #10.
- 329 Dale Gertz, in group video interview, Townsville, 12 May 2007.
- 330 Noel Gertz, #3.
- 331 Ailsa Snider, Part 1; Harry Gertz Jnr, #6; Yvonne Cadet-James, Part 2.
- 332 Ailsa Snider, Part 2.
- 333 Harry Gertz Jnr, #6.
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- 336 David Christian, 'History and Global Identity' in Stuart McIntyre, (Ed.) The Historian's Conscience: Australian historians on the ethics of history (MUP, Melbourne, 2004), 139–50.
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- 338 Elsie Thompson, #3.

- 339 Kathy Edwards, Dickman family interview, #7.
- 340 Melissa Edwards, Dickman family interview, #9.
- 341 Hazel Illin, #7.
- 342 Elsie Thompson, #3.
- 343 Kathy Edwards and Gabriel Dickman, Dickman family interview, #7.
- 344 Lillian Galipo, Dickman family interview, #8.
- 345 Vincent Snider; videoed interview, Smithfield, 19 December 2006, #6.
- 346 Hazel Illin, #7.
- 347 Hazel Illin, #1.
- 348 Elsie Thompson, #2.
- 349 Elsie Thompson, #4.
- 350 Narda Kennedy, in Narda and Beverley Kennedy and Patrick Boyd interview, #4.
- 351 Murray River Upper State School 1904–2004; Celebrating 100 Years (Murray River Upper State School P & C Association, Murray Upper, Qld, 2004).
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- 353 Dickman family interview, #7.
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- 356 Noel Gertz, #5.
- 357 Noel Gertz, #5.
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Appendix

- 361 AIATSIS Research Grants Program Application Form: Grant number G2004/6943.
- 362 The URL for retrieval of interview material is http://plone.jcu.edu.au/gugu
- 363 AIATSIS Research Grants Program Application Form: Grant number G2004/6943.
- 364 Australian Research Council Linkage Projects (Round Two) Application Form for Funding Commencing in 2005, Project ID: LP0562411, A5 Summary Descriptions.

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Electronic medium

Gugu-Badhun language CD-ROM (Townsville, Grail Films, 2004).

Bridging historical scholarship and Aboriginal oral tradition, this innovative book tells the story of the Gugu Badhun people of the Valley of Lagoons in North Queensland. It provides new insights into Aboriginal–European interactions, and new understandings of how Aboriginal people sustained their identities and exercised agency.

It lays bare violence and oppression, but also recognises the inter-racial cooperation and friendships which were equally part of Gugu Badhun experience. It tells of a people whose options were limited by state power and public racism but who remained proud and undaunted, making their own decisions for their collective and individual benefit.

Much of the story is told in the words of Gugu Badhun people themselves. Interviews are interspersed with commentary and analysis by the four authors, one of whom, Yvonne Cadet-James, is herself a Gugu Badhun elder.

This collaborative approach has produced a timely book for an Australia in which notions of Indigenous autonomy and self-determination are being re-imagined and re-configured.



