THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JOHNNY CAMPBELL

Malcolm D. Prentis

Johnny Campbell is not as well-known as another bushranger hanged in 1880. His career was as interesting and could be as symbolic as the career of Ned Kelly. He was also less violent and more successful than Jimmy Governor. There are clear pragmatic and racial reasons for forgetfulness about Johnny Campbell.

When Johnny Campbell does appear in history, it is in one of four guises. First, he appears as another black rapist hanged, and used as a manifestation of the sexual-racial anxieties of whites on the frontier.¹ Secondly, he is seen as transitional figure in an age of bushranging - someone between primary resistance against white settlement and the Robin Hood tradition of bushranging. By 1900, Jimmy Governor had virtually completed the transition, but in the meantime, the Wide Bay region of Queensland had nurtured a whole series of black bushrangers - Yarraman, Sambo, the Dora Dora brothers as well as Johnny Campbell. All of these men had grown up during white settlement and retained their native skills while adopting some European mores and techniques.² He has been called, then and since, an Aboriginal Ned Kelly.³

Another stereotype which lurks behind some later, more romantic characterisations is that of Kabi tribal warrior. One who, as a schoolchild, saw him arrested said that 'no better specimen of aboriginal physique could be found.'⁴ The most romantic version appears in an early *History of Maryborough*:

('Black Campbell' was) a most intelligent individual, and conversant with many languages, speaking French, German, Italian and Gaelic. He received an education in Europe, where he was taken by Mr Campbell, a squatter.⁵

The linguistic facility and trip to Europe are attested elsewhere, but ascribed to his working for the Mortimers of Manumbar, which he did, but the trip and languages rest on no real evidence.

Finally, Johnny Campbell enjoyed some minor *post mortem* fame as an object of scientific study. His execution was brought forward for the convenience of 'the Moon Man', Baron Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay, who pickled Campbell's body and sent it to Berlin for scientific analysis. Campbell also appeared later as an unintentional informant in the anthropological works of John Mathew.

The life and death of Johnny Campbell span the period from first contacts with Europeans in south-east Queensland to the beginnings of scientific curiosity about a dying race. His career illustrates resistance, the consequences of dispossession and the exploitation

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1 Harris 1982:44.

2 Reynolds 1978:257; 1982:119.

3 Holthouse 1973:170; Reynolds 1982:119, quoting Maryborough Chronicle, 16 March 1880.

4 Bull 1974:64.

5 Loyau 1897:223 and Bull 1982:66.

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Photograph of Johnny Campbell.

The original caption read:

"KAGARIU, OR JOHNNIE CAMPBELL, OF KABI TRIBE, MARY RIVER,
QUEENSLAND, THE MOST NOTORIOUS NATIVE BUSHRANGER

(Ætat. 24.)

Photo kindly supplied by Queensland Penal Dept."

The photo may instead show Campbell at 34, (not 24) in 1880, before his hanging. From J. Mathew, *Two Representative Tribes of Queensland* (London, 1910), facing p.137.

Note: The Editors acknowledge the assistance of the Department of Family Services, Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs in contacting members of the Kabi people to receive permission to use this photograph.

of Aboriginal labour on the land as well as the old theme of the 'man between two cultures'.⁶ Probably, the insights into European attitudes expressed through the criminal law and the influence of science on racial attitudes and *vice versa* are even sharper.

Johnny Campbell's real name was Kagariu, possibly a Kabi word for *kookaburra*. The Kabi-speaking people occupied the area north of Brisbane from Bribie Island to Fraser Island and inland roughly to the ranges which divided the valleys of the Brisbane and Mary Rivers from that of the Burnett River, though extending somewhat into the last around Barambah and Manumbar. Their culture and language were fairly fully described by John Mathew in *Two representative tribes of Queensland*. John Mathew is also our only reliable witness on the early life of Kagariu.⁷

According to John Mathew, Kagariu was born in about 1846 at Imbil on Yabber (now spelt Yabba) Creek, a tributary of the Mary River.⁸ This was the heart of Kabi country, the territory of the Baiyambora clan. This clan name is open to question. As J.G. Steele points out, Mathew (tentatively) interprets the name to mean 'folk of the pipe' (with '-bora' as a standard ending for a clan name meaning 'folk'). Perhaps they changed their name to 'Baiyambora' after contact with tobacco.⁹ This particular clan, whatever its traditional name, had a long and close relationship with Manumbar station, just over the range and it was there that Mathew first met Kagariu and other 'Yabba blacks' in 1865, when he went to live there with his uncle, John Mortimer, the lessee.

Kagariu was born into the Dherwain section of the Dilbai moiety. His mother, Kami, would therefore have been Bonda-gan section of the same moiety. Kagariu was born at the very time the squatters were taking up runs in the Wide Bay and Burnett districts, and there was a rumour that Kagariu's father was shot for stealing sheep, which may help to explain Kagariu's later career. The father would have been Barang of the Kopait-thin moiety. Evidently, the Barang had some particular prestige around Manumbar, as John Mortimer of Manumbar was assigned to Barang section.¹⁰

Kagariu's mother remarried, necessarily to a classificatory brother of her deceased husband, another Barang called Bual. In due course, a younger half-brother was born, called Kilkaibriu. The half-brothers were not alike in appearance; the younger brother was to grow to six feet three (183cm) in height and Kagariu to about five feet three (160cm) and was particularly ugly by European standards. Mathew's better knowledge, photographic and other evidence weigh against the reminiscence of the witness to the capture of Johnny Campbell quoted above.¹¹

There is conflicting evidence, too, on the source of the name, Johnny Campbell. Loyau avers that Johnny Campbell was named after a squatter called Campbell, who took him to Europe.¹² There is no evidence for this at all, indeed positive evidence of different employers at the likely times. Some witnesses suggest he had served in the Native Police and troopers were often given European names.¹³ The only time this could have happened

⁶ Lockwood 1964:95.

⁷ Mathew 1880, 1889, 1899 and 1910.

⁸ Mathew 1880:2.

⁹ Steele 1983:216-217 and Mathew 1910:130.

¹⁰ Mathew 1910:134, 135, 137.

¹¹ Mathew 1880:4; 1889:341; 1910: facing 137; Lilley 1880:52; Bull 1974:64.

¹² Loyau 1897:223.

¹³ Heap 1980:13; Loyau 1897:223. Like some other incidents, this may have been transferred from Billy Lillis's life.

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was a couple of years in his late teens. Heap suggests the name came from a period in which Kagariu worked in the timber industry.¹⁴ This is unlikely, given his constant liking for work with stock, his general preference for the hills and specific contrary evidence. Mathew is quite clear that Johnny Campbell was named after a storekeeper on Manumbar station. Even though this would have been before Mathew arrived, he was there long enough and is a credible enough witness for us to accept his version.¹⁵

We may presume that Kagariu remained in the Imbil-Yabba area until about the age of 12. Furthermore, we are told by John Mathew that he had learned horsemanship by that age. In about 1858, a Mr White took him to Drayton, near Toowoomba, where he worked for two years or more with horses. Here he mastered English more thoroughly, to the extent of temporarily losing fluency in Kabi. He learned to whistle and sing several popular airs such as 'Early in de mornin' ' and 'In the 'tran [Strand]'. Two things emerge from this early employment: his acknowledged great skill with horses and his better than normal grasp of the English language, both of which became points of pride to him later.¹⁶

After his stint on the Darling Downs, Kagariu moved back home. Around this time, probably 1860-61, the Baiyambora or Yabba clan had moved to Manumbar station. Manumbar remained 'home' to Kagariu for most of the next eleven years. The Yabba folk had previously worked from time to time on various stations, including Manumbar, Imbil and Yabber. One factor prompting the permanent move may have been the notorious Native Police massacre of February 1861, which occurred between Yabba and Manumbar and most seriously harmed the Yabba folk. John Mortimer of Manumbar emerged from the incident as the best defender the local Kabi-speakers could expect; it was his agitation which formed part of the impetus behind the setting-up of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Native Police in May 1861.¹⁷

Johnny Campbell, as he was now known, lived and worked with his kin on Manumbar station. He acquired a reputation as a courageous horseman, who could ride securely on the wildest horse. He was said to be vain about his horsemanship and believed he was cleverer than other blacks. Bound up with this was his apparent rejection of what Mathew called 'the traditions and superstitions of [his] fathers' - he laughed at them. Though he could not read or write, he took offence at being addressed in 'the jargon' (pidgin) and prided himself on the superiority of his English.

We have only fragmentary information about Johnny Campbell's life on Manumbar. There is general agreement that he attended for a time the Sunday School run by the devoutly Presbyterian Mortimers on Manumbar. Through this he picked up a smattering of Christian doctrine and morality but, as John Mathew testifies, religion was not his 'favourite topic' and he went to the gallows officially described as a 'pagan'.¹⁸

There are stories illustrating Campbell's service of his white masters. One, sadly untrue, concerns Charles Green, Manager of Yabba cattle run, who was out mustering, ran into a tree and knocked himself unconscious only to wake up three days later in the dining room of Yabba station, thanks to Johnny Campbell's carrying him safely there.¹⁹ John

14 Heap 1980:13.

15 Mathew 1880:3. But see the last paragraph of this article, below.

16 Mathew 1880:2-3.

17 Prentis forthcoming.

18 Mathew 1880:5-6; Barber 1967:189.

19 Heap 1980:14. On checking Green 1939:9, this story also refers to another Kabi 'outlaw', Billy Lillis, and occurred in the 1890s.

Mathew himself was saved from drowning in a waterhole by Campbell. Dating this incident is impossible, but around 1865 to 1867 is the most likely period.²⁰

About this time, perhaps 1867, Johnny Campbell married Nelly, of Balkuin-gan section. Mathew's observation was that marriage to this 'vivacious and mirthful, amiable and attentive' woman had improved Campbell's character, at least temporarily: he was a 'confiding, contented and indulgent' husband. Nelly bore Campbell a baby son. However, before long, Johnny and Nelly Campbell began to have occasional tiffs. He blamed his loss of nerve on horses on Nelly and began expressing his jealousy by physically abusing her. On one occasion in 1871 two other black station workers, Waruin and Turandiu found Johnny and Nelly wrestling on the ground, Nelly having thrown her husband. Only Turandiu would help Johnny because Waruin was of Nelly's moiety. It was a question of brothers and sisters. On his release, Johnny beat Nelly severely and made her dive into a waterhole to retrieve an axe. They were now estranged permanently.²¹

John Mathew has left several clear descriptions of Johnny Campbell's appearance when they both worked on Manumbar station. The descriptions were gradually toned down. In 1910, a photograph of Campbell was provided; in 1899 he was described as unprepossessing. In 1889, he was 'about as ugly, from a European point of view, as it were possible to conceive.'²² In the unpublished manuscript of 1880:

His appearance was decidedly disappointing, contemptible and repulsive. His only clothing was a blue serge shirt gathered at the waist by a saddle strap. Although at full stature, he was miserably stunted being only about 5ft 3in in height.

He weighed less than seven stone (40kg), his 'hair was thick, long, wavy and tangled', his forehead 'low and retreating' and his 'nose broad and flat'. In this early unpublished work, Mathew made the unusually unqualified remark:

He was ugly even for a blackfellow and his physique and physiognomy, the dimple only excepted, were an accurate index of his moral character as afterwards exhibited in full development.²³

Violence was not only manifest against Nelly. As early as his late teens, Campbell began his life of crime against the whites. Or, at least, he was first *accused* of a crime at this time. The dates and order of events up to 1872 are difficult or impossible to establish. However, some time about 1864 or 1865, Campbell was accused of molesting the five year old daughter of a Manumbar shepherd known as Tom. Campbell and an associate, called Billy, who may have been Billy Lillis, another Yabba 'station black' who turned bad, robbed the shepherd's hut and rode off. After an absence of two years, Campbell returned to live with his family in the home paddock at Marumbar. He was given the benefit of the doubt on account of his horse breaking skills.²⁴ Holthouse reports that a few whites at the time thought he started his life of crime 'by being blamed for an assault he did not commit.' If so, then the incident of Tom's daughter was probably it, though Campbell's record of interest in white women was long and fairly consistent.²⁵

²⁰ Mathew, R.Y. 1973:30.

²¹ Mathew 1880:6-8; 1910:137.

²² Mathew 1910: facing 137, 1899:10, 1889:341.

²³ Mathew 1880:4.

²⁴ Ibid.:3-4.

²⁵ Holthouse 1973:170.

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About 1871 or 1872, Johnny Campbell was working as a cattle-hand for Edgar Foreman, who had charge of a herd owned by a Brisbane merchant at Lake Dunethin in the Maroochy River valley. As with other white observers, Foreman commented on Campbell's apparently contradictory character. Campbell was never seen as a threat to the 17 year-old Mrs Foreman, even when her husband was absent. Foreman called Campbell a 'superb horseman and ... a man of his word' and added:

a better or more honest fellow could not be found, and when he turned out one of the greatest scoundrels that ever breathed I was simply astonished.²⁶

On one occasion, Foreman gave Campbell some rum for the weekend and the latter promised to be back on Monday. Campbell turned up for work as promised with a huge gash down his left side from ribs to hip, the result of a drunken fight. In consideration of his valued worker, Foreman tended the wound and gave Campbell time off to recover. Foreman moved south to the Pine River and Johnny Campbell went west over the range to the south Burnett district.²⁷

It is most likely that Campbell now headed for Manumbar looking for work. John Mathew mentions three incidents at this point. There was an attempt to waylay a Miss T., a shepherd's daughter. He is alleged to have sent a false message to a German lady which was wisely ignored.²⁸ Holthouse mentions a story in which Campbell 'waylaid a schoolmistress riding through a property' where he was working, she whipped him across the face and had him flogged to boot.²⁹

A somewhat better-attested story has Campbell starting his career of crime with an attack on a shepherd's wife at Manumbar. This is confirmed by Mathew, who names the shepherd as Tom F., whose young daughter Campbell was alleged to have molested previously. If the shepherd had thought Campbell guilty of the earlier offence, it seems strange that he would get Campbell to mind the sheep while he left his wife behind and went to the diggings to buy supplies. However, Mathew evidently knew the story in some detail, for he says that after Campbell took the sheep out, he reappeared at 10 a.m. and made indecent advances to Mrs F. and allegedly assaulted her, although the full extent of the assault was not divulged in public.³⁰

Serious assault or hysterical over-reaction we do not know, but Johnny Campbell headed for Nanango, near which he stole a horse, and then abducted an Aboriginal-Chinese girl from Gayndah. On his way back in the direction of Manumbar, he stayed for a day or two with friendly Aborigines on Bonara station. Though harboured by Aborigines, he was betrayed by one of them.³¹ This contradictory relationship with black communities was to continue right up to his hanging eight years later. Just as Johnny Campbell constantly probed and occasionally violated the white-set boundaries of black behaviour, so the communities he used as protection when a fugitive explored the boundaries between traditional obligations and the need for a quiet life. Captured at Bonara station in 1872, Campbell was tried at Maryborough and sentenced to ten years for assault and attempted rape.³²

²⁶ Heap 1980:14; Holthouse 1973:171; Foreman 1928:96-99.

²⁷ Heap 1980:14; Foreman 1928:95-97.

²⁸ Mathew 1880:i.

²⁹ Holthouse 1973:170.

³⁰ Murphy and Easton 1950:263; Mathew 1880:9.

³¹ Mathew 1880:10.

³² Heap 1980:14.

Campbell was released for good behaviour after seven years in about June of 1879, and immediately headed for his old haunts. There are interesting but unverified stories about his state of mind on his release from gaol. In essence, it is suggested that Johnny Campbell swore revenge for what white men had done to black women.³³ Though he was obviously very keen on women especially white women, and he was eventually hanged for rape, this rape was the only actual rape he appears to have done and far more typical behaviour was the raid on an isolated farm-house. He was primarily a bushranger not a rapist,³⁴ but became a fantasy hate-figure for a white community anxious to keep the 'Aboriginal problem' out of the way.

Between 19 June 1879 and 15 March 1880, when he was captured, Johnny Campbell terrified the white population of south-east Queensland. His raids were centred on Kilkivan but ranged far and wide. His *modus operandi* was generally to wait until a hut or homestead was deserted or the woman of the house was alone and rob it. He occasionally had help from, often had the company of, and several times was protected by Kabi people. Campbell was armed with a rifle and was claimed to be a crack shot, but he only shot at someone once during his nine-month rampage.³⁵ He exploited his intimate knowledge of the topography and his great bushcraft to evade capture again and again. One ploy was to walk along the tops of the post-and-rail fences in order to leave no tracks. He often travelled at night. He often sent out a companion - usually a female - as a forward scout. Until almost the very end, police and trackers were unable to pin Campbell down.³⁶

Campbell began with a series of raids on houses in late June. By mid-July, many robberies later, several police had been thrown into the chase.³⁷ In early August, he robbed an Aboriginal, and many of his people were growing tired of Campbell's demands for hospitality and help, and his helping himself to their women, not to mention 'constant harassment by police search parties'.³⁸ Just after the early August attack, Campbell was camped with the Kilkivan station blacks. The owner found out and sent a black worker with some brandy to get him drunk, but another black warned him. A few days later, near Kilkivan, he abducted a twelve year-old Aboriginal girl and struck an older black woman.³⁹ By October, the Kabi were growing markedly less co-operative with Campbell.

Through the rest of August and September, more homestead raids and attempted raids occurred near Gympie and 50 miles south near Kilcoy. Campbell was now said to be travelling with two women, whom he used as ambassadors when encountering an Aboriginal camp. Through October, travellers, lonely farms and a timber camp in the Gympie area were robbed.

Again, it is impossible to place the following incident exactly, but it fits best in early November, when Johnny Campbell headed for less inhabited parts with a large Kabi woman, reputed to have weighed 18 stone (133kg).⁴⁰ Constable Tom King of Gympie and a tracker by the same surname were hot on Campbell's heels, and traced him to a farm on the upper Mary River, where the farmer told them Campbell was hiding in the pigsty. The

³³ Heap 1980:14; Holthouse 1973:171; Harris 1982:24.

³⁴ Mathew 1880:10 says that assaults on women were 'all but perpetrated'.

³⁵ Mathew 1880:10; Holthouse 1973:175.

³⁶ Murphy and Easton 1950:264.

³⁷ Holthouse 1973:171 ff usefully summarizes all the attacks in chronological order.

³⁸ Holthouse 1973:173.

³⁹ Mathew 1880:11; Holthouse 1973:172.

⁴⁰ Mathew 1880:12; Holthouse 1973:174.

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Area of Johnny Campbell's Activities in South East Queensland.

constable was unable to effect a capture, and Campbell escaped inland. He now lay low for about two months.

In January 1880, Johnny Campbell was in the Kilcoy area, robbing a farmhouse east of there on the 5th. In February, fatefully, he was about 30 miles (48km) south of Kilcoy, 35 miles (56 km) north of Ipswich, at Kipper Creek, Northbrook. At about 9 a.m. on 10 February, Johnny Campbell came to the farmhouse of the Stewart family. Flora McDougall Stewart was alone with her 14 year-old sister, Jane Macalister, and her two young children, one of whom was a baby. Campbell asked for matches, chatted generally with the two women, asked about the local blacks of Wivenhoe, where he said he was headed. Mrs Stewart gave him a bag as shelter as it started to rain. At this point, the stories diverge. Campbell claimed he had been solicited by young Jane Macalister; the court accepted that he had used threats to force her to succumb to rape. (This will be examined later in relation to the trial.)⁴¹

Campbell and his large mate headed north once more. In the Pine River area, he had a brush with the police, when a Sergeant Campbell and his tracker Billy got close. Johnny Campbell shot Billy in the shoulder and the Sergeant unsuccessfully returned fire.⁴² Johnny Campbell continued northward, heading for the Noosa River. There is one version of this flight which implies that it was a pilgrimage, back to his home territory - almost as if going home to die.⁴³ As we have seen, his homeland was Yabba Creek, further inland. Mathew was probably on the right track when he said that he was going to stay with the relatives of his 18-stone companion, as she did come from Tewantin.⁴⁴ There are also suggestions that Campbell's flight was a desperate attempt to evade the police trackers.⁴⁵ The police did not know about the rape yet and were after him for robbery and assault. Accounts suggest that Campbell's trek was far from secret, and the tracker Johnny Griffin was not relying as much on arcane bushcraft as he was on intelligence reports from Aborigines fed up with the cost of helping Campbell. A group of white school children saw Campbell and his mate moving through Mooloolah on their way to Noosa.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Johnny Griffin the tracker was the halfbrother of Campbell's companion so he and Constable Tommy King knew where Campbell was going and headed for Tewantin. He was captured on Monday, 15 March 1880.

The precise details of the capture vary slightly from story to story, but it would appear that Campbell was hiding near the bank of the Noosa River on a property called Hilton, near a large Aboriginal camp.⁴⁷ (The area now has a park and street named after Hilton, just east of Tewantin across the Donella bridge.) Johnny Griffin was not known to Campbell as a police tracker and caught the latter off-guard, literally pouncing on him with a brother, Sandy Fleming, and another Aboriginal called Brady. Campbell offered them five pounds to let go, but Griffin retorted that the government would give much more to hold on. Indeed, Sergeant Pickering told the Tewantin Aborigines they would get a reward of 100 pounds.⁴⁸ What rewards Griffin and the community actually received is unclear. John Mathew reports

41 *Daily Observer*, 28 July 1880; Lilley 1880.

42 Mathew 1880:12; Holthouse 1973:175.

43 Heap 1980:15; Holthouse 1973:176.

44 Mathew 1880:12.

45 Heap 1980:15; Murphy and Easton 1950:264.

46 Heap 1980:15.

47 Heap 1980:16; Bull 1982:69; Holthouse 1973:176-177.

48 Bull 1974:84.

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that the Tewantin whites gave a feast to honour the black community.⁴⁹ They were supposed to have been given a free trip to Brisbane on the steamer *Culgoa* for the hanging,⁵⁰ which hardly qualifies as a reward. The captors were also reported to have been given a whaleboat, two fishing nets and other gear.⁵¹ The original source for most details is D.W. Bull, who was a schoolboy in Tewantin in 1880 and saw the aftermath of the capture and heard the story from Johnny Griffin himself and other Aborigines.⁵²

Two days later, the captured bushranger was sent to Gympie by Cobb & Co. and put in the lockup. Campbell's long-time pursuer, Constable King visited his quarry in the lockup and the following dialogue is plausibly supposed to have occurred.

King: Hello, you black bastard. We have got you at last.

Campbell: Hello, you white bastard. You couldn't get me, I was too good for you.

King was determined to get the better of Campbell and tried to throw him. Sergeant Pickering and other police had to rescue King from humiliation, as Campbell had thrown the constable and had a good grip on his throat.⁵³

From Gympie, Campbell was transferred to Maryborough for trial. At the criminal sittings of the District Court in Maryborough on 3 April 1880, before Mr Justice Blake, Johnny Campbell was convicted of assault and robbery and sentenced to fourteen years in Brisbane Gaol.⁵⁴ In the meantime - it is impossible to know exactly when - news of the Kipper Creek alleged rape came to light. Though the victim and her sister had told a neighbour, they did not immediately report the incident because (Mrs Stewart said) of the disgrace involved.⁵⁵ On 12 May, three months after the incident, Jane Macalister was examined by Dr Alexander MacKintosh.⁵⁶ On 20 May, in Ipswich, Johnny Campbell was committed for trial for rape by Magistrate William Townley. The trial was set for 26 July in the Circuit Court, meeting in Ipswich and depositions were to be received by 28 May.⁵⁷

Over three days, from 26 to 28 July, 1880, Johnny Campbell was tried for the rape of Jane Macalister. No chances were taken: the Chief Justice Charles Lilley presided and Virgil Power prosecuted.⁵⁸ Campbell was defended by Frederick Ffoulkes Swanwick (1839-1913), a maverick politician and barrister well-known as a campaigner against the death penalty. He was independent MLA for Bulimba, 1878-1882.⁵⁹

In the second half of last century, Queensland had a higher rate of execution than the rest of Australia, especially for rape.⁶⁰ An attempt to abolish the death penalty for rape in 1860 was overwhelmingly defeated in the Legislative Assembly. Significantly, the main

⁴⁹ Mathew 1880:13.

⁵⁰ Bull 1982:70; Heap 1980:16 suggests they travelled overland.

⁵¹ Heap 1980:16.

⁵² Bull 1974:84.

⁵³ Bull 1974:85; Bull 1982:70.

⁵⁴ *Queenslander*, 10 April 1880.

⁵⁵ *Daily Observer*, 28 July 1880.

⁵⁶ Lilley 1880:31.

⁵⁷ Register of Criminal Depositions Received, 1865-85, QSA: JUS/52, p.208.

⁵⁸ Information, depositions and associated papers filed in Criminal Cases, Ipswich 1861-1882, QSA: CCT 2/1.

⁵⁹ Waterson 1972:175; Barber 1967:68-69, 201; Fowler 1962:84.

⁶⁰ Barber 1967:4.

arguments used by retentionists were the sparse population of Queensland, the isolation of women in the bush and the relatively large numbers of Aborigines present. Death was the only real deterrent for Aborigines, it was argued.⁶¹ Between 1860 and 1900, there were 14 executions for rape in Queensland of whom ten were Aborigines and three were Kanakas. Rapists were only half as likely to have their sentences commuted as other capital offenders. All seven rapists hanged to 1875 were Aborigines who had raped white women.⁶²

Quite clearly, rape was a race issue in Queensland. The death of a black woman was of less account than the violation of a white woman. Harris argues that

The rape of a white woman by a black man was regarded by the dominant ideology of Queensland colonial society as an assault on the supremacy of the white race for which retribution had to be exacted swiftly and surely.⁶³

On the Aboriginal side, this was decidedly not what such rape meant, if the Campbell case was at all typical. In terms of European attitudes, the deeply ingrained and Biblically-derived belief and feeling about sexual intercourse as 'knowing' and as sealing the one-ness of flesh of the two parties gave special point to the revulsion evoked by rape. Rape was cruel but it was also inappropriate and presumptuous. So much more was this the case when the rapist was an inferior. It is not irrelevant that Johnny Campbell's religion was described officially as 'pagan'⁶⁴ and that his brain was studied scientifically after his execution.

The prosecution case was based almost entirely on evidence from Mrs Stewart and Jane Macalister that Johnny Campbell pointed a pistol at Mrs Stewart, said 'I want a scrape', indicating her sister, and chased her until she submitted. Swanwick called no witnesses, though he did vigorously cross-examine, simply giving a speech in defence, which referred to the general treatment of blacks in Queensland, stating that

numerous were the cases of white men ravishing black women, and the blackfellow naturally imitated his white fellowman to whom he looked for an example in morality and civilization.

He then appealed to the jury to be colour-blind.⁶⁵ Secondhand stories about Campbell's alleged threats against white women, though contrary to what evidence we have, and Swanwick's imaginative defence are both persuasively misleading about Campbell's motives.

Lilley's summing up took nearly two hours. In it, he asserted about Swanwick's argument that

the diatribes in reference to the treatment of aboriginals by white men, were quite foreign to the case; and were no argument ... sentimentalism must not be allowed to weigh; ...

The Chief Justice was in no doubt and neither was the jury. Within fifteen minutes, the foreman John Hine announced the guilty verdict.⁶⁶

The only time in his life we hear Johnny Campbell's own words is his response to the Judge's invitation to speak before sentencing. The reporter noted that Campbell appeared nervous and emotional, accepted the invitation and spoke in 'broken English'.

⁶¹ Ibid.:53-55.

⁶² Ibid.:198, 62, 64.

⁶³ Harris 1982:44.

⁶⁴ Barber 1967:189.

⁶⁵ *Daily Observer*, 28 July 1880.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 29 July 1880.

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There's some story there; I did not do such thing; that woman tell lot of lie on me; I'm not supposed to be guilty; he [referring to female witness] says a lot of stories about me putting revolver to his head; I was standing by Creek and he called me down himself; before that he asked me how much money I had; I'm not supposed to be guilty.

The judge 'could not credit the statement',⁶⁷ but the writer's subjective and instinctive reaction to it was that it seemed sincere. The medical evidence had been inconclusive, the neighbour's evidence second-hand and some passages of the sisters' testimonies were identical. There is also the long delay between the incident and formal complaint, which occurred *after* Campbell had been imprisoned in April. A plausible explanation would be that the two European women interpreted their actions as placatory defensiveness while Johnny Campbell perceived them as acquiescent, and that they reported the incident (possibly to counter the inevitable rumours about Jane) when there was publicity about Campbell in March and April. More sinister interpretations are possible, but unnecessary to explain known facts and lacking other evidence. It certainly suited the government to be able to try Campbell for a capital crime.

After the usual review of sentence, Johnny Campbell was hanged at Brisbane Gaol on 16 August 1880, in the morning. Three hundred Kabi people were said to have been brought down to witness it:⁶⁸ the *Telegraph* reported an 'unusually large number of witnesses.' Campbell was reported to have 'showed strong emotion when his hour arrived,' attended by the conscientious Rev. J.K. Black. Death was also instantaneous.⁶⁹

Johnny Campbell had a date with science. Waiting patiently since May for a choice specimen of *Homo australis* (his phrase) was the eminent Scots-Russian scientist, Baron Nickolai Miklouho-Maclay. Maclay had been studying exotic creatures in the south-west Pacific islands between March 1879 and May 1880, when he arrived in Brisbane. He had a particular interest in collecting the skulls and examining the brains of Melanesians and Aborigines, as well as measuring and photographing living specimens.⁷⁰

Maclay had strong support from the Queensland government for his studies of Johnny Campbell's corpse. He had the full cooperation and help of R.H. Staiger, the former Government Analytical Chemist, and advice and hospitality from the Surveyor-General A.C. Gregory. While waiting for the execution, Maclay had gone bush and stayed for part of the time with Joshua Peter Bell of Jimbour. The government gave him the use of a room in the old museum as a laboratory.⁷¹

On the afternoon of the day of the execution, Maclay only had time to remove Campbell's brain. Later, he photographed and studied it, concluding that the 'convolutions ... indicate ... a good deal of intellectual capacity.'⁷² The next day, the Baron removed the entire intestinal tract and injected Wickersheimer's fluid into the corpse's veins and arteries. Cold weather on the 16 and 17 August helped temporary preservation until the corpse was immersed in a bath of a modified Wickersheimer's fluid: 40 gallons (192 l) of water in which was dissolved 40 pounds (18 kg) of common salt, four pounds of white arsenic, two pounds of potassium carbonate and three pounds of corrosive sublimate. The body had to be

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Heap 1980:16.

⁶⁹ *Telegraph*, 16 August 1880.

⁷⁰ Webster 1984:241; Miklouho-Maclay 1881a:171-173.

⁷¹ Miklouho-Maclay 1881b:578, 1881a:174.

⁷² *Queenslander*, 2 October 1880:421; Miklouho-Maclay 1881b:578.

pricked hundreds of times after ten to fourteen days to relieve swelling and increase fluid penetration.⁷³

After two months with what the press called his 'close companion', Maclay shipped the specimen to Professor Rudolf Virchow of Berlin, hoping it would add to knowledge of the comparative anatomy of mankind.⁷⁴ The Anthropological Society of Berlin met on 19 March 1881 and was told by Professor Virchow that the poor preserved shell of Johnny Campbell had arrived safely and in good condition. The Professor and his pupils would subject it to 'valuable dissections'. In May 1881, Maclay told the Linnean Society of New South Wales about his scientific travels and the preservation of Campbell's corpse.⁷⁵

Science had not finished with Johnny Campbell. He makes several appearances in the works of John Mathew, who obviously had many opportunities to observe him and talk to him. At the time, circa 1865-70, Mathew was not an ethnographic collector, but was just interested. Later, in works in 1889, 1899 and 1910, he used Kagariu - Johnny Campbell - to illustrate or demonstrate kinship systems and types of physiognomy amongst the Kabi. Mathew was clearly fascinated by Campbell - he did not fit an Aboriginal stereotype.

It is easy enough to see Johnny Campbell as an incomprehensible victim. He was typical and not typical, a black man who welcomed much of the white world without leaving his kin, traditional life and skills behind. His behaviour, to the extent that it is clearly reported, has a certain consistency. He had personal demons, not just racial ones. He was used well by some whites and badly by others, and reacted accordingly. He was a bushranger like other bushrangers, but his use of bushcraft and kinship links to remain at large were definitely Aboriginal. His end demonstrates in sharp focus the transition of Aborigines from acute threat to scientific specimen, and the way in which they could be stripped of their dignity by well-meaning whites, as well as of their lives by the less well-meaning.

The personal demons suggest themselves: relationships with women, the loss of his father as an infant. In the presumed year of Johnny Campbell's birth, a report appeared in the *Moreton Bay Courier* concerning an attack on Rosewood station in the Burnett. Twenty or so Aborigines approached the homestead and demanded money, tobacco and flour at spear-point. Their leader, who had quite good English, was among three who were shot dead. His name was Campbell.⁷⁶

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⁷³ Miklouho-Maclay 1881b:577-578.

⁷⁴ *Queenslander*, 2 October 1880:421; Miklouho-Maclay 1881b:577-578.

⁷⁵ Webster 1984:243; Miklouho-Maclay 1881b:576-577.

⁷⁶ *Moreton Bay Courier*, 5 September 1846, quoted by Taylor 1967:138-139. See also Mathew 1880:2.

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