1939

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

REPORT

on

EXPEDITION TO ARNHEM LAND

by

Dr. Donald Thomson, D.Sc (Melbourne) Dip. Anthrop. (Sydney)

F.R.A.I.

Published under the authority of the Minister of Interior
Canberra, A.C.T.

By Authority:

L.F. Johnston, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra

(Printed in Australia)
I. INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY OF WORK CARRIED OUT ON TWO EXPEDITIONS TO ARNHEM LAND.

The two expeditions carried out among the native tribes of Arnhem Land occupied a total period of approximately 26 months. The first expedition commenced in March, 1935, and ended in January 1936; the second extended for about 16 months from June 1936, to October 1937, when the work that was commenced on the first expedition was extended and more extensive and detailed work on the culture and social organization was undertaken.

PRELIMINARY WORK

In my Preliminary Report* I have outlined the work carried out on the first expedition. Friendly contact was first established with the natives of Blue Mud Bay - the so-called "Woodah Islanders" - and Caledon Bay who are frequently referred to as "Dalumuru" then in a very disturbed state, following upon the trouble that had occurred there. An initial survey of the culture of the whole of eastern Arnhem Land was undertaken, and efforts were made to pacify the natives and to instil into them the elements of the white man's code in the terms of the Commission (1935) with which I was entrusted. Towards the end of the first expedition, in 1935, a journey was made across eastern Arnhem Land on foot from the Crocodile Island to Blue Mud Bay, with the dual objective of making friends with the groups of the interior; of ascertaining their numerical strength and the character of the country and its resources, and the mode of life of the native inhabitants. A depot was again established at Blue Mud Bay and patrol work again undertaken in this area. An inland journey was also made, with pack horses and mules, up the course of the Wilton River from the Roper River northwards into Central Arnhem Land.

OBJECTS OF PATROLS

These patrols were undertaken so that in addition to making contact with all the important groups of natives inhabiting eastern Arnhem Land, their numerical strength and the localities that they inhabited could be ascertained. The object of this was to group these into ethnographic "areas" and to endeavour as far as possible to make a study of a typical group in each of these provinces, so that comparisons could be made between the various areas, and the general trends of culture movements traced.

(* General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia 1935-36 - presented April 1936)
SECOND EXPEDITION - RETURN OF PRISONERS TO CALEDON BAY

Subsequently, after returning to Melbourne and presenting the Interim Report covering the first expedition, I reached Darwin again, late in June 1936, and left for the field almost at once. On this expedition I was in eastern Arnhem Land for some fifteen months, during the whole of which time I did not visit Darwin, but remained on the field in order to get the maximum amount of work done in the time at my disposal.

Before leaving Darwin the three prisoners from Caledon Bay, who were under sentence for the killing of Japanese on the boats that were attacked at Caledon Bay in 1933, were released, and placed in my custody for return to their country. They were returned without incident.

UNREST ON RESERVE - DISORGANIZATION

The unrest due to outside influences which have exerted a very disturbing effect on the natives of Arnhem Land, and which I have stressed in my report, appears to have become accentuated during the "wet" or north-west monsoon season of 1935-36, when numbers of natives walked to Darwin from districts up to 300 or 400 miles away. When I returned in June, 1936, a number of these natives were then derelict in Darwin, and were living in the Chinese quarter. Some of these were returned on this and subsequent store voyages of my ketch "St. Nicholas".

On leaving Darwin, I first visited the East Alligator River and walked across the Coburg Peninsula to the neighbourhood of Goulburn Island to see at first hand the type of country and the natives of the area, as I had not made contact with these natives during the previous expedition.

After reaching eastern Arnhem Land and repatriating the Caledon Bay prisoners I set out to investigate tribal fighting that had taken place in the area between Blue Mud Bay and Arnhem Bay, and of which misleading reports had been appearing in the southern press.

This involved a long journey of about 280 miles from Cape Arnhem to the south of Melville and Arnhem Bays, and southwards and eastwards to the Gulf of Carpentaria. On this journey, which was accomplished with native carriers, many uncharted rivers and other geographical features were encountered. As a result of this, and of my experience in the interior of Arnhem Land on the previous expedition, I made representations to the Air Board, which was subsequently (May 1937) able to make available for a short time an amphibian aircraft that had been working in conjunction with H.M.A.S. Moresby in the vicinity of Darwin, to co-operate with me. This enabled me to make a reconnaissance of some of the unmapped country which I had traversed on foot, and to map out and photograph a number of rivers and inlets hitherto uncharted. Although the aircraft was available for less than three weeks, and flying time was necessarily limited, it was possible to make a number of corrections to the existing maps and to obtain some date on the geographical features of the area.
Disturbances to be attributed chiefly to the general unrest in the reserve took place during the year, and two or three natives were killed. I was handicapped in dealing with these, however, by the fact that although I was able to investigate most of them, and to use the evidence obtained to make a detailed study of the legal and other institutions of the natives, I lacked the authority necessary to take the action that in my opinion should have been taken. In all these matters, which occurred some 400 miles from Darwin, I consider that summary action should have been taken, when once the matter was known to the natives to have come to my knowledge. Among these natives even the old men are themselves handicapped in these circumstances because they are now afraid to carry out their own legal codes in the presence of the white man's authority, and the culprit thereby escapes the penalties of the laws of both the black man and the white - a precedent is established, and the value of life, as well as the prestige of the white man, are lowered as a result.

**MEDICAL TREATMENT**

A considerable amount of medical work was undertaken throughout and in addition to the routine treatment of wounds, injuries, etc, a large number of injections, both intravenous and intramuscular, were carried out for the treatment of yaws, with N.A.B. supplied by the Northern Territory Medical Service. In two or three localities, notably at Cape Stewart, leprosy was prevalent, and attention was directed to this fact in an interim report from the field. (Appendix III).

The most disturbing feature of the past year was the extent to which the natives of Arnhem Land were demoralized by the influx of intruders, both white men and Japanese. My own experience in the field during the past two and a half years has proved conclusively that the reserve is no longer serving the purpose for which it was intended, that neither the letter nor the spirit of the reserve is being enforced, that it is not only failing in its objective, which is presumably the protection of the native peoples, but the failure to enforce the ordinances has unhappily come to be regarded as indicating the attitude of the Government towards the natives.

**ANTHROPOLOGICAL WORK**

During these two expeditions a large amount of anthropological data was collected and a comprehensive survey of the culture, both social and material, of the area has been completed, which it is intended to present in the Anthropological Report now in course of preparation.

On account of its importance in the domestic economy of these people, and the data provided on the food resources of the area, a thorough survey of fishing methods was carried out. A number of extremely specialized methods were noted, some of which have not been described hitherto.
Because of the disturbed state of the reserve when I first entered the area and the instructions given to me to "establish as far as possible friendly relations with the Aborigines", a great deal of time on the first expedition during 1935, as well as subsequently, was devoted to making contact and establishing friendly relations with the natives, and a great deal of the period was occupied in long patrol journeys and journeys of exploration.

While thus engaged, however, I set out to determine the names of the areas occupied by the various tribes and local groups. This also enabled a preliminary study of the culture to be made at the same time, the objective of which was to assess the numerical strength of the various groups and to determine the localities and area they inhabited, to group these into ethnographic "provinces", and to make, in as far as possible, a study of a typical group in each region in order to enable comparisons to be made from area to area, and the general trends of the major culture movements to be traced and evaluated.

Special attention was also devoted to social organization, kinship, and behaviour, to the legal and moral codes, and to magical beliefs and practices which play a large part in the regulation of native conduct, and often supply the initiative for action which is otherwise incomp ehensible and a systematic account of which would be of most practical value to the Administration. In the case of the legal code, the fullest advantage was taken of every opportunity to observe and to record the details of disputes or outbreaks of trouble as a means of providing concrete data, for it is almost useless to endeavour to build up the legal code of people in the stage of culture of Australian aborigines by putting abstract questions to an informant. The concrete evidence, the evidence provided by actual examples in which the kinship or relationship of all the individuals concerned could be studied and their reactions noted, provided the basis for the collection of valuable data on the legal sanctions of these people, which it is hoped will be of value in the future, not only to the officers to whom fall the task of the administration, but also in the drafting of future legislation.

2. RETURN OF THE CALEDON BAY PRISONERS RELEASED FROM FANNY BAY

On the second expedition I left Darwin on 28th June in the auxiliary ketch "St. Nicholas" taking with me the three prisoners from Caledon Bay – Natjalma, Mau and Narkaiya – who were released from Fanny Bay Gaol, and handed over to my custody by the Administration. In order to avoid the risk of a possible recurrence of the incident that occurred when Takiara was released, I made a visit to the gaol on the day preceding my departure, to establish myself on a friendly footing with the prisoners. I arranged with the Police Department to provide me with a car on the following morning to take the natives from the gaol to the boat, which was ready for sea. The three natives were returned to eastern Arnhem Land without incident, as reported from the field.
3. NARRATIVE OF THE SECOND EXPEDITION

As the account of the preliminary work of the second expedition has already been presented in a series of reports from the field, it appears to be unnecessary to cover the same ground again. I have therefore incorporated these preliminary statements in the form of appendices to the present report in order to bring the data together. Nor does it appear necessary to encumber the present report with a full and detailed account of the patrols which followed very closely the long and arduous journeys of 1935-36 already recorded in detail in the Preliminary Report of 1935.

Before proceeding with the narrative, I draw attention to the undermentioned Appendices to this Report:

Appendix I. - Interim Report on work carried out among Northern Tribes of Arnhem Land (June-October, 1936)

Appendix II. - Interim Report on Investigations among Northern Tribes of Arnhem Land (covering period October-December, 1936)

Appendix III. - Interim Report covering period from December, 1936-January 1937. (Attention is particularly directed to this latter in connexion with the recent disturbances that are reported to have occurred in this area).

These reports cover the initial period from June to the following February.

When the wet season of 1936-37 broke, I enlarged the base camp that I had established to the south-south-west of the Derby Creek, roofing the shelter that I had used at intervals during the year, with a heavy thatch of paper bark, and continued to use this camp as a working base. This area, is on the fringe between the culture of the people of eastern Arnhem Land, the Raimbaranga, and the Burara (of Cape Stewart district) and the Gunwingo peoples of the vicinity of Liverpool River. As an important ceremony, known as Kunabbibbi, was in progress near the Elythe River, I spent some time with these people establishing a temporary camp inland, which I occupied until after Christmas Day (1936). Living conditions were very severe at this period. Native foods were scarce and quite inadequate at this season for the needs of the big group of natives assembled for the Kunabbibbi, and there was practically no animal food at all.

At the conclusion of the ceremony I returned to my base camp and carried out further work until about the middle of January. Meanwhile news had come of the loss of the Methodist Mission's supply boat the "Maree" which left the Missions without means of transporting stores. I returned to Milingimbi to arrange to make my boat, the "St. Nicholas, available to carry the necessary stores and supplies from Darwin for the Missions and made my headquarters at Milingimbi for some time.
For some weeks at the end of the wet season I carried out
intensive work on social organization, mythology, and on language
in this area. It seemed to be of special importance to have a
thorough knowledge of the people of this region and of their
languages and customs, as they have appeared to a large extent
in the Police Court proceedings in Darwin in recent years, both
as prisoners and as witnesses. Throughout the wet season I also
carried out a close study of fishing methods, making a number of
journeys to areas where specialized types of fishing techniques
were practiced. A study was also made of the poisoning of fish
(carrying out during the dry season) and advantage was taken of
the flowering of plants used in the material culture, for the
manufacture of spears, utensils, fibres, and resins and of food
plants and fish poisons - to collect the flower and fruit for
later identification. One of the principal difficulties in the
study of native culture hitherto has been to secure sufficient
material of the inflorescence and fruit, in addition to purely
vegetative parts of the plants, to enable exact determination to be
made, and a long sojourn in an area enables this to be done in the
appropriate season as part of the routine work.

TREE DWELLINGS OF THE GOOSE HUNTERS OF THE ARARU SWAMPS.

Of the work that was carried out during the years 1936-37, the
most interesting was the investigation of the specialized hunting
methods of the natives whose territory borders the great swamp bed
to which reference was made in the preliminary report, and through
which we had passed dryshod on the journey overland to Blue Mud Bay
in October 1935. During that patrol the natives had informed me
that during the "wet" this great area was converted into an immense
lake or swamp, to which the Magpie (semi-palmated) goose Anseranas
semipalmata repaired to nest, and that long journeys were made by
the natives into the swamp in search of the eggs of the wild geese.
They informed me that as there was no dry land they were obliged
to live in trees. These reports had interested me greatly, and I
was determined to investigate them, for nothing of such a culture
had been recorded hitherto from Australia.

Like many of the specialized occupations of these peoples,
however, their hunting of wild geese and their eggs is dependent
upon favorable rains. During the wet of 1935-36 I was away from
the area, and when I returned the natives informed me that the rains
had been very light and that in consequence the geese had not
nested that season. This augured well for the following "wet"
and in January 1936-37 I arranged my work and patrols so that I
would be in the vicinity at the critical time. Towards the end of
the "wet" the natives began to come in with reports that conditions
in the great swamps were favorable - that the flood waters were
rising. The natives reported that the "water grass" was high and
that the were beginning to mate and to trample down the long grass
that was to form their great nests.

I took the "St. Nicholas" as high up the Glyde River as appeared
to be safe, but met with conditions there difficult and dangerous
for the vessel. At high water, the river had been a wide, slow-
running stream, but a few hours later the tide fell rapidly and
we found ourselves between two steeply-sloping walls of sticky grey
mud, so far down that we could not see anything of the surrounding
country above the banks, and still descending - in a river bed
reduced to a narrow stream of water that had suddenly become a
raging torrent.
The river was swollen to several times its normal size by flood waters, and was of a dark yellow colour from the mud scoured out by the flood waters inland. It was dotted with logs, trees, and debris that was being swept away to sea, and was highly dangerous for a small boat. While running, it was necessary to station a native constantly in the bow as a lookout for snags and floating debris, and to clear the anchor chain, which was constantly being fouled when the boat was anchored in the stream.

At low water, when I saw what was occurring, the river was already running too swiftly and was much too narrow to turn a boat, over 40 feet in length, and drawing 6 feet of water. I put out as much anchor chain as I dared, got out a second anchor, and put out bow and stern lines to the banks. But the current was now running so swiftly that the vessel was in danger and I had to let go the stern lines lest the vessel got broadside of the current, and to concentrate on keeping her in the centre of the narrow stream that now formed the river. Mosquitoes came in millions and I spent one of the longest and most wretched nights in my existence. On the following morning I swung the boat on the full tide and took her down stream in search of a safe anchorage. But although we were for several weeks in and about this river, I was never happy about the safety of the boat and had many anxious moments - not least, when for many days I had to be away far inland among the swamps that drained into the Glyde.

But the effort was rewarded and I found that not only was the whole country through which we had walked in the dry season of 1935 converted into a great swamp as the natives had declared, but they did make long journeys in bark canoes into this swamp in quest of goose eggs. I accompanied these expeditions on two occasions and obtained photographic and film records of these remarkable people. As there was no dry land on which to camp, and as the canoes were only about 10 feet in length and too small for sleeping, the natives were obliged to camp in trees, where they constructed rough platforms on which they lived, slept and cooked their food.

The journeys that I made with these people, the Djinba, and the camping in the upper branches of the trees were the most remarkable experience of the entire period that I spent in Arnhem Land. When firewood was required, we were obliged to walk out as far along a branch as seemed expedient and to break off the dead sticks within reach. But if one's demands were of a more ambitious nature he would be obliged to crawl backwards over the edge of the platform descend the tree trunk to a canoe moored below, paddle across to a neighbouring tree, climb for the required wood, and repeat the entire performance on the return journey.

To look at nights across the park-like expanse of swamp, to see the sun rise and set over the water from the sleeping platforms, to watch the long file of canoes converging at dusk on the pre-arranged camping place - bringing in their spoils; to see, at nights, on all sides, the glimmer of camp fires high up in the trees, or reflected below in the dark water was a remarkable experience. Not least because no white man had ever seen them before. These are the things that remain, but at the same time there were long sleepless nights of torment in which the mosquitoes, which were active day and night, made life almost a burden - for the mosquitoes in this region I have never even seen approached. There were leaches in hundreds which made trickles of blood down one's legs, and pools of blood at the bottom of the canoes.
As only light bark canoes are employed on these long quests by the goose hunters, accidents occurred frequently. On the last journey that I made, 21 canoes set out. Of these, one was destroyed on the journey, another was damaged in the stern and had to be resewn, and a snag was driven through the bottom of the canoe in which I was squatting in a pool of water.

The water was already drying up in the swamps, and the vegetation was growing more rank and dense, and increasingly difficult to penetrate with bark canoes propelled by poles. This impeded our progress and we were overdue in returning to the "St. Nicholas". Eventually we reached the boat, worn out with hard travel, lack of sleep and the ordeal by leech and mosquito. Our skins were sore and scarred by small cuts made by the sharp grasses, and rough from constant immersion in the water.

I was relieved to find the boat safe. The boys whom I had left in charge reported that a big aeroplane with "mintji (marks) like damper" had flown up the course of the river and had swooped low over the boat. The "dampers" were the circular colour discs of a Service aircraft. This was disconcerting news.

Geographical discoveries had been mounting up during the long journeys on foot and an aircraft from the Royal Australian Air Force was made available at this juncture for a short period for co-operation from the air in the area in which I had been working. The reports of the natives indicated that the aircraft had arrived at the rendezvous at Milingimbi in the Crocodile Islands before me. We were still nearly a day's journey up the river. It was necessary for us to get out of the Glyde at once and to run to the Crocodile Islands. But it was low water and we could do nothing. Supper, as usual, consisted of wild goose eggs and catfish. We snatched a hurried supper then lay down to get a short rest before moving on. During the night, as soon as the tide had turned and the moon was sufficiently high to show the river as a shining pathway between dense black walls of mud and mangroves, we swung the vessel and ran down stream, dead slow, keeping a sharp look out for the great logs that were floating everywhere. It was a long journey, running dead slow, the night was cold, and the boys weary from the recent severe travelling. The following morning we reached the mouth, crossed the bar, and ran for the Crocodile Islands.

One arrival in the Crocodile Islands I was informed by Flight-Lieutenant Alexander that I had been reported in the southern press as lost or overdue in Arnhem Land. As these reports recurred subsequently in the newspapers I desire to record that I was at no stage lost or overdue on any patrols during this year.

Following the investigations among the natives of the Upper Glyde River and the period at Milingimbi Mission Station, a number of further patrols were undertaken. Among these a journey was made to the Goyder River area, where I undertook a patrol to visit an important ceremonial centre. Subsequently I visited Moorunga, an outlying island of the Crocodile Group, and thence sailed to Elcho Island and into the Cadell Straits.
The number of Japanese-named craft in the waters of the reserve had been increasing steadily throughout the year, and on account of the large presents of food and clothing that the Japanese had made a practice of giving to the natives on the coast, the demoralizing and disintegrating effect of their presence was increasingly manifest.

A considerable amount of travelling, both by sea and land, was necessary during the dry season in order to make a study of the fishing methods, which are highly developed and very specialized in this area*, but which owing to their close adaptation to local conditions, are often restricted in their distribution.

4 GEOGRAPHICAL WORK AND DISCOVERIES

During the long patrol journeys in eastern Arnhem Land, I had been impressed by the number of rivers and other geographical features that were not marked or even indicated on the maps. On several of the long patrols in the neighbourhood between Caledon Bay, Port Bradshaw and Arnhem Bay, rivers were encountered unexpectedly that do not appear at all on the existing maps and frequently had to be crossed by swimming.

In addition to the great interest of the extensive Arafura swamp, which is drained by the Glyde River, on account of the tree dwelling habits of the natives there, I was anxious to be able to investigate the area more thoroughly than was possible in bark canoes and to determine the extent of the watershed of the Glyde River and the disposal of the hills to the east, west and south.

On this account I made application for an aircraft to be made available from the Royal Australian Air Force to enable a reconnaissance to be made of the region in which I had been working on foot. Subsequently the "Seagull" Amphibian which had been working in conjunction with H.M.A.S. "Moreseby" near Darwin, was made available and early in May 1937, we established a working base at Milingimbi. The aircraft remained with me for about three weeks, during which time a number of extended reconnaissance flights were made.

(* A systematic account of this will be presented with other anthropological data in the Anthropological Report)
During this period it was possible to clear up definitely the position of certain of the rivers of north-east Arnhem Land which are in a state of some confusion on existing maps. In particular the identity of the Glyde, Goyder and Woolen Rivers was established. On the journey overland to Blue Mud Bay in 1935 I crossed the stream that drains into the Glyde Inlet close to the site of the old Florida Station (north of Lindsay's Bluff). The stream that I encountered later on the same journey to the south-east was named on the existing map as the Goyder. It was now possible, however, to prove definitely what I had been led to suspect on this journey - that these two rivers were one and the same; that the so-called (as indicated on the map issued to me in 1936) is really synonymous with the Glyde, and drains the great water-bed of the Arafura Basin. The name Goyder may, therefore, be applied to the stream to the eastward, sometimes named the Woolen, which flows, at first south-east and ultimately south-west, extending towards Buckingham Bay. I was thus able to make a reconnaissance of the swamps of the Upper Glyde River, and to make sketch maps of a number of rivers flowing into Melville and Arnhem Bays, that I had previously met with on foot journeys and had been obliged to swim.

Explorations with the boat in Arnhem Bay had already led to the conclusion that the land on the west side of Arnhem Bay, shown as Everett "Island" in the Admiralty charts, is in reality a peninsula with a wide shallow bay to the north, and this was finally confirmed from the air. A series of sketch maps indicating the rivers, and other features, with compass bearings of their course, is now being prepared.

Because there had been a great deal of discussion as to the agricultural possibilities of the Arnhem Land area, a large number of representative soil and rock specimens were obtained for chemical and mechanical analyses. These were related to definite types of country, in each case characterized by a distinctive type of floral association, and one of the objects of the reconnaissance from the air, was to obtain data, at least in broad outline, of the distribution and approximate areas covered by the various types of country. Although it was not possible in a brief period and without ground organization, to carry out anything approaching a survey, nor practicable to make vertical mosaics, a number of photographic runs were made and sketch maps are now being prepared, incorporating the geographical discoveries of the expeditions. Arrangements are also being made for analyses of the soil and rock specimens to be carried out, which should furnish some critical data on the soils of the area.

8 LAW AND ORDER

It is not easy in a brief account to convey an adequate impression of the state of disorganization and disorder that prevails in the Northern Territory, which could undoubtedly be reduced to a very large extent by a sympathetic approach and simple measures. In Appendix I, No, 4, I have discussed in outline the effect of the capricious action that has been taken hitherto by the white man, in the name of justice.
From the standpoint of administration it has seemed to me to be unjust suddenly to subject the people in the Arnhem Land Reserve to the penalties of the law of the white man, without a preparation or transition period or to permit any form of interference or exploitation until and unless the area is brought under control by the establishment of a suitable patrol system as proposed in my initial report of 1936. I shall endeavour to show at a later stage that the friction and lawlessness which appears recently to be rife in the reserve is not due to the "natural lawlessness of savages" but the result of breaking down of the organization of the natives through unregulated outside interference.

Throughout the period that I remained in the field I devoted much time to the study of law and legal codes of these people, making the disturbances, the private quarrels, the thefts, the feuds, the acts of vengeance and homicide, a starting point for these investigations. In this way, studying the reaction of the people to the situations that arose, using concrete examples, it was possible to obtain a systematic account of the legal and moral sanctions of these people. As they are closely bound up with the beliefs about magic, medicine, and totemism which will be discussed more fully in the Anthropological Report, I have deferred all discussion of the actual investigations and of the legal code and sanctions and have confined myself here to a summary of the position from the administrative aspect.

It is impossible for any native living under tribal conditions in Arnhem Land today to understand the methods of administration and of justice of the white man as it is at present applied to his affairs. As an example of this, the Japanese activities and their invasion of the reserve during the past year may be cited, for long discussions of this subject occurred frequently among the people. The native knows that these activities are against the law of the white man and he sees them go almost unpunished. But for acts on his side, which, according to his own legal and moral codes, may be quite justifiable, or even obligatory to him as a member of the society in which he is still living; acts which may be backed by all the traditions under which he has grown up, he is himself often subject to punishment by the white man's law. It is no exaggeration to say that the great majority of the serious troubles of the people of Arnhem Land in recent years have been due directly or indirectly to the casual interference of intruders in the reserve. Permits have been issued to certain individuals, and many others have entered the area to work the natives without any means of regulating their actions or of protecting the natives, and it happens often that these people set themselves up in authority in the area in which they are working. Trouble invariable results (see Appendix II) if not to the man concerned then to a subsequent visitor.
In the discussion of the policy contained in Section II presented before my departure from Australia, I have shown that the natives see no relation between the operation of their own legal code and that of the white man, so that a man may, and sometimes does, suffer two punishments for one act. It should be mentioned, however, that neither side sees any incompatibility in this. Beyond, however, a slight uncertainty as to the apparently capricious interference by the white man in affairs in which—when the area is not under control by patrol officers and where there is no visible sign of white man control—the white man seems to have no interest or concern.

As an instance of this may be cited the example of a man who at the time of my first visit to Fanny Bay Gaol was serving a sentence of ten years' imprisonment for having killed another native in a quarrel. This man "Charlie" by name, a member of the Mara tribe of the Roper River district, informed me that when the time came for his release from gaol he would be unwilling to go back to his own country. For, he explained, he was afraid that he might be put in the position of having to kill someone else—"might be I kill more people"—he said. After he has served his sentence under white man's law for killing one of his people, he has, in their eyes, in no way expiated his offence, and when he eventually returns he must still face an ordeal by spear. He runs the risk of being killed or injured, or if he should defend himself, of killing again and getting into trouble once more under white man's law.

My object in citing this example is to show that under existing conditions a native does not know where he stands. In many cases he is subject to most of the penalties, but enjoys few of the privileges of two societies. In the absence of specially-trained officers who understand what is going on, almost no protection is afforded to these people by English law, and in consequence they see only its punitive aspect and regard it as part of a system employed by the white man to persecute them. I could cite much evidence in support of this. The aboriginal gains nothing from the white man's law; it is to him not a system of justice but of punishment—and of punishment the meaning of which he cannot be expected to understand. A review of the position of the aboriginal under present law is urgently needed.

If native custom is to be considered during the trial for any offence it is important that there should be some real understanding of that native law and custom. In the absence of kinship, chieftainship or other outward and visible signs of authority, the tendency is too often to assume that there is no organized code of behaviour among these people, i.e. a failure to recognize the fact that they have a definite code grounded in tradition and approved and sanctioned by the society. It comes as a surprise to many people, even among those whose business it is to deal with these natives, to know that they have a legal code that is not merely capricious, but functions in a definite manner; that rules of conduct of a set and formal type exist and that these actually regulate their behaviour. It is anomalous and unjust, nominally to admit native custom as a mitigating circumstance, but to provide no possible means by which evidence of this can be obtained, although on the other side counsel thoroughly trained in English law is engaged to prepare the brief for the prosecution.
The injustice of this system is manifest in the press reports of the police and court proceedings in Darwin, from which it is apparent that not only does no real understanding or appreciation of native law or custom even the proceedings in the court but that where it is desired to admit such law the native too often suffers through the ignorance and prejudice of those who pretend to understand his customs, so that in place of a sound defence which might be advanced the evidence on admission of native custom becomes merely ridiculous. To reiterate: I wish here to stress the fact that the social, moral and legal codes of these people are well defined, and that their conduct and behaviour is regulated by quite definite laws and sanctions which are capable of being studied and formulated, and which frequently provide a logical explanation, if not a justification, of many of their acts.

I shall illustrate this by reference to one native custom which has led to much fighting and many deaths. One of the most fruitful causes of serious camp or internal domestic fighting in Arnhem Land arises from the brother-sister taboo. A man may not touch the person of his sister, and he may not, under any circumstances, speak her name, nor would anyone else speak the name of a sister in the presence of her brother. It is "miririri" - a serious ritual offence. If the man himself mentions the name of his sister he will be punished by a ritual visitation. If he should be nearby when a quarrel breaks out and a woman who stands in the relationship to him of sister is abused or in which a reference to the genital organs should occur he will strike her with a fighting club or even with a spear. No action is taken against him, even if the woman should be killed - it is miririri. Not only is it not a crime for him to strike his sister, it is obligatory to do so. This behaviour falls under a recognised social sanction.

It is not possible for any native to hear the name or any sexual reference made to his sister, and to remain passive; such references are fighting taunts of the most extreme kind. The worst swearing in the language, regarded as a dreadful taunt, and used only as a goad to fight ta-tumulmirri, and refers to a man whose nose is tainted with the menstrual blood of a sister. Every native in the area knows what miririri means and he avoids it.

But an example of the danger of interference by strangers and the complications that may arise from ignorance of customary behaviour, was brought to my notice when a man in coming to me with a complaint about the Japanese invaders on the reserve told me that they knew no shame for not only did they openly solicit women, but they solicited a woman in the presence of her brother. This is an incomprehensible thing to a native, the penalty for which would be death - although in the native society itself it is inconceivable that such a thing could ever occur. It must be understood that such a killing in this society is not a private matter; it is a social obligation to avert a ritual visitation and to remove a collective sense of shame.

(*In discussion with me on kinship a man was confronted with the name of his sister. It was the custom in these discussions to call upon a bystander who would pronounce the name in an undertone but as there was noone present on this occasion the man spoke the name himself. Looking about him uneasily he exclaimed: "Eye-and-bye, snake bite me". A few days later we were on patrol in the bush and had just made camp when a death-adder crawled over my bare legs as I lay on my blanket. To him this was proof positive of what he
prophesed — a ritual visitation: "I been talk, bye-and-bye snake come".

+ This sense of "shame" (Kora) is very strongly developed in these people.

I am not seeking here to justify in general terms all native offenders, who must be treated on their merits; I seek only to show that the present position is anomalous and unjust and to demonstrate the great need for a review of the entire system of the administration of justice. I do not advocate "weakness" in dealing with native people but as I have suggested in a previous field report, the punishments to be effective must be just; it must fit the crime; and it must be inevitable or its only useful function, its value as a deterrent, is lost.

This has been well illustrated in the case of two natives on whom I have reported — Yangarnin and Bindjarumpum, known as "Slippery". Yangarnin** was a bad native who should have been apprehended and summarily dealt with in the interests of the whole area. He was guilty of several murders, unprovoked and unjustified even in terms of his own society.

I submit that where native custom is to be admitted it should rest upon a systematic and scientific basis as carefully presented in the terms of native sociology as is the brief for the prosecution in English law. In our own society, children's courts are constituted to deal with the offences of minors, but among these primitive people it is possible to subject them to almost any form of injustice, and when they are goaded or provoked to reprisals — and take the only remedy they know — they are charged with murder under English law and in an English court without even the benefit of a counsel versed in native law to defend them. Generally they have not even the least idea of the fact that they are not already convicted when arrested. But, understanding nothing of the procedure nor its meaning, they are arraigned before a British judge and prosecuted by British prosecutors who have no knowledge of the native law and no means of getting access to it. I submit that this practice of bring uncivilized natives for trial in the white man's court at Darwin is inconsistent with the ideals and the spirit of British justice. He is entirely at the mercy of the court, which understands him no more than he understands it. That the native is quite incapable of appreciating the pomp and formality of court procedure was revealed to me over and over again, and a really sophisticated native who has spent much time in Darwin, who speaks good and fluent English, and who had been more than once used as an interpreter in the court at Darwin, observed to me during a discussion on legal matters and native custom, that he had noticed in court that there was a conflict of opinion and "power" between the legal principals, and asked me naively "Which one more strong?", i.e. who has the balance of power. He explained that he had had some difficult difficulty as to how he should decide on which side to throw his weight. The idea of the court as an impartial tribunal of justice never occurred to him.

Ø It has been stated recently in an attack, couched, as is the custom in quite general terms, and with no specific point, that "anthropologists" have been the cause of the "pampering" of natives in the Northern Territory. It is only necessary to point out that it has not been the practice of the Government to employ anthropologists hitherto. Apart from which the science of
anthropology and the practice of administration are two different things. There appears to be no reason, however, why an anthropological viewpoint should not be adopted to administration. In this regard it means merely the recognition of the other man's point of view, which is perhaps not incompatible with "justice".

** In a press statement published in the Melbourne "Argus" on 3rd August 1937, it was reported that this man, who was referred to variously as "Smiler" and "The Lone Wolf of Arnhem Land" was "oulawed by his tribe" and that he "fled into the Arnhem Land Reserve followed by a police patrol" and further that "Constable Hall returned from another patrol at the weekend and reported that black justice had overtaken the killer several months ago". The home of Yangarin is actually in the Arnhem Land Reserve. He escaped the vengeance of his victim by moving westward where he eventually died from illness. His body was eaten and the bones were turned eastward to his own people. He was not killed by 'black justice' nor was he "oulawed".

My own experience of native witnesses leads me to the conclusion that in a crisis a native is faced with a problem of conflicting loyalties; he is normally influenced by solidarities which are to him stronger than any consideration of white man's law.

Each native has certain solidarities - set obligations laid down by kinship, by membership of a group, which define for him patterns of behaviour and of conduct to which he must adhere. He is born to these: they have ruled and regulated his life from infancy. These loyalties and these obligations are far stronger to the native than any mere arbitrary obligations to tell the truth to a white man. It is not that he is immoral or even amoral; every individual is a product of his social environment.

It is safe to say, therefore, that a native when brought into a court, unless he is influenced by fear, real or imaginary, of punishment, disfavour, or other consideration, will act according to traditional behaviour. It must be remembered that he is not normally expected to tell the truth as we understand it but he is expected to fulfil his social obligations, which are outside his control, and which take the form of set attitudes to all who are near him (more specific and often more intense with relatives of certain orders) against others to whom he has less definite obligations or possibly even traditional hostility. It is not a case of right or wrong, of truth or untruth, for he knows nothing of morality in the abstract; it is rather that he is expected to conform to this behaviour. For this reason many natives have been tried and punished for "murder" in a white man's court, when they have been merely instruments carrying out social functions imposed upon them by a social group, to avoid which would mean that they would be regarded as anti-social, and treated by their own society accordingly.

It would be possible, therefore, by examining carefully the kinship terminology and other bonds between a group of natives and a man against whom they were expected to give evidence, to form a fairly accurate idea of where their sympathies lie.
As an example of the attitude of these people towards theft, I may quote an instance that occurred at Milingimbi Mission in the Crocodile Islands. A native on this station repeatedly entered the Mission store and Mission dwellings and stole food and other goods. The missionary would not send him to Darwin, and charge him in the court, and he was annoyed because the man's fellow tribesmen would take no action and seemed to feel no obligation to do so; nor any responsibility in the matter. Actually, they considered it (not unnaturally) as in their own society, the task of the offended party to exact vengeance for the wrong done.

But in the same community a quantity of sacred native food - that was dedicated ceremonially to a totem and which was strictly tabu to all but a few initiated big men - was stolen by young boys. The old men were very angry, and punished the offenders severely.

To a white man, regarding the matter superficially, these are both merely examples of theft. Without analysing all the factors it may be said that the cases were to the natives in no way parallel. They represented two quite different problems - one was a private delict - a matter for individual action; the other concerned the society, or at least an organized group.

The obvious and at the same time, the simplest solution to all this appears to lie in the constitution of special courts for the handling of native affairs, presided over by men who may be required to make a special study of the social organization in all its branches of the people with whom they deal. Only in this way does it seem possible to remove the injustice of the present system. The essential point is to make the administration of justice as simple as possible and to try the natives by men who are not strangers, nor regarded by the natives as people to be feared, and before whom they are already condemned, but in whose sense of justice and in whose knowledge of their language and customs they can have faith. It would be an advance for a native to understand that he could state his own case, in terms of his own beliefs and customs, in an atmosphere that did not seem hostile. It would introduce a sense of justice to the proceedings and it would remove the feeling that sentence had been passed on a dumb and trapped animal.

6. INVASION OF RESERVE BY JAPANESE AND OTHERS

The invasion of the reserve by Japanese and other intruders - the latter chiefly from Darwin - reached such proportions during 1936-37 that the conditions reported in my previous communications were intensified. The unrest was further aggravated, and the native reserve was violated to such an extent that it completely broke down, and was a reserve only in name. Not only were natives widely exploited by white men and by Japanese, but they were freely taken to Darwin and elsewhere either as passengers on boats* or by certain vessels manned by Japanese in payment for the prostitution of their women. During 1936 in spite of the lessons of 1933, white men were engaged in trepang fishing and other activities with depots on the reserve at both the eastern and western ends of Arnhem Land. Casual intercourse with trepangers and with the crews of fishing crafts has now not only established a desire for tobacco, clothes, and other material possessions, but has made it easy for the natives

* Among these may be mentioned the Mission boat at Groot Eylandt (where half-caste crews are available) which however takes a native crew to Thursday Island. Grey who also took natives to Thursday Island
during visits there Ladd who after maintaining a trepang depot on the Reserve in 1936, later recruited native crews in the Reserve while apparently employed at the same time in carrying Government and Japanese supplies, as well as the prize return. All this is a serious factor in spreading unrest, in setting up a desire for white men's goods as well as a serious risk of the introduction of disease, in particular venereal disease, with increased sterility.

to visit Darwin, and the ambition of almost every man was to go into the Town and to acquire wealth in the form of cast-off clothing, to get casual work, or to live as a hanger-on in Chinatown. I have reported at various times on the agencies at work in the breaking down of culture on the Arnhem Land Reserve and it is my belief that apart from any disintegration of the native society, the lowering of the prestige of the white man resulting from the failure to act upon what the natives know to be the breaking of the law, has had a serious effect and is one of the primary factors in the increasing unrest, fighting, and trouble that has been reported recently on a large scale from this area. I have endeavoured to show that the highly complex organization breaks down as soon as it comes in contact with outside influence, and I have advocated that steps be taken to avoid further breaking down of these cultures until a satisfactory solution has been arrived at. Failure to appreciate this and to enforce the inviolability of the reserve in the absence of a settled, established policy for the administration of the natives is further adding to the number of the "rudderless" native population now "adrift" in the Northern Territory. Rigid segregation in the Arnhem Land Reserve and protection from all outside contact with its destructive and disintegrating results, alone would preserve this population as a stable, self-respecting, self-supporting, primitive community. The present practice can only result in disorganization which means a further increase in the shiftless, unstable semi-detribalized natives adrift on the fringe of white settlements which are a reproach to the community.

Although the disturbances reported in Arnhem Land are generally attributed to natives living under tribal conditions, an examination of the facts will show that they have in almost every case originated among natives who have been much in contact with white men and others, and that these troubles have reached their greatest intensity at times when this influence has been greatest. In 1933, and on frequent occasions subsequently, trouble arose at the camps of F.H. Gray and his white employees at Caledon Bay and at other places. In 1936 a trepang camp was established at Arnhem Bay, followed by trouble in that area (see Report, Appendix I, No. 3) and this experience has been repeated over a long period at other places in the reserve, vide Florida Station, established on the Glyde River many years ago with much destruction of native life, and subsequently abandoned.
Although apparently only a limited number of permits have been issued for entry into the reserve, it must be remembered that such permits are more injurious, and that their effects are more far-reaching in the absence of any kind of control over those to whom they are issued, for they expose the native population to unregulated exploitation from which there is no appeal. But, when, as has frequently happened, notably at Caledon Bay in 1933, the natives are driven to desperation and turn upon those who exploit them, the Government steps in, takes the part of the real aggressor, sentences the native to imprisonment without taking any cognizance of the illegal acts or provocation that have driven them to these desperate measures, and thereby give a charter to all that has been done, and yet this is proclaimed a reserve for the well-being and protection of the native inhabitants.

As long ago as 1934 I urged that no permits to enter the native reserve should be issued, and no approval be given for the initiation of fresh enterprises in Arnhem Land - at least until the completion of my own investigations and the consideration of the reports resulting therefrom. I submit now that before any further permits be issued for entry into this area a critical review and examination be made of the gain - economic or otherwise - that has resulted either to the community or even to individuals from the white enterprises that have been carried on under special permit (or in defiance of authority) and that these be weighed not only against the cost to the native community and its chance of survival, but against the cost of necessary official action and other measures that have been rendered necessary - including the cost of the police operations at Woodah Island and at Groote Eylandt in 1933-34, and the subsequent cost of the arrest and conveyance to Darwin of native prisoners.

But if the influence of white men and their activities have been disturbing to the natives and have been active factors in the destruction of the native life and organization, the invasion of the reserve in 1936-37 by Japanese trepangers has had a profound effect that has extended throughout the reserve. It would be difficult to over-estimate the disruptive effect of all these things and the damage done by this intrusion in a comparatively short period. Throughout 1937 the steadily growing number of Japanese-manned pearing vessels in the waters of the reserve was a most potent factor in the growing unrest that was becoming steadily more serious each month. It was reflected to such an extent in my own work among these people, that I was delayed for months on work that should normally have occupied only a very short time. In May 1936-37 there were upwards of 70 vessels within sights at one time from the beach at Mooroonga Island in the Crocodile Group. One of these vessels - the "Tenjin Maru" which I reported having boarded in territorial waters, had a crew of fifteen men, so that at a conservative estimate there were perhaps 700 Japanese on the Arnhem Land coast at this time. Some idea of the extent of this invasion may be gathered by an examination of photographs taken by me from the air in the Crocodile Islands in May, 1937; Royal Air Force Official Photographs, nos. 1078-1089.
These fleets represented boats from Darwin as well as from Thursday Island, supplemented by overseas vessels such as the craft cited above, with the crews of which they fraternized at the watering places as indicated by me telegrams at the time. I consider that strong action in the initial stages of the invasion would have obviated much of the trouble that ensued, but during the year the crews of these vessels grew increasingly bold, and it became the practice of the fleets to resort to certain anchorages, particularly at the King and Liverpool Rivers, at Cape Stewart, Mooroonga Island in the Crocodile Group, and Elcho Island, when the tides where unfavorable for diving. These visits were made ostensible for shelter and water or for repairs. But the natives began to congregate at these places and in order to conciliate and to ingratiate themselves with the aborigines the crews gave at first very large presents of contraband goods, such as tobacco and clothing, rice, fish-hooks, knives and other trade goods - presents out of all proportion to the initial value of the services rendered. News of these things spread throughout the reserve. The normal activities of the native population were entirely suspended in many areas, the natives abandoned all their normal activities and congregated at various rendezvous to wait for the return of the boats and the orgy that they grew to expect. At Cape Stewart and at the King River particularly, the prostitution of women, including little girls, became the regular custom and a state of affairs inconceivable under Australian law was established and persisted almost unchecked. Authority was set at nought, the reserve was violated, women and children prostituted, and serious friction occurred between the natives and Japanese in which weapons were flourished and fighting only narrowly averted. An important aspect of this situation is the obvious danger of the introduction of diseases which, I understand were actually epidemic in the East during this period. Many of the vessels come direct to the Australian coast from the Dutch East Indies, and even if they do not land crews immediately, they receive natives on board and the crews fraternize with the men of vessels under Australian control. Even when, after the visits of the "Larrakia", the overseas vessels remained for some time outside territorial limits, they regularly mingled with the vessels from Darwin and Thursday Island, and as the crews of these latter vessels enjoyed almost complete immunity within the waters of the reserve, I am able to state from personal observation that the overseas vessels met during the night at watering places such as Elcho Island. The aborigines knew that all this was in defiance of the white man's law, and the prestige of the white man fell greatly in their eyes. Unrest, instability and lawlessness increased among the natives, a state very near chaos resulted, it was a heavy task to keep the peace, and the chance of saving the remnant of these people suffered a blow which may be irreparable. In the light of these facts, which I have stated in outline only, I would urge again earnest consideration of the recommendations regarding the complete segregation and the maintenance of the inviolability of this reserve which I advocated in December last.
PROTECTION OF NATIVES AT GROOTE EYLANDT

I would also suggest that while it was highly desirable that a careful survey should have been made, as a routine matter, of the population of Groote Eylandt before the conclusion of any arrangement for the establishment of an air base there, an exhaustive study of the people and of their culture and a full census should be undertaken without further delay. This would serve the dual purpose of placing on record as complete an account as possible of the Ingura tribe before it is too late and of enabling the effect on population to be measured accurately. In addition it appears to be desirable to take definite steps to segregate the natives from all contact with the air base, both during its constructional stages and later, and to take active measures to prevent the degradation of the people, which has created so unfavorable an impression on the Trans-Continental Railway, through contact both with men employed on construction work and later with travellers and tourists. As an initial step I suggest that measures be taken absolutely to prohibit all trade or sale of objects of native culture, whether material or ceremonial, at Groote Eylandt, thereby removing one of the temptations. I would suggest that the proposed objective could best be attained by the appointment of a special officer to act as Resident Protector and to be responsible for the welfare of the population of Groote Eylandt.

7 HEALTH

During the two expeditions in Arnhem Land a considerable amount of medical work was undertaken. At each camp visited, treatment for wounds, sores, coughs and colds was carried out wherever possible, and in addition, routine treatment for yaws commenced on the first expedition was extended, with results, particularly in the case of children, that were gratifying.

As stated in the Interim Report the general health among the natives still living in bush camps was very good with the exception of certain areas in which yaws and leprosy were prevalent. Nevertheless it should be noted that even where the incidence of these diseases was high there were relatively very many more babies and young children in bush camps than were ever seen in any camps or compounds under civilized conditions.

(I) EPIDEMICS

Reference has been made to the danger of the introduction of disease from the East, either directly to the natives, or through the crews of Australian controlled vessels. The position when I left the field was such as to nullify to a large extent the careful guard on all entries from overseas maintained by the health authorities at Darwin.

There is another aspect, however, no less serious for the native population. I have pointed out elsewhere that one of the great difficulties when the native is brought into contact with civilization is the fact that he has no immunity to disease and is susceptible in an excessive degree to measles, whooping cough, influenza, and even to common colds which are likely to assume a virulent form with a high mortality rate among aborigines. It is especially desirable that a strict regulation be maintained of all vessels visiting Arnhem Land waters and that the segregation previously advocated should be enforced.
(II) YAWS

Yaws is prevalent throughout the reserve, particularly in eastern Arnhem Land, where many of the children exhibited lesions.

Treatment, commenced in 1936, was carried on, and a further large series of injections, both intravenous and intramuscular, was carried out with materials supplied by the Northern Territory Medical Service. I wish to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation of the unfailing promptness with which medical supplies for the treatment of natives, including large quantities of N.A.B. for the treatment of yaws by injections, were always supplied. On every occasion on which medical supplies were required, these were made available with a readiness that still leaves a feeling of gratitude and appreciation. I would be grateful if you would formally convey my thanks to the Chief Medical Officer and his staff.

(III) LEPEROSY

Unfortunately, the incidence of leprosy appears to be high in certain parts of the reserve, especially on the coast. A number of cases of nodular leprosy in an advanced form were noted at Blue Mud Bay and at Cape Stewart, as well as in the camps of the low-lying area between the Goyder, Clyde and Blythe rivers.

The greatest number of lepers, many of whom were young children, were observed in the camps at Kutji, near the mouth of the Derby Creek and also at Cape Stewart, where, on account of the abundant water and food supplies, camps of long duration were established. A copy of the report from the field dealing with this matter (Appendix III), is attached to this report.

(IV) CLOTHING

Before leaving the subject of health I shall discuss briefly the subject of clothing.

One of the greatest desires of almost every bush native is to possess some article of white man's clothing, and in order to acquire this they will go to almost any lengths. It is not difficult to show that clothing has no real value to bush natives, and the injurious effects of clothes among primitive peoples is so widely recognized (as witness the legislation on the matter in the Mandated Territories and elsewhere) as to need no repetition here.

The ill effects of the wearing of clothing is especially apparent among these people. They have no ideas whatever of hygiene or asepsis and attribute most, if not all, sickness to magical or to supernatural causes (as for example deformity, certain kinds of sores, believed to result from the breaking of tabus). They collect therefore indiscriminately odds and ends of clothing without any regard to its dirtiness or to its source and wear these until they are encased in a covering of black grease, which at body temperature must provide an effective breeding grounds for harmful organisms.
Every individual has set obligations to certain individuals within his relationship system. Often these take the form of reciprocal obligations to exchange gifts, and having few valuable possessions the natives generally exchange clothing, which, accordingly, circulates freely among the groups. It is no uncommon sight to see a native who has used a foul rag for months as a loin cloth (as a covering for the pudenda) pass it on to another, who, having a discharge from his eyes, sits wiping these with the cloth. Thus it circulates from man to man, no less in camps infested with leprosy or with venereal diseases, and even when it disintegrates its social value is too great to permit of its destruction. The shreds are carefully collected and interwoven in a dilly bag to form pendant tassels.

A blanket is used not only as a protection against the cold of night but is thrown down anywhere on the ground in the camp, often impregnated with the faeces of humans and of dogs without ever being washed. Finally, when it starts to disintegrate, it too is cut into pieces and distributed far and wide to serve for an indefinite period as loin clothes. Quite frequently these will be removed at intervals to serve such varied purposes as shrouds for a dead body or as receptacles to hold flour or other food until, when they finally disintegrate, they, too, function as tassels to adorn dilly bags and similar objects.

It is the custom at certain establishments to issue regularly loin clothes to the natives. These, generally tied close to the genitalia, form admirable receptacles for money, tobacco, playing cards and other personal possessions which are extracted as required and handed about. In an emergency the cloth is removed and handed in at the store for the ration of flour.

I submit that no useful purpose is served by permitting these people to wear European clothing and that the issue of any wearing apparel or clothing as well as of bags and blankets, might well be prohibited on the reserve — if not elsewhere in the Northern Territory, with the possible exception of Darwin — where, however, a suitable designed loin cloth similar to those used in New Guinea and worn in the same manner, would appear to be sufficient.

In former times it was the custom of these people to employ, strips of sheets of tea tree bark as a pubic covering, or even as a blanket, etc. As these, on account of the nature of the material quickly disintegrated, they were discarded and replaced by fresh bark. Having no social value there was no incentive to keep them long, and as it is regarded as dangerous to permit any article impregnated with one's body sweat to pass into the hands of an enemy who may employ it for magical purposes, and work evil against the owner, there was a special incentive to dispose of these fragments of used bark expeditiously and (incidentally) hygienically. It might be said that the same danger applies to sweat-impregnated calico, but the great social value of even fragments of calico in areas 300 or 400 miles from Darwin make the native reluctant to destroy the, whatever their condition.
8. REPORTS OF WHITE WOMEN SURVIVORS OF "DOUGLAS MAWSON"

Shortly before my return from the field, reports concerning the existence of white women survivors of the wrecked steamer "Douglas Mawson" which was believed to have been lost in the Gulf of Carpentaria in a cyclone many years ago, were again revived. Owing to the persistence with which these rumours are circulated, the credence given to them in certain quarters and the source of embarrassment which they must provide for the Northern Territory Administration, I shall discuss the matter here.

On 1st September, I received the following telegram from the Administrator:-

Dr. Thomson, Milingimbi.

Strong rumours again prevalent white women survivors "Douglas Mawson" at Woodah Island. Can you give any information regarding this and your whereabouts next few days.

(Sgn) Administrator.

Realizing the responsibility of the Administrator in a matter of the kind and with the object of assuring him of the fact that the reports could be discounted with confidence I reported to him in the following terms:

Urgent. 1st September 1937. Milingimbi

Administrator, Darwin

Telegram received today. Have visited Woodah Island and spent weeks in vicinity. Woodah has no permanent native population. Traversed by foot patrols, Blue Mud Bay and Caledon Bay areas know area and natives well. You can discount with confidence rumours existence white women that area.

During past 2½ years have covered on foot approximately 1000 miles including crossing eastern Arnhem Land from Milingimbi to Blue Mud Bay and have made contact with, live with, and travelled with all native tribes from Wilton River to Cape Stewart. Returned Milingimbi 26th, will await further communication here.

If you consider further investigation necessary can undertake patrol alone without danger from natives who know but consider entry stranger in this area likely be misinterpreted by natives with grave risk repetition situation of 1933.

(Sgn) Donald Thomson

2nd September 1937. Darwin

Dr. Thomson, Milingimbi.

Very many thanks indeed your comprehensive and informative telegram. Do not propose taking further action at present but am grateful for your offer.
There is little doubt that these reports arise from sources outside the reserve, and as I was moving about among the natives at the time when they were circulated in Darwin, I wish to state emphatically that no tradition of any such occurrence or of the survival of white women at Blue Mud Bay in recent times exists, and I would add that the natives themselves have no part in the perpetuation of a myth which appears to have no foundation in fact.

9. DEPOPULATION

It was my intention at the outset to discuss again at some length the subject of depopulation in the reserve. I have, however, quoted figures, collected on the first expedition and presented in the Interim Report, and have also in various places in the present report indicated the various factors contributing to the present rate of decline, and have made clear my beliefs as to the result of a continuation of the present policy. I do not therefore propose now to add anything further to this.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations arising from my research in the field were presented in December last*. After discussing the matter at length with various authorities on native administration, I feel that the course outlined was a sound one, and I do not wish to modify the proposals that I advanced in the memorandum which is appended hereto.