The Aboriginal prospectors and miners of North Queensland’s Gold and Mineral fields, from pre-contact times to ca. 1950.

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Tradition to present

• Aborigines were miners using sophisticated underground and pit mining methods
• They used post-extraction treatment processes
• They had explanatory story for mineral occurrence
• They adapted traditional knowledge of minerals, mining and treatment processes to post contact mining (technology transfer)
• They also adapted other traditional technology to mining eg. ‘yandying’
• They were integral to the north Queensland mining industry as prospectors and miners

Open pit mining at Lake Moondarra for greenstone axe material
Marnbi’s journey
(Bronzewing Pigeon, *Phaps chalcopter*)

- Mining story
- Creation of minerals
- **Gold** eg Broken Hill, Tibooburra
- **Copper** eg Cloncurry, Mt Isa
- **Grinding stones** (sandstone) – eg. Mt Isa, Parachilna
- **Opals** eg. Quilpie, White Cliffs, Cooper Pedy
- Traded around Australia
- Most of these – economic minerals for Europeans too
Principal trade routes of pre-colonial Aboriginal Australia
Zillmanton Mine and Marnbi

Copper staining on a limestone boulder

Outcrop of the western ore body, Zillmanton

(Ray and Ellwood, 2014)

1. Three copper specimens from the surface outcropping of the ore body (Ellwood, 2015)

- This is where the Marnbi story ends
- He finally enters the ground in Chillagoe creek to the east of this copper deposit
- This copper orebody was first prospected by an Aboriginal prospector in 1888 – George Henesy
Economic minerals which are important both pre-contact and post-contact economies of the Chillagoe District.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mineral</th>
<th>Pre contact use</th>
<th>Post contact use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iron stone, Ochre and Kaolin</td>
<td>Rock art and body painting</td>
<td>Flux in the smelters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billy-chert</td>
<td>Stone tools</td>
<td>Flux in the smelters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin ore</td>
<td>Stone tools?</td>
<td>Tin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper ore, Lead ore</td>
<td>pigments for Rock art</td>
<td>Copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pigments for Rock art</td>
<td>Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obsidian</td>
<td>Stone tools and possible trade</td>
<td>Perlite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alum</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>Medicine, toothpaste, purifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver</td>
<td>rock art pigments</td>
<td>precious metals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>rock art pigments</td>
<td>precious metals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mineral Salts</td>
<td>Medicines, food additives, flocculants....etc</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Copper ore as crayons for art

Chillagoe Aboriginal people painted cave walls in blue, green and red.

These were copper ores – Aboriginal mining of Coonbeet deposit noted by first European prospectors.

Later worked by Europeans (More and Gorey mining lease).

Copper ore as crayons for art.
Using copper ores, charcoal and kaolin as paint, Mungana art site
Good quality Red Ochre from a mine near Maytown

Fern Cave, Mungana, NQ

Markhams Tower, Mungana, NQ
Nychum obsidian mine

(all images Ellwood, 2012)
Extraction of Alum and other salts

Alum (potassium aluminium sulfate) deposits, Boonmoo Pinnacle near Stannery Hills

Potassium chloride and bicarbonate deposit, near Pillar Rock 12 km east of Chillagoe
The transition from traditional to post-contact mining in Chillagoe

King Cooper

A group of Broken Hill mining speculators, while inspecting the Chillagoe prospects, visited an Aboriginal camp near Calcifer, they noted an interesting skill adaptation.

“King Cooper," who has been invested with a shield presented by Mr. Moffatt, has a reputation as a geologist. He has learned the class of stone the white man values, and his intimate knowledge of the district adds to his value in reporting upon mines and directing prospectors.”

("Half way round the continent’, Barrier Miner, 17 November, 1899:2)
Technology transfer: heat treatment

Heat treated billy-chert to make it more workable, from the heat treatment pits and reduction site near Atherton Mine, Cathedral Tower, Chillagoe.

Heat treated fine grained Silcrete from heat treatment pits near Cathedral Tower, Chillagoe.
• Excavation of pre-contact heat treatment pits at Chillagoe include post contact treatment of copper ore
• Used to sinter copper ore to prepare it for sale to the European smelter at Calcifer
• Hot enough to melt tin ~1,100°C
Technology transfer: - Dry blowing

Adapted to dry-blowing alluvial gold and tin

Appears to have been passed to European prospectors at Cloncurry who developed some of the early dry-blowers

Aboriginal and White miners dry-blowing, Oaks Rush

Yandying for tin, Western Australia
Using Aboriginal trade routes for historical exploration and prospecting of Cape York Peninsula between 1865 to c. 1875

Jerry of the Girramay people – finder of Cape River goldfield 1864, with Daintree when they found the Gilbert and Etheridge in 1867-1868

Richard Daintree
Qld Govt Geologist
William Hann’s Northern Expedition, 1872 Chillagoe and Palmer

Jerry

William Hann of Bluff Downs and Maryvale
Aboriginal miners and prospectors identified for north Queensland

34 named individuals, 17 named families and as yet many unknown and unnamed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Prospector/Miner</th>
<th>Mineral</th>
<th>Associated Town/Field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>Lord Johns Swamp GF</td>
<td>unknown Aboriginal Stockman (discoverer)</td>
<td>Au</td>
<td>Thanes Creek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Clermont GF</td>
<td>unknown Aboriginal Stockman (Dick?) (discoverer)</td>
<td>Au</td>
<td>Clermont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Cloncurry/ Mt Isa</td>
<td>Tubbie Terrier (discoverer) shows Ernest Henry where 'big fella copper lay down': followed by others discovering copper and lead deposits</td>
<td>Cu</td>
<td>Yammillah changed to Argylla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865-</td>
<td>Cape River GF</td>
<td>Jerry (stockman) (discoverer) Prospector Gilbert Goldfield. Emsleigh copper with Damtree &amp; Hann 1866-7 With William Hann's 1872 expedition</td>
<td>Au</td>
<td>Cape River Gilbert GF Emsleigh Copper Palmerville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871 -</td>
<td>Charters Towers GF</td>
<td>Jupiter Mosman (discoverer) (Horse boy, stockman, miner) – later part owner of tin mine, prospector in Kangaroo Hills and other fields</td>
<td>Au/Sn</td>
<td>Charters Towers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870s</td>
<td>Hodgkinson GF</td>
<td>unknown Aboriginal woman (miner/prospector)</td>
<td>Cu</td>
<td>Thornborough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886-</td>
<td>Annan River TF and the Batavia Diggings</td>
<td>Wm. Baird and Romeo (discoverer) prospector, miner</td>
<td>Sn/Au</td>
<td>Mt Romeo Bairsville (Retreat Creek)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Cloncurry MF</td>
<td>Toby (discoverer, miner) with Ernest Henry</td>
<td>Cu</td>
<td>Mt Oxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887-</td>
<td>Herberton/Chillagoe MF</td>
<td>George Hennessey (discoverer of major mines) Prospector, miner Also ran what is probably the first cave tour venture in the Chillagoe Karst area</td>
<td>Cu/Sn/Ag/Pb</td>
<td>Chillagoe, Koorboora, Muldiya, Zillmanton, Mungana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1888</td>
<td>Darky Green's Reef, Mt Trial, Hodgkinson GF</td>
<td>John 'Darky' Green (miner and millowner)</td>
<td>Au</td>
<td>Mt Trial Thornborough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Jordan's Creek GF</td>
<td>unidentified Aboriginal diggers (discoverers of major mine)</td>
<td>Au</td>
<td>Geraldton (Innisfail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ca. 1899</td>
<td>Chillagoe- Mungana</td>
<td>King Cooper, invested with a King plate by Mr. Moffatt, for his reputation as a geologist, and his clan (miners)</td>
<td>Cu/Ag/Pb</td>
<td>Calcifer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Discoverer(s)</th>
<th>Mineral(s)</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c. 1900</td>
<td>Chillagoe MF</td>
<td>Bob, Gilbert and Palmer (stockmen) discovered OK Mine</td>
<td>Cu, OK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Mt Emu GF</td>
<td>King (stockman) (discoverer)</td>
<td>Au</td>
<td>Mt Emu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896 - 1942</td>
<td>Coen Ebagoolah Batavia Chock a block Blue Mountains</td>
<td>Fredrick 'Friday' Wilson (prospector, miner)</td>
<td>Au</td>
<td>Coen Ebagoolah Plutoville, Wenlock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca. 1906</td>
<td>True Blue, Mt Carbine MF</td>
<td>Keating Brothers (discoverers, miners)</td>
<td>CaWO_4/Wo</td>
<td>Mt. Carbine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-1910-1915</td>
<td>Chock-a-block Batavia Diggings</td>
<td>Pluto (prospector, miner) Appears Pluto also packed during the off season. He provided more deposits in the region</td>
<td>Au (Pluto Lead #1-1910), Au (Pluto Lead #2-1911), Au (the Tunnel-1912), Au (Pluto's Gully-1913)</td>
<td>Plutoville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915-1922</td>
<td>Batavia Diggings (Lower Camp)</td>
<td>Kitty Pluto (prospector/miner)</td>
<td>Au</td>
<td>Lower Camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Nightflower, Herberton /Chillagoe MF</td>
<td>Archer and Stewart (prospectors, miners)</td>
<td>Ag/Pb/Au</td>
<td>Chillagoe/Mungana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932?</td>
<td>Blue Mountains GF</td>
<td>'uncivilised Black' befriended by Mr Armbrust (discoverer)</td>
<td>Au</td>
<td>near Blue Mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>Goondiwindi GF</td>
<td>Weribone Jack (stockman) (discoverer)</td>
<td>Au</td>
<td>Tawool Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>late 1930s? (1875)</td>
<td>Cracow GF</td>
<td>Jacky Nipps (stockman) (discoverer)</td>
<td>Au</td>
<td>Cracow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>Little River Coal</td>
<td>Jerry Croydon (packer, drover, miner) (discoverer)</td>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>Laura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? - 1960s</td>
<td>Coen Geike Creek (tin, gold) Batavia/Wenlock</td>
<td>William 'Billy' Fox (miner)</td>
<td>Au, Sn</td>
<td>Coen Lower Camp, Wenlock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many others

- **Cape York**: Norman Baird, Friday Wilson, Billy Fox, Keating Bros., Carbine miners (gold, tin, wolfram)
- **Herberton**: Con Goo, Gosam, Haines, Smyth families (tin and wolfram)
- **Palmer**: Burton, Pellen, Mitchell, Lyell families (gold, tin)
- **Ngadjon-jii**, Mamu, Yidinji on the Mulgrave, Russell, Jordan goldfields
Jupiter Mosman- Charters Towers

Jupiter Mossman was a 10 year old boy when he found the first gold near Charters Towers in December 1871.

Jupiter in old age standing where he found the first gold on Charters Towers. The second image is the memorial to the discovery of the gold, showing Jupiter on the right. However, the scene implies that the gold was alluvial; this is inaccurate.
Erected by the Citizens of Charters Towers to the Memory of Jupiter Mosman who discovered the first gold in Charters Towers on the 25th Dec. 1871. Died 5th Dec. 1945. Aged 85 years. R.I.P.
1886 Romeo discovered the tin field of Mount Romeo south of Cooktown on the Annan River.

The small town of Romeo grew up, with a store, hotel and a post office that only closed in 1930.

Romeo, with his partners William Baird and Jack Duval, discovered the Batavia goldfield in October 1892 on Retreat Creek.

About 150 men rushed to a camp called Bairdsville. Most soon left but Baird and Romeo remained there until, in 1894, Baird was killed by local Aborigines.

Romeo joined the Native Police - died in Cooktown Hospital 1915.
George (James) Hennessy aka Hensey

b. unknown, Ipswich, Qld

Garbutt and Stevenson
1887 Chillagoe (Cu, Pb, Ag)

with Garbutt
1888 Muldiva (Cu, Pb and Ag)

with Tony Linedale
1888 Zilmanton (Cu, Ag)
1888 Girofla/Mungana (Cu and Pb)
1888 Koorboora (Sn)

d. ca. 1892-1894, thrown from horse near Chillagoe
Pluto of Plutoville, Batavia (Wenlock) Diggings

b. 1869: Charters Towers

1895: Travelled from Laura to Cape York with the party of Basalt Earl

1895: Departed from party to try his luck on the Coen goldfield

1905: Chock-a-Block

1910: Pluto’s Lead #1

1911: Plutoville named for Pluto

1911: Pluto’s Lead #2

1912: The Tunnel

1913: Pluto’s Gully

d. 1916: Coen Hospital
Kitty Pluto (Altengen)

b. ca.1877  pos. Batavia River District

1916:- found gold at **Lower Camp** on the Batavia River

1922:- Kitty Gully

1931:- Records say removed 1921 but Cilento’s survey notes her on the field, age 55, finder of Plutoville

1932:- Removed during the 24th December round up of Aborigines by Const. Thies (witnessed by Anthro., Donald Thompson) but soon sent back

1939:- granted a full mining pension by the Qld Govt. for being the only Aboriginal woman to find a Goldfield

d. 1946:- Lockhardt Mission, aged 69 years
So:

• Aborigines knew mining
• Aborigines knew minerals later valued by Europeans and had Story for them
• This is why so many mineral fields were discovered by Aborigines post-contact
• This is why so many Aborigines went mining
• Tradition continued on into post-contact society
Mining in north Queensland is a 38,000 year old mining story, not just a 160 year mining history.

Mt Leyshon, Charters Towers. This is the only 19th century photograph of the ‘shared history’ of mining: an Aboriginal miner and his White mate at work.
THE END