

2 Sociohistorical context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents sociohistorical data from the Roper River region from the 1840s to the 1960s. The aim of this chapter is to determine when and how a creole language evolved in the Roper River region and what role the pastoral industry may have played. Chapter 2 expands on Harris (1986), which is to date the most comprehensive sociohistorical study of pidgin and creole emergence in the Northern Territory. This work complemented Sandefur (1986) and provided background to other studies such as Munro (2000). Harris (1986) uses sociohistorical data from the 1840s-1900s from the early settlements in the vicinity of present day Darwin and the coastal regions in contact with the Macassans to describe the development and stabilisation of Northern Territory Pidgin (NT Pidgin) by the 1900s. Harris (1986) also describes the cattle industry invasion, as well as the establishment of the Roper River Mission (RRM), which led to the suggestion that abrupt creole genesis occurred in the RRM from 1908.

The information in this chapter will contribute to the application of the Transfer Constraints approach to substrate transfer in Kriol in three ways. Firstly, it will provide evidence of which substrate languages had most potential for input in the process of transfer to the NT Pidgin, and ultimately then Kriol. Secondly, the sociohistorical data should suggest how much access to English, as the superstrate language, the substrate language speakers had. And finally, the description of each phase will allow for accurate identification of the timeframes within which transfer and levelling (as discussed in chapter 1) occurred.

The data used for this chapter was derived from the following sources: the Northern Territory Archive Service (NTAS), The National Archives (Commonwealth Record Service, or CRS), the Northern Territory Library, personal communications with Aboriginal consultants and various published texts of historical significance. The initial three sources provided census data, records from pastoral stations, personal records of

missionaries, Church Missionary Society records, government departments correspondence files and Government Resident's reports from the time. Appropriate abbreviated citations will be used in the text and full citations in the reference list. Citations for data derived from NTAS will take the following form: [NTAS, NTRS (Northern Territory Record Service) no. &/or Item no./Page no.]. The citations from the National Archives follow the same method [CRS F (File) no. year/page no.]. The personal communications with Aboriginal consultants that were collected in tape recordings will be sourced either from the recording or from the oral history booklet produced as a result. Citations of the recordings take the following form: [first letter of name/Year: tape no., date], so for example [D01:1, 26/3/01] suggests that the recording is Tape 1 of DG in 2001, recorded on 26/3/01. Citations of oral history booklets will follow established practices in quoting published material. Similarly data from texts of historical documents, which include journals of explorers and early workers as well as autobiographical accounts from pastoralists, may be published, in which case they will be cited in the received method for published work. If, however, they are taken from archives then the appropriate citation system from that source will be used.

This chapter begins in §2.2 by presenting a description of the linguistic situation of the Roper River region prior to English contact, which places the following four contact phases in context. For each phase that follows in §2.3 - §2.6, the general social nature of contact is presented, followed by demographic information and finally the processes of language contact are discussed. The sociohistorical data suggests that there are four phases in the emergence of a creole in the Roper River region. The 'Exploration' phase is discussed in §2.3, the 'Invasion' phase in §2.4, the 'Station' phase in §2.5 and the 'Community' phase in §2.6. The Discussion in §2.7 will summarise the main findings and describe the ramifications for the application of the Transfer Constraints approach to substrate language transfer in Kriol.

2.2 The linguistic situation in the Roper River region prior to English contact

2.2.1 Relationships of language, land and identity in the Roper River region

In describing the linguistic situation in the Roper River region prior to English contact we can use current information, which is based on continuing cultural traditions and knowledge. Much of this information has been recorded in order to identify traditional owners for land ownership and management purposes. The Roper River region was and is comprised of at least the following languages: Warndarrang, Marra, Alawa, Ngandi, Ngalakgan, Nunggubuyu and Mangarrayi. Their distribution is shown in map 2. While most Aboriginal people now live within communities (see map 4), a certain level of cultural practice continues, such as continuing custodial relationships with certain tracts of land, or more specifically a collection of sites, known as country. Such relationships are handed down along a patrilineal line, along with language. Therefore, certain sites or areas of country are associated with a particular patrilineage, or clan, and a language group, which continues to this day (e.g. Merlan 1981:142). Prior to English contact, these family groups most likely lived in the particular areas, as indicated in map 2, while today they live in communities and travel to country to maintain relationships. While a particular language group predominates in a certain area, however, it is not the language group as such that maintains their relationship with that tract of land. These language boundaries, therefore, represent the area in which that language will be most commonly found, but does not necessarily suggest that the language group has primary responsibility for that land (see e.g. Layton 1980; Morphy and Morphy 1981; Asche, Scambary and Stead 1998).

To more fully understand the cultural significance of the connection between land, language and cultural practice, a discussion of moiety and clan groups is necessary. Every person in the Roper River region was and still is identified under one of the four moiety groups: Burdal, Mambali, Murrungun and Gyal. Ultimately moiety groups and their members are identified with certain mythic creatures. Song cycles tell of their travelling stories across country. Within each moiety group there are different clan

groups that include association to a particular mythic creature based on patrilineages (Merlan 1981:142). By singing the particular songs and learning the travelling stories associated with the mythic creature the clan group increases their understanding of their country, as well as reinforcing their relationship with ceremonial law. All the clans of a particular moiety are united through membership of that moiety yet remain distinct. There are differences between the language groups in the Roper River region as to the identification of such groups. Nunggubuyu and Warndarrang, for example, name distinct clans groups (see e.g. Heath 1984; Heath 1980a respectively), while Alawa and Marra do not distinguish clan groups in this way (see e.g. Layton 1980; Asche et al. 1998). All groups in the Roper River region do, however, practice the main tenets of cultural practice as set out here, which creates an inextricable relationship between language, land and social identity in Aboriginal society.

While the cultural classification of moiety and clan membership overrides language affiliation it also promotes multilingualism (see e.g. Brandl and Walsh 1982; Harris 1986). Firstly, the ceremonial song cycles and travelling stories may be in languages other than a person's L1. Furthermore, during ceremony when moiety groups gather, any number of languages may be represented within the group, all of which encourage a level of multilingualism in order to carry out ceremonial responsibilities. Secondly, as previously mentioned, language identity, moiety membership and responsibility for country are all usually inherited from the patrilineal line. Marriage practices, however, insisted on inter-moiety, and most likely inter-language relationships. With grandparents included in the family group, it was possible that at least two to six languages were spoken within these small clan groups that lived and moved together. Children growing up in this environment would be exposed to numerous languages from a very early age. Their L1(s) would depend on who the primary care-giver was although it would be expected that they also acquire their father's language. All of these factors encouraged a high level of multilingualism in the Roper River region in pre-English contact times.

2.2.2 Demographic information

There are no actual population figures available for the Roper River region in this time. The only estimation that can be made is that it would have been well populated, particularly compared to semi arid or desert regions of Australia, which, due to the paucity of food and water available, could sustain only smaller populations. As mentioned in chapter 1, the Roper River is a large barramundi river system that provides a rich source of food from the river, springs and fresh water lagoons it feeds. There are at least two other river systems that run into it and another two in the vicinity, that likewise are important water and food sources. The coastal region would also have been well populated due to the larger sea animals, fish and shellfish available. While the overall population of the region would therefore have been sizeable, this was divided into the seven language groups that were spoken in the proximity of the Roper River. This would suggest smaller individual language populations, which are characteristic of nonPN speaking regions, rather than the large numbers associated with PN languages in other parts of the continent (see §1.1.2 for a discussion of PN and nonPN languages).

2.2.3 The stable, multilingual language contact environment

Prior to English contact, the Roper River languages themselves were in long term and stable contact with each other, which resulted in extensive borrowing between them (Heath 1978b; Heath 1981b). As noted in chapter 1 there are two language families in the Roper River region. While Alawa, Marra and Warndarrang of the Marran family differ in many respects, there is a large amount of shared vocabulary between the three. The same is so between the Gunwinyguan languages, Ngalakgan and Ngandi, although to a lesser degree with Nunggubuyu. Heath (1981b) carried out a lexicostatistic analysis on the same languages and found large-scale lexical and morphosyntactic borrowing across language families. Heath (1978b; 1981b) also provides evidence that borrowing between the Roper River languages did occur and that it did so across language family boundaries. A summary of the directly borrowed features provided by Heath (1978b:105) follows in Table 6.

Table 6: Heath's list of borrowed features between Roper River languages

"Diffusable"	"Nondiffusable"
case affixes	independent pronouns
number affixes	bound pronominals
diminutive affix	verbal inflectional affixes
derivational verbal affixes	demonstrative stems
negative affix	demonstrative adverbs
other postpositions	
inchoative verbaliser	
thematizing augment	
special compound initials	

A feature is classified as "diffusable" if there is evidence that the actual form, as well as the function, has been directly borrowed between languages. Alternatively, a feature is classified as "nondiffusable" if there is no evidence of a directly borrowed form between languages. Heath (1978b) shows, in particular, that direct borrowing of morphemes had occurred between Warndarrang (Marran) and Nunggubuyu (Gunwinyguan) and also between Ngandi (Gunwinyguan) and Ritharrngu, which is a neighbouring PN Yolngu language (see map 2).

The only evidence of a contact language during this timeframe was the Macassan Pidgin (Harris 1986). This trade language developed along coastal Northern Australia as a result of the contact between Macassan traders who sailed from Sulawesi in Indonesia, with Aboriginal people in whose country and seas they camped and fished. It is assumed that this occurred for approximately two hundred years to 1907, when it ceased (Harris 1986:108). Harris (1986:83-84) describes the activity thus:

Travelling south in convoys of around 50 praus [sailing vessels], the 'Macassans' were brought to North Australia by the north-west monsoons, arriving about December. The praus, each containing around 30 men, split up and spread out along the coast, ... where the 'Macassans' settled for the wet season, bartering trepang, drying and smoking it. Around April, the south-east trade winds took the 'Macassans' back to Sulawesi.

The Macassans made their way as far south along the western rim of the Gulf of Carpentaria, as the Sir Edward Pellew Islands, off the coast from Borroloola, and therefore, would have had contact with the Warndarrang, Marra and Nunggubuyu groups. This is supported by the fact that there is an account of an Indigenous man from Caledon

Bay, which is north of the mouth of the Roper River (see map 2), returning with the Macassans to Indonesia, as numerous other men also did (Harris 1986:94). Secondly, the loanword *prau* was recorded by Lowrie (1872-1873), a ship captain on the Roper River, who also notes: ‘...evidently coast natives [know] something of the Malays’ (Lowrie 21/4/1872). Evidence of contact between Macassans and Aboriginal people is found in other loan words as well. Evans (1992), for example, shows that loan words from Macassan Pidgin exist in a number of Northern Territory languages, which includes Warndarrang and Marra.

2.3 Contact period 1 (1840s-1870s): ‘Exploration’ phase¹⁰

The first incursions on the stable multilingual language contact situation of the Roper River region came with the explorers, the Overland Telegraph Supply Depot and the first cattle drive to the region. Leichhardt’s 1845 expedition was the first, followed by Gregory in 1856 and Cadell in 1867 (Merlan 1981; Asche et al. 1998). South Australia began administration of the Northern Territory in 1863, which continued until 1911. The most significant event during this timeframe, however, was the establishment of the Overland Telegraph Supply Depot in 1871, constructed on the banks of the Roper River near Roper Bar (see map 3) in Ngalakgan country (Morphy and Morphy 1981). The Overland Telegraph was under construction running from Adelaide to Darwin (then Palmerston) and was, therefore, inland from the Roper River, but access to it was cut off during the monsoonal wet season. The Overland Telegraph Supply Depot was established to salvage the construction of the overland telegraph at this time by utilising the Roper River as a means of shipping in materials, equipment and the workforce (Mitchell 1993). One of the most significant consequences of the depot was the first cattle drive into the NT by Matthew Cox and Darcy Uhr in 1872 with 400 head of cattle (Harris 1986:189; Mitchell 1993:9). They arrived too late to supply the depot as planned

¹⁰ It should be noted that ‘Contact period 1/2/3 and 4’ refers to contact with English, as opposed to contact with Macassans.

but their droving journey cleared the path of the ‘Old Coast Track’, along which most of the pastoral industry would follow (Harris 1986).

2.3.1 Nature of contact

The explorers had little to no communication with the Indigenous population of the Roper River region. Leichhardt (2000[1847]), for example, provides very few instances of attempted communication with Aboriginal people. It has also been noted that Gregory resorted to violence on numerous occasions, which in fact discouraged contact (Asche et al. 1998:3). The first consistent contact, therefore, was initiated with the establishment of the Overland Telegraph Supply Depot.

Mitchell (1993:6-10) describes the Overland Telegraph Supply Depot as a temporary and ill-conceived camp of construction workers, their horses and cattle, where morale was low with parties being marooned at the construction site further inland, lost on their journey back to the depot, or stranded at the depot with low rations. Accounts suggest that while the construction workers did not seek out to harm Aboriginal people, they were mistrustful and aggressive when they did have contact, possibly due to their difficult circumstances (see e.g. Mitchell 1993:8; Morphy and Morphy 1981:8). The negative situation grew in intensity over time, as the following extract from the journal of Captain James Lowrie (1872-1873), master of the paddle steamer, *The Young Australian*, which serviced the depot, indicates:

Regarding our communication with the natives I have very little to say. We had been suspicious from the first of the coast natives and those met at Maria Island and although we had always treasured them well and they in return had managed to steal 3 of our axes whilst assisting us to wood. They never did a destructive or malicious act until after the arrival of Captain Douglas with his survey parties and Mr Smith’s party at the Port Survey Camp had had several collisions with them. Since then our beacons have all been cut down and our buoys destroyed.

While this describes contact with coastal groups, the shipping practice came in contact with all groups along the length of the Roper River. The Warndarrang are no doubt the

‘coast natives’, with which contact was difficult. Lowrie (1872-1873) also distinguishes between the ‘mid river tribe’ and the ‘upper river tribe’, which Munro (1999b:1) identifies as Marra and Alawa, and Ngalakgan groups respectively. The most negative aspect of the contact is defined by the fact that there are accounts of Aboriginal people being shot in each part of the Roper River at this time (see e.g. Lowrie 1872-1873; Morphy and Morphy 1981; Mitchell 1993).

The ‘mid river tribe’ or Marra/Alawa people had the most positive contact, since they frequented the paddle steamer, such as the following entries suggest:

21/4/1872 ...4 natives came on board today whom we had seen more than once before. Quite friendly and confident....
22/4/1872...pm a party of 8 men and boy ...made their appearance.
6/8/1872 ...proceeded up the river taking on board ... the Bongona in Chief our old passenger who had been wounded in the thigh evidently by a ball [gunshot].
30/8/1872...Chief with bad leg and some others came onboard and remained
31/8/1872 ...Natives on board passengers.
18/10/1872...5 natives on board including Bongona, Peter, Paul, Jamu and Jack. Found them very useful. (Lowrie 1872-1873).

The final entry alludes to the work the ‘mid river tribe’ did on board, such as navigating the ship along the river and general duties. As the depot was located on Ngalakgan land, it was this group that was most affected by violent interactions, resulting in them avoiding contact. An incident of misunderstanding, mistrust and violence described by Morphy and Morphy (1981:8), best characterises such contact, which occurred at the depot and resulted in two Aboriginal men being chained to a tree in reprisal for suspected theft of clothing.

What this suggests, therefore, is that while the majority of the Aboriginal population avoided contact with those involved in the depot due to their aggression, bred of fear and suspicion, there were a few who sought contact with them, particularly on the paddle steamer. It has been noted that Aboriginal people of the region were more trusting of and friendly with those who arrived by boat, rather than those arriving on land, due to their long term association with the Macassans (see e.g. Costello 1930:134). For those who

worked on the paddle steamer, albeit briefly, their communications with the English speaking crew would no doubt have been their first real contact with the English language (see §2.3.3). It was short lived, however, because by the end of 1873 the Overland Telegraph was complete and the depot therefore abandoned.

Finally, the first cattle drive into the NT by Cox and Uhr was also marked by violence. Dymock (1991:10-11), for example, in reproductions of newspaper accounts of their journey describes violent altercations between the droving party and Aboriginal men at various locations along their journey. The closest to the area under study here was around the Wickam River, where it appears the droving party interrupted a ceremony by using gunshot and threatening behaviour when confronted. Lowrie (1872-1873) also says: ‘...I had not long before healed [the big Bongona, who had previously worked on board the paddle steamer] of a gunshot wound through the thigh inflicted by Cox’s party who it is reported treated the neighbouring natives after the manner of Queensland’. This would go on to set the tone for the pastoral industry as a whole.

2.3.2 Demographic information

The only written documentation of demographic information from this timeframe is in the form of journals, either of explorers or paddle steam captains. In both cases the figures for the Indigenous population are given as vague estimates. The earliest example is from Leichhardt (2000[1847]), who passed through the Roper River region in October 1845. The following extract is indicative of the descriptive nature of observation.

They had not exaggerated their account, neither of the beauty of the country, nor of the size of the lagoon, nor of the exuberance of animal life on it. It was indeed quite a spectacle to us to see such myriads of ducks and geese rise and fly up and down the lagoon, as we travelled along. ...When we came to the end of the lagoon ... I found myself on the banks of a large fresh water river...It was the river Mr. Roper had seen two days before, and I named it after him, as I had promised to do. ... Natives seemed to be numerous; for their foot-path along the lagoon was well beaten; we passed several of their fisheries, and observed long fishtraps made of Fagellaria (rattan). (Leichhardt 2000[1874]:286)

The description of the abundance of wildlife is included to show that the region could sustain a large population. Similar accounts are given all along the Roper River, such as the following: ‘The extensive burnings, and the number of our sable visitors, shewed [sic] that the country was well inhabited’ (Leichhardt 2000[1874]:290). The only indication of a population figure is provided by Lowrie (1872-1873:2/11/1872), who noted that there were fifty men, women and children that camped on the bank opposite the depot after being requested to do work in exchange for food, but they departed the following day.

On the other hand the numbers of non-Aboriginal people in the region drastically changed, albeit only temporarily. The early explorers simply passed through with their small contingents. The most significant numbers, however, are those associated with the Overland Telegraph Supply Depot, which varied over time from 40 at its outset in 1871 to 300 while in transit out of the NT in 1873 (Morphy and Morphy 1981:7; Mitchell 1993:5). This latter number was the highest population of non-Aboriginal people in the NT at the time, even though it was temporary and scattered as most workers were in transit from the construction site further inland. The Aboriginal population continued to far outnumber the non-Aboriginal population in the Roper River region.

2.3.3 Initial but restricted contact with English

As noted in §2.3.1, the interaction between explorers and the Indigenous inhabitants was highly restricted, which is therefore the same in terms of language contact (Harris 1986:199). Leichhardt (2000[1874]:289) for example, only recorded three words in Aboriginal languages that were moiety names given as introductions. Cadell (Asche et al. 1998:3) only recorded the use of ‘pantomime’ for communication around the mouth of the river. In each case only a small number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men may have used mime and some attempts at communication.

Language contact at the Overland Telegraph Supply Depot was also minimal and Lowrie's (1872-1873) journal suggests that the atmosphere described in §2.3.1 discouraged most, but not all, Aboriginal people from contact. From a word list Lowrie (1872-1873) collected from Aboriginal people, it was found that 37 of the 65 words collected were from the 'mid river tribe', or the Marra/Alawa (Munro 1999b:2-5). As noted in §2.2.3 Lowrie also recorded one word of Macassan Pidgin origin, *prau*, meaning canoe, or a sailing vessel of the Macassans. Lowrie also recorded *kan-no*, which appears to be the English word for 'canoe'. The first example of the use of English or a contact language in this region is provided by Lowrie (1872-1873:6/8/1872) who quotes an Aboriginal man wounded by gunshot as saying, *whitefellow manapa*, and suggests that *manapa* means firearm. In fact Munro (1999b:5) points out that *manapa* is most likely in fact *marnbarl*, 'wound/gash' in Marra. This suggests that some communication did take place, most often perhaps with the Marra/Alawa people.

Harris (1986:189) extends the significance of these early communications by pointing out that communication was possible '... in 1907 with an Aboriginal man who had worked as a pilot on the Roper River for supply vessels. These years 1871-1872 thus mark the historical beginnings of the English-based pidgin of the Roper River region, small as those beginnings may have been'. Harris (1986:199) also suggests that this situation remained largely the same until the 1880s when the pastoral industry was being established.

2.4 Contact period 2 (1880s-1900s): 'Invasion' phase

The pastoralists brought many thousands of head of cattle to newly leased stations and this constituted an invasion of the country of the Roper River Aboriginal groups (Merlan 1978). The 'Old Coast Track', which went through the Roper River region was also the route along which other pastoralists travelled in order to establish stations further north-west (Munro 2000). It was also the route along which many travelled for the goldrush in the Kimberleys in the 1880s (Munro 1995). This traffic constituting an invasion of

country, along with the violence that accompanied it, had a devastating effect on the demographic, social and linguistic situation for Indigenous inhabitants of the Roper River region. This phase is also distinguished by the introduction of the stable NSW/QLD Pidgin by pastoralists and the growing role for its use in the industry (Harris 1986).

This phase is therefore marked by the large-scale establishment of the pastoral industry in the Roper River region, which necessarily required large areas of land and fresh water for the stock. Stocking predominantly occurred in the 1880s-1890s. Table 7 shows the dates of establishment of stations and on which language group country they were situated.

Table 7: Date of establishment of cattle stations¹¹

Year	Station name	Country by Language
1879	Springvale	Jawoyn
1882	Elsey Station	Mangarrayi
1883	Bauhinia Downs	Warndarrang
1884	McArthur River	Yanyuwa
1884	Hodgson Downs	Alawa
1884	Valley of Springs	Marra
1890	Tanumbirini	Alawa
1900	Nutwood Downs	Alawa
1903	Eastern and African Cold Storage Co. holding	Alawa, Ngalakgan, Ngandi, Nunggubuyu
1920	St. Vidgeon	Marra, Alawa, Warndarrang and Ngalakgan
1922	Roper Valley	Ngalakgan and Alawa
1920s	Urapunga	Ngalakgan

2.4.1 Nature of contact

The selection of stations was usually done sight unseen, through the use of maps in government departments in southern states. The best country and all water sources were therefore selected and needless to say, the traditional owners were not notified that their country had been handed over in a pastoral lease to a pastoralist. The nature of the

¹¹ Compiled partly from Duncan (1967:160-161).

contact with the traditional owners once the pastoralists arrived to claim their station is well documented as being violent from the outset (Merlan 1978; Morphy and Morphy 1981; Harris 1986). Merlan (1978:76) suggests that this was due to a ‘...mutual lack of understanding of behaviour and motives...’ between both parties.

Once pastoralists had released cattle onto station runs and established themselves, the traditional owners would retaliate. Harris (1986:194) provides an overview of the type of guerilla warfare that Aboriginal people waged for their country by murdering pastoralists and spearing cattle. Their drinking water and food sources had been cut off to varying degrees as well as their ability to move through their own country. Aboriginal people were therefore fighting for their own country, culture and very existence. The usual response involved severe recriminations by non-Aboriginal pastoralists and/or police. One such case involved the spearing of the Daly Waters station-master, along with two others at Roper Bar in 1875, supposedly by Aboriginal men (see e.g. Harris 1986:192). The NT police, assisted by local pastoralists, led punitive expeditions throughout the Roper River region that resulted in numerous, indiscriminate Aboriginal deaths (see e.g. Merlan 1978; Harris 1986).

The following police stations were opened during this period: Mt McMinn in 1885, Borroloola in 1886 and the Roper River in 1890¹² (map 3 shows that Mt McMinn is in the vicinity of the Roper River and provides locations). These police stations were charged with the duty of protecting the non-Aboriginal pastoralists from the resistance activities of the Aboriginal population (Harris 1986:205). Merlan (1978:84) notes that there are few records available on the Mt McMinn police activities. Harris (1986:205) suggests that this is due to a ‘conspiracy of secrecy’ that developed whereby records were not kept on the police activities and murders committed during this time. He further says; ‘The years 1885 and 1886 mark an intensification of European anti-Aboriginal activities’ which ultimately resulted in the ‘pacification’ of the Roper River region resistance movement (Harris 1986:205).

In other instances, reported massacres of Aboriginal people are not related to any particular event. The Hodgson Downs massacre is one such example (Read and Read 1991:41-45; Hercus and Sutton 1986:180-181; Layton and Bauman 1994:15-16; H. Wilfred 2001). Layton and Bauman (1994:15) estimate that 30-40 Alawa people of all ages and both sexes were killed. The site of the massacre is within the current community of Minyerri and the account is retold frequently. There is no known reason for the killing, however.

From 1903-1908 the worst atrocities were carried out by the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company, which took up a massive lease over Elsey Station, Hodgson Downs Station and the south-eastern portion of Arnhem Land (Bauer 1964; Merlan 1978). The company employed two gangs of 10-14 men to hunt out and kill Aboriginal people on sight (Merlan 1978:87). Bauer (1964:157) says that it was 'probably one of the few authenticated instances in which Aborigines were systematically hunted'. Merlan (1978:87) described it as 'the most systematic extermination of Aborigines ever carried out on the Roper'.

There are numerous accounts of Aboriginal people hiding out in rocky outcrops and caves during this time as their only refuge (e.g. H. Wilfred 2001; Layton and Bauman 1994:13). Harris (1986) points out that some country did not provide features in which to hide, such as that of the Warndarrang, which as map 2 shows, is predominantly coastal with no such geographic features to afford protection. Harris (1986) describes in detail the interruption of social and cultural practices that this way of life forced on Aboriginal people of the Roper River region, particularly in terms of language skills, such as multilingualism. Ceremony could not be performed, family could not travel to one another and children born into this era were limited in their exposure to other groups.

Some Aboriginal people were drawn to the stations, no doubt for safety. Harris (1986: 206) says: 'Aboriginal people tend now to look back on a particular massacre, a particular shooting or a particular hanging and see that event as marking the end of

¹² The Roper River Police Station replaced the Mt McMinn Police Station

resistance in their country'. The station itself was the only way to access secure drinking water, food and resources without the fear of being killed. It appears that Aboriginal men would initially approach the station manager. Most stations were managed by single men, who were also becoming aware that Aboriginal men were indispensable to their industry due to their knowledge of the land and their ability to act as interpreters and translators. Once Aboriginal men had established such a relationship on a station, then their family could join them.

2.4.2 Demographic information

While the non-Aboriginal population in the Roper River region became permanent for the first time during this period, their numbers were, however, low. The Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory (GSNT) (1986a) compiled records for 1881 and found that 407 non-Aboriginal people were in the NT but no place of residence was provided so we cannot ascertain figures for the Roper River region specifically. Records for 1891 do, however, provide place of residence and out of the 872 non-Aboriginal people in the NT, 45 were in Borroloola and 102 in the surrounding Barkly and Gulf country stations (GSNT 1986a). This also includes 25 people recorded in the Roper River region, which is comprised of 2 men each at Hodgson Downs and the Roper Bar Police Station, 8 at the Valley of Springs Station and 13 at Elsey Station. In 1901 the non-Aboriginal population of the NT dropped to 864, with 21 at Borroloola and that of the Roper River stations to just 10 (GSNT 1986b). The temporary population of non-Aboriginal people, that included prospective gold miners and drovers moving through to north-western parts of the Northern Territory and into Western Australia, is estimated to have been higher (see e.g. Costello 1930).

The Aboriginal population, on the other hand, was decimated during this time as a result of murders, massacres and large-scale killing by the hunting parties employed by the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company, as well as introduced disease (Layton and Bauman 1994:16; Harris 1986:215). In attempting to determine numbers Harris

(1986:212) says; ‘It will never be possible to determine how many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Aboriginal people were killed in that era ...’.

2.4.3 Introduction of NSW/QLD Pidgin and initial stabilisation of NT Pidgin

As previously stated, very little language contact appears to have occurred up to the 1870s. As §2.4.1 showed, there was obviously an increase in the level of language contact during the 1880s to early 1900s, although it is difficult to define the quantity, quality or outcome of this contact. Considering the intensification of violence, mistrust and dispersal during this period we can assume that language contact would again have been hampered. Harris (1986), however, suggests that pidgin varieties based on NSW/QLD Pidgin not only developed but stabilised during this time frame into NT Pidgin. Harris (1986:183) provides a comprehensive account of the development of pidgins in the NT in this period and also says: ‘It must not ... be inferred ... that Darwin was the sole or major source of Northern Territory Aboriginal Pidgin English. Various pidgins arose outside of Darwin independently, particularly in association with the cattle industry’. Exhaustive examples are provided of the Chinese and Malay influence, although the pidgin development in the Roper River region is based on only a few examples. This section attempts to expand on our understanding of the language contact in the Roper River region, specifically in the cattle stations, based largely on the sociohistorical data so far presented. Available examples of pidgin use from this region are provided accordingly.

It has been noted that not all Aboriginal people had contact with or learned any English in this period. White, a Reverend carrying out reconnaissance in preparation for the opening of a mission, says (1918:145) in 1907 for example: ‘We saw several natives...They were large, well-made men in splendid condition, but understood no word of English except the magic word “tabak [tabacco]’.

White (1918:148) also says:

Mr Ebbs, Mr McCauley and I went ashore and found Old Bob the Pilot and a small camp of natives, to whom I presented a bag of flour and some tobacco, pointing out our Mission flag and telling them that it

would return next year. I tried to explain the nature of the proposed Mission, but it was hard to get them to understand. ... On the way Old Bob, who is intelligent and speaks fairly good English tried hard to comprehend my business.

It is therefore suggested here that this phase of language contact is one that involved individuals, usually men who went forward to communicate with the colonisers. They would therefore act as interpreters and translators to both parties and would often secure a safe living arrangement through such means, especially as station managers began to realise the value of an Aboriginal labour force.

Examples of such contact include Pilot Bob, as mentioned by White (1918:148) above, who first gained his experience with non-Aboriginal people when piloting ships down the Roper River. In §2.3.1 extracts from Lowrie's (1872-1873) journal also suggests that there were only a handful of men, one may have been Pilot Bob himself, who frequented his paddle steamer. Another example within the pastoral industry is the case of 'Dick' working for John Costello at the Valley of Springs Station around 1885. Costello (1930:135) describes him as, '... quickly getting sufficient knowledge of English to make himself understood. He soon learned to ride a quiet horse too and became serviceable in stock mustering'. It has been a common practice throughout the pastoral industry in Northern Australia for such men, and therefore their families, to adopt the surname of the station manager. This suggests that in a sense pastoralists 'adopted' those men who came forward to learn the industry. No doubt the reverse may also have applied, in that the Aboriginal man 'adopted' the manager into his country and culture. Another example is found in Gunn (1908), an autobiographical account of a station manager's wife, who had close working relationships with the women working as domestics at Elsey Station, who also taught her how to communicate with other Aboriginal women. There were not very many non-Aboriginal women in the NT at this time and so this type of relationship was far less common between women than it was between men.

Actual examples of speech during this period are scarce. Harris (1986) provides examples from the fictional work of Gunn (1908) and transcripts from the Borroloola Court House in 1902. Additional examples found in the literature are provided in Table 8,

with examples 1-7 spoken by Aboriginal people and examples 8-10 spoken by non-Aboriginal settlers. While an analysis of examples of this pidginised variety is outside the scope of the present study, it can be expected that these examples are of NT Pidgin, which was based on NSW/QLD Pidgin.

Table 8: Examples of pidgin use in the Roper River region (1883–1907)

	Year	Example	Source
1	23/8/1883	<i>Yarraman bite Alright picaninnie way</i>	D. Lindsay (1884). Journal entries
2	24/8/1883	<i>Come along water. Alright come on. Yes him alright. No wild fellow black fellow that one, him bullocky alright. My word, wild? blackfellow that one. You come away, him kill'em you. Parr, him bin spear him. Extracts from extended conversation.</i>	D. Lindsay (1884). Journal entries
3	1888	<i>Me Lowrie me savee Roper</i>	Captain Carrington (1888)
4	15/10/1889	<i>No more kangaroo lang a bush</i>	W.G. Stretton (1889) as Chief Protector of Aborigines. (NTAS, NTRS F790 1466/1889).
5	1902	Court hearing in Borroloola with Aboriginal people using a pidgin.	see Harris (1986:345-347).
6	1906	<i>Me sabee you, you Mr Giles long time boss longa Springvale? ...Him close up been shootem me, me bin thinkit might be him come back more shootem.</i>	A. Giles (1906 cited in Harris 1986:331)
7	1907	<i>kill him along head kill him along bingey</i>	Cecil L. Strangman (SRSA 175/1908)
8	24/8/1883	<i>Which way camp? Rodunga what name that one? Rodunga what name one black fellow? Come here come here.</i>	D Lindsay (1884). Journal entries
9	1902	Court hearing in Borroloola with non- Aboriginal, including the magistrate using a pidgin.	see Harris (1986:345-347)
10	1907	<i>I think that fellow-man make big corroboree tonight</i>	Rev. G. White (1918:153)

It is suggested then that the involvement of the pastoral industry in this 'Invasion' phase led to the first introduction of the NSW/QLD Pidgin, which it must be assumed the pastoralists spoke. Aboriginal men from Queensland working for the pastoralists, also travelled into the region, who are assumed to have spoken the pidgin. Individual Aboriginal Roper River people, usually men, then learnt either English or the NSW/QLD

Pidgin in order to communicate with the invaders. While the wider Aboriginal society continued to use their ancestral languages and relied on these ‘interpreters and translators’ for communication with non-Aboriginal people, the individual pidgin varieties could still develop and stabilise to some degree by the end of this phase. As Harris (1986) has pointed out, other pidginised varieties were also developing during the same time in other regions of the NT, such as in Darwin. Harris (1986:214) adds: ‘... due partly to a general mobility of the population, these Pidgin Englishes had converged by the end of the last century into one widely-understood pidgin, best referred to as Northern Territory Pidgin English.’ I would suggest, however, that the resistance and fearfulness of Aboriginal people during this period, as described in §2.4.1, would have hampered both the mobility of Aboriginal people and the wider stabilisation of the pidgin features outside of the Roper River region. Within the region, however, it is likely that some level of stabilisation occurred to form a variety of NT Pidgin. When the Aboriginal society on the whole began learning and using the stabilised pidgin it could expand, involving an increase in variation, in part due to increased substrate influence. It is expected that this occurred in the next phase, the ‘Station’ phase.

2.5 Contact period 3 (1900s-1930s): ‘Station’ phase

The level of violence in the Roper River region had already climaxed with the hunting parties of the Eastern and African Cold Storage Company before it went into liquidation in 1908, the same year that the Church Missionary Society (CMS) opened the Roper River Mission. 1908 is therefore a year that marks a dramatic change in the nature of contact in the region, including language contact. This is what has become known as the ‘quietening’ time (Read and Read 1991; Layton and Bauman 1994; Merlan 1978). The main vector for change during this period, apart from the role of dormitories in the Roper River mission, was the large-scale employment of the Indigenous work force within the pastoral industry. This was assisted in legislative changes introduced by the Commonwealth Government, which took over administration of the NT in 1911. The nature of contact in this period is therefore defined by three things: the widespread

recruitment of an Indigenous labour force; the 1918 Ordinance for Aboriginal Employment introduced by the Commonwealth Government; and the role of the Roper River Mission. These aspects of contact also affected the processes of language contact at this time, which is marked as a period when children throughout the Roper River region maintained bilingualism, although with varying proficiency, in both the NT Pidgin and their ancestral language. This period is identified as the time when the widespread use of the contact language resulted in the transfer of substrate features to the expanding NT Pidgin. Ultimately, stabilisation of this pidgin would have begun towards the end of this timeframe, and continued in the contact period to follow.

2.5.1 Nature of contact

The overall nature of contact during this time was characterised by the ‘master/servant’, or perhaps more appropriately in this case the ‘boss/stockworker’ relationship between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people respectively. The 1918 Ordinance for Aboriginal Employment formalised and attempted to regulate the practice of using Aboriginal labour in return for food, clothing, shelter and tobacco (see e.g. Berndt and Berndt 1979). The industry involved most Aboriginal adults, including both men and women, who worked as overseers, stockmen, stockwomen, domestics, cooks etc. (see e.g. Sandy 2001; Watson 2001; C. Wilfred 2001; H. Wilfred 2001). The relationship between the manager, or ‘boss’, and their Indigenous labour force, or ‘stockworkers’, varied from station to station; some ‘bosses’ may have continued the violent traditions of previous phases, some may have been paternal, others married into Aboriginal society (see e.g. Gibbs 1995) and others still may simply have acted as employers. The following discussion will show that the Roper River Mission is also best understood as an alternative station in which the ‘boss/stockworker’ relationships continued to exist, albeit in an unrecognised or paternal manner.

The Church Missionary Society (CMS) established the first mission in the NT on the banks of the Roper River (see map 3) in 1908 with a party of six (Harris 1986:234).

Harris (1986:235) notes the calming effect of having a permanent and sympathetic group of Christian settlers in the region and that local Aboriginal people came to quickly realise the protection afforded them there. This is the same process that began in the 'Invasion' phase, whereby individual men would go forward and forge relationships with station managers in order to bring their families into the safety of the station camp set aside for Aboriginal people. Oral history accounts describe the vital role played by Gajiyuma or 'Old Bob', by accepting the first missionaries and encouraging other Aboriginal people to do so (Harris 1986:234; [D01:1, 26/3/01]). The account provided by consultant DG, suggests that he, 'Old Bob', acted as a translator and interpreter between the missionaries and Indigenous population in the early phase of settlement, by entreating Aboriginal people to entrust their children to the mission compound.

While this same process of building trust between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people continued on other stations in the region to some degree, the new station camps quickly developed and evolved in others. In an attempt to maintain ceremonial responsibilities to sacred sites and country, traditional owners generally initiated contact on the appropriate station and if possible moved onto the station. This led to each station being most closely connected to a language group or clan group, which continued throughout the 'Station' period. Table 7 in §2.4 showed the main stations in the Roper River region in relation to their language group association, which also therefore formed a prominent part of the workforce living there, which continues to this day. Once Aboriginal camps were established on the appropriate station, therefore, the stockmen's families had a secure place to live and provided the labour force for the station. Most importantly, the monsoonal wet season also afforded a lay-off period every year that would then allow the Aboriginal groups to meet ceremonial responsibilities to their country (Merlan 1978).

The Roper River Mission was also initially settled by groups who had responsibilities to country in its vicinity, such as: Marra, Nunggubuyu, Ngandi, Alawa, Ngalakgan and Warndarrang (Harris 1986). Similarly the police tracker families that settled at Roper Bar Police Station did so because they were generally Ngalakgan (Morphy and Morphy 1981). It should be noted that the role of the police changed considerably during this

period because they were appointed 'Protectors of Aborigines' and distributed rations and blankets to the aged and infirm. The affiliated Aboriginal groups in every camp comprised the workforce that the missionaries or police could utilise on their respective stations, which also allowed the workforce to remain on their country and maintain ceremonial responsibilities to it.

The use of an Indigenous labour force became institutionalised during this period, possibly as it became apparent that it was vital for the pastoral industry to survive (Bern, Larbalestier and McLaughlin 1980:15). The 1933 Regulations under the Aboriginal Ordinance in 1918 required that pastoralists purchase a licence for five shillings to use Indigenous labour in 'country districts'. The following conditions applied: the pastoralist was required to maintain the employee and their family, pay minimal wages and a contribution to the Aboriginal Medical Benefit Fund both held in trust for the employee and provide for the employee in food, clothing and tobacco (NTAS NTRS 868, 29/6/1933.) As Berndt and Berndt (1979) have described, wages, therefore, were generally not awarded to the Indigenous work force in the pastoral industry although pastoralists were expected to provide for their employees, and their families, adequately in terms of food, clothing and shelter.

The structure of station camps is also most telling. The manager and his family, if any, would live in the station compound with quarters set aside for a few non-Aboriginal staff, if indeed there were any (see e.g. photo 1 on p.63). Aboriginal people may have been adopted into this family and lived in this same compound, such is the case described by Sandy (2001) at Hodgson Downs Station during his childhood (1920s–1930s). Outside was the Indigenous camp, where stockworkers and their families lived. While the pastoralists were required to maintain decent living areas, the definition of such was often left to their discretion. Many managers were single and ultimately lived and worked very closely with their Indigenous work force and their families, such as Jimmy Gibbs at St. Vidgeon station (see e.g. Gibbs 1995; Asche et. al 1998).

Over time, a similar camp structure developed at the Roper River Mission, as Spencer (1912:45) wrote:

The Roper Mission Station comprises a few buildings including a mission house reserved for the white missionaries; close to this ... are the sleeping quarters of 31 black and half-caste children. Only a short distance from the station is a native settlement consisting of small bark huts and still further away a 'Myall Camp' where the natives coming from the surrounding parts of the country may stay a few days, spending the nights in their own fashion around the camp fires.

Masson (CRS A3 NT1914/7500a) also wrote in 1913:

Besides the Mission children there are wild blacks who often camp nearby. Any Aboriginal can get food, tobacco and clothing, provided he or she works for it, and much of the labour on the station is done by these wild blacks, such as digging the irrigation channels and herding the goats. The wild blacks come and go, and the Mission does not attempt to instruct or educate them. They describe themselves to outsiders as Mission Blacks but are not regarded by the Missionaries as such.

The photos numbered 2-7 (p.63) illustrate and support the accuracy of these descriptions.

The most prominent difference between the Roper River Mission and other stations was the existence of the dormitory for children. But while it appears that the Mission house and the dormitories were central in the structure of the mission, they were not isolated from the other camps that involved Aboriginal adults. The families most closely associated with the mission lived in a nearby camp with some level of autonomy. They provided most of the labour to the mission. As time went on a church and other amenities were built with their assistance, for example. Further outside again was another camp where any number of people from visiting groups would stay, possibly working at the mission in return for goods, possibly to visit those at the mission. This situation is supported by oral accounts from DG born in 1923 [D01:1-4], who describes the structure of the mission compound in some detail [D01:1, 26/3/01], including visits from family from further afield [D01:1, 26/3/01]. She also describes the use of unpaid labour within the mission, particularly in relation to the cattle work and gardening [D01:2, 26/3/01]. The stock work associated with the cattle yards as described by DG

Photo 1: Roper River Mission looking west,
Church, Mission dwellings and store



[NTAS NTRS 337 Perriman Album 1:6]

Photo 2: Watering the vegetable garden, Roper River



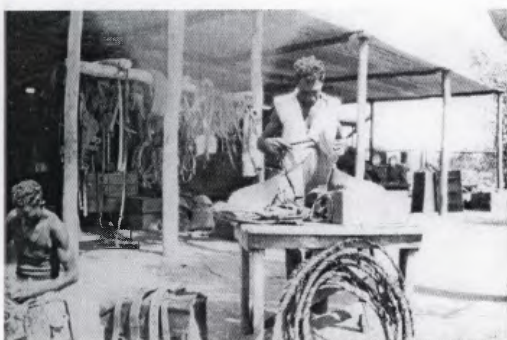
[NTAS NTRS 337 Perriman Album 6:7]

Photo 3: Sawing up firewood for the kitchen, Roper River



[NTAS NTRS 337 Perriman Album 6:8]

Photo 4: Harness work and saddle shed



[NTAS NTRS 337 Perriman Album 6:14]

Photo 5: The cattle yard, Roper River



[NTAS NTRS 337 Perriman Album 6:15]

Photo 6: The slaughter yard, Roper River



[NTAS NTRS 337 Perriman Album 6:16]

Photo 7: The native camp near the mission, Roper River



[NTAS NTRS 337 Perriman Album 6:19]

Photo 8: The dormitory, Roper River



[NTAS NTRS 337 Perriman Album 6:21]

[D01:2, 26/3/01] is supported by photographic evidence (see photos 4–5 p.63). The cattle constituted a vital food source, which implies that while the scale of operation may have been smaller than other stations, the claim that the mission was nonetheless another station is well founded.

The picture that emerges, therefore, is that most, if not all, Aboriginal people in the Roper River region became associated with one station camp or another during this timeframe. Where they settled initially depended on what country their ceremonial responsibilities lay in. While the cattle stations were numerous and therefore provided for most Aboriginal groups, there was also the Roper River Mission and the Roper Bar Police Station. In each case the camp consisted of families from which most adults would work, either on the station, the mission or for the police, in return for provisions and shelter. The most important food source for these camps was cattle, which were generally managed by Aboriginal stockworkers. The Roper River Mission differed from other stations in that a dormitory system existed for children. While this no doubt created a more intense relationship between the missionaries and the children, it was not in isolation from Aboriginal adults, particularly the children's parents, who were usually in camps in the vicinity of the mission. The factor that allowed all these station camps to develop was the 'boss/stockworker' relationship that controlled the use of the Indigenous labour force.

2.5.2 Demographic information

Demographic information for the Roper River Mission becomes more available closer to the present. The numbers of Aboriginal people in the mission in the early years appears to be variable, as Harris (1986:237) says:

There were over 200 Aboriginal people at the mission within a few months, although by the middle of 1909 these numbers were fluctuating, but never falling below about 70 (Cole 1968:6). There were two main reasons for this. One was simply that within two months of the establishment of the mission came the onset of the wet season, a time when movement was restricted and when the people were glad

enough to stay near this new food supply. ... Thus by about May 1909, there would have been considerable movement in and out of the mission.

This is an important point. While 200 people may have initially visited the mission they did not stay. In fact as Table 9 (p. 66) shows, it wasn't until the 1930s that the adults were considered a part of the mission. In terms of children of mixed descent, Perriman (NTAS NTRS 337/p.2) writes:

In 1917 or 18 the Northern Territory Administration insisted that all half caste children and minors should not live in native camps - but be drafted into missions or settlements for education and training- from then on quite a number were brought to Roper. Mr Warren decided to transfer them to Groote Is. in order to segregate them from the old associates. In 1924 – about 45 half castes were brought over and the mission commenced at Groote Eylandt.

It is generally understood, therefore, that the missionaries focussed their attention on a core of approximately 30–50 children throughout this period, which is supported by figures in Table 9. While they did not actively encourage adults settling there, Aboriginal family groups set up camp and gradually became permanent residents.

The numbers of children in residence in the mission also fluctuate, as pointed out by Joynt (1918:9):

We have at present about 70 girls and boys on the station. This does not mean that there are always 70 children in residence. There are times when many are away for their holidays, and there are also times, alas, when some run away.

Masson (CRS A3 NT1914/7500a) also says: 'in the past the Mission children have been accustomed to run away to the bush whenever they liked'. And this appears to have continued until the 1930s when Port (CRS F1 1938/534a) writes: '... a fluctuation occurs in the number of mission inmates as parents resident in the camp take their children from the mission, when they go walkabout, handing them over to our care on their return.' This is supported by oral autobiographical accounts, which suggest that the children ran away to family (C. Wilfred 2001), sometimes because of receiving punishment at the mission (Roberts 2001).

Table 9: Population figures for Roper River Mission (1908–1935)¹³

	Children	Children of mixed decent	Adults in mission	Adults in vicinity in contact with mission
1911	33			300
1912	31			
1913	53	10		
1918	70	(20)		300-400
1934	40		30-40	
1935				200

The number of non-Aboriginal mission staff at the Roper River Mission usually remained around 5 during this period, although numbers fluctuated and there was an annual turnover of staff (e.g. Harris 1986; CRS A3 NT1914/7500b). When the Groote Eylandt mission was opened numbers may have been further reduced as staff were required there (see e.g. NTAS NTRS 337/p.2). Unfortunately, no available demographic information was found with regard to the other stations during this period. It can be estimated, however, that each station would have employed 1–3 non-Aboriginal managers and stockmen. While some station managers were accompanied by their families, their presence was short-lived and uncommon. On the other hand Aboriginal families are traditionally large, and incorporate 3–4 generations. A conservative estimate of a minimum of twenty Aboriginal people in each station camp is therefore reasonable.

2.5.3 Expansion of NT Pidgin

There are three main factors of the contact situation that resulted in the expansion of the NT Pidgin during this period. The first is the level of communication required in the ‘boss/stockworker’ relationships. During the ‘Station’ phase an increasing number of the Indigenous population had contact with the managers and missionaries, although access to English remained limited, due to the low numbers of English speakers in comparison to the Aboriginal population. The communication that took place between the two groups would have taken place in English, or more likely in a variety of NT Pidgin.

¹³ Sources for figures by year follows; 1911: CRS A3 NT1114/7500; 1912: Spencer 1912:43; 1913: CRS A3 NT1914/7500a; 1918: Joynt 1918: 9; 1926: 1934: CRS F1 1938/534a; 1935: CRS F1 1938/534b.

Those who had learnt the model of English presented to them in the ‘Invasion’ phase were therefore no longer required to act as interpreters or translators. The second factor impacting on language contact was the developing permanency of the camps, which resulted in several Indigenous language groups existing together on a daily basis for the first time. Harris (1986) also clearly describes the interruption of transmission of multilingual skills, which took place during the ‘invasion’ phase of settlement. These fundamental changes in the structure of Aboriginal society would have encouraged an increasing number of the Indigenous population to communicate with each other via a variety of NT Pidgin. The third factor is that the children born during this period were largely bilingual in their childhood, learning both a variety of NT Pidgin and their ancestral language. The size of the Roper River region meant that stations over a large area were all involved in the development of the NT Pidgin simultaneously.

As the estimates of demographic information in §2.5.2 showed, the Aboriginal population in station camps far outnumbered the non-Aboriginal staff. This suggests that there would have been minimal access to learning English, although it was still present in the contact situation. Varieties of the developing NT Pidgin were, however, accessible. As examples below show, the missionaries at least became familiar with the NT Pidgin during this period and it is reasonable to assume the same in other stations. In fact it is most likely both parties involved in the ‘boss/stockworker’ relationship relied on some variety, or at least some features, of the NT Pidgin to communicate.

Harris (1986: 206) suggests the other effect of the ‘Station’ phase on language contact was the gathering of disparate language groups together in stations.

From the sociolinguistic point of view, the ‘settling down’ of Aboriginal people on the cattle stations institutionalised contact between linguistically different people who had thus far been scattered and discontinuous and made such contact a daily fact of life. This language contact and need to communicate made the cattle stations a significant milieu of pidgin development.

The same can be said of the Roper River Mission. Harris (1986:301) differentiates between the Roper River Mission, credited with the abrupt creation of the creole, and the cattle stations, credited with the development of NT Pidgin. I posit that there was no such differentiation in the region, as described in §2.5.1. As such, NT Pidgin expanded in all stations, including the Roper River Mission, during this time.

The profiles of consultants who contributed to this thesis were provided in Table 1 (chapter 1:12). This group of people acting as a sample of the population born from the 1920s–1940s, show the complexity of language learning during this period. The first four were born into the ‘Station’ phase and they are described here. Those who spent time in the Roper River Mission no doubt made greater use of the developing pidgin with their peers. Masson (CRS A3 NT1914/7500a) provides support for this view with the following description of language use at the mission: “‘Pidgin’ English is not supposed to be spoken but it is evidently very hard to adhere to this rule. The children amongst themselves speak in “Pidgin” English mixed with native words.’ When these children returned to their families, as they frequently did, they were spoken to and acquired something of their Indigenous languages [D01:1, 26/03/01]. Similarly those in cattle stations acquired their Indigenous language and a pidgin variety simultaneously during their childhood. In adulthood the use of some languages waned and others gained importance and this has often made the status of these languages confusing. For example, that an elderly person can no longer speak their Indigenous language does not necessarily imply that they never acquired any aspect of it in childhood. Consultant SR, for example, learnt Alawa in childhood but because of leaving the region to live on stations in his spouse’s country for some 35 years, he lost full fluency in that language.

There are only a few examples of speech in the region during this time period. The examples provided in Table 10 show a greater fluency with the pidgin by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, particularly in comparison to the examples of the contact language in Contact Period 2 (see §2.4). The extended narratives are especially clear evidence of this as they require some level of fluency on the part of both the speaker and the transcriber.

Table 10: Examples of pidgin use in the Roper River region (1908–1918)

Year	Example	Source
1908	Toby's narrative. See Appendix 1, item 1	NTAS NTRS F790 17865/1908 Toby's narrative 27/12/08
1908	"They want to <i>sit down quiet fellow all a time</i> ".	NTAS NTRS F790 17865/1908 Letter from G. Huthnance. 27/12/08
1908	"...he told us he would like " <i>catchem fish, cobra, no good</i> "....(p.2) "He pulled out these spears and reached the other side, where he " <i>not run plenty my gut come out too much</i> "... (p.2) "He told us, " <i>lettem me die - me close up finish</i> ".	NTAS NTRS F790 17865/1908 Letter from J. F. G. Huthnance. 29/12/08
1908	<i>Good fellow Jesus, picaninnie belong God, Spirit on top.</i> <i>Big fellow sick this time.</i>	CRS A3 NT 1914/7500b
1908	See Harris (1986:342-344) for examples.	Gunn (1908)
1915	<i>What name? What name you call him?</i> <i>No bloody fear, suck easy!</i> (p.72) <i>You take him along a you boss, him present from me. I all day savee that you look after him alright</i> ' (p. 78)	Lewis (ed. 1998) See also dialogue in Appendix 1, item 2
1918	Percy's story. See Appendix 1, item 3	Joynt (1918:17)

Contact Period 3, the 'Station' phase, is therefore important in terms of the development of the NT Pidgin and ultimately the creation of the creole. It is a significant finding that consultants born into this era were bilingual, to varying degrees, during their childhood in both varieties of NT Pidgin and their ancestral languages. As such, while there were interruptions to linguistic skills such as multilingualism (see §2.4.1), the transmission of traditional languages continued. Furthermore, there was a dramatic increase in the use of the NT Pidgin in the Roper River region, including its use as a lingua franca among disparate Aboriginal language groups. It is suggested, therefore, that the expansion of roles for the NT Pidgin encouraged the expansion of the pidgin linguistically. As such, the 'Station' phase is the period when substrate transfer is most likely to have occurred, and by the end of this phase, stabilisation of the NT Pidgin had begun. This view differs from that previously presented by Harris (1986) in which it is assumed that children in the Roper River Mission, as the sole creators of Kriol, did not have exposure to their parent's ancestral languages.

Harris (1986) was clearly influenced by Bickerton's (1981; 1984) Universalist view that prevailed at the time, which suggested that 'true' creoles, such as Hawai'i Creole English, were created in a single generation with little to no other linguistic input other than innate linguistic abilities (see chapter 1). Yet Roberts (2000) has provided counter evidence that the development of Hawai'i Creole English did involve input from both a previous pidgin variety and ancestral languages through a stage of bilingualism in the two during the contact situation (see §1.3.1). Similar sociolinguistic circumstances have been shown here in relation to Kriol, whereby speakers of NT Pidgin, which preceded Kriol, also display bilingual capabilities.

2.6 Contact period 4 (1940s-1960s): 'Community' phase

Contact period 4 is characterised by shifts in identity and language use, as well as new migration patterns in the region. The station camps became communities as a generation had been born into them, and as a result Aboriginal people developed new identities associated with them. The NT Pidgin, therefore, continued to stabilise in this phase as it continued to be used for communication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff, as well as a lingua franca among the Aboriginal population. Language shift also began in this period, because the children born into this phase did not acquire their ancestral languages. The NT Pidgin, therefore, ultimately became the primary language for all communities in the Roper River region by the end of this phase, which included becoming the L1 for children born during this time. Significant events of this phase that increased migration patterns are: the creation of World War Two (WWII) army camps and the eventual collapse of the pastoral industry. Both these factors led to an increase in migration patterns, which, along with the growing sense of identity within the stations, contributed to the loss of ancestral languages, the stabilisation of the NT Pidgin and the emergence of the creole in this 'Community' phase of contact.

2.6.1 Nature of contact

Every year the Roper River swells during the wet season. In 1940 a larger than normal wet season caused a flood that devastated the Roper River Mission. The Church Missionary Society authorities approved a move up river to rebuild on higher ground, to a place called Ngukurr (CRS F1 1948/265a; NTAS NTRS 219 Tape 513). This was generally a difficult time for the mission, as Patrol Officer Sweeney (CRS F315 49/393A) notes:

The Mission policy in the past has been largely negative, with staff shortages, staff changes and untrained staff. Then came the major upset to their work by the flood in 1940, followed by food shortages due to lack of agricultural development, stock out of hand and unreliable boat service with eastern ports.

Temporary dormitories were erected in 1940 (CRS F1 Item 1948/265a). Patrol Officer Sweeney notes that they were still in use for the girls in 1949 although in bad repair and that the boys lived with their parents in the 'native camp' (CRS F315 49/393A). It appears then that the new mission struggled to implement the dormitory system after the move to Ngukurr and that it never really recovered, and was soon abandoned altogether. It is noteworthy, therefore, that the dormitory system only really existed for 30 odd years, and struggled to retain children in the mission permanently during that time (see §2.5.2).

WWII also had a significant impact on the Northern Territory from 1942-1945. Patrol Officer Harney (CRS F1 1944/275) says in his 1942 yearly report that:

The Native Affairs Branch, prior to the 19th February, 1942, had fixed a policy of removing all native women from towns and by the general evacuation of Darwin, only a few native women remained in the town. ... In April, natives (black people) were brought from the forward areas [to Mataranka station] and so commenced the first of our control and labor depots.

Indeed, many Aboriginal people were moved to some form of army camp in these years. In previous research I also list Manbullo, Larrimah and Adelaide River as other army camps (Munro 2000:262). Morris (1992:108) says that by 1945 'an average of 500 male and 50 female aboriginals, had been employed by the Army since March 1942....'. Patrol Officer Harney (CRS F1 1944/275) says that at the Mataranka Depot there were

Marra, Alawa and Ngalakgan people among those of 22 language groups. I also found that there was a large percentage of Roper River people at the Larrimah Camp (Munro 2000:262). This was the first time Aboriginal people were paid weekly wages, received a high standard of rations and were encouraged to continue to actively engage in traditional cultural practice (Read and Read 1991:122). This would have lasting affects throughout the region.

It should be obvious from the discussion so far that it is difficult to define whether people spoke NT Pidgin or Kriol as either an L1 or L2, at any given point. This is the difficulty inherent in the discussion of nativisation of a pidgin, particularly in circumstances such as this when a creole emerged gradually from a stable pidgin variety (see chapter 1). In relation to the army camps, I have previously claimed that such concentrations of language groups in these camps helped the spread of Kriol (Munro 1995; 2000). This was based on the claim by Harris (1986) that a creole abruptly emerged in the Roper River Mission from 1908. If, however, the creole emerged gradually in the Roper River region from the 1940s to the 1960s then it is most likely that the expanded NT Pidgin as spoken in the Roper River region, or at least its features, were spread via the army camps. As previously noted by Harris (1986), however, varieties of the NT Pidgin had developed through most of the Top End of the Northern Territory and Western Australia, particularly following the pastoral industry. The widespread migration into army camps, therefore, would appear to suggest that several varieties of NT Pidgin, most likely at varying stages of development, converged in these camps.

Once Aboriginal people had been successfully paid for work in army camps a precedent was set that would affect all stations in the Roper River region. In relation to the Roper River Mission, for example, Patrol Officer Sweeney (CSR F1 1949/461) recommended the following in 1949: 'It is essential that a simple wage system be introduced and a trade store for the sale or barter of useful articles for the natives....' 'In 1951 CMS [Church Missionary Society] began paying pocket money to Aboriginal workers, ... [who were] being paid full wages by the end of the 1950s' (Sandefur 1986:108). Sandefur (1986:108) also says: 'By the mid-1950s a shop had been opened, electricity and water

were reticulated to the homes of Aborigines and motion pictures were being regularly shown ... [and] ... by the late 1950s most had become used to settlement life and had come to see many features of it as desirable, even necessary'. After a failed attempt at autonomy under the direction of a station council, the Church Missionary Society handed over control of the mission to the Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Administration in October 1968, then renamed Ngukurr community (Sandefur 1986:110-111).

Toward the end of this period the pastoral industry fell into decline. The introduction of the award wage for Aboriginal stock workers in 1968 combined with a slump in the pastoral industry (Layton and Bauman 1994:20) resulted in the sacking of Aboriginal stock workers and the ultimate downgrading of the entire industry in the Roper River region. Bern (1971:1) says this resulted in the '...migration of individuals and groups from surrounding cattle stations...' to Ngukurr in the late 1960s. Other migration patterns also emerged. In 1952, for example, a number of Nunggubuyu and Marra families left the mission to establish the Rose River Mission at Numbulwar. And, in the 1950s people from Arnhem Land, generally referred to by their language name, the Ritharrngu, '...were drawn to Ngukurr through a desire for European goods, kinship ties with residents and/or flight from conflict in their own communities' (Bern 1971:1). Furthermore, while some cattle stations were completely abandoned, others lost their Aboriginal community, such as at Nutwood Downs Station, and in each case the inhabitants had to migrate elsewhere. Other stations developed into Aboriginal communities. Comparing maps 3 and 4, for example shows that Hodgson Downs Station became Minyerri community, which is predominantly Alawa, likewise for the following: Elsey Station became Jilkminggan for the Mangarrayi and Urapunga Station became Urapunga for the Ngalakgan.

While these migrations altered the sense of identity for some, they also cemented them for others. Bern (1971:5), for example, says of the mission: 'The early settlers are numerically predominant...[and] their social identity is closely linked with the concept of a Ngukurr community. Persons from the other two settlement categories [Ritharrngu and

cattle stations] are more likely to identify with either their place of ethnic origin or their former residence'. The process of identification also occurred in other station camps. As mentioned in §2.5.1, the station camps afforded not only protection, and later provisions, but also a means to maintain responsibilities to country. As relationships with stations strengthened, a sense of loyalty developed, which resulted in people identifying with the station and the station camp. Due to the continuation of cultural practices allowed in station camps, traditional identities were also, however, maintained. As noted in §2.5.1 while station camps were predominantly settled by the language group most closely associated with country on that station, settlement was not restricted to that language group, resulting in any number of language groups present.

2.6.2 Demographic information

In terms of the Roper River Mission, the population figures in Table 11 show that the adult Aboriginal population was generally increasing, which highlights the trends of migration into the mission as discussed in the previous section. Correspondingly, the increase in the number of children no doubt reflects that this migration involved families with children. The number of mission staff most likely remained around five.

Table 11: Aboriginal population of Roper River Mission (1941-1958)¹⁴

	Adults	Children
1940	45	55
1941		46
1942	52	55
1949	98	102
1951	80	95
1957	103	155
1958	89	141

In relation to the army camps, Table 12 indicates that large numbers of Aboriginal people were involved in them, with the majority employed by the army. It is expected that there were also large numbers of non-Aboriginal army personnel, although their presence in

the Northern Territory would have only been significant for the few years of the war, 1942–1944.

Table 12: Aboriginal population by army camps¹⁵

Depot	Employed	TOTAL
Mataranka Depot	170	500
Koolpinya Native Control Camp	75	105
81 Mile Camp	60	140
Katherine Labor Depot	50	130

Finally, in relation to pastoral stations, Table 13 shows that their population had stabilised during this period. The 1957 figures come from the first comprehensive survey into the Aboriginal population. While children are also listed, it is likely that many weren't present for the count, therefore, it is expected that actual figures would be higher than those provided. The number of non-Aboriginal staff is assumed to have remained from 1–5.

Table 13: Aboriginal population in stations (1948–1957)¹⁶

Place	1948	1955	1956	1957
Roper River region		1000		
Urapunga Station			40	21
Roper Bar Police Station			20-50	58
Hodgson Downs Station				46
Maroak Station				20
Roper Valley Station				68
Elsey Station	80-100			66
Nutwood Downs Station				55

2.6.3 Further stabilisation of NT Pidgin and the emergence of the creole

The demographic figures presented above and the discussion in §2.6.1 suggest that the circumstances were conducive in this period for full stabilisation of the pidgin and creole

¹⁴ Population figures per year taken from the following sources; 1940: CRS F1 1948/265a; 1941: CRS F1 1948/265b; 1942: CRS F1 1948/265b; 1949: CRS F315 49/393A; 1951: CRS F1 1949/461;

¹⁵ Taken from CRS F1 1944/275.

¹⁶ Population figures taken from the following sources; 1955: NTAS NTRS F76 1940-1955; Urapunga 1956: CRS E51/0 1960/715; Roper Bar 1956: CRS E51 1960/713; Elsey 1948: Merlan 1986:6; 1957: Northern Territory Administration 1957.

emergence. First of all, the exposure to English remained limited. The increase in army personnel and the Patrol Officers that visited stations may have slightly increased the exposure of Aboriginal people to English, but as noted in §2.5 stabilisation of the NT Pidgin had already begun, which continued in this early part of this phase. Secondly, by the end of this phase the status of the NT Pidgin rose to become the primary language for Aboriginal people throughout the Roper River region. The NT Pidgin was, therefore, in daily use both by adults and children. It was noted, for example, in §2.5.1 that the NT Pidgin had currency within the pastoral industry both for communication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff, but also as a lingua franca among Aboriginal groups. Such a situation continued until the Indigenous contribution to the pastoral industry ended. The renewed patterns of migration, described in §2.6.1, would once again require a common lingua franca in communities where new language groups settled. It is suggested that the NT Pidgin served this role, and in effect became a creole.

Concurrently to the NT Pidgin becoming the primary language for children, the loss of ancestral languages also began throughout the Roper River region. Most people born into the ‘community’ phase of contact generally only have partial or passive knowledge of their ancestral language. The final two consultants in Table 1 (chapter 1:12), for example, were both born in the 1940s and acquired Kriol as their L1 but only one of them also gained fluency in their ancestral language. This process may first have occurred at the Roper River Mission. As Sweeney (CRS F315 49/393A) notes in relation to Mr Palmer the then Roper River Mission school teacher in 1949: ‘He faces the unusual problem of a native people still largely in their tribal areas, who have forgotten their own native language. Many can “hear” but cannot speak their own language - the language they use is a sort of pidgin English.’ The fact that the use of traditional languages and cultural practices were actively discouraged by the missionaries no doubt contributed (e.g. CRS A3 NT1914/7500a). However, ceremonial practice did continue. Bern (1971:6-7), for example, notes that ceremonies were still performed in the vicinity of the Roper River Mission, which is still the case today. Similarly, other station camps continued to perform ceremonies throughout phase 4 and into the present.

Regardless, the current status of Roper River Indigenous languages is that they are weak or threatened (see chapter 1), suggesting that language shift, and therefore language loss, has been in process for some time. It is suggested that the combined changes to Aboriginal society in the Roper River region overwhelmed traditional language use, particularly with the speed of change. It was noted that linguistic skills, such as multilingualism, were interrupted in their transmission to this generation during the ‘Invasion’ phase of contact in the 1880s to early 1900s, as such this may have allowed for the initial stabilisation of the NT Pidgin. During the ‘Station’ phase of contact the NT Pidgin gained prominence as the language of preference in the pastoral industry, and fittingly underwent expansion and then stabilising from approximately 1920–1940. The generation of this era were still able to acquire something of their ancestral language, although their success was highly variable. The ‘Community’ phase, therefore, is one in which the culmination in loss of linguistic skills within Aboriginal society is such that it was not possible for children to acquire their ancestral language, and language loss was established. The process is compounded by the fact that the new communities that developed in this phase, and the identities associated with them, found themselves catapulted into the mid–late 1900s. The emerging creole may have offered more scope for the expression of the new technologies and concepts, therefore being preferred over the ancestral languages.

2.7 Discussion

As noted in §2.1, the data and findings of this chapter have direct influence on the application of the Transfer Constraints approach to substrate transfer in Kriol. Firstly, the discussion in §2.4 and §2.5, combined with that from §1.1.2, shows which substrate languages had the greatest opportunity to influence the developing pidgin, and therefore the creole. There were approximately seven language groups represented in the Roper River Mission station camp: Alawa, Marra, Warndarrang, Ngandi, Nunggubuyu, Yugul and Ngalakgan. As shown in Table 7 in §2.4, all bar Yugul were also represented in the pastoral station camps that were established during this time. As discussed in chapter 1, Warndarrang and Ngandi having the least number of speakers, now and presumably in

the past, are regarded as the least influential of the substrate languages. The remaining four languages were highly represented in the wider Roper River region. Features from these languages that were transferred to individual speaker varieties of the expanding NT Pidgin would, therefore, be most likely retained in the creole due their high frequency. Which, if any, exerted more influence than others may become evident through the course of this study.

Secondly, §2.3, §2.4 and §2.5 all show that there was restricted access to English, the superstrate language, throughout all stages of contact discussed here. There was little communication between Aboriginal people and explorers in the ‘Exploration’ phase of contact. The ‘Invasion’ phase of contact was also characterised by restricted language contact due to the violent invasion by the pastoral industry into the Roper River region, which did, however, introduce the stable NSW/QLD Pidgin to the region. Individual Aboriginal people, usually men, approached managers or missionaries to act as interpreters and would have communicated in either English or a pidgin variety. Labour was also provided, in return for which they secured safe living arrangements for their families. Demographic information provided in this period also suggests that the Aboriginal population far outnumbered the non-Aboriginal, English speaking pastoralists. The ‘Station’ phase saw little change in the demographic figures, although there was an increase in communication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people due to the central role of the Indigenous labour force in the establishment of the pastoral industry. The languages used in this role were English and, more likely, varieties of the expanding NT Pidgin, which by the end of this stage were stabilising. In the ‘Community’ phase there was an increase in the English speaking population in the Roper River region, due to WWII, but this was temporary. Furthermore, the NT Pidgin continued to stabilise and the emergence of the creole in the now permanent communities of the region was already in process.

Thirdly, the Transfer Constraints approach recognises that there are stages in the process that leads to the emergence of a creole (as discussed in chapter 1). It is necessary to first identify when transfer of substrate features is most likely to have occurred, followed by

identification of when levelling of the variant features occurred. In terms of transfer, Roberts (2000: 295) points out: 'When the AL [ancestral language] persists longer than the initial generation [involved in pidgin/creole development], substratal influence on the developing creole becomes possible.' Roberts (2000) bases this claim on the finding that the second generation of speakers of the pidgin that eventually developed into Hawai'i Creole English were in fact bilingual in their ancestral languages and the pidgin, which in turn allowed for the expected transfer of features to take place. The same was shown in the case of Kriol development in §2.5, whereby the generation born into the 'Station' phase of contact in the Roper River region continued to acquire something of their ancestral languages at the same time as using NT Pidgin.

It was discussed in chapter one that there are two positions as to when transfer is most likely to take place to a contact language. One position, originally that of the Transfer Constraints approach, is that transfer takes place in the early formative stages of the pidgin. Siegel (2003), on the other hand, suggests that transfer occurs during expansion of an already stabilised pidgin when speakers are bilingual in the stable pidgin and their ancestral languages. It was also mentioned in chapter 1 that transfer during both stages is also possible. In the case of Roper Kriol, the NSW/QLD Pidgin initially entered the Northern Territory during the 'Invasion' phase, which had previously undergone transfer and levelling any number of times in New South Wales and Queensland. It has been claimed by Harris (1986) that a NT Pidgin quickly stabilised to a certain degree during this same phase. During the 'Station' phase, however, speakers remained bilingual in their ancestral languages and the NT Pidgin, while expanding it. From the early 1900s to the 1930s then is the period in which the substrate languages of the Roper River region most probably had the greatest influence on the expanding pidgin when bilingual speakers transferred features into the pidgin. This supports the view put forward by Siegel (2003) that transfer is most likely to occur during expansion of the pidgin.

It was also described in chapter 1 that levelling is a process in which a large number of variant features of a contact language are reduced to a set of common features, whereby some transferred features are lost and some retained. The features with the greatest

chance of retention are those that occur most frequently because they are shared by the most languages and because they are 'core features' of the substrate languages, in other words shared core features (see chapter 1). It is expected that this process occurred during the end of the 'Station' phase and early in the 'Community' phase of contact, in station camps and emerging communities when stabilisation of the expanding NT Pidgin is most likely to have occurred. It is also possible that the army camps in the early 1940s may have contributed to the process of levelling. This would have directly preceded, or happened concurrently, to the emergence of the creole towards the end of the 'Community' phase.