

Ah Toy's Garden: A Chinese Market-Garden on the Palmer River Goldfield, North Queensland

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The Chinese on the Palmer River goldfield of North Queensland from the 1870s onwards were involved in market gardening as well as mining. This paper examines in detail the history and archaeology of one such garden occupied by Chinese from 1883 until 1934. The results of an archaeological survey of the garden area, including habitation sites, graves and an irrigation system, and excavation of the principal Chinese house-site and several rubbish dumps, are analysed in the context of documentary and oral evidence. The exotic nature of plants and artefacts (including many imported bottles) is emphasised along with the evidence for improvisation in this hostile environment. The authors of this paper are Ian Jack of the Department of History, University of Sydney, New South Wales; Kate Holmes of the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory; and Ruth Kerr of the Queensland State Archives.

The Palmer River gold-rush of the 1870s had several features which make it distinctive among Australian mining fields. The remoteness and undeveloped nature of Cape York in the tropical north of Queensland created special problems for supplies and communications (Fig. 1). In 1872 no roads led to the Palmer, no pastoralist had exploited it, no adequate maps were available. The climate was extreme; the complex river systems were huge torrents in the wet season early each year but by each winter trickles in an arid land. The terrain around the Palmerville Fault and the Palmer basin consisted of dauntingly steep ridges: the drainage system of the Palmer itself was westwards towards the Gulf, while some of the gold-bearing creeks rising in the Conglomerate Range immediately to the north flowed north-eastwards to the Coral Sea. The vegetation was sparse and even the Aborigines found it gave poor subsistence. There were few mammals and a principal, fragile food resource was fish and crustaceans in the rivers and creeks.¹

This inhospitable area received between 20,000 and 30,000 gold-seekers between 1873 and 1876. Some European miners came from the Etheridge field around Georgetown to the south and many left in 1876 to the new Hodgkinson field, also to the south. During these years Chinese peasants from Canton and Hong Kong had become numerous on the Palmer, travelling from China to Cooktown on the new regular steam-ships: by 1877 the Chinese were an overwhelming majority on the Palmer, some 18,000 to the surviving 1500 Europeans. The antagonistic three-way relationship among the European miners, the Chinese and the Aborigines gave the Palmer a further quite distinctive character.

In 1982 the University of Sydney, in conjunction with the James Cook University of North Queensland, mounted a four-week expedition to investigate aspects of the Palmer River goldfield economy. The wealth of equipment remaining on European reef-mining sites took up half the available time and will be the subject of a separate monograph; the other area investigated archaeologically was a Chinese market-garden and alluvial gold-mining site in the gorge of Lone Star Creek (Figs 1-3). This garden, known for convenience as Ah Toy's Garden (after the third and last of the known Chinese lease-holders), was surveyed, explored and a small section excavated.

Market-gardens were peculiarly necessary in an area of such remoteness. With vulnerable lines of communication and poor natural food-supplies, the need for fresh fruit, vegetables and horse-fodder was acute. All gardeners on the Palmer field were Chinese: in 1883 there were 68 of them paying rates, declining to 57 by 1885 and 36 by 1887.² On the track from Laura to Maytown, increasingly the principal route into the goldfields, Chinese gardeners and storekeepers serviced the miners, the hotels and coach stages.³ By 1883 (the first year of comprehensive records for the Hann district) there was a community of nine Chinese on Jessop's Creek (near the Maytown end of the track): five of these were storekeepers, one was a blacksmith, one an opium dealer and two, Tee Wah and Heong Seong, were gardeners. All the habitable buildings were constructed of wood and bark (valued up to 30 pounds), save for Heong Seong's hut which was thatched with grass (and valued at 16 pounds) and one of the stores, which had an iron roof (30 pounds).⁴

The area explored in 1982 was centred on garden area No. 211, a one-acre (0.405ha) plot on Lone Star Creek. A Chinaman called An Gee applied for the first gardening lease there on 11 September 1883, paying 18 shillings for the survey fee and a rent of 1 pound annually.⁵ On the site An Gee built a wood and grass-thatched house, valued in 1884 at 26 pounds, at 9 pounds in 1885.⁶ On 1 April 1884 he applied for another garden site in the area, No. 217.⁷ Also living around Jessop's was Ah Ung who, like An Gee, combined mining with gardening. When An Gee applied for garden No. 217, Ah Ung evidently took over the Lone Star Creek garden area No. 211. Later in 1884, on 14 October, Ah Ung and a party of six took up the 'Mossman Extended Alluvial Tunnelling Claim' of 325 × 100 feet (99 × 30m) on a gully on the right-hand side of Mossman's Gully.⁸ It seems likely that Mossman's Gully is the Lone Star Gorge (the Lone Star Creek becomes the Mossman River in modern usage a few kilometres to the north). These alluvial workings may have been the precursors of the water-race and irrigation system described below.

An Gee continued in Lone Star until 1900. From 1890 onwards he held a Prospecting Protection Area, 300 yards (274m) square, on the bank of the creek (again described in the record as the Mossman River).⁹ The garden was well sited for traffic on the Laura road and hopes that the Cooktown

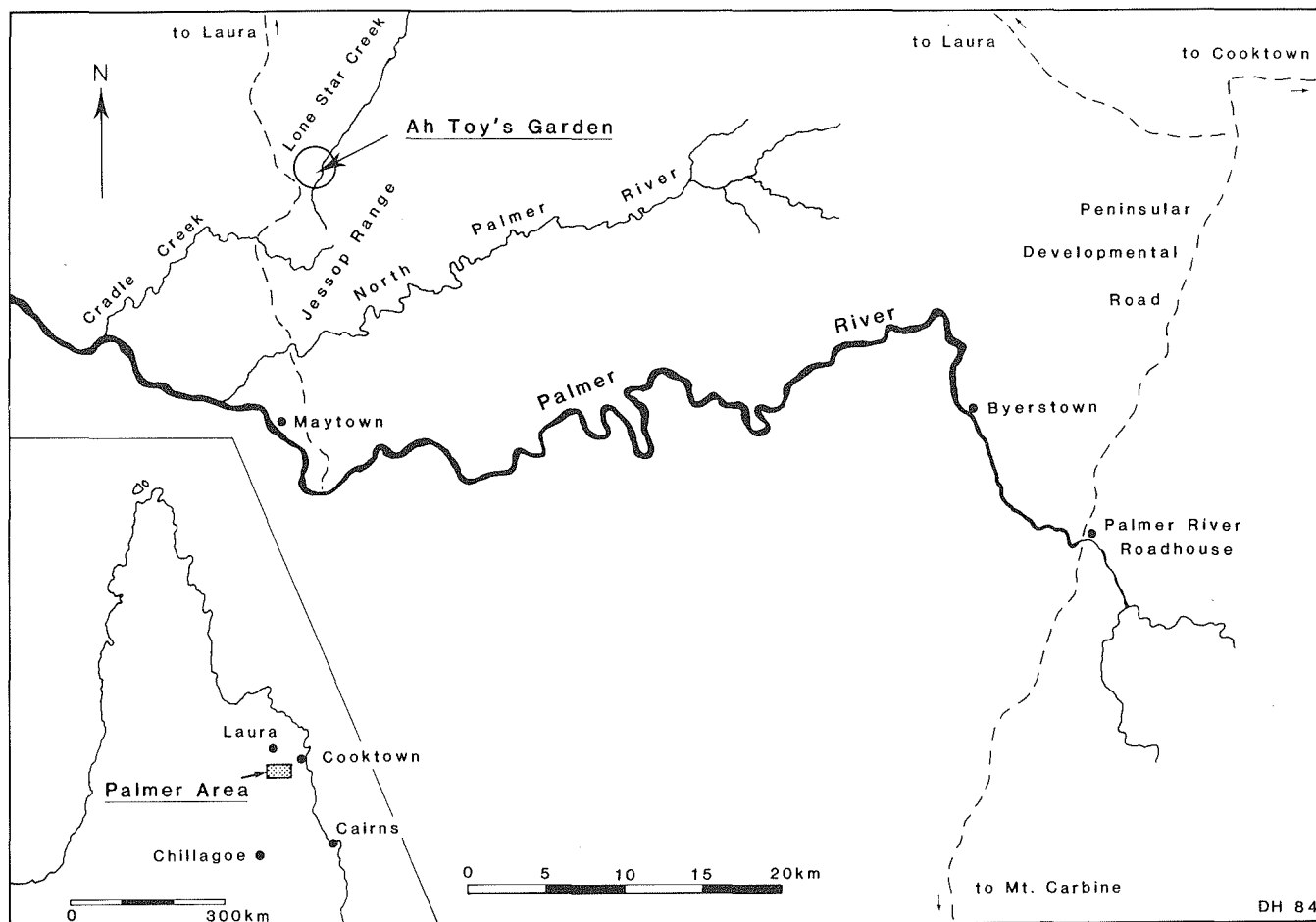


Fig. 1: Location Map.

to Laura railway, surveyed along Lone Star Creek to Maytown, would be constructed beyond Laura, encouraged the investment of British capital.¹⁰ A number of Palmer stalwarts, William Charles Clifford, Jens Peter Jensen, Alfred Dimes, John Sheffield, Henry Ahrens, H. L. Green, J. Reilly, T. Davies and J. B. Kinnear, took up the Independent lease and several Tunnelling Areas on the Lone Star, Mossman, Chinky and Kennedy Creeks.¹¹ This activity, though shortlived in the 1890s, helped to sustain a small population on the Conglomerate Range in the Lone Star region.

Tommy Ah Toy took over Ah Ung's garden on 4 April 1900.¹² Born in Canton in 1855, Ah Toy had arrived in Australia as a baby in 1856.¹³ Presumably his mother and father had come to the Victorian gold-rush and stayed on in Australia. A Chinaman called Ah Toy received a Miner's Right at Maytown in July 1875, possibly a twenty-year old Tommy arriving to try his luck on the Palmer.¹⁴ Ah Toy is not an uncommon Chinese name, however, and the first secure information about the gardener is his lease at Lone Star in 1900. By that date there were officially only 393 Chinese left on the Palmer field and only 13 gardens. Over the 35 years that Tommy Ah Toy lived in the Lone Star garden, the number of Chinese gardeners dwindled still further. Initially Ah Toy supplied local miners, the Louisa mine near Maytown (which reopened in 1901 and was the scene of some intermittent activity until 1941),¹⁵ the Maytown population and a Chinese storekeeper in Cooktown called Hip On.¹⁶ The packer on the Maytown to Laura route rode regularly through the garden and Ah Toy planted pannikin grass (which survives in the creek today) to supply horse-fodder.¹⁷

Tommy Ah Toy, like most of the handful of Chinese characters left in the Palmer, led a fairly solitary life. Unlike his predecessor, Ah Toy seems to have had no Chinese associates. For a time, he had an Aboriginal woman living

with him, as many Chinese men had done in the virtual absence of Chinese women. The couple had a son, young Tommy, born around 1912, but just as the boy was becoming a useful help in the garden in June 1922 he was taken away by the Laura policeman on a Government Removal Order and despatched to Yarrabah Mission Station.¹⁸ By 1929, when the surviving Maytown packer, Sonny Parsons, first visited the garden, old Tommy Ah Toy was living entirely alone.¹⁹

The circumstances of Ah Toy's death are not clear, but he apparently left the garden in 1934, along with another Chinaman, Willy Hip Wah, a 'con-man' from elsewhere on the Palmer, to consult a herbalist in Cairns. Ah Toy died soon after and Hip Wah acted quickly to obtain possession of the garden, although Ah Toy is said to have made other dispositions.²⁰ After a few months, the garden was sold for 5 pounds to a miner called Jack Sellars, who lived at the Wild Irish Girl battery on the headwaters of Cradle Creek. Sellars stayed in Lone Star Gorge for only one or two seasons before he moved to the beach at Cooktown. He did not occupy Ah Toy's house but built a new hut, to the south, probably using some of the materials from the empty house, the only form of cannibalism common on the Palmer.²¹

The next occupants of the garden were well-remembered eccentrics, Wilhelm Bernhardt Tekaats and his wife Grace Charlotte, who built the present corrugated-iron hut situated on the northern elbow of the two creeks in the garden. The Tekaats were vegetarian nudists who wished only to be left alone with their two young children and a dog (until the dog was shot by Wilhelm for his unvegetarian attempt to eat a snake). In 1943, after a number of gossipworthy incidents, the Tekaats moved to Cairns and ran a hardware shop. Their archaeological contribution to the garden was principally

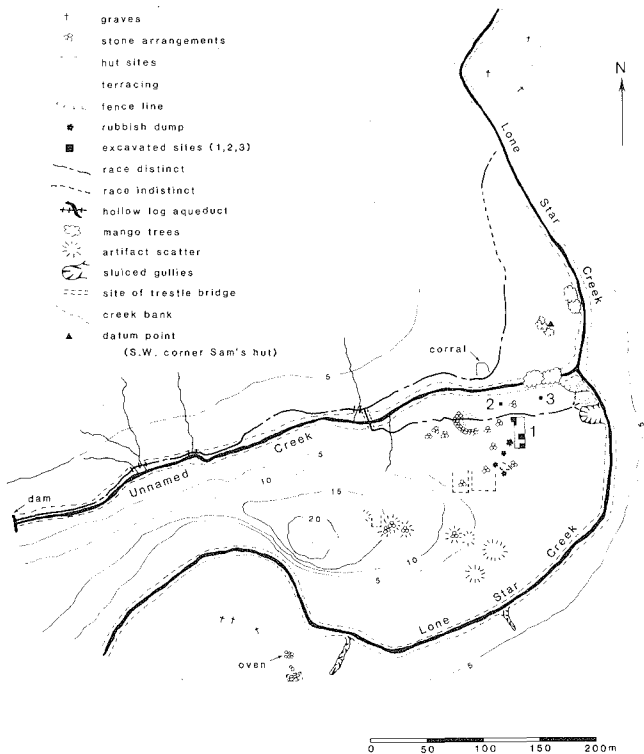


Fig. 2: General plan of Ah Toy's Garden.

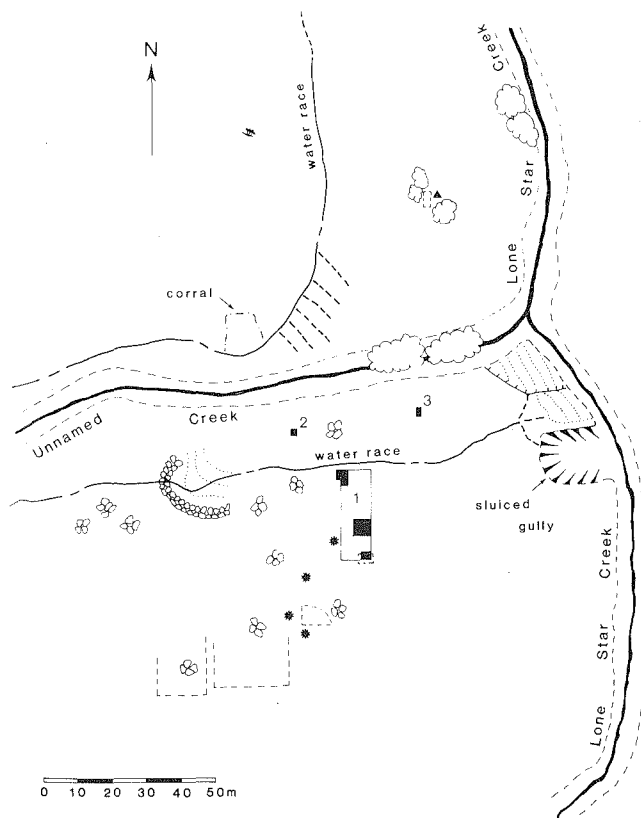


Fig. 3: Detail of plan of Ah Toy's Garden.

their new house and the scattering broadcast of Ah Toy's Bentall chaff-cutter, broken up into its constituent parts, to discourage visitors from coming to utilise the pannikin grass.²²

Since the Tekaats left, Sam Elliott, one of the legendary Cape York miners and horsemen, who accompanied us on the expedition, has owned the new hut and used the garden

for his horses regularly during the dry seasons until about ten years ago.

The purpose of the 1982 expedition was to explore the archaeological evidence for this remote but by no means undisturbed Chinese site. A general survey of the entire exploited area was undertaken along Lone Star Creek and its unnamed tributary which we christened Unnamed Creek. As shown in Figure 2, most of the evidence of habitation lay on the west bank of Lone Star Creek and up Unnamed Creek to the dam about 600m due west. Only at the extreme north and south of the site were there any remains on the east bank of Lone Star Creek. At the south, on a cleared flat, the early Chinese miners had built a substantial rectangular stone oven and had carefully paved with stone flagging the floor of a building nearby: both the oven and the house were close to a gully used for the sluicing of alluvial gold. At the extreme north-east corner of the site there were four identifiable Chinese graves, marked by a stone arrangement at the foot of each.

The principal Chinese habitation sites were in the angle of the two creeks, to the south of Unnamed Creek and the west of Lone Star (Fig. 3). Ah Toy's house and the rubbish dumps which were excavated were close to Unnamed Creek, while on the hill behind to the south-west there were a probable hut site and seven separate surface scatters of artefacts presumably associated with more casual alluvial mining by late nineteenth-century Chinese. The Chinese presence was demonstrated by the incidence of opium canisters. The forty-five matchboxes found among these scatters were dominated by two London-made types, Palmer Vestas of Bow and Bell and Black No. 4. There were also five Australian-made boxes, two of them Bell and Co's No. 4 Vestas, the remaining three Bryant and May waterproof wax Vestas. The opinion of Neville Ritchie, partly based on Dimitri Anson's work in New Zealand on matchbox chronology,²³ is that four of the hillside assemblages begin before 1885 and end before 1910. The fifth assemblage consisted of two Bell No. 4 Vestas with square corners (c.1885-1900), seven Bell No. 4 Vestas with round corners, three Bryant and May Australian boxes and two Commonwealth boxes with round corners (all post 1900). This area, together with the remains of three other buildings, perhaps belonging to the Sellars period in the 1930s, and an associated rubbish dump, has been a good deal disturbed.

The excavation first concentrated on the two corrugated-iron structures (Site 1) which were, on the oral evidence of Sonny Parsons and Sam Elliott, likely to be part of Ah Toy's house. The structure to the south was almost intact, and almost exactly 2m square (Fig. 4). Parsons later identified this as Ah Toy's tool-shed, which seems eminently reasonable, as it was quite unsuitable for a kitchen and no evidence to suggest cooking was found. Sam Elliott had used it partly as a tool-shed and his shovel was still tucked in the roof-beams.

This cramped hut was gridded internally into four squares, 4K, 4L, 5K, 5L, aligned as closely as possible to the main metric grid. The surface layer (Layer 1) consisted of leaves and a fine but hard-packed soil. There were several large surface finds including parts of the Bentall chaff-cutter, a cooking pot, kerosene tin and pieces of wood. When the surface layer was removed, three large pieces of tin were found along the eastern half of 4K and 5K, and appear to have been the remains of a floor. Along the east and south walls there was some build-up of clay between wall and floor, probably used as a sealing device. The central post along the east wall appeared to stand on the floor. Beneath the tin, Layer 2 consisted of a soft and crumbly brown soil, honeycombed with holes and tunnels left by small reptiles. There were very few finds either beneath the floor or in the western squares. The soft Layer 2 came down to an extremely hard-packed paler brown—either the underlying natural or a well-trodden floor. As time was short, the excavation stopped at this level.

The remains of the larger building 4m to the north consisted of four posts and some corrugated iron. A building almost 3m square was indicated, with an artificially levelled floor on ground sloping naturally downwards to the north: there was a small retaining wall of stone along the north side. Some corrugated iron remained in situ, but most of the panels were scattered around the perimeter of the structure. These were roughly rectangular in shape, 72cm × 90, 110 or 120 cm (Fig. 5).

The area of the building was gridded in a block of sixteen squares, 10K–N to 13K–N. As most of the valley had been fired some time before the excavation, the surface layer over all the excavation site was burnt on top and then a grey-brown colour. This was a soft deposit, but within the structure this layer did contain some patches of hard-packed clay, and overall it lay over a very hard-packed almost white soil. This is likely to have been an artificial floor, given that the surface had been levelled up: certainly it was extremely difficult to excavate by trowel. Along the west wall, excavation in 11N showed that this deposit had been mounded up against the outside of the remaining piece of corrugated iron, presumably for extra support and sealing. The post still standing in 14N seemed to indicate an addition or verandah along the north side, but no other postholes or post remains were found despite every effort, particularly in 14K.

The archaeological evidence for a verandah is at best inconclusive. Supplementary sources of evidence, documentary or oral, are however often available for historic sites. In this case there is a first-hand eyewitness account of the house, recalled after fifty years by Sonny Parsons, the Maytown packer. In an interview Parsons described how Ah Toy's house occupied this site, how the living area was some 12 feet (3.7m) square and how it was surrounded by a sapling and bark verandah some 10 feet (3m) wide on all sides save the south.²⁴ This description makes it virtually certain that the northernmost excavated area with its single post was in fact an enclosed verandah. The structure as it was in 1929 is shown in Figure 6, drawn from Sonny Parsons' description at the time of the interview and checked by him. It was a windowless room with a single door on the west side, sapling-framed with bark walls, with a hipped roof of split logs and bark, topped with a square tower which had windows on all four sides. In the excessive wet seasons of 1930 and 1931 this elaborate roof construction sprang several leaks and a miner called Charlie Tonkin was employed by the aged Ah Toy to dismantle the tower and re-roof the hut with corrugated iron. A photograph of the house taken from the north about 1935, just after Ah Toy's death, shows about half of the roof as iron held down by logs: some bark had been retained.²⁵ The bark sides of the verandah had been crudely patched with iron and the north door was now an iron sheet.

The iron found on the site suggests that the inner walls of the house proper (not, of course, visible on the photograph because of the verandah) were similarly patched in the 1930s.

After the straightforward excavation of the house area, attention in Site 1 was centred on a mound of stones and soil some 11m north of the main excavation. This was the area identified by Sonny Parsons as having been used for cooking by Ah Toy. Four squares, 24P, 25P, 26P and 25Q were opened covering much of this mound (Fig. 7). This appeared to be a solid structure approximately 1.4m square, although the number of loose stones around the basic structure made it more difficult to delineate the structure from the surface. On the southern edge there was a gentle slope from the present ground level to the mound, but the northern edge was made more obvious by a sudden drop of some 50cm from the present height of the mound to ground level. As the square 25P seemed to contain most of the mound, excavation concentrated on 24P and 25P.

In 24P the usual surface layer (Layer 1) was found to be very shallow: along the northern side of the square, the

southern edge of the hearth was obviously marked by several large stones, and adjacent to the stones Layer 2 showed up as a darker grey-brown. This layer extended from the stone edging in the north-east corner of the square diagonally across to just south of the mid point on the western edge of the square. Close to the stones, within Layer 2 were a heavy chisel and an iron bolt, and other metal artefacts were indicated only by rust remains. Most of the artefacts were found along the southern edge of the square in Layer 1, and included fragments of a green-glazed ginger jar and some of a heavier green-glazed pot, possibly a planter for seedlings. These were the first real indications of any Chinese habitation found by excavation.

In 25P, although some of the surface stones had been displaced, it soon became obvious that the basic stone foundation or hearth continued across just into 26P. The eastern half of the square was excavated to some depth, while the western half was just cleaned over and the top 5cm excavated. Layer 1 was hard-packed but fine, and proved to be a substantial deposit. As it was excavated, it was found that the charcoal content increased towards the foundation stones, and so the layer was divided, with Layer 2 containing more charcoal and two of the larger artefacts—an opium tin and a bottle base. The tip of a horseshoe found close to this base indicated that the deposit continued for another 10–15cm, but there was insufficient time to excavate this completely.

A quick look at 26P showed that the hearth did have an abrupt edge along its northern side, as the structure remained to a height of 50cm. A length of timber was found lying along this northern edge, indicating that the hearth may have had some sort of timber superstructure.

One square was excavated on one of the larger mounds east of the main excavation site—20E. The upper, shallow layer soon came down to a hard clay soil, so the square was left. Most of the artefacts found were small and fragmentary, including some probably Chinese ceramic and pieces of glass bottles.

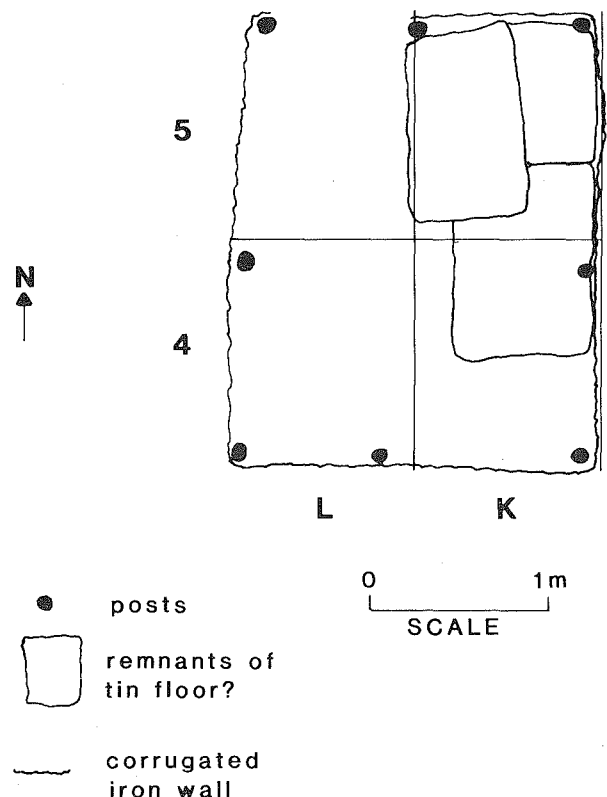


Fig. 4: Plan of Site 1: iron shed.

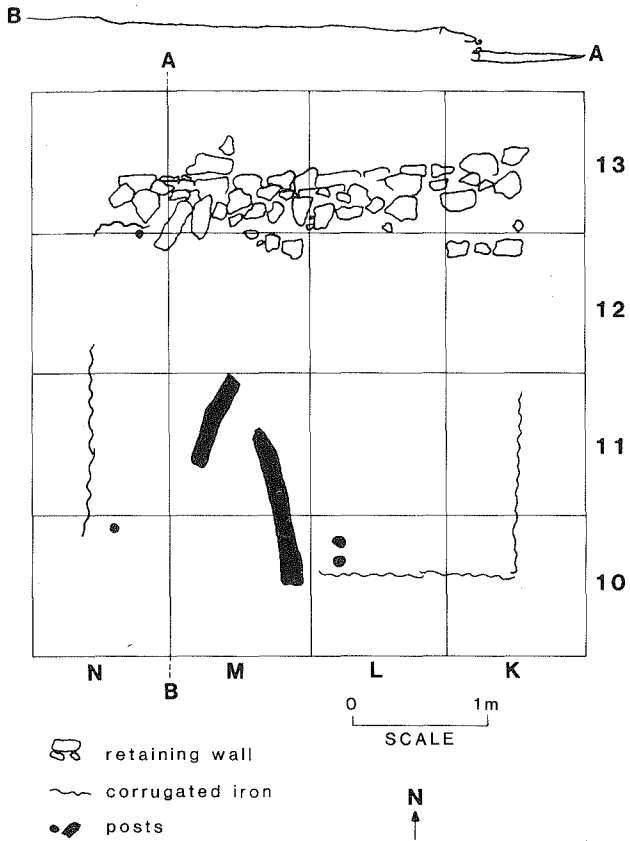


Fig. 5: Plan of Site 1: house site.

This excavation of the cooking area completed the work on Site 1. The rest of the valley area examined consisted of the irrigated gardens on both sides of Unnamed Creek. Like Lone Star Creek, Unnamed is fed by a permanent spring and a dam was constructed across it either by Ah Ung in the alluvial gold-mining period or by Ah Toy himself for the gardens. This dam, 600m to the west of the confluence of the creeks, was stoutly constructed of logs and earth, the principal horizontal log held in place by a great iron bullock chain, firmly embedded in the creek-bed some 4m upstream. The dam was still intact when Sam Elliott lived in the valley but in the late 1970s wild pigs suddenly became a nuisance in the area and so altered the creek environment that the dam largely collapsed. From the dam a race ran through an earth-dug ditch on the north side of Unnamed Creek downhill (or, for a spell, dead flat) to the garden area nearly half a kilometre away (Fig. 2). One of the characteristics of Chinese sites in America recently defined in an important conceptual study by Mary Hilderman Smith, is the scale and complexity of hydraulic technology: Lone Star garden is no exception to this general rule.²⁶ The dam is well conceived and skilfully sited. The race crosses side gullies through hollow logs supported on a wooden trough, some of which have survived. At several places side sluices leading south into the creek were constructed to give some additional control over the waterflow. Just west of the garden areas the race forked, with a trestle bridge carrying one fork across to the south side of the creek.

The garden on this south bank of Unnamed Creek consisted mainly of fruit trees, custard apples, orange and mandarin, with a group of taro yams and, in the elbow with Lone Star Creek, rough-leaf pineapples. On the north side of Unnamed Creek there was the irrigated vegetable garden, west of the hut built by the Tekaats, and on the bank of Unnamed Creek a coconut palm which had grown to some 10m by 1930.²⁷ The archaeological remains of the irrigation

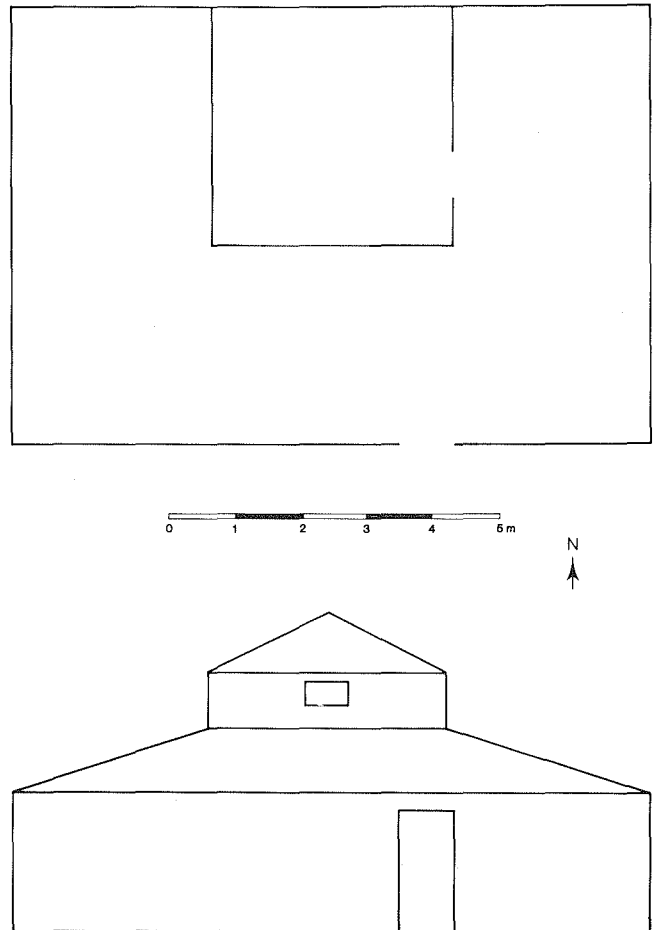


Fig. 6: Plan and north elevation of Ah Toy's house as it was in 1929. Taken from description by Sonny Parsons, who recollected the dimensions of the actual house (without verandah) as some 12 feet (3.7m) square. The excavation showed the size to be 3m square.

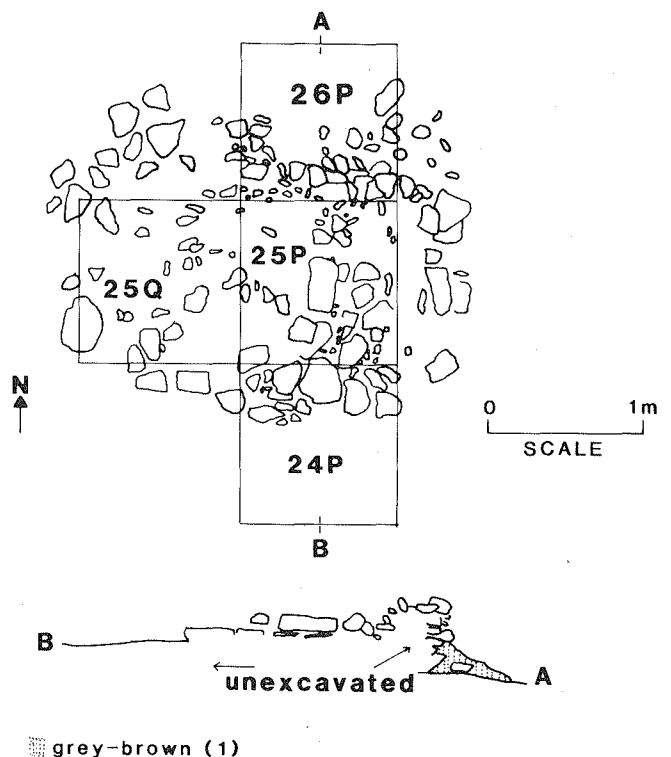


Fig. 7: Plan of Site 1: cooking area.

system for the vegetables is substantial but severely overgrown and no attempt was made to plot the channels in greater detail than appears in Figure 3, where six parallel channels running south-east from the race are plotted. None of the fruit trees survives except the mangoes around the deep swimming-pool on Unnamed Creek just above the junction: the mangoes beside the Tekaat's hut were planted by Sam Elliott in the 1940s to give much-needed shade.

Numerous agricultural implements were found on the surface of the garden area to the north of Unnamed Creek. There were two hoes and one half of a plough made by Bradfield of Ipswich (near Brisbane). A small rake straddled the gold-mining and gardening transition years of the late nineteenth century. This rake (Fig. 8) had originally been a ten-tined sluicing instrument for raking alluvial gravel. Three of its outer tines had clearly broken off. Three tines on the other end had then been sawn off to balance the tool, the handle was abbreviated and the sluicing rake became an effective garden rake, a pleasing example of Chinese bush ingenuity in an area where iron was not lightly discarded.

The bottle dumps excavated on the south bank of Unnamed Creek (Sites 2 and 3) may also be examples of waste-not-want-not ingenuity. Site 2, north-west of the main excavation Site 1, was a single square opened in an area where Sam Elliott had previously found some complete bottles presented to Cooktown Museum. On excavating the square, bottles were found stacked to a depth of 15–20cm. Those on the western side were apparently disturbed and broken, those on the eastern whole and neatly stacked, some four or five bottles deep, on a north-south alignment. Thirty-nine complete bottles and 62 bottles altogether were taken from the light brown compacted soil of this square: the dump was well covered with soil and large stones. Provisional dating of the bottles, which range from two-piece mould brandy bottles and spirit bottles with applied tops to crown-capped beers, is c.1880 to c.1920.

The construction of the dump, which extended at least 3m, was unusually careful. Interpretations advanced by the excavating team included the need to prevent accidents, caused by bottles being tossed and broken by water, in an area where Unnamed Creek thundered down in flood each wet season, or to avoid the accidental firing of the dry grass in the dry season, or to build up the bank to prevent erosion of the fruit-tree and taro area in time of flood. The last interpretation is attractive because of the exceptional care taken in layering some of the bottles. Since the bottles seem to be in three discrete concentrations, however, they would have been rather ineffective both for retaining the edge of the fruit-growing area and for acting as flood-control. The interpretation preferred by their actual excavator, Neville Ritchie, is that the dumps are simply dumps: in two of the three squares opened, the bottle arrangement was largely haphazard and in Site 2 the twenty deliberately stacked bottles were surmounted by bottles haphazardly placed, not apparently as the result of a more careful stack collapsing.

Site 3, further east along the bank of Unnamed Creek, consisted of two squares, A and B. This dump was more disturbed than Site 2. Only eight complete bottles were found in square A and, while the deposit and soil in both squares were similar to those in Site 2, the bottles did not seem to have been neatly stacked or deliberately covered.

The artefacts from Sites 2, 3 and the hillside scatters have yet to be analysed. They consist in the main of liquor and beer bottles, or bottle fragments, the bulk of which are probably Australian. Bottles of overseas origin include Dutch schnapps, Scotch whisky, English and Dutch gin and Japanese (Fig. 12), Philippine (Fig. 13) and German beer. In addition there were a number of condiment and pharmaceutical bottles (Fig. 11), some of Chinese origin. The other Chinese objects were rice-bowls (Figs 9 and 10) and opium tins. No fragments of ceramic opium pipes were found, rather surprisingly, but the carefully cut-off base of a green bottle in Site 3 was clearly the result of adapting the

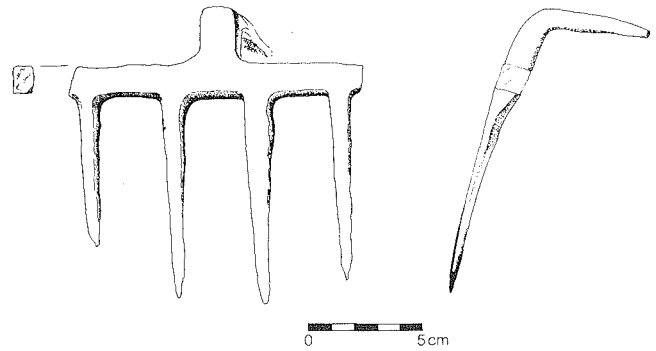


Fig. 8: Garden rake made from broken ten-tined sluicing rake, surface find.

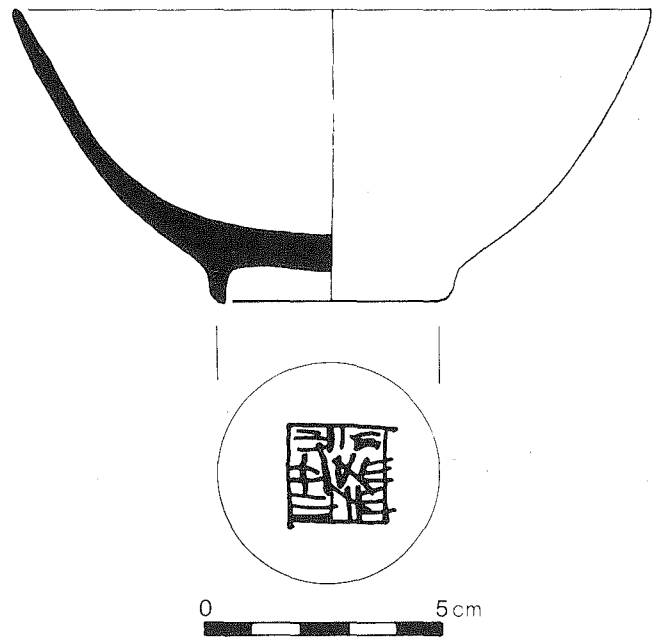


Fig. 9: Chinese rice-bowl, Site 3A. (stamp unidentified.)

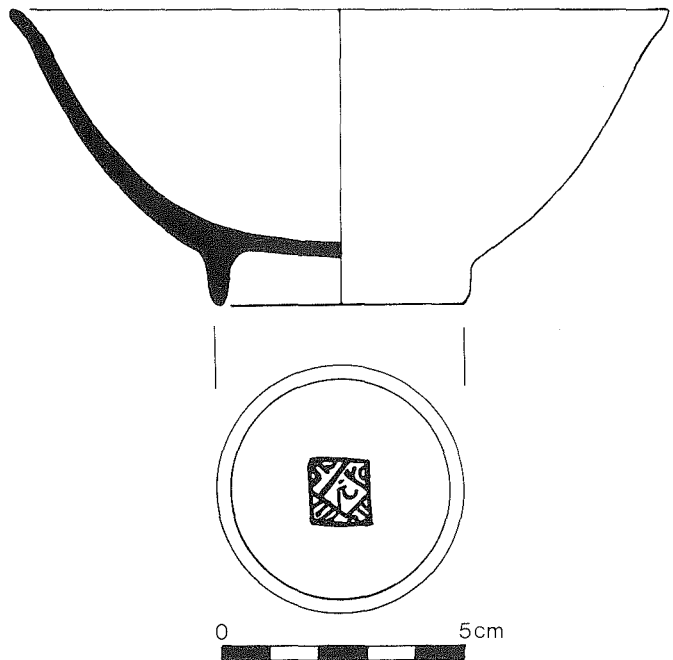


Fig. 10: Chinese rice-bowl, Site 3A. (Stamp unidentified.)

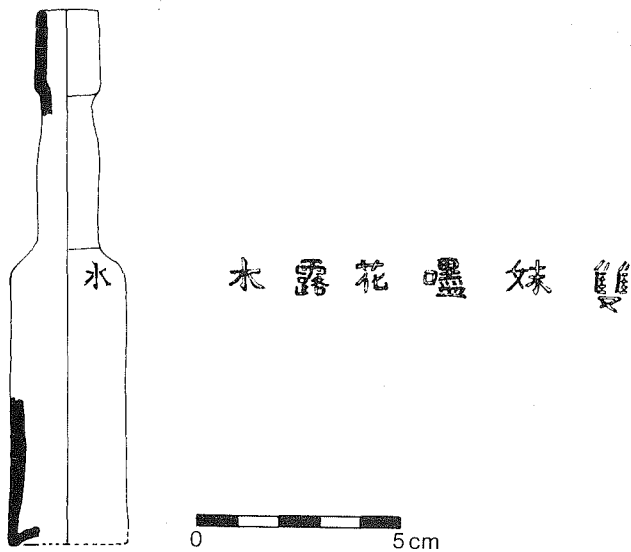


Fig. 11: Chinese perfume bottle, Site 3A. The characters read, from right to left: 'Twin (or Two) Sisters brand Eau de Cologne'. We are indebted to Mr T. Kobayashi for his translation.

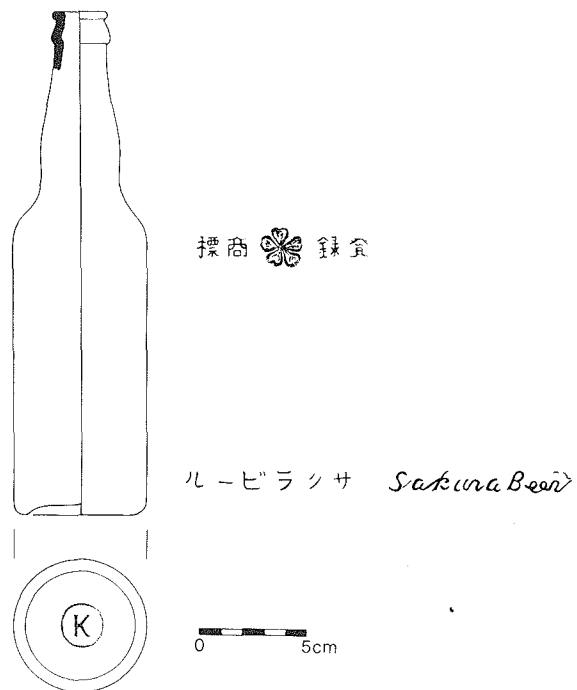


Fig. 12: Japanese beer bottle, Site 3B. The characters at the top surrounding the floral trademark read, simply, 'trademark'; those at the base read, from right to left, 'Sakura beer', which is repeated, left to right, in Western script. We are indebted to Mr T. Kobayashi for his translation.

rest of the bottle (which was not found) as an opium lamp. There was an uncommon dearth of ceramic. At the surface tips associated with the comparable Chinese site of Garden Creek, some 10km to the north, there is a great variety of ceramic sherds mixed with bottles and opium canisters.²⁸ Presumably the ceramic debris of the half-century of Chinese occupation at Lone Star Creek is buried elsewhere in the valley.

Ah Toy's Garden is an interesting case-study in historical archaeology. The peculiar flavour of archaeological investigations in the relatively modern historical period is the interplay between documentary, physical and oral evidence. Tim Murray has recently written persuasively in the context of conservation philosophy about the problems of intradisciplinary conflict and interdisciplinary conflict, arguing that 'these conflicts, while unavoidable, are not unresolvable'.²⁹ The collaboration of skills on this obscure site in North Queensland is an example of such potential conflict resolved in practice. The expedition to the garden was inspired by oral communication in a college's senior common room, proven to be feasible by an initial field survey, and documented between the preliminary survey and the full-scale expedition by interviews in North Queensland and archival work in Brisbane. The survey and excavation in turn raised questions and the mere fact of living in the Palmer area for a month produced previously unknown or unavailable informants, including an impressive witness who as a young packman had known Ah Toy, his house and his garden. The archaeological data and the new oral testimony in turn sent two of us back to the archives in Brisbane, while the finds from the garden responded to study in New Zealand and New South Wales. At various stages in the process it seemed that the results of the archaeological work were inadequate. It was disappointing that the excavation of the house-site produced no evidence which would have shown it to be Chinese or indeed a house at all, but it is valuable to show that the archaeological record of a house built in such a way in such a place can be so bare. It is also valuable to show the interface of questioning and answering, turning from one source of evidence, from one discipline to another. The social and economic history of this exotic site could not be understood in any rounded way without the stimulation and information provided by three quite separate kinds of evidence. The improvisation practised by Ah Toy in this hostile environment combined features common to many outback sites in Australia and to a number of Chinese sites

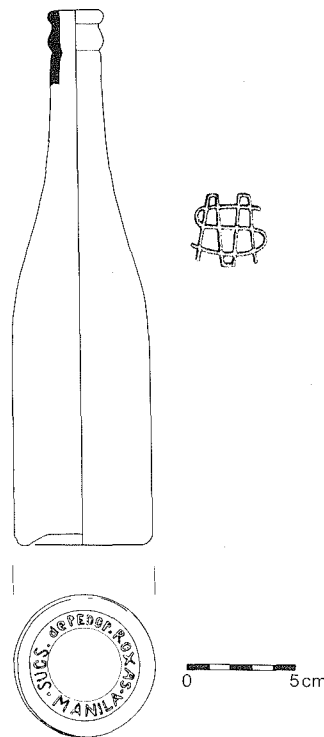


Fig. 13: Philippine beer bottle, Site 3B. The monogram is 'SM' for 'San Miguel', still the patron saint of Philippine beer. The base-stamp gives the maker in Manila.

in America: Ah Toy's brand of flexibility was no less necessary in those investigating his garden half a century after his death.

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The original site records are at present held in the Department of History, University of Sydney.

NOTES

1. For the Palmer River goldfield see Kirkman 1980 and Jack 1984, *passim*.
2. Hann Divisional Board, Valuation Register, 1883-1887: Queensland State Archives, A/23413.
3. Queensland *Government Gazette* 1880, Vol. 27, No. 50: 821-34.
4. Queensland State Archives, A/23413 p.9.
5. Mining Warden, Maytown, Cash Book, June 1880-October 1884: Queensland State Archives, MWO 13B/M2, 11/9/1883.
6. Queensland State Archives, A/23413 pp.34, 60.
7. Queensland State Archives, MWO 13B/M2, 1/4/1884.
8. Mining Warden, Maytown, Minute Book of Court, 31/10/1882-22/11/1887: Queensland State Archives, MWO 13B/3 p.205. Ah Ung is spelt variously as Auk Ung, Ah Hung, Ah Hing and Ah Ing.
9. Mining Warden, Maytown, Minute Book of Court, 27/9/1889-21/11/1903: Queensland State Archives, MWO 13B/5 p.72.
10. The railway plans were tabled in the Queensland Parliament on 16/10/1888, Queensland *Parliamentary Debates* 1888, Vol. 55: 780-6.
11. Mining Warden, Maytown, Minute Book of Court, 22/11/1887-27/9/1889: Queensland State Archives, MWO 13B/4 pp.364, 365, 388, 389, 405, 443, 455, 456, 470, 474, 477, 478.
12. Queensland State Archives, MWO 13B/5 p.450.
13. Clerk of Petty Sessions, Maytown, file of applications for registration of aliens in 1916-7: Queensland State Archives, CPS 13B/13, certificate 20 of 1916.

14. Mining Warden, Maytown, Register of Mining Rights, November 1874-May 1876: Queensland State Archives, MWO 13B/11, miner's right no. 75018.
15. Bell & Jack, forthcoming.
16. Interview with Jack Skinner by Ian Jack, 2/6/1982.
17. Information from Sam Elliott.
18. Protector of Aborigines, Cooktown, Diary: Queensland State Archives, POA 13/1.
19. Interview with Sonny Parsons by Ian Jack, 9/6/1982.
20. Interview with Jack Skinner by Ian Jack, 2/6/1982.
21. Information from Sam Elliott; interview with Sonny Parsons by Ian Jack, 9/6/1982.
22. *ibid.*; Mining Warden, Cooktown, Minute Book of Court, Queensland State Archives, MWO 13C/D4; Cairns, Electoral Roll, 1943.
23. Anson 1983: 115-38. Cf. Bedford, forthcoming.
24. Interview with Sonny Parsons by Ian Jack, 9/6/1982.
25. The only known print of this photograph is owned by Jack Skinner.
26. Smith 1983: 16.
27. Information from Sam Elliott; interview with Sonny Parsons by Ian Jack, 9/6/1982.
28. Field survey by Ian Jack, May 1981.
29. Murray 1983: 2.

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