

Coloureds and Catholics:

A Colonial Subject's Narrative of the Factors and Processes that led to the Colonisation and Conversion of Coloureds at Garden Point Mission, 1941 -1967

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of Charles Darwin University for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Faculty of Law, Business and Arts, Charles Darwin University.

2007

DECLARATION

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the work presented in this thesis for the degree of Philosophy of Charles Darwin University, is the result of my own investigation, and all references to ideas or the work of other researchers have been specifically acknowledged. I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Sue J Stanton – Tjalingmara, Kungarakan-Gurindji

Invasion Day, 26 January 2007

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my ‘Old Black Aunty’ Aunt Rowena Abala Stroud – Wetjie of my children and grandchildren. It is also dedicated to my Brother, Daryl Stroud and to all those taken to Garden Point Mission as part of the colonial experiment. Many have since learned it was part of a genocidal mission cloaked in the robe of assimilation.

This thesis is dedicated to all Aboriginal, Native, First Nations and other Indigenous Peoples who have suffered under the yoke of British and other western-type colonialism and its conquerors, as well as the many imperial invaders and others acting out their “divine right” as part of their so-called civilising mission while justifying European expansionism.

To all the Coloured kids taken to Garden Point Mission and to Tiwi Islanders - my gratitude and respect.

To those women at Daly River who told me stories about my Wetjie, Alayandubu and to my Mothers Sadie Ludwig Kibbimloonj, Kathy Mills Muradoop, Mim McGinness Tiboyak and Joan Angeles, while not forgetting those who have already taken the journey home, Joyce Patullo and Maree McGinness. I thank all these women for their inspiration and for sharing with me their stories about being Coloured and growing up and living in the Northern Territory during the crucial apartheid policy periods some of which are covered in this thesis. I acknowledge Mimbingal Vai Stanton (deceased) who I grew up knowing as my First Mother, who had first-hand experience with government authority and exemption and who related and validated some of the Coloured stories and Northern Territory history that all my generation, and all subsequent generations of Darwin Coloureds know so well.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this work would not have been possible without the incredible patience, sound advice and western wisdom of Professor David Carment, AM, my supervisor.

I must acknowledge my wonderful friendships with Dr. Alistair Heatley (deceased) and Dr. Lyn Riddett (ex Northern Territory University) who helped guide me through those early years and who gave me the best advice at the start of my western academic journey – “Go read western philosophy and some of this just might start making sense”.

I acknowledge Professor Mary Ann Bin-Sallik, Charles Darwin University, who has been a long-time mentor. As well, I acknowledge all the Retta Dixon Home ex inmates and all the ‘Coloured’ girls from Parap Camp.¹

As well I must acknowledge an assortment of folk outside of the university including my children Adam, Soneva and Erin and my Grannie Kerrienne, my Cousin/Sister Sally (Abala) McDowell and her husband Mack who fed and housed me on my many trips back to Darwin. My childhood friend, Eileen Whiteley, has provided much support and encouragement and has ensured my feet remained firmly within my ‘old Darwin’ boundaries. A special thank you to Barbara Cummings (author of *Take This Child*) and to all the Retta Dixon survivors, some who also shared their stories and many who are still ‘big sisters’ and ‘big brothers’ and great friends.

At a stage when I thought I would not continue with this thesis, Lorna Cubillo and

¹ Parap Camp, now known as Stuart Park, was the area surveyed prior to the Second World War. Westralia, Charles and Duke Streets are the only streets left which still reflect the aligned tracks set out during the military occupation of that area. Army battalions occupied this area as it was the Army Staging Camp during the war years. Iron structures erected were known as Sidney William huts. In 1948 the Northern Territory Administration purchased these huts from the Army, along with some smaller huts at what was known as K9 Camp, a former Civil Construction Corps camp built in 1941.

The Sidney William huts and the smaller fibro structures of K9 camp and surrounds were later to be occupied by both paying tenants and squatters and thus developed the Parap Camp Coloured community. Information courtesy of Donal Raethel, *Stuart Park: A Landscape History*, BA unpublished manuscript, Northern Territory University, 1997, p.23 The author’s father purchased one of these ex-Army fibro structures in Charles Street and it remained the family home until the late 1970s.

Peter Gunner, without even knowing, provided inspiration to an increasingly sad and depressed psyche that had decided it could no longer read or write about the whole western colonial horror script that they had actually featured in.

There are many others who must be acknowledged for their constant encouragement and support, especially Indigenous friends and colleagues here in Australia, especially great colleague and good friend, Professor Marcia Langton, AM, University of Melbourne. As well there are those good friends and adopted family in Native America. All of these people appreciate and understand the pressures and unreasonable expectations put on the Indigenous scholar in a number of situations, especially as many of our group came late to academia, the women most often after the children had graduated from high school, and just as they were becoming first-time Grannies. There are of course too many others who must be acknowledged for their constant support and encouragement, and interest – I simply do not have the space to write all the names down, but they know who they are.

I make special acknowledgment of the Larrakia people in whose country I was born. This is also a tribute to my Kungarakan ancestors, in particular my Wetjie, Alayandubu (Lucy McGinness), and to all those almiyuks and namiyuks who set the rules in place and have guided us thus far. Acknowledgment and respect to all of my kin of the Paperbark country, Kurrindju.² I greet you – Kemec! Remembering too, all my Gurindji family, especially my Grandmother Violet (Polly) Wakelin McGinness who was taken from her country and imprisoned at Kahlin Compound, Darwin.

I honour my first Grandfather Kingalawuy John (Jack) McGinness (Kungarakan) and his brother Pumeri Joseph (Joe) McGinness who were instrumental in the early struggle for “Coloured” or “Half-castes” rights which helped set the groundwork for all future Aboriginal rights and land struggles, in the Northern Territory and Australia-wide. This struggle continues. Also my Uncle Speedy McGinness (Kungarakan-Gurindji).

I pay tribute to my Father James (Jim) Everard Stanton – an early pioneer who was

² Kurrindju – the head of Kungarakan country. Kurrindju, south-west in the Wagait Reserve.

brave enough to leave the safety of his family in Newcastle and Sydney in the late 1930s and who established the branch of Coloured Stantons in Darwin.

I am grateful to those many Aboriginal and Indigenous networks of friends who generously helped me with their thoughts, ideas and suggestions, who took the time to introduce and share with me the philosophies and perspectives presented throughout this thesis. I thank all listed below for helping me to find the right words:

University of Arizona, Tucson:

Professor Tom Holm (Cherokee-Muskogee Creek) – Professor, American Indian Studies;

Professor Rob Williams Jr. (Lumbee) – Thomas Sullivan Professor of Law; American Indian Studies; Director, Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy Program;

Professor James Anaya (Purepecha-Apache) – James J. Lenoir Professor of Human Rights Law and Policy;

Professor Salomon Baldenegro, Director, Chicano Studies.

Mr Tomas Martinez, Chicano Studies, Tucson Unified Schools District (TUSD)

Others I wish to acknowledge are my White Mountain Apache Mother, Avelin Gordon at White River Apache Reservation, White Mountain, Arizona; my sisters, Stephanie and Janelle Joseph. A special thank you for the wonderful trips into Mexico, New Mexico and Nevada and through all the beautiful canyons and deserts of that region, and for the introductions to some of the most amazingly interesting and knowledgeable people I have ever met.

Curtis Kekkabah (Kansa) of North Carolina for both spiritual and cultural guidance and for helping me to stay on the right path.

Special acknowledgment of Vine Deloria Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux) - who joined his ancestors 13 November 2005 and Ward Churchill (Keetowah Cherokee), Professor of American Indian Studies, at University of Colorado, Boulder for their wonderful writings and continued inspiration. The aforementioned, and so many others who I

Vai Stanton: “Kurrindju is always called the head of Kungarakana country”. p. 70 in *Finniss River Land Claim* from *Report by the Aboriginal Lands Commissioner to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the Administrator of the Northern Territory*, original transcript p.784, Interim edition, *Canberra*, 1981

simply cannot list here, are responsible for re-awakening the dormant questions, releasing the suppressed voice, putting me back on the right path to the truth about colonialism.

Thank you to Professor Rob Castle, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), University of Wollongong for his encouragement and support whilst I was working under demanding and relentless pressure in both management and academic roles. I also acknowledge the support given to me by Dean of Arts, Professor Andrew Wells. I am grateful to the University of Wollongong for financial support provided mostly through an Equity Fellowship grant and through staff development initiatives. This financial assistance as well as generous travel and study leave has allowed me to give quality time to the completion of this thesis. Others at University of Wollongong I wish to acknowledge and thank are Sue Mathews for her encouragement, support and friendship and for those colleagues interested, and brave enough, to offer the following words: “You need to tell this story.”

I appreciate the gargantuan effort put in by my editor and proof reader, Jill Cassidy, and I thank her for all her sound advice, suggestions, and patience, and friendship.

Gratitude and respect go to my husband Abdelwahab Khoualdia

A special thank you to EP.

Statement

I consider myself a colonial historian and I use colonisation, gender and race as analytical categories in all my teachings and writings.

I am interested in elite, specifically non-Aboriginal and/or non-Indigenous women's activities and attitudes in relation to Aboriginal or Indigenous women, men and children in earlier colonial settings, but also in their present-day activities and roles in the on-going colonisation processes. I am especially interested in examining their selective and/or exclusionist practice when profiling 'pioneer' women and their representations of womanhood in the categories of Feminist and or (White) Women's Studies. I acknowledge and follow the examples set by Aileen Moreton-Robinson (*Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*, 2000). Moreton-Robinson represents an Indigenous standpoint within Australian feminism and like her, regard my Indigenous standpoint within Australian history as an extension of my communal responsibilities.

I am also keenly interested in analyses of the patterns of white superiority and white privilege, especially white male privilege and superiority and in particular how it relates to and impacts on Aboriginal or Indigenous, minority and other culturally or non-white diverse groups within society. I am always keen to examine how white males in particular have used science to construct ideas about race that continue to justify social as well as individual behaviour/s.

I am always interested in making contrasts and comparisons as well as contested approaches in relation to all matters that deal with western colonisation and imperialist regimes that have over-run indigenous societies, and which have relegated these societies to Third or Fourth world status. I am also keen to place Aboriginal peoples back into the Australian historical landscapes from which they have been largely removed, especially in the recording and writing of western validatory histories.

My first degree is in History (Double majors), Northern Territory University,

Australia. (1994). While my focus was on Australian history, I also studied aspects of both European history (Europe in Revolution/Other), South East Asian civilisations and religions and Northern Territory history.

I am a graduate MA in American Indian Studies from the University of Arizona, United States of America (1997) and as a result of that, hold qualification in the one year's Masters degree program, Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy.³ This gives me the added expertise and confidence to pursue this type of comparative and contested study that I include in this thesis.

All of the above has enabled me to introduce different views into mainstream History curricula as well as into aspects of Aboriginal Studies and has enabled a better articulation of ideas and a new way of teaching practice (at a personal level) within the broader framework known as 'Aboriginal education'.

³ My principal teacher was Professor Robert A. Williams Jr., co-chair with Professor S. James Anaya in the Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy Program which is recognised as world-renowned curriculum. The Program is part of the James E. Rogers College of Law and works closely with the Udall Center's Native Nations Institute and the American Indian Studies Program.

Abstract

The main focus of this thesis is on the force that was colonialism and Christianity that impacted on, and fractured the lives of Aboriginal people under weighty governmental policy dictums, segregation, assimilation and institutionalism. This thesis offers no positive reviews of those factors and processes that not only created false identities with the construction of the term “Aboriginal”, but ensured the Indigenous People of Australia would remain one of the most conquered peoples in Western history.

The research carried out is a study of the transformation of two particular Aboriginal groups in a society that was partly formed due to the influences of a foreign religion, namely the Catholic faith. The relationship of government policy and administration to the ambitions of the missionising project is explored in order to ascertain the success of the various goals, and the ultimate success of the conversion of the particular combined Aboriginal community of ‘Coloured’ and Tiwi. The resultant conclusions are founded on a personally intense, perhaps partly obsessed, study of the philosophies and attitudes involved in the processes of the civilising mission based on contemporary western ideas about civilisation, “progress” and social evolution. The convergence and divergence of the goals of governments, earlier colonial, post-Federation and mission societies raise historical questions which demand answers for Aboriginal Australians, but sadly, will not be answered any time soon.

Structure of the thesis

The structure of this thesis varies somewhat from the traditional historical approach mainly due to the amount of qualification and acknowledgment I felt was required to set the tone of the overall work. I felt it necessary to spend considerable time on definitions and terminology because I noted, after copious amounts of research, and of reading academic and other works – from history through most other disciplines, including law, education and science – that there is always only some fleeting reference or explanation or neat and concise definition of terms relating to Aboriginal and/or Indigenous. Mostly these definitions and explanations are simply rhetoric. The complex issues of identity are not given a truly rigorous analysis, construction or deconstruction. Most terms and definitions provided are blasé to say the least. I note that these are usually provided by non-Aboriginal or non-Indigenous writers and researchers, sometimes apologetically, and it is due to this I feel Aboriginal and Indigenous points of reference, definitions and understandings, must find their place in western academia. This is my small contribution to that end.

Added to the standard Statement, Abstract and Acknowledgments, the thesis contains an Introduction followed by 10 chapters, a Conclusion and a Bibliography. The core section of the thesis is divided into six parts:

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The Foundation
- 3 In The Beginning
- 4 The Catholic Church on the Northern Frontier
- 5 Christianise, Civilise and Integrate
- 6 Conclusion

Chapter Summaries

Each chapter in this thesis, while standing alone, focus on the central theme as stated in the title: the key words being “colonial subject’s narrative”; “factors and processes”. The historical frame of 1941-1967 was selected so as to give voice to those Coloureds, especially who survived this particular colonial experiment. While it was my intent to construct an Aboriginal view of this historical period in Australian

history, I had to rely heavily on non-Aboriginal historians and authors for a significant amount of Aboriginal materials. This was a direct result of the lack of Aboriginal and specifically Coloured voices and authors. Thecla Brogan is the only stand out example of the coloured voice who related some of that Garden Point Mission colonising and Christianising experience.

The more I probed for materials and information to support my own colonised person's narrative, I belatedly realised that if I was to continue with the work I urgently needed to modify my approach and my methodology if I wished to make some sense of colonial Australia and its colonising mandates as well as its willing and enthusiastic servants of empire. I balked at the many directions that I **had** to speak to Catholic authorities and seek endorsement for my research. I admit some western reviewers might, with some haste, identify 'blindspots' in my thesis. I do not apologise for this but will add, with much sadness, that I have had to omit more than half of the Coloured voices from this work. This is as a result of a number of factors. Some because of personal pressure placed on participants; in some instances the passing of some informants; and others who have become unable to participate in follow up collaboration. My strong adherence to my Aboriginal protocol, as well as my ethical considerations for these people, leave me in no doubt that it was the right decision to not include their material.

Chapters 2-6 is my endeavour at articulating an understanding of the theoretical and operational characteristics of non Coloured scholars and others and their writings and especially their attitudes and opinions in relation to the broad generalisations and assumptions about Aboriginal people and issues overall.

Probing these attitudes and definitions did not shed any light on why these authors and observers feel they must always produce justification histories or why they feel they must always embellish the so called 'good deeds' of missionaries and other white authorities. My conclusion is that in the most part these authors and observers are either dishonest or seriously naive – or both.

Chapters 7-10 focus on the Catholic Church and its presence in the traditional homelands of several nations of Aboriginal clans. These chapters endeavour to

highlight the two-fold aims of civilising and conversion – always through the combined forces of colonising conquest and Christian crusade. Western historians insist on highlighting the successes of these forces and rarely attempt to establish, without doubt, consensual agreement and steer away from using terminology such as coercion, brainwashing, large scale murder, physical and emotional abuse - indeed genocide. My focus and intent, in these chapters, is to reinforce my conclusions in relation to justification and validatory histories that ignore truth and reality of colonisation and Christianisation for colonised Indigenous peoples. I set out to break the code of these western idealised historical constructs, whether imagined or real (to colonisers). I offer the opportunity to westerners to reorientate their perspectives and to attempt to become more diligent ‘outside’ observers, as opposed to their present, highly assumptive and internalised code, that has come about as a result of generations of enculturation and education as part of an inflexible and unchanging white superior status and philosophies.

Of course we will never be able to recreate or reassemble much of the past. The past is most definitely a foreign country for us all, but westerners have had more resources at their disposal in their attempts at reconstruction of past events.

Chapters 9-10 especially focus on how one of the most important resources, the template of language, and in this instance, the language of Christianity, ensured the further decimation of broad and diverse groups of people. While some might argue that the Catholic Church eventually incorporated Tiwi language and Tiwi design into Catholic mass and ceremonies, it is conveniently forgotten that Coloureds had lost language and were forced to adopt two different languages as part of their compliance and conversion.

The conclusion is an overall summary of all of the above characteristics and reinforces the dilemma that remains for displaced and disadvantaged Coloureds. Coloureds now form part of a broad Diaspora of mixed race, including Stolen Generations people whose predicament is one of postponed crisis that authorities of both Church and Governments will not address.

The Conclusion is by no means a judgment or final summary of this complex story but may offer, in the first place, a respectful account of the ‘Coloured’ story through one colonial subject’s historical narrative. This work is precisely what the title suggests and is by no means meant to be a definitive analysis of, or a specific and detailed study of Catholic missionaries, or their work at Garden Point Mission. I simply present an Aboriginal perspective titled: “Coloureds and Catholics: A colonial subject’s narrative of the factors and processes that led to the colonisation and conversion of Coloureds at Garden Point Mission, 1941-1967”.

The literature review is interspersed throughout the thesis as this was the only way to introduce the many, possibly new, Aboriginal and Indigenous reactions and responses to much of the socio-historical-cultural issues, definitions and western approaches to a wide range of historical data involving Aboriginal, and in this study, ‘mixed-descent’ or ‘Coloureds’.

I do not apologise for the frequent use of inverted commas. My preference was to not have this as a mark denoting use of such words and terms as only being used in their historical context, for I feel these are all part of the overall story that is known as ‘Aboriginal history’. Many of these terms are in current use by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike even though mostly they are deemed pejorative and their use ruled inappropriate. However, I believe they should be recorded in the same spirit they were originally meant, without qualification and without justification, yet at the same time, without glorification. Their use in modern language should not be denied.

Definitions and Terminology

Aboriginal/Indigenous

Throughout this work I will mostly use the dual terms of Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples when referring to the Aboriginal or “original inhabitants” and their descendants of what is now known as mainland Australia.¹ Torres Strait Islander peoples are not represented within this category of indigenous within the broad framework of this particular history, even though a small number of Torres Strait Islanders, particularly from Thursday Island, did end up at Garden Point Mission. It should be carefully noted that while I use these popular terms as descriptive terms, their usage is problematic as all of these terms do not fully relay the diversity of peoples and experiences that they try to encompass.

The term Coloured will be used to describe those “mixed-descent” children who were categorised mostly by government authorities and in legislation as “half-castes” and a variety of other derogatory names. The term will be noted with a capital C and without inverted commas throughout this thesis.

At a personal level, while I acknowledge that most might be comfortable with the colonial tag of Aboriginal as part of a collective identity, separate but the same as Australian, I am not. However, I also realise that to avoid confusion and to deflect much criticism or avoid lengthy explanation, I too must use this inappropriate term to describe myself. I understand that Indigenous peoples of Australia have been forced into this colonial construct of what westerners decided is an appropriate identity marker or classifier of the Other, however, I will always object because it detracts from the truth of my Kungarakan-Gurindji being.

Other terms of contention such as ‘peoples’ versus ‘populations’ will not be given

¹ Many people, including Aboriginal peoples, ask what this land mass was called before the arrival of Europeans and especially before its naming by the British. I can only surmise that different clans or nations of Aboriginal people had their own names for their own countries and estates. For example, particular portions or estates within Kungarakan country are known as Lok, followed by a name of particular significance for that particular area or region, and the name for the bigger area which encompasses all these is Kurrundju. The famous American Indian writer Vine Deloria Jr. when asked what the United States of America was known as before the arrival of non-Indians replied “Ours” and perhaps that is as good an answer as any for Aboriginal people to adopt.

attention in this thesis; however, it is acknowledged that these terms are currently part of emergent discussion in terms of politically correct terminology in relation to Aboriginal and/or Indigenous peoples. The current debate's controversy is in relation to the term 'populations' which some say precludes land or territorial claims and those claims that demand rights of self-determination. 'Peoples' is the term used in this thesis.

The definition of 'Indigenous/indigenous' embraced and used by this author is that offered by S James Anaya (Purepecha-Apache).² Also part of the definition offered by Cunneen and Libesman in most part is adopted by this author:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies...consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories...They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.³

The constant use of the dual terms of Aboriginal and/or Indigenous when describing peoples is unavoidable as it would be remiss of me to exclude other Native, First Nations, Islanders or traditional owners or original or pre-western/European invasion inhabitants from other conquered lands, locations and islands around the globe when writing such a history.

Catholic

In Greek, the word *kata*, "concerning" and *halou*, a form of *halos* "whole" were compounded to form *katholou* "in general", which gave rise to *katholika* "universal"...early Christian writers began using *catholicus*, the Latin form of the Greek word for "universal"...Around the year 110, Saint Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, used the term *katholike ekklesia* "Catholic Church"...In its struggles against various heresies, the Church emphasised its universality, and its epithet *Catholic* took on the

² "...the term indigenous refers broadly to the living descendants of pre invasion inhabitants of lands now dominated by others...They are indigenous because their ancestral roots are embedded in the lands in which they live, or would like to live, much more deeply than the roots of more powerful sectors of society living on the same lands..."S James Anaya, *Indigenous Peoples in International Law*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p.3

³ Chris Cunneen and Terry Libesman, *Indigenous People and the Law in Australia*, Butterworth's Legal Studies Series, Sydney, 1995, p.238

connotation of “one and true” or “orthodox”. (After 1054 the Western Church continued to use Catholic and the Eastern Church Incorporated into its title Orthodox to describe itself.) Most of the protestant churches arising out of the sixteenth century Reformation eschewed the term *Catholic*...the Anglican church, however saw itself as the “Catholic Church in England”, and thus referred to the Latin Church as Roman Catholic.⁴ It is this latter category that is spoken of in this thesis.

Colony/Colonial

Usually, colonies are established by military conquest followed by occupation by colonisers, followed by annexation of territories or dispossession of the original inhabitants. Military presence is fixed and is paramount in maintaining the coloniser’s power base and while some might argue that military conquest is always swift or instant, some military conquests are gradual, but are always meant to be permanent. The term used by westerners to describe this gradual colonisation is ‘settlement’, and usually this altered state is achieved through the combined efforts of military, missionary and civilians, sometimes with the assistance of indigenous peoples themselves, whether willingly or not.

Colonial pioneers, whether government representatives (colonial administrators), farmers and graziers, scientists, missionaries, merchants or soldiers form part of what may be described as the metropolitan presence of the new or founding colony. Many participants in colonial ventures are motivated by a superior imperialist doctrine that is primarily concerned with introducing and establishing capitalist enterprises in less technologically advanced territories or countries. Initially the thrust is to exploit the natural resources, usually with the help of cheap indigenous labour. Some colonies are established on the basis of treaties with the indigenous or original inhabitants. Usually this occurs after military invasion but is not necessarily a standard requirement. Westerners would argue that establishment of treaties, based on the principle of mutual benefit, automatically signals a relinquishment of sovereignty, however, indigenous peoples may not necessarily agree with this supposition.

Once colonies are firmly established, the overriding common aspect is the element of

⁴ *Webster’s World Histories*, Merriam-Webster Inc., Springfield, Mass., 1989, p. 96

domination, over indigenous or conquered peoples especially. Colonial administrators ensure that these new regimes reflect the political and religious, and general moral values and standards of their own metropolitan culture and society. As Robert Young in his *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (1995) noted that “Colonialism was a machine: a machine of war, of bureaucracy and administration, and above all, of power...”.⁵ And added to that, the words of Thomas De Quincey (*Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, and Other Writings* (1882) “...all sorts of engines and machinery...expressive of enormous power put forth, and resistance overcome”.⁶

(Human) Colonisation

Human colonisation in its broader definition is an encompassing of all large-scale immigrations of an established population to a ‘new’ location, and expansion of their civilisation into this area, for example, in ancient times powerful maritime nations such as Greece often established colonies along several neighbouring countries’ coastlines as well as within its own borders, mostly these were for farming and mercantile trading purposes. The Roman Empire’s approach was different in that it conquered large tracts in other countries such as in north Africa, western Europe and west Asia.

Perhaps it could be argued that the roots of western colonisation and its large scale movements and displacements of later-day societies, for example, Aboriginal and/or Indigenous peoples, its attendant philosophies, justifications and culture can be claimed as the initial imperative of ancient Roman authority. The culture of colonialism and the objectives of colonisation soon saw numbers of different nations invading and colonising others, including the Roman Empire itself by the Franks. The Romans certainly commenced a trend that endured throughout time, commencing in what was known as the Dark Ages, saw the full-scale establishment of new colonies developed all throughout Europe, including the colonising of England by the Anglo-Saxons.

This Roman dominion went through different phases and served as a model

⁵ Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, p.98

⁶ Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, and Other Writings*, p.70, original publication, The Walter Scott Publishing Co. Ltd., 1886, in Robert J.C. Young, Op. Cit. p.98

for subsequent empires in eastern, central and western Europe...there were shifts in empire that also served as examples for the British, French, Austrian, Russian and German empires.⁷

The so-called 'colonial era', aspects of which are discussed in this thesis, commenced around 1492 when the 'discovery' of the Americas was first recorded and is that time when now-known Spain began its conquest of South America and the Caribbean. However, according to some sources, western colonisation began with the travel of Portuguese sailors – to the Cape of Good Hope, and then reaching India in 1498.

When the Portuguese pushed south along the western coast of Africa, it would have been hard to predict that the center of the world power would really shift west to a land unknown to them.⁸

Seventeenth century European states (mainly the Netherlands, France and England) commenced with the colonisation of the Americas. These Europeans largely saw those as simply conventional movements of families into new lands. At the same time, England 'planted' nearby Ireland extensively with English and Scottish settlers.

Even though it may be argued by some historians that the British invasion and subsequent colonisation of Aboriginal Australia did not follow the usual pattern there is lengthy debate to be had in that regard for records indicate that British military presence, and law, were established with the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788. That is, it followed the normal process of western colonisation. Arguments in regard to gradual settlement as opposed to sudden conquest might interpret into 'peaceful establishment' by westerners keen to justify invasion and conquest, however they sound hollow to this Aboriginal historian.

Imperialism

The term *imperialism* was a new word in the mid-nineteenth century (and) dates back to 1858. The Latin root is *imperium* (command or supreme power). However, its nineteenth century implementation and intent was clear, and no different to much earlier interpretations and understandings of such a term. The motives of colonisation may have varied slightly from colony to colony and state to state at international levels but imperial interests were solely motivated by economic factors, which in turn

⁷Jonathan Hart, *Comparing Empires: European Colonialism from Portuguese Expansion to the Spanish-American War*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003 pp. 3-4

concentrated on the exploitation of natural resources or were meant to monopolise trade. Colonial interest was always about power: “Apostolic zeal, humanitarian idealism, and scientific endeavour were at best peripheral stimulants”.⁹

The age of Imperialism in the nineteenth century saw much colonisation by the European powers in Australasia and Africa. However, the issue of colonialism and its attendant, imperialism, only appears to have entered into Australian dichotomy insofar as discussion involving Australia’s role as a colonial power itself – in relation to New Guinea in the post World War II period. When Herbert Evatt and Paul Hasluck spoke of self-determination and economic advancement for “the natives” they were not speaking of Aboriginal people. At the very time that post-war policies in relation to Aboriginal people were being enforced and re-legislated so as to give authorities more power over Aboriginal people, these men, among others, were more concerned about the educational, social and economic advancement of the people of New Guinea. Hasluck stated that Australia was prepared to give immediate and realistic target dates to address those needs as he felt that:

“...in political advancement we would rather take each step too soon than too late, but we see no kindness in making human beings walk over cliffs in the dark”.¹⁰

During the 1960s, when assimilation policies were still rigidly in place in this country, Australian authorities spoke loudly at the United Nations against South Africa and its policy of apartheid, stating that it deplored the practice of racial discrimination and spoke of moral obligations to indigenous peoples. Australia also objected to South Africa’s “ruthless intensification of the policy of apartheid” and oppression of indigenous peoples, and further claimed that South Africa had “persistently failed in its international obligations in administering the Territory”.¹¹ Australia consistently called for South Africa to initiate aspects of self-determination, accused South African white authorities of racism and practising oppression, and deprivation of basic education and training for indigenous peoples – all the while ignoring and at the same

⁸Jonathan Hart , Ibid. p.149

⁹ W.J. Hudson, *Australia and the Colonial Question at the United Nations*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1970, p.110

¹⁰ Paul Hasluck (Minister of Territories), as quoted in the *London Times*, 28 June 1960 in W. J. Hudson, *Australia and the Colonial Question at the United Nations*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1970, p.110

¹¹ W.J. Hudson. Op. Cit. p.95

time subjugating and denying basic human rights to Aboriginal people within its own borders.

In the Aboriginal Australian experience imperialism may be best described (in the historical and colonisation contexts) as that which saw the dispossession of homelands and estates of original inhabitants purely for economic exploitation. As well, it may also be that the experience of imperialism for them, seeing that it was accompanied by overt military conquest, culminated in serious violations of freedom and human rights. However, some non-Aboriginal historians would state that their interpretation of earlier colonial encounters between Aboriginal and English peoples was not based on undue influence, cruelty or dispossession but rather on mutual interaction and agreements. Therefore they would consider the use of the term imperialism as overly hysterical and would define coercion and militarism as highly evocative concepts, and probably not at all a true description of what occurred as a result of the notion of *terra nullius*.

Even though the modern definition of the term imperialism is not relevant to this particular study, it is noted that aspects of its original meaning have resonance of the original concept. And while the term empire is mostly limited to descriptions of historical countries and eras, it is worth noting a definition given in Merriam-Webster:

[Imperialism] is the policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas.¹² ...it always involves the use of power; whether military force or some subtler form...¹³

terra nullius

John Batman, it is claimed, made a treaty with some of the Port Phillip (Melbourne) “tribes” (possibly Kulin and Kurnai peoples were part of this) in 1835 through an exchange of blankets, axes and other sundries, and yearly rent for approximately 243,000 hectares of land. Although some people at the time recognised that Aboriginal peoples had rights in the lands, and this was confirmed in a House of Commons report on Aboriginal relations in 1837, the negotiation was deemed invalid

¹² Merriam-Webster Online. <http://www.m-w.com>. Accessed 6 December 2006.

¹³ Britannia Online. <http://www.britannia.com>. Accessed 6 December 2006

by Governor Richard Bourke. Consequently, a proclamation issued by the Colonial Office, London, sent to Governor Richard Bourke with Despatch 99 of 10 October, 1835 effectively established the law of *terra nullius*.

The proclamation read:

I, the Governor, in virtue and in the exercise of the power and authority in me vested, do hereby proclaim and notify to all His Majesty's subjects, and others whom it may concern, that every such treaty, bargain, and contract with the Aboriginal Natives...is void and of no effect against the rights of the Crown.¹⁴

The statement and subsequent document effectively implemented the doctrine, and thereby law of *terra nullius*. The publication of the document meant that from the day of its public display people, that is settlers, found in possession of land without authority of the government would be considered trespassers. The initial purpose of the law may have intended to thwart the plans of settlers laying claim to tracts of land, but the full implication of the term meant even Aboriginal peoples could not make claims of ownership of land. This was to have major impact on Aboriginal peoples Australia-wide as the interpretation of the term was to take on other meanings which effectively ruled them as “non-peoples”. The 1835 law was to remain in effect until June 1992 when its implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their status as peoples, were finally overturned by the *Mabo* decision. Bain Attwood contends that *terra nullius* was irrelevant to the High Court's legal considerations (in *Mabo*) and in fact *terra nullius* was not part of the case that Koiki (Eddie) Mabo and the Murray Islanders put forth.

Conversion

Conversion, as in a Christianising context or evangelical sense, for this author at least, denotes change and the sharing of religious faith with others, whether required, requested or forced upon.¹⁵ It simply cannot be denied that conversion and coercion

¹⁴ Proclamation of Governor Bourke, 10 October 1835, Colonial Office of the British Government. The actual document sent to Bourke was never located and is not available in Australia. The original is held at the National Archives of the United Kingdom [Ref: UK: CO 201/247 ff 411 r+r]; See: “Documenting a Democracy”: Australia's Story, National Archives of Australia, www.foundingdocs.gov.au/timeline.asp.

¹⁵ Note: use of the term ‘forced’, when describing what transpired in relation to conversion as part of the colonial experiment at Garden Point Mission was met with serious objection when I first submitted my PhD proposal and application for ethics clearance to the Human Ethics Committee at then Northern Territory University and outlined as part of my investigation “the forced conversion” of Coloureds to Catholicism. I am as perplexed about that objection now as I was in 2001.

go hand in hand as the re-socialisation into an alternative culture and belief system takes place. According to *The Angus and Robertson Dictionary and Thesaurus* the term coerce translates as “to compel or restrain by force or authority without regard to individual wishes or desires”¹⁶ and it is this definition that I base my understanding of what I regard as ‘forced conversion’ into a foreign faith and unfamiliar theology. I have heard the mission, that is the conversion experience, described by a number of Aboriginal people interviewed as a process of “flattery and battery” and even though I am unable to ascertain where this originated from, it surely describes conversion and coercion succinctly.

Others might understand conversion as that process which signifies discovery and acceptance of different views and practices. They might be of either political or religious in nature. Some might regard conversion as a type of educational program, not necessarily religious education, as a means of imposing other ideas into an already programmed different mindset. In the Aboriginal experience religious conversion was about the conquest of the mind as part of subversive strategies (education and separation) of control and domination. Naturally, exploitative conditions fostered a steady decline in Aboriginal philosophy, theology and social order thus making conversion possible and more rapid.

Convertees became/become pawns in the suppression and destruction of their own culture and families by teaching, spying on, and converting their own. As well, forced and strict discipline assisted in the conversion process. The conversion process continues (mostly) through the education system which has a distinct and deliberate acculturation focus and agenda.

There are of course other definitions of this term, however for the purposes of this work, its meaning is specifically meant to describe Catholic conversion – that is, the experience that entails non-voluntary church membership or association. This non-voluntary membership describes the situation when it is not necessarily the utilitarian need, and specifically is a decision made on a child’s behalf as a requirement of a certain religious community to enable acceptance, or entry so as to experience “God’s

¹⁶ *The Angus and Robertson Dictionary and Thesaurus*, HarperCollins Publishers, Sydney, 1986, p.185

call to Christ’.

The decision to participate in this experience may be decided by others as it has been understood that certain individuals lack certain moral or religious instruction and are in urgent need of salvation from sinfulness and lack of (usually) Catholic or western religious understandings.

Empire and Church

...there is no doubt that Christianity was steeped in an imperial atmosphere: the picture of Christ evolved in ancient times was that of Christ-Caesar, a brilliant sun, victorious over darkness and death, *Kosmokrator*, head of the militia of his faithful followers, enthroned among the splendours and pomp of the World Beyond, surrounded by a senate of saints.¹⁷

While the original relationship between the Empire and the Church was quite separate and was about two distinct and powerful institutions, it was not long before they interpenetrated one another. The Empire may well have existed before the Church but by the fourth century this dynamic had changed and soon it was the Church that was implementing rules of law that gave legitimacy and power to its fundamental idea that Rome had a universal missionising role to play. In fact the Roman Empire, that is the Church, became the political expression of Christian universality – it derived from God:

...the *christianum Imperium*, the *sancta respublica*, which would continue for as long as the world existed.¹⁸

Evangelism

Evangelism is the zealous preaching and dissemination of the lessons of the gospel, and is done mostly through missionary work. In essence it is the spreading of various forms of Christianity, the preaching of the Christian Gospel, or, by extension, any other form of or proselytizing. Catholic evangelism is a lay apostolate in service to Jesus Christ, the Word of God. Catholics claim theirs is the true Church, founded by Jesus Christ, and that it is a pillar and foundation of the truth.

¹⁷ Robert Folz, *The Concept of Empire in Western Europe: from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century*, (*L’Idée d’Empire dans L’Occident du V au XIV siècle*), translated by Sheila Ann Ogilvie, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd, Great Britain, 1969, p.7

Anglo

The term Anglo defines those colonists who were/are of specifically English heritage and culture, separate from the generic categorisation of British, including Anglo-Celt and European. Anglo or English might be other terms to describe first colonists and use of such is meant to exclude others who did not define and impose English or Anglo national and imperial ideologies onto Aboriginal peoples. Such terms, like others mentioned previously, are problematic but necessary so as to clearly differentiate and identify exactly who transported the various ‘instruments of empire’ to these shores and who ensured their survival and continuation for at least the first one hundred years or more.

The imposition of stylised identity – the issue of Aboriginality, its terms and definitions

The word “Aborigine”, in a primary etymological sense, describes the Aboriginal peoples of mainland Australia, but it was not a term chosen by them. Literally translated the word means “from the beginning”. However, the word was chosen by non-Aboriginal people, first British settlers and later Anglo-Australians, as a collective identity for mainland Aboriginal Australians. The terms “Aborigine” and “Aboriginal” have become among the most disputed in contemporary Australian language. As they became “Aborigines”, later changed to the all-encompassing indigenous identity of “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders”, British invaders, later settlers, and other immigrants from a variety of cultures, became “Australians”. However none of these neat categorisations or groupings of peoples, including the category Australian, are ever simple to explain or comprehend.

Bain Attwood in his book *The Making of the Aborigines* (1989) ¹⁹ is correct in stating that Aboriginal peoples were not the homogenous group implied by the term Aborigines. They were named that, and have since named or re-claimed their own names for themselves with the use of contemporary and popular terms such as Kooris, Murris, Nungars, Nyungars, to name a few. Regardless, Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples suffer the same as others who are homogenised into all-compatible, all-inclusive groups, for example, the Irish, indeed even Australians. They too, have to contend with a similar pan-Irishness or pan-Australianness as the inappropriate pan-

¹⁸ Robert Folz, *Ibid.* p.9

Aboriginal categorisation that prevails.

The term Australian Aboriginal itself is a wholly consumptive way in which Anglo Australia goes about integrating a range of different aspects of diverse Aboriginal clans, their ideals, philosophies, knowledges, politics, religious and cultural tenets and ceremonial practices, simply to accommodate their limited understandings and laziness. As Patrick O'Farrell, in relation to the Irish and how the so-called Australian-Irish identity might be understood, such pan-identity is incorrect as "an elusive complexity rules".²⁰

Attwood further states that the "making of the Aborigines" was a process more determined by Europeans than by Aboriginal peoples and this was mainly due to the fact that they had the power to shape that Aboriginal identity, to create Aborigines. The agents of colonialism, for example, missionaries and other Christian authorities, governments and their servants and agents were all able to contribute to this creation of Aboriginal identity, and thereby satisfy their own understandings of the Other. Attwood contends that Aboriginal peoples were not always passive recipients of European colonialism, and that out of the exchange (as he describes it) Aboriginal Australians experienced their own transformed consciousness. While he might be correct to a certain degree in saying that the newly transformed consciousness shaped both Aboriginal and European cultures, I find the argument unconvincing that it was Aboriginal peoples' own decision to accept the identity of Aboriginal/Aborigine, even though it may appear to westerners that such an outcome was both clearly determined and determining. I would contend that the exchange may have been a little one-sided, and the truth of the matter is that we will never know what the outcome would have been even if the exchange had been balanced differently. Regardless of any suppositions, it is quite apparent that the term Aborigine has dispossessed Aboriginal peoples of their separate identities, and especially within the current move described by mostly Anglo Australians as "multiculturalism", supposedly initiated and buoyed in a spirit of reconciliation, continues this dispossession as it continues to strip, indeed further rob, Aboriginal people of their unique cultural identities.

¹⁹ Bain Attwood, *The Making of the Aborigines*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1989.

²⁰ Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia: 1788 to present*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000, p.5

What developed among mainland Aboriginal Australians' identity was an identity formed by colonial reduction. It became an identity based on their shared experiences of oppression and became what some have described as a type of "tribal internationalism" in an attempt at creating a sense of solidarity, a survival mechanism set in place in the wake of the invasions of their respective and very separate countries.

Professor Mick Dodson AM, (Yawuru, southern Kimberley) first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1993-1998), and currently Director, National Centre for Indigenous Studies, Australian National University made these comments in regard to non-Aboriginal peoples' arrogance and insistence at defining Aboriginal Australian identity:

Since first contact, colonising societies have been obsessed with Aboriginality and have produced a continuous flow of representations of Aboriginality. Definitions of "Aboriginality" have been used to justify and legitimise the abuse of indigenous rights and to assimilate indigenous cultures. More broadly they have been used to affirm the non-indigenous cultures' sense of superiority and progress.

The imposition of definitions of Aboriginal identity is an abuse of indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination, and self-identification and has had a significant impact on indigenous peoples and our relationship with other sectors of society. It is crucial that indigenous peoples enjoy the right to self-identification, and that our voices determine the representations of Aboriginalities. In particular, it must be recognised that Aboriginalities will have a range of forms, and are not limited to the narrow, static and ahistoric images of a pristine traditional culture.

Today indigenous peoples are strongly asserting our right to "speak back", and to draw creatively from our traditions to recreate ourselves and our Aboriginalities. In this way the present and the future of Aboriginality are firmly rooted in, and always growing out from our past.²¹

Professor Langton offers a succinct summary of the broad construction of Aboriginality in the following passage:

"Aboriginality"...is a field of intersubjectivity in that it is remade over and over again in a process of dialogue, of imagination, of representation and interpretation. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people create "Aboriginalities" so that in the infinite array of intercultural experiences, there

²¹ Professor Mick Dodson AM, The Wentworth Lecture April 1994 – "The end is the beginning: re-defining Aboriginality", *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, No. 1, pp.2-13

might be said to be three broad categories of cultural and textual construction of “Aboriginality”.

One category is the experience of the Aboriginal person interacting with other Aboriginal people in social situations located largely within Aboriginal culture...As a second category of cultural and textual construction of things “Aboriginal”, there are familiar stereotypes and the constant stereotyping, iconising and mythologising of Aboriginal people by white people who have never had any substantial first-hand contact with Aboriginal people...The third category is those constructions which are generated when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people engage in actual dialogue.²²

Use of the words aborigine, Aborigine, aboriginal, Aboriginal and Indigenous, is a deliberate attempt to acknowledge the status of the original occupants of the countries detailed in the thesis, and without knowing those peoples’ various territorial, clan and language group names. The capitalising of the words Aborigine and Aboriginal is in line with the standard accepted form of address and identification of the Indigenous peoples of mainland Australia. They will not be noted in inverted commas. I state that neither of these terms provides comfort or identity for me at an individual level and I find them both highly inappropriate and at times even offensive, but know I must use them if I am to deflect further confusion. Following is an additional list of what may be considered by most as offensive and inappropriate:

“half-caste”, “yella fella”, “octoroon”, “quarter-caste”, “mixed-blood”, “mixed-race”, “mixed-heritage”, “bi-cultural”, “bi-racial”, “half-white”.

I will attempt to limit my use of such terms throughout this thesis. They will always appear in inverted commas out of respect for those who disagree with their continued use as their usage is a reminder of both past and present racial language.

Henry Reynolds agrees somewhat in his observation that “half-castes” were a global phenomenon and were the direct result in the main part, of the process of colonisation. The language surrounding “mixed-race” or “half-castes” was both colourful and loaded with contempt within a hierarchy of respect and regard based on skin colour and presumed percentage of English or European blood. He provides many noted observers’ opinions in relation to what the Portuguese colonisers labelled “defective” or people with *sangre infecta*, infected blood:

²² Marcia Langton, “Representations and Indigenous Images”, *Global Diversity Conference*, Sydney, 1995

In 1878 the distinguished anthropologist Paul Topinard estimated that “the number of mongrels on the face of the globe” was twelve million. ...The saying attributed to Africans by Dr Livingstone, reported by him and repeated over and over again, was that God made the white man and God made the black man, but the devil made the mulatto.²³

Mostly, the term Anglo is that used by this author to describe westerners, mostly of English ethnic origin, sometimes known as Anglo-Saxons and sometimes erroneously described as Anglo-Celts, who later adopted the identity Australian.²⁴ Such terms as European, Anglo, Anglo Australian, Australian, non-Aboriginal, non-Indigenous, coloniser, invader, settler, will be used in all descriptions and references to all western characters in this work. Non-Aboriginal or non-indigenous, predominantly Anglo Australians are best described by these terms. Other terms such as invaders, settlers, colonisers are also used to describe these non-Aboriginal players, in both historical and contemporary contexts. The term ‘white’ to describe the abovementioned players will be used sparingly and will be limited to instances where appropriate parenthesis or direct quotation is required, or to avoid repetition of terms. The term ‘black’ will be used, however, it is acknowledged that this term, as are associated terms such as ‘blackfellows’ or ‘blackfella(s)’, is not in favour among a considerable number of the Aboriginal population, Australia-wide.

Sometimes the term non-Aboriginal and/or non-Indigenous will describe a number of other non-western or non-Anglo characters who were present on the same colonial frontier, for example Chinese miners and merchants. Many of this group were guilty, along with numerous Anglo settlers and others, of the grave colonial transgression known as miscegenation.²⁵ The fear of racial contamination, especially of whites was often articulated, even in parliament. Member for South Sydney, G.B. Edwards

²³ Henry Reynolds, *Nowhere People: How international race thinking shaped Australia's identity*, Penguin Books (Aust.), Camberwell, Vic., 2005, pp. 1-3

²⁴ For further reading see M. Dixon, *Imaginary Australian: Anglo-Celts and Identity 1788 to the Present*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1999

²⁵ “miscegenation” – intermarriage or extramarital relations between persons of different racial types. “In modern times miscegenation has been regarded with strong disapproval in several nations of the Western World, and social ostracism and prohibitive legislation have been employed to prevent such unions. The prejudicial attitude toward miscegenetic marriages stems mainly from obsolete conceptions of race and heredity. Also contributing to the attitude are white supremacy theories, and the inferior social status, commonly imposed on dark-skinned peoples, and consequently on the children of mixed marriages, in various nations throughout the world...legal barriers against miscegenation were a pillar of the apartheid system of racial separation in South Africa”. (And one might add Australia). In FunklandWagnalls.com.Encyclopedia

Online: [http://www.fwkc.com/enccllopedia/low/articles/m/m\)16002045fr.html](http://www.fwkc.com/enccllopedia/low/articles/m/m)16002045fr.html). Accessed 13 March

voiced such fears when he stated that superior and inferior “races” should never be allowed to stain “Australian blood” with “darker hues” and he feared that contamination would eventually filter into the superior Anglo Australian society, finally affecting the entire nation:

That is what we have to fear. I do not fear that my people or my friends will mix with the inferior races, but I do fear that my descendants, in the future days of the Commonwealth, may be largely contaminated with them.²⁶

Coloured versus Half-Castes – the rose-coloured view

I will use the language I grew up with in Darwin – from 1948 to present as it still has legitimate currency among a number of residents who come from the same timeframe as I do, and who have a share in the Northern Territory historical colonial period that I mention, some of which is also covered in the early period of this thesis. This language is part of what I describe as ‘compound language’ and resulted from the early days of removal and subsequent incarceration of our Grandparents and other family members, kin and acquaintances in institutions such as Kahlin Compound, Retta Dixon Home, Garden Point Mission and others. Post-World War II language for Aboriginal residents of Darwin and some other locations throughout the Northern Territory is briefly referred to in the film *Buffalo Legends*.²⁷ As with many old-time Darwin and other Territory residents who were part of the experiment that was white colonialism Northern Territory-style, self-identification was expressed in such terms as “half-caste” or Coloured and more specifically as still expressed today by many old-time residents, especially those who grew up, lived in or had association with Parap Camp, as Darwin Coloureds. Many conversations with a broad cross-section of older Darwin women especially those who are institution survivors (Kahlin Compound, The Bungalow, Croker Island, Garden Point Mission, Retta Dixon Home to mention a few) have very clear memories of the term Coloured being their way of describing themselves. Most of these older women, as do their offspring and grandchildren, great-grandchildren use this language today. Aunty Connie Cole and Aunty Alice Briston recalled that the term Coloured lost its legitimacy for broad

2001

²⁶ G.B. Edwards in Henry Reynolds, *Nowhere People: How international race thinking shaped Australia's identity*, Op cit., p.87

²⁷ Paul Roberts and Des Kootji Raymond, *Buffalo Legends*, Ronin Films, 1997

public use at the commencement of the land rights struggles in the early 1970s.²⁸ Noted anthropologist, Dr Nancy Williams has long-time connections to different communities of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. She remembers how thirty years ago in Darwin, the term Coloured was accepted as a legitimate identity of women, described also as being of “mixed-descent”.²⁹ Naturally, those who were lucky enough to retain links with, and had memories of their homelands, and connection with families and the network of kinfolk throughout the Northern Territory, identified by expressing their individual and various clans, and always in reference to their country or their biological paternal or maternal country of origin. Many stories are told of how Aboriginal Mothers visited their children at Kahlin Compound, to be allowed to speak to them only through the wire fence that surrounded the complex. Still those who were able to make those visits passed on vital information in relation to genealogy and kin and country connections.

Part of my own Gurindji Grandmother’s experiences under the Act, as told by my Mother Vai Stanton:

You hear a lot of stories about tribal people rejecting their children, the half-castes. It’s not true. It’s incredible what my mother learnt about herself when the tribal people weren’t even supposed to come near her. My mother was in the compound (Kahlin Compound, Darwin), huge wire fence, concentration camp fence and the tribal people, old tribal women would come up to the fence and call the little children over. When the children came over they would hold their little hands through the wire and tell them who they were, who their mothers were, where they’d come from, what their skin was...They were caught, belted by the authorities and told not to mix with the dirty blacks, told they should drive the black people away. There was this constant battle for the children’s minds.³⁰

Some Aboriginal people, including a number of Darwin Coloureds, are offended by the continued use of most of this language, usually this group is made up of younger women or those who have not grown up in Coloured culture or might not have had

²⁸ In conversations with Aunties Connie Cole and Alice Briston (ex Croker Island inmates) at Darwin 9 August 2000 (Ref. notes: Stanton/Cubillo & Gunner trial, Darwin, August 2000)

²⁹ In conversation with Nancy Williams, Centre for Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resource Management (CINCRM), Northern Territory University, Darwin, 1999. (Ref. notes: Stanton/Williams/CINCRM – unrecorded date 1999) Dr Williams was Investigator/Anthropologist Finnis River Land Claim, Northern Territory. She is currently Honorary Reader in Anthropology, University of Queensland.

³⁰ Vi Stanton, Chapter One, “ ‘The Act’ as History”, in Kevin Gilbert, *Living Black: Blacks talk to Kevin Gilbert*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Vic., 1977, p. 11 (Correct spelling is Vai – Gilbert has used the common spelling.)

experiences or connections to those of the Parap Camp era, the Kahlin Compound or the Retta Dixon Home. My personal response to the continued use of the term is that we must take ownership of such, and understand among ourselves that such terms are powerful objects that give strength to a particular identity that is uniquely ours. In support of the argument that Coloured has currency for some indigenous societies, its everyday use is testament to the strength of ownership of such terms by colonised peoples, similar to that of “mestizo”. This term is common in use, especially by those indigenous societies who have experienced Spanish imperialism in particular – from the Americas to the Philippines. Literally mestizo translates as “a person of mixed blood; a person of mixed Spanish and Amerindian blood” (*Webster Dictionary*) or according to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the definition of mestizo is “any person of mixed blood”. In the southwest of the USA, in Mexico and some South American countries such as Ecuador, the term has acquired social and cultural connotations – “a pure-blooded Indian who has adopted European dress and customs is called a mestizo or cholo.” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). It is my experience that some Native Americans in the southwest of the United States as well as Mexicans, label Americans, Anglos, Europeans or whites as mestizos. In addition, Coloured is a viable and strong indicator of language that also locates certain Aboriginal people within the social and political structures of non-Aboriginal set boundaries, I use the example of the term “Aboriginal” as yet another inappropriate identifier that was developed out of the same imperialist racist language and attitude, yet the latter is not deemed offensive or pejorative.

I acknowledge that some Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples may object to the use of many, or perhaps all of these terms, however, I maintain I have a right to self-identify and to use such language as Darwin Coloured as it is essentially part of my identity. I also take license in using such terms in their historical context even though some may deem them pejorative. I also believe that generally, Indigenous peoples such as those who use imperialist terminology to self-identify, have come to the realisation that a term is needed in an effort to address the multifarious realities that are the result of western colonisation.

Some modern academic discourse tries to talk people out of the use of the term ‘race’, and tries to shift away from responsibility for categories of black and white, or Other,

by pointing out that these were social rather than biological constructions. However, Ivan Hannaford in particular notes:

This idea, that human beings are obviously members of races, begs the whole question by saying that all meanings of race are finally reducible to “the biological transmission of innate qualities”, or that race is an all-pervading natural phenomenon, an awesome and mysterious primordial force operating mechanically or organically, materially or spiritually, through all historical and prehistorical time.³¹

Gillian Cowlshaw too, has noted that the “fact of blackness” remains despite what she claims has been decades of anthropological banishment of such. Perhaps the rest of western academia has not caught up with that just yet because even though another term ‘race’, that is, as a qualifier of cultural difference as opposed to the western interpretation as biological determinism, has long been dismissed as a false concept, a social construction, the word and its associated relevancies retains vibrant currency in everyday use, by noted historians even. Cowlshaw ignores her own words though for her latest ethnographic work and study of Murriss from Bourke in north western New South Wales, persists in, and perpetuates this colour and biological construction and categorisation. A reviewer of this latest work has observed that these categorisations:

...are neither independent of national discourses nor uncreative reproductions of them; neither innocent of the history that present times manifest nor purely manipulative of the other side; nor...are these performances of racialised identity ever limited to Whites. Murriss (the local term of self-identification for Bourke’s Aboriginal population) are invested in the persistence of blackness in part because it is testimony to an enduring (if unmarked) ‘values and partially voluntary category[y] that no one wants to abandon, even though the inequalities and injustices’ (Cowlshaw, p.4) intrinsic to racial division produce pain and suffering.³²

In relation to race as a biological determinant, the term mestizo as well as the term Coloured, also suggests that a genetic pyramid has been constructed. As we know the dual purposes of colonisation and Christianisation, under the auspices of assimilation and integration, are always meant to render the indigene less indigenous, more western, or white, or Anglo. The higher one is on the genetic pyramid, the more European and the less Indigenous, Aboriginal, Mexican, African or Asian. The lower one is on that pyramid the more genetically indigenous or non-western, Anglo,

³¹ Ivan Hannaford, *RACE: The History of an Idea in the West*, The Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, Washington, DC, 1996, p.3

European one is likely to be classified.

The use of all such terms are essential to the flow of this thesis so as to fully emphasise that part of the colonial agenda which is achieved through the use of degrading, derogatory and demonising descriptions of colonised peoples. Its overall debilitating effect is that the colonised then adopt this imperialist language in descriptions of themselves. Coloureds, “half-castes”, mestizos and the various other names used to describe people who were created as a result of cohabitation between colonisers and colonised have suffered a great deal and Henry Reynolds’ description “Nowhere People” seems an apt and appropriate one. Reynolds speaks of the effects of “race bruising” and his heartfelt words would strike a chord with millions around the world, both past and present, who have been derided and persecuted just for being Coloured.³³

The fear of miscegenation was not confined to other countries around the world, Australian authorities too were fearful of what had been created as a result of sexual interaction between black and white and all attempts were made to halt the practice. Not only were “half-castes” considered a threat to national unity but the fear of contamination to “white bloodlines” bordered on hysterical. As Reynolds comments:

Half-castes were, then, seen as subversive – they were biologically dangerous and therefore a threat to vital national interests. And there lay the problem. Political dissidents could change their minds, switch commitments. Religious rebels might convert or recant. But biological dissidents could do neither. Nothing could be done about one’s parents and grandparents or about tainted blood. As a result governments developed an obsessive interest in half-castes, determined that it was in the national interest to stop them breeding (or to decide who they should breed with), and to take children away from parents in the name of the race and the blood of the nation...above all, it was the young women who mattered and who were seen as the inadvertent biological revolutionaries who had to be watched, managed and controlled.³⁴

In the Northern Territory these “biological revolutionaries” were under constant surveillance, and they, as well as their children, were to be closely monitored by the authorities whether they had gained “exemption” from the Act or not. According to

³² Kirk Dombrowski, book review of Gillian Cowlishaw, *Blackfellas, Whitefellas and the Hidden Injuries of Race*, Blackwell Publishing, London, 2004, *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, August 2005, pp.20-21

³³ Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, Op cit., 2005, passim

³⁴ Henry Reynold, *Nowhere People*, Ibid, pp.5-6

my Mother Vai Stanton, she and her older sister Joyce automatically registered as “wards” under the Ordinance simply because they were born before their Mother gained exemption. It did not matter if children had been institutionalised or not, as one only had to be Coloured or “half-caste” to qualify for special consideration under the Aboriginal Ordinance. The trend continued in the late 1940s when my brother and I were born and due to our Mother’s non-exempt status as a result of not knowing that such legislation was even in place. As she tells it, her knowledge in relation to what she described as an insidious Ordinance came about quite by accident. This is my Mother’s account:

My husband is white. He went to see the Aborigines department on another matter. And it was Frank Moy...who said to him, “Look, Jim, while you’re at it, you ought to get your wife exempted.” My husband protested. He said, “You’ve got the wrong person. I’m married to Vi McGinness. She’s never been in an institution. She grew up in a private home. Her family have been free persons.” He said, “Please Jim, no hassles. Your wife is still a ward of the state. Believe me, I know.”

...We didn’t know...all those years they’d known every bloody thing about me. We could have been raided any time of the day or night for co-habiting (sic) with a female ward, even though we were married...Our marriage could have been annulled, I could’ve been banished to a settlement...They said you had no right to marry, you did not get the permission of the protector of Aborigines to do this. They virtually had control of people.³⁵

Even though she did not mention the matter in this interview with Kevin Gilbert, my Mother also realised that her children could also have been separated from her, and placed in different institutions for “half-caste” children. After the incident with Moy³⁶ she was forced to gain an exemption certificate, which in turn also meant exemption for me and my brother – we became part of her package. She was never happy with the entire idea of “exemption from the Act”, often stating “we didn’t realize that we (Coloureds) were different”, “nobody worried that you were part-Aboriginal”:

...I discovered that I wasn’t quite the person I’d thought I was all those years. I lost all my sense of knowing who I was in the 1950s. I was so shocked that I

³⁵ Vi Stanton, “ ‘The Act’ as History” in Kevin Gilbert, op cit., pp. 9-10

Also see: Val McGinness, “The Compound”, *Hitana: Journal of the History Teachers’ Association of Northern Australia*, National Conference issue, 1982

³⁶ Frank Moy was Director of Native Affairs in the Northern Territory and was the architect of the 1950s Welfare Ordinance that Vai Stanton refers to in her interview with Kevin Gilbert. Moy was a controversial figure in 1950s Darwin, often at loggerheads with both white authority, indeed even with Paul Hasluck, then Minister of Territories and with Aboriginal people who fought to gain rights and recognition as citizens. Moy is famous for using his powers under the Ordinance in having prominent Larrakia leader Fred Waters removed to remote Haasts Bluff Reserve in Central Australia for agitating and leading Aboriginal workers in strike action against work conditions and restrictive legislation.

burnt the damned exemption that my husband got for me.³⁷

One who did worry about “half-castes” was the novelist Ernestine Hill, author of *The Great Australian Loneliness*, who wrote in 1938:

...the steady increase of coloured and half-breed populations threatens an empty country with the begetting of one of the most illogical and inbred races in the world...(“half-castes” were) pitiable in that they are cursed with a dark skin in a white man’s country...³⁸

She was assured by Cecil Cook, Chief Medical Officer and Chief Protector of Aborigines, that at least the latest scientific theory (1930s) suggested “that one could breed out the black, and unlike crosses with ‘Negroes’ or Asians, there was no danger of atavism, or throwbacks”.³⁹

All the terms thus far discussed are used for the purposes of this particular narrative only as I acknowledge that all States had their own special definitions or interpretations of “Aboriginal” or “half-caste”, “quadroon”, and even “native”, and the several Aboriginal Acts increasingly refined those meanings. All supposedly in efforts to advance government authority and church-motivated charitable intentions to Aboriginal peoples, but in the most part those definitions and classifications were about control. The definition of Aboriginality was changed at times to suit various government policies, not in any effort to better the situation for Aboriginal peoples but to better facilitate both government and Church mission assimilation programs. Testimony to this is contained in an analysis of the definition of Aboriginality prepared for the *Bringing them home Report*,⁴⁰ which found more than sixty seven definitions in over seven hundred pieces of legislation.⁴¹

John McCorquodale in his article “Aboriginal Identity: Legislative, Judicial and Administrative Definitions” states:

A new species of legal creature was created and sustained as a separate class, subject to separate laws and separately administered. This form of legal apartheid preceded that of South Africa by more than two generations, and

³⁷ Vai Stanton in Kevin Gilbert, Op.Cit. p.10

³⁸ Ernestine Hill, *The Great Australian Loneliness*, Jarrolds, London, 1937, p. 138. In Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia*, Basic Books, New York, 2003, p.229

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *Bringing them home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Sydney, 1997, p.31

⁴¹ John McCorquodale, “The Legal Classification of Race in Australia”, *Aboriginal History*, Vol.10, No.1, 1986, pp.7-24

continued on a different parallel course for another three...

For Aborigines, therefore, the vacuity or bankruptcy of policy in some states was matched only by the ingenuity of others in extending the reach of legislative control. Those who escaped through having a lesser amount of “black” blood suddenly found themselves made subject to law: those who obtained exemption could lose it. “half-castes” might be placed on the same footing with “full-bloods” for some purposes (testimony, liquor laws), but not others (reserves, guardianship of children).

The unequal provision and treatment of law even within extended Aboriginal associations mocked the notion of equality...⁴²

Historian Peter Read added more to these inconsistencies and contradictions through a paper he presented on Aboriginal Citizenship:

In 1935, a fair-skinned Australian of part-indigenous descent was ejected from a hotel for being an Aboriginal. He returned to his home on the mission station to find himself refused entry because he was not Aboriginal. He tried to remove his children but was told he could not because they were Aboriginal. He walked to the next town where he was arrested for being an Aboriginal vagrant and placed on a local reserve. During the Second World War he tried to enlist but was told he could not because he was Aboriginal. He went interstate and joined up as a non-Aboriginal. He received exemption from the Aborigines Protection Act – and was told he could no longer visit his relations on the reserve because he was not Aboriginal. He was denied permission to enter the Returned Servicemen’s Club because he was.⁴³

While Tony Austin states that “the Federal Government did not create the half-caste”,⁴⁴ by the time the Commonwealth took control of the Northern Territory, and with that, the responsibility of the Aboriginal population, it certainly did nothing to discourage racial categorisation of this group, either through policy, especially legal definitions, education, health, or practice.⁴⁵ Legislation for the Northern Territory was based on the earlier Queensland policy of 1897 and included specific recognition of

⁴² John McCorquodale, “Aboriginal Identity: Legislative, Judicial and Administrative Definitions”, *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, Vol. 2, 1997, p.29

⁴³ Peter Read, Unpublished paper, “Aboriginal Citizenship conference, Australian National University, February, 1996 in John Gardiner-Garden, “The Definition of Aboriginality”, Social Policy Group, Parliamentary Library, Australian Capital Territory, December 2000 – found at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rn/2000-01/01RN18.htm>. Accessed 1 December 2005

⁴⁴ Tony Austin, Chapter 2, “The ‘Half-Caste’ in South Australia’s Northern Territory” in *I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly; The Commonwealth and “Half-caste” Youth in the Northern Territory 1911-1939*, 1993, pp. 31-41

⁴⁵ Individual State discrimination, through the Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902 did not allow “aboriginal natives” to vote in State elections and those States were quick to apply the blood quantum rule – for example, an individual who was deemed to be Aboriginal under Section 127 of the Constitution was automatically disqualified from voting. Even though some historians and other commentators claim that a progressive policy period and new language to describe Aboriginal peoples existed from the 1960s to the end of the 1970s, blood quantum definitions remained firmly entrenched in the Northern Territory, especially in the Top End.

people of mixed descent and thus was born the Northern Territory Aboriginals Act (1910). This Act legalised the racial hierarchy that saw the population of that region categorised:

...in order of legal, social and economic status, Europeans, Asians, Aborigines of mixed descent and other Aborigines. The Act officially encouraged a major dislocation of Aboriginal societies by separating children from their kin.⁴⁶

Before the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act*⁴⁷ the definition of Aboriginal was usually expressed in official terms as “a person who is a member of the Aboriginal **race**⁴⁸ of Australia”. A somewhat more sinister approach than even the blood quantum definitions, as this wording implied Aboriginal peoples were perhaps a different species of human. The modern definition, while sounding a little better than previous ones, causes major problems in the post-Mabo era especially, even though Justice Brennan’s criterion stated that indigenous peoples’ membership depended on biological descent and mutual recognition by the “elders” or others who exercised “traditional authority”.⁴⁹ The three-part definition that requires proof of descent, self-identification and community recognition is more open to abuse and misrepresentation than any definition that ever went before it. As well, many Anglo Australians are critical of such an ad hoc definition and there have been protests, especially from former Victorian State president of the Returned Soldiers League (RSL), Bruce Ruxton, who called “...to amend the definition of Aborigine to eliminate part-whites who are making a racket out of being so-called Aborigines at enormous costs to the taxpayers.”⁵⁰

Henry Reynolds highlights the contemporary issues that may be traced back to earlier racial thought which resulted in a number of inappropriate, indeed incorrect labelling, of Aboriginal peoples. He also notes that this in turn has created problems with the current official definition of Aboriginality – relied on by non-Aboriginal and a frightening number of Aboriginal people themselves:

...Australian governments have adopted a definition of Aboriginality taken from United Nations reports that attempted to provide a means of determining

⁴⁶ Tony Austin, *I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly*, Op Cit. p.32

⁴⁷ *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* 1976 s 3 (1)

⁴⁸ My emphasis

⁴⁹ *Mabo v Qld.* (No.2) (1992) 175 CLR 1 at p.70

⁵⁰ Bruce Ruxton as reported by John Slee, “Definitions of an Aboriginal”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 September 1988

indigenoussness all over the world...The definition was adopted at a time when there was growing federal government engagement in Aboriginal affairs and when it became necessary to determine who could vote for and hold office in indigenous organisations and have access to a range of specific programs, services and grants.

Like all previous definitions, it has created many problems relating to identity which became less a matter of private engagement than a form of public labelling.

Added to that, claims of Aboriginal descent cause serious complications:

...descendants' problem is whether they should claim to be Aboriginal and privilege just one branch of their often complicated family tree. Such people of mixed – or complicated – descent have at times been attacked from two directions. If they don't identify as Aboriginals they are accused of denying or disowning their heritage. When they do they are often challenged as to the legitimacy of their access to services and grants.⁵¹

There are others terms used such as “transcultural” and one in common use in African-American language is “people of color”, which are neither suitable nor appropriate to the Australian setting. The term “black” may also have its critics, be deemed inappropriate, even racist. Overall there appears to be few judicial declarations on other inappropriate terms such as ‘race’, just as there appears to be insignificant challenges to *Acts* or sections of *Acts* that are still legislated against Aboriginal peoples of Australia.⁵² As with the colonial past, all legal matters dealing with Aboriginal peoples were subject to the whims and selective decisions of both government and church mission authorities. In the contemporary setting it is difficult to disagree with the following statement:

...while the state no longer suppresses cultural and social differences, it does domesticate them by controlling the domains in which they can be ‘legitimately’ expressed...In guaranteeing expressions of ‘ethnic difference’, both historically and culturally, the state attempts to centralise and manage the productions of the representations of identity...⁵³

Other indigenous approaches to terminology and broad issues of identity

For too long western academics, scholars, and a range of experts in the field of Aboriginal or Indigenous studies, and matters, have skirted around this issue of appropriate terminology by sticking to the safety of such terms as Aboriginal or Aborigine. Indigenous of late seems to be gaining popularity but this is mainly

⁵¹ Reynolds, *Op.Cit.*, 2005, pp. 10-11

⁵² For example, The NSW Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 states: “Aboriginal means a person who: (a) is a member of the Aboriginal **race** of Australia...(my bold emphasis)

⁵³ B. Morris, “The politics of identity: from Equal Rights to Land Rights” in *Domesticating Resistance: The Dahn-Gadi Aborigines and the Australian State*, Oxford, Berg, 1989, p.207

because a number of Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples have insisted it is the more appropriate term if the clan, language group, or tribe name is not known. They are generic terms that they have had some say in choosing themselves. Just as the term Chicano, (widely used in Mexico and the south-west of north America) is deemed pejorative by some, others use it proudly as an identity marker, a name chosen by them that represents the indigenous struggle against Spanish and other colonisers, their agents and other authorities. The term is more representative of the Indigenous-Spanish struggle and is deemed by many as more appropriate than the term Hispanic, which for Mexicanos in particular, is a too generic and European term for people with indigenous roots.

Jose Antonio Burciaga⁵⁴ states, Chicano recognise the racial and cultural complexity of their makeup and they too acknowledge that this may mean a mixture of Mexicano, Indios, Hispanos, Gringo, or United States citizen. It is a complex identity just as Coloured might be, and one which is not clearly categorised or defined so as to fit, or suit western classifications and clearly leaves westerners and non-indigenous others frustrated. As with the Garden Point and other Territory Coloureds, many have varied ethnicities including Chinese, Indonesian, Indian, Greek or Cypriot, other European, and Anglo-Australian; Chicano too recognise the cultural complexity of their makeup. Both Coloureds and Chicano are comfortable, and accepting of the reality of one of the inevitable outcomes of western colonialism, know of the term hybridity and its relevance to them, and are well aware of its long-range consequences in all spheres of their daily lives. It seems that others who do not fit this profile or category are the only ones uncomfortable with the terms and implications of such.

Hybridity – its meaning and its complications

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the time most significant for the Aboriginal peoples of Australia insofar as they represent the active periods of combined colonisation and conversion, discussions on the link between hybridity and fertility

⁵⁴ Jose Antonio Burciaga successfully gives an indigenous or Chicanismo perspective of what the experience is for some others who experience living between, and sometime outside of two cultures, just as the Coloureds profiled in this thesis. As Burciaga expresses so well: 'A Chicano is both Hispanic and Indian. The term "Hispanic" alone negates our Indian heritage. Our ancestors were not only the conquistadores but also the conquered...Chicanos more than a political label for it has a link to our indigenous past. Its etymology dates to the conquest of the *Valle de Mexica*.' In Jose Antonio Burciaga, *Drink Cultura*, Joshua Odell Editions, Santa Barbara, 1993, p.49

were considered serious scientific theory. This was due in large part to earlier debates in regard to different groups of people being classed as part of fauna according to non-Aboriginal, Anglo and/or non-indigenous or other colonial-settler hierarchical scale according to the Great Chain of Being. The Great Chain of Being, a conception of the nature of the universe that had a pervasive influence on western thought and philosophy, and is representative of western ontological argument for the existence of (Christian) God. Its principles were expounded especially from the Renaissance through to the twentieth century. This western conception represents degrees of perfection – from the highest (and fullest), positive – to the lowest (and least), negative were elucidated by Enlightenment period scientists such as Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840).⁵⁵ Aboriginal people were at the lowest grid of the pyramid as they were considered least developed, were rendered unimportant, and indeed were nothing in the Great Chain of Being. The strong belief, even for those who claimed to be Christian and who also claimed to be ‘enlightened’, held the prominent idea that there were different species of humans – even though their own Biblical accounts and interpretations told them that God made man and woman and that he/she were all equal. As well, *all* mankind was to share in the ultimate salvation.

Aboriginal peoples of Australia who claim or wish to claim their so-called “mixed-heritage”, who are comfortable with, and/or accepting of the acknowledgment of one of the inevitable outcomes of western colonialism, and who accept the notion of what is termed hybridity. Hybridity, as well as miscegenation, are terms regarded by some as inappropriate terms to describe a melding of peoples and their cultures, and remains, as do other imperialist terms, outstanding and ignored issues that Aboriginal and/or other indigenous scholars must decide to either keep using and then justify and/or qualify their continued use of, or come up with other terms that will be truly representative of who they are and that may be acceptable to both the wider Aboriginal and/or indigenous community – academic or other,

⁵⁵ Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, claimed by some to be “the founder of racial classification” has been credited with coining the term “Caucasian” – because it is claimed he believed that the Caucasus region of Asia Minor (now Middle East) produced “the most beautiful race of men”. In the modern context Caucasian refers to persons of European descent or those of light skin colouring, or white. See: Stephen Jay Gould, “Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, one of the least racist thinkers”, *DISCOVER*, Vol. 15, No. 11, November 1994. Also see: <http://www.whonamedit.com/doctor.cfm/1247.html>. Accessed 12 November 2005

Of course just as the term Coloured might offend many, the term hybridity has its own set of criticisms, varied definitions and representations that vary from racial theories to cultural criticisms. Essentially in this context, hybridity is meant as a way of showing the connection between the setting of racial categories of the past and the present cultural discourse which I speak of in this thesis. As mentioned previously, imperialist coloniser language gives us such terms that also become part of the language of both the coloniser and the colonised, and repetitions of these often deemed inappropriate terms, including Coloured will always ensure that the status quo is maintained. Robert Young⁵⁶ expresses the western viewpoint in regard to perpetuation of inappropriate terminology and concepts well in the following passage:

There is an historical stemma between the cultural concepts of our own day and those of the past from which we tend to assume that we have distanced ourselves. We restate and rehearse them covertly in the language and concepts that we use; every time a commentator uses the epithet “full-blooded”, for example, he or she repeats the distinction between those of pure and mixed race.⁵⁷

Moreover, just as Cowlishaw may be accused of perpetuation of imperialist language in her study of Murrin and their identity issue, Young too, in the concluding words of his statement, reiterates and rehearses, and thus continues the perpetuation of the classic western categorisation of indigenous peoples with the use of the words “pure” and “mixed race”. One classic use of this is through reification.⁵⁸ Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples do the same and the numerous debates and discussions further highlight the myths of origins and descent. This causes dissention when claims to Aboriginality are sought, or attempted to be established, and then challenged, even by other Aboriginal people or other Aboriginal people. This coupled with the never-ending western compulsion to erase indigenous roots, while at the same time boasting of the capability, as well as the desire to keep alive ancient traditions and kinship links, is indeed perverse. The reasons are obvious for in some instances it is important that stories do not maintain unbroken links to country and ancient traditions as this will have implications for land rights and native title claims among other claims. In addition, separate identity is not conducive to the brand of nationalism that western

⁵⁶ Robert J.C. Young, *op cit.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.27

society, and in particular Australian society, seeks to promote, establish and maintain.

Methodology and other considerations

...Foucault gave permission to historians to conceive more modest aims, to trace and chart particular genealogies and specific histories of discrete discourses...History could be decentred. Historians didn't have to seek, pursue or desire a master narrative.⁵⁹

Part of the methodological approach of the historian, including this one, when faced with a proliferation of stories, anecdotal or other, is to piece together a newer, or individual version of events, with of course, different interpretations. I attempt this different approach with the presentation of this thesis. The attempt to write a new version of an old colonial story while avoiding some of the rhetorical canons of western scholarship has been difficult, but also their omission has been deliberate.

Mostly my informants were no longer residents of the Tiwi Islands, however they all maintain strong connections and affiliations with both local Tiwi, former Garden Point inmates, and with Catholic missionaries and others who may have had contact and/or were involved with the mission at Garden Point. Every one of them displayed an unnerving loyalty to both the Catholic church overall, to particular missionaries, or memories of past missionaries, and to the Garden Point Mission itself. Although most were frank and sometimes scathing in their criticisms of certain mission individuals, mostly from the past, as well as past mission practices, the clear message was that only they had the right to make those judgments and statements, and to express them. I can only describe, in what I consider inadequate terms, aspects of this loyalty as the result of a level of propaganda and indoctrination that has silenced these people. Perhaps this is testament to what may be regarded by authorities as the major success of the assimilation story that took place at this particular mission. Or perhaps one could be sympathetic and understand this unwavering loyalty as strategy, or perhaps necessity, of ex-inmates to hold together the only semblance of family structure they could ever know. There was also strong loyalty displayed and expressed to their adoptive Tiwi families, and all informants were reluctant to endanger those

⁵⁸ Reification - by continuing to use these words and contemporary theorising about "pure" and "mixed-race", western categorisation maintains "racial difference", that is, by using these words in a defining category, for example, in anthropology, we continue to make the words "real" and "concrete". Paul Gilroy, "Race ends here", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 21, No. 5, September, 1998, pp 838-847

⁵⁹ Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Is History Fiction?*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005, p.186

relationships – at any level or for any purpose. But this thesis is not about the Coloureds and Tiwi peoples' relationships and interactions. It was always meant to be a study of the colonial interactions and factors and processes, and impacts of mission life for Coloureds.

Most approaches to standard academic methodological practices were observed, for example, interviews were conducted, transcripts recorded and typed. Regrettably a huge amount of initial data, including tapes, transcripts, photographs and other materials were lost when a filing cabinet containing this collection was moved between buildings at Northern Territory University – Centre for Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resource Management moved to Faculty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (dates unknown). While this has been widely reported and I have conducted searches myself, none of this material has ever been recovered. However, for the most part I chose to listen more carefully to the Coloured informants than other players in this story. Copious note taking was not a priority and I was careful not to do any analytical interpretations of any of the data I collected or of the additional information I collected. It was important to allow the informants to be in control of the process and for them to have complete ownership of the stories they told. Many informants requested off-tape conversations and I found this far more conducive to the entire interview/recording process because this allowed more of the story to be told. In addition it was necessary to display solidarity with people who I knew were afraid to reveal their identities. Subsequently, I agreed that many sections of stories were not to be written up – it was agreed that some were never to be repeated – at any stage.

While this more flexible approach to a historical data collecting exercise may raise eyebrows in the traditional western research setting, I, as well as the informants, were better able to enjoy a fuller, more panoramic as well as Aboriginal-specific view of a special time in Northern Territory history. I trusted them with their delivery and veracity as much as they trusted me with recording their views and versions of those stories.

The initial commencement of research into this story was with much gusto and exuberance but this soon waned. I became a disillusioned researcher until I read Linda

Tuhiwai Smith's words in relation to her personal research journey in her paper titled "Ko Taku Ko Ta Te Maori – The Dilemma of a Maori Academic"⁶⁰ and discussed aspects of this with her on a visit to Auckland in July 2002.

Dr Wendy Brady's "Beam me up Scotty! – Communicating across World Views on Knowledge Principles and Procedures for the Conduct of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research"⁶¹ also guided me in decisions I made in regard to appropriate approaches. As with my own experience, both mentioned Indigenous scholars have experienced frustration when trying to frame indigenous research within our own indigenous or cultural contexts. We all asked ourselves the question on how we might best go about researching in our own communities, and pondered on what we might or should expect, especially if many non-indigenous researchers had already been to our chosen sites of research. What if those non-indigenous researchers had worn the community people down with their constant evasive and inappropriate questioning and demands for special or unique information?

In most instances this was the case and the Aboriginal researcher-historian in this case was faced with a mixture of suspicion and hostility, from Coloureds themselves, but mostly from non-Aboriginal stakeholders and observers.⁶² I was often told (by non-Aboriginal researchers) I **had** to speak to certain missionaries if I wanted to get "the true stories", indeed I was told I **had** to seek permission from certain non-Coloureds or non-Tiwi before I proceeded. It was not a new experience for me to be confronted with such negative reaction from non-Aboriginal researchers keen to 'protect' their precious booty for themselves. It seems in the main part, that 'Aboriginal or indigenous research' is the sacred domain of non-Aboriginal or indigenous researchers only, and that this tradition is firmly upheld within western academia.

⁶⁰ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "Ko Taku Ko Ta Te Maori", presented at NZARE/AARE Conference, Deakin University, Geelong, November, 1992

⁶¹ Wendy Brady, "Beam me up Scotty! – Communicating across World Views on Knowledge, Principles and Procedures for the Conduct of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research", presented at *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Conference*, Hervey Bay, 6-11 December, 1992

⁶² For instance, when offering my own views (on invitation and request) to an American and Catholic scholar who was researching Catholic-Indigenous interaction on the North American and Australian frontiers, I was branded a heretic and the opportunity for further discussion was curtailed immediately. He cancelled a planned meeting (in Darwin) and stated that he was advised not to speak to me.

Like Smith, I too have often heard the anti-research discourse and the cynicism regarding non-Aboriginal or non-indigenous researchers. Quite often people speak of lack of ethics, no respect, intrusive questioning and unreasonable demands. This made me even more conscious of the need to always ensure high level confidentiality and to know about mutual trust, and for that trust to be of the highest order – something to be honoured and to have total obligation to. It was important that I conveyed that my research was not primarily in pursuit of profit or academic advancement or credibility. While it might result in a further qualification for me in western academia that was not what motivated me to relay this story. Even though it was a requirement of the Human Ethics Committee for me to submit examples of ‘Plain Language Statement’ and ‘Informant Consent Form, mostly, when these were produced they caused much anxiety that in turn led to many questions as to their purpose and intent. Most people I interviewed were suspicious of signing documents, which led me to think that perhaps non-Aboriginal researchers had not complied with these ethic requirements or they had a different method of approach and explanation. I also thought that perhaps this document signing was threatening to the informants, a reminder of earlier instances that once promised unsavoury and unclear outcomes.

At the time I commenced my research and commenced interviews (1998) I got the clear impression that Aboriginal people were more content with, but not more trusting, of the non-Aboriginal researcher. I have no conclusion to offer in regard to this situation except to state that it remains a contentious issue for many Aboriginal researchers in a variety of research situations, and this is not confined to the Northern Territory.

Vine Deloria Jr., recently deceased Native American professor philosopher, made several statements over the years in relation to western anthropologists and Christian missionaries as well as their indigenous supporters. He felt that Indians that accepted the western scientific explanations, Christian beliefs and findings and had been mesmerised into denigrating their own people. Deloria’s words with a few additions:

Many...have come to parrot the ideas of anthropologists (and Christians) because it appears (they) know everything about (indigenous) communities. Thus many ideas that pass for (indigenous) thinking are in reality theories originally advanced by anthropologists (and Christians) and echoed by

(indigenous) people in an attempt to communicate the real situation.⁶³

Perhaps in some way as the non-Aboriginal ethnographer/researcher/historian, the Aboriginal counterpart, due to the prescribed methodologies and other set practices of western academia, has as his or her own personal objective, adopted the researcher gaze. I ask myself: can I successfully argue that an Aboriginal gaze is a more appropriate one, or more valid than the non-Aboriginal one? No. I cannot. What I can offer as an Aboriginal historian is a representation of a historical narrative that I am sure would be better accepted by those Coloured people who were under that western gaze. For example, narration of Aboriginality and criticism or even mockery of assimilation and conversion or perhaps partly, even a celebration of Christianity, as presented in Jimmy Chi's *Bran Nue Day*⁶⁴ gave the Aboriginal people of Broome an opportunity to re-visit, re-assess, even re-access, mostly through song and parody, that mission experience. It may not have always been a healing experience for everyone, but it certainly gave voice and authentic representation to that particular Aboriginal community and its special Christian experience. As well, Chi's play's message was powerful in that it refused to relegate Aboriginal culture to the past, and it celebrated the reality of contemporary or present-day Aboriginal culture. While showcasing a significant Aboriginal historical period, this musical made the strong statement that modernity means a different contemporality for Aboriginal people, specifically those "hybridised" Aboriginal identities, and especially those who had "mission experiences".⁶⁵

As with most works whether they be historical narratives, scientific analyses, or sociological interpretations and understandings, the complex mesh that includes cultural elements such as formal history, literature, material artefacts, photography, folklore, media, and even anthropological discourse, all provide a more inclusive and reflective insight of the past. For the purposes of this thesis, a sample collection of Coloured informants' stories, as well as published works and archival materials, assisted in the construction of this historical snapshot of the Coloureds' and Catholics' Garden Point Mission story.

⁶³ Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1988, p.82

⁶⁴ Jimmy Chi, *Bran Nue Day*, play/musical depicting life for Aboriginal people at a Lutheran mission in north-west Western Australia, premiered in Perth in 1990.

The research “wilderness”⁶⁶

It is appreciated that the concept of ‘wilderness’ might represent quite different understandings for different people, and is a concept it seems of what might be described by the more technological society of people, say from the nineteenth century through to the twenty-first century, who have long lost contact with many features of the natural world. As well this statement could include both Aboriginal and/or Indigenous peoples and westerners or Anglos and others who might see themselves or even believe themselves as being completely separate from the natural environment in which they live. However, I believe that most Aboriginal and/or Indigenous peoples only see ‘home’ or know ‘homelands’ – there is no ‘wilderness’, and no concept of such especially as an ecological notion. The wilderness concept promoted by a majority of non-Aboriginal and/or non-indigenous peoples keep alive Longfellow’s⁶⁷ erroneously referred to “forest primeval” which in turn denies the impact of generations of indigenous peoples. For the wilderness buffs in the most part cling to the belief that:

...wilderness (is) the untouched or untamed land...and urban perception, the view of people who are far removed from the natural environment they depend on for raw resource...Indigenous groups in the tropics, for example, do not consider the tropical forest environment to be wild; it is their home.⁶⁸

I have often compared the Aboriginal and/or indigenous researcher experience, and difficulties those researchers might sometimes face, as ‘the research wilderness’. This is a place where they might be confronted with the many academic non-Aboriginal, non-indigenous mercenaries and assortment of other hunters and collectors chasing the unique research trophy or prize. There seems to be Aboriginal research over-kill in some areas and this situation, as far as this author is concerned, is further perpetuation of the combined overall *terra nullius* matrix. This notion in particular lends support to

⁶⁵ Jimmy Chi himself claims Aboriginal, Chinese, Japanese and Scottish ancestry.

⁶⁶ An explanation of the use of the term “wilderness” as used in this context relates to Professor Marcia Langton’s comments an ABC Radio National “Reconciliation” program which was broadcast in 1995 Professor Langton set out her objections to the contemporary use of the term by stating that: “The term “wilderness” (is) a derivative of the terra nullius fiction...and the term, in its contemporary context effectively eradicates the imprint of millennia of Aboriginal impacts...of Aboriginal people present and past...”

⁶⁷ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882). American poet in whose poem *Evangeline*, the words “This is the forest primeval” evokes many a reaction and response to “wilderness”

the philosophies of such greats in western intellectual thought such as John Locke (1632-1704), *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) whose principles for example, empiricism (the human mind is *tabula rasa* and we learn through experience), among others, are still heavily relied upon today – especially in relation to how Anglo or western researchers interpret Aboriginal and/or indigenous data. Locke, his compatriots and the generations of western researchers since have developed, relied on and argued for philosophical positions that have provided justification for Aboriginal and/or indigenous dispossession and enslavement ever since. Thurman Lee Hester Jr. and Dennis McPherson, also take the same view and have presented their objections to inappropriate representations of North American and Canadian indigenous peoples’ knowledge’s and philosophies in an editorial released in 1997.⁶⁹

It has been my experience as an Aboriginal researcher that in most cases I am part of that wilderness that I speak of above. That is, I am virtually non-existent or irrelevant in a western researcher or historian world, and the strong feeling that accompanies that is that my research is or will be of little significance. I know too well that historical research is not deemed as significant as for example, scientific research, and that research conducted by Aboriginal and/or indigenous researchers in particular, is mostly considered far less important or valid. It is more of entertainment value than anything as it satisfies the non-Aboriginal reader’s yearning for the Longfellow versions of primordial or tragedy-laden pasts. It is considered less rigorous in approach and methodology, therefore requiring less time and energy, and finance to support research. In a nutshell, ‘wilderness’ in this context, refers to where researchers like me find themselves in relation to research being carried out on Aboriginal pasts, even sometimes the Aboriginal present. Aboriginal researchers are simply locked out in a western-imagined vast uninhabited wasteland, not even invisible; they are simply not meant to be there.

⁶⁸ A. Gomez-Pompa and A Kaus, “Taming the wilderness myth”, *BioScience* 42:273 in Fikret Berkes, *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management*, Taylor and Francis, Philadelphia, 1999, p.154

⁶⁹ Thurman Lee Hester Jr. and Dennis McPherson, “Editorial: The Euro-American Philosophical Tradition and its Ability to Examine Indigenous Philosophy” in *Ayaangwaamizin: The International Journal of Indigenous Philosophy*, Vol.1, No.1, 1997, p.4

I offer an example of this by speaking of Keith Windschuttle⁷⁰, who, while attempting to examine the credibility of received interpretation in what he labels the examination of historiography in respect to the relations between Aboriginal and colonists, fails to acknowledge the very important oral accounts that may not be able to withstand the scrutiny of the western historiographic examination. Windschuttle does not just question Aboriginal versions of their own history, he also questions non-Aboriginal historians who write such histories and who document oral accounts of Aboriginal history. The end result is that oral accounts in relation to population numbers or battles and the like, are largely dismissed and consequently the Aboriginal researcher or historian along with them. This is partly so because the majority of non-Aboriginal and/or non-indigenous researchers, as well as the growing but still small number of Aboriginal and indigenous researchers, are university trained. While it is acknowledged that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers are seduced by what may be considered the inviolable oaths set out in western research rules and procedures, the following quotes are intended for non-Aboriginal or non-indigenous researchers:

...in a context where the importance of research and the principle of scientific freedom were held to be primary values, transcending even the responsibility to respond to public demands. The foundations for these ideas can be traced back to the Renaissance and the “educational revolution” (Parsons and Platt 1973:3) that followed. (These) scholars have come to assume that the acquisition and free exchange of knowledge is accepted as common practice throughout the civilized world. “The unhindered opportunity to conduct research, to freely discuss issues and to publish ideas, was seen as central to both the further development of science and to the improvement of [white] human life”. (Nason 1981:3) As democratization continues to evolve along its natural course, however, towards expanding the concept of equality to an ever-widening range of people and societies – the principle of scientific freedom is also, as it were, subjected to the pressures of democratization...⁷¹

And as James Nason states:

...our ability to freely collect data, along with the notion that research work was an inviolable activity, has diminished in the face of new legal and social condition...⁷²:

⁷⁰ Keith Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, Vol. 1, Macleay Press, Sydney, 2002

⁷¹ Michael Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*, UBC Press, Vancouver, 1992, p.103

⁷² James Nason, “A Question of Patrimony: Ethical Issues in the Collecting of Cultural Objects”, *Round Up*, British Columbia Museums Association, 83, pp.13-20 in M. Ames, Op. Cit., p.104

Even though Nason notes the inconvenience caused by new legal and social conditions, mostly, serious ethical transgressions still occur. Some non-Aboriginal and non-indigenous researchers remain dismissive of the oral tradition. However, the recording of Aboriginal or indigenous histories should never be dismissed or demeaned. It is important for those who set out to dismiss and de-value such recollections to recognise that they represent a collective autobiography, conducted over an immense length of time, through rapidly ever-changing social conditions and situations that have always been fully controlled by colonisers. According to Penny van Toorn, Aboriginal people, especially on Australia's eastern seaboard, were recounting and documenting their stories and histories via various mediums other than the written word since 1796. They may have been piecemeal and fragmentary, nonetheless:

This fragile multifarious archive offers brief glimpses into a multitude of individual lives. These documents have usually served as raw materials or sources *for* history, but they also represent a genre *of* history in their own right. Together they may be viewed as a fragmented, collectively produced autobiography of a people.⁷³

Indigenous oral histories and ethical researcher historians

For most historians and an assortment of western researchers I would say that the underlying ethics are mostly those of a philosophical nature where there is to be a balance reached between the theoretical and the basic pressing value issues of day-to-day living. That does not mean to say that philosophical historical ethics and issues are entirely abstract or are totally disregarded altogether. However, just as philosophers might turn to Socrates⁷⁴ as a guide, historians might too, as both need to step back from individual everyday life, learn to abstract themselves from their Eurocentric and sometimes over-judgmental thoughts and pronouncements, in an effort to better view and understand indigenous pasts. Historians, along with other western researchers must have the capability to reflect on the nature and values of both the indigenous past

⁷³ Penny van Toorn, "Indigenous Australian life writing Tactics and transformations" in B Attwood and F Magowan, *Telling Stories: Indigenous history and memory in Australia and New Zealand*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2001, p.2

⁷⁴ Socrates has been credited with the following words of wisdom, greatly cherished it seems by a large number of western researcher-academics: "We are dealing with no small thing but with how we ought to live". Funnily enough though the fundamentally simple statement 'how we ought to conduct ethical research' brought about by Socrates' words, has been largely ignored as part of basic ethical behaviour when dealing with a wide range of folk who do not fit the category of Anglo or western.

and the indigenous present. They must be as philosophically rigorous in approach to indigenous history as with Anglo, western or other histories, because if they fail to do that, they fail to be ethical.

The good history student or researcher can only then become the ethical researcher when they have learned the basic concepts and categories - before embarking on that intellectual journey. They do this by focusing on and ensuring that a solid grounding in good research skills and behaviour has been achieved. Ethical historians and researchers will be familiar with all Aboriginal and indigenous issues, arguments and concepts, long before they even attempt writing up that very first 'Plain Language Statement' or 'Consent' Form. They should be familiar with all arguments, and perhaps even some of the answers, especially in relation to Aboriginal and/or indigenous intellectual property issues, and the rights and responsibilities entailed. As well, they must ensure the roles that they play clearly protect Aboriginal and/or indigenous intellectual property and that the utmost priority is given to respect of Aboriginal and/or indigenous knowledge and philosophies.

The roots of western ethics

Western philosophy supposedly began some twenty-five thousand years ago, a mere drop in the ocean in relation to Aboriginal existence and therefore the antiquity of Aboriginal philosophical and other understandings and principles.⁷⁵ As we know, the Greeks got most of the credit for the birth of western philosophical tradition. Of course there was not the world-wide human population that we have now, nor was the technology, economical or political systems in place so that moral behaviour was not what could now be considered, universal. Socrates' wise words of long ago were mostly in response to life and behaviour of a specific societal group and of a specific region. However, they have universal appeal and significance for European or western societies, scholars, and others right up to the present period – regardless of relevance to geographical location or philosophical disposition.

The principles of behaviour adopted from an ancient indigenous society, turned into a

⁷⁵ These Aboriginal and/or indigenous philosophical, other understandings and principles may be described in the modern context mostly as "traditional ecological knowledge" or TEK, once also described by westerners as "folk science".

western society, now also impacts on indigenous societies at all levels. It is recognised, that like all cultures, both past and present, principles of behaviour are based on sets of beliefs, attitudes and values that guide most peoples' daily lives, and such principles are not just the province of non-Anglo or non-western societies. Perhaps the Greeks of Socrates days would have answered his question "How ought we to live?" by stating that Greeks had to live an ethical life – and just as it was then, it is now, that customary beliefs of all cultures are connected to each culture's religious worldview. In short, to be ethical, to live an ethical life, is to conform to what is the "good thing" to be typically done and to do what is expected of the majority of the ethical population or community or culture. As we know, one must obey all conventions and rules of society, whether Aboriginal or Anglo, indigenous or western, in which we live, or live by the rules and conventions of the religion we belong to. In a broad sense, particularly in modern society, this plain version of ethics is difficult to apply, or adhere to, because the conglomerates now exist in almost every country of the world. However, it was a principle that would have been far easier to abide by in the earlier conversion phase of colonial Australia – but did not.

It is important to have this discussion as Socrates and the founding principles of ethical behaviour, especially in relation to academic research because modern-day ethics, modern philosophy, and its approaches lead the new-age researcher to mostly forget, or simply to not know, the foundations of ethics or ethical behaviour. Today's approach almost gives carte blanche permission for the western researcher to be unethical in their attitude to Aboriginal and/or indigenous research, and philosophical thought and old rules are pushed aside in pursuit of 'new' Aboriginal or indigenous knowledge. No longer do we have a Socrates challenging and questioning the beliefs, values and morals of society, instead we have small groups, sometimes individuals working alone, who may think they oversee the ethical behaviour of a historian/researcher as they pursue what they consider their own big questions. Instead they mostly ignore strict rules of engagement and appropriate protocols when conducting or participating in so-called 'Aboriginal or indigenous research'.

JOURNEYING FROM WILDERNESS

At this point it is important to mention another wise man from the western historical past that set the parameters for ethics as they might relate to human nature, and who it is claimed, introduced the most influential tradition into western ethics. Plato is held responsible for the integration of metaphysics and epistemology – both essential elements in any western research agenda. An explanation of all these concepts is set out below:

Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of reality. Epistemology is the branch that investigates standards of knowledge and rationality. Like many philosophers who follow him, Plato believed that by studying *human nature* (metaphysics), we can come to *know* (epistemology) how we *should live* (ethics).⁷⁶

As DesJardins explains regarding ethical research, the basic premise is that ethical research within our research cosmos is that “the good life for humans is a life spent in pursuit of the fulfilment of human nature”. And as part of that fulfilment we should all leave our caves and escape out into a world of ideas, to gain legitimate knowledge, and then return to the cave, to serve, to teach, and to lead. Of course, this philosophy cannot be evenly distributed because not all people have the resources, the will, the intellectual capacity to attain knowledge, or to be researchers, whether ethical researchers or otherwise. This means the creation of a researcher elite emerges and to use Plato’s terms, sees the creation of philosopher-kings, who in turn get to rule, or own any number of research agendas, Aboriginal or indigenous included. The philosopher-kings (and queens) are those research historians who have been able, and are still able to control the research purse strings of funding organisations, so they may continue to own most Aboriginal or indigenous research. Mostly these historian researchers have Aboriginal or indigenous populations and individuals as their objects of study and experiment, and it seems, are always considered by funding organisations at academic and other institutions, to be the most qualified and only bona fide historian researchers in the entire research kingdom.

I draw on what I have learned as a historian studying the colonial history of Australia, through a journey that commenced with Europe in revolution, followed by a journey

through North Australian history; then through South-East Asia, its religions, its varied regional histories, and its colonial experiences; the politics and structures that have subjugated the Aboriginal peoples of this country and the Indigenous peoples of other countries, especially of North America. As well I have learned much as part of my studies in a wide range of inter-linked subjects, and observance and participation in western systems at all levels – political, religious, social, academic and other. Many experiences have been learned whilst undertaking my Bachelor degree at Northern Territory University and my Masters degree in American Indian Studies at University of Arizona and through research conducted into the colonial and conversion experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, and Indigenous peoples of North America and elsewhere. The sad reality is that the many negative colonial and racist experiences have continued and I have experienced much of these even while compiling my PhD.

I draw on the supportive works of Peter Nabokov⁷⁷ in seeking to present ideas in relation to the need for more Aboriginal, “Native” or indigenous historiography and offers some of his words in support of the premise that different peoples may record different histories, using different methodologies and even offer diverse and challenging conclusions. At a personal indigenous level Nabokov states:

They may complain that I fail to interpaginate Indian cases with themes of concern for contemporary historians issues of human agency, alternatives to Master Narratives, experiments with multivocality and narrativity, and older debates over Great Men storylines and how best to periodize the past.⁷⁸

Likewise, there are many different approaches even within Aboriginal peoples’ own histories. For example, they draw on story-telling, dance, song, art or weaving to record their histories. There are as many varied viewpoints and worldviews as there

⁷⁶Joseph DesJardins, *Environmental Ethics: Concepts, Policy, and Theory*, McGraw-Hill College Publishers, 1998, p.3

⁷⁷ Peter Nabokov, *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2002. The title of Nabokov’s book was adapted from historian David Beaulieu (Chippewa) who had issue with the European model of history. Beaulieu described that history as:...a [Euro-American] tree with many different branches, the idea of variations on a common theme...[which according to Nabokov’s translation Beaulieu’s proposal was that]...a more egalitarian alternative...[title of which is]...attributed to Navajo historian Ruth Roessel who spoke of “a forest of many different and varied trees” with its stand of independent tribal approaches to recollecting and using the past including Euro-American trunk and branches as only one among many. But this arboreal symbol for American Indian cultural diversity may have a wider root system, serving in one instance to make a point about epistemological diversity or in another to supply mnemonic metaphor for tracing the evolution of a tribe’s accounts about itself. [Preface p.vii]

are histories, and to highlight this point I quote from respected Tewa Native scholar Alfonso Ortiz, who stated:

There is simply no *the* Indian viewpoint in the writing of history.⁷⁹

I add there is also no *the* Aboriginal viewpoint of Aboriginal histories nor indeed no *the* Australian viewpoint. There are mnemonic analogies for descriptions of cosmological domains in the religious context, or in the instruction on social or moral teachings. The practice is not limited to Aboriginal Australia or Native America as analogical references through a variety of religious and iconic symbols may be found in a number of cultures, Aboriginal, indigenous, non-Aboriginal and non-indigenous, of the past and present. For example, at around the same time as Christian missionaries were converting and assisting with the civilising of Aboriginal peoples in the southern part of Australia, in July 1844 an Ojibwa orator told a Jesuit priest:

My brother, you have come to teach us there is only one way, for all people, to know the Great Spirit...My brother, there are many species of trees, and each tree has leaves that are not alike...⁸⁰

A few words on the notion of shared history goes to Richard Broome who shows sensitiveness it seems, to perceived objections and criticisms in regard to non-Aboriginal writers presenting Aboriginal histories. He does this despite his acknowledgment that most Aboriginal histories have been badly written. While recognising that “good historical writing...is not about race, religion or ethnicity...but about training and rigor, skills, together with compassion and reflexivity”⁸¹ he needs to recognise that both Aboriginal writers and historians are capable of all this too, and that there might be other issues of exclusion that compel some to criticise. Aboriginal historians and writers do expect compassion, reflexivity, ethical research, as well as less “ideological aggression” and even less “rationalisations” and “racial ideas” and it should be recognised by him and non-Aboriginal others that these agendas are not just stored in the dustbins of history. Aboriginal historians (and other Aboriginal scholars)

⁷⁸ Peter Nabokov, Op.Cit., Preface, p.vii

⁷⁹ Alfonso Ortiz quoted in “Commentary”, in *Breaking Barriers: Perspectives on the Writing of Indian History*, Newberry Library, Chicago, 1978, edited by D.L. Beaulieu in Peter Nabokov, Op.Cit. Preface, p.vii

⁸⁰ Denys Delage and Helen Hornbeck Tanner, “The Ojibwa-Jesuit Debate at Walpole Island, 1844”, *Ethnohistory* 41, 2, Spring 1994, p.319

⁸¹ Richard Broome, “Entangled Histories”, The Politics and Ethics of Writing Indigenous Histories: A Seminar held by the History Council of Victoria, 7 July 2005 published in *Melbourne Historical Journal*, Vol. 33, 2005, p.8

face never-ending challenges in western academia, some as a result of a western perceived assessment as to their lack of “well-honed historical skills” or ‘imagination’, but mostly they are dismissed so as western academics may go about ‘ennobling’ themselves by way of an Aboriginal agenda. Overall, a number of Aboriginal historians and scholars would agree with Broome’s statement:

You don’t have to be French to write French history, or Catholic to write Catholic history or Aboriginal to write Aboriginal history. This view is stultifying and can lead to the death of the historical enterprise. Not only could we not write the history of many pasts because we have not lived there or they are not “our people”, but we would be condemned to write only our “own history”, what ever that might be, doomed to know only ourselves. It would be as lonely and as sterile as self love.⁸²

Most Aboriginal scholars would agree with Broome and other western academics, historians and others, that all are part of the colonial matrix that has seen relationships built on economic exploitation driven by debilitating psychological potency that has rendered a firm ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ ideology that is difficult to break down. While a number of historians and other western scholars quote such giants as Fanon, Memmi, Said, Foucault, even Langton, Dodson(s), Deloria, and a plethora of other indigenous or ethnic ‘other’ philosophers, they misread and misinterpret the many messages. Broome speaks of “a strange fraternisation” that might sometimes develop into and influence a new form of relationship, but this cannot truly happen while the westerner continues with the superior colonial and racial discourse in the dominant voice. Yes, both must meet half way and allow all voices to be heard, but also to be respected and to be rendered valid, and equal, and western colonisers must do everything to stop rationalising and justifying their own impotencies.

Perhaps the final word should go to Michael Kammen who reminds all historians in uncomplicated and quite simple terms: “The historian’s vocation...is to provide society with a discriminating memory. Indeed, to communicate effectively he must discriminate. Only by shaping available sources can any historian, whether a professional academic or a creator of romance, coherently convey knowledge of the past. Many do provide society with this discriminating memory, but little use is made of it: the gulf between sophisticated chroniclers and the public at large seems to widen

⁸² Richard Broome, op cit., pp.8-9

all the time. More about the past is known than ever before, and is even less shared”.⁸³

⁸³ Michael Kammen, “Vanitas and the historian’s vocation”, *Reviews in American History*, 10,4,1982, in David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, p237

INTRODUCTION

Garden Point Mission was the Catholic mission at Melville Island, one of two islands, approximately 5,800 square kilometres in area which make up the Tiwi Islands. The islands are situated in the Arafura Sea, which is a shallow arm of the Pacific Ocean between Australia and New Guinea. Melville Island, 80 kilometres north of Darwin, across the Clarence Strait is separated from Bathurst Island which is approximately 2,600 square kilometres in area to the east, by the Apsley Strait. The Garden Point Mission depicted in this thesis was in operation during two separate periods, 1940 - 1945, and from 1956 - 1964.

However, the Coloureds and Catholics story began in a much earlier time, and long before both Bathurst and Melville Islands were established as sites for Catholic conversion, which was mostly carried out by devoted Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC). Garden Point Mission was evacuated in 1942, briefly following the bombing of this region by Japanese airforce, but was not fully closed down until 1967.

The Tiwi Islands are of significant interest as this region has remained as one of enduring connection between local traditional owner Aboriginal peoples, (Tiwi Islanders), Coloureds, and organised western religion (Catholics). The Tiwi Islands, according to Europeans, were ‘discovered’ by Phillip Parker King in 1819. However, there are counter-claims to this, and while there are those Europeans who would argue that it was possibly the Dutch who ‘found’ the Islands around 1636, the Portuguese also lay claim that the Eredia map of 1602¹ is proof that their cartographers and

¹According to A.F.Z. Cortesao, Emanuel Godinho de Eredia described as cartographer, cosmographer, geographer and mathematician – of Goa, sometime around 1600 mapped the Islands now known as Bathurst and Melville (Tiwi Islands). His father was Portuguese and his mother Malayan. He was educated by the Jesuits at Malacca and Goa. Author of *The Description of Malacca* (c.1613) which contained fifty-six maps and drawings, and a chapter “Meridional India” in which he reported on a visit to what he named *Luca.Antara* and *Ouro*, and noted on the 1602 map “*descobridor* (discoverer) *Luca.Antara in 1601*.” There is speculation that these islands he named, were in fact Bathurst and Melville Islands. His map (Eredia map) was discovered in the National Library, Rio de Janeiro by Dr. Mota Alves in 1946.

surveyors were in the region even before the Dutch. Only a small number of non-Aboriginal historians acknowledge that the Tiwi people were in the region for a much longer period of time, or that they may have surveyed and mapped the region for their own purposes of establishing boundaries and estates. Nevertheless, in 1824, the English named the headland at Melville Island, Garden Point. However, the Tiwi name for this place is Pularumpi. According to Thecla Brogan:

...it is known to many as “The Water Hole” because of the beautiful billabong where waters flow onto the beach.²

Commonwealth government ‘removals’ policy, legitimated and carried out via *Aboriginals Ordinance* (1918) NT dictated the removal of all “half-caste” children from ‘Aboriginal camps’. Subsequently the Catholic Church was granted 1000 square kilometres on the north of Melville Island for the purposes of a mission for Coloureds. The mission was originally named Our Lady of Victories Mission.

As we know, or should know, one of the biggest colonial lies, the lie of *terra nullius* has long been exposed. Regardless of the arguments that surround this term, and in spite of colonial/settler nationalistic histories that work hard at dismissing Native Title claims, the fact remains that this landmass was occupied when the British first invaded. The truth is that the land was obtained by an act of dispossession carried out through British law that insisted on the assumption that the land was unoccupied. The ‘settlement’ of all areas of Australia, including the Tiwi Islands was not only part of an on-going colonial goal but was a continuation of western criminal acts against Indigenous peoples the world over. By the time the colonial machine reached the

¹ See also: A.F.Z. Cortesao and A.T. Mota, *Portugaliae Monumenta Cartographica*, Lisbon, 1960; M.G. de Eredia, *Declaracam de Malaca E India Meridional Com O Cathay*, M.S. ,(1613, preserved in the Bibliotheque Royale, Brussels, No.7264, transl. to English by J.V. Mills as *Eredia’s Description of Malaca and of E India Meridional and Cathay M.S. 1613*, (1930), addressed to the King of Spain, with Mills’ Notes, published in *The Royal Asiatic Society Journal, Malayan Branch, Vol.VIII*, Pt. 1, 1929-30 (Singapore, Sept. 1930) Intro. Pp. 1-6 and Notes pp. 184-199 (State Library of NSW Call No. DS506A); also translated to French, under C. Ruelens, Intro. To L. Janssens (ed.), Brussels, 1882) – National Library, Canberra, Call No. BRAQ2876; M. McCaskill, Personal Communication, Flinders University, Adelaide, 1996. Copy also held by the Western Australian Maritime Museum under File MH 31/92; K.G. McIntyre, *The Secret Discovery of Australia: Portuguese Ventures 200 years before Captain Cook*, Adelaide, London, pp.75-77, pp.362-365; N.H. Peters, *The Iberian Charting of the North Coast of Australia in the Sixteenth Century*, unpublished thesis, 1992; (Above list of resources provided in website established to allow wider readership of the paper prepared by as a result of PhD of Noel H. Peters (listed above): *Eredia Map 1602*, published in *Cartography*, Mapping Sciences Institute, Australia, December, 2003 <http://www.users.tpg.com.au/papag/EREDIA2.html> Accessed 6 December, 2005.

² Thecla Brogan, *The Garden Point Mob: stories about the early days of the Catholic Mission and the people who lived there*, Historical Society of the Northern Territory, 1990, p.2

Northern Territory, and specifically the Tiwi Islands location, it was well-oiled and able to justify all of its processes and actions. When Aboriginal people did not cooperate by becoming extinct, and especially when the new category of Coloured presented, the colonial machine, instead of being set back by these quandaries, became even more ingenious, and more focused on how to best control its colonised constituency. Mostly this was done through the invention and introduction of policies so as to justify theft, kidnapping and displacements of people.

During the earlier 1860s colonising period, the Northern Territory, and consequently, the Tiwi Islands, was under the control of the colony of South Australia. By 1890 many “half-castes” or “mixed-race” children were born. This not only posed problems for their white fathers, but also for the coloniser bureaucracy. And while it has been recorded that some Aboriginal women were willing sexual partners of white and other non-indigenous men, there were those who were sexually abused and exploited. “The desirability of “half-caste” girls in the eyes of non-Aboriginal men in a predominately male foreign population meant that most were destined to a life of exploitation...”³ So much so that by 1909 the growing population of “half-caste” children (in the essentially white populated areas of the Top End) numbered around 200. It was noted that at least “one-third were females of child-bearing age”.⁴

At the same time the main centre of Darwin’s European population numbered around 300, and the white authorities considered the growing numbers of “half-castes” posed security as well as ‘moral’ problems. Aboriginal people overall, were seen as impediment to the progress and development of the frontier, and it was deemed necessary to hold them in a state of subjection. Tony Austin states that the Protectors and Sub-Protectors saw themselves, in the first instance, as defenders of white economic interest, rather than champions of Aboriginal welfare.⁵ Perhaps then, this conclusion might assist in laying to rest the claim that all intent and action in relation to what transpired on that frontier was honourable and done solely in the interests of Coloureds, at whatever location.

³ Tony Austin, *I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly*, Op. Cit., p. 5

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Tony Austin, *Never Trust a Government Man: Northern Territory Aboriginal Policy 1911-1939*

From pacification to protection

By 1910, legislation which introduced the Northern Territory Aboriginals Act provided that all Aboriginal children were to be taken into custody (where possible), and to be maintained and educated by the Northern Territory Aboriginals Department. The Act also provided that the Chief Protector became legal guardian of every Aboriginal and every “half-caste” child up to 18 years of age. This guardianship was enforced whether the child had parents and other living relatives, and it also meant that the Chief Protector was given power to order and confine any Aboriginal or “half-caste” to a reserve or institution. It seems it was especially Aboriginal women who required close guardianship for: “The sexual exploitation of women resulting in growing numbers of children of mixed parentage – known scornfully as “half-castes”- was the single most potent reason for calls in the North itself for protective legislation”.⁶

In 1911 the Commonwealth of Australia took control of the Northern Territory and thus was enacted the *Northern Territory Aboriginals Ordinance 1911*. It was at this time that Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory, under the control of the Commonwealth, moved from a period of ‘pacification’ to one of ‘protection’. The original idea of ‘protection’ supposedly arose out of concern for the indiscriminate massacres that occurred frequently throughout the Northern Territory. Most notable of this period were the so-called dispersals at Barrow Creek (1874) and the Daly River region (1884). “Population loss in the Victoria River Region between 1880 and 1939 has been estimated at between 86.5 per cent and 95.6 per cent, and in the Alligator River region at 97 per cent”.⁷ The 1910 Act, in fact, was the beginning of the “half-caste’ solving strategy, which subsequently led to what was to become known as “the removals”. Under the Act provision for the “better Protection and Control of the Aboriginal Inhabitants” of the Northern Territory empowered the Chief Protector “to assume the care, custody or control of any Aboriginal half-caste if in his opinion it is necessary or desirable in the interests of the Aboriginal or half-caste for him to do so. These powers were retained until 1957”.⁸

Northern Territory University Press, Darwin, 1997, p. 3

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid. p.1

⁸ Tony Austin, *Never Trust a Government Man: Northern Territory Aboriginal Policy 1911-1939*, Op Cit., p.4

To fully appreciate the Garden Point Mission location and its history and to gain a clearer background picture of the place where all those kidnapped and captured children were taken during the 1940s, and after, it is important to know of some of the earlier Catholic and other activity in the Tiwi Islands. It is acknowledged that the Tiwi have their own stories to tell of their experiences of that earlier interval with Catholic missionaries. While some of these have been recorded in written form, by Tiwi and others, many of the re-tellings have been expressed in song and in their art.

Of course the overall story of Catholic missionaries in the Tiwi Islands has a much longer history, some of which has been mentioned in the preceding passage. The factors that led to the combined civilising and conversion of Coloureds, and Tiwi Islanders, during the period 1941 to when the Mission was officially closed down on 19 December 1967, followed a pattern and set agenda that was created in 1788. It was simply another phase in the colonial process. The Mission itself, was at first, established as a place for “incorrigible natives”, many who had been rounded up in Darwin and surrounds by colonial government officials named Patrol Officers. One such Patrol Officer of the Native Affairs department, and later, Protector of Aborigines was Bill Harney. Author of *Life Among the Aborigines* (1957), he took his coloniser activities seriously, and believed that the Catholic civilising and conversion mission was a worthy project. His comments regarding Tiwi people, as well as his praise for the work of Catholic missionaries give legitimacy and justification to the combined forces of civilising and conversion. Harney held similar views to most government officials, Catholic missionaries, and the general white public. Harney’s observation of the situation at the Tiwi Islands led him to comment:

Generally, the mission’s influence caused a rise in the Tiwi population. To the missionaries the traditional methods of population control and the associated customs of abortion, infanticide upon the birth of twins or malformed babies and the burying alive of old people who had outlived their usefulness...had to be abandoned. The use of medicines also created greater respect for human life and was a direct result of mission teachings.⁹

The Coloureds were later moved to Snake Bay (Milikapti), Melville Island when the location at Pirlangimpi or Garden Point (Pularumpi) was officially identified as the

⁹ W.E. Harney, *Life Among the Aborigines*, Rigby, Sydney, 1957

new Catholic mission for Coloureds. The strong belief held by Catholics and government authorities alike was that Aboriginal people belonged to a doomed race, and that they were incapable of being civilised. This prevailing belief was so firmly entrenched in their minds that it helped authorities and missionaries to downplay injustice and cruelty as the inevitable adjunct of a conclusion that was unavoidable. The only hope was for their offspring of “mixed-descent”, the Coloureds.

The new mission, known as *Our Lady of Victories*, was coordinated by Father William Connors. He had previously served at missions in New Guinea and Palm Island. He received a government grant of 170 square kilometers of land, plus an amount equivalent to \$10,000 and set about building dormitories for Coloured boys and girls expected to start arriving from the mainland in 1941:

The timber he used was Oregon and silky oak and came from Townsville: it was insulated on bloodwood posts and poisoned against white ants. The building outlived the mission which was closed down in October 1967. [The buildings] were demolished in October 1975.¹⁰

After Father Connors, the mission was organised by a succession of missionaries of the Sacred Heart order. His immediate successor was Father Gerald Doody, followed by Father John Flynn, Albert Cuneo, John Leary, John O’Carrigan, Allan Corry and Kingston Summerhayes, to name a few.

The stories and histories of civilising and conversion of Aboriginal people throughout Australia, have many versions. And the Catholic story at Garden Point Mission is not much different. However, it is important to acknowledge that this particular story is one also about the Tiwi people as much as it is about the Coloured children who were taken to the Islands for induction into Catholicism. While much has been recorded and told by a variety of observers, commentators and writers, there is a significant absence of the history of religious experiences of people of “mixed-race” or “mixed descent” in the available literature. This is so of the Coloureds and Catholics and the Garden Point Mission story. In the Northern Territory some researchers, for example historian Tony Austin (1997), and Barbara Cummings, indigenous researcher and author of *Take This Child: From Kahlin Compound to the Retta Dixon Children’s Home*, (1990), have written about “half-caste” institutions such as Kahlin, Retta Dixon (Darwin) and the Bungalow (Alice Springs). However, their work does not

detail the Aboriginal-Christian contact experiences; and especially the experiences of the “removed” or Stolen Generations childrens’ contact and exposure to Christian, and in this study, specifically Catholic missions and missionaries. Austin briefly mentions the “New Deal”¹¹ for Aborigines that was introduced by then Director of the newly formed federal Native Affairs Branch E.W.P. Chinnery in 1939. As Austin noted:

The “new deal” brought little early relief for Aboriginal people of mixed descent...They continued to be ostracised by the comfortable class of white Territorians, although churchgoers in Alice Springs and Darwin could hope to experience a modicum of acceptance by Methodist and Catholic parishioners as those denominations competed for their faith and began to undertake welfare work in towns...Authorities, experiencing a dull awareness of the stigma attached to the term “half-caste”, began to replace it with “part-Aboriginal” and even for a time, “part-European”. They also sometimes managed to acknowledge that the “problem” was more a function of white racism than “half-caste” inferiority, and exemptions were granted a little more willingly, until, in 1953 adults of mixed descent were granted unqualified citizenship. In the Northern Territory this followed agitation by the Australian Half-Caste Progressive Association and others.¹²

Jack McGinness, among others, was to lead the fight for some “modicum of acceptance”, as citizens of Australia, before anything else. Not only was he to be the first Aboriginal president of a Trade Union in Australia, the North Australian Workers Union (NAWU), he was also president of the Australian Half-Caste Progressive Association.¹³

While much has been written on mission life at various locations throughout Australia, especially in light of the Stolen Generations’ experiences within compound, mission and institutional life, this study will focus more on the Coloured reaction to the overall colonial experience, and the effects this had on traditional spirituality and notions of self-image. As well, some of the central characters who played major roles in the assimilation and conversion of Coloureds overall have always been revered as

¹⁰ Brother John Pye. In Thecla Brogan, Op. Cit., p.2

¹¹ There were several ‘new deals’ struck for Aboriginal people and as noted by Tony Austin in *Never Trust A Government Man: Northern Territory Aboriginal Policy 1911-1939*, p.5 :“From 1911 Commonwealth policy, like that of South Australia, was based on the assumption that Aborigines were a dying race in need of protection while they died off. Beyond that, policy consisted of a hazy, and barely articulated concept of economic assimilation. Since very few whites could conceive of anything even approximating social equality for Aborigines, assimilation lacked the cohesion, or sense of social optimism of the policy proclaimed in 1939, and pursued with vigour during the 1950s and 1960s.”

¹² Tony Austin, *I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly*, Op. Cit., p.213

saviours, with good and honourable intentions when perhaps, in retrospect, they should be judged along with other perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

One such notable, Cecil Cook,¹⁴ commenced in 1927 as the Northern Territory Chief Protector of Aborigines (NTCPA) and became the longest serving NTCPA until his dismissal in 1938.¹⁵ His policies were to be criticised by many in far away southern states, especially by Interior Minister John McEwen who introduced his own version of a “new deal” for Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. This deal, according to McEwen and his supporters, (as reported by Austin) meant “socio-economic assimilation of “half-castes” was desirable, if not inevitable” and was meant to pacify fearful white Australians who needed to be assured that biological assimilation was possible, “without detriment to the white race” and without “throw backs”. However, it was implemented at a time when popular prejudice against Aboriginal peoples was high, attributed by the anthropologist Norman Tindale “to the import of American prejudice against Negroes”.¹⁶

While all persuasion of Christian missionaries and their supporters will justify their actions by offering up ‘they/we believed we were doing what was best for Aboriginal people’ it is a far from convincing justification. It has been noticed in the research that some mission societies provided haven for many Aboriginal people fleeing from frontier violence, at a number of locations Australia-wide, yet, at the same time, governments, according to some interpretations, condoned, or at least ignored settler practices and would perhaps justify their deeds by stating ‘it was for their own good’. This was particularly so of colonisation activities on the northern frontier and one

¹³ Sue Stanton, “The Australian Half-Caste Progressive Association: The Fight for Freedom and Rights in the Northern Territory”, *Journal of Northern Territory History*, Vol.4, 1993, pp. 37-46

¹⁴ Cecil Evelyn Aufrere Cook (1897-1985). In 1927, at the age of twenty-nine years, he was appointed to the Northern Territory as Chief Medical Officer and Chief Protector of Aborigines.

¹⁵ (District) Protectors of Aborigines were government employees, with extraordinary powers that saw no regulation of their activities, who were also not required to report or justify their abuse of power and authority. They were led by a Chief Protector, who was charged with the contradictory duties of controlling, promoting, while at the same time protecting Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. The Chief Protector was “the legal guardian of every aboriginal and every Half-Caste child, notwithstanding that any such child has a parent or other relative living, under the age of eighteen years”. For the purposes of the Act, and for the implementation of differential treatment of youths and adults, definition of “Aborigine” included “half-caste” children whose age did not exceed sixteen years.

¹⁶ Norman Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia. Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits, and Proper Names*, University of California Press: Berkeley 1974. Please note: Some may regard the use of such terminology inappropriate and may find this particular reference, even in a historical context, offensive.

only needs to read the work of W.H. Willshire of the mounted police. Willshire carried out his “dispersals” of Aboriginal individuals and clans with the full support of settlers usually also acting in the capacity as government officials, some with special designation as “Protectors of Aborigines”. Tony Roberts, in his expose *Frontier Justice*, (2004) of the violence on the northern frontier, makes it clear that the evangelical regard for the worth of Aboriginal lives was not a widespread view in the earlier colonising period of the Northern Territory.

While Christian missions proselytized to all Aboriginal people under their influence whatever their “caste” categorisation, and taught beliefs about the soul, not the body, their own beliefs were incompatible with the biologically-based “caste” ideas. They preached that heaven was open to all believers whatever their colour, but only if you were white were you conferred with equality and respect on earth. However Peggy Brock noted that Indigenous peoples may enter that exclusive realm of new religious understandings and practices eventually. Indigenous peoples do this by becoming entrenched in, and embracing those understandings and practices fully. This occurs when they allow them to become “embedded within the social and cultural life of the community”.¹⁷

Not only were uncivilized savages and the unwanted progeny of white fathers, “human monstrosities”, shunned, there was a basic belief among Anglos that it was their responsibility to redeem these people from irrational savagery and immoral wickedness. This view of Aboriginal society as being beyond the pale of humanity set in place legal and political ramifications that were to have long-term malignant impact that last until this day:

It was an axiom of Christian thought, propounded in the opening portion of its most sacred text, the Bible, that all organic life on earth was arranged in a hierarchy, at whose apex stood Christian man. As its appointed masters, Christians could look down upon this entire physical realm as a God-given field for their use and enjoyment. If the savage were not differentiated from the natural environment, then it followed that he too could be incorporated in that utilitarian prospect. Since he was outside the fellowship of Christian civilization, he would enjoy no greater legal or moral status than any other flora and fauna.¹⁸

¹⁷ Peggy Brock , (ed), *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change*, Brill Leiden, Boston, 2005, p11.

¹⁸ Mark Cocker, *Rivers of Blood, Rivers of Gold: Europe’s Conquest of Indigenous Peoples*, Grove Press, New York, 1998, p.14

The entire battery of deceptive legal and theological devices that upheld those basic western tenets to guide and assist government determinist schema and also reinforce Christian moral validity, were quickly designed and implemented. The new program, civilising savages and conversion of “part-Aborigines” has always attracted healthy numbers of recruits, all eager to bring these wayward people to Christian civilisation’s terminal apex to which it was understood, all mankind must inevitably aspire. For their own reasons, all who engaged in the activity of removal of Aboriginal children from their families realised they worked for the regime that forced those children into accepting foreign beliefs through Christian or western-type religious instruction. They were active agents driven by the larger imperial designs derived from the history of ideas developed as a result of the encounter between colonial powers and peoples of the New World. However, the roots of western superiority were well fertilised long before either Colombus or Cook embarked from their homelands on their divinely ordained missions of progress:

Ever since the time of the Greeks, Europeans had been accustomed to a binary vision of human societies. On the one hand were the original classical cultures of the Mediterranean and their successors in a wider Europe. These were the ordered realms which civilization naturally inhabited, but beyond the pale of this rational interior, Europe was besieged by the forces of human darkness or, to use the word of Greek origin, the barbarians...If the commonwealth of civilized nations was the province of rational government and moral order, then it followed logically that the exterior was a province of irrational savagery and immoral wickedness. And when Columbus reported progress on his search for dog-faced men...he was articulating Europe’s persistent belief in this threatening penumbra at the margins of civilisation.¹⁹

John Harris in his *200 years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: A Story of Hope*, speaks of some of the negative impacts of mission life on Aboriginal people. This publication attracted these comments by one of the judges when being awarded the Christian Book of the Year (1991) prize:

The book tells of the best and worst of missionary endeavour amongst Aboriginal people and all shades between. It is respectful of their culture without glamorising or baptising paganism.²⁰

¹⁹ Ibid. pp.12-13

²⁰ Judges’ comments, John Harris, *One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: A Story of Hope*, Albatross Books, Sutherland, NSW, 1990, inside dust cover.

Some of the language used in the review is somewhat disturbing because it clearly outlines the bias, and still strongly held view in the insignificance of Aboriginal peoples capacity to have their own thoughts and attitudes to their own religious beliefs. Mostly these religious beliefs are still viewed as pagan in the eyes of Christians. This attitude is evident throughout Harris' publication and when it is time to mention the mission at Garden Point, it is always referred to as the Catholic mission at Bathurst Island. While Father Gsell warrants a couple of brief mentions in relation to his "work among the Tiwi of Bathurst Island",²¹ it is not new information and there is meager reference to the Coloured children who were missionised at the same location. The Garden Point Mission story and reference to Bishop Gsell gets scant attention. Brief mention is made of Gsell's so-called marriages to young "promised girls to prevent child marriage and multiple wives"²² however, the story is neither further explored nor explained.

Both physical and demographic changes in the Aboriginal populations, resulting from different engagements and experiences of frontier contact, presented problems for governments. These problems were identified by government and ordinary settler alike as 'racial' problems. To address these racist concerns it was deemed necessary to develop policies, some which led to the categorisation of Aboriginal people according to a so-called 'caste' system of terminology. This phenomenon of the racial categorisation of Aboriginal people, accompanied by administrative measures aimed at maintaining "racial hygiene", developed in the mission contexts, as well as other frontier contexts. The evidence suggests that the missionaries, in line with the overall settler and government aim, set as part of their goal, or at least in its general rhetoric, to reproduce the British class and imperial caste system. This means that Aboriginal societies were to be segregated and portioned into blood quantum specifications, 'traditional' (meaning "full-blood") or 'primitive' and "mixed-race" (meaning "half-blood" or "half-white"). The latter category probably being in far more precarious position for the survivors of frontier interaction; for the 'traditional' folk were meant to die out eventually so it was that the soothing pillow policy was widely accepted, even assisted in most part. This group, it was believed, would soon not exist. However, the 'half-white' survivors were meant to integrate into a society that did not

²¹ John Harris, *Op cit.*, p.476

²² *Ibid.* p.798

readily accept them as part of their own:

To be known as half-caste was to be placed in an encompassing unbending straightjacket of other peoples' expectations, to be judged in advance regardless of your individual personality or ability.²³

In general, although there is some analyses of the assimilation policies, as in Markus' *Governing Savages* (1990), a social history of the Northern Territory politics and government, these lack the historical, sociological and personal accounts of the "removed" or Coloured children's' experiences under the regimes of combined government assimilationist policies and Christianising endeavours in northern locations, such as Darwin and the Tiwi Islands. However, writers such as Tony Austin make broad sweeping statements:

...subordination in institutions was consigned mainly to Christian missions funded far less parsimoniously than previous government institutions, especially as child endowment payments were now paid to missions for each child.

Austin also quotes Ernest Chinnery, one-time Chief Protector of Aborigines, and gives us his view in regard to Coloureds "they have no race, no traditions, no culture, nothing except what we can give them".²⁴ There were many other administrators, missionaries and Aboriginal philanthropists such as Daisy May Bates (*The Passing of the Aborigines: a lifetime spent among the natives of Australia*, 1938) who detested the idea of "half-castes" and was reported as having said "...however early they may be taken and trained, with very few exceptions, the only good half-caste is a dead one".²⁵

Tindale and Birdsell advised that absorption, not isolation, was the best "scientific solution" of the "half-caste" problem:

Complete mержence of the half-castes in the general community is possible without detriment to the white race. Their Aboriginal blood is remotely the same as that of the majority of the white inhabitants of Australia, for the Australian Aboriginal is recognised as being a forerunner of the Caucasian race...Two successive accessions of white blood led to the emergence of the Aboriginal in the white community. There are no biological reasons for the rejection of people with a dilute strain of Australian Aboriginal blood. A low percentage of Australian Aboriginal blood will not introduce any aberrant

²³ Henry Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, Op. Cit., p.231

²⁴ E Chinnery as quoted in Tony Austin, *I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly*, Op.Cit.,p.214

²⁵ Daisy Bates, (Western Australia) *Sunday Times*, 2 October 1921 in Henry Reynolds, Op. Cit., 2005, p.8

characteristics and there need be no fear of reversions to the dark Aboriginal type.²⁶

Even the Catholic missionaries at Garden Point, similar to other Catholic mission locations in the north, encouraged the development, and actively nurtured this caste system. They did this through maintaining the ideology of the idea of “caste” by transmitting these ideas to their converts, both Coloureds and Tiwi, many who still maintain some of that “caste” language. This combination of caste and conversion to Catholicism caused long-term problems that have persisted. Even though some would say that the colonial-type missionaries have long since departed, and that the Tiwi Islands community has been transformed into a vibrant settlement governed more as a village council, much of the Catholic legacy lives on.

Social differentiation between Aboriginal groups classified according to the “caste” ideology presents further historical problems felt to this day, and largely they are either ignored or are embraced by the later-day proponents of assimilation. It is not the place of this thesis to examine in detail those questions that might attempt to answer or at least raise the issues that might prompt such an investigation. It is important to know that the persistence of the “caste” categories in the broader Aboriginal community Australia-wide causes both conflict and concern. However, even despite the differentiations imposed on Aboriginal people, by themselves as well as others, the evidence suggests that social and cultural links between Aboriginal people forced into these categories have been maintained and remain strong. Aboriginal people themselves, in the most part, have retained an inclusive concept for their social identification based on genealogical and historical connections.

There were some whites who were sympathetic too, such as Mary Montgomery Bennett, who often criticised and complained about government treatment of Aboriginal women in particular, and especially of attitudes in relation to “marriage bondage” and “domestic slavery”. Bennett’s strong humanitarian views upset the Western Australian government and she was considered unfashionably interventionist

²⁶ Norman Tindale, “Survey of the half-caste problem in South Australia”, p.67, in W. Anderson, *Op. Cit.*, p.240

according to Alison Holland.²⁷ She was constantly at loggerheads with Chief Protector Neville²⁸ in regard to Aboriginal women of Western Australia, and was highly critical of the “arranged marriages” and the removal of children from Aboriginal women, including those classified as “half-castes”. But more importantly she was highly critical of the interference of white administrators and their missionary colleagues in Aboriginal marriage laws, and to the sending out of girls into domestic service even though Neville had said:

“Our policy is to send them [Aboriginal and half-caste girls] out into the white community, and if a girl comes back pregnant our rule is to keep her for two years. The child is then taken away from the mother...the mother goes back into service.”²⁹

[Further] Bennett argued that this [“absorption” strategy] put a premium on the abuse of women and ultimately resulted in state-sanctioned prostitution’³⁰.

What impelled the establishment of Christian institutions such as Retta Dixon, or Garden Point Mission, as well as earlier models, was that authorities such as those mentioned above, had chosen to ignore the sexual practices of white men on the wider frontier. Their activities were mostly ignored even though the growing numbers of “half-castes” would pose problems for government, chiefly among those was what to do with the children. A growing separatist attitude between coloniser (especially male) and colonised (especially women and children) developed as a result of a changing colonial momentum. Imperial morality as well as an emerging fear of the growth of numbers of “biracial” people impelled authorities to re-think their strategies and to explore their vulnerabilities as colonial controllers.

Ann Laura Stoler, author of *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* and *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, maintains that the intersections of such

²⁷ Alison Holland, “‘Whatever her race, a woman is not a chattel’ – Mary Montgomery Bennett, Ch. 6, in Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins & Fiona Paisley, (eds), Op. Cit, p.130

²⁸ Auber Octavius Neville (1875-1954), born England. Western Australian bureaucrat who was appointed *Chief Protector of Aborigines* in 1915 and remained in the job for the next quarter of a century. In 1936 he became the *Commissioner for Native Affairs*. He retired in 1940. Neville was the public face of the “removal” or “Stolen Generations” policy and was portrayed in the 2002 film *Rabbit Proof Fence*.

²⁹ A.O. Neville as quoted by Alison Holland in Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins & Fiona Paisley (eds.), *Uncommon Ground: White women in Aboriginal History*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2005, p.148

³⁰ Mary Montgomery Bennett, Australia, Parliament 1937, *Aboriginal Welfare*, as quoted by Alison

encounters are also through forms of sexual control. Stoler points out that, due to the male coloniser stance, Anglo women's presence on the Indigenous or Aboriginal frontiers, for a variety of reasons, was both undesirable and unnecessary. Indigenous or Aboriginal women would meet male colonisers' immediate sexual needs, however, even long after the acceptance of Anglo women on the colonial frontiers, the practice of cohabitation or miscegenation continued. This was a favourable situation for most Anglo men, and was either ignored by authorities or even sometimes condoned for it meant minimum (or sometimes no) obligation to Aboriginal women, especially financial, denoting in the long term minimum impact on the general cost of living.

Mary Montgomery Bennett remained an outspoken critic of what she termed "native slavery" and along with missionary friends Rod and Mysie Schenk, who established Mount Margaret United Aborigines Mission (Western Australia) in 1921, were strong opponents of the practice of polygamy in settled districts. Polygamy in settled districts, according to the Schenks and Bennett, promoted the "selling" of women by "old polygamists" for rations such as tea, sugar flour and tobacco. Bennett held a firm view that Aboriginal women had an intrinsic and "instinctive passion for purity and innate desire for chastity".³¹

Like missionaries worldwide, the Schenks shared an abhorrence of traditional Aboriginal marital practices because of what they perceived as the domination of old men (gerontocracy) and the servility of women. Women were always cast as victims of patriarchal disposal: there were no female polygamists in their schema. They also shared the belief that Aboriginal women were more open to change or conversion.³²

While Bennett and Schenks' attitude and approach to Aboriginal women may appear to have been motivated by humanitarian ideals and a modicum of social justice, they too had clearly defined agendas: those agendas could only be successfully accomplished and the future assured by the silencing of Aboriginal people – men and women. Women like Bennett could expect success in the colonising campaign because as "citizens" they worked within the safety of their gendered, racial, national and imperial frameworks.

Holland in Anna Cole et al, p.148

³¹ Mary Montgomery Bennett, *The Australian Aboriginal as a human being*, Alton Rivers, London, 1930, p.113, as quoted by Allison Holland, in Anna Cole, et al (eds.), *Op.Cit.*, p.143

³² Alison Holland in Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins & Fiona Paisley (eds.), *Op.Cit.*, pp.143

This demonstrates even though women such as Mary Bennett set out to challenge what Pateman calls “the sex-right” of white men over white women and Aboriginal women, she and others like her sought their own version of assimilationist outcomes – they hoped to ensure the progress of white civilization, not its demise, through enabling black Australians to adopt the highest of white standards. They aimed for women, like themselves, to take their place as civic individuals through reforming the white nation-state, not dismantling it.³³

Mary Bennett’s protestations and comments about the “brutalization of Aboriginal women” and the “wicked callousness” of white men, and her exposure of “wealthy squatters, station managers and others” as the fathers of “mixed-descent” children, did not slow the tide of abuse in any way.

Bennett singled out the mother-daughter bond as particularly important to racial survival and to breaking the cycle of despair experienced by Aborigines living under the threat of the Aborigines Act: ‘What Australia’s aboriginal half-caste daughters need is their own mothers who love them, and their own homes among their own people, and teaching, until such time as they shall have attained legal and economic and political freedom, and meet white people on terms of equality’.³⁴

Obviously government welfare authorities in Darwin or members of the Catholic diocese responsible for the Garden Point Mission had not listened or heeded any of the advice of this woman who spent considerable time in the earlier “protection” period in Western Australia. Those at the Northern Territory mission were not to be deterred even though ample other evidence and reports were abundant, such as those from Western Australian Catholic missions, especially the one at Beagle Bay which, by 1907, provided “refuge” for every “half-caste” child over seven years of age. According to the Benedictine monks, the widespread abuse of Aboriginal women was squarely the fault of their own men, who punished women cruelly for “illicit dalliances” with white men. It was with strong Catholic conviction that gave those missionaries the belief that:

In extending “loving protection” to women and children, Catholicism would

³³ Fiona Paisley, *Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women’s Rights, 1919-1939*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2000, p.152

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 121

supplant such “savagery.”³⁵

Chief Protector and Chief Medical Officer Cook reassured the concerned author Ernestine Hill in the 1930s, that he was directing “a vitally interesting ethnological experiment, teaching these children to live white and think white.” Hill was encouraged to visit a “half-caste home” in Alice Springs where she was told that “...under the best conditions, these unfortunate little ones will be given every opportunity to outgrow their heredity – if they can.”³⁶ According to Warwick Anderson, she was heavily influenced by Daisy Bates – described by Anderson as “the great white queen of the Never-Never, ranting at Ooldea about savagery and cannibalism and condemning the propagation of half-castes.” Evidently, “she tried to be hopeful, but she remained skeptical at heart”.³⁷

Another author of the time, and later to become a Superintendent at the Kahlin Aboriginal compound, was Xavier Herbert. He and Cook were often in dispute as Herbert accused Cook of not doing enough to “civilize the half-castes”. In his novel *Capricornia* (1938), Herbert identified Cook as Dr Aintee who described Aboriginal people:

...merely as marsupials being routed by a pack of dingoes, and he understood that his duty was merely to protect them from undue violence during the rout.³⁸

Herbert believed that the government did not really want blacks to flourish because this would lead to further miscegenation, to the proliferation of half-castes; the authorities would prefer to reside over the race’s extinction.³⁹

Meanwhile in Western Australia, according to John Stanton,⁴⁰ Rod Schenk (or old “Hallelujah” as he was known), was responsible for one of the more “successful” and “noteworthy missionary achievements in the state, if not in the whole of Australia”.

³⁵ Ros Kidd. Review of Christine Choo, “Mission Girls: Aboriginal Women on Catholic Missions in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1900-1950”, *Australian Humanities Review*, p.1. Online journal at: <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-March-2002/ki8dd.html>. Accessed 2 August 2005.

³⁶ Ernestine Hill, Op. Cit. pp. 203, 204, 207. In Warwick Anderson, Op. Cit., p.229

³⁷ Warwick Anderson, Op. Cit., Notes, p. 319

³⁸ Xavier Herbert, *Capricornia*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1996 [1938], p.238 in Warwick Anderson, Op. Cit., p. 230

³⁹ X. Herbert as quoted in Warwick Anderson, *Ibid.*, p. 230

⁴⁰ John E. Stanton, “Mt. Margaret – Missionaries and the Aftermath”, Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (eds.), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions; Ethnographical and Historical Studies*, The Australian Association for the Study of Religions at the South Australian College of Advanced Education, Sturt Campus, 1988,

Even though he was a missionary of the fundamentalist Christian organisation known as the United Aborigines' Mission he approved:

...of the Roman Catholic rule of teaching directly from the Bible rather than from secular educational materials, even though he disagreed with the tenets of Catholicism...he regarded material needs as playing a very important part in improving the life of Aborigines. Education and changing environmental conditions were always considered as important adjuncts to evangelization; as factors which improved the likelihood of inculcating Christian teachings and ensuring their adoption by Aboriginal people...There is...little doubt that his approach was assimilationist, and his attitudes paternalistic.⁴¹

Schenk, as one who was employed in the same industry as Neville and Chinnery, would have disregarded Aboriginal researcher Barbara Cummings when she exposed some of the practices of missionaries sanctioned by government. She gives some of her personal recollection of days at Retta Dixon:⁴²

(Bagot) reserve, the smaller children in particular had been inculcated with a deep fear of the "blackfella". This fear had been instilled by the situation in which we lived; by the ramifications of the mission's adoption of the assimilation policy; and by the most paranoid desire of the government authorities to keep part-Aborigines separate. The mission manifested a view of the assimilation policy in the most mystical and populist aspects of Christian doctrine: "sin is black"; "darkness is sin"; and "white is pure". We were taught Christian ditties that reinforced these axioms, such as "Wash me in the blood of the lamb and I shall be whiter than snow".⁴³

A question to be asked is: To what extent did Christianity, as a socially unifying idea break down the differentiations made between Aboriginal people by government officials using the "caste" categories? Evidence suggests that some measures adopted to separate people of different "castes" were implemented both administratively and geographically, as part of the desire by Christian leaders and government authorities to separate, and to create two distinct groups or populations, were mostly successful. However, the experiment failed somewhat in the Tiwi Islands. Even though authorities as well as the Catholic Church saw two distinct groups and treated them as such, Coloureds, or "protected" people, socialised into the caste system mentality as a

⁴¹ John E. Stanton, "Mt. Margaret – Missionaries and the Aftermath", Op cit., pp. 292-293

⁴² Retta Dixon Children's Home (named and managed by the Aborigines Inland Mission, in 1947) replaced that of the original "half-caste" institution of Kahlin Compound (established 1912). It was formerly part of Bagot Aboriginal Reserve (established 1938). Retta Dixon was officially closed in 1980.

result of their status as outsiders in the Tiwi cosmos, as well as their biological status, and Tiwi Islanders being assigned to the “traditional” or “tribal” categorisation, the two groups demonstrate a unity rarely seen in other Australian Aboriginal settings.

There has been a long accepted idea of two categories of Aboriginal people, “traditional”, meaning remote community and “having language” or “having English as sometimes third or fourth language” and “non-traditional”, meaning urban, rural, city or town dwellers, usually with little or “no language”.⁴⁴ This long accepted idea of two main categories of Aboriginal poses the further historical problem of representation of Aboriginal society as a pan-Aboriginal, all-homogenous one, in current and political affairs, historical and other debates and research, and in overall dialogue within pan-Australian circles in particular. In fact the “Aboriginal identity”, described in generic terms as “Aborigines”, or “Aboriginal Australians”, or “Aboriginal people” are problematic in that none of those terms fully relay the diversity of peoples and experiences that they so inadequately try to encompass.

It should always be remembered, but is mostly forgotten, or dismissed, that what developed among mainland Aboriginal people of Australia (including the Tiwi Islanders), and their identities, were identities formed by colonial reduction. That identity came about based on their shared experiences of oppression and became what some may describe as “tribal internationalism” and was mostly accepted unchallenged by what might be better understood as an attempt at creating a sense of solidarity among them. The acceptance of such identity is acknowledged by most as one of the survival mechanisms set in place in the wake of the invasions of their homelands.

As part of the Garden Point Mission study, historical evidence was examined in order to account for those two visions of Aboriginal society mentioned earlier. One is the popular belief held by non-Aboriginal society of the success of the ‘caste’ system in its primary attempt to eradicate a ‘coloured’ or ‘caste’ group through assimilation and biological ‘out-breeding’. However, this cannot be said about the Coloureds who were sent to Garden Point as part of the Catholicizing experiment for, mostly, those who

⁴³ Barbara Cummings, *Take This Child: From Kahlin Compound to the Retta Dixon Children’s Home*, in Tony Austin, *I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly: The Commonwealth and “half-caste” Youth in the Northern Territory 1911-1939*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1993, p.214

⁴⁴ In the present there are possibly even more categories of ‘Aboriginal’ designated to Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people.

remained on the islands fully integrated and married into Tiwi society, or at least married other Coloureds from Garden Point or other missions. The other steadfast belief of non-Aboriginal Australia is that the two-fold aim, under the banners of ‘protection’ and ‘Christianity’ has been a rebounding success most notable in the present historical moment. As well, there are some Aboriginal Christians, indeed Catholics who are firm in the belief that a pan-Aboriginalism, unified by broad kinship, shared cultural tenets, as well as religious beliefs from two disparate traditions and cultures, Aboriginal and Christian, is a triumph of the colonial mandate – and God’s wishes.

Obvious loyalties have developed between many Coloureds, Tiwi and the Catholic Church and its missionaries. Mostly there exist complex relationships, many of long-standing, and a general feeling of goodwill exists even today between both present-day missionaries, clergy, lay people and other Catholic authorities and associates. This extraordinary relationship is also noted in other interactions between a broad cross-section of Aboriginal people who have had interaction or have been raised, or converted to various Christian religions. Some Aboriginal people have made unkind and particularly critical statements about their experiences within Christian boundaries and speak of a range of abuses and cruelties they suffered at the hands of Christian missionaries. They comment how they find it difficult to understand how other Aboriginal people can remain so loyal, even though they acknowledge that these missionaries were the only ‘families they ever had. It was difficult for this researcher to relate to stories that spoke of ‘kindness’ especially when they also contained clear examples of abuse and cruelty.

The Garden Point Mission stories that were collected to fit this particular thesis timeframe are what may be described as the modern or contemporary period – post World War II. Essentially, my informants were those who were part of the catholicising colonial experience of the re-vitalised Northern Territory administration, eager to continue with the pre-war assimilationist agendas of a White Australia policy. It was a time when the earlier attitude and rhetoric prevailed in regard to “half-castes” or Coloureds. One example, writers Oswald P. Law and W.T. Gill, expressed earlier in 1904, when explaining the Policy to English readers:

The future Australian race would blend British elements but must resist the

degeneration that would inevitably follow a cross with “coloured people of low morality and social development”.⁴⁵

These types of attitudes were influenced by a number of factors, not least of all was the hysteria surrounding the limited information in relation to “half-castes” or Coloureds, and generated by supposedly intelligent, but sometimes, ill-informed, passionate white folk. In the vein of *Mutant Message Down Under* (1994)⁴⁶, another fictional book, *The Germ Growers*,⁴⁷ was authored by none less than the Canon of St Paul’s Anglican Church at North Melbourne, Robert Potter. Potter’s writing gave grave misconceptions about Aboriginal people overall, and whilst only fiction, *The Germ Growers* in particular focused on the evil “half-castes” or Coloureds, and depicted them as weird out-of-space aliens who visited Earth only to destroy white people. This book is recognised as the first alien invasion novel, and its storyline features extra-dimensional creatures from the Kimberleys, waging germ warfare on white Australia. The Coloured germ growers preceded even H.G. Wells’ Martians who had come to Earth to wage “The War of the Worlds”.⁴⁸

It seems only fitting that the Garden Point Mission at Melville Island should have been chosen as the site for the incarceration of ‘alien’ Coloureds or “half-castes” so soon after the threat of the ‘Yellow Peril’ from the Asian north. Australia’s obsession with the unknown ‘other’ helped justify the kidnapping of Coloured children under a false agenda that promised much, but delivered little. It was done with the full cooperation of Catholic missionaries, with promises of government financial rewards, which were delivered. Eventually, the entire region known as the Tiwi Islands, became ‘Catholic territory’ and virtually remains so today.

Early government policy and legislation and the 1912 “Report on the Aboriginals of the Northern Territory” – Baldwin Spencer⁴⁹

The fact that the Australian aboriginal has never of his own initiative cultivated a cereal or attempted to domesticate any animal as a food supply is one of fundamental importance and together with his nomadic instinct makes

⁴⁵ Oswald P. Law and W.T. Gill, “A White Australia: What it means”, pp. 146, 149. In Warwick Anderson, Chapter 4 “The Making of the Tropical White Man”, Op. Cit., p.98

⁴⁶ Marlo Morgan, *Mutant Message Down Under*, Harper Collins, USA, 1994

⁴⁷ Robert Potter, *The Germ Growers*. [An Australian Story of Adventure and Mystery], Melville & c.: Melbourne, 1892

⁴⁸ H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*, Heinemann, London, 1951. (First published in 1898)

⁴⁹ Walter Baldwin Spencer (1860-1929)

him much more difficult to deal with than the Papuan, African or New Zealander.⁵⁰

With an attitude such as this, and coming from an eminent academic, it is little wonder that Aboriginal people, of the Northern Territory, and the rest of Australia, ever had much of a fighting chance at all. During his 1911-1912 sojourn through some parts of the Top End, Spencer paid visits to Bathurst and Melville Islands and to the Daly River areas “to investigate the natives”. It is claimed that Spencer referred to Aboriginal people as “the early childhood of man left stranded”. While at the Tiwi Islands he observed that “except for a small apron or tassel both men and women are stark naked” and that in general, Aboriginal peoples’ “...moral code is a very different one from ours and certainly permits of and sanctions, practices which, in some cases, are revolting to us...”. As well, he observed that the people around the Darwin area were “not only demoralized but decimated, the old rules cannot be enforced” and that the “so-called civilized aboriginal” had “given up his old habits and become often a mere loafer”.⁵¹ He offered many comments in relation to the overall morality and general character of Top End Aboriginal people but did not have a blanket belief that all were corrupt and bad and completely beyond redemption. Mostly he listened to information and took advice supplied by whites whose own morals and character were obviously beyond reproach:

It is not infrequently stated by white settlers that the natives have no morality. That is, of course, entirely untrue – that is, of aboriginals in their normal state, before they have been degraded by contact with a civilization that they do not understand and from which they need protection.⁵²

Consequently, and on the strength of such reports, part of the protection the government could provide to Aboriginal women, was to try to keep them separated from Anglo and other non-Aboriginal men – for if that failed, “mixed-descent” children would result.

Supposedly the Tiwi Island base was established primarily in an effort to curb what has been described as “the trade in women operating between the Tiwi and indentured

⁵⁰ Professor W. Baldwin Spencer, Professor of Biology, Melbourne University, *Preliminary report to Commonwealth Parliament via Administrator of the Northern Territory, 1912*, Government Printer, Victoria, 2 October, 1913, pp.35-52

⁵¹ Ibid. p.39

⁵² W. Baldwin Spencer, Ibid.

Japanese crewmen on Australian-owned pearling luggers”.⁵³ However, its purpose was extended in late 1940 when it was identified as a site for the provision of accommodation for children of mixed Aboriginal-European and Aboriginal-Asian descent, known commonly then as “half-castes”, later to be known as Coloureds. At the beginning of the 1940s the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory was approached by government to assist with what it described as “orphan children”. These children had up until that time been “cared” for by the Native Affairs Branch in Darwin and were known as “Aboriginal wards’ and “half-castes” among other titles. These ‘orphans’ of “part-Aboriginal descent” would later become identified as part of the Stolen Generations - generations of stolen children, 1941 to 1967.

⁵³ John Morris “Potential Allies of the Enemy: The Tiwi In World War Two”, *Journal of Northern Territory History*, Issue No. 15, 2004, p.83

PART ONE – THE FOUNDATION

Chapter One - Garden Point Mission and the Two-Fold Aim

The location of Garden Point Mission, re-named Nguiu in the 1960s; once also known as Wiu or Weo by the locals, was also meant to be part of the government agenda of a long-term “education” project specifically aimed at constructing a culturally and linguistically uniform nation by means of integrationist policies and institutions. However, it should be noted that the “half-caste problem” of the Northern Territory was widespread long before South Australia handed over responsibilities for Aboriginal people, including “half-caste” children to the Commonwealth.

The collected stories, notes and other materials for this particular historical snapshot of Garden Point Mission is about the mission that came into being in 1954. Daryl Stroud, a principal informant, and a second generation inmate, following his Mother, was sent to Garden Point in June 1956. Following other models already in operation, the Garden Point Mission was to be another place where, under white management, selected members of the Coloured population were to reside. Consequently, the Catholic Church and its missions assisted various governments in interfering in the lives of Aboriginal Australians through the governments’ establishment of their respective Aboriginal Protection Boards. The ironically named “Protection Acts” promulgated by those various Boards:

...passed by all mainland governments by 1912 (for example Western Australia 1905, South Australia 1911)...allowed for the permanent removal of children.⁵⁴

Government protection policy then removed those children into the assimilation programs they had set up with Christian missions. Spencer commented that overall, Aboriginal people were “well treated by the settlers”, however, inter-racial marriage was not only discouraged it was forbidden. Spencer commented in his report:

Reference may be made here to the intermarriage of aboriginal lubras with men of other races. In past years there have been a considerable number of cases in which Asiatics and Europeans have lived with aboriginal women as their wives and though not legally married have treated them as such and have recognised the children. Under the Act no one except an aboriginal man may marry an aboriginal lubra except by special permission which should be and is

⁵⁴ Peter Read, *a rape of the soul so profound*, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards, NSW, 1999

only granted under very exceptional circumstances...[otherwise]...such inter-racial marriages should not be permitted.⁵⁵

Setting the stage – why civilisation and conversion was the only solution

Long before Spencer made this report there were others contributing to the debate about what should be done about Aboriginal people. As well there was an endless stream of “experts” who offered wide-ranging views that covered religious as well as sociological aspects of everyday Aboriginal life. Mostly many views were mere assumptions and guesswork, and conclusions were of course, always reached through western reasoning and understandings of their own religious, legal, political and other systems. It was not uncommon to hear and read such comments as “there is no ceremony connected with marriage” or that “polygamy is universal” and neither was it unusual for a number of other misconceptions to be produced – all the while totally ignorant of the reasons why “promised marriages” were necessary or how they regulated many aspects of community life. Cannibalism was often discussed and written into reports such as “Transactions and proceedings and Report of the Royal Society of South Australia”. Paul Foelsche, Inspector of Police of the Northern Territory offered this in his 1881 report which stated that, of “the most civilised [tribe] on the northern coast”, the Aboriginal clan at Port Essington:

The eating of grown-up people...is as far as I can ascertain, not practised. Only children of tender age – up to about two years old – are considered fit subjects for food, and if they fall ill are often strangled by the old men, cooked and eaten, and all parts except the head, which are skinned and buried, are considered a delicacy. Parents eat their own children...Dead children up to about the age of two years if in good condition are with few exceptions not buried, but eaten.

Such reports as well as other amateur anthropological observations played major roles in all aspects of interaction of European or Anglo authorities, and were relayed to religious authority with subsequent devastating impact on Aboriginal societies. However, despite the many fieldwork expeditions to numerous locations throughout Australia, advice back to government failed to establish any realistic, or even reasonable coordinated policy for Aboriginal people. Yet western authority, including both government and Christian, persisted on creating and implementing new

⁵⁵ Ibid. p.43

arrangements for the administration of Aboriginal affairs across the breadth of Australia. Kerry Arabena's apt expression "not fit for modern Australian society" speaks loudly in relation to this persistence with waves of inappropriate and inept policy implementation [which continue in 2007] as a clear indictment of Australian authorities' long-held attitude toward Aboriginal people.⁵⁶

Arabena identifies A.P. Elkin⁵⁷ former Anglican priest turned anthropologist, sometimes described as a paternalistic humanitarian, as one of the major architects of one of the many "new deals" [for Aboriginal people]. Elkin, along with then Minister for the Interior, John McEwen, decided that the new 1930s deal should shift to "protection, education, health and better government" even though Elkin believed there were limited opportunities for Aboriginal people, even those who "became civilised" by forsaking "their native view of life".⁵⁸ The emphasis was on a brand of citizenship devised by Elkin et al that, according to Arabena, meant among other criteria, "the acceptance of colonial legal structures". The National Missions Council supported these ideals and argued for "oversight and control" [of Aboriginal people] and subsequently issued a document "A National Policy for the Protection, Education, Health and Better Government for the Aborigines".⁵⁹ Consequently 1939 saw the establishment of a Native Affairs Branch base at Garden Point Mission on Melville Island, part of the larger area known as the Tiwi Islands, some 80 kilometres from Darwin. It was chosen by the white authorities for its close proximity to Darwin as well as its safe distance from white civilisation.

During this particular policy period, Chief Protector Cecil Cook⁶⁰ was removed by the

⁵⁶ Kerry Arabena "Not fit for modern Australian society: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the new arrangements for the administration of Indigenous affairs", *AIATSIS Research Discussion Paper* No. 16, AIATSIS: Canberra, 2005,

⁵⁷ Adolphus Peter Elkin (1891-1979) "...the records point to a man who kept his distance from Aborigines and people of mixed descent...He justified laxity in the enforcement of laws controlling sexual relations with Aboriginal women with the argument that if this outlet for the passions of the male population was obstructed attacks on white women would result" in Andrew Markus, *Governing Savages*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, p.97

⁵⁸ John McEwen, *Commonwealth Government's Policy with Respect to Aborigines*, Canberra, 1939 pp.1-6 in G. Gray, "From Nomadism to Citizenship: A.P. Elkin and Aboriginal Advancement", N. Peterson and W Sanders (eds.), *Citizenship and Indigenous Australians: Changing Conceptions and Possibilities*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p.56

⁵⁹ Kerry Arabena, Op. Cit., p. 15

⁶⁰ Cook supported the establishment of segregated out-patient facilities at Darwin Hospital. He outlined his reasons in a letter to the Northern Territory Administrator: "I need only to remind you that the wife of a Civil servant attending the Consulting Rooms for advice in pregnancy or to consult the medical

Commonwealth government, under Elkin's influence, from his Northern Territory post. Tony Austin described Cook as "a towering dominance in Aboriginal affairs for a twelve year period", but it was Elkin who, "from 1933...began campaigning for what he regarded as a positive policy for northern Australia's indigenous people". While Cook cannot be blamed for the initial design and implementation of "the removal by police protectors of light-skinned children", under him "the practice became more widespread".⁶¹

[Elkin's] demands for a new, better qualified, better equipped administrator of Aboriginal affairs in the North had Cecil Cook constantly looking over his shoulder for the dismissal notice that arrived eventually in 1939...Elkin concluded that all of the northern and central parts of Australia needed a single administrator trained in anthropology and law, and supported by wide-ranging powers and appropriately trained patrol officers armed with 'Magisterial authority'...Gradualism must dictate the unavoidable introduction of Aboriginal people to white civilisation...Extinction was not inevitable.⁶²

As a result of all these expert views the Native Affairs Branch of the Northern Territory Administration was created in 1939. The Branch assumed responsibility for Aboriginal people after the split of the Medical Service, Health and Aboriginals Branch. The Native Affairs Branch moved from Darwin to Alice Springs in 1942, returning to Darwin in 1946. From when Paul Hasluck became Commonwealth Minister of Territories in 1951, "assimilationist policies and practices were refined, extended and systematised".⁶³

As with all Christian missions throughout Australia, Aboriginal people, including people of the Tiwi Islands, were held on reserves under white management. This was true also of the mission at Garden Point, where the Coloured population was made up of children who had been removed from their mothers and families from various communities throughout the breadth of the Northern Territory. The Catholic Fathers, Sisters and Brothers were of the opinion that the Coloured children who had "come into their care" were being given the opportunity to have a better life than their

officer about some ailment of her infant in arms, is at present required to wait her turn in company with Half-castes...In Andrew Markus, *Governing Savages*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, p.97

⁶¹ Andrew Markus, *Op. Cit.*, p.97

⁶² Tony Austin, - *Never Trust A Government Man* *Op. Cit.*, pp.156-157

⁶³ Russel McGregor, "Wards, words and citizens: A.P. Elkin and Paul Hasluck on assimilation", *Oceania*, June 1999, p.1. Online at: http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3654/is_199906/ai_n8839496/print. Accessed 22 February

mothers and other family members. Even though it was often expressed that most Aboriginal men, and also a greater proportion of the women, had, in the missionaries' opinions, been exposed to negative aspects of white civilisation and influence, it seems that only the Coloured children required assistance and salvation. This prevailing attitude is reflected in Father Frank Flynn's reminiscences of his contact with the Aboriginal people at Port Keats Mission (now Wadeye, and a community in crisis):

The latter...have suffered from the wrong kind of contact with white civilisation and influence. Not so the Port Keats families, for their only association with our civilisation was through the refining influence and ministering care of the Mission.⁶⁴

Government policy and legislation

Melville Island and the establishment of a Catholic mission was to take a different shape in the early years of the 1940s, until interruption by World War Two activities in the Top End, but the Church resumed its missionising activities immediately post-war. So that by 1954 it was once again a thriving Catholic mission. But, as stated, long before Garden Point Mission was established there were already ideas circulated in relation to how best to assimilate Aboriginal people into Anglo society. Even though Anglos had these simple ideas, and perhaps held some minor discussion about introducing Aboriginal people to "white ways", essentially the entire Aboriginal agenda was seen as "the Aboriginal problem". Tony Austin maps this early journey of Anglo consternation, and the general coloniser-settler reaction to what to do about another emergent issue, that of the "half-caste" problem in his chapter "Educating Aborigines".⁶⁵

During the 1950s there were to be many views in relation to the issue of assimilation, however, only non-Aboriginal views were recorded. Paul Hasluck who as Minister of Territories from 1951 to 1963, held responsibility for two Australian colonial possessions at the time, Papua New Guinea and the Northern Territory. While some have praised his "significant reforms", he followed very strict assimilationist views which he expressed in the most paternalistic terms:

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⁶⁴ Doris M Allen, *Frank Flynn M.S.C.: A Remarkable Territorian*, Chevalier Press, 1994, p.59

We do not want a submerged caste or any other social pariahs in our community but want a homogeneous society.⁶⁶

The policy of assimilation means that all Aborigines and part-Aborigines will attain the same manner of living as other Australians and live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, as other Australians.⁶⁷

Hasluck was obviously under the mistaken assumption that Australian society was already a happy and homogeneous one and that perhaps it was Aboriginal peoples who were holding back progress. He too, was guilty of making contradictory statements when the issue of Aboriginal policy arose and he too, was responsible for expressions and attitudes that spoke of “homogeneity” but at the same time highlighted Aboriginal “difference”. The contradiction is obvious as the policy of assimilation created a situation, as well as a dichotomy, that clearly stated “separation” yet “assimilation” was the only way to deal with “the Aboriginal problem”. Hasluck outlined this separate development idea, basically as one that would divide a nation (and still does), in the following statement “...the superiority of western civilisation both on its own merit and in its established position as the way of life of the vast majority...left only two possible outcomes: separate development or assimilation.”⁶⁸

While the premises underlying assimilation policies now attract considerable debate and analyses in regard to their inadequacies, nothing is said about their inappropriateness, and mostly they are described as being misguided instead of malevolent. Christian missions supported government mandates knowingly, and deliberately combined to put assimilation into effective practice. It is not unreasonable

⁶⁵ Tony Austin, “Educating Aborigines”, *Simply Survival of the Fittest: Aboriginal Administration in South Australia’s Northern Territory 1863-1910*, Historical Society of the Northern Territory, Darwin, 1992

⁶⁶ Paul Hasluck “From Protection to welfare”. In *Native Welfare in Australia*, p.35 in M. Dodson, *H.C. (Nugget) Coombs Northern Australia Inaugural Lecture*, December 2000, p.1

⁶⁷ “Statement of Policy” presented by leave by the Hon. Paul Hasluck MP, Minister for Territories in the House of Representatives, 14 August 1963 in M. Dodson, *H.C (Nugget) Coombs Northern Australia Inaugural Lecture*, Op. Cit., p.2

⁶⁸ Geoffrey Partington, “Policy options need review”, *Courier Mail*, 19 June 1996. Clearly Partington and like-minded people fail to see the correlation between past assimilationist policies and its modern equivalent “self-determination”. Although the more recent model might appear to have more aspects of equality and freedom of choice, and sometimes might even involve levels of collaborative negotiation, it too has (still) failed to, in Partington’s own words: “[improve]...conditions of life for Aborigines [even] after separatist policies had been pursued for a quarter of a century...”Partington in M. Dodson, Op. Cit., 2005, p.6

to propose that through government grants and funding, missions were paid to enforce and carry out the objectives of assimilation. Nowadays, it is people like Geoffrey Partington who blame Aboriginal people for the failure of past policies instead of laying responsibility for the welfare dependency culture that prevails, squarely at the feet of government. Should missions accept part of this responsibility too? Did they actively encourage welfare subsistence by not providing adequate standard education and training outside of the mandatory religious curricula?

The final solution? – send Coloureds to missions and government institutions

In the Northern Territory, both before and after World War Two the spectre of “half-caste Aboriginals” out-numbering whites was regarded as a terrifying reality. Politicians and bureaucrats alike were seriously concerned at the rise in numbers of Coloureds for a variety of reasons, not least of all the general threat to social order and the thought of alignment of loyalties to opposing political powers in the Asian conglomerates to the near north. As well, whites believed that the fabric of their own society would be severely threatened by what they considered unruly and badly behaved “half-whites” whose moral, cultural and physical tendencies would overpower and lead to the degeneration of white society. Venereal disease became a huge problem for authorities to deal with and Dr. Cecil Cook, often expressed the view that there was an urgent need to absorb the non-white populace as rapidly as possible. It was immediate that Coloureds, that if they were to be in anyway useful, should receive some type of training in both western social skills and in Christian instructions in an effort to leave behind any inclinations of nomadism, idleness, promiscuity, and lack of discipline. Andrew Lattas best sums up this colonist attitude to “half-caste” vices and lack of virtues:

Aborigines were often constructed as prisoners of unreflexive bodily desires which they could not control or satisfy [and overall, Aboriginal society was] characterized not by the disciplined freedoms of the mind, but by the violent passions of the body.⁶⁹

Supposedly the Tiwi Island base was established primarily in an effort to curb what has been described as “the trade in women operating between the Tiwi and indentured

⁶⁹ Andrew Lattas, “Savagery and civilization: towards a genealogy of racism”, *Social Analysis* 21, 1987, pp.43, 55. Also see: Andrew Lattas, “Primitivism, Nationalism and Individualism in Australian Popular Culture” In B. Attwood & J Arnold (eds) *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, Latrobe University Press, Bundoora, 1992, pp. 45-58

Japanese crewmen on Australian-owned pearling luggers”.⁷⁰ However, its purpose was extended in late 1940 when it was identified as a site for the provision of accommodation for children of mixed Aboriginal-European and Aboriginal-Asian descent, known commonly then as “half-castes”, later to be known as Coloureds. At the beginning of the 1940s the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory was approached by government to assist with what it described as “orphan children”. These children had up until that time been “cared” for by the Native Affairs Branch in Darwin and were known as “Aboriginal wards” and “half-castes” among other titles. These “orphans” of “part-Aboriginal descent” would later become identified as part of the Stolen Generations - generations of stolen children, 1941 to 1967.

A long-lasting legacy

Spencer, together with other biologists, zoologists, anthropologists and entomologists were all drawn into and entranced with the study of “race-crossing”. They were all excited, but ever cautious, and perhaps mostly uncertain about the effects of what they all termed “hybridization” or “mongrelization”. The issue of “half-castes” and their potential threat to white Australia bordered on hysteria so that eventually extensive “race-crossing” studies were ordered by the government. Mostly, these were conducted by Norman Tindale and the American anthropologist Joseph Birdsell, who in their final measurements and tests concluded:

Complete mergence of the half-castes in the general community is possible without detriment to the white race. Their Aboriginal blood is remotely the same as that of the majority of the white inhabitants of Australia, for the Australian Aboriginal is recognised as being a forerunner of the Caucasian race...Two successive accessions of white blood lead to the mergence of the Aboriginal in the white community. There are no biological reasons for the rejection of people with a dilute strain of Australian Aboriginal blood. A low percentage of Australian Aboriginal blood will not introduce any aberrant characteristics and there need be no fear of reversions to the dark Aboriginal type.⁷¹

Anthropological observations played major roles in all aspects of interaction of European or Anglo authorities, and were relayed to religious authority with

⁷⁰ John Morris “Potential Allies of the Enemy: The Tiwi In World War Two”, *Journal of Northern Territory History*, Issue No. 15, 2004, p.83

⁷¹ Norman B. Tindale, “Survey of the half-caste problem in South Australia”, *Proceedings Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, South Australian Branch* 42 (1940-41), pp. 66-161, in Warwick Anderson, *Op. Cit.* p. 240

subsequent devastating impact on Aboriginal societies. However, despite the many fieldwork expeditions to numerous locations throughout Australia, advice back to government failed to establish any realistic, or even reasonable co-ordinated policy for Aboriginal people. Elkin, mentioned earlier, a former Anglican priest turned anthropologist, was sometimes described as a paternalistic humanitarian. However, while Elkin led much investigative research into what was deemed “problems of Aboriginal-white relations”, he too, failed to come up with any viable solutions it seems. One observer, critical of the lack of rigorous social research as part of the number of anthropological surveys carried out, was A. Grenfell Price. Grenfell Price, was at that time, Master, St. Mark’s College, University of Adelaide. And while his 1950 work may now be deemed dated, some of his observations, were accurate and especially pertinent in relation to the timeframe of this thesis. As part of his criticism he stated:

The extreme paucity of social research workers in various fields of anthropology in Australia is particularly lamentable. It is an excuse for continuation of the present unsatisfactory administration of Australian aborigines, and the localised autonomy of State policies.⁷²

Unfortunately for Aboriginal people, those policies of the 1930s through to the late 1970s, have had negative impact on their lives overall. Even in the Aboriginal present, those observer anthropologists, policy advisers, consultants, government policy writers and church authorities, have modern-day counterparts that continue to bury Aboriginal communities beneath masses of irrelevant and ineffective policies and other information. As well, most Aboriginal commentators conclude that these same people have provided serious miscomprehensions to the scholarly community, government agencies and sometimes the general public, and in so doing have impeded the self-determination aspirations of Aboriginal society overall. It is important to note that both Hasluck and Elkin were ardent advocates of assimilation but took different approaches and were highly critical of one another.

As previously noted, the Catholic Church’s Garden Point Mission came into being in 1940 after previously being known as Melville Island (Aboriginal) Mission and was controlled by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC). Although previously

criticised in the early days of colonisation, for lacking a sense of mission to Aboriginal people, it seems the Catholic Church began to take a keen interest in offering missionary service to the state governments from the late 1880s, so that by the 1940s, the church was also part of the thriving assimilation industry.

Both the Catholic Fathers and Sisters at Garden Point Mission were of the opinion that Coloured children who ‘came into their care’ were being given the opportunity to have a better life than their mothers and other family members simply due to the lighter colour of their skin. Training and increasingly, a general education were regarded as keys to success in European society. However, during a period in which the necessity for universal primary education became accepted in all the Australian colonies, little was said officially, let alone done, about equipping northern Aboriginal people to play a part in overall white Australian society. The colonisers’ conviction about Aboriginal peoples’ mental incapacity, together with the general concern that Aboriginal people mattered only to the extent that they might help or hinder economic development, saw to that. Only when the “half-caste” population began to grow did official thought become action, and turn to the idea of the benefits of schooling.⁷³

Nation-building and “A1 human stock” – humanitarian impulses and patronising assumptions

A number of other non-Catholic ‘orphanages’ were also set up at other Northern Territory locations. According to Charles Duguid,⁷⁴ who wrote in 1951:

As a general rule, half-caste babies born in the country west and south-west of Darwin go to Melville Island, and those born in the country east and south-east of Darwin go to Croker Island. But they do not all go there at once. At the age of three to four months many half-caste babies in the native camps are taken from their full-blood mothers, brought to Darwin and placed under the care of the Aborigines Inland Mission, there to wait final placing at a later date.⁷⁵

⁷² A Grenfell Price, *White Settlers and Native peoples: An Historical Study of Racial Contacts between English-speaking Whites and Aboriginal Peoples in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand*, Cambridge University Press, 1950, p. 207

⁷³ Tony Austin, *Never Trust A Government Man*, Op. Cit., 1997

⁷⁴ Dr Charles Duguid, *Doctor and the Aborigines* (1972), a long-time critic of John Flynn (Flynn of the Inland) recalled a 1930s conversation with Flynn, who asked of Duguid, why he was “wasting his time on those damned niggers” in Charles Duguid, *The Aborigines of Darwin and the Tropic North*, Aborigines Advancement League, 1951, p. 42

⁷⁵ Duguid, Op. Cit., p. 42

Charles Duguid, medical practitioner and philanthropist, along with Minister John Flynn, were both prominent in the Northern Territory in that era when the Garden Point mission was in full operation. Flynn was employed by the Presbyterian Church to produce a report detailing the welfare needs of white settlers, especially those in remote areas of the outback. He eventually set up the famous Australian Inland Mission (AIM), which in its early days was entirely devoted to addressing the welfare needs of white settlers. Aboriginal welfare needs were administered by the “Foreign Mission” branch of the Presbyterian Church and Flynn was adamant that the two missions should remain separate. He clearly stated that his particular mission work could never adequately tackle the racial problems of the broader colonial frontier. He was forthright in his views, developed during a lifetime which encompassed stark shifts in philosophical thinking and social planning – from brutal colonisation that included murder and general mayhem, to that of pathological paternal assimilation.⁷⁶

Flynn worried about white children “reverting to the blacks” and frontiersmen, especially, “living like blackfellows”. His earlier comments, made during 1915, in an article titled “Our Aborigines” condemned both church and government policies, and was scathing in criticism of both these bodies to Aboriginal health and welfare. He described their efforts as “terribly amateurish”:

Our efforts need to be increased, improved, systematised...we are all to blame. We are all more or less ignorant into the bargain.⁷⁷

He had little respect or patience, or what he described as “romantic ideas” about traditional culture, and was highly critical of what he saw as violent and exploitative attitudes towards Aboriginal women within their own social groups. By the 1950s Flynn had very definite views in relation to “half-castes” and wrote several assimilationist pieces which “welcomed” what many would have described as “acculturated Aborigines” into Australian society. Some might argue that Flynn was merely a product of his time, articulating a widely-held view by the majority of settlers:

Whether he consciously acknowledged it or not, Flynn’s reading of the desert

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Brigid Hains, “Inland Flynn: Pioneer? Racist? Or product of his time?”, *Eureka Street*, 13,4, May 2003 Also see Rani Kerin, “Charles Duguid and Aboriginal assimilation in Adelaide, 1950-1960: The nebulous “assimilation goal”, *History Australia*, Vol. 2, 3, 2005, pp.1-85

as the “wide open spaces” and his passionate defence of the interests of white settlers in the Inland were part of the implicit racism of the frontier. And Flynn’s mission to make the Inland safe for white women and their children was a product of his racial beliefs in the eugenic importance of the white bushman – whom he called “our A1 human stock”. The implication is that “half-caste” children were a waste of such potential, and that sexual liaisons with Aboriginal women were a poor substitute for the “nation-building” of white families.⁷⁸

Besides the Catholic mission at Garden Point, there were others established specifically to keep “half-castes” separate from the important work of nation-building. An example of one of the “missions” and a place Flynn would have approved of as an appropriate one for housing “half-castes and niggers” was established at Croker Island. This “hostel”, established in 1941 by the Methodist Overseas mission, was approximately 220 kilometres north-east of Darwin. It took responsibility for 96 “mixed race” children. The mission was temporarily closed and the children and staff evacuated in the 1942 (World War II) bombing of the region by the Japanese – they returned to the site in 1946.⁷⁹ John O’Loughlin, Catholic Bishop of Darwin, after hearing of Croker Island inmates submissions to the Stolen Generation enquiry, wrote in his memoirs:

I see the Croker Island people were complaining...about their experience. I don’t think I would be ashamed of what took place at Garden Point...In Darwin, you will find over 300 people of mixed descent who owe their schooling and many of their good qualities to their experience at Garden Point where Father Bill Connors established the mission and where great work was done by a nun named Sister Annunciata...All the grandchildren...of these children who were once at Garden Point, used to regard her and call her Sister Granny, because she was the only mother that so many knew.⁸⁰

The sad tragedy is in the last two lines of this statement, the words of which appear lost on O’Loughlin who seemed to take great pride in this revered status being bestowed on a foreign, non-Aboriginal, single, motherless woman. A number of ex Garden Point inmates interviewed confirmed this to be the case with other nuns too. One in particular, clearly remembers the nuns encouraging children to address them as

⁷⁸ Brigid Hains, Op cit.,

⁷⁹ The mission at Croker was run as a “cottage home” until 1967.

⁸⁰ John O’Loughlin, MSC, “The History of the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory”, *Occasional Paper No.2*, Library Services of the Northern Territory, 1986

mother.⁸¹ The abject irony of this is that some of those children were to find out much later in their lives that their first Mothers were alive in distant communities, and that they were not orphans after all.⁸²

The Catholic contribution to project ‘Coloureds to A1 human’

The local paper *Northern Standard* of 10 December, 1940, under the heading “Missions To Take Half-Castes”, reported that a number of “incorrigibles”, both male and female, that is “refractory mainland natives”, were also to be detained at Garden Point Mission due to their “anti-social behaviour” around Darwin.⁸³ Jack (JWB) Gribble from the Native Affairs Branch was sent to Snake Bay, Melville Island to set up a branch to provide a detention base for “incorrigibles”, both from the mainland and the Tiwi Islands.

It was not long after this, that the Northern Territory came under attack from the Japanese air force, which meant Top End locations, including Bathurst and Melville Islands, felt some of the impact of the bombing raids which were to follow. This led to what has been termed “the war time evacuation” of Coloureds and missionary staff from the Catholic mission. Rowena Stroud remembered being told they were “going south for a while” and while she remembered feeling quite frightened at the prospect, she was more afraid of the what the Sisters told her what the Japanese would do to them.⁸⁴

At the time of the establishment of parts of the northern coastline as reserves for Aboriginal people (just prior to World War II), some Northern Territory residents objected to the closing of large sections of the north coast for such “Aboriginal reserve” purposes. Sometime later, other residents were in favour of selling or leasing the Tiwi Islands to the United States of America for the purposes of setting up a military base. It was a Mr C Johnson who suggested this in a letter to Country Party

⁸¹ Luke Morcom – personal communication. Interview: Malak, Darwin, 2 September, 1999. Ref: SS/GPM/BL/LM

⁸² The term “first Mother” is deliberate as this denotes “biological”. Mother’s sisters are also Mothers.

⁸³ John Morris, “Potential Allies of the Enemy: The Tiwi in World War Two”. Also see: National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA): “Garden Point (Melville Island). Reviews, reports, etc.”. A431/50, 51/1399

⁸⁴ Interview RMcGS/SS/GPM, Tapes #3, 5 - Sections A and C. Palmerston, Northern Territory - 18 July 2000, 9 February 2003

MP, Arthur Fadden.⁸⁵ Johnson's argument was that the Tiwi Islands and surrounds were well known to Japanese pearlers, who consequently had been visiting this region for quite some time before the outbreak of World War II, and who now posed a threat to Australian border security. There was also the fear among Australians that Aboriginal people may decide to make allegiance with "the enemy". Bishop Francis Xavier Gsell also made comment that the Japanese had been boasting to Tiwi Islanders for at least twenty years or more, that one day they would be their bosses. This comment was reported in *The Age* newspaper 26 February 1943 under a story titled "Darwin Raid Tomorrow. Japanese Boast".

A.P. Elkin was so concerned in relation to the possibility of such a development that he wrote to the Prime Minister, telling him that the Aboriginal people of some parts of the northern coastline had formed friendly relations and trade connections with Japanese pearlers, and had found Japanese "a very kind folk".⁸⁶

The possibility of Aborigines on the Northern Territory coast becoming potential allies of the Japanese was expressed in southern newspapers, adding to Government concern about the effects of pre-war Japanese activities amongst Aborigines in Queensland.⁸⁷

Such was the fear that Aboriginal people of the northern coast of Australia would fraternise with and form strong alliances with the "Japanese enemy" that a proposal was put forward to the military authorities that Aboriginal men be employed as coastal patrollers. This idea was rejected by the military, as it was "not desirous of receiving this help". Prior to the initial Japanese raids on Darwin and parts of the northern coastline, the military changed its mind and sought Aboriginal assistance and labour. However, the Administrator of the Northern Territory opposed such ideas, deciding instead that all Aboriginal people should remain on the various missions instead of moving to Darwin for military or other training. For all the fear and distrust that was directed at the Tiwi Islanders, many were eventually recruited into the military as volunteers when the Army became responsible for Aboriginal welfare during this war period. The Tiwi proved to be loyal to Australia, even though they were disqualified from joining the regular military services at the time. A number of

⁸⁵ NAA:A981, PAC41, "Pacific-Melville Island", Johnson to McFadden, 21/2/1942, p.3

⁸⁶ NAA: MP551, 42/70/1024, Box 17, "Co-operation Between Aborigines and Whites to Combat Possible Liaison with Japanese Landed in Remote Parts of Australia", Elkin to Right Hon. John Curtin, 2/4/1942.

them, voluntarily, “operated as guerrilla and surveillance units”⁸⁸ and provided valuable coastal watch service to an under-manned northern military force. They also rescued injured airmen and others, including Australian, American, and even Japanese.⁸⁹ During this period, some Tiwi also worked in Darwin as unpaid labourers, maintaining roads and helping construct airfields and Army housing under the supervision of Australian soldiers. Also during this period a radar station was established at the site known as Garden Point Mission. This radar facility was set up in conjunction with another at Snake Bay and Tiwi men such as Matthias Ulungura, Alan Pupajua, Louis Munkura and Albert Kerinauia. As well as two men from the mainland, Greenant Paddy and Major all provided unpaid service mostly as messengers between the two radar facilities. These men were known as the Snake Bay Patrol.

The mission felt some of the effect of Japanese war plane attack during the 1942 raid on Darwin, and it was reported that the mission church sustained some structural damage while one Tiwi man, Fernando Urungapotemeri was injured by bullets. This event is now celebrated as being “the first casualty of war-time aggression in Australia”.⁹⁰

Policies, prayers and protection – the Pandora’s Box

The *Northern Territory Aboriginals Ordinance* of 1918 stated:

...the Chief Protector shall be entitled at any time to undertake the care, custody or control of any Aboriginal or half-caste if in his opinion it is necessary or desirable in the interests of the Aboriginal or half-caste for him to do so.⁹¹

Baldwin Spencer, mentioned earlier as one of those who carried out duties in the role as Chief Protector of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, wrote in his 1912 Report to the Administrator:

⁸⁷ NAA: A373, 5903, “Japanese Activities Amongst Aborigines”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11/3/1942.

⁸⁸ NAA: MP551, 42/70/1024, Box 17, “Co-operation Between Aborigines and Whites to Combat Possible Liaison with Japanese Landed in Remote Parts of Australia”, Op Cit.

⁸⁹ The first Japanese prisoner of war, Sergeant Hajime Toashima was captured after his plane was shot down over Melville Island. He was captured by Tiwi man Matthias Ulungura on 20 February 1942. Several other Japanese airmen were also captured by Tiwi around Tikalarpi (Calico Creek), Melville Island. John Morris, “Potential Allies of the Enemy: The Tiwi in World War Two”, Op.Cit

⁹⁰ John Morris, “Potential Allies of the Enemy: The Tiwi in World War Two”, Op.cit., p.80

...no half-caste children should be allowed to remain in any native camp, but they should all be withdrawn and placed on stations...In some cases, when the child is very young, it must of necessity be accompanied by its mother, but in other cases, even though it may seem cruel to separate the mother and child, it is better to do so, when the mother is living, as is usually the case, in a native camp.⁹²

The Northern Territory government conspicuously intervened in interracial sexual relationships, playing out the role of moral guardian by instituting a battery of controls purportedly designed to protect Aboriginal women - carnal knowledge, consorting, marriage and employment were all regulated in a series of carefully framed laws.⁹³

These measures had to be taken it seems, as an increasing number of children whose patrimony was European or Anglo (after 1901, Australian), or Chinese, Malay or Filipino, or sometimes an unrecorded frontiersman. Perhaps sometimes the fathers of these “half-caste” children were prominent members of frontier society. However, the first encounter with outsiders for many Top End Aboriginal people, except for some Yolngu of Arnhem Land, and especially for Aboriginal people inland of the settlement of Port Darwin, was with Chinese goldminers of the 1870s. Barbara James reports that the 1881 census records calculated 3347 men living in the Territory, 2700 of who were Chinese. She further remarked on the implications of this for Aboriginal women:

The male-to-female ratio was even more marked, with only 104 women listed and only one of those being Chinese. The figures of course do not include Aboriginal people or the children of mixed Aboriginal descent, of whom, by now, there were undoubtedly many – a not surprising situation given the imbalance of the sexes of other races.⁹⁴

It was not until the early 1880s that Chinese men brought their wives to the Territory, and it was at this time too, that the practice of the previous decade, that of Aboriginal women being traded, bought or borrowed for opium, became the subject of a debate about prostitution in the Northern Territory. Mostly the debate centred around the question whether the Territory was a suitable place for white women, but the issue of

⁹¹ Part of the wording of the ironically named Aboriginal Protection Acts were passed by all governments by 1912, allowing for the permanent removal of children. Western Australia 1905; South Australia 1911.

⁹² *Administrator's Report 1912*:46-47, in Barbara Cummings, Op. Cit., 1990, pp.10-11

⁹³ Ann McGrath, “Black Velvet”: Aboriginal women and their relations with white men in the Northern Territory, 1910-1940, in K. Daniels (ed.), *So Much Hard Work: Women and Prostitution in Australian History*, Fontana Collins, Sydney, 1984, pp. 233-297

⁹⁴ Barbara James, *No Man's Land: Women of the Northern Territory*, Collins, Sydney, 1989

replacement of young Aboriginal girls for these women, and as partners for white men was mostly ignored. Anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt, while visiting the Northern Territory at the request of the Australian Investment Company, otherwise known as Vestey's⁹⁵, in 1945, made several observations in regard to the "spasmodic and insufficient" rations, lack of medical and health services and facilities, and the use of girls as young as "eight and ten working in white homesteads". The station managers' claimed that while the girl children were working, they were also learning, however, the Berndts were aware that:

...small girls as young as seven were ordered to come down to the "white mens" huts despite the fact that the natives themselves did not regard them as being old enough for sexual intercourse.⁹⁶

Margaret Ann Franklin writes that several companies around Australia, such as The Australian Agricultural Company at Port Stephen, employed Aboriginal women in the mid-1880s, as domestics and "prostitutes".⁹⁷ Supposedly, this employment of such workers ensured that men using the services of Aboriginal women would pay compensation to "their tribal husbands: an arrangement that suited both races".⁹⁸ It was also common practice for drovers, cattlemen and station hands to have 'blackboys' or 'drovers' boys' (which were Aboriginal female children dressed in male clothing), who were used for work as stockriders as well as sexual companions. Mostly these young girl children were lured away or kidnapped to be the young concubines of white male paedophiles. Most were treated cruelly and in most cases were abandoned once seriously riddled with sexually transmitted diseases, or became pregnant.⁹⁹

Coloured children and babies were separated from their Aboriginal mothers as it was

⁹⁵ At that time Vestey's owned eleven cattle stations in the Northern Territory, covering an area in excess of 24,993 square miles.

⁹⁶ Margaret Ann Franklin, *Black and White Australians: An Interracial History 1788-1975*, Heinemann Educational, Melbourne, 1976, p. 132

⁹⁷ Margaret Ann Franklin, *Op. Cit.*, p.35

⁹⁸ Margaret Ann Franklin, *Op. Cit.*

⁹⁹ This procuring of young girls needs to be clearly understood for what it really was, by those who would romanticise this part of Northern Territory history, and who tell stories of 'true romance' or companionship, by covering up the truth of the story of 'blackboys' and 'drovers' boys'. The other suggestion that those white men were "saving" the young girls from tribal marriage or camp life is also misleading. The big story is yet to be told about those kidnappings, and of paedophilia, or perhaps what this author names 'cross-dressing on the frontier'. The stories remain a large part of the oral history passed down through several generations, still largely unrecorded but well-known, even to this author. However, at present informants and contributors ask to remain anonymous for a variety of reasons.

deemed necessary, by both Catholic missionaries and government officials alike, in an effort to save the souls of those children, but not necessarily their mothers. White, and other non-Aboriginal fathers, were also not part of this Catholicising mission. As well, there was clear disregard for the relationships that should have developed between those Coloured children and their other family members, such as grandparents and extended family, but also the land on which they were born - their mothers' countries.

The aftermath: Stolen Generations on trial - invention and exaggeration?

The Stolen Generations¹⁰⁰ issue is one that will not go away anytime soon, and yet it seems there are those in Australia who refuse to accept that this country was in fact one that developed racist policies that included dispossession, segregation, indeed apartheid as well as slavery and genocide. There are those in this country who label the stories of the Stolen Generations false, or at least grossly exaggerated. Coloured peoples' testimonies and stories are mostly regarded as fanciful imagination or plain lies. As well, initiators and supporters of the *Bringing them home Report*, such as the late Sir Ronald Wilson and prominent Aboriginal commentators such as Mick Dodson, as unreliable and biased commentators who would distort the facts of history.

As I sat in the Darwin courtroom during the *Cubillo and Gunner v The Commonwealth*¹⁰¹, I observed how traumatic cross-examination could be for members of the Stolen Generations¹⁰² and while this thesis' focus is not on the specifics of child removal, it does deal with Native Affairs and the *Aboriginal Ordinance 1918 (NT)*, and more specifically, with the role that government and associated authorities played in the removal of Coloured children to Garden Point Mission. The thesis deals with the specific of the significant role that a variety of non-Aboriginal authorities, both secular and religious, played in the catholicising of Coloured children from throughout the Northern Territory, and beyond. While Lorna Cubillo (from age seven to eighteen) and Peter Gunner (from age six to fourteen), experienced their forced

¹⁰⁰ The Stolen Generations inquiry findings were released in April 1997 under the title, *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*. The Inquiry found that it was policies of assimilation, sponsored by the Commonwealth government that motivated the removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

¹⁰¹ *Cubillo & Gunner v Commonwealth of Australia* (1999), FCA 518 (30 April 1999).

Christianisation at Retta Dixon, (Darwin) and St. Mary's Anglican Hostel (Alice Springs) institutions respectively, there are many parallels to be drawn between government strategies, and with the experiences of inmates of Garden Point Mission.

A prominent critic of the Stolen Generations history that stood out at this trial was Commonwealth legal representative, Douglas Meagher QC. Meagher was appalled at the level of accusations made against what he considered "good people", who merely assisted Aboriginal people, especially children, "for their own good", so as they could better fit into mainstream Australian society. Meagher was fierce in his representation of those servants of empire, speaking often about fabrication and dishonest processes, and generalisations and false implications. He publicly stated that there was no general policy of forced removal (in the Northern Territory)¹⁰³ and that the only legitimate policy on removal was that based on the grounds of welfare.

According to Meagher, Aboriginal children, when removed, were placed in hostels at their parents' request, so as to take advantage of the many educational opportunities offered. He was most offended by what he considered vicious attacks on the character and reputation of welfare officers, patrol officers, missionaries, government bodies and their employees, who were now wrongfully condemned. At the same time, Meagher felt that members of the broader group known as Stolen Generations have distorted the histories of their pasts, and have presented false impressions to the Australian public, in efforts to alter the facts of removal policy history. Meagher felt especially annoyed that these efforts by Stolen Generations were especially planned and directed so as compensatory claims may be made against the government.

Meagher was so passionate in defence, yet so uncaring of the situation that removal had on the lives of children, regardless of which mission or institution they were sent to. It became clear that defending and reinstating what he referred to as "good reputations" were of more importance than the residual legacies of racist policies. But Meagher is only one of a large number of Australians who are concerned more about

¹⁰² The author observed much of this trial and subsequently co-wrote with Martin Flynn (Law –UWA), "Trial By Ordeal: The Stolen Generation in Court", *Alternative Law Journal*, Volume 2, April 2000, pp, 75-78, 87

¹⁰³ With the exception of the Northern Territory, the practice of child removal and separation from family was administered by the States.

reputations and who are prepared to vigorously defend the shameful history of past assimilationist practices, at all costs. It seems these Australians prefer to cast all morals aside, and concentrate instead, on charging members of the Stolen Generations, with accusations of fabrication and exaggeration of their past injustices. And who might make further grotesque accusations against the Australian nation that speak of genocide. Meagher was critical of Coloureds, and those who support their claims, and he labelled them mischief makers that set out to demonise “good people”.

Meagher stated that his own father, a former Minister of Aboriginal Affairs in Victoria from 1960 to 1972, would never have been involved in illegal practice nor condone child removal, or its associated crimes and transgressions. He spoke passionately about his father’s positive role as Minister, and reacted with disbelief and horror at the suggestion that the Aboriginal Children’s Holiday Project, identified in the Wilson-Dodson report, was anything but a wonderful program for Coloured kids. However, the *Bringing them home Report* identified this “holiday” project as one that saw the inducement of Aboriginal parents (especially those from Queensland), to place their children into “temporary care” which later progressed to permanent separation. Meagher protested I found it impossible to believe that...my father would have lent support to such a scheme”.¹⁰⁴

Is assimilation justiciable?

The above question is posed by Robert Van Krieken¹⁰⁵ in his paper outlining the Cubillo and Gunner case, and he makes an attempt at analysing the legal conclusion offered by Justice O’Loughlin, the trial judge. Van Krieken contends that O’Loughlin’s decision was based on flawed assertions that at that particular time in Northern Territory history, there was simply not enough evidence to arrive at any firm resolutions about the nature of governmental removal policies. Van Krieken asserts that, due to this factor, a strong claim was made by government, and subsequently agreed to by the judge, that no official policies of child removal existed, for:

...patrol officers did exercise at least some selectivity in the removal of part-Aboriginal children, and that this selectivity was based on a consideration of

¹⁰⁴ Douglas Meagher. In “The Genocide of Aboriginals and the Stolen Generation: Fact versus Fiction”, *Quadrant*, Vol XLIV, 11, November 2000

¹⁰⁵ Robert Van Krieken, “Is assimilation justiciable?: Lorna Cubillo & Peter Gunner v Commonwealth”, *The Sydney Law Review*, 23 (2), 2001, pp.23-60

he individual circumstances of particular children and their “best interests”.¹⁰⁶

As with most contemporary official dialogue attached to issues of Stolen Generations, essentially the Coloureds affected by assimilation policies Australia-wide, but more specifically those who were taken to Garden Point Mission, the term ‘civilising’ is mostly avoided. However, assimilation was essentially the explicit and central part of the civilising project, and it was part and parcel of the overall integration process. Van Krieken describes the term civilisation as the “watchword” as well as the conceptual and “ideological banner” which was used consistently to specifically characterise the difference between white and black, and, added to that, Coloured Aboriginal people. Most importantly, Coloureds, had to achieve ‘civilisation’, and they were sent to missions and government institutions to do just that - as part of the widespread colonial project. Historians and other intellectuals and academics speak of “civilisation” and “project assimilation” as non-violent, benign, and necessary - but fail to recognise and acknowledge, just how violent a process it is.

Coloureds sent to Garden Point Mission were seen like all Coloureds. Coloureds, Australia-wide, were part of a coloniser self-induced problem that had to be remedied when it was recognised that authorities had misjudged the notion of fragility (in relation to the dying out of Aboriginal societies and cultures). Instead of establishing programs and policies that would enable and ensure the propagation and continuation of Aboriginal populations, the colonists embarked on programs that targeted total extinction as a solution and ultimate outcome. Pat O’Malley named this “gentle genocide through a program of enforced eugenics, understood by state officials to be a program hastening what was believed to be the fulfilment of an inevitable but distressing process”.¹⁰⁷

An inevitable but distressing process, as well as the ultimate insult occurred for Evie¹⁰⁸ incarcerated at two months of age at Garden Point Mission and an inmate

¹⁰⁶ Robert Van Krieken, Op. Cit p.26

¹⁰⁷ Pat O’Malley, “Gentle genocide: the government of Aboriginal peoples in Central Australia”, *Social Justice*, 21, (4), 1994, pp.46-65

¹⁰⁸ Evie is the pseudonym used by “confidential evidence number 557, Northern Territory”, and appears on page 147 of the *Bringing them home* report. From: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Report, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) at: <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social-justice/stolen-children/stories/evie.html>. Accessed 9 May 2006.

from 1950 until 1964. As one of several witnesses at the *Bringing them home* inquiry, her evidence was dismissed by Peter Hearn, representative of the Catholic Church, in his thesis. In his defense of Church involvement with Coloured children at the mission, Hearn responded to Evie's allegations of sexual and other physical abuse against certain Garden Point Mission Sacred Heart and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart missionaries with condemnation of the *Bringing them home* report and serious denigration of Evie's testimony and memory. Hearn, and other Catholic authority looked for support in ultimate vilification of the Report. The Church looked for support to the highly dismissive counter-report prepared by Perth-based Institute of Public Affairs that condemned the *Bringing them home* inquiry and report on a number of levels in a critique titled *Betraying the Victims, The 'Stolen Generations' Report*. Hearn quotes the Perth institute's findings and states that its summary was that "The nature of the Inquiry process and of the information sought and provided meant that evidence and submissions could not be tested as thoroughly as would occur in a courtroom".¹⁰⁹

Once again, Stolen Generations' memories and stories were dismissed just as in Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunners case, and Hearn sums up his criticism of Evie's allegations against those missionaries of the Catholic Church as fanciful and unproven, indeed untrue. He gives Evie's memories and words no credence and indicates that they could only be challenged as acceptable in a court of law, and he refers to Thecla Brogan and other Garden Point Coloureds' recollections of only joyous and carefree days as reaffirmation that there were no incidents of neglect or abuse at Garden Point Mission.¹¹⁰

Determining responsibility and damages

Given the lapse of time and the range of circumstances involved, not to mention the absence of relevant documentation, it is more than a difficult task for today's authorities to deal with the issues associated with Stolen Generations' cases. The issue

¹⁰⁹ Peter Hearn MSC, *A Theology of Mission: An Analysis of the Theology of Mission of the Catholic Diocese of Darwin and its Ministry to Aboriginal People During the Episcopacy of John O'Loughlin MSC (1949-85)*, Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit, Kensington, 2003, p.56

¹¹⁰ During interviews conducted with a number of former inmates, some spoke of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, but were not prepared to have these matters documented in the thesis. Three informants have since withdrawn consent for use of their interviews and demanded that the materials be destroyed and another two are now deceased. Their materials have been destroyed as well.

of compensation – who to? – how much? – will no doubt cause many awkward situations including that of interpretation and understanding of what exactly constitutes ‘removal’, and even what ‘stolen’ means. However, it must be remembered that Aboriginal people have a very different interpretation of not only word meanings, but of events, and one of the most confusing for non-Aboriginal people, a completely different approach to what constitutes ‘family’ and family obligations and responsibilities. It would be difficult for non-Aboriginal authorities to work with their limited understandings of family without fully understanding the complex extended kinship networks, which will also impact on future judgments and render the current situation most problematic to say the least.

However, the inter-generational effects that past child removal has had, and continues to have, must be taken into account. It would be extremely difficult to know where the limit is, and or how far the extent of affected community reaches. Does it stop with the present generation, or does it continue unabated into the future? – considering that currently, Aboriginal children are at least five times more likely to be subject to care and protection orders. Where does it stop? How should the government respond to this issue? How should Aboriginal society best respond to and deal with it?

The issue of individual damages compensation was raised in the Williams case, where it was agreed that arriving at an appropriate sum was fraught with many problems. For example, taking into account other life experiences that may have contributed to the person’s current state (of health or circumstances). It was stated in relation to this particular case, that it would be difficult to separate out damage caused by particular conduct of the past while in the care of the State (institution or mission) from the very broad range of disadvantages and other impacts, including racism, that has been the among the range of experiences of Aboriginal people overall.

A Government response

Another key question is that of who would ‘defend’ the claim. The common law actions to date have been brought against the responsible government, with the Commonwealth being the respondent only in the case of the Northern Territory. In the event of a national compensation tribunal, as proposed in the *Bringing them Home*, it would be unrealistic to expect the Commonwealth to respond to claims involving the past actions of the States and indeed of churches and other non-government welfare organisations of that era. The

Commonwealth would not have the personnel or available records to respond to such claims. On the other hand, the States and the responsible non-government organisations are unlikely to actively contest such claims unless they are likely to be held liable for the outcome and the question of apportionment of damages between defendant governments would become a legal quagmire.¹¹¹

A different response

So long as litigation in the court remains the only option available to members of the “stolen generations” who seek to hold the Commonwealth accountable for the consequences of assimilation, it would not be surprising if claims continue to be made in courts. The Commonwealth Government, as evidenced in *Cubillo & Gunner*, appears set to vigorously defend each claim. It is an expensive option that will generate much ill-will among all indigenous people affected by assimilation policies. We have suggested in this submission that one alternative is for the Commonwealth to adopt a *reconciliatory approach* to the litigation. This approach would see each claim tested *fairly* in the courts.

The reconciliatory approach that we outline assumes that domestic law is the most appropriate standard by which to assess claims arising from the assimilation policy and that courts of law are the best forums for resolving contested claims. Each assumption is questionable. *Self-determination* is a concept that is rarely mentioned in domestic political circles. It remains high on the agenda of international institutions concerned with setting standards for sovereign states treatment of indigenous peoples. In the context of an appropriate Commonwealth government response to the “stolen generations”, *self-determination* would oblige the Commonwealth to enter genuine negotiations with leaders of affected indigenous communities. These negotiations would encompass issues such as the relevant standards to be applied in assessing claims and the appropriate forum for assessing contested claims. The negotiations would also cover the issue of the quantum of compensation.¹¹²

What is to be done then to assist the Stolen Generations, and especially Coloured claimants to overcome the legacies and injustices of the past, especially that immediately after the release of the *Bringing them Home* report the Commonwealth Government stated little more than it did not accept that there had ever been gross violations of human rights? It also refused to apologise or offer monetary compensation – and the Commonwealth has made it clear that it intends to combat all claims. It insists that the methodology used in the preparation of the Report was flawed, and that the findings and conclusions were inaccurate, as child removal was

¹¹¹ “Dissenting Report of Government Senators to the Inquiry into the Stolen Generation”, *Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee*, November 2000, p.15

¹¹² Martin Flynn and Sue Stanton, Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee Inquiry into the Stolen Generation”, April 2000

only ever motivated by strong and genuine consideration for the welfare of Coloured children. The Commonwealth also strongly rejects that removal of Coloured children was in any way linked to racial policy. Yet Justice O’Loughlin in *Cubillo & Gunner*, during an attempted strike-out action by the Commonwealth, made a point that the case should be heard as it was “of such importance – not only to the individual applicants and to the larger Aboriginal community, but also to the Nation as a whole”.¹¹³

White truths and black lies

Many Aboriginal people, and especially Coloureds, have tried to establish their stories and have attempted to have their voices heard, thus far to little avail. Some recent court cases involving Stolen Generations people have been dismissed and or lost in a number of Australian courtrooms, and the decisions have all been reached after serious rejection of oral evidence and memory. Governments, both State and Federal have vigorously fought to have Stolen Generations testimony seriously challenged and subsequently disregarded. As well those who defend the welfare officers, patrol officers, missionaries, government bodies and their employees state that they have all been wrongfully condemned. The claim is that Stolen Generations have distorted the histories of the past and presented false impressions to the Australian public in efforts to alter the facts of “removal” policy history, simply to make compensatory claims against the government.

That celebrated case *Cubillo and Gunner versus Commonwealth of Australia*¹¹⁴ is but one example of how Aboriginal testimony and history may be disregarded and discarded. Evidence of this is Lorna Cubillo’s “huge void” of documentary evidence as reason for dismissal of her personal testimony, while the Commonwealth had at its disposal access to all archival materials, including official documentation, even photographs of Lorna and Peter that they did not even know existed. Aboriginal and Coloured peoples of that time did not know the value of such documents nor did they have access to resources that provided such. As well the Commonwealth was able to call as witness former servants of empire, who naturally, were keen to protect their

¹¹³ Justice Maurice O’Loughlin, *Cubillo & Gunner v Commonwealth of Australia* (1999), FCA 518 (30 April 1999) at para. 203.

own interests, and reputations. Aboriginal witnesses, mostly Coloureds who had their special colonial experiences at Retta Dixon Home, were no match for the extremely prepared and heavily financed Commonwealth team.

No longer was the Commonwealth interested in “protection” or even justice, it was only interested in subjecting those members of the Stolen Generation to more trauma, through abject disregard of their recollections of insitutionalised abuse and injustice. The most telling part of the trail was that truth and testimony of Aboriginal witnesses was no match for the words of whitefellas. It was truly sad to witness the dismissive and selective manner in which Aboriginal versions of the past are treated by westerners. “Only whitefellas tell the truth and have memories”.¹¹⁵ Surely Topsy had not given her consent, nor had she self-colonised to the point that her alleged compliance with government policy meant she embraced the idea of assimilation – yet this is what we are led to believe by O’Loughlin’s judgment.

It seems that Australian courts and judges have a long way to go before they are to emulate the progressive thinkers involved in the Canadian court system. In the *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* (1997) 3SCR 1010 case, the equivalent to *Mabo v. Queensland (No.2)*, and which relied on some of the judgement of that case’s legal principles, the importance of oral submission was highlighted. Australian courts and judges could learn much from this case and the emphasis that is placed on Canadian First Nations peoples’ oral histories, or *adaawk*. In the *Delgamuukw* case the importance of aboriginal oral history was highlighted in the aftermath of its dismissal by the trial judge who ignored the rule that had been established in *R v. Van der Peet* (1996) 2SCR 507. It was held that the trial judge’s findings could not be held up due to his mistreatment of various kinds of oral history tendered as evidence. Presiding Justice Lamer made these comments:

...a court should approach the rules of evidence, and interpret the evidence that exists, with a consciousness of the special nature of Aboriginal claims, and of the evidentiary difficulties in proving a right which originates in times where there were no written records of the practices, customs and traditions engaged in...the courts must not undervalue the evidence presented by aboriginal claimants simply because that evidence does not conform with the

¹¹⁴ M. Flynn, and Stanton, S. “Trail by Ordeal: The Stolen Generations in Court”, *Alternative Law Journal*, Vol. 25, No. 2, April 2000, pp. 75-78, 87

¹¹⁵ Remark made by Peter Gunner to Sue Stanton, lobby of Federal court, Darwin, 9 August, 1999

evidentiary standards that could be applied [in other areas of the law].¹¹⁶
As Professor Larissa Behrendt¹¹⁷ states in her summary of the *Delgamuukw* case:
...Chief Justice Lamer emphasised the need for flexibility when receiving evidence given by Aboriginal witnesses, especially in cases where rights are being asserted. He held that:
Notwithstanding the challenges created by the use of oral histories as proof of historical facts, the laws of evidence must be adapted in order that this type of evidence can be accommodated and placed on an equal footing with the types of historical evidence that courts are familiar with, which largely consists of historical documents.¹¹⁸

Concluding:

This emphasis is in stark contrast to developments in Australia. Although the *Mabo* case defined native title as deriving from the customs of Indigenous Peoples, rules of evidence are applied in relation to evidence of these practices. Lower Court judges have discretion on how to deal with Aboriginal oral evidence, and while this may be done in a sensitive manner in some instances, this is not always the case. The High Court has not yet made a pronouncement on this matter in the same way that the Canadian Supreme Court has.¹¹⁹

Do westerners own the Aboriginal past ?

Paul Connerton in *How Societies Remember*, when addressing western historians, speaks of the modern imagination's propensity to turn back "again and again to the French Revolution" as a starting point for a "historic beginning." It is this "historic rupture" more than any other, according to Connerton, that has assumed for western historians the status of a modern myth. To emphasise this point Connerton elaborates further:

All reflection on history on the continent of Europe throughout the nineteenth century looks behind it to the moment of that revolution in which the meaning of revolution itself was transformed from a circularity of movement to the advent of the new. For those who came after, the present was seen as a time of fall into the ennui of a post-heroic age, or as a permanent state of crisis, the anticipation, whether hoped or feared, of a recurrent eruption. Revolutionary imagining reached beyond the European heartland; since the late nineteenth century [westerners] have lived the myth of the Revolution much as the first

¹¹⁶ Justice Lamer, quoting from *R v. Van der Peet* (1996) 2 SCR 507 in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* (1997) 3SCR 1010, at para. 138

¹¹⁷ Larissa Behrendt, Professor of Law and Indigenous Studies. Director of the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at UTS, Sydney; Director of the National Institute of Indigenous Law, Policy and Practice, UTS

¹¹⁸ Justice Lamer, *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* (1997) 3SCR 1010, para. 87. In Larissa Behrendt, "The Protection of Indigenous Rights: Contemporary Canadian Comparisons", *Parliamentary Research Paper No. 27, 1999-2000*, Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Australia at: <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rp/1999-2000rp27.htm#top>. Accessed 16th February 2006

¹¹⁹ Larissa Behrendt, "The Protection of Indigenous Rights: Contemporary Canadian Comparisons", *Parliamentary Research Paper No. 27, 1999-2000*, Parliamentary Library, Parliament of Australia.

Christian generations lived the myth of the End of the World.¹²⁰

As stated previously, too much transference of ownership of Aboriginal pasts to non-Aboriginal researchers, ethnographers, social scientists and others has been allowed. In effect non-Aboriginal and non-indigenous processes have tended to attract greater legitimacy to written accounts, other texts and other research data.

The past we need to understand

Former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, who delivered the 2000 Vincent Lingiari Memorial Lecture at Charles Darwin University, titled his lecture “The past we had to understand”, and he had this to say:

When I first read of the happenings in Darwin’s Federal Court and noted the statements made on behalf of the Commonwealth, I wondered what we had learnt...following the O’Loughlin judgment in Darwin in the Cubillo and Gunner case, the government should alter its policy and avoid forcing more people to fight for justice through the courts. Unless it could be overturned on appeal, we know that under the discriminatory ordinances, it was legal to take half-caste children from their families. We also know that the Commonwealth had not failed in its duty of care.

I believe that the Commonwealth’s “duty of care” should have extended not only to the act of taking the child away, but also to making sure that the conditions of the institution were appropriate. In that respect I do not believe the Commonwealth did meet its “duty of care”...

There is another aspect that needs to be clearly understood. The cases have to be tried considering the law at that time. They cannot be tried under today’s law. If that were possible, which it is not, the Commonwealth would lose every case. The injustice done to individuals was substantial. So many were tragically and traumatically affected. Surely it is reason enough to shut the doors of the courts and solve the issues politically...¹²¹

It is evident that the experiences of Coloureds and the entire group known as Stolen Generations overall colonising and Christianising experiences were in the main part, devastating and crippling and involved immeasurable costs and consequences that will last for eternity, and were carried out under the racial banner of assimilation, as part of western civilisations empire and progress. For “there was no more evil policy...than the taking away of aboriginal children from their families, and the wounds that that left in Aboriginal society – both the wounds for individual people

¹²⁰ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1989, pp. 6-7

¹²¹ Malcolm Fraser, “The past we need to understand”, *Vincent Lingiari Memorial Lecture*, Darwin, August 2000

and the collective scarring for the Aboriginal people – that’s something which has flowed through into all of the social problems which we see now”.¹²² Even if some Aboriginal people might have been receptive of Christianity, and even some aspects of assimilation or civilising notions, the colonial thrust has set in place a depth of despair that might take for the rest of time to recover from. The claims that the intent of some who were involved might have been sincere and honourable mean little, as essentially, they were still active participants and stakeholders in the fantasy of empire that drove members of the master race.

¹²² Stuart Rintoul, “Missing” with Kirsten Garnett, *Background Briefing*, ABC Radio National, Sunday 11 February 1996.

PART ONE – THE FOUNDATION

Chapter Two : The Master Race - Why the West Always Wins

There are neither good nor bad colonists: there are colonists.
Jean-Paul Sartre - 1957

It is time to challenge some of the old and tried methodological practices that are in place in the discipline of history. While recognising there are many approaches to history, and the study of history - my own approach is always to represent indigenous peoples in history - to put them back into the landscape - to represent them in the history books, the journals, and in the syllabus, and to be deliberately biased in my approach. And to promote this by defending the oral histories and stories that have been handed down for generations - to have faith and belief in the truth of those stories, told, sung and danced through centuries and depicted in a variety of 'art' styles. This may then perhaps assist in ending some of the history wars taking place and put an end to white men, mostly, fighting over who best researches and presents 'true' versions of the Aboriginal past. ¹

Robert Manne thinks that the lack of indigenous writers being consulted to contribute to the 'history wars' might be an oversight, however it might well be a deliberate action. Which non-indigenous historian writing of the Indigenous or Aboriginal past is interested in the indigenous or Aboriginal view or account of their own pasts? I was in attendance at the debate between Henry Reynolds and Keith Windschuttle at The University of Sydney (2001) where both were dismissive of any contribution and account of a Risdon Cove, Tasmania massacre from the Tasmanian indigenous historian and academic, Greg Lehman. Both Reynolds and Windschuttle were only interested in proving who was the better historian and researcher - two white men fighting over black history! Someone in the media even named the debate 'The history circus comes to town'. At the same time it was pleasing to see the numbers in attendance both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who understood the debate and its implications for Aboriginal history overall. Whether the audience was part of the

¹ Tony Birch "The Abacus of History", *Australian Book Review*, October 2003 reviews, Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, *The History Wars*, and Robert Manne (ed.) *Whitewash: On Keith Windschuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History*:...only two indigenous writers, Peggy Patrick and Greg Lehman, are included...Given the number of Indigenous writers and academics in Australia today, and given the strength of their critiques of colonisation, this small representation looks like an oversight. Not that some form of paternalistic tokenism should be applied to such texts.

historical romance genre crowd or of the Australiana nostalgic cult sector, it was evident that there was an awareness of this aspect of Australian history, and not an ignorance of history. As for example, that proposed for American students by Bradford Burns who feels, through lack of interest of both students and educational institutions contribute to:

...the decline of historical knowledge among university students, of whom 'the majority cannot identify Socrates, confuse the Enlightenment with the name of a rock band, and draw blank when McCarthy, Kennedy, or Vietnam are mentioned'.²

The dismissal by both historians of the Aboriginal voice, of Greg Lehman (Trawulwuy descendant, northeast Tasmania) and other present-day Aboriginal chroniclers and commentators, or the long-past voices of the Palawa³ people of that particular historical site, were of little interest. Antiquity and revival of ancient and old stories are the province of the non-Aboriginal or non-indigenous historian only it seems. Re-birthing the past, resurrecting the dead, the very notion of some sort of renaissance or retrieval of classical heritage can only be affected by the strenuous recovery and reanimation as carried out by non-Aboriginal or non-indigenous historians. Most social commentators, academics, scholars, and so-called authorities on a whole range of Aboriginal or indigenous issues, whether they be historical, sociological, anthropological or other, continually comment and record their findings and assumptions from the position and belief that there are no authentic Aboriginal or Indigenous voices remaining.

Non-Aboriginal or non-indigenous historians are trapped by their own burdens from their own pasts, especially their philosophical understandings of ancient and so-called primitive indigenous societies, and regardless of academic discipline most western scholars rely on a very out-dated anthropological view and attitude to indigenous peoples overall. The modern-day missionary too, has not advanced all that much in his or her knowledge about the entire Aboriginal and/or indigenous agenda and

² E.Bradford Burns, 'Teaching history: a changing clientele and an affirmation of goals', *American Historical Association Perspectives*, 21:1 1983, 19-21 in David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, p.237

³ The term Palawa, (Aboriginal People of Tasmania), is used by some but not all to describe those who claim ancestry to a Bass Strait ancestor known as Manalaganna. There are also Lia Pootah people who claim unbroken ties to Trowerner (Tasmania) and who hold records and history of Teen Toomle Menenye (Big River People) of the Risdon Valley and Risdon Cove districts.

worldview. Even most modern-day historians have a strange attitude toward Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples, and their own chronicles depicting their pasts. Just as earlier day colonisers and Christian missionaries and their helpers felt compelled to assist in the annihilation of Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples, and their Coloured offspring, whether physically or metaphorically, western historians feel that justification is needed when recounting their versions of the Aboriginal and indigenous historical past. This approach is reminiscent of the strange blend of chauvinism, violent imperialism and “intentions of goodwill” that were used as justifications of colonisation, conversion and genocide.

However, this strange blend is not practiced by male historians specifically as female historians are just as capable of applying their own arguments and justifications, and excuses for their own special blend of imperialism. Antoinette Burton (*Burdens of History*) in her chapter “The Politics of Recovery” historicises imperial feminism in the period 1865 to 1915, and reminds the reader that:

Organized feminism in Britain emerged in the context of Victorian and Edwardian imperialism. Historically speaking, arguments for British women’s emancipation were produced, made public, and contested during a period in which Britain experienced the confidence born of apparent geo-political supremacy as well as the anxieties brought on by challenges to imperial permanence and stability...[However]...Western feminism’s historically imperial location has not been the subject of comprehensive historical enquiry...⁴

Indian women had to adjust to the special blend of feminism and imperialism, practiced by “lady missionaries and colonial memsahibs” combined with a cultural superiority that enforced a brand of social Darwinism and institutional anthropological notions and applications. So too have Aboriginal women been exposed, albeit at different stages of history, by a variety of similar feminist imperialisms, commencing with a middle-class English version similar to that experienced by the Indian women Burton speaks of. Of course Aboriginal men were also subjected to this feminist imperialism, which sanctioned by white men, promoted white women as cultural and religious missionaries. White women have always been revered as saviours of the nation, the empire, indeed the race. Not only did British feminists work consistently to align themselves with and promote British imperialism,

once established in new territories they strongly identified with all aspects of national interest, and were just as committed to the prosperity of the nation-state as their white men. Burton agrees with this proposition:

Feminists working for reform in the political, social, and cultural arenas of late Victorian Britain [and in later arenas] demonstrated their allegiances to the imperial nation-state and revealed their imperial mentalities in a variety of ways. Although this tendency has not been critically examined by historians of British feminism, arguments for female emancipation were articulated in patriotic, and at times remarkably nationalistic, terms.⁵

Without doubt the above factors were paramount in the success of the combined civilising and Christianising program was the role of white women. Female missionary ethic and attitude in Australia played, and still plays a more than significant role in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, predominately pro-Anglo religious relations. Moreover national consciousness played significant roles in the shaping of late nineteenth century, entire twentieth century and current twenty-first imperial feminism and feminist ideology on a number of fronts. Most white women saw themselves as part of the greater international league of moral crusaders. Their holier-than-thou, purer-than-thou attitude was probably firmly established during the Victorian era when it was clearly enshrined that women held a moral superiority, even over white men. It was this Victorian moral superiority that was transported to Australia. It travelled to Australia with convict and settler women alike, and was part of the cultural baggage of the missionary woman who later emerged. The white woman's moral superiority was to be the chief justification for the detached and indifferent attitude shown to all Aboriginal people, including Coloureds, and especially the Stolen Generations. From the early missionaries to the later day ones, they transferred this moral code to their male counterparts, and Australian authorities, which in turn influenced judgements of Aboriginal people.

To this day there is a certain brand of imperial continuity practiced even though the killing and institutionalisation of Aboriginal or Indigenous Peoples has mostly ceased. What Australian women, especially Anglo Australian women, might articulate is unconvincing - even in the contemporary period, when discussed under the banners of

⁴ Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminist, Indian Women. And Imperial Culture, 1865-1915*, The University of Carolina Press, Chapel Hill & London, 1994, p.1

⁵ Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History*, Op Cit., p.5

multiculturalism or reconciliation. This imperial continuity was even more evident during the missionising days on Australia's colonial far north. Mostly, the legacy of British feminist imperialism has survived in the Northern Territory, except it is now labelled Australian feminism. Evidence of that lingering imperial feminism is found in the ways in which Northern Territory histories are recorded, the concentration on identifying important pioneer women, who are always white. White women were/are important figures in the continuing civilising mission of empire and they have long deployed their imperial maternalistic attitude and action cleverly so as to appear to be working inclusively for all women, including their subjugated colonised 'sisters'. If white women were supposed to have been playing humanising roles, they failed, as they have permitted colonial power and racial distinctions to stay firmly in place, across all sectors, even in historical writings. Mary Montgomery Bennett, who might appear to some as a champion of Aboriginal women, perhaps even a sincere humanitarian, was supposedly driven by criticism from Anthony Martin Fernando⁶ who accused her of "cant and hypocrisy", which ultimately stirred her "to practical action".⁷

Historians and others' attitudes and lack of understanding and acceptance of Aboriginal, and Indigenous "coloured" peoples as part of the matrix that describes colonised peoples is telling, even as they write and pontificate on such issues in the 21st century. While non-Aboriginal historians and scholars wax lyrical about how the past is integral to sense of identity, they fail to apply this to indigenous peoples, including the colonised 'other', the Coloureds. Lowenthal puts forward Meerloo's thoughts to the importance of identity: "Identification with earlier stages of one's life is crucial both to integrity and to well being".⁸ In addition to individual and collective pasts, and is surely essential for the maintenance of identity for both indigenous and non-indigenous, is the identification that:

...post-renaissance Europeans have increasingly seen the past as essential to personality. Rousseau's *Confessions* and Wordsworth's lyrics have taught us to view our identity in terms of our cumulated lives. Even traumatically painful memories remain essential emotional history; amnesiacs bereft of their

⁶ Anthony Martin Fernando (1864-1949), Aboriginal humanist who was visited by Bennett while awaiting trial in London for crusading and petitioning for Aboriginal rights.

⁷ Allison Holland. In Anna Cole, Victoria Haskins & Fiona Paisley, Op. Cit., p. xxix Preface.

⁸ Joost Meerloo, *The Two Faces of Man: Two Studies on the Sense of Time and on Ambivalence*, in David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Op Cit., p.42

past are also deprived of identity.⁹

This must also be true of the Coloureds, the so-called hybrids of colonised indigenous societies and even though some critics have labeled the ‘Windschuttle debate’ as little more than a ‘sideshow’¹⁰ the sideshow has a growing and dangerous audience that will cause much friction and discontent in this nation well into the future. It is paramount that Aboriginal and indigenous historians do not take this type of activity or attitude too lightly as Windschuttle and his followers and supporters takes Australia back to the time that it so desperately seeks to erase from collective memory. They might find support in the words of Tony Birch who beseeches non-Aboriginal and non-indigenous writers and historians:

We should move forward by listening to, and reading, more indigenous scholars. This would identify a wider intellectual voice within indigenous Australia, able and prepared to advance ideas within the mainstream intellectual community. Such an outcome would also mitigate the at times crude and deliberately anti-intellectual polemic being constructed by conservative ideologies.¹¹

Birch’s personal reaction to Manne’s work *Whitewash*¹², while presenting a positive review of the work, also showcases the sorry story of Aboriginal or indigenous histories at this point in time - in the written word, in the classroom or elsewhere, with mostly non-indigenous people setting themselves as the authorities by way of their ‘superior’ academic status and standing. In many institutions and organizations Aboriginal or indigenous advice pertaining to the Aboriginal history syllabus or agenda is mostly ignored.

Birch is more than comfortable with both Reynolds and Ryan’s and Tasmanian historian James Boyce’s “such quality and detailed research and intellectual scholarship” yet comments on Greg Lehman’s contribution “Telling Us True” by stating: “There are more varied and vital ways to understand the past”? That is right! There are the Aboriginal and indigenous understandings, and recollections which are

⁹ Meerloo in Lowenthal, Op.Cit., p.42

¹⁰ Tony Birch, ‘The Abacus of History’, Op Cit.,

¹¹ Ibid.,

¹² Tony Birch, “The Abacus of History”, *Australian Book Review*, October, 2003, “What *Whitewash* does achieve is a necessary and articulate demolition of the ‘thesis’ presented in Windschuttle’s *Fabrication: of Aboriginal History*, that historians such as Henry Reynolds and Lyndall Ryan had exaggerated and ‘fabricated’ the number of indigenous people murdered by the invading British in the early decades of the nineteenth century.”

not only valid and of quality and detailed research, mostly from primary sources, but also make contribution to intellectual scholarship.¹³

It is well-known and understood that history and the western historiographical tradition goes well back to Thucydides, and essentially rests on a distinction that is meant to clearly draw a line between truth and myth. In what may be described as a pre-modern academy, the discipline of history was that which chronicled what had occurred in the past and was to be ordered into a narrative that was both coherent and instructive. Nineteenth century changes to the discipline saw it emerge as a science that promoted objective knowledge through a presentation of real pasts or the past as it actually occurred. Archival research was introduced, and was to combine with collated transcripts, documents and other materials, such as written evidence, or eye-witness accounts that was eventually meant to present a chronological and written narrative of past events, so that these might be interpreted by different readers and commentators for current-day audiences.

This is not meant as a wholesale condemnation of the western approach, as most Aboriginal, indigenous scholars and others now understand better that western trained history practice and its production of historical knowledge is presented mostly in chronological order, in neat timeframes. However, sometimes there is so much information lost as a result of this because historians have convinced themselves that events outside of the specific timeframe or landscape have no cause or effect, or are of little interest or are perhaps, of minor relevance to the historical present. Empirical practices such as those espoused by von Ranke, that is, emphases on empiricist historiography or documentary interpretations and historical teleology, has mostly discredited and dismissed Aboriginal versions of their own histories and subsequently silenced their voices. Until quite recently historians remained relaxed in the comfort and security of an old, well-established profession that was rigidly ruled by the rules as set down by von Ranke and others. They rarely questioned and barely recognised the legitimacy of the long-range usefulness of their enquiry, especially in relation to the reporting and profiling of Aboriginal or indigenous pasts.

¹³ Tony Birch , *The Abacus of History*, Op cit

In quite recent times there appears to be an increasing self-consciousness of non-Aboriginal or non-indigenous historians and other scholars. Many are now willing to engage in the most philosophical analysis in relation to the overall broader historical agenda, both nationally and internationally. Many western historians have come to the realisation that history, like other disciplines, is a porous discipline that draws on other disciplines, as well as other than scientific evidence, as ways to present and interpret past events, especially those presented from oral chroniclers. A current unprecedented interest in Aboriginal or indigenous history overall by professional philosophers has not only stimulated historians' concerns but also provided some with the intellectual resources and moral and ethical capacity and ability needed for disciplined, on-going self-analysis.

Long ago R.G. Collingwood in *The Idea of History*, 1946, (published posthumously), alerted historians that archival searches were not the only means of establishing "truth" or traces of the past – "the ultimate aim of history is not to know the past but to understand the present". Aboriginal people would rather not be constantly viewed in Australian history as "casualties" or "victims" of the colonial past or other circumstance and would appeal to Australian historians to remind themselves of the words of Edward Thompson.¹⁴ Perhaps, just as Thompson, in his role as historian, promised to rescue the English working class, "the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'Utopian' artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity"¹⁵, so too may Aboriginal people be rescued from a similar fate. Whether it be surmised that Aboriginal stories and histories are based on illusions, or it is deemed that the countless reports of agonies, heroisms or other are excessive, they demand to be heard. However, a large number of Australian historians have either forgotten the words of their earlier associates or just do not afford status to Aboriginal versions of the past in their competition with each other to restore or validate what many of them consider, those lost or untruthful dimensions of the Australian past.

¹⁴Edward Palmer Thompson (1924-1993) British "activist" historian, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963); *Making History: Writings on History and Culture* (1995)

¹⁵E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Random House, London, 1966

Foucault¹⁶ and Friends

For too long the students of colonialism, especially the western historian, have relied on theorists such as Foucault for their interpretations of the different attitudes, perspectives and findings on the overall colonising experiences for indigenous and Aboriginal peoples, including Coloured peoples. Mostly the colonial studies student, whether historian, anthropologist or other has it seems, concentrated on the sexual aspects of the colonial thrust and Foucault more than any other, has flooded the colonial analytic framework, especially over the past couple of decades. Edward Said¹⁷ is also responsible for neatly tying together the production of anthropological knowledge to Foucault's ideas and between both theorists have helped produce this expose of colonial authority that is rigidly adhered to by scholars in the Humanities disciplines.

Oddly, Said and Foucault have set the groundwork, and remain unchallenged thus far, in influencing those schools of thought in western academia that trace the disciplinary regimes that help produce discourse in relation to subjugated bodies and the multitude of identities that may be created by them. The social geography of colonies, colonised peoples, specifically indigenous and including Aboriginal and Coloured peoples, as well as different strategies of rule, imperial and other, have been shaped by the discourses that emanated essentially from Said and Foucault. Nonetheless, both theorists have their critics with James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 1988,¹⁸ making special reference to Said's essentialist position on Orientalism and partly questioning Said's authoritative evocation on the differences between East and West, especially as Said spoke from what Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, 1994 describes as his 'hybridized position as an Arab-American'.¹⁹

Others such as Ziauddin Sardar²⁰ *Orientalism*, 1999 state that there are problems with Said's distinction between "east" or "other" and the "west" for, despite its title, in

¹⁶Michel Foucault (1926-1984), French philosopher and historian

¹⁷Edward Said (1935-2003) American-Palestinian Professor/social scientist: author of *Orientalism* (1978).

¹⁸James Clifford is Professor, Board of Studies in the History of Consciousness at University of California, Santa Cruz.

¹⁹Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1994, p. 187

²⁰Ziauddin Sardar (1951-), writer, broadcaster and critic – prominent writer regarding the future of Islam in particular, *The Observer*, *New Statesman*; editor of *Futures* and co-editor of *Third Text*.

most part the study or criticism of such is not about the east or the Orient at all. Due to this, many in academia, especially novices but also scholars at all levels, have a gross misunderstanding of what “orientalism” really implies. Whether his intent was deliberate or not, there is nothing neutral or objective about Said’s unravelling of what he once described as the west’s myopic vision of “the other”. Instead of educating the western “others” it tends to alienate people and has become yet another avenue for western academia to sell another non-western product under the guise of new scholarship whilst opening up a new frontier in literary imagination. The rhetoric of “orientalism” means everybody gets to talk about “difference” while still not really understanding or making changes to eradicate the racism that goes hand in hand with cultural and philosophical “difference”, especially in western academia. According to Sardar:

...the fact of Orientalism will always impede understanding between the East and the West. We need to begin again, from different premises, and find new bases for genuine encounters with...people, places, history, ideas...one has to urge people to go beyond this misunderstanding and see what has been made invisible; to distinguish a different outline in a picture that has been distorted by centuries of myopic vision.²¹

In the Australian, and the Aboriginal history contexts, “orientalism” has become “Aboriginalism” or as Richard Broome has observed, written by the coloniser historian as a result of the “ursurper complex”.²² As Broome noted:

Writing about Aborigines by non-indigenous people is as old as settlement itself, and much of it has not been well done. [The “ursurper complex”]...caused settlers to ennoble themselves and to denigrate the colonised “savages” and “cannibals”...Through such rationalisations and racial ideas that Memmi termed...“ideological aggression” [and by]...Adopting Edward Said’s “Orientalism”, Bain Attwood has called this view of Aboriginal people “Aboriginalism”²³, meaning the construction of false images for political purposes.²⁴

Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples have been mostly ignored in past western historical writings, in national memoirs, in both personal and public reminiscences, and

²¹Ziauddin Sardar, *Orientalism*, Open University Press, Buckingham, Philadelphia, 1999, p. Preface

²²“Ursurper complex” as identified and defined by Albert Memmi (*The Colonizer and the Colonized*, 1965).

²³For Attwood’s views on “Aboriginalism” see: Bain Attwood, “Introduction”, Bain Attwood and John Arnold, “Power, Knowledge and Aborigines”, special edition of *Journal of Australian Studies*, No.35, 1992, p.1

across the broad spectrum of western memory. Most western academics, including historians, acknowledge this position to a degree but then do little to remedy it. As Conkin and Stromberg, in *Heritage and Challenge*²⁵ state, historians can easily succumb to myopia, particularly in times of prosperity. Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples may well succumb to this too for most Aboriginal and indigenous scholars, teachers and others do not always present challenges, or are not consistent with challenges, to the omissions, misinformation and misconceptions presented. This category of scholar or student fails to make strong demands for a more equal representation in the history chronicles and memoirs, both at domestic and international levels. They sometimes fail to challenge or question 'other' knowledge and seem prepared to have 'other' knowledge relegated to lowly status, while a growing number of Aboriginal and indigenous academics never tire of presenting such arguments to their western colleagues.

Foucault spoke of the link between knowledge and power²⁶ and how it might be seen as an agent of empowerment. If this premise can be accepted by Aboriginal and/or indigenous scholars it should also work for non-indigenous or western scholars and others as well, including present-day missionaries and those who continue to put effort into religious conversion. They should be mindful of Foucault's message that "all knowledge is interpretive" and that it is not already there but should be thought of as an artifice, "an entity constructed by human beings" to make sense of objects or other things so as to establish meaning. Indeed western scholars believe truth depends on power to make it true and this was applied in a very literal sense when it came to the conversion of Aboriginal peoples as 'Christian Truth' was indeed the ordered procedure that produced and regulated Catholic statements and teachings at Garden Point Mission.

Attwood and Arnold²⁷ note, as do a large percentage of the world's indigenous

²⁴Richard Broome, "Entangled Histories", The Politics and Ethics of Writing Indigenous Histories: A seminar held by the History Council of Victoria, published in *Melbourne Historical Journal*, Vol. 33, 2005, 7 July 2005, p.8

²⁵Paul K. Conkin and Roland N. Stromberg, *Heritage and Challenge: The history and theory of history*, Forum Press, Arlington Heights, Ill., 1989

²⁶Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, Pantheon Books: New York, 1980

²⁷B Attwood and J Arnold (eds.), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, Latrobe University Press, Melbourne, 1992

populations, that power and truth are those commodities possessed by certain, usually non-indigenous groups, and that these are exerted over other social groups, mostly in efforts to undermine and control.

Capitalism, for example, differentially empowers those who own the means of production and disempowers those without those means...As colonial history indicates, domination can be directly physical, military and coercive, but consent to domination can also be manufactured in less bloody ways, and this is where ideology becomes important.

If a dominated group can be successfully persuaded of the thesis that its interests correspond with the interests of the powerful, then consent has also occurred...Oppressive social relations can be maintained with an illusion of solidarity and can operate through the mystifying premise that society is working for the benefit of all. Crucially, the powerful can also become persuaded that they are acting in everyone's interests, and thus also become reconciled to the power exercised in their name.²⁸

The very notion of *terra nullius* was about power, and the initiative and action, supposedly carried out with the knowledge and sanction of European law, established British sovereignty in Australia, thereby dispossessing Aboriginal peoples of their lands and denying all access to their estates and homelands. It also gave legitimate mandate to the christianising mission that followed proving that the dual concepts of perceived superior knowledge and power, especially within the first one hundred years of British invasion, saw the Australian coastline mapped:

...the interior explored...progressively furrowed and blazed with boundaries, its estuaries and riverine flats pegged out for towns. The discoverers, explorers and settlers (and missionaries)...were inhabiting the country.²⁹

Vine Deloria Jr.,³⁰ offers many Indian, specifically Standing Rock Sioux, perspectives and definitions of myth, religion and spirituality, and their legitimate place in the overall dialogue in relation to the broad spectrum of discussions on the topics of belief and creation. Deloria also recognises the damage that has been wreaked on Indigenous, including Aboriginal peoples as a result of anthropological and scientific findings made over the past few centuries, and especially since the spread of western colonisation and christianisation – in the Americas, but also in the wider Pacific

²⁸Margaret Wetherell and Jonathon Potter, (eds.), *Mapping the Language of Racism: discourse and the legitimation of exploitation*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992, pp.84-85

²⁹B. Attwood and J. Arnold (eds.), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, Op.Cit., Introduction.

³⁰Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died For Your Sins*, (1970); *God is Red*, (1983); *Red Earth White Lies*, (1995)

region, including Australia. Deloria singles out what most Aboriginal people would have recognised in an earlier colonial encounter, as the typical western anthropologist (with some minor alterations) as he stated:

...anthropologists can readily be identified on the reservations...Pick out a tall gaunt white man wearing Bermuda shorts, a World War II Army Air Force flying jacket, an Australian bush hat, tennis shoes, and packing a large knapsack. ..He (had/has) an IQ of 191, and a vocabulary in which even the prepositions have eleven syllables...He rarely has a pen, pencil, chisel, stylus, stick, paint brush, or instrument to record his observations...(He)...comes out to Indian reservations to make OBSERVATIONS.³¹

Deloria also once stated that, above all other people in history, Indians have been cursed because, Indians have anthropologists.

Some would argue that one does not have to visit an earlier colonial time to see the anthropologist that Deloria describes, and Aboriginal people remain surrounded by them, except they are now conducting research, stalk the halls of academia and have become consultants to governments and the like. The fashion sense may be different but the objective remains the same as there is big money to be made out of Aboriginal people. Anthropological research has not altered that much except that, in the earlier colonial encounter and especially during the Aboriginal assimilation periods, less was done insofar as providing information that might have led to their protection from either government authority, Christian missionaries or the ordinary settler. Those Aboriginal people in remote locations and or those incarcerated in government institutions and Christian missions, were there mostly on the advice of anthropologists.

Most colonists and settlers, along with government officials and missionaries either fit the profile of 'observer' or were (and still are) totally reliant on anthropological advice on how best to deal with "the Natives", even at universities and within government agencies. Chief Protector of Aborigines, (Northern Territory) Professor Baldwin Spencer was most prominent among all. Spencer's field observations told that Aboriginal men were "stone age" and that in general, the Aboriginal people were "probably the most backward human race now extant", with the mental capacity "of a

³¹Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, Reprint, Okalahoma University Press, Norman, 1988, p.79

child who has no control over his feelings”.³²

John Mulvaney offered these words on Baldwin Spencer:

Spencer’s anthropology derived from Darwinian evolutionary theory as applied to social and religious institutions...His fieldwork and his analysis of data were filtered...through the preconceptions and value systems of both Evolution and Empire...Spencer believed that biological evolution went along with mental development and material progress. He conceived of Aborigines as surviving fossil remnants from the remote past, whose social and belief systems reflected this pristine condition...his 1901 museum handbook proclaimed that, “*the Australian Aborigine may be regarded as a relic of the early childhood of mankind left stranded*”.³³

A number of other field and institutional observers including Herbert Basedow, Professor J.B. Cleland and Professor A.P. Elkin, were among a number of observers and professional and amateur anthropologists who visited or lived among Aboriginal people. All offered opinions that ranged from “interesting relics of primitive mankind” worth saving and studying “in the interests of future generations of our Nation, and of the anthropological sciences”. Their roles in the complicity of colonialism, through the social sciences, and explicitly through the medium of anthropology, prompted Levi-Strauss³⁴ to comment:

It is the outcome of a historical process which has made the larger part of mankind subservient to the other. During this process millions of innocent human beings have had their resources plundered and their institutions and beliefs destroyed, whilst they themselves were ruthlessly killed, thrown into bondage, and contaminated by diseases they were unable to resist. Anthropology is daughter to this era of violence.³⁵

At this launch into an account of the Catholicising experience for Coloured people at Garden Point Mission inspiration is found in Foucault’s words in response to the journalist Duccio Trombadori when referring to the then recently published *The History of Sexuality*, and some of Foucault’s earlier work. A similar response is difficult to construct and has been so precisely articulated by Foucault:

If I had to write a book to communicate what I have already thought, I’d never

³²Baldwin Spencer, *The Aboriginal Photographs of Baldwin Spencer*, Introduced by John Mulvaney. Selected and annotated by Geoffrey Walker and edited by Ron Vanderwal, Penguin Books Australia, Ringwood, 1987

³³John Mulvaney, Foreword, *The Aboriginal Photographs of Baldwin Spencer*, Op. Cit., p.x

³⁴Claude Levi-Strauss (1829-1902), French anthropologist, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949); *Structural Anthropology* (1978)

³⁵Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, Vol.2, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1978, pp.54-55

have courage to begin it. I write precisely because I don't know yet what to think about a subject that attracts my interest...As a consequence, each new work profoundly changes the terms of thinking which I had reached with the previous work. In this sense I consider myself more an "experimenter" than a theorist; I don't develop deductive systems to apply uniformly in different fields of research. When I write, I do it above all to change myself and not to think the same thing as before.³⁶

The histories of colonial Australia with their narratives focused on white nationhood, are histories of forgetting of the black past. Genevieve Grieves noted that: "Currently, history-making by academics and governments largely focus on the creation of elitist narratives that are not accessible to grass-roots".³⁷ It is for this reason I write this history – for it is not only a production of Aboriginal knowledge, but a grass-roots narrative about remembering part of what Richard Broome describes as "entangled histories" of a great (black and white) human drama.³⁸

³⁶Foucault in Ann Laura Stoller, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1995, p.ix Preface

³⁷ Genevieve Grieves, "The Politics and Ethics of Writing Indigenous Histories", *Melbourne Historical Journal*, Vol. 33, 2005, p.4

³⁸ Richard Broome, "Entangled Histories", Op. Cit., p.6

PART ONE – THE FOUNDATION

Chapter Three - Anthropology, history and fiction and the production of 'Aboriginal knowledge'

What is History?

What is history after all? Cultural theorists such as Foucault and Levi-Strauss see the analyses and narratives of historians as both individual and collective perspectives presenting particular worldviews, arrived at from particular notions they have about time and or causal relationships. These cultural theorists might say that history is in fact a type of fiction. Indeed, Ann Curthoys and John Docker ask the question: *Is history fiction?*¹ in exploration of that fundamental question that E. H. Carr might have sought answers to when he asked: "What is history?"² Perhaps similar to Carr's alertness to such questions, Foucault in his 1970 writings, at least made historians think more about the wider issues and factors – to see the big picture - and he did this by opposing traditional approaches, and especially by making statements such as:

The forces operating in history...respond to haphazard conflicts, they are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms...the true historical sense confirms our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference.³

Bernard S. Cohn speaks of "the discovery of new historylands" and makes the observation that historians, just like anthropologists, have created new lands of hyphenated histories to conquer. He notes that a generation or more back:

...one could discuss current trends in historical research using a very simple classificatory grid. Time and place formed the basic axis. Biography and political, diplomatic, institutional, economic, and social...history provided the main cross-cutting categories. In the United States this simple grid began to break down in the fifties, primarily under the impact of the discovery *by historians* of the "non-Western world" (a neat ethnocentrism which defines nine-tenths of the people of the world in a single negative term)...academics with financial encouragement from the foundations and federal government began to "attack" the problem of the non-Western world. This brought historians into close working relations with economists, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and language and literature specialists

¹Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Is history fiction?*, UNSW Press: Sydney, 2006

²Edward Hallett Carr (1892-1982), in the past sometimes reviled as "revolutionist realist" especially in relation to his contribution to the study of Soviet history.

³Michel Foucault in Ann Curthoys and John Docker, 'Is History Fiction?' in *The UTS Review*, Vol.2, No.1, 1996, p.1

concerned with “exotic” (another ethnocentrism) languages.⁴

Even so, historians such as Curthoys and Docker are intuitive enough to recognise that, while triumphant nationalist documentaries of the past are important for the conquerors’ overall psyche and ego, it is also important to know that:

History has become a source of public debate and anxiety in many societies in recent years, as differences between historians about the past have become the site for major political contestation and discussion...In other cases, it is the very foundation of the nation that is in question, as in Australia’s “history wars” over the degree of violence in the course of British settlement.⁵

But it is not entirely the fault of historians that a one-sided and biased view of Australian history is chronicled, presented, and re-told in the nation’s classrooms. Even the earlier colonisers, including Christian and Catholic missionaries, had to rely on expert knowledge and advice from mostly anthropologists and scientists for their understandings of Aboriginal peoples. However, historians too, fell into the trap of taking most of that advice and knowledge as truth and consequently built their versions of Australian history around erroneous data and information supplied by the numerous experts in the field. Many of these experts had never even met or had seen an Aboriginal person.

Retrospective or revised history might work some way to repairing some of the damage of the past. Authors such as Curthoys and Docker, and Novick⁶ suggest that earlier nationalistic histories were biased due to the lack of concepts and ideas that might have alerted authorities to atrocities and the like. They also ask that we consider how the connections and consequences of those factors might now have to the present if viewed in a different light. These authors’ appeal is that so-called “victim histories”, sometimes labelled “holocaust histories” or “black arm-band” views of history should not be named such, simply because they speak of another side of the story, or that they portray colonisers and oppressors in a bad light.

Many societies have suffered during the different waves of western imperialism and under the leadership of dictators, and not least Aboriginal people of Australia. They

⁴Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1987, pp.35-36

⁵Ann Curthoys and John Docker, Op.Cit. p.4 Introduction

have endured several examples of cruel and inhuman practices at the hands of a parade of missionaries, madmen (and women) and other misfits. As an example of another reaction to adverse or negative history Curthoys and Docker, give an example of a similar situation that exists in America, especially for African Americans and Jews. They highlight Novick's reference to African American James Baldwin's late 1960s outburst in what they consider his "sad caustic observations":

One does not wish...to be told by an American Jew that his suffering is as great as the American Negro's suffering. It isn't...It is not here, and not now, that the Jew is being slaughtered, and he is never despised here, as the Negro is, *because* he is an American.

However, there may be a chord of familiarity to this particular quote, especially in relation to the Coloureds or "non-traditional Aborigines", who still suffer as a result of a number of factors solely attributable to the forces of white colonialism. They have always been separate, and while there should be no contest in regard to who may have suffered the most, there are patterns of separatism that are in existence, and are encouraged by colonial masters to be maintained so that the "divide and rule" precept remains firmly in place. Curthoys and Docker's inclusion of the following quote, and their subsequent comments could easily be applied to the Australian setting. Their reaction to Baldwin's suggestion:

...white Americans are performing an act of displacement, that they cannot bear to confront the history of mass death and cruelty that occurred in the United States itself, the history that was and is the condition for the emergence of the white nation.⁷

"White Americans" could easily be transposed with 'White Australians' in the above observation, and in the American context, the Indigenous peoples, that is Native Americans, could easily feature in place of African Americans. Either way the above observation by Curthoys and Docker, while observing such with an American historical backdrop, may easily apply in an Australian one, when reading the following suggestion:

White Americans cannot bear to confront the horror of what their forebears have done in their name, the ordinary horror by which they exist, build a society, prosper, and attempt to dominate the world. They cannot bear, that is,

⁶Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory: The American Experience*, Bloomsbury, London, 1999

⁷Ann Curthoys and John Docker, Op.Cit., p.8 Introduction

to possess – as Baldwin does – a tragic consciousness.⁸

Curthoys and Docker add this quote from *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism, and the Final Solution* (1992)⁹:

If there was ever an event, or series of events, more likely to open a range of interpretations, historical representations, metaphoric and figurative understandings, surely the Holocaust is it.¹⁰

In the Australian setting, if there was ever an event, or series of events that should be subject to the same scrutiny, debate and discussion, and less ridicule, as an overall attempt at initiating a possible Australian “tragic consciousness” it has to be through the equivalent of the “Australian holocaust”, the genocide or eradication of Aboriginal peoples and that of the Stolen Generations. Perhaps a tragic consciousness of the Australian kind would see, instead of memorials, buildings and other commemorations honouring those who assisted in the destruction of Aboriginal society, even if only through the genocidal policies of assimilation, there perhaps should be Stolen Generations museums in every city and town in Australia.

Anthropology and the history of its power

European knowledge assumed even more power over Indigenous or Aboriginal peoples after the initial invasions and the “killing times” of the British settlement period. By the mid 1800s “... nearly all of the Australian colonies...later states, developed sizeable bureaucracies to administer Aboriginal lives”.¹¹

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the production of knowledge in regard to Aboriginal peoples became professionalised with the increase of anthropological studies of so-called ‘primitive societies’. Anthropological studies developed yet another form of power over Aboriginal peoples of Australia by its production of ethnographic knowledge, whereby non-Aboriginal people became experts regarding Aboriginal peoples, their cultures, their languages, their lifestyles, their aspirations, and set in place, it seems for time immemorial, the stereotypical image of what is

⁸ Ann Curthoys and John Docker, Op.Cit., p.8.

⁹Saul Friedlander (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism, and the Final Solution*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1992. In Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Is history fiction?*, p.239

¹⁰Saul Friedlander, in Ann Curthoys and John Docker, Op.Cit., p.8

mostly described as ‘the Australian Aborigine’.

For example, Spencer and Gillen¹² in their *Arunta: A Study of a Stone Age People* (1927) made these expert comments:

Australia is the present home and refuge of creatures, often crude and quaint, that elsewhere have passed away and given place to higher forms. This applies equally to the aboriginals as to the platypus and the kangaroo. Just as the platypus, laying its eggs and feebly suckling its young, reveals a mammal in the making, so does the Aboriginal show us, at least in broad outline, what every man must have been like before he learned to read and write, domesticate animals, cultivate crops and use a metal tool. It has been possible to study in Australia human beings that still remain on the cultural level of men of the Stone Age.¹³

Much of Spencer and Gillen’s work was presented in the 1899 publication *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*¹⁴, and described in the introduction of Mulvaney’s *From the Frontier* as “the world’s first modern anthropological monograph” even though written within a broad “evolutionary framework” it was “remarkably free of evolutionary theory”. Even so, “its impact was enormous” and was to later heavily influence Durkheim’s major theoretical work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, which in turn was to become the foundational text for anthropology and subsequently for anthropologists. As well, according to Mulvaney, Spencer and Gillen’s work initiated the development of modern anthropological methods, “theoretically informed fieldwork and the meticulous recording of data from an Indigenous perspective”.¹⁵ It appears to have gone unnoticed that these men were unable to present any of their data from an “indigenous perspective.” As well it seems that by the end of the 1920s and into the early 1930s anthropologists were considering the production of their ethnographic knowledge as a practical science

...which would be useful in facilitating better government administration, developing more appropriate policies...most ethnographers have studied

¹¹B. Attwood and J. Arnold (eds), *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, Latrobe University Press, Bundoora, 1992, Intro.

¹²Frank Gillen (1855-1912)

¹³Gillen and Spencer in Attwood and Arnold, *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, Op. Cit., Intro.

¹⁴According to Mulvaney et al: “That book is arguably one of the crucial publications in the formative history of global anthropology and a landmark in white Australian knowledge of Indigenous Australians. Either largely, ignored or selectively used for decades, today the research by Gillen, Spencer and their collaborators provides an irreplaceable resource for all Australians. Apart from their own massive assemblage and interpretation of data, their chief field agent was Ernest Cowle.” John Mulvaney with Alison Petch and Howard Morphy, *From the frontier: outback letters to Baldwin Spencer*, Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards, NSW, 2000, p.53

¹⁵John Mulvaney et al. Op.Cit., p.9

Aborigines for the same reason they have always pursued anthropological research – for the insights Aborigines are assumed to give Europeans into the universal nature of humankind.¹⁶

This situation, whereby social anthropology played a significant role in the construction of Aboriginality, set in place stereotyped images of what many consider the “real” Aboriginal person should be, and influenced the attitudes of those who were to be their institutional and religious minders. And as a footnote to Mulvaney et al’s celebration of the contribution of Spencer and Gillen, is the acknowledgment that “their writings continue to be used and cited as much as ever”.¹⁷

Therein lies the perennial problem that stalks the Aboriginal individual, clan, agenda and perspective and will continue to mute the Aboriginal voice, forever it seems. Anthropologist Gillian Cowlishaw’s comments describes the forever to be anthropological attitude and notion in regard to Aboriginal peoples by a number of other anthropologically influenced commentators that varied from academics to Mounted Police, to ordinary citizens (mostly) men on the Australian frontier. They all offered what they considered superior knowledge and “indigenous perspectives” on any number of topics, as well as neatly classifying Aboriginal people into what they considered suitable categories of identification, always it seems influenced by the likes of Spencer and Gillen and other would-be amateur anthropologists. According to Cowlishaw:

...such anthropologists defined their object of study as ‘traditional’...those who had ‘retained their culture’...And culture was conflated with the category of race, and consequently only ‘full-blood’ Aborigines were considered to be real Aborigines, thus denying the Aboriginality of those of mixed descent.¹⁸

Illiterate savages and uneducated Coloureds were deemed to have no history it seems. Just as they had no future in the Australian nation founded in 1901, Aboriginal peoples were marked as a dying race, doomed to disappear, so there was an almost contradictory attitude in regard to their “protection”. It seems there was no point in including them in the nation’s constitution and therefore general administrative arrangements, or within the citizens rights matrix and at the same time there was the

¹⁶B. Attwood and J. Arnold (eds), *Power Knowledge and Aborigines*, Op.Cit., Intro.

¹⁷John Mulvaney et al. Op.Cit., p.9

¹⁸Gillian Cowlishaw, “Studying Aborigines: Changing Canons in Anthropology and History” in Attwood and Arnold, Op.Cit., Introduction.

justification for the establishment of welfare institutions and Christian missions, just in case. After all, anthropological “findings” in relation to Aboriginal people have always been motivated by financial profit before all else. Letters to Spencer from Ernest Cowle¹⁹ confirms this:

By the way, Field and I had each a wager with Gillen before he left Alice Spgs (sic) – He bet us each that neither you nor he would reap a penny profit from the great work in five years.²⁰

Cowle, even though it is claimed he had an Aboriginal partner, held negative views on Aboriginal peoples and their societies and displayed a typical frontier ethos that demanded compliance to colonial masters and their laws. From his isolated post at Illamurta he rigorously pursued and was dedicated to his task of controlling local Aboriginal people by “monitoring their movements, determined to reduce the predations on cattle” all the while “administering physically harsh punishments”.²¹ While he enjoyed corresponding with Spencer and considered himself an expert on Aboriginal people and society, he was also highly critical of both Spencer and Gillen and held them responsible for what he termed the cult of “Spencer and Gillenism”.

The writings of Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen possibly informed and influenced a number of white authorities at the time. Both had much experience with living among and observing the habits and practices of central Australian Aboriginal people in particular. Colin Tatz lays responsibility for Cecil Cook’s attitude toward “half-castes” squarely with Baldwin Spencer. Tatz recorded some of this attitude after interviewing Cook in the early 1960s:

In the biological footsteps of Professor Baldwin Spencer, Dr. Cecil Cook, Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, believed that “the preponderance of coloured races, the preponderance of coloured alien blood and the scarcity of white females to mate with the white male population” would create “a position of incalculable future menace to the purity of race in tropical Australia”. What was worse was that a large population of blacks “may drive out the whites”.²²

¹⁹Mounted Constable Third Class Ernest Cowle (1863-1922) – self-imposed exile to the desert in an effort to keep secret his syphilitic condition - as hypothesised by Dr Robert Spencer Gillen: “...this socially distressing knowledge...led him to enlist in the mounted police, becoming a bush recluse, avoiding family and fiancée”. Spencer in Mulvaney et al *From the Frontier*, pp.48-49

²⁰As noted in reference No. 4 of Chapter 4 ‘After Gillen’ Spencer in John Mulvaney et al, *Op.Cit.*, p.129: ‘Any profits were small because Macmillan printed only 1500 copies of *NT*’.

²¹John Mulvaney et al, *Op.Cit.*, p.11

²²Colin Tatz, “Genocide in Australia”, *AIATSIS Research Discussion Paper No. 8*, Canberra, 1999, p.17

During the early years of black and white contact in the Northern Territory Gillen was in charge of the telegraph station at Alice Springs as well as being the local magistrate who was also responsible for the administration of justice throughout a large portion of central Australia. He also held the position and title as Sub-Protector of Aborigines. Spencer was an anthropologist/ethnographer, a scientist with a background in biology who at that time held the Chair at University of Melbourne. He became friends with Gillen on one of his trips to the Centre where he was in search of unidentified and primitive species, especially human. Both Spencer and Gillen subscribed to the view that Aboriginal people were living fossils, ancient relics of the stone-age, and due to that, were unlikely, indeed incapable of sharing the sensibilities and sensitivities of what they considered civilised others.

Interestingly enough, even though they did not interfere with the local marriage customs and arrangements as Bishop Gsell did at Bathurst and Melville Islands, Spencer and Gillen were to study marriage patterns and rituals of Arrente people and seemed to be fascinated by the prospect of group marriage and group sex rituals.²³ Gillen confirmed his Eurocentric ethnographic views in letters to Spencer that he could substantiate his theory that Aboriginal women were both promiscuous and practiced cannibalistic infanticide. While the research for this thesis did not come up with any such letters or notions stating the same about Tiwi women, it is highly probable that all, if not most attitudes and opinions about Aboriginal people in general were gleaned from such information from others working and living in the field, as it were. Of course there were numerous others throughout Australia who held similar views and opinions and who also demonised Aboriginal people to the point that government authorities were prepared to do anything in an effort to bring about levels of control within Aboriginal populations.

These strategies and mechanisms of control meant the introduction of legislation, policies of assimilation, or Australian-style apartheid, integration and other that would also see that the Coloured or “mixed-descent” population came under closer scrutiny

and control. The establishment of missions such as that at Garden Point was part of that agenda. In fact the fear of growth of the Coloured numbers in the wider now European settled communities was huge cause of consternation Australia-wide. Baldwin Spencer had his own opinion as to what was happening in the Top End of the Northern Territory, and as Tony Austin concludes:

An irreligious Spencer thought well of the missionaries at Bathurst Island, especially mission head Father FX Gsell, just as he did of the convent sisters in Darwin. He was aware of the advantage enjoyed by the Mission by virtue of its isolation from European and Asian influences, but he felt that if any denomination could do any good among Aborigines, it was the Catholics because they sent out 'good men'...wise, practical, cultured...²⁴

Anthropology and hordes of anthropologists and ethnographers continue to play pivotal roles in the on-going genocidal mission of those earlier colonisers and Christians. They do this through their obsessive preoccupation with research, study, and findings on the cultural notions of the Other. Mostly Aboriginal people have moved on from that frontier anthropological approach to Aboriginal everything, but sadly many western researchers from this particular discipline remain trapped in the mists of "the dreamtime". Sadly, this anthropological agenda remains firmly in place in western academia and in some academies is mostly prominent in "Aboriginal centres" and in the curricula meant to represent the canon of Aboriginal knowledge and is marketed as 'Aboriginal Studies'.

Myths, missionaries and academic mercenaries

There are those who would say that history is partly based on myths from the past, there are some elements of fact, or truth, but much gets lost, or can be embellished in the re-telling of stories over time. Such a myth surrounds Bishop Gsell, founder of Garden Point Mission, "The Man With A Hundred Wives." And while Levi-Strauss would argue that myth is a language within itself, because myth has to be told in order to exist, mostly it is the structure of myth that academics and others pontificate over. These academics and others would mostly agree with Levi-Strauss and his

²³ See especially letters from Gillen to Spencer in which one of the objects of study, and mirth, is an Aboriginal woman they named Polly, who was Gillen's wife's 'maid', to better examine the shamelessness and deviance of such people who had total disregard for fellow humans. Theirs is a deliberate knowing of disregard for the opinion and preference of others, especially what they consider "the savage other". The sad thing is that these people were influential with their views and findings and assisted government authorities in making decisions about missions and other institutions of control.

understanding that myth is necessary in all cultures, if there is to be any semblance of order in society. Repetition of myths, that is layer upon layer of interpretation and understanding ensures that myths grow, and over time, they may tell variations of a particular story, event or person. However, this does not render the myths of a particular group any less valid to them even though it may face scrutiny and ridicule from others outside that specific group. James Wilson²⁵ gives an excellent description of myth in the following excerpt:

Myth is an arrangement of the past, whether real or imagined, in patterns that resonate with a culture's deepest values and aspirations. Myths create and reinforce archetypes so taken for granted, so seemingly axiomatic, that they go unchallenged. Myths are so fraught with meaning that we live and die by them. They are the maps by which cultures navigate through time.²⁶

Some myths, especially those built up by western historians and chroniclers, even if we attempt to consciously reject them, whether in part or in full, continue to shape and pervade our contemporary views of the world and is how we might build up a profile, negative or positive, of some significant persona from the past. Myths then, play an important role in our lives and they should never be seen as mere lies or fantasies, whether they come from Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples or from western storytelling and legend-building. There can be no distinction between 'story' and 'history' in the telling of Aboriginal or Indigenous pasts as they are both part of an oral tradition. Even though westerners may regard this rich profusion of anecdotes and legends as myths, they are always part of the Aboriginal or indigenous version of truth - of the creation of their world, and tells the stories of their own origins and experiences. As well, they document Aboriginal and indigenous societies' historical, religious, social and other events of importance, some of which coincide with geographical and other natural events that have happened through time.

Imperial histories, anthropological observations and indigenous theories

Cherokee-Creek Professor Tom Holm²⁷ spoke in many class discussions of western academics' attitude to this topic. The discussion was directed mainly at the non-Indian

²⁴Tony Austin, *Never Trust a Government Man: Northern Territory Aboriginal Policy 1911-1939*, NTU Press, Darwin, 1997, p.47

²⁵James Wilson, *The Earth Shall Weep: A History of Native America*, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 1998

²⁶Ibid. p.4

or western students when he spoke about Native American attitude in regard to how other peoples organised their lives, their histories, their legends, their myths, as the majority of indigenous and/or Native students had knowledge of this already. The important message he gave was that Native American tribes, indigenous or even Aboriginal clans, were not, and should not, concern themselves that their neighbours myths, stories, histories differ from their own. After all, those neighbours were/are created by their own gods and creators to be part of a quite different landscape and due to this would have their own stories and histories, legends and myths that help them to make sense of their own unique experiences. Most non-indigenous people and western society in general have not been able to understand this attitude because of their very different ideologies and concepts across a range of ideas. The following quote from James Wilson best sums up the Aboriginal as well as the Native American attitude in relation to this matter:

Almost since the time of Columbus, the Native American ability to syncretize two realities – to accept that different people have different truths or to believe that two apparently contradictory statements can be true in different ways - has baffled and frustrated Europeans brought up with the idea of a single, monolithic truth...Unsurprisingly, the modern scientific tradition still shares many assumptions with the missionary culture from which, in part, it developed...twentieth-century scholars have confidently dismissed Native American beliefs about their history as “superstition” and then gone on to provide their own version, based on empirical evidence and “common sense”, of what really happened. The hundreds of Indian origin myths, for example, are uniformly rejected - except insofar as they may contain a few nuggets of “fact” about a migration or a natural event - in favour of the “proven” scientific account.²⁸

Anthropological observations played major roles in all aspects of interaction of European or Anglo authorities, and were relayed to religious authority which subsequently impacted on Aboriginal societies. However, despite the many fieldwork expeditions to numerous locations throughout Australia, advice back to government failed to establish any coordinated policy for Aboriginal people as a whole.

Consequently over the years, and even during the Aboriginal present, those observer anthropologists, regardless of category, have succeeded in burying Aboriginal communities beneath masses of not only irrelevant information, but provided serious

²⁷Personal communication with Professor Holm while undertaking MA (American Indian Studies), University of Arizona, October 1996

miscomprehensions to both the scholarly community, government agencies and others who continue to pretend to be assisting in the advancement of what they consider less qualified humankind.

It is acknowledged that some indigenous or Aboriginal observers have been mesmerised into accepting either anthropological or Christian beliefs and findings that denigrate their own people. Vine Deloria Jr. observed:

Many...have come to parrot the ideas of anthropologists [and Christians] because it appears [they] know everything about [Indigenous] communities. Thus many ideas that pass for [Indigenous] thinking are in reality theories originally advanced by anthropologists [and Christians] and echoed by [Indigenous] people in an attempt to communicate the real situation.²⁹

But most Indigenous and Aboriginal people are now more aware of past agendas, and recognise past inaccuracies and now try to avoid many of those past mistakes. Mostly they refuse to support the massive volume of western-biased information that has been generated in the past and refuse to engage in the production of a never-ending network of anthropological or western Christian theories that are designed to capture the “real” or authentic voice of the indigene, whether scholar or other. Most Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples are adamant that they no longer wish to portray an Aboriginal and indigenous person as only a relic of the primordial past, telling creation stories simply to entertain tourists or teaching and/or offering profound philosophies that Anglos and others might perceive as cure-alls for life’s everyday woes. Nor do they expect that they should hold all the answers for environmentalists and conservationists or are solely here to provide new-age wisdom to western society. All of these expectations assist in the perpetuation of images that have been carefully constructed and are still part of on-going anthropological and Christian perception. These images and expectations are constantly relayed to government and the public, rendering the present-day Indigenous or Aboriginal person invisible and silent in today’s society.

While some embarrassed academics might argue that modern Anthropology has moved on from this view and assessment of Indigenous or Aboriginal people, the legacy of earlier anthropology definitely lives on. A reading of daily newspapers and

²⁸James Wilson, Op.Cit., pp.9-11

listening to radio or viewing certain television programs will soon alert the discerning critic to just how far Australian media has [not]advanced its Indigenous or Aboriginal thinking over the past couple of hundred years. Many have come late to “the enlightenment” and the anthropological legacy is evident especially so through the perpetuation of primitivist or nativist discourses at universities which offer Aboriginal Studies and similar academic ‘cultural experiences’ as supposed intellectual discussion. A variety of fora including ‘cultural awareness’ training to “Aboriginal reconciliation” agendas, and ‘post-colonial studies’ are made attractive to both domestic and international buyers, and the market for ‘primitivism’ products sells well. Nicholas Thomas (*Colonialism’s Culture* (1994)) describes primitivism:

While eighteenth-century primitivism is associated mainly with French and British Enlightenment writers who were reflecting on accounts from remote America or the South Pacific, whites in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and elsewhere are now idealizing indigenous peoples in similar terms, but with reference to Australian Aborigines, Maori and native Americans.³⁰

As Vine Deloria also states we are long past the days when the ‘noble savage’ needed redemption from his or her barbaric ways. Indigenous or Aboriginal peoples no longer need to have dominant society people telling them to organize their “flourishing” or our salvation. According to Deloria, not even American Indians can relate to those types as mentioned by Alfred Frump in his 1803 *Our Feathered Friends*:

After all, who can conceive of a food-gathering, berry-picking, semi-nomadic, fire-worshipping, high-plain-and-mountain-dwelling, horse-riding, canoe-toting, bead-using, pottery-making, ribbon-coverting, wickiup-sheltered people...³¹

It is worth noting that a number of Aboriginal and indigenous writers and teachers ponder, as does Thomas, whether modern-day primitivism, both scholarly or that practiced and perpetuated by others is in fact some type of affirmation of Indigenous or Aboriginal spirituality or true expression of harmonious relations with the environment. Or is it simply recapitulations of appropriations familiar from the history of settler colonies in which both Indigenous or Aboriginal peoples and Europeans or Anglos were sometimes all defined as ‘natives’ due to their use of

²⁹Vine Deloria Jr. Op.Cit. 1988, p.82

³⁰Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism’s Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*, p.171. Thomas also suggests reference to: Marianna Torgovnick’s “useful and readable discussion on twentieth-century primitivism”, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1990)

indigenous motifs such as boomerangs, art forms, utensils, instruments, stories, even some language ‘and by claiming similar attachments to land’? Perhaps Anthropology can no longer be blamed entirely for twenty-first century primitivism or nativism as it is clearly acknowledged by a number of Aboriginal and indigenous academics that the current form of primitivist idealisations are promoted by both Indigenous or Aboriginal people/s and Europeans or Anglos alike. However, it did have its beginnings in those earlier colonial periods, and especially when assimilation and ‘protection’ were still primary agendas that drove white Australia’s apartheid policies. These policies impacted on the lives of all Indigenous or Aboriginal people in Australia, including those who perhaps were considered fortunate to having been removed to Christian missions and especially all those taken to Garden Point Mission, among them some of ‘the lucky ones’.

In conversations with a Gurindji Aunt, who wishes to remain anonymous, she stated that she was both happy and grateful that she was taken from Wave Hill to Garden Point Mission. She also stated that she had a happy life with the Nuns but often thought about what life could have been like “back in the camp” but acknowledged that by the time she “thought about her biological family too much water had passed under the bridge” and that she “had built up a family of my own” with another mission inmate. This woman remains totally loyal to the Catholic church and refused to hear any criticism of its officers, programs or attitudes “even though [she] knew some bad things happened” she was prepared “to pray...and forget ”.³²

The informant that made this remark, like many others, took comfort in the teachings and gospels of the Catholic faith without ever knowing anything of their own clans’ spiritual tenets or the lessons and messages contained in their own unique spirituality and religious teachings. The so-called lucky ones who share this informant’s view find themselves rationalising their position, possibly unconsciously, by extolling the work of missions and missionaries, and it is to the benefit of the latter that through this strategy, these colonised people prevent criticism and closer scrutiny of colonisers’ actions and practices. Both the lucky ones, and coloniser missionaries, work extremely hard to prevent any tarnishing of the images of Church activities and

³¹Vine Deloria Jr., *Op.Cit.*, 1988, pp.81-81

³² Interview – informant # 9: Reference: SS/GPM/WHK-G/---, Batch #: 1/1, Darwin, February 2000.

their personnel. This in turn allows the colonisers, missionaries and government authorities, to absolve themselves of any guilt by making only token confessions professing profound sorrow or ignorance.[For westerners] “the act of confessing is *in and of itself* touted as incontrovertible proof of each confessor’s honesty, integrity, and otherwise honorable character. The arrangement, wherein one who confesses his/her guilt is presumed thereby to have been “purged” of it, is perhaps most familiar to Catholicism...”.³³ Self-absolution is an overpowering and clever strategy employed by colonisers who co-opt the colonised “into casting an appearance of validity upon the settlers’ agenda”.³⁴ For this agenda to work efficiently for colonisers it is paramount that carefully chosen ‘representative natives’, the lucky ones, compliant and grateful, are enlisted and nurtured. The colonised eventually, not only reconcile themselves to the new arrangement, but actually give consent to their subjugation. By considering themselves lucky ones, the colonised in fact, agree to assume ‘their rightful place’ in the colonial order of things, and in turn self-colonise. (Albert Memmi gives incisive analysis of this very phenomenon in several of his writings on the interactions between colonised and coloniser.)³⁵ As a result, these confessions and absolutions, minimise the public disgrace of the Catholic personnel involved in missionary activities and continue to obscure the actual dispossessing of Aboriginal peoples’ religions and spirituality.

³³ George E. Tinker, “Tracing a Contour of Colonialism – American Indians and the Trajectory of Educational Imperialism”, Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 2004, Preface, p. xxviii

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1965; *Dominated Man*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969

PART ONE – THE FOUNDATION

Chapter Four - Understanding Aboriginal religion

Though serious scholars can derive insights from Indigenous ceremonies, focusing narrowly on them portrays Native people and their civilizations one-dimensionally. Imagine someone trying to understand Euro-Americans by studying the various ceremonies of the Catholic Church and comparing them to the correlative ceremonies of the Presbyterians and Southern Baptists. Such a project would never be given serious consideration when applied to Euro-Americans, though it is often taken as definitive when discussing Indigenous people. ¹

In a general sense the term religion is best defined as the belief in the worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods. The term can also mean a particular system of faith and worship or it could also be described as a pursuit or interest followed by devotion. The term spiritual however, is better understood as relating to or affecting the human spirit, as opposed to material or physical things. The term may also describe that which relates to religion or religious belief. Mostly understandings of both terms are often wrongfully defined and used in the wrong context.

Both terms are problematic when used to try and explain both Aboriginal or indigenous beliefs and notions of religion or spirit and ancestor worship and are usually amalgamated into the representation that is described as “the Dreaming.” Mostly this concept “Dreaming” is thought to be a type of generic Aboriginal religion or that which sets the Aboriginal spiritual agenda, when in fact it is probably better defined as more a code of ethics. It is also much more than this and may be better understood as a number of religious, legal and social contracts that need to be observed by certain peoples in different locations, and at different times in their own religious and social calendars.

As Professor Marcia Langton notes, the issue in regard to Aboriginal religion has led to many and varied ideas and debates in anthropological, theological and other schools of thought ever since first contact occurred between British colonisers and Aboriginal peoples of mainland Australia. And the only way in which this matter of

¹Thurman Lee Hester Jr. and Dennis McPherson, Editorial: “The Euro-American Philosophical Tradition and its Ability to Examine Indigenous Philosophy”, *Ayaangwaamizin: The International Journal of Indigenous Philosophy*, Vol.1, No.1,1997, pp.7-8

“Aboriginal religion as sociological phenomena” can be dealt with is through referring:

...however obliquely, to the many strands of theoretical and epistemological thought on the subject.²

In support of this Professor Langton nominates at least one prominent anthropologist from the gallery of “curious observers”, that is W.E.H. Stanner, author of such works as *On Aboriginal Religion* (1966) and *White Man Got No Dreaming* (1979). In 1976, just at the time this thesis framework ends Stanner delivered the Charles Strong Memorial Trust Inaugural Lecture. Even though Stanner was an Anglican, his following words are true of the situation for Aboriginal religion overall, regardless of adaptation into any number of religious denominations and beliefs.

Stanner’s opening words at the inaugural lecture were:

There may still be some who question the rightness of including Aboriginal beliefs, acts and objects within the scholarly scope of Comparative Religion. In this lecture I will contend that all the intellectual requirements can be, and long have been, amply satisfied. If, for the purpose, I adopt William James’s dictum – that the word ‘religion’ cannot stand for any single principle essence, but is rather a collective name – it will not be in deference to the sceptics, but rather in acknowledgment of two things: the Aboriginal materials are too various and subtle for our present stage of professional insight, and we cannot yet make powerful general statements on a continental scale.³

However, these words were expressed far too late, indeed may not have made any difference or impact at all on the views held by the range of church authorities and missionaries who had set out to convert Aboriginal people Australia-wide. It seems that the various religious denominations were not to be deterred in that mission nor could they accept that Aboriginal people had their own religions and or belief systems, indeed totally ignored the fact that they had a right to maintain and to practice them as well yet extended this courtesy to those outside of their own denominations.

Many of the early missionaries, government authorities and other observers of Indigenous or Aboriginal peoples tried to understand the complex organisation of

²M. Langton, ‘Religion And Art From Colonial Conquest To Post-Colonial Resistance’ in Sylvia Kleinert and Margo Neale (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 9-16

³ W.E.H. Stanner, “Some Aspects of Aboriginal Religion”, Charles Strong Memorial Trust Inaugural Lecture, *Australian and New Zealand Society for Theological Studies*, 1976, Colloquium, pp.19-35

Aboriginal political and religious arrangements and rules, and could of course only apply their own western understandings and interpretations to such. Consequently, many of the ceremonial or devotional practices of ritual activity were grossly misinterpreted and these misconceptions, including still clumsy and inadequate representations and interpretations of Indigenous or Aboriginal social structures and belief systems, continue to this day. Indeed, as Vine Deloria Jr. has observed:

The practice of placing Christianity at the apex of religious development, with other religions not quite at its level of understanding, continues today...Exactly where would other religious stories be placed? When they happened to agree with Christianity, they would be found in the footnotes and anecdotal references. When they did not agree, they would be cited in a pejorative context to emphasize the superiority of Christianity.⁴

Deloria further observed:

Beliefs and practices of other peoples had to fit into the familiar Christian format of a single creation, the Fall, sin, repentance, redemption, salvation, and judgment. Students of the history of religion, in addition to locating other religions further down the evolutionary scale than the Western religions, tended to reshape those religious traditions and interpret them in Western terms. Often, to gain an advantage in proselytizing, efforts were made to identify certain aspects of Christianity within the beliefs and practices of other peoples. When one set of identities were made, the other beliefs and practices not consonant with Christian teachings were believed to be shortcomings, thus elevating Christianity above these traditions and reinforcing the misunderstanding.⁵

An early observation in such publications as Sir John Lubbock's *The origin of civilization and the primitive condition of man. Mental and social conditions of savages*, first published in 1882⁶ refers to Aboriginal people as "Australians" as well as "natives." Lubbock explores what he described as their folklore:

The Australians have no idea of creation, nor do they use prayers; they have no religious forms, ceremonies or worship. They do not believe in the existence of a Deity, nor is morality in any way connected with their religion, if it can be so called.⁷

Late nineteenth century assumptions and misconceptions about non-white people also influenced those such as Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917), "the founder of cultural anthropology", a member of the Ethnological Society of 1867 who subsequently

⁴Vine Deloria Jr., *Evolution, Creationism, and other Modern Myths*, Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, Colorado, 2002, p. 117

⁵Ibid. p. 119

⁶The 7th publication of this book by Books for Libraries Press, Freeport, New York, 1972

delivered a paper “The Philosophy of Religion among the Lower Races of Mankind” in 1870. The following year the publication of his book *Primitive Culture* coincided with the formation of the Anthropological Institute and it is no coincidence that his best-selling book became an essential formative text of anthropology.

He was twice elected president of the Institute, became the first professor of anthropology in Great Britain, and by the time of his death was acknowledged throughout the world as the towering figure in the science of culture...[In]1891...Tylor delivered an admorary address to Fellows of the Institute “On the Limits of Savage Religion.”⁸

Tylor, it appears, held a belief that religion was a universal element in the long-range human history and along with his so-minded colleagues was to be directly responsible for the many incorrect assumptions and serious misconceptions in regard to what was then considered the “lower races of mankind religious and philosophical conceptions.”

Of particular concern was a readiness to regard certain beliefs and sentiments found in low tribes as evidence of monotheism. This was certainly going beyond the limits: all such instances upon examination turn out to be consequences of ideas implanted in the minds of natives by missionaries.⁹

With the arrival of missionaries on Australian shores Tylor became an even bigger expert on “native” religions and religious practices. He became especially instructive on a range of Aboriginal religious ideas following the feedback he and others received from those first missionaries who gave a large number of Aboriginal names for the “Supreme Deity.” Hiatt notes that:

...observers on the Australian continent were...reporting theological conceptions on the formation and conservation of the universe that, if truly indigenous, would place the blackfellow on a par with his white supplanters.¹⁰

This premise was totally unacceptable and to arrive at such a conclusion was both unwise and unnecessary as “alleged native deities were nothing more than adaptations of indigenous beliefs to ideas obtained from civilization”.¹¹ There were too, many misunderstandings and levels of confusion as the result of language, translation and

⁷John Lubbock in Andrew Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, Vol. 2, Random House, London, 1996. p.5 First published in 1913 by Longman’s, Green & Co., London.

⁸L.R. Hiatt, “High Gods”, *Argument About Aborigines: Australia and the evolution of social Anthropology*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.100

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

general communication difficulties between the two cultures. Tylor quickly identified problems in regard to interpretation in missionaries' attempts to translate the concept of what was understood by those missionaries as their Christian God into Aboriginal languages. Although in those early days missionaries and others did not recognise that there were many different languages between the many separate nations of Aboriginal peoples. They often believed they were dealing only with a variety of dialects. Tylor felt that technical terms were needed to separate the two different levels of civilised and primitive concepts of religion and religious beliefs and he proposed that Aboriginal religion be described as animism or animistic doctrine.¹² Hiatt states that Tylor only decided on these terms as the preference for the obvious choice term, spiritualism:

...was already in service for table-tapping séances and other unorthodox methods of communicating with the dead in civilized society.¹³

It appears that Tylor and his former pupil Andrew Lang, author of *Myth, Ritual, and Religion* Volumes 1 and 2, 1913, were at loggerheads over certain ideas in regard to "the limits of savage religion" as Lang proposed that Aboriginal peoples' beliefs were in line with western civilisation's ideas and beliefs that "power that makes for righteousness in this world and the next".¹⁴ Lang further expressed the view that "whatever heights the ancient Greeks may have reached in philosophy, much of their art, myth and ritual was not different in kind from that of Kamilaroi of New South Wales...".¹⁵ Lang's ideas challenged Tylor's assumptions about "savage religion" by declaring that his evidence indicated "that the concept of a Supreme Being, in the sense of a first cause or creator...exists among the lowest savages *simultaneously* with beliefs in souls, ghosts, demons and other spirits."¹⁶ Lang's challenge further questioned the term and concept of animism to describe Aboriginal religion and stated that it was incorrect to infer that it evolved out of animism, but that it arose independently of it.

¹²"Animistic doctrines", according to Tylor, have their roots in two great enigmas of human experience: death and dreams. By inferring that every human is animated by a ghost-soul capable of independent existence, primitive rational philosophy solved them both at a single stroke. In dreams we see the spirits of fellow human beings, including the departed dead. Death itself is to be understood as a permanent departure of the soul from the body., Tylor in Hiatt, Op.Cit. 1996, pp.101-102

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴ Andrew Lang as quoted in Hiatt, Op. Cit., 1996, p.102

¹⁵ Ibid. pp.102-103

Naturally there were opposing thoughts on the overall issue of Aboriginal religion and religious beliefs and a strong supporter of Tylor named Sidney Hartland¹⁷ spoke out in his defence in his 1898 work ‘The “High Gods” of Australia’.¹⁸ Hartland mostly concurred with Tylor that some of the religious terms and concepts expressed by Aboriginal people were heavily influenced by their contact with Anglo and other western missionaries and this was especially so even within the first half century after the arrival of the first British invaders. Ethnologist Horatio Hale, who worked around the Wellington Valley, New South Wales area was told that the Supreme Being for the Aboriginal residents of that region was a deity named Baiame. However, it was found:

In the years that followed, information recorded by colonists everywhere indicated that Baiame was by no means a peculiarity of the Wellington Valley. By the end of the century it could be said that, while given different names in different regions (such as *Bunjil*, *Daramulun*, *Nurelli*), the High God¹⁹ of the tribes of south-eastern Australia was uniformly conceived as a Sky God referred to as ‘Our Father’,²⁰ who created the earth and instituted culture, and whose presence is manifest in the rumbling of thunder.²¹

One colonial missionary L.E. Threlkeld²² published works and memorandums to authorities on Aboriginal peoples of the east coast. In a memorandum to Judge Barton (September 1838) “Twenty Four Years of Missionary Engagements in the South Sea Islands and Australia” he spoke of “something Aboriginal people worshipped” – who was named *Koin* which he described as a “kind of goblin”. Between Threlkeld and other missionaries and self-proclaimed theologians of the time, it was generally decided that the spirit deity known as *Baiame* was their own

¹⁶ Ibid. p.102

¹⁷ Sidney Hartland (1848-1927) was a lawyer, civil servant and President of the Folk-Lore Society, London – main interest was in “the science of fairy tales”.

¹⁸ According to Hartland, in Hiatt 1996:103: The earliest reference to a ‘High God’ among the Aborigines appeared in the records of the United States Exploring Expedition of 1838-42.

¹⁹ “High God” also called “Sky God” is that named by anthropologists as the supreme deity found among non-literate peoples. They conceive that Aboriginal and/or Indigenous peoples see their “High God” as being totally transcendent and far removed from the world that he/she created. (Personal comment: I don’t know how different that is from Christian understanding and belief of their “High God/s”).

²⁰ Hiatt acknowledges Tony Swain’s work *A Place for Strangers: Towards a History of Aboriginal Being* for information on the ‘Our Father/All-Father’ deity: The author attributes the All-Father of south-eastern Australia to invasion by Christian conquerors, and the All-Mother of northern Australia to influences from Indonesia. The indigenous religion in his (Swain) view was preoccupied with locality (“parochial totemism”, as Maddock has termed it). (Hiatt 1996: p.199 – notes to Chapter 6 ‘High gods’)

²¹ L.R. Hiatt, Op.Cit., 1996, p.103

translation for the “Aboriginal creator” or divine being. However, later studies found that the name *Baiame* “...preceded the missionaries, and is not a word of missionary manufacture...”.²³

Early missionaries and other observers of Aboriginal “religious” practices and beliefs insisted on naming all deities, symbols and other ceremonial icons, rituals and symbols in European Christian terms. They added their personal, often ill-informed notions and ideas from their own various religious backgrounds and beliefs. Translations as well as incorrect spellings and individual theological interpretations of their understandings of the Bible and general Christian belief, meant imposed false impressions and lingering misconceptions that endure to this day.

...missionaries saw the totems of Aboriginal people and jumped to the wrong conclusions. They thought that the Aboriginal totems were idolatrous...it is...clear that totems are not idols as the bible defines them and that both totems and sacred sites serve to retain the law in a way analogous to that of the ark of the covenant.²⁴

Missionaries faced the ultimate frustration, trying to unravel the mysteries of Aboriginal belief systems whilst their own creations and western ideologies were mysteries to them. This frustration was most evident with the recognition of the failure to wholly convert large numbers of Aboriginal people. Lang’s statement sums up some of this frustration along with the missionary resolute determination:

It is for science to determine how far this startling idea of the Son is a natural result of the desire to preserve the remote and somewhat inaccessible and otiose dignity of the Supreme Being from the exertion of activity; and how far it is a savage refraction of missionary teaching, even where it seems to be anterior to missionary influences, which with these races, have been an almost failure. The subject abounds in difficulty. But the sceptic must account for the marvelously rapid acceptance of the European ideas by the most savage class, the doctors or sorcerers for the admission of ideas into the most conservative of savage institutions, the Mysteries; for the extreme reticence about the ideas in presence of the very Europeans from whom they are said to have derived; and in some cases for the concealment of the ideas from the women, who, one presumes, are as open to the men to missionary teaching. It is very easy to talk of “borrowing”, not so easy to explain these points on the borrowing theory, above all, when evidence is frequent that the ideas preceded the arrival of

²²Lancelot Edward Threlkeld (1788-1859), Missionary to the Aborigines, New South Wales, stationed at Lake Macquarie from 1831-41.

²³Andrew Lang, *Myth, Ritual & Religion*, Vol.Two, Random House, London, 1996, p.9

²⁴Reverend Djiniyini Gondarra (Uniting Aboriginal and Islanders Christian Congress), “Aboriginal and Christian – developing an indigenous theology”, *National Outlook*, February 1984, p.11

Christian teachers.²⁵

While there has been some admittance that Aboriginal people did have some form of belief system before the arrival of western missionaries and others, it is mostly acknowledged with almost incredulous surprise. We can only wonder at what might have been if the overpowering influences of western belief systems and the variety of religions had not been imposed onto Aboriginal peoples. A constant theme and large-held belief is that Aboriginal people have learned their sense of morality (or lack of it) from Europeans and from western belief systems. While it is evident that Tiwi Island and some former inmate Garden Point art is heavily influenced by their experiences with Catholicism and depict some Catholic/Christian themes and icons, it should not be assumed that similar images and expressions were not already in place before conversion to Catholicism. It appears that non-Aboriginal people, in the main, hold an attitude that Aboriginal people's sense of beliefs, govern clan, tribal and individual morality under a supernatural sanction. How close to the truth might this be and how different is the idea and attitude to their own Christian understandings and beliefs? This predicament poses two important questions: What religion is totally sacred? Is it not true that all religions have their own contradictory myths which all help sustain and maintain their own truths?

Some may wish to express religion as a truth in a primal being, a Maker, a Creator, Inventor, or perhaps in another entity. After all they all exist as myth and hypothesis only. Belief, most would say, is rational, and elevated (perhaps not so for "savages" and non-Christians), whereas myth may be defined as irrational and debased. The question to be asked: Are both these concepts evident in a variety of Christian as well as non-Christian thought? Some would contend that both streams of thought are present but that they are always in conflict and have been throughout the entire religious and spiritual history of humans.

But all these considerations seem to pale in comparison with the evil policies of assimilation that were introduced as part of the civilising and christianising agenda. Control of growth of numbers of "half-castes" or Coloureds in an effort to protect

²⁵ Lang, Op Cit. pp.17-18

Elkin's²⁶ notion of racial hygiene for the northern frontier was a priority that could only be supervised through the combined efforts of government policy and Christian institutionalism. The effects of the conversion part of the civilising agenda were far-reaching and were noted by yet another prominent anthropologist Catherine Berndt. She spoke of her and husband Ronald's findings:

Only on rare occasions have we carried out anthropological research in an area that was not directly or indirectly affected by missionary activity. Throughout our professional careers...in almost all of our field research we have been under the shadow of one mission or another...there were, and are few Aborigines who have not been exposed in some degree, at first hand or otherwise, to some form of proselytization.²⁷

While the Berndts' experiences were mainly among the Yolngu, and their own particular experiences with Methodist missionaries, and the proselytization of those in Arnhem Land may have followed different patterns, it is reasonable to say that little thought went into the removal of Coloured children from their families and homelands for the same purposes. Disconnection from customs, languages and familial responsibilities, or cultural obligations, especially in regard to caring for country were never considered. Evangelisation followed the same patterns, regardless of denomination or location. During the period of the active land rights movements of the late 1960s – even though the struggle for land rights commenced back in 1788 – these issues were not acknowledged or discussed by either government or missionary authorities. It was not until the immediate post-*Mabo* victory in Australia's High Court that these types of issues were given any type of consideration. However, they have never been fully or adequately addressed. Challenges to Native Title and omissions to the issues surrounding removal of children from families, institutionalisation of them in Christian missions and government facilities, as well as the associated effects of those traumas continue to this day – and remain mostly unaddressed. Mostly no thought of connection, religious, ceremonial or other is made between people and land. And it is only recently that scholars and others make this

²⁶A.P.Elkin, previously mentioned Church of England priest and anthropologist (1891-1979) and adviser to governments on "Aboriginal policy". Based on his interest in myth and ritual he "devised theories that were to have profound influence over the way European Australians were to perceive the indigenes for several decades. He strove to influence public policy in relation to Aborigines living in the Territory...with his closest informant being Bill Harney." in David Carment, Robyn Maynard, Alan Powell (eds.), *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.One: to 1945, NTU Press, Darwin, 1990, pp.90-91

²⁷ Ronald and Catherine Berndt, *End of an Era: Indigenous labour in the Northern Territory*, Australian Institute of Indigenous Studies, Canberra, 1987, p.69

vital link that such issues need to be addressed even if only for the purposes of general well being, but also as affirmation of individual and collective purpose of life, for:

...knowledge and land are intimately bound to one another is a belief widely shared among indigenous peoples, as is the accompanying belief that the natural world is alive, spiritually replete. Consider, for example, Alice Benally, a Dineh woman, who, facing the prospect of removal, expresses the incomprehensibility of that notion by commenting that in the proposed relocation site the plants and animals would not know her – nor would she know them...And indeed, in some native languages such relocations are literally unthinkable. There is no term for them: no concept by which they are known. As Pauline Whitesinger once stated: “If we were to go on top of an unfamiliar mountain we would not know the life forms that dwell there”.

This is a significant point of contrast with western science and western knowledge systems more generally, where a conviction prevails that knowledge of nature is ultimately distinct and separable from, nature. Certain other western beliefs about how it is to know facilitate this, in particular the belief that what is known are true propositions about reality.²⁸

Just as the legal lie *terra nullius* exposed the truth in regard to Aboriginal peoples' very existence, so too it brought into focus yet another myth, expressed here by Mary Kalantzis:

There were people here already, a civilisation so subtle, variegated and complex that it is almost beyond comprehension from within a modern frame of reference – its systems of land tenure, forms of farming, kinship structures, cosmologies and languages...²⁹

It seems ever since the invaders came ashore, and even long before Catholics became busy with their own missionary activity, Europeans were already actively creating what may be described as Aboriginal theologies. Later, this was to spread across the breadth of Australia and in the Northern Territory, and at Garden Point Mission. It was not until during the late 1970s and also throughout the 1980s that Catholics did acknowledge and stress the sacramental quality of such spirituality. Prior to that, it seems Catholics took a very relaxed approach to their commitment to conversion of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory in particular. John Harris in *One Blood: 200 Years of Encounter with Christianity: A Story of Hope*, (1990) is critical of Jesuit missionaries, especially non-English speaking priests. He held them responsible for the lack of success at Daly River mission and the closure of that mission in June 1899.

²⁸Laurie Anne Whitt, “Metaphor and Power in Indigenous and Western Knowledge Systems”, *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1998)

²⁹Mary Kalantzis, “Reconsidering the Meaning of the Commonwealth”, *Women’s Constitutional Convention*, Canberra, Jan.29-30, 1998, p.5

Although site location of the mission was also a contributing factor to unsuccessful attempts to grow crops and to build sound structures, Harris implies that the decision to abandon the mission was made too hastily. He notes that the Austrian Jesuit missionaries conclusion that “civilisation” was a long-range objective “needing time” was not an altogether persuasive one. *Ita clausum est opus hoc* (Thus this work is concluded)³⁰ was simply not a favourable conclusion it seems to such important proselytizing work.

Harris further states that the commitment from the Catholic Church to the overall evangelical mission was tardy in the earlier colonial period, at both national and Northern Territory level. Even though he notes that the Sacred Heart priest Father Francis Xavier Gsell was sent to work at Bathurst Island in 1911, the Catholic Church had all but abandoned its pastoral and spiritual mission to Aboriginal people. Harris notes:

It was with an almost cynical disregard for Aborigines in 1905, six years after the Jesuits departed (Daly River mission) the annual *Acta et Decreta* of the Plenary Council of Australian Bishops, in the section entitled “On Spreading the Faith among the Aborigines”, was still routinely printing an 1885 description of the first Jesuit mission as it was in 1883. The same token report had sufficed them for twenty years.³¹

Other Christian activity and interpretation of Aboriginal religion and belief continued only as a special kind of blindness and as noted by Stanner, and reiterated by Langton in *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*:

[It]...prevented Europeans in the past from seeing that “the ritual uses of water, blood, earth and other substances, in combination with words, gestures, chants, songs and dances, all having for the Aborigines a compelling quality” were not “mere barbarisms” but had a sacramental quality...one has to look beyond the symbols to what is symbolised; behind the spoken images of myth, the acted images and gestures of rite, and the graven or painted images of art, to what they stand for; beyond the chrism of blood and ochre to what they point to...³²

Colonial missionaries, including those from the Catholic sector also failed to recognise, indeed acknowledge, that Aboriginal people made religious and spiritual

³⁰G.J. O’Kelly, *The Jesuit Mission Stations in the Northern Territory*, BA (Hons), Monash University 1967:72 cited in John Harris, *One Blood*, p.475

³¹John Harris, *Op. Cit.*, p.476

³²W.E.H. Stanner, *Op. Cit.*, in M Langton, *Op. Cit.*, pp.9-16

links between God's other creatures and the Earth itself. Missionaries and others subsequently denied the right to this belief to Aboriginal people by introducing them to varied foreign Christian beliefs and themes. Respect, human fellowship and appreciation and acknowledgment of God's other creations it seems, was only to be extended to those who were "worthy". Only those ready to embrace broader Christian theology or western philosophy or through the development of heteronomous relationships with evangelising missionaries and their assorted servants were accepted into that fellowship. Human beliefs that inter-related with the natural world, the environment, animals, indeed, seasons were treated with disdain and mirth. These beliefs usually provided further justification for colonial administrators from across the broad spectrum of amused observers to belittle and demonise Aboriginal belief systems and ceremonial practices. However, Aboriginal narratives consistently present examples of representations of the natural world as one being of other than human and Aboriginal. Aboriginal children raised on such narratives, when suddenly removed from those teachings and being forced to adopt other philosophies and beliefs in abject contrast, must have been severely traumatised and profoundly confused.

The adults who were forced into accepting these foreign belief systems must have found it extremely difficult to ignore the obligation to give praise and thanks to those animals who provided skins and food, and medicines. They were not able to offer their own prayers and give respect for the gifts of sustenance. It would have been difficult to suppress the desire, indeed the obligation to give praise to the winds, the sky, the rains, the snow, the oceans and water-ways, and all natural features of the landscape. It would have been difficult to have to deny and separate themselves from the Earth. For those who held tight to their beliefs and their spiritual and other obligations, especially to Earth, would have had to find other ways of expressing this in foreign language. They were in unfamiliar far-distant locations where many of their ancestral beings were not present. Indeed, most informants interviewed for this thesis found it almost impossible to articulate their own clan stories, of creation or other. They did however know the Tiwi *Palingarri* or Creation Story. Some stated that they were only just learning of their animal ancestors and other stories that connected them to country and clan. Others could only express Catholic notions in regard to creation and ancestors, and it seems most were comfortable and happy to trace their descent to

Adam and Eve, and were more inclined to hold onto the Garden of Eden as some type of ancestral homeland.

Christian, including Catholic missionaries, would not have recognised Aboriginal belief systems which told of animal emissaries from the supernatural world who were responsible for either the patrilineal or matrilineal clans. Missionaries would never have considered or understood that every individual clan member traced their descent backward in time through either line to the individual who first adopted, or was given the name of one of the animals the emissaries represented. The hostility that this situation would have created between enemies from outside their kin and beyond the boundaries of their own estates is something that was never considered. If it was considered and acknowledged it was certainly down-played.

Removal and conversion are at the root of many insecurities and lack of own knowledge in regard to Aboriginal, including Coloured individual and collective identity, belief, and expressions of spiritual and other narratives that impact at this present time. While some of the older Coloured informant's spoke of belonging to certain Tiwi clan names such as *Tarnikuwi* or *Arewurtuwi* (Flying Fox), *Wutunjuwi* (Crocodile) and *Wurantawi* (Stingray) they were careful to explain that they were adopted and not born into these clans. Some mused that they would like to know more about the clans they were born into before removal from their homelands but sadly for some the connections are long-broken. Mostly they had adopted the stories, histories and spiritual and other beliefs, mores and values of the Tiwi Islanders. As Luke Morcom who was fostered to a non-Aboriginal family as well as adopted and married into another mixed Tiwi/Coloured family stated:

I am proud of my Tiwi family and I will always regard them as my proper family but I also know that my real family was at Boroloola when I was taken away. I have spent my adult life finding out my own stories.³³

Examples of both Tiwi and Ojibwa creation tales that detail the journey and activities of certain emissaries follows:

Tiwi *Palingirrai* (Creation) story, and essentially the beginning of the history of the Tiwi People is led by female creator beings and especially by an old blind woman

known to Tiwi as *Murtankala* or *Murdankala*. Before *Murtankala* came all the land was in darkness, it was devoid of geographical features, and there were no animals or humans around. However, “under the ground” some spirit beings dwelled as did *Murtankala* and her children. *Murtankala* wanted to take her children to a different place so she started digging her way through the ground until she made an opening at the top and soon she was above the darkness and on the land. Once on the surface *Murtankala* had to find food for herself and her children and while she was searching she gradually carved out what is now described as the Tiwi Islands. She carried her children in a bark basket for as she worked carving out the islands water was forming around the edges. She continued her journey and her work until she ended up where she had begun, at *Murupianga*, at the place now known as Impinani. She placed her children on the sand and went about lighting up “the whole place, probably the whole world” so she could “see what she was doing when she was making all the bush and the plants and the animals”. She named her son *Purukuparli* and her daughters *Wurupurungala* and *Murupiyankala* and “these three are the proper ancestors of all the Tiwi”.³⁴

There is still argument about whether Aboriginal religion is what may be categorised in western thinking as matriarchal paganism or patriarchal Christianity. Hiatt believes that “All-Father” belief is attributable to European and/or Christian influences and the “All-Mother” belief might have been influenced by Indonesian contact. Consideration, it seems is not given to the argument that different Aboriginal nations and therefore different language groups had their own ideas and creation stories that told of gender-specific or even non gender-specific creators and architects. Hiatt makes a pertinent point in his criticism of Swain’s reference to “unnamed scholars” who he believes make “denigratory assumptions” that Aboriginal people were not influenced by other concepts and ideas and that “Aborigines were incapable of

³³Luke Morcom – personal communication. Interview: Malak (Darwin) 2 September, 1999. Ref: SS/GPM/BL/LM

³⁴ The story as related to the author by a number of anonymous informants, as well as Luke Morcom and Ellen (Rowena) Stroud. The spelling of all names is adopted from John Morris’s publication *The Tiwi: From Isolation to Cultural Change*, p.14. For similar information and spelling see Peter Forrest, *The Tiwi Meet the Dutch: The First European Contacts*, Tiwi Land Council, 1995 and Beatrice Kerinaiaua’s version of the story in *Murtankala the creator*, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Nguiu, 1994.

adjusting their world-views to alien impacts”.³⁵

The term ‘sacred site’³⁶ is more than inadequate to describe significant creation and other sites of significance in all the different Aboriginal estates across Australia. The term totally discounts the possibility of acknowledgment of Aboriginal evolution and/or evolutionist ideas or an Aboriginal ‘Ark of the Covenant’ minus the scrolls. Aboriginal ‘sacred sites’ mostly house some elements of religious artifacts, whether depictions on cave walls and rocks, or sacred remains and traces of religious ceremonial activity. This dismissal of what may be described as Aboriginal ‘cathedrals’ and holy places of worship is enforced by non-indigenous scholars, government authorities, western religious denominations and others even today

In Aboriginal tradition a ceremonial visit to a sacred site does not emphasise worship, but rather focuses upon the traditional law. Ceremonial leaders who visit sacred sites in traditional ways are open to the law. They are open that they may receive wisdom and understanding in order to share with others who are ready to receive it. The parallels with the Old Testament Torah (teaching law) are real. In the spirituality of the Aborigines, what happens at sacred sites is more like recognition of ancient moral imperatives than a kind of worship.³⁷

John Morris in *The Tiwi: From Isolation to Cultural Change* and Beatrice Kerinauia in *Murtankala the creator* tell of the first *Pukumani* mortuary ritual being initiated and performed by *Purukuparli* near the place known as Eeparli or Cape Keith. One of the most important rituals still practiced by Tiwi People to this day is the mortuary ritual *Purukuparli* set in place:

...declaring that thereafter all Tiwi were duty bound to carry out this ritual whenever an Islander passed away. They were also required to avoid the earthly home of *Ampiji*, the Rainbow Serpent, who threatened trespassers with death.³⁸

Another version is documented in The Ojibwa story:

³⁵The author of this thesis cannot successfully argue that her clans’ beliefs and religious concepts and spiritual ideas were not influenced to any degree by early Christian teachings, language or ritual. However, what can be asserted is that there are concepts and beliefs that are held, especially by Kungarakan, that are not European/Christian/Indonesian or Asian. And most religious understandings, obligations and responsibilities are related to specific areas in Kungarakan country and revolve around animals and/or the natural landscape.

³⁶The term “sacred site” should be understood to mean a place of ceremonial significance where reaffirmation and re-focus on traditional or customary law is symbolically embedded, through song, story, dance and more often now depicted through representations in art. They are not places of worship as understood in a Christian sense and should not be thought to be analogous to the ark of the covenant or compared to Christian cathedrals or churches although some would argue that there are many parallels, especially with the Pentateuch or Torah.

³⁷ Reverend Djiniyini Gondarra, Op.Cit., 1984, p.12

³⁸ John Morris, *The Tiwi: From Isolation to Cultural Change*, Op cit., p.16

the...five 'original' clans [of the Ojibwa] are descended from six anthropomorphic supernatural beings who emerged from the ocean to mingle with human beings. One of them had his eyes covered and dared not look at the Indians, though he showed the greatest anxiety to do so. At last he could no longer restrain his curiosity, and on one occasion he partially lifted his veil, and his eye fell on the form of a human being, who instantly fell dead 'as if struck by one of the thunderers'. Though the intentions of this dread being were friendly to men, yet the glance of his eye was too strong, and it inflicted certain death. His fellows therefore caused him to return to the bosom of the great water. The five others remained among the Indians, and 'became a blessing to them'. From them originate the five great clans or totems: catfish, crane, loon, bear, and marten [from which other Ojibwa clans named after different species were subsequently derived].³⁹

Or, as expressed by respected elder and well-known artist Wenten Rubuntja of the Central Australian Mparntwe Arrente community:

These rocks we've got to worship. The rainmakers, the caterpillars, or the kangaroos, emus, we got to pray for it. In this country, and every other country, we were looking at worship, before the settlers came here. When the settlers came here they started cutting trees. We shouldn't be cutting trees. We shouldn't be getting rocks, making holes in the country...Country was pretty and country was *tywerrenge* (something associated with sacred ceremonies; it can also refer to land itself). We don't forget about *tywerrenge*. We still keep going, singing, and ceremonies all the time, singing all the time and painting all the time, shield and dancing. What belongs to this country, belongs to the Aboriginal culture, we never lost, keep going ahead...The landscape painting is the country itself, with *tywerrenge* himself. Tywerrenge and songs come out of the body of the country. See all this one, this little waterhole. We're not like whitefella who can take a photograph and say what pretty country it is; we've got the song to sing for that country.⁴⁰

It is clear by these above examples given by indigenous and Aboriginal orators that the western ideas in relation to religion, and the overall homogenising theory the West applies to everything indigenous or Aboriginal, are erroneous as well as misleading, and subsequently allowed (and still allows) for much misconception and false evaluation that upheld (and still upholds) the justification for evangelising of Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples from within a western framework:

Once we step outside the Western framework, we realize that religion is not a

³⁹Levi-Strauss 1; cf. Warren 41-53, in Paul Driben, Donald J. Auger, Anthony N. Doob and Raymond P. Auger, "No Killing Ground: Aboriginal Law Governing the Killing of Wildlife among the Cree and Ojibwa of Northern Ontario", *Ayaangwaamizin: The International Journal of Indigenous Philosophy*, Vol. 1, 1, 1997, p. 100

⁴⁰Wenten Rubuntja as referenced by D.Wilkins "Lingusitic evidence in support of a holistic approach to traditional ecological knowledge", in N.M. Williams and G.Baines (eds.), *Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Wisdom for Sustainable Development*, in Fikret Berkes, *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management*, Taylor and Francis, 1999, p.25

universal concept and is probably not even a proper category to use when examining human cultures and their perspectives on the world. Murray Wax, sociologist of religion, among other scholars, asserts that “only the languages of the modern West contain a term corresponding to religion.” Tracing the concept backward in time, Wax found that “even the ancient Hebrew Scriptures contain no word corresponding to religion.” Except in the modern West, then, there are virtually no “religious” traditions that separate religion from the rest of human knowledge and experience.⁴¹

Certainly, most conversion and civilising activities of the earlier colonial period had very little to do with human dignity, and or respect for others’ views and attitudes, to a multitude of agendas and issues, and was, I believe, driven more by competing organisations, church and church and state and state, and state and church, by one of the worst sins in their very own Christian manifest - that of greed.

The term religion may be used in many different contexts, and may also have, for diverse peoples, and their respective religions and or beliefs, perplexing extents of significance. Most attempts to define this word, or associated terminology, are never going to be satisfactory to every individual. However, almost any definition, or different worldview on religion or religious practice, will always serve the purposes of argument, and mostly will always forever lead to even more confusion for most people. Therefore it is important for the individual to be able to express frankly and authoritatively his or her opinion and definition, without the biased influences and perspectives of others. As Reverend Djiniyini Gondarra has expressed:

God is black as much as white. If I am to have my true identity before God, you cannot lock me into white ways. You must give me freedom to be me. God has the same concern for the Aboriginals as for the white (balanda).⁴²

As previously stated, this thesis research has drawn on the Garden Point Catholic Mission experience in particular and has tended to focus on the broader historical picture of Christian, especially Catholic missionaries and their evangelising mission in north Australia at a crucial time in the overall construction of what is popularly known as “the Territory lifestyle”. Essentially the mission experience at Garden Point was part of the over-riding agenda of assimilation which in turn was more concerned

⁴¹Vine Deloria Jr., *Evolution, Creationism, and Other Modern Myths*, Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, Colorado, 2002, p. 120. For reference to Murray Wax – See “Religion as Universal: Tribulations of an Anthropological Enterprise,” *Zygon* 19, No.1, March 1984, p.6

⁴²Reverend Djiniyini Gondarra, Op.Cit., 1984, p.11

with racial experiments purely based on eugenics and born out of white fear of black and brown people.

PART TWO – IN THE BEGINNING

Chapter Five – ‘Race’ and the purity of Christian lineage

[In Australia, whiteness is] “itself a fantasy position of cultural dominance born out of the history of European expansion” – Ghassan Hage, 1988¹

The Northern Territory was a critical place for experimentation in the theories of social Darwinism and eugenicist ideas. While the idea of race commenced its familiar modern form in the early days of the seventeenth century, the concept was unknown to Aboriginal people when coloniser-settlers arrived. Nor was it known to Coloureds who were confined to various missions and government institutions as a result of western understandings and applications of so-called ‘race theories’ or ‘caste’. Predating the 1788 British invasion of Australia, the Spanish were considering such matters and although ‘race’ was not the defining term of this idea in relation to separate peoples, a different example of ‘caste’ was. For example, according to Americo Castro, *Spaniards: An Introduction to Their History*, 1985 “...until the forcible repatriation of the *moriscos* and the expulsion of the Jews, there was no such thing as Spain as we understand it today. What existed was a conglomeration of peoples of different faiths, “none of which could survive without the other two.” It was not until one caste...the Christian caste consisting of old Christians and *conversos* – took over the Hebrew notion of purity of blood (*limpio de sangre*) – that the idea of collective life began to yield to the idea that authority now came through blood”.²

While the concept of race was unknown to Aboriginal people, indeed unknown to Coloureds at Garden Point Mission, it was to play a major role in Aboriginal peoples’ daily lives from the moment Europeans arrived in the Northern Territory. For the racialisation of the West, specifically for the English, took shape and development in the seventeenth century. That is when ‘intellectuals’ started to seriously consider notions in relation to ‘purity of blood’ and “purity of Christian lineage” among other things. One notable, Bartolome de Las Casas (1474-1566) had already spoken of “peoples of unequal degrees of civilization”, and especially those from the infidel

¹ Ghassan Hage, *White nation: fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1988, p.20

² Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West*, The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, DC, 1996, p.149

lands of Africa, the Americas and the East Indies. Franciscus de Victoria,³ (sometimes recorded as Francisco de Vitorio) and his singular innovation – a Law of Nations, contributed to these attitudes in his several theoretical speculations. According to R.A. Williams Jr., *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (1990):

(Victoria and other medieval Canon lawyers)...initiated the process by which the European state system's legal discourse was ultimately liberated from its stultifying, expressly theocentric, medievalized moorings and was adapted to the rationalizing demands of Renaissance Europe's secularized will to empire.⁴

Victoria's theoretical speculations' biggest impact on indigenous peoples was on Native Americans and their rights (or lack of) as colonised peoples. His 1557 publication "On the Indians Lately Discovered" drew on Greek philosophical traditions, ancient Roman natural law (*ius gentium*), canon law,⁵ Scripture and Thomistic philosophy. It conceived essentially that Indians or Native Americans possessed natural legal rights as free and rational people. According to R.A. Williams Jr. Victoria would have disagreed with later colonial theorists who interpreted and "acknowledged convenient legal fictions such as 'discovery' as a legitimate basis for European hegemony in the Indians' America." As Victoria stated:

The pope's grant to Spain of title to the Americas was "baseless" and could not affect the inherent rights of the Indian inhabitants.⁶

(However) Transgressions of the universally binding norms of the Law of Nations by the Indians might serve to justify a Christian nation's conquest and colonial empire in the Americas.⁷

Williams notes however, that Victoria was "no radical proto-egalitarian" wishing to free Indians from "Spanish Christian hegemony" as his:

...discursive practice was thoroughly medieval in its totalizing trajectory,

³ Franciscus de Victoria (1480-1546), Dominican scholar, Spanish Renaissance theologian and canon lawyer. He was first to inaugurate a jurisprudence of international order – a Law of Nations, sometimes erroneously credited as "the real founder of modern international law". The original intent of many of his ideas in regard to Law of Nations was that it allow regulation of all aspects of relationships between independent states.

⁴ R.A. Williams Jr., *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990, pp. 96-97

⁵ "...particularly the canonical tradition derived from Innocent IV's natural-law-based discussion of infidel rights as affirmed by the Constance Council, to argue that the Indians of the Americas were rational beings." In R.A. Williams Jr., *Op.Cit.*, 1990, p.98

⁶ Franciscus de Victoria, *De Indis et de Ivre Bella Reflectiones* 73 (E. Nys ed., J.Bate trans, 1917) In R.A. Williams Jr., *Op cit.*, 1990, pp.96-97

⁷ "Victoria's lecture" in R.A. Williams Jr., *Op.Cit.*, 1990, p.97

desire for the plenitude of a rationalized world order, and critical focus on the Indians' normative difference.⁸

As well, Victoria flatly asserted:

The pope...has no temporal power over the Indian aborigines or over other unbelievers.⁹

Regardless of the principles set down in the Law of Nations, and Victoria's defence of Indian rights in law, neither went in any way toward emancipating Indians from the guardianship of European Christians, and the Catholic Church. The important point is that all these principles in relation to the "rights of man" were clearly understood by British authorities at the time of deciding on the invasion of Australia. Such rules of law were well-known, yet continued to be ignored, and were never applied in dealings with Aboriginal peoples of Australia. British authorities decided to follow Victoria's rule to the letter in regard to his interpretation of *dominium* (ownership) and the Thomistic theory¹⁰ which held that "reason is a precondition of capacity for ownership in general." Clearly the principles and the "lack of reason" that were made applicable for Indians were also relevant in relation to the right to dispossess Aboriginal peoples.

The different philosophical views on ideas in relation to genesis are too many to cover in this work. The arguments vary from "natural phenomena" to metaphysics to more academic matters that concentrate on "the politics of man" as well as his rationality and overall purpose of being. Racism and the general attitude to those ideas that centred on difference were embraced by many philosophers, ancient, medieval and contemporary. Justification for such views is as prolific as the many theories and hypotheses, discussions and writings that concentrate on such issue. Mostly, colonisation and empire, from ancient Roman Empire day's right up to the 1788 establishment of a British settlement in Australia, has always been justified under the principles of rule and subjection. And they have always been cloaked in the Christian

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Francisus de Victoria, *De Indis et de Ivre Bella Reflectiones* 73 (E. Nys ed., J Bate trans, 1917) In R.A Williams Jr., Op.Cit, 1990, p.100

¹⁰ Thomistic theory – that takes its orientation from the account of the "natural law" as developed by Thomas Aquinas, and as interpreted and supplemented in the context of scholastic theology, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. See Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*, Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005. Jean Porter, John A. O'Brien Professor of Moral Theology at the University of Notre Dame is regarded as one of the pre-eminent interpreters of Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas, who along with such notables as Cicero, supposedly gave to Western Christian theological reflection a *locus classicus* on matters to do with natural law. Usually they borrowed from the Christian Bible – as an example see Romans 2:14 natural law.

language of conquering forces under some type of moral and natural justification that has strength of belief in differentiation and discrimination as principles set down by the Christian or western God. Some principal theorists and philosophers such as Aristotle argued that essentially, as a species, “Man was an Idea, an Essence” and regardless of class or status, all were united in substance “in the essence of man.”

However, later-day philosopher-theorists such as John Locke (*Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690), criticised Aristotle’s theories on “Species,” “Differentia,” and “Genus,” and they were clear to interpret his reference to “barbarian” as racist description of “inferior due to colour” (usually black or Ethiopian/African other). However, according to Hannaford (*Race: The History of an Idea in the West*, 1996) the ancient Greeks did not have a well-defined concept of biological race and that biology was only significant at the individual level as men were classified as neither white or black. Nor did they have a clear and defined concept for ‘culture’ just as “we [still]do not have one that is truly sharp and clear.” Hannaford quotes Clyde Kluckhohn from *Anthropology and the Classics* to make this point clear:

Some of the Greeks more than half formulated the principle of natural selection. On the other hand, they did not fall into the error of biological racism. They preferred the pertinence of geographical environment and culture.¹¹

Race as an organising idea became especially prevalent in its first stages, from 1684 to 1815. The idea developed by way of three critical stages: methodology (reconstruction – of ideas and language); establishment of new relationship (to adapt to new methodology, language and justification); new physical anthropology, literary criticism and history and interpretations, especially of Aristotle’s works:

The important departure point here was the adoption and adaption of Aristotle’s ideas of *genus* and *species* (the essences of things) and his classification of the physical world. This methodological change, triggered by Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbs, and John Locke during the seventeenth century, created a useful way in which things could be divided into material *classes*, *genera*, and *species*, thus enabling natural historians to divide and subdivide material things into general orders more systematically than had been possible before. This new method was considered to be as applicable to

¹¹Clyde K.M. Kluckhohn, “Anthropology and the Classics”, *The Colver Lectures*, 1960, Providence, R.I., Brown University Press, 1961, pp.34,42 in Ivan Hannaford, Op cit.,1996, p.47

primates as to plants, and especially to humankind...¹²

Britain, as part of its colonising instrument, brought such ideas of social evolution, hereditarianism, and eugenics to Australia, and colonial emissaries quickly spread both ideas and attitudes to all Europeans and Anglos regardless of class or status. Permanent British settlement to the Northern Territory occurred at a much later stage than in the south and it is due to this factor that it is an all-important region in comparison with the southern Aboriginal-coloniser-settler experiences of the continent. For in the Northern Territory it meant a large Aboriginal population survived a variety of circumstances despite intense cultural contact with British coloniser-settlers and others. Even with the removal to government-controlled institutions, and later government-funded missions and the separation and breaking up of families, mostly Aboriginal people were able to retain strong individual as well as collective identity. This was to change in a later period, directly due to the categorisation of different peoples into distinct groups, based on skin colour, or caste system. This system was mandated by both government and mission authority. The caste system imposed by authorities was not dissimilar to what was practiced in colonial India. Its original intentions and objectives were the same.

Racial superiority and ownership: (on being white but talking black)

Susanne Hoerber Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, authors of *The Modernity of Tradition* (1967) confirm such patterns in this particular work. It is recognised by these authors that British racial ideology always sets out to cause and maintain deliberate distinction between categories of people from within similar social networks. In their other work, co-edited with Mohan Singh Kanota, *Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh's Diary, A Colonial Subject's Narrative of Imperial India* (2002), strong reference is made to Colonel James Tod's¹³ imperial voice and opinion. This voice and opinion effectively silenced all non-whites in "imperial India". It meant the colonised referred to Tod as the authority when wanting to know and understand notions of the tradition to which they belonged. It also meant that the silenced indigenous voice and opinion adopted the British racial ideology which in turn

¹² Ivan Hannaford, Op. Cit., pp.187-188

practiced caste and class among themselves. The situation was similar in the Northern Territory where caste and colour was stressed so as to implement imperialist theory and practice in the assimilation process.

Tod's emphasis on exoticism and romance of the colonised 'other' meant he became the authoritative voice and only his version and opinion counted from when he first penned his work between 1818 and 1822. His public service was in Mewar (Udaipur) with the East India Company as first political agent to the western Rajputana where his written work became:

...not only the authoritative version through which older bardic accounts of Rajputana were filtered for nineteenth century Indian and English consumption, but also the dominant historiography of primary India. Those who wished to know what Rajput was consulted Tod.¹⁴

Amar Singh sadly noted in his diary that he had to read Tod to understand the tradition of his essential Rajput identity.¹⁵ He maintained his diary so as to give an account about a native subject in a reflexive "native's" narrative "about the self, the master, and the relationship between them." More importantly:

...he wrote in response to his liminal positioning between two societies, Rajput and English, the first "black," princely, and subordinate, the second "white," colonial and dominant.¹⁶

It is important to add this other colonial subject's narrative as similar situations existed (and still exist) for colonised Aboriginal peoples of Australia. The reference to Tod is a deliberate attempt to highlight the need to give voice to the Aboriginal, including Coloured actors in the overall Australian colonial story. As mentioned in the front part of this thesis, there is in the Australian history discipline a reliance on and promotion of the colonial dominant voice. Far too often it is mostly the non-

¹³ Colonel James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, 2 volumes 1829 & 1832. See also Lt. General Sir George MacMunn, *The Martial Races of India* (1932) in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph & Lloyd I. Rudolph with Mohan Singh Kanota (eds.), *Reversing the Gaze: Amar Singh's Diary, A Colonial Subject's Narrative of Imperial India*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO., 2002

¹⁴ Susanne Hoeber et al., Op cit., p.13

¹⁵ To have been born and bred as a Rajput meant you were part of a dominant social order in one of the princely states of Rajputana. They were of the military class which was considered incompatible with the literary class and one of their well-known proverbs clearly stated: "A Rajput who reads will never ride a horse." However Amar Singh kept a diary " From September 3, 1898, in the waning days of the Victorian era, until his death on November 1, 1942. He claimed that the daily dedication to writing was his way of knowing and constructing himself amid the frustration of being surrounded by "the ennui and philistinism of Rajput and British acquaintances" – writing was an integral part of his being if he was "to keep himself amused." In Susanne Hoeber Rudolph & Lloyd I. Rudolph, Op.Cit., 2002, pp. 4-5 Introduction.

¹⁶ Susanne Hoeber et al., Op.Cit., 2002, pp. 4 -5

Aboriginal or non-indigenous voice and opinion that is given status and validity over the colonised voice. Mostly, as with the work of this thesis, there is the expectation that coloniser missionaries and associates' permission must be sought for any information, and for validation of the stories of Coloureds at Garden Point Mission. Just as Amar Singh was reliant on Tod for information regarding his own cultural traditions and knowledge, there was (and sometimes still is) the same type of pressure and reliance on non-Aboriginal presumptions and knowledge on a wide range of Aboriginal topics and histories for many Aboriginal people in this country. Colonisers are not the ones to be giving credence and voice to any Aboriginal knowledge or history and the Garden Point Mission story has to finally be told without the use of the well-worn western ethnographic interpretation and focus. Sonia Smallacombe emphasises this point in her article in relation to gatekeepers suppressing indigenous voices.¹⁷

Yehuda Bauer in *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective*, while speaking of the effects of the Jewish Holocaust, speaks of mystification as a means to obscure or to make secret, historical events such as the Holocaust. He states that due to the enormity and obscenity of such an event most peoples' minds are incapable of absorbing it. Directly due to this they tend to run away from it, deny it, and "...try to reduce it to shapes and sizes that [they] can cope with...". Bauer also contends that, due to peoples' political or ideological predilections, coupled with their anti-Jewish, or anti-Aboriginal beliefs, are inclined to produce "...denials or obfuscations that are in accord with their prejudices".¹⁸

The mystification of historical events, especially those which caused great trauma to minority and non-white groups, is not unique to the white Australia inert memory. Holocausts have been experienced by others besides Jews in Europe. For example, Poles and Lithuanians too, suffered under similar ethnic cleansing policies. Trauma on a grand scale was visited upon the Jews in the former USSR, Arabs in Israel's

¹⁷ Sonia Smallacombe is Maramanindj from Daly River and is a former Senior Lecturer at Charles Darwin University who is currently recording oral histories of former Garden Point Mission inmates. Sonia is also author of "Accessing Personal and Family Records: Contesting the Gatekeepers", *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, 4, 8, January, 1998, p.4 and other works. Currently at Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, New York

occupied territories, not to forget the invasion of East Timor by Indonesia, and the continued human rights abuses that continue to take place in Papua. This situation has been the case it seems for “...any number of other victims of real or imagined injustices perpetrated all over the globe”.¹⁹

The Holocaust, like the tragedy of the Stolen Generations, remains a blot on the histories of both German and Australian societies. They should not be dismissed as mundane historical events in a continuous time frame of struggle and nation-building. For the above two examples, history is not simply a Jewish or Aboriginal specific history. The Jewish Holocaust history belongs essentially to Germany, and the Stolen Generations history belongs to Australia – all levels of society are involved – some as victims, some as perpetrators, and others as bystanders.

As Zygmunt Bauman pointedly states “The Holocaust was born and executed in our modern rational society, at the high stage of our civilisation and at the peak of human cultural achievement, and for this reason it is a problem of that society, civilisation and culture”.²⁰ This statement is true of the Stolen Generations too - and Australian society, and especially of Australian governments and their assimilation policies. While the trauma caused, was in enclosed, confined historical spaces, responsibility cannot be dismissed simply on those grounds. Denying the reality of events does not make them go away, nor does the self-healing process set out to vanish the memory.

The self-healing of historical memory which occurs in the consciousness of modern society is for this reason more than neglect, offensive to the victims...it is also a sign of dangerous and potentially suicidal blindness.²¹

Theo van Boven²² sums up this historical amnesia, lack of acknowledgment and the ignoring of long-term effects of past policies. The best thing governments can do is

¹⁸ Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1978, p.30 & p.31

¹⁹ Ibid. p.31

²⁰ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cornell University Press, 1992, p 55.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Theo van Boven, University of Limburg, Maastricht, The Netherlands, Special Rapporteur on Victims of the United Nations Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. Van Boven argued that concern for human rights should not be a marginal activity within the UN system, but should become the core element of development strategies on all levels. He sought to break through the selective approach of the UN in human rights matters, and to deal more consistently with the gross violations of human rights...and discrimination against indigenous peoples. [University of Oslo on awarding the Lisl and Leo Eitinger Human Rights prize to van Boven in 2004].

suggested by van Boven :

It is often assured that the passage of time is in itself sufficient remedy against the wrongs people have suffered mentally. In many instances this is a fallacy. Unless proper medical, psychological, social, and material assistance is given over a long period of time, post-traumatic stress may aggravate and generate further victimization.

It is an imperative demand of compassion and justice that we redouble our efforts, nationally and internationally, so as to secure victims more consistently and more widely the rehabilitation and redress they need and they are entitled to...²³

While it may appear that there has been too much emphasis on comparison with the Holocaust, it is important to draw on certain parallels. It is important to note here that most peoples' interpretation of genocide only allows them to analyse it in the context of the Jewish Holocaust. This of course limits their capability of understanding the true meaning of genocide, which in the case of Coloureds and the larger group known as Stolen Generations, most people are unable to see that removal, separation from family, denial of culture and language constitutes genocide as well.

It is also important to point out that anti-Semitism is not the only hateful phenomenon of Christian or western (enlightened) society. This anti-human attitude was directed against all dark-skinned peoples, and to all others who did not conform to set western standards. Anti-Aboriginalism occurred in Australia quite simply because Eurocentric and class rules dictated their compliance. However, there is absolutely no reason or excuse for those attitudes to continue in Australian society today, and yet they do. Some forms of the crime of genocide express the terrifying arrogance that assumes the right to determine which people shall inhabit the Earth. The enactment of that arrogance is always an evil, even when it looks relatively benign beside those forms of genocide that involves mass murder.²⁴

In her controversial article on the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, (*The*

²³ Theo van Boven. In Yael Danieli, Nigel S. Rodley and Lars Weisaeth, (eds.), *International Responses to Traumatic Stress: Humanitarian, Human Rights, Justice, Peace and Development Contributions, Collaborative Actions and Future Initiatives*, Baywood Publishing Co.,USA, 1995

²⁴ Raimond Gaita, "Peace Crimes", *The Weekend Australian*, 5 July, 1997

New Yorker, 1961) Hannah Arendt (1906-1975)²⁵ called genocide a crime against humanity because it is a crime “against the human status.” Her portrayal of Eichmann was as a bureaucrat simply following orders and “doing his duty” rather than like his commander, the raving ideologue anti-Semitic Hitler. Arendt claimed Eichmann represented “the banality of evil” but also that so many Jews would not have suffered and died if other Jews had not collaborated with the Nazis. All collaborators, or those who choose to ignore, or pretend bad things just are not happening, “turn a blind eye” or justify their roles in such aggression and or other acts of tyranny, terror, removal and genocide are equally guilty and may not justify any of their actions or lack of action.

On the Australian frontier there were those Coloured and other Aboriginal individuals who assisted Anglo pioneers, government authorities and Christian missions in carrying out the policies of assimilation and “protection.” There can be no justification for their collaboration. Arendt speaks of the Jewish connection with Nazism, and states that ignorance and non-action can never be justification, and the same must be said in the Anglo-Australian-Aboriginal situation. Missionaries and government officials, and their Aboriginal and Coloured associates all combined to enforce those murderous and/or subversive fantasies of domination as part of the mandate of empire. Western autocracy and embedded racism of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, derived originally from some subterranean source within western society, was soon adopted by Aboriginal people and practiced against their own. There can be no denial of the complicity of Aboriginal people too, in radical evil imperialism and its experiments of “protection” and assimilation. If western Christians had allowed themselves to become a morally bereft and grievously wounded civilisation that denied “human status” to all, then so too had certain Aboriginal individuals and communities. The Australian history book has yet to be written that mirrors the sentiments set out by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen in his book *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (1996).

Lothrop Stoddard²⁶ was one on many early writers who incited racial hysteria by

²⁵ Hannah Arendt, (Russian-Jew) a post-World War II exile who had experienced the horrors of European tyranny. German trained political theorist, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (1951); *The Human Condition* (1958); *Between Past and Future* (1961); *On Revolution* (1968).

²⁶ Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Colour against White World Supremacy*, Charles Scribners’ Sons, New York, 1920 in Henry Reynolds, *Nowhere People*, Op. Cit., p.66

writing about the new biological phenomenon that threatened to overtake the white race. However, the “gentle genocide” of enforced eugenics did not remove the threat entirely and even today, at least one prominent academic is concerned with the twenty-first century version of “the rising tide of colour” albeit from a different source. “Swamped by “the rising tide of colour”...the old Australian dream of a new Britannia in the Southern Ocean is now little more than a faded memory”.²⁷

Historian Tony Austin reaffirms this in his analysis of prominent Northern Territory educator Lampe’s oration on “half-caste” education:

They had long been reviled in Australian society and pushed to the social and economic fringe...The expectation was that, “saved” from the camps of their Aboriginal mothers, brought up to reject their Aboriginal ancestry, they would be given enough of an education – a bit of the 3 Rs but mostly vocational...They must learn to regard themselves as superior to the so-called “full-bloods” – this was declared policy. But they would learn also that white society would not accept them as equals, but merely regarded them as potentially pliable, cheap labour.²⁸

So it was too, that the majority of white men, and their white women, tried to engineer the genetic structure of non-white, and especially “mixed-descent” society. Aboriginal women especially, struggled to fit into the alien white world. They tried to find the happy medium so as they and their children, and husbands and partners could enjoy the benefits of civil society as enjoyed by their European counterparts. They did not resist ‘enforced eugenics’ at that time because they had no alternatives and many saw benefits of being at least on the periphery of white society for the benefits and rights it might afford them in the long run.

The objective when writing such histories and memoirs is not to establish or determine who might be telling the truth, but should be about acknowledgment and respect – of a multitude of voices, of differing texts and interpretations, even different memories. All voices and memories are multivocal and certain voices should not be privileged over others. Such diaries, memoirs and recollections are not exposes, but

²⁷ Professor Andrew Fraser, Chapter Six “Monarchs and Miracles”, Upholding the Australian Constitution, Vol. 17, Conference of the Samuel Griffith Society, Greenmount Beach Resort, Coolangatta, 8-10 April 2005. At: <http://www.samuelgriffith.org.au/papers/html/volume17/v17contents.htm>. Accessed 7 December 2006.

²⁸ Tony Austin, “Lampe’s ‘half-castes’ Aboriginal kids in urban classrooms past and present”, *The 1994 Lampe Oration*, Australian Council for Educational Administration, 1996, p.3

more about sharing, and ultimately about trying to understand a range of issues that depend on a multiplicity of voices. For the colonial subject such narratives are important as they present the opportunity to “reverse the gaze” without setting up retrospective judgement as some may imagine the case to be.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith²⁹ in *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999), implores and at the same time encourages all indigenous writers, historians and others, including government appointed commentators and representatives, to write about their experiences under imperialism and its more specific expression of colonialism. And while Smith says that it is vitally important that indigenous people create their own literature, she emphasises that imperialism “cannot be struggled over only at the level of text and literature.”

Imperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly. Indigenous peoples as an international group have had to challenge, understand, and have a shared language for talking about the history, the sociology, the psychology and the politics of imperialism and colonialism as an epic story telling of huge devastation, painful struggle and persistent survival...’The talk’ about the colonial past is embedded in our political discourses, our humour, poetry, music, story telling and other common sense ways of passing on both a narrative of history and an attitude about history.³⁰

²⁹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Ngati Awa and Ngati Porou, Associate Professor in Education and Director of the International Research Institute for Maori and Indigenous Education at the University of Auckland.

³⁰ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Zed Books Ltd., London, 1999, p.19

PART TWO - IN THE BEGINNING

Chapter Six – Christianity comes to *Australias del Espiritu Sancto* (The South of the Holy Spirit)

Catholic evangelising mandates arose out of the Papal Bulls of 1452 and 1493 and these licenses not only ensured the propagation of the Catholic empire, but gave authority to most dispossessing and genocidal missions carried out under the auspices of exploration and discovery. Many Australian historians are sensitive to the use of the word genocide when descriptions, or comparisons, are made in relation to the destruction of Aboriginal society, whether through government policies or the missionising mandates that depended on government support and finance. However, as the major episodes for these activities took place in what might be described in historical terms as ‘contemporary times’, and especially the Garden Point Mission experience, most of which took place in the post-World War II period when a number of extremely racist segregationist attitudes and policies were still yet to be qualified, such a term is relevant, and applicable. Genocide, according to Raphael Lemkin, who coined the phrase in 1944, and which was adopted by the United Nations, constituted that which included any government policy undertaken with the precise and implicit intention of bringing about the dissolution and ultimate disappearance of a targeted human group.¹ The first Inter Cetera Bull or decree of 1452 was issued by Pope Nicholas V and was sanctioned by Alfonso, the Portuguese king of the time. The 1493 doctrine issued by Pope Alexander VI expressed the Pope’s desire that “barbarous nations be overthrown” and to “propagate the Christian religion”. And while it is recognised that the Catholic Crusaders of Renaissance Europe were not among those invaders of the First Fleet to *terra Australis incognita*, the culture that is overall Christian crusade was well represented all the same, for:

...Europeans already enjoyed the singular advantage of possessing a systematically elaborated legal discourse on colonization. This discourse, first successfully deployed during the medieval Crusades to the Holy Land, unquestionably asserted the normatively divergent non-Christian peoples

¹ Part of what Lemkin stated: “...genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of nation, except when accomplished by mass killing...It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of the essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of personal security, liberty, health, dignity...” Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Washington, DC, 1944, pp.79-95. In Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 2004, p. 3

could rightfully be conquered and their lands could lawfully be confiscated by Christian Europeans, enforcing their peculiar vision of a universally binding natural law.²

The emergence of discourses of crusade, conquest, colonisation and Christianity, and specifically Catholicism, can be traced directly to Roman Catholic archives. A large body of archival information reveals direct links and connections to the Christian Crusades commenced in approximately 1096. For it was around that time that it was deemed necessary to rescue the Holy Land from Saracen and the rest of the infidels. Those archival records also reveal information in regard to the activities of the Renaissance era “discoveries” and subsequent colonising conquests. German historian Otto von Gierke (1841-1921), who wrote many years prior to R.A. Williams Jr., made this comment:

Throughout the whole Middle Ages there reigned, almost without condition or qualification, the notion that the Oneness and Universality of the Church must manifest itself in a unity of law, constitution and supreme government, and also the notion that by rights the whole of mankind belongs to the Ecclesiastical Society that is thus constituted.³

Even though some of the strategies of conquest may have changed in the modern context, especially post-Enlightenment, the evangelising tradition was to get stronger and was to last the length of white colonisation of Australia, that is, 1788 to present. To a large extent, that which both Williams and Gierke detailed remains at the core of western Christian psyche today. Thomas E. Woods Jr.⁴ in his recently released *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization* (2005) adds credence to this proposition as well. John McCloskey in his review of the work compared it to Thomas Cahill’s *How the Irish Saved Western Civilization* (1995) but noted that, while Cahill “writes from a heterodox Christian perspective,” Woods’ writing is based on “historical fact and Church teaching.” However, another might argue that Woods’ work is pro-Catholic and biased. He credits the Catholic Church, the by-product which is Catholicism and the Catholic believers, with establishing the great majority

² R.A. Williams Jr., “The Medieval and Renaissance Origins of the Status of the American Indian in Western Legal Thought”, 57S, *California Law Review* 1, 1983, pp.11-48

³ O.Gierke, *Political Theories of the Middle Age*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge and New York, 1938 – Translated with an Introduction by Frederic William Maitland, pp. 18-19 in R.A. Williams Jr., *The American Indian in Western legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990, p.17

⁴ Thomas E. Woods Jr., *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization*, Regnery Publishing Inc., Washington, DC, 2005; *The Politically Incorrect Guide to American History* (2004)

of the institutions that define the West, and which in turn are shared with the rest of the world. Woods sets out to praise not condemn:

Western civilization stands indebted to the Church for the university system, charitable work, international law, the sciences, and important legal principles...Western civilization owes far more to the Catholic Church than most people – Catholics included – often realize...The Church in fact, built Western civilization.⁵

Catholics such as Father McCloskey and even author Thomas Woods celebrate what they describe as the enormous Jesuit contribution to western science:

The Jesuits were also the first to introduce Western science into...China and India. In seventeenth century China in particular, Jesuits introduced a substantial body of scientific knowledge and a vast array of mental tools for understanding the physical universe, including the Euclidean geometry that made planetary motion comprehensible. Jesuits made important contributions to the scientific knowledge and infrastructure of other less developed nations not only in Asia but also in Africa and Central and South America.⁶

It is reasonable to accept that later-day scientific contributions by other Jesuits and Catholic others might have assisted all humankind. For example, Johnathan Wright, *The Jesuits*, (2004) lists from seismology, pendulum clocks, the theoretical possibility of flight, blood circulation, flood control of rivers and even atomic theory. It is not reasonable though to accept that non-western societies were incapable of doing much without their help. It is also a gross insult, especially in the modern discourse, to speak of such ancient societies as ‘less developed’ when clearly those civilisations had technologies and theories that had sustained them for centuries before the arrival of Jesuits and other Catholic missionaries. The western proposition that all non-western societies were ‘less developed’ and ‘heathen’ and lacking any intellectual tradition is purely that, a western hypothesis. It is also further justification of Christian commitment to “reason and rational argument” for the spread of empire and the stealing of lands from others. Western attitudes, it seems, have not altered much over time.

Britain of the 1700s was not only familiar with similar attitudes, but entrenched in

⁵A Book Review by Father John McCloskey, Thomas E. Woods Jr., *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization*, Regnery Publishing, Washington, 2005. In *National Catholic Register*, September 4-10, 2005, p.9. Online.

<http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/history/world/wh0101.html>. Accessed 14th February 2006

⁶Ibid.

many of these legal and Christian principles, developed in Spain and Papal Rome, that both Gierke and Williams speak of. Britain was more than conversant with aspects of Canon law, and had a strong Catholic nation prior to 1788. Most educated Christians, practising members of different denominational churches and others, were guided by such documents as Vattel's *Law of Nations* also known as *The Law of Nations or the Principles of Natural Law*.⁷

The principles of the *Law of Nations*⁸ were those that instilled and perpetuated the peculiar rights of Christians to take over lands of 'indigenous heathens'. Christians of that earlier period further interpreted "unoccupied lands" as those lands occupied by indigenous peoples but not occupied by European Christians. It was this rationale that guaranteed the subsequent prejudicial and cruel treatment of Aboriginal peoples in Australia. Simply, they did not fit the profile of 'civilised' and Christian peoples, Catholic or otherwise.

According to western interpretations, Nations or States were to be regarded as those which were composed of (white) men (only) who by nature were to remain free and independent now that they had attained a certain level of humanity in civil and organised society. They are always meant to be regarded as free persons living together in the state of nature, within civil society. The dictates of *natural law* guarantees such men liberty and independence and neither may be taken from him without his consent. The contradictions in that interpretation do not require further explanation. When looking at such principles and their interpretations it seems that the only conclusion that may be reached is that Catholic missionary activity was not guided by such. This is especially telling during the early colonising years in the

⁷Emmerich De Vattel (1714-1767) Eighteenth century Swiss jurist whose *Law of Nations* was first translated in English in 1758

⁸ The Law of Nations was introduced in the early Roman Empire and was adapted by early Christians to explain the purpose of the Empire and its conversion to Christianity. "For early medieval Christians, God directed the accrual of power to Rome, so that Christianity, when it occurred, would have a world united under one power so that the religion could more effectively spread. In this, the Christians simply borrowed the Roman concept of the Law of Nations and substituted for this concept the Christian religion itself. This theory of power – that secular power and empire was God's means of spreading Christianity – was the central political theory of power and its practice until the modern age, and it reproduced in the ideology of democratic states and in colonialism. Modern democratic states justify hegemony on the grounds that this hegemony serves the purpose of spreading democracy; colonialism legitimated the appropriation of land, resources, and cultures under the auspices of spreading civilisation to uncivilised countries. All of these concepts derive ultimately from the Roman Law of Nations." – Richard Hooker, *The Law of Nations*, World Civilizations, 1996. Online <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/GLOSSARY/LAWOFNAT.HTM>. Accessed 13 February 2006

region now known as New South Wales. Eugene Stockton's chapter "Maverick Missionaries" in Swain and Rose, *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions* (1988), came to similar conclusions as John Harris in *One Blood*:

The Catholic community has itself been largely apathetic towards Aboriginal people. From the beginning of the colony Catholics have shared the attitudes of most of their fellow Australians about Aborigines: a primitive and degenerate people – pagan and corrupt beyond redemption – incapable of being civilised and Christianised – ignorant and unintelligent – what can you do with them – why can't they be like us...⁹

Peter O'Neil, a convict priest, is the first recorded Catholic missionary to have had contact with Aboriginal people in that colony. During the period 1801-1803, it is claimed:

...he devoted his attention, as far as he was permitted, to the aboriginals (sic) whose state of ignorance he constantly deplored. He instructed many of them in the great truths of religion and led them to abandon their idolatrous practices.¹⁰

It is difficult to understand how Catholic missionary activity ever took hold in Australia when such criticisms have been recorded. Perhaps there were other agendas on the minds of missionising programs as it seems the Law of Nations principles did not readily apply to non-whites. It is important to note that it was not only Catholics that behaved in this dismissive way.

Irish Catholics came to Australia

It must be remembered that most Catholics had arrived in Australia from a nineteenth century Ireland that was undergoing remarkable changes including fluctuations in both wealth and population distribution. Born of the earlier eighteenth century social structure where political power was vested in the hands of the land-owning classes, not dissimilar to the situation in England, and which saw the carving up of provinces into Anglican and Catholic. Ireland, however, had not benefited at all from the Industrial Revolution but had maintained a successful linen industry. Ireland, immediately prior to 1788 was not, as commonly believed, a country in either political or economic crisis. It had undergone an immense population increase during the period 1772 to 1845, and the landed Catholic population had decreased its land

⁹ Eugene Stockton in Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (eds.), *Op.Cit.*, 1988, p.202

¹⁰ Eugene Stockton in Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (eds.), *Op.Cit.*, 1988, p.204

holdings from 90% to just 5% by 1788. Subsequently many petty criminals, mostly Catholic it seems, tried under the English legal system were transported to the new colony of Australia for petty crime theft and perjury as well as other crimes associated with poverty and land disputes. Most would later be described as political deportees and due to this for a long time colonial Australia, Irish nationality, and Catholicism would be associated with subversion and sedition.

As if Aborigines were not problem enough for the newly arrived Christian missionaries, they were to be baffled and angered by these Irish and Catholic convicts as well. Some of that frustration led the Anglican Minister Reverend Samuel Marsden (1765-1838) to remark in 1807:

...the number of Catholic convicts is very great in the settlement; and those in general composed of the lowest class of the Irish nation they are very dangerous members of society. They are extremely superstitious, artful and treacherous. They have no true concern whatever for any religion...but are fond of riot drunkenness and cabals; and was the Catholic religion tolerated they would assemble together from every quarter not so much from a desire of celebrating mass, as to recite miseries and injustice of their punishment, the hardship they suffer and to enflame one another's mind with some wild scheme of revenge.¹¹

English authorities both in the colony and back in England held negative views and attitudes in relation to the Irish Catholics in particular. Some would propose that due to this situation a strong sense of Catholic solidarity developed in the Australian colonies, and later on the wider Australian frontier. It is also perhaps due to this English bias and traditional prejudices that Irish Catholics formed a different solidarity, both social and religious, with many Aboriginal groups throughout Australia. Irish names, history and folklore are as much a part of some Aboriginal culture and folklore as they are part of general Australian culture, folk literature and music. Even today much of the substantial Irish qualities that remain in both mainstream Australian and Aboriginal cultures are attributable in essence, to the influences of the Catholic Church.

Catholics in Sydney

It was not until 1803 whilst under the governorship of Philip Gidley King (1800-

1806) that an Irish priest, the Reverend James Dixon was permitted to conduct limited religious services for Catholics in the Sydney district. The first authorised public Catholic mass in Australia and the first Catholic marriage celebrated in Sydney were both performed by Father Dixon. However, the Castle Hill uprising, just west of Parramatta, saw the withdrawal of such privileges in 1804. Favouritism was shown to Church of England religion in both land and financial support. Even the establishment of the Church and Schools Corporation in 1825, in an effort to set up religious educational institutions among all principle denominations, was not fair in its distribution. Consequently, there was much resentment between the different religious groups and especially in reaction to the monopoly held by Church of England. The Corporation was finally abandoned in 1833. It is evident from this that right from the early days of Christian settlement that land and funding became a political way of keeping major denominations content, yet always separate and also competitive against one another.

From those early beginnings, and at the direction of the Colonial Office in London, it was agreed that the four major Christian denominations were entitled to equal amounts of aid and thus began the corporation of religion in Australia. From a modern perspective it could be said that this earlier practice set the pattern for religion becoming an administrable corporate enterprise. It became, for Catholics and others, a way of accumulating wealth and property through the management of so-called “Aboriginal programmes”, as:

In 1836 the NSW Legislative Council passed an Act to promote the building of churches and chapels and to provide for the maintenance of Ministers of Religion in NSW. The Church Act, as it was commonly referred to, established the legal equality of the principal denominations and guaranteed a reasonable degree of equality funding for these denominations. Government salaries were paid to ministers with a large congregation. The government also undertook to pay [pound for pound] subsidies for capital works such as Churches and schools.¹²

Perhaps this explains why there has been a noticeable connection between Church and State in Australia, although some would argue against this conclusion. It is noted that

¹¹*Historical Manuscripts Commission*, Stopford Stackville, 1, p.248 in C. Ryan, “When Irish Eyes Were Not Smiling”, Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations Inc., (AFFHO). Online at: <http://members.lineet.net.au/~perthdps/affho/0800-07.htm>. Accessed 17 December, 2001

¹²Australian Catholic University homepage. Online <http://www.mcauley.acu.edu.au/staff/simonr/austrel119.htm> Accessed 21 May 2003.

unlike the United States of America, which enshrined in its Constitution of 1787 a distinct separation between Church and State, this did not occur in the Australian Constitution. Therefore one could argue that all liberal democracies have a connection between Church and State and that they have never been truly separate. In the Australian context, in the Aboriginal experience at least, it seems that government had always supported Church in a planned effort to use their institutes and guilds for the purposes of government institutionalism and policy experimentations.

O’Kelly, in his study of Jesuit mission stations in the Northern Territory found: “The Australian church of the late nineteenth-century was far more preoccupied with building schools than thinking about Aborigines.¹³ Nevertheless, assimilation programs soon caught up with the teachings of the Catholic Church in north Australia, and the post World War II period especially, saw a new type of approach to what was well considered at this point in time, as an old problem. It was evident that the Aboriginal population was increasing instead of decreasing – they simply would not die out – instead Aborigines, all on their own it seems, were producing “half-caste” children. Because authorities believed that skin colouration would disappear after a few generations, the thinking of the time was that, isolation and separation would enable the breeding, through acculturation, of a new almost white Australian. By the time Paul Hasluck was ministering the Northern Territory and taking responsibility for its development, he felt it timely, during 1951, to announce a policy of assimilation. This announcement was soon followed by supposed new reforms, to be implemented by the *Welfare Ordinance* and the *Ward’s Employment Ordinance* (1953). The former Chief Protectors were to be phased out, and replaced with a Director of Welfare, who held the same powers as the former. Both terms ‘Aboriginal’ and “half-caste” were, at least officially, replaced with what was considered a “neutral” term, the term “ward”. The Director of Welfare became the “guardian” of all wards, including all those who were placed at Garden Point Mission.

Authorities, with the help of missionaries and Church representatives, including those

¹³ J. O’Kelly, “The Jesuit Mission Stations in the Northern Territory 1882-1899”, unpublished BA Hons thesis, Monash University In Eugene Stockton, 1967, “Maverick Missionaries: An Overlooked Chapter in the History of Catholic Missions”, Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (eds.), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions*, The Australian Association for the Study of Religions: South Australian College of Advanced Education, Sturt Campus, 1988, p.203

at Garden Point Mission, were comfortable in the thought:

Here was a policy based on the assumption of a progression, not of individuals who are thought of as persons and ends in themselves, but as successive stages in a breeding program, from the first half-caste resulting from a liaison which the vigilant authorities (had) been unable to prevent by laws controlling marriage and miscegenation to the disappearance of his descendants into the white community. The full-blood would still 'disappear' but, in the sense that his special physical characteristics would be progressively bred out of his part-Aboriginal descendants.¹⁴

All Aboriginal people, regardless of skin colouration, were thence classified as 'wards' (unless exempted), regardless if they were resident on Aboriginal reserves such as the Tiwi Islands, or elsewhere. As well, all Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory were "liable to a range of legal disabilities and to the exercise of official discretionary powers that had no application to non-Aboriginal people".¹⁵ Further, towards the end of the 1950s, mineral wealth was found to be lying just below the surface "within the hitherto commercially valueless Aboriginal reserve lands".¹⁶

By classifying all Aboriginal people as wards, government authorities not only dispossessed Aboriginal people of family and identity, they also implemented control policies which dispossessed Aboriginal people of their inalienable rights. This occurred further with the invocation of the policy of assimilation. Assimilation was a categorical statement that ensured the dispossession of Aboriginal reserve lands, which would ultimately benefit white economic interests. By handing out the management of many wards to institutions and schools run by Church groups, the government enlisted their practical assistance in carrying out assimilation policies while giving Church interests free reign in their evangelising missions.

¹⁴ M. Gumbert, *Neither Justice nor Reason: A Legal and Anthropological Analysis of Aboriginal Land Rights*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1984, pp.18-20

¹⁵ H. McRae, G. Nettheim, L. Beacroft, *Aboriginal Legal Issues*, The Law Book Company, Sydney, 1991, p. 23

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

PART THREE – THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ON THE NORTHERN FRONTIER

Chapter Seven – Crusades and Conquests

With promises of paradise and gifts of beads and knives
Missionaries, pioneers are soldiers in disguise
Saviors and conquerors, they make us wait
The fishers of men they wave their truth like bait
With a touch of a stranger's hand, Innocence turns to shame
The spirit that dwelt within, now sleeps out in the rain.¹

These few words hardly capture the full impact of Christian activity on the lives and religions of most indigenous societies affected by the Christian agenda. They do go some way to expressing some of the reality of the missionary experience for a great number of Indigenous peoples. Invasions of homelands, indeed nations, subsequent dispossession, first of lands, then of human spirit, coupled with the debilitating collaborative disempowerment strategies employed by colonising authorities and churches alike, can never be fully measured or truly comprehended by those who were (and remain) victims.

Australian writers such as Mary Durack, especially in her work *The Rock and the Sand*, justify the “wonderful work” of Catholic missionaries in north-western Australia, and may also attempt to justify government action by stating that missionaries’ work, “whether inspired or blindly stubborn”:

...was the only evidence the Aborigines had of anything in the nature of consistent altruism within an otherwise ruthless and self-seeking economy...It was for many the only means of survival and their sole reason for regeneration.²

While this conclusion may offer solace to coloniser-settlers, including her own family, who played a significant role in that ruthless and self-seeking economy she speaks of, it is of little comfort to generations of Aboriginal families who were torn apart and severely damaged by experiences at the hands of government authorities, Catholic missionaries and cattle baron emperors. All of the aforementioned failed to recognise that proselytizing mission activities and other behaviours toward Aboriginal peoples were both highly intrusive and inappropriate. They were, and still are, more

¹ “Natives”, composed by Paul Doran – from: *The Rankin Family – Endless Seasons* album, EMI Records, 1996

² Mary Durack, *The Rock and the Sand*, Corgi Books, Australia, 1971, p. 157

inclined to believe that those not attracted to Christian principles, regardless of denomination, are irrational, in error - deluded even, and require 'salvation'.

As mentioned earlier, Christian law, held up by western society in general, is western civilisation's most honoured and sacred instrument of empire. However, for Aboriginal people of an earlier Australian colonial period, it was among the most destructive genocidal instrument of conquest. The social Darwinist view that accompanied that Christian law, especially clung to by government officials on the northern frontier, gave emphasis to the finality of the 'dying race' theme. Attitudes on the frontier were firmly entrenched in the view that this 'race' of people would disappear within a few generations. The attendant philosophy, also mentioned previously, regarding "mixed-descent", "half-caste" or Coloured category, was that they would eventually be absorbed into white or Anglo society – with the help of Christian conversion.

As with indigenous societies the world over, there have been deliberate attempts at genocide either through active government policy or Christian endeavour, or a combination of both. All carried out in the name of the Christian God. In the Native American situation, contact with Spanish Catholics can be traced back to the fifteenth century when Isabella and Ferdinand gave Columbus authority to take possession of the lands of the infidels. To be fair to Columbus, the entire tradition of discovery and conquest was well established long before he set sail for *Los Indios*, but it was his party that was responsible for the beginnings of the dispossession of the lands of Native Americans. The later English-American invaders justified this dispossession under the dubiously named *Doctrine of Discovery*.³ Ward Churchill in *Struggle for the Land: Native North American Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide and Colonization*, (2002), makes the observation that the United States discovery doctrine "has been considered something of a truism" even though America's "vestiture of title" is over a jurisdiction that Americans actually did not discover at all. As Churchill points out, the curious proposition in relation to the discovery doctrine is that:

³ "The Doctrine of Discovery vested in the Crown inchoate rights of conquest and ultimate title to infidel-held territories not yet granted to English American subjects. Thus while imperial policy of the eighteenth century recognized the Indian tribes' rights of occupancy over their lands, under the legal discourse of the proclamation that right was a diminished one. The Crown held the superior sovereign interests in their lands by virtue of "discovery", R.A. Williams Jr, Op cit., 1990, p.229

...unlike Canada, which has always maintained a certain fealty to the British Crown, the U.S. can make no pretense that its own citizenry ever “discovered” any portion of North America.

Further to that false notion of proprietary colony rights:

...the claims of several of the country’s “Founding Fathers” and many of their descendants notwithstanding, did Great Britain transfer its own discovery rights to the insurgent Continental Congress at the conclusion of America’s decolonization struggle. Rather, under the 1783 Treaty of Paris, England simply quit-claimed its interest in what is now the U.S. portion of the continent lying eastward of the Mississippi. ⁴

It is recognised among Indigenous scholars at least that, in Australia, this legalised theft of land was carried out under the fictitiously legal misnomer of *terra nullius* – the English discourse meaning ‘instrument of empire’ and the western translation of dispossession.

As we should all know by now, at least one historical untruth has been exposed and that is the lie of *terra nullius*. The exposure has proved that the land was not unoccupied when the British first landed. The country was in fact, obtained by an act of dispossession and assisted in British law by the assumption that the country was *terra nullius* or empty land. This meant the ‘settlement’ of Australia was to be an

⁴ Ward Churchill, *Struggle for the Land: Native North American Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide and Colonization*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 2002, p. 43. Further explanation from Churchill in regard to the discovery doctrine “Moreover, even had the American republic somehow inherited its former colonizer’s standing as a bona fide discovering power, this would not in itself have conveyed title to the territory in question. Contrary to much popular – and preposterous – contemporary mythology, the medieval “Doctrine of Discovery,” originating in a series of interpretations of earlier papal bulls advanced by Innocent IV during the mid-thirteenth century and perfected by Vitoria and other three hundred years later, did nothing to bestow ownership of new found territory upon Europeans other than in cases where it was found to be *territorium res nullius* (genuinely uninhabited). In all other instances, the Doctrine confirmed the collective title of indigenous peoples to...land – in essence (they held) sovereignty over it – and, (had) right to retain it”, in Churchill (2002), *Ibid.* p.43. For further reference to this interpretation and discussion, and claim to Indian immemorial rights of land, see R.A. Williams Jr., *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (1990); John Taylor, *Spanish Law Concerning Discoveries, Pacifications, and Settlements Among the Indians* (1980); L.C. Green and Olive P. Dickason, *The Law of Nations in the New World* (1989); Mark Frank Lindsey, *The Acquisition and Government of Backward Country in International Law: A Treatise on the Law and Practice Relating to Colonial Expansion*, (1926); W.J. Mommsen and J.A. de Moor, (eds), *European Expansion and the Law: The Encounter of European and Indigenous Law in 19th and 20th Century Africa and Asia*, (1992), also see Frank MacNutt, *Bartholomew de Las Casas*, (1909), especially for the papal bull promulgated by Paul III in 1537, *Sublimis Duis*, wherein which, according to Ward Churchill (2002) the interpretation and understanding, and principles involved in relation to Indian sovereign rights was still being demonstrated by United States courts well into the twentieth century. “In *Deere v. St. Lawrence River Power Company* (32 F.2d 550 (2d Cir. 1929), for example, it was admitted that , “The source of [native] title is no letters patent or other form of grant by the federal government...Indians claim immemorial rights, arising prior to white occupation, and recognized and protected by treaties between Great Britain and the United States and the United States and the Indians (under which) the right of occupation of (their) lands...was not granted, but recognized and affirmed”, in Churchill, 2002, *Ibid.* p.74

experiment in criminology and colonialism, the after effects of which impact on the Aboriginal peoples of the country today.

Currently there is debate among Australian historians and others in relation to, not only the legal interpretation of the term *terra nullius*, but also in regard to when this term may have had valid application as far as interpretations as whether it was, in fact, a dispossessing instrument of empire. Michael Connors' *The Invention of Terra Nullius*,⁵ is not much different in tone to Keith Windschuttle's *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*. Both are tomes supposedly re-examining and re-appraising various aspects of Australian history and earlier colonial British legal language. Just as Windschuttle makes claim that frontier violence against Aboriginal people is fiction writing at best, Connors disputes the validity of the term *terra nullius* and questions its appropriateness and correctness when relating to "the foundation of Australia". Connors claims that "it was never a phrase used in eighteenth or nineteenth centuries", and that it "was only injected into Australian political and legal debate in the 1970s". Andrew Fitzmaurice has presented a good defensive argument in his article aptly titled "Evidence tailored to fit an argument" in the e-journal of social and political debate *Online Opinion*⁶ in which he accuses Connor of "fabricating" his own evidence in explaining his thoughts on the origin of the term *terra nullius*.

These types of arguments as presented by Connor can go around in circles forever, and Windschuttle, Reynolds and a host of others may claim and counter-claim in regard to individual research methods, data, and interpretations. However, they fail to see, or care too much, to consider exactly what real impact *terra nullius* and other such instruments of empire had on the lives and long-term health and status of Aboriginal people. The reality, for Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples alike, is that the term *terra nullius* and legal use of this concept as a dispossessing instrument of empire has a rather long history. The term *terra nullius* was clearly laid out and

⁵ Michael Connor., *The Invention of Terra Nullius: Historical and legal fictions on the foundation of Australia*, Macleay Press, Sydney, 2005

⁶ Andrew Fitzmaurice, "Evidence tailored to fit an argument", *Online Opinion*, <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au> Accessed 17 March, 2006.

legally formalised in an Australian legal case *Attorney-General v. Brown* (1847)⁷ a mere 59 years after the initial British invasion of Australia, even though the term *terra nullius* may not have been used, but clearly for Crown acquisition to take place, the land had to be unoccupied. And while the *Mabo* decision of 1992⁸ was hailed by many as the outright rejection of the concept of *terra nullius*, all members of the High Court (Brennan, Deane, Gaudron, Toohey and Dawson) concluded that irrespective of the presence of Aboriginal people, and their long-time occupation of the continent, and in the absence of negotiated treaties or other arrangements being set in place, Australia was territory acquired by 'settlement'. The concept of *terra nullius*, empty or unoccupied land, was firmly held in place by their decision even though there was some recognition of Aboriginal presence. Britain then, according to the High Court of Australia, acquired sovereignty over a considerable landmass, without negotiating with resident peoples, or recognition of native title at common law, simply by declaring it had been settled. It was resistant to all challenge to that assumed sovereignty even at the handing down of the *Mabo* decision where Brennan, Deane and Gaudron declared that Australian sovereignty could not be challenged in any Australian municipal court. Whilst failing to recognise, or perhaps ignoring the sovereignty,⁹ of resident Aboriginal peoples, the High Court upheld the notion of *terra nullius* by clearly rejecting any recognition of Aboriginal law, and reinstating the widely held notion that Aboriginal people were lacking in social organisation, political knowledge and did not understand land tenure rules, obligations and management.

Likewise, the concept of either *terra nullius* or *res nullius* and its full intent and purpose, in America at least, was clearly understood and enunciated by the Puritans of Plymouth Plantation and at the Massachusetts Bay colony, as early as the 1620s,

⁷ In *Attorney General v Brown* (1847) 2 SCR (NSW) App. 30, a case in which first mention was made in relation to the notion of Aboriginal ownership of land. A coal miner challenged the assertion of Crown ownership of land. Part of the dicta or judicial opinion was that from the inception of the Australian colonies, land was granted to settlers and that "No agreements with or compensation was paid to Aboriginal people, but lands were especially set apart for their benefit". Further interpretation and opinion suggested that land in the New South Wales colony "are, and ever have been, from the time of settlement in 1788, in the Crown". No mention was made of rights of Aboriginal land ownership.

⁸ *Mabo v State of Queensland (No 1)* (1988) 83 ALR 14

⁹ Although, essentially Aboriginal sovereignty was recognised in *Milirrpum v Nabalco* (1971) 17 FLR 141, its scope was seriously limited and could be described as a lesser inherent sovereignty, with extremely limited rights.

when they argued:

...that while native property rights might well be vested in our townsites and fields, the remainder of our territories, since it was uncultivated, should be considered *terra nulli* and thus unowned...¹⁰

While there may have been any number of theoretical disagreements over respective rights of Indians, and use of land by Europeans, the biggest practical reality to be considered at that time was population numbers. Indians outnumbered Europeans for the first several decades so it was deemed both prudent and practicable to enter into trade and land sale agreements. Purchase of land was done by both Dutch and English colonial authorities and governments in agreements and arrangements that identified and recognised Indians as sovereign, therefore, land-owning nations who might enter into legal and financial transactions with potential purchasers. It was toward the early days of the nineteenth century that the demographics changed for both Indians and European settlers alike:

One result was that the potential of invoking the Norman Yoke in combination with the broader notion of *res Nullius* began to be rethought. In terms of international law, the principle eventually found expression in the observation of jurist Emmerich de Vattel that no nation holds a right to “exclusively appropriate to themselves more land than they have occasion for, or more than they are able to settle and cultivate.”¹¹

It is important to note Ward Churchill’s observations in relation to that term *res nullius*, and American application of such as instrument of empire. He claims that one of the tracks that the United States proceeded along revealed “glaring, deliberate and systematic falsification of indigenous demography”. This meant that pre-invasion population numbers were dramatically reduced so as, according to Churchill a figure of less than a million was presented and “recorded” when he claims the figure was close to 12.5 million, perhaps even as large as 18.5 million. Churchill relies on Euroamerican historians and anthropologists such as Francis Jennings (*The Invasion*

¹⁰ Ward Churchill, Op. Cit. 2002, p. 46

¹¹ Ibid. p.47. Ward Churchill’s reference to Vattel’s (*Law of Nations*) notion is important to note: “This was not one of Vattel’s more tenable positions. If settlement and cultivation were actually employed to determine the quantity of land nations “have occasion for,” the territoriality of Canada, Australia, Brazil, Russia and several other countries would be immediately diminished by more than half. Nothing in the formulation admits to the legitimacy of speculative acquisition such as the U.S. engaged in the nineteenth century, or of current policies “banking” land against anticipated future needs. By the same token, no nation would be able to maintain commons such as national wilderness areas, wildlife preserves, military training areas and so forth, on pain of losing the right to possess them. Nor does Vattel’s overall system of legal equity allow for the application of one set of standards to indigenous nations, another to settler-states.” In Ward Churchill, Notes, Op. Cit., 2002, p.76

of America: Indians, Colonialism and the Cant of Conquest, 1975), Henry F. Dobyns (*Their Number Became Thinned: Native American Population Dynamics in Eastern North America*, 1983) and Russell Thornton (*American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492*, 1987), among others. Anne Waters¹² suggests this:

When newcomers came to the Americas, Indigenous peoples were seen as lacking any rights to self-determination. This belief was based upon hegemonic religious and political theories of manifest destiny that newcomers brought with them. King Ferdinand's speech to the Arawak upon arrival in the Americas in 1492 clearly articulates the allegedly justified psychological, political, and physical powers of taking.¹³

The application of *res nullius* has clear legal definition in, for example, what is known as the *Rainbow Bridge Case*,¹⁴ which was heard and deliberated on in 1981 or the *G-O Road Case*, 1988.¹⁵ From the 1950s, it was clear that Indians were required to demonstrate their "ownership" or title to land, so that by the 1980s it was clear that even when the United States clearly recognised that land title was clear and apparent, further proof of ownership was required, and even if proven, the government could make decisions in relation to those titles, regardless of evidence of proof of title. In both above-mentioned judgments, the consistent rule was that the United States courts held that the "broader interests" of (Anglo) settler society outweighed the rights and needs of Indian owners. In short, Indian owners of the lands involved in the aforementioned cases, could not make decisions in relation to their use. These examples, and others that deal with treaty deals, for example, *U.S. v Dann*,¹⁶ could be declared *res nullius*, and deemed vacant lands even if Indians were living on it. Such is the power of *res nullius*:

As seen in the histories of confederacies in pre-colonial America, Indigenous being is also political. Non-Indigenous communities' traditional political, colonial, and legal lines of demarcation among nation states, countries, or even continents, which define where any particular place begins or ends, are merely historical abstract lines drawn (on a globe) and enforced by militarised nation states. To reflect upon currently established international (and national) global borders is to reflect upon a history of hegemonic and genocidal colonial self-

¹² Anne Waters, "Indigeniety, Self-determination and Sovereignty" in Barbara A Hocking (ed.), *Unfinished Constitutional Business: Re-thinking Indigenous Self-determination*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2005

¹³ Ibid. p.197

¹⁴ *Badoni v. Higginson*, 638 F.2d (10th Cir. 1980) cert. denied, 452 U.S. 954 (1981).

¹⁵ *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association*, 485 U.S. 439 (1988).

¹⁶ *U.S. v. Dann*, 470 U.S. 39 (1985).

determination exercised by historically ruthless monarchies of church and state against Indigenous peoples. It is to reflect upon artificial separations of land use that bear no relation to sacred ontological place, or the place of humans on the land.¹⁷

And so too is the power of *terra nullius* in the Australian context.

When it was realised that Aboriginal peoples were permanent occupants of the country, and when it was realised that they were not going to simply disappear, Australian governments set about introducing policies as well as geographical boundaries to deal with this quandary. However, many of the policies are coming back to haunt present-day governments and Australian society in general, and by far one of the worst nightmares is the policy history of the Stolen Generations. The overall history of policy designed specifically for Aboriginal peoples can be divided into four principal periods. These dates are not clearly defined, as policy changed at different times in individual Australian states meaning that more accurate time frames for each major policy is not possible and there are phase overlaps. This factor also reflects the complexity of the process.

- (1) initial contact – 1788 onwards
- (2) protection period – 1860 – 1930 (approximately)
- (3) assimilation period – 1930 – 1972
- (4) integration with limited self-management; on-going colonialism (present)

Both Christian law terms mentioned above were born of various legal and theological doctrines formulated during that time immediately following the Christian Crusades. For this is the time when it was decided that indigenous peoples were enemies of the Catholic faith, and as such, were considered less than human and therefore had no rights to lands, indeed at times, to life.

In 1863, the Northern Territory was placed under the control of the colony of South Australia. By 1890 many “half-caste”, “mixed-race” children were being born, thus posing problems (especially) for their white fathers, but also for white bureaucracy. Although it has been recorded that some Aboriginal women were willing sexual partners of white and other non-Aboriginal men, many more were usually abused and or exploited. By 1909 the growing population of “half-caste” children had numbered

¹⁷ Anne Waters, Op. Cit. p.197

approximately 2000, and as was recorded “of whom one-third were females of child-bearing age”.¹⁸

The Coalition of the Willing – Australian frontiersmen, mercenaries and missionaries and their crimes against humanity

The black history of Australia is ‘black armband’ history. It is about destruction of society, it is about dispossession, it is about killing, rape, massacre, child abuse (sexual and other physical violence), it is about genocide. It is about trauma on a grand scale not dissimilar to what has been suffered by other indigenous and ethnic groups around the world, at the hands of ‘civilised’ invaders and so-called settlers. The only differences being choice of language; as for example in the Jewish situation. The policies implemented in the Jewish situation were known as the policies of ‘resettlement’. But in Australia, in relation to Aboriginal people, they were known as policies of ‘removal.’ However, terminology did not alter the intent of the purpose, which was to carry out the forced expulsion of groups of people from their original or long-time homelands, in an effort to destroy their culture.

Past injustices against Aboriginal peoples has been mostly ignored by mainstream Australia, and it is only with the occasional statements by such people as Justice Marcus Einfeld that the press ever record anything of interest in relation to Aboriginal issues. Einfeld is among a small proportion of Australian people who recognises past injustices and acknowledges that passages of Australian history contain stories, such as those telling of the Stolen Generations. He is also one of a very small handful who publicly expresses his views in regard to this issue. He is careful to state that reviews of Australian history in regard to Aboriginal peoples is not about apportioning fault or blame and adds that present generation Australians should not be blamed for the sins of the past.

Einfeld recalls his early adulthood and university years – a time when John Howard too was building his career and profile. He speaks of the evil directed towards Aboriginal peoples that was actually taking place during those years.

During our early adulthood we actually voted for governments who carried it [policy]out. Whatever one can say of the past generations who conceived and

¹⁸ Tony Austin, “The Starved Intellect, the Starved Spirit in a Starved Body. Some Preliminary Findings about Mission Education for Aborigines in South Australia’s Northern Territory, *Northern Perspectives*, Vol. 9, 1, 1986, pp.13-31

executed this policy, there is no excuse for my and John Howard's generation having turned a blind eye to the fact that it was happening while we were happily building our own careers and laying the foundation of our own prosperity. And I am ashamed of myself for having let it occur without my effective protest. If that is a black armband view of history, I willingly wear it in recognition of truth, sorrow and commitment to reconciliation. Rather an armband than a white blindfold to shut out the truth.¹⁹

¹⁹ The Honourable Justice Marcus Einfeld, "The New International Order: The Human Dimension", *Background Briefing*, Sunday 12 October, 1997 – Radio National transcripts

PART THREE – THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ON THE NORTHERN FRONTIER

Chapter Eight – Civilising the North

The sad truth is, that the neighbourhood of white men, instead of being the proof and illustration of Christianity, is a scandal and an anti-Christ. The Fathers of the Council...desire solemnly to lay upon the conscience of all who have property in these colonies the thought that there is blood upon their land, and that human souls, to whom they are in so many ways debtors, in the name of natural justice, and in the name of the Redeemer, are perishing because no man cares for them.

Catholic Bishops of Australia¹

Catholics come to the Territory

Catholic territorial boundaries were first put into place after Archbishop John Bede Polding,² first Archbishop of Sydney had appointed Father John Brady as the first priest to the Swan River colony in Western Australia. Father Brady found the task of evangelising the entire state of Western Australia too onerous a task so he went to Rome to seek assistance and advice. His visit to Rome resulted in meeting with the “Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide”. It was while on this trip to recruit more help that Father Brady presented a memorandum to the Cardinals of the Congregation, on how best to divide up Australia in an effort to facilitate the objectives of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide.

However, Archbishop Polding presented what he believed a well-considered plan immediately after Father Brady’s memorandum. This plan was to change some of the diocese boundaries suggested by Brady’s memorandum. Perhaps, naturally, Polding’s plan held more weight and was officially approved by Pope Pius IX in 1847.

¹ “Organisations of the Catholic Church Known to have cared for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Children Separated from their families”, p.6 at <http://www.acswe.org.au/ATSIC/ATSIC4HTM>. Accessed 26 February 2000.

² Archbishop John Bede Polding arrived in Sydney in 1835 to take the position as head of the Catholic Church in Australia. By 1840 Polding expressed concern at the little his Church was offering to Aboriginal peoples of Australia, who he believed were amenable to aspects of conversion, if isolated from Europeans: “I have felt sincere and deep regret for not having a priest to devote to the conversion of the savage nations. I am convinced by my own experience that the faith would easily spread among the tribes which are removed from all intercourse with Europeans, with whom any contact is commonly a source of corruption. These savages, the object of so much contempt, appear to be intelligent, cheerful and very deserving. I have had from time to time the opportunity of seeing them, and when I speak to them of religion, I find it very easy to make them comprehend...” Polding to Central Council for the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, Lyons, 10 January 1840 in O’Thorpe, *First Catholic Mission to the Aborigines* (1950).

Subsequently, soon after the Catholic Church was established at Port Essington by Don Angelo Confalonieri.³ Don Angelo was one of the missionaries recruited by Father Brady while he was in Rome. Born at Riva on Lake Garda, Italy, he travelled from Fremantle via Sydney to the Northern Territory by ship. The party, including the two young Irish Catechists, met with disaster in the Torres Strait and the two young men were drowned in the shipwreck. Confalonieri survived and after being picked up by a passing ship, continued on his journey to Port Essington.⁴

It was from this time that the Catholic Church had its true beginnings in the Northern Territory and that which is known in Catholic terms as a Vicariate Apostolic was established at Port Essington. Being shipwrecked was one of many challenges to be faced by Don Angelo, for when he arrived at Port Essington he found that the settlement was under the command of Captain McArthur, a fervent Presbyterian. His conversion activities it seems were to concentrate on local Aborigines. While it may not be officially recorded as such, his first contact would possibly have been with Iwaidja people of the Coburg Peninsula region. This is significant because it is this same group that was to have some influence on the nearby Tiwi at other stages of interaction, including the missionary activity at Garden Point Mission.⁵

Don Angelo spent time and considerable energy in learning the local language and translating some Catholic prayers into the Iwaidja language. He died in 1848 after only two years at the settlement and was buried at Coburg Peninsula. Shortly after 1849 the British garrison abandoned the settlement and only a few European miners remained in the area. Around the same time some European explorers such as Stuart, Leichhardt and Gregory travelled across the region and reported back to South Australia, mainly in unfavourable terms about this northern part of the continent. It was not until 1869 that the British and other European people, mostly re-settling from southern states, firmly established a permanent settlement at what is now known as Darwin.

³ Angelo Bernado Confalonieri (1813-1848). After recruitment by Father Brady, he volunteered to work at Coburg Peninsula; was given the equivalent of one thousand English pounds by the Propagation of the Faith Society in Lyons and assigned two Irish Catechists, James Fagan and Nicholas Hogan before setting off to Australia to work with "the Aborigines".

⁴ The Catholic Encyclopedia, On line, New Advent – the largest Catholic website launched in 1997. <http://www.newadvent.org/cather/index.html> Accessed 26 February 2000

⁵ As mentioned in relation to Joe Cooper's relations with Iwaidja people and his use of interpreter

However, the Catholics of the new frontier were unattended until 1882 when the first Jesuit priests, some Irish and some European people from Austria-Hungary, arrived on the ship *Indus*. The new Catholic missionaries commenced their first services to the residents of Darwin in premises in Bennett Street. At the same time the priests surveyed a site at Rapid Creek, where they quickly established a mission for the Aboriginal people who lived there. It is not recorded if this group were the traditional owners of the greater Darwin area, the Larrakia people. In informal conversations with Larrakia Elders and others, the opinion was that there was a small population of Tiwi people who frequently travelled between the Tiwi Islands and the beaches of now-known Mindil, Casuarina and Rapid Creek. Also in old Darwin Aboriginal folklore there are stories about interaction with Tiwi and mainland Aboriginal groups, especially Larrakia. Tiwi and Larrakia tell stories of the coming to Darwin mainland beaches to perform ceremonies and burials, from the greater Darwin area to the area known as Buffalo Creek. Rapid Creek is still a significant meeting place for Larrakia.⁶

Bishop John O'Loughlin's history of the Rapid Creek Catholic Mission nominates peoples of the "Larrakeyah" and the "Woolnas" as being the people mostly administered by the Jesuit priests. He also mentions that Chinese people were also in the region but does not mention if they converted to the Catholic faith. He did however, observe that:

Darwin...has always been a pretty rough place but it was very rough in those days. There were many Chinese about as well as people of European descent. We have marijuana and heroin, they had opium and it wasn't long before some Aborigines became addicts of opium in Darwin and of course it was a hopeless task to try to deal with them. They had very nomadic habits and the Jesuit Fathers decided that there was no future in their mission at Rapid Creek and they went off to the Daly River.⁷

When O'Loughlin mentions the nomadic habits of the Aborigines he could not have been speaking of the Larrakia, as they have always lived, and still do live in the Darwin region. Their association with both the Darwin region coastline and some of

service whilst at Melville Island and Port Essington. p. 188

⁶ Personal communication with several Larrakia people during a lifetime of listening to Larrakia stories, some of which are verified in the Sam Wells, (ed.), *Saltwater People: Larrakia Stories from Around Darwin*, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, Casuarina, N.T., 2001; recent Native Title hearings, Federal Court, Darwin, and observation and participation as a Larrakia supporter in the Kenbi Land Claim.

⁷ John O'Loughlin, MSC, "The History of the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory", *Occasional paper No.2*, Library Services of the Northern Territory, 1986, pp.3-4

the inland areas as far south as the Manton Dam area is unquestionable among all Aboriginal peoples of this region of the Northern Territory, including the Tiwi. The Larrakia consistently maintain they should hold native title over vast estates, which stretch over great distances and they continue to fight for recognition as the traditional owners of this region.

Larrakia lands also include the Cox Peninsula, most of Gunn Point and much of rural Darwin. Darwin Harbour is also recognised as being within ‘Larrakia country’...[the] boundaries extend about fifty kilometres inland...⁸

Territorial Boundaries (1830s) and setting the boundaries in place (1863)

The region which was to become the Northern Territory of Australia was annexed by the New South Wales colonial authority to the colony of South Australia on 6 July 1863 – a mere 75 years after the initial invasion of the eastern seaboard. This region, mostly entirely within the tropical region of northern Australia, was later to be designated as the Northern Territory. It comprises approximately 523,620 square miles, almost all of which was classified as Crown land. Early population counts almost always excluded Aboriginal people. Frequently there were only rough estimates done in relation to counting of Aboriginal people generally, and usually only of those who were more visible. The Catholic Church arrived relatively late to this northern frontier and we must rely on information from the Catholic Encyclopaedia for a brief early ecclesiastical history of those early days.

Benedictines and Jesuits for Port Victoria and Palmerston (1847-1892)

A Sacred Congregation decree of 27 May 1847 established the “Diocese of Port Victoria and Palmerston” supposedly to service the spiritual needs of the very small European population residing in that region and surrounds. Benedictine Joseph Serra O.S.B., consecrated at Rome on 15 August 1848, was appointed to the yet to be established diocese. However, Serra did not take up the appointment instead he became administrator of the Diocese of Perth in 1849, where he continued to work until his retirement in 1861, dying in Spain in 1886.⁹

Rosenda Salvado O.S.B., consecrated at Naples on 15 August 1849, was supposed to

⁸ Sam Wells (ed.), *Satlwater People: Larrakia Stories from around Darwin*, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, Casuarina, N.T., 2001, p.v. Preface

⁹ “Northern Territory”, The Catholic Encyclopedia, On line, New Advent – the largest Catholic website

take up the Northern Territory position as Serra's replacement, but according to Catholic reports, the entire European population had abandoned the diocese he was meant to service. Consequently, he was ordered to return to the Benedictine Abbey of New Norcia, Western Australia. Catholic records indicate he returned to reside at New Norcia as *abbot nullius*, resigned as See of Port Victoria in August 1888 and was appointed "titular" Bishop of Adrana in March 1889.¹⁰

According to Tony Scanlon, Salvado was one of few sympathetic observers and writers who did not denigrate "the moral and spiritual worth" of Aboriginal people. Scanlon claims that Salvado was different to most who dismissed corroborees as "lewd" or "offensive"; Aboriginal ritual characterised as a "sorcery" or "demonic magic" and the spirit ancestors as "debil-debils"; Aboriginal customary law as "outrageous", "barbaric" or "cruel".¹¹ Tony Scanlon is one of the rare authors who does not attempt to endorse the missionary descriptions and who recognises that there were few missionaries who saw Aboriginal peoples sacred spirituality as being relevant.

Around 1882 Jesuits of the Austrian province were commissioned by Rome "to establish a mission for the purpose of civilising and converting the aborigines"¹² and some sixteen members of the order "devoted themselves to the work".¹³ Jesuit

launched in 1997, <http://www.newadvent.org/cather/index.html>. Accessed 26 February 2000

¹⁰ George Russo in his book on the missionary Rosenda Salvado, gives an everlasting image of this man, as he stepped ashore at Fremantle on 7 January 1846: "...clad in the black habit of a Benedictine monk which he had worn throughout the voyage...he was thirty-two years old. He was short, but well knit and robust, with dark hair, already receding from his lofty forehead, and a thick black untrimmed beard. The eyes, large, expressive and powerful, were more than striking, giving the impression of a strong, determined nature. He appeared to be physically brave and well fitted for pioneering life...his disposition was kind and he had a cheerful temperament." George Russo, *Lord Abbot of the Wilderness: The Life and Times of Bishop Salvado*, The Polding Press, Melbourne, 1980. In John Harris, *One Blood*, Op.Cit., 1990, p.280

¹¹ Tony Scanlon, " 'Pure and Clean and True to Christ': Black Women and White Missionaries in the North", *Hecate*, Vol. XII, Nos. 1/2., 1986, p. 85

¹² *The Catholic Encyclopedia Volume XI: (Northern Territory)*: Includes references: *Missiones Catholicae* (Rome 1907); *Australasian Catholic Directory* (Sydney), 1910; GORDON, *Australasian Handbook for 1891*; BASEDOW, *Anthropological Notes on the North-Western coastal tribes of the Northern Territory of South Australia in Trans.*, Proc. And reports of the Royal Society of South Australia, XXXI (Adelaide, 1907, 1-62); PARSONS, *Historical account of the pastoral and mineral resources of the North Territory of South Australia in Proc. Of the Royal Geog. Soc. Of Australasia, South Australian Branch*, V (Adelaide, 1902), appendix, 1-16; HOLTZ, *Capabilities of the Northern Territory for tropical agriculture* (Adelaide, 1902), appendix, 17-27. ANDREW A. MACERLEAN – Transcribed by Joseph E. O'Connor. Online at: <http://www.newadvent.org/cather/11115a.htm>. Accessed 26 February 2000

¹³ *Ibid.*,

“stations” were established at St. Joseph’s at Rapid Creek, Holy Rosary at Daly River and Sacred Heart of Jesus at Serpentine Lagoon. Catholic records indicate that modest beginnings saw the establishment of two churches, one chapel and two mixed schools although it does not identify which missions or stations had these buildings. While it is not clear what was meant by “mixed schools” it was recorded that by 1891 there were 260 Catholics “in the mission,” and one may only guess that Aboriginal converts were not included in this count. Once again no individual mission was identified although one would surmise that the majority number may have been at the Rapid Creek location as it was closer to the bigger European settlement at Port Darwin.¹⁴

In 1892 the Jesuit missionaries were able to secure land at Daly River from the government for use as an “Aboriginal farm”. The Jesuits did not have much success at any of the missions they established and had all but withdrawn from the Northern Territory within twenty years of the commencement of their missionary activity. Jesuits Father John O’Brien, S.J., and Father Strehle took up administration of the Rapid Creek mission until they were relieved by Bishop William Kelly from Geraldton in Western Australia. Some claimed that the Rapid Creek mission was closed because of its close proximity to the main township of Port Darwin, and that a decision had been made to concentrate the missionary activity to Daly River because of its isolation. One can only assume that this decision meant a change in direction for the missionaries wherein their priority became centred on conversion of Aboriginal people instead of providing pastoral care for white settlers.

The Tiwi Islands

The Tiwi people are the resident Aboriginal people of the Melville and Bathurst islands region. Their name for the mission site at Garden Point is Pularumpi. The area is sometimes still referred to, mostly by non-Aboriginal people, as Fort Dundas.¹⁵ As noted by Peter Elder in his work¹⁶ the establishment of a military post at this location, with the firepower directed seaward, was in an effort to deny intrusion and subsequent

¹⁴ Port Darwin was “discovered” by Lieutenant John Lord Stokes and named by Captain J.C. Wickham whilst travelling on the *HMS Beagle* in 1839. Wickham named the port after Charles Darwin who had sailed in the area in the *Beagle* on an earlier occasion. In 1869 it was renamed Palmerston but in 1911 reverted to Darwin.

¹⁵ The original naming of Fort Dundas was after Henry Dundas, the first Viscount Melville and Head of the Admiralty at the time of the first British visits to the Tiwi Islands.

possession by other maritime European forces. German political and commercial interests also meant:

...the earlier British presence in northern Australia was to forestall Dutch and French encroachments into places where the flag had been raised over various fortified encampments. These defensive positions were established on the Tiwi Islands and the Coburg Peninsula at Fort Dundas in 1824, Raffles Bay in 1827, where there was a slaughter of Aboriginal men, women and children in December of that year by the military occupants, and at Fort Victoria/Port Essington in 1838.¹⁷

Elder claims that the initial establishment of the northern fort at Fort Dundas/Pularumpi was not to be seen as a deliberate act of dispossession but that the primary objective of the military was the protection of northern sea lanes. Lenore Coltheart makes further claims that settlement by colonists was also not the primary purpose of the post. Even though the commandant of nearby Port Essington, James John Gordon Bremer had suggested to British home office to open up the land for sale, it was to be regarded primarily as a military stronghold "...alienation was not sanctioned by the Colonial Office".¹⁸

Regardless of those claims by Elder, Coltheart and the British Colonial Office, possession of land and thereby dispossession and annihilation of resident peoples commenced. It commenced with the "pacifying" of local Aboriginal people at Escape Cliffs in 1866. Fort Dundas was deemed uninhabitable as the overall landscape was found to be unsuitable for non-Aboriginal habitation. As noted by Coltheart the very land that was to be protected against other imperial invaders "was unhealthy, harsh, desolate, forsaken".¹⁹

Nevertheless, formal dispossession took place in 1863 when the South Australian government was successful in its persuasion of the Colonial Secretary in London to annexe 80,000 square miles of the Northern Territory from the responsibility of New South Wales authority. The *Northern Territory Act* of 1863 was designed to make

¹⁶ Peter Elder, "The Inner Logic of Dispossession: Land Acquisition in the Northern Territory and Papua", *Journal of Northern Territory History*, 2000

¹⁷ Ellen Kettle, *Health Services in the Northern Territory – a History 1824-1970*, p. 11. In Peter Elder, *Op.Cit.*, 2000, p.5

¹⁸ Lenore Coltheart, "Australia Misere: The Northern Territory in the Nineteenth Century", PhD Thesis. Griffith University, Brisbane, 1982, p.24

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 58

land available for sale mostly for realtors in South Australia and London even though most sections, including the Tiwi Islands had already been deemed unsuitable for white settlement. However, it was difficult for British colonists to accept that the vast area of the Northern Territory was “in the sole possession of hordes of savages”.²⁰ Dispossession did occur in the very early days of British settlement and it was wide-sweeping and exact when the vast Australian landmasses, including the Tiwi Islands, were deemed to be the property of the Crown:

The 1865 *Colonial Laws Validity Act* not only denied legal appeal to Aboriginal title but also left unanswered the moral question of how arbitrary appropriation of Aboriginal land could remain outside the law.²¹

Tiwi People

Nine distinct clans of Tiwi people lived on the two islands, Bathurst and Melville. According to the several studies carried out on the Tiwi by notable anthropologists such as Klaatsch (1904, 1905, 1906), Hart in the late 1920s and Stanner and Elkin in the later years similar conclusions in regard to the Tiwi were reached. That conclusion found that due to the geographical location of the Tiwi Islands, and also due to their relative isolation at the time, a special structure of society developed that had not been seen on the mainland. As well, these and other observers decided that “...the Tiwi did very little as a united people and so there was little or no need for a strong central government”.²² Further observations, included notes from the Police Inspector Paul Foelsche during 1882-83, which stated that prior to B.T. Finniss arriving at Escape Cliffs in 1864 “...the Melville Island natives occasionally visited the mainland for the purposes of stealing lubras”.²³

In addition, according to C.W.M. Hart and A.R. Piling in their 1960 publication, *The Tiwi of North Australia*:

...the central position of power and authority was held by an elderly man, usually the father and/or husband...Although each group was a distinct unit in domestic matters, it was in no sense a separate political entity, for the politics of marriage and the prestige system in Tiwi society precluded any such strict

²⁰J.G. Knight, (ed.),*The Northern Territory of South Australia*, E.Spiller, Government Printer, Adelaide, 1880, p.10

²¹ Peter Elder, Op.Cit, 2000, p.3

²² Valda Krastins, *The Tiwi: A cultural contact history of the Australian Aborigines on Bathurst and Melville Islands 1705-1942*, BA Hons. Thesis, ANU, Canberra,1972, p.5

²³ Ibid.

definitions.²⁴

It was into this environment that the French Catholic Francis Xavier Gsell arrived at Bathurst Island in 1911. Gsell was disturbed to find that local Tiwi women not only “willingly or otherwise” marry Iwaidja men employed on Melville Island, but that they “...infrequently co-habited with Maccassar-men, and at least one woman sailed to Macassar and married there”.²⁵ C. Price Conigrave in his 1936 book, *North Australia*, stated it was because of Joe Cooper, buffalo shooter/adventurer:

...largely due to his influence among the once wild aboriginals that it became possible...for a Mission Station to be established by the Roman Catholic authorities on the south-eastern end of Bathurst Island.²⁶

It must be noted that most white settlers and others, were not too constrained by either rules of their own society, or simple courtesies and protocols of any kind, during these early days of white settlement of the Northern Territory. For those who grew up in the Territory, stories abound with tales of lawlessness on the frontier and of some of the larger than life characters, some who became later-day legends. Most of the stories from this area told of Joe Cooper, involving accounts about Aboriginal women as well as guns and violence. Cooper was well-known for his use of guns to settle disputes around the Coburg Peninsula region and some of his antics resembled the actions of the legendary men of the “Wild West” of the United States of America. A description and often used term of such men and other frontier characters was the term “carpetbagger” and it was these men that Francis Xavier Gsell was said to quieten down and control somewhat.

In the *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography*, Volume One, it is claimed that Joe Cooper took an Iwaidja woman named Alice (some descendants believe she was Tiwi, or at least had some genealogical links to Tiwi)²⁷ as his “wife” who “he had married by Aboriginal custom in about 1890”.²⁸ It is claimed that in the early 1890s Joe Cooper:

²⁴ CWM Hart & AR Piling, *The Tiwi of North Australia* (1960). In Valda Krastins, Op.Cit., 1972, p.9

²⁵ Rev. J.O’Carrigan & John Morris, *Christian Marriages and Family Life on Bathurst Island*, 1964, p.1. Also see: J.F.Murphy, “Bathurst Island: A Mission Station for the Aborigines”, *Australia*, Mar. 1920. Typescript and photocopy held by AIATSIS; AA 20/2153 National Archives of Australia.

²⁶ C. Price Conigrave, *North Australia*, Cape: London, 1936, p.152

²⁷ In conversation with Sally Abala McDowell – great-granddaughter of Joe and Alice Cooper – Darwin, September, 2004 [Notes: SS/SAM - # 3]

²⁸ David Carment, Robyn Maynard, Alan Powell (eds) *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography, Volume One: To 1945*, NTU Press, 1990, p.61

...kidnapped four Tiwi from Melville Island and returned with them to the Port Essington area, where reciprocal Tiwi/Iwaidja language training was undertaken.²⁹

Cooper, his wife Alice, son Reuben, and brother George Henry (but known as Harry), returned to Melville Island in 1905, and it was at this time that the legend of “King Joe” or “Jokupa” began to take shape, amongst Aboriginal and white people alike. There are very different recollections and stories in regard to Joe Cooper and his band of men, and mostly he has been described by white historians as treating Aboriginal people of the region with fairness and kindness. However, Cooper was also known for his aggressive behaviours toward some Aboriginal people on the Top End frontier, and “he rarely left his camp unarmed”:

...Bathurst Islanders were being threatened by Joe Cooper’s Iwaidja buffalo shooters...Christopher (Foxy) Tipungwuti reported that Father Gsell was initially regarded as a potential protector, which explains why the Tiwi allowed him to land and build a hut...[They]...nicknamed him “Tirninia” of “Whiskers”, and observed him perform a new kind of corroboree as he celebrated his first mass at his camp on June 8 1911.³⁰

Cooper’s camp was at Paru, Melville Island, and he was not happy with the arrival of the Catholic missionary. It was established that there would be a conflict of interests, however they were able to negotiate different boundaries, and Gsell’s ultimate decision was to move to Bathurst Island. Gsell was quick to get official sanction and to establish church authority on the island. He was rewarded for his efforts in 1910 when “the then South Australian Minister for the Northern Territory, W. J. Denny, proclaimed Bathurst Island a native reserve”.³¹ Ten thousand acres of the south eastern tip of Bathurst Island was granted to Gsell, with support from the Administrator of the Northern Territory, John Gilruth.³² to establish a mission for Aboriginal people. Gilruth claimed Professor Baldwin Spencer, first Commonwealth appointed Protector of Aborigines, as a colleague and a friend. Cooper also enjoyed an association with Spencer, “who stayed with him while studying the Aborigines in 1911 and 1912”.³³ Cooper was subsequently appointed Melville Island’s Honorary Sub-Protector of Aborigines in 1911. Part of his responsibilities were to manage and care for those mainland Aboriginal people addicted to opium and alcohol, and people

²⁹ Ibid.,

³⁰ David Carment et al., *Op Cit.*, p.61.

³¹ Bathurst and Melville Islands were proclaimed as an Aboriginal Reserve on 4th December 1912.

³² John Gilruth (1871-1937) first Administrator of the Northern Territory (term in office 1912-1919)

authorities did not want in Darwin.

The Tiwi Islanders have had a long contact history with many peoples, long before Catholics and other visiting Australians, in the contemporary period. The Dutch visited the islands around 1705. The Portuguese obviously had contact as it has been recorded that the first British invaders heard some Tiwi using Portuguese words of greeting. The Macassans probably had a much older, but unrecorded (in western journals) contact history. As C.C. Macknight in his book, *The Voyage to Marege*³³ explains:

Australia's first modern industry was trepang. It was conducted by brown-skinned Muslims...Most were in fact Macassarese, a distinct linguistic and slightly less distinct cultural group occupying the extreme southwest corner of the island of Celebes...The term 'Macassan' does not refer to any racial, linguistic or cultural group as such. It refers simply to any person who came on the annual fleet of praus to the Northern Territory. Even an Aborigine, when travelling with the trepangers beyond the normal ambit, can be included within the definition.³⁴

Much later, indeed in the contemporary period, and possibly only after the British invasion, the Tiwi Islanders had contact with Japanese pearlers. Valda Krastins³⁵ states that the Tiwi were always in control of the situation in regard to visitors and it was **they** who dictated the terms of trade and lengths of visit. Macknight tells of muskets being used "with effect" against Tiwi people as they tried to chase off foreigners. The master of a prau wrecked on Melville Island in December 1886 is said to have "kept the niggers at bay with an old carbine...".³⁶ As well, he claims that "the people of Melville and Bathurst Islands seem to have been consistently hostile to Macassans".³⁷ It is perhaps due to this that Macassan influences such as language and art, were not as evident among the Tiwi, nor was there a vibrant trade relationship established as was in other northern coastal communities

During the early years of the twentieth century this contact situation changed dramatically, as a result of increasing numbers of non-Tiwi visitors, including some

³³ *Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography*, Op. Cit.

³⁴ C.C. Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1976, p. 2

³⁵ Valda Krastins, Op. Cit., p.5

³⁶ G.A. van der Capellen, "Het journal van den Baron van der Capellen op zijne reis door de Molukko's", *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch Indie*, vol. 17 (II) (1855), pp.357-96 in Macknight, Op. Cit. p.32

ethnographical expedition visits to the islands. Other factors included increased exposure to trading relationships with the mainland, especially Darwin, but also with the Iwaidja of Coburg Peninsula. Finally, there is the history of the British settlement at Fort Dundas, Melville Island, discovered as they say, by the navigator Phillip Parker King just a year after he had discovered Port Essington in 1818.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Missionaries and the establishment of Garden Point Mission (1941)

As explained in Chapter One, the establishment of the Garden Point Mission was originally part of a plan to have control over what was described as “incorrigible natives”. Many of whom had been rounded up in Darwin and surrounds by a bounty hunter by the name of (Patrol officer) Bill Harney, an employee of Native Affairs. They were later moved to Snake Bay (Milikapti), Melville Island, when the location at Pirlangimpi or Garden Point (Pularumpi) was officially identified as the new Catholic mission for Coloureds. The strong belief held by Catholics and government authorities alike was that Aborigines belonged to a doomed race, and that they were incapable of being civilised. This prevailing belief was so firmly entrenched in their minds that it helped authorities and missionaries to downplay injustice and cruelty as the inevitable adjunct of a conclusion that was unavoidable. The only hope was for their offspring of “mixed-descent”, the Coloureds.

Evangelising might have been part of the agenda of Catholic missionaries, but in essence that was only the second objective of government authorities and Catholic missionaries – civilising was at the top of the agenda, for Coloureds as well. As Peter Hearn MSC noted:

“Civilising” had a long ancestry in the Northern Territory, and was integral to the efforts to evangelize the Aboriginal people. The Jesuits at Daly River Mission...adopted the policy of “civilize in order to Christianize...For Bishop Gsell...was axiomatic that the Aborigines had the same right as others to the benefits of Christian civilization. For him, the notion of “civilizing” was founded in a classicist understanding of culture: to be Christian was to be civilized in the fullest meaning of the word. And to be Christian was to be the bearer of Western European culture.³⁸

Hearn quotes Gsell in emphasising the importance of combined civilising and Christianising as the first pillar of missionary work and the only way forward in the

³⁷ Macknight, Op.Cit., p.88

detribalisation process:

The aim of the missionary is obedience to a divine command: he must bring the heathen to the true faith...no one...would dare to deny that the true faith is the generating force of civilization. Thus it is vain that some people say, "Why not leave these people in peace? Why disturb their old customs if they make them happy?"³⁹

Hearn also noted that John O'Loughlin, who had been mentored by Gsell, took the same attitude a few decades later and that the former acted out of a "firm conviction that as detribalisation proceeds and a religious and philosophical vacuum envelops the aboriginal – it is essential, if he is to survive, for him to be guided by the Christian faith and Christian philosophy of life".⁴⁰ John O'Loughlin, like others before him also saw Christianisation as an essential component of assimilation, and perhaps he may have been buoyed by some who spoke as Aboriginal leaders who, while not in full agreement with government policies or Christianising agendas, did see some benefits. While earlier 1930s southern leaders such as William Ferguson and Jack Pattern, and northern leaders like Jack McGinness, demanded equal citizenship and equal rights, it did not mean they demanded absorption into white society. However, there were observers and supporters of the assimilationist agenda who convinced themselves that Coloureds desired this above all else. Colin McLeod, former Patrol Officer in his reminisces of the situation in the Northern Territory in the 1950s claimed that:

...people of full Aboriginal descent, rarely considered themselves as one with there was a distinct stratification of society those of part Aboriginal background, and the reverse was also the case...⁴¹

The new mission known as *Our Lady of Victories* was coordinated by Father William Connors. He had previously served at missions in New Guinea and Palm Island. He received a government grant of 170 square kilometres of land, plus an amount equivalent to \$10,000 and set about building dormitories for Coloured boys and girls expected to start arriving from the mainland in 1941:

The timber he used was Oregon and silky oak and came from Townsville: it was insulated on bloodwood posts and poisoned against white ants. The building outlived the mission which was closed down in October 1967. (The

³⁸ Peter Hearn, *Op. Cit.*, p.90

³⁹ Peter Hearn, *Op. Cit.*, p.90

⁴⁰Part of Bishop John O'Loughlin's speech at the opening of the Daly River Mission, October, 1956. In Peter Hearn, *Op. Cit.*, p.90

⁴¹ Colin McLeod, *Patrol in the Dreamtime*, Mandarin, Random House, Milsons Point, NSW, 1997, p.236

buildings) were demolished in October 1975.⁴² After Father Connors, the mission was organised by a succession of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart order. His immediate successor was Father Gerald Doody, followed by Father John Flynn, Albert Cuneo, John Leary, John O’Carrigan, Allan Corry and Kingston Summerhayes to name a few.

⁴² Brother John Pye. In Thecla Brogan, *The Garden Point Mob: stories about the early days of the Catholic Mission and the people who lived there*, Historical Society of the Northern Territory, N.T., 1990, p.2

PART FOUR – CHRISTIANISE, CIVILISE AND INTEGRATE

Chapter Nine - The Arrival of Francis Xavier Gsell

White people living in settled and secure communities must find it difficult to imagine the poor conditions under which the native women live in uncivilized countries: their degradation both morally and physically. The men, their husbands, consider them as inferior beings, little more than beasts of burden who, according to a man's whim, may be cajoled, thrashed, killed or even taken to market to be sold infamously. Clearly the status of our aboriginal women had to be raised before they could respond to Christian teaching...

F. X. Gsell¹

In time the Catholic mission commitment for the Northern Territory region was taken up by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. The Prefecture Apostolic of the Northern Territory of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart was established in 1906. The first Australian Catholic priest to take position in the Northern Territory was father O'Connell, M.S.C., who arrived in Darwin in 1908. The Very Reverend Francis Xavier Gsell, M.S.H.,² was elected Apostolic administrator on 23 April of that same year. At the time that Father Gsell took up his appointment at Port Darwin, the Catholic civilising and conversion effort in the Northern Territory was made up of two churches, one chapel and three missionaries.

In 1910 Francis Xavier Gsell took an interest in Bathurst Island, which at the time, and according to Catholic records of the time, was inhabited by approximately 1000 Tiwi. According to writer Charles Priest, *Northern Territory Recollections*, the combined populations of Melville and Bathurst Islands during this period was 1,000 with approximately one hundred or more Tiwi people living away from the islands. By 1911 the Commonwealth Government was administering the Northern Territory which meant that all Aboriginal people of that region were no longer to be administered, supervised, traded or controlled by the South Australian Aborigines Protection Act.³ Father Gsell, it is claimed, was able to induce the Commonwealth Government to declare the island a "native reserve". His main argument to

¹ F.X. Gsell, *The Bishop with 150 Wives*, Angus and Robertson, London, 1956, pp.62-63

² Following preliminary education in France he graduated from Appollinaire University in Rome. His appointment as a Missionary of the Sacred Heart was finalised by the Pontiff in Rome and he arrived in the Northern Territory after undertaking brief missionary work in New Guinea. One of Gsell's former colleagues at university was Eugene Pacelli who later became the 260th Pope – Pope Pius XII (in office March 1939 until October 1958).

³The South Australian Aborigines Act made the Chief Protector (of Aborigines) the legal guardian of every Aboriginal and "half-caste" child under 21 – with control over the child's place of residence.

government, an echo of Archbishop Polding's earlier observation and sentiment, that "little could be achieved with Aborigines in contact with Europeans". Thus the Two Fold Aim was put into action and the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart became partners with the Commonwealth Government in the protection and management of the Tiwi people of Bathurst and Melville islands under the Aborigines Ordinance (NT) of 1911.⁴

An interesting character and certainly of the old school, was Father Gsell. This particular Catholic missionary's control over the Tiwi Islanders, and others who were subsequently brought to this isolated northern community, was immense. Some see him as a saint and he is certainly considered by the Catholic clergy in the Northern Territory as an innovative and compassionate missionary. Others hold opposing opinions. For example, according to Charles Priest⁵ who lived and worked at Melville Island during 1929, and who on several occasions had contact with Gsell, who was based at Bathurst Island (once sharing a bottle of French wine which Gsell had organised from France).⁶ Priest had this to say:

He was an autocrat as far as his subordinates were concerned and the junior priests and the lay brothers had to ask his permission even to smoke a cigarette.⁷

Priest also claimed that Gsell used the young Aboriginal girls he had bought to attract male converts to the Catholic religion, but at this point in history it would probably be more than difficult to substantiate this claim.

Gsell set about changing the Tiwi traditional marriage system as he was not pleased with the arrangement in regard to 'promised' marriages which involved very young girls being betrothed to much older men. Gsell's plan was to introduce the idea of 'free marriage' to the Tiwi, as according to O'Carrigan, the betrothal system ensured that many young men were unable to take wives and form married partnerships due to the older men having already taken the young girls into their group. It is claimed that part of Gsell's dedication to breaking the Tiwi traditional marriage system was to 'buy' young women on the pretext that he was purchasing wives for himself. He

⁴ One of the conditions of the Aborigines Ordinance (NT) meant administrators (of Aborigines) were empowered to declare any place a prohibited area for Aborigines and "half-castes."

⁵ C Priest, *Northern Territory Recollections: Life Amongst the Aborigines*, pp.2-3

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ C. Priest, *Northern Territory Recollections: Life Amongst the Aborigines*, Op cit., pp.2-3

purchased his first 'wife' in 1917 and by 1938 it is claimed he bought at least 150 young girls as 'wives'. Gsell paid for the young girls and women with flour, axes, material, tobacco, and other commodities sought at the time. After the first purchase Gsell, it is said, was able to convince most Tiwi Islanders that their marriage system was unfair to both the young girls, and the younger men in the community who sought life partners, and thus, as claimed by Gsell supporters, and the north Australian Catholic church at least, was able to introduce the new marriage system. And it meant that by as early as 1918:

...willing partners, though pagans, were married formally by missionaries.⁸

Gsell's ideas in relation to 'traditional' marriage and his interference in well-established ancient traditions did not go without criticism. In that usual interminable white supremacist style that colonised peoples have become accustomed to, the Very Reverend A. Perkins, whilst reviewing what he considered the failure of Australia to resolve 'the Aboriginal problem', made comment in regard to the Catholics "active policy of purchasing children", and expressed:

...the term "family" was almost a misnomer, for the community was controlled by a council of old men for their own selfish ends. Women had no status and no purpose but to satisfy the whims and fancies of the old men to whom they had been allotted...Girls, little more than mere children, were taken away as wives.

How was the missionary [Gsell] to attempt any reform? Of course his aim would be to abolish polygamy; but humanely speaking, this is almost impossible since the blackfellow's life, moral, social and economic, is based on polygamy...A moral atmosphere had to be created through which the natives would see the deformity and the disadvantages of polygamy, compared with the beauties and benefits of monogamy.⁹

However, former Bishop of Darwin, John O'Loughlin MSC, gives a version of Gsell's reason for interfering in traditional Tiwi marriages in the following:

One day a little girl called Martina came crying to him in great distress and she said "There is a man out there". He is described in the bishop's book as "an anonymous hairy creature", who had come in from the bush and wanted this little girl of about 12, Martina, who had been brought up with the nuns on the mission station. So the bishop was very disappointed because he thought he had in Martina a good prospect for the future; she was taken off to the bush,

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The Very Reverend A. Perkins, The National Eucharistic Congress, Dec. 2-9th, 1934, Advocate Press, Melbourne, 1936, p.195, Tony Scanlon, "Pure and Clean and True to Christ": Black Women and White Missionaries in the North", *Hecate*, Vol. XII, Nos. ½, 1986, PP. 82-105

but she ran away and came back to the mission.¹⁰

The story of Martina is now part of Tiwi folklore, and more specifically Catholic folklore even though one may hear several very different versions of that same story. O'Loughlin's version, and the one most told is of negotiation between Gsell and the "outraged legal husband" as the Tiwi warrior has been described, and tells of an exchange of goods such as flour, axes, knives and treacle for Martina to be able to remain at the mission. In conducted interviews with both Tiwi Islanders and ex-inmates of Garden Point Mission, the standard tale is in line with John O'Loughlin, and one suspects, the official Catholic version:

Gsell: "Now I am prepared to give you all these things if you let me have Martina...She wants to stay here and live at the mission".

So they agreed to this, and I suppose you could say that the Bishop had bought his first wife because he paid the husband of this girl for her, and he relinquished all rights to her. So the Bishop became legally her husband.¹¹

In fact, it has been pointed out by several observers, both Garden Point former inmates and others, that a legal marriage did not take place, and while this may only be a play on words, the 'legal marriage' statement claim cannot be made because government legislation did not allow such marriages of whites and non-whites. We will never know the reasons why Gsell persisted with the marriages. Perhaps Gsell was not content with simply re-organising the traditional marriage system of the Tiwi Islanders, and was simply not satisfied with what he considered pagan unions. His main priority it seems was in catholicizing Tiwi people, and he obviously felt some joy when the first Catholic marriage took place in 1927.

O'Loughlin, in his continuation of the Martina story tells of how later in life she married a young man of her own age, who was obviously not a Wildman from the bush. Subsequently she gave birth to five children, including two daughters. One of these daughters, Elizabeth, decided to go back to the old ways, and was chosen by a husband from 'the bush' and one who had not been influenced by the mission. As O'Loughlin observed in regard to Gsell's interference into traditional Tiwi marriage rituals, he had not solved what he considered the problems of traditional Tiwi

¹⁰ John O'Loughlin, "The History of the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory", *Occasional Paper No. 2*, p.8

¹¹ John O'Loughlin, "The History of the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory", *Op cit.*

matrimonial relations. Gsell was also to find out just how complicated those marriage obligations were. It was not simply to be an exchange between two men, but involved a wider web of people, as in accordance with wider kinship obligations and responsibilities. As O'Loughlin told it:

Martina explained that when she was a little girl, a man had been deputed to be her future son-in-law, so that all her daughters would become his wives. It wasn't only Martina who was concerned, it was her daughters also. After that, if he wished to buy a young girl, Bishop Gsell had to pay the husband and the son-in-law as well, because the son-in-law had the right to her daughters. ..That was the marriage system on Bathurst Island in those days. That a young man acquires a mother-in-law before he acquires a wife!¹²

Not to be deterred Gsell, according to O'Loughlin, found other ways of getting around the marriage and kinship obligations of traditional Tiwi marriage systems by disallowing the continuation of the ancient marriage rites. O'Loughlin, among others, take great pride in the fact that Gsell was able to alter forevermore those marriage patterns, and take pride "that this practice has been wiped out amongst the Tiwi". It is claimed by his admirers, including some Tiwi, that Gsell:

...stopped polygamy, child marriage and the abuse of young girls and the degradation of women. He was able, on the positive side, to establish Christian family...it was very important for the establishment of Christianity amongst the Aborigines.¹³

Gsell has been described as "the Apostle of the Tiwi" and it has been suggested by many Catholics in the Northern Territory that his work among the Tiwi would have served as a model for other "Aboriginal missions" throughout the entire Commonwealth. Others would dispute this and especially today, Gsell's experiment at Tiwi would be viewed quite differently, and perhaps, would not withstand a thorough sociological, or even anthropological examination. This is especially so in light of the evidence of the intergenerational aspects of trauma being exposed as part of the Stolen Generations experiences.

O'Carrigan offers some benefits of the Catholic marriage system initiated by Gsell and implemented by him in his purchase of the young girls as wives, and other added benefits for the Tiwi (and Coloured) female population overall by stating:

Another advantage of Christian law and the purchase of girls in past years is

¹² Ibid p.8

that widows are no longer bound to remarry unless they so desire...¹⁴

According to the Catholic missionaries the new marriage system and other social innovations, although sometimes ignored at times over the years, did help to maintain a peaceful and stable society for the Tiwi by eliminating "...the complete despotic control of the family group, and is exercised within a community that is almost 100% Christian (and Catholic).¹⁵

O’Carrigan also celebrated Gsell’s initiative to purchase the young wives, and as he states, an initiative sanctioned by the Tiwi themselves, as one which led to the establishment of the boarding school system which was first introduced at Bathurst Island. The boarding school system, where higher primary school-aged girls were sent and put under the supervision of a priest-superintendent and Catholic nuns, became the preferred option for the parents of these girls, according to O’Carrigan. It is claimed that the boarding school experience produced an excellent spirit among the Tiwi, and was also much welcomed by the girls as it:

...emphasises the privilege (sic) of the parents in having their daughters educated and trained in conditions far superior to camp life.¹⁶

It supposedly also gave assurances to both girls and parents that daughters would be safe:

...from the undue advances from any boy to whom she is not promised...they support the discipline of the school. The boys betrothed, in turn, are satisfied that their promises are duly safeguarded.¹⁷

O’Carrigan further commends Gsell’s initiative in the buying of young girls as “brides” and the re-organising of the Tiwi Marriage arrangements by stating that it allowed the priests who came after him to:

...exert a certain “paternal” influence in the interest of the young people and is an influence recognised by the community as a whole...it can be fairly stated that there has been established as the norm of life what in fact is the basis of human society. Christian marriage, the Christian family and Christian education – on such a foundation the hopes and fears of the Bathurst Island community may rest.¹⁸

Gerardine Tungutalum was one of those young girls who was purchased by Gsell – no

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ John O’Loughlin, “The History of the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory”, Op cit.,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid. p.3

¹⁸ John O’Loughlin, “The History of the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory”, Op cit., p.4

date recorded – who wrote a delightful history of Tiwi first encounter with the Catholic priest, later Bishop:

A person there. A white man. One white man with a big beard.
Who is he?
He said he was a missionary from heaven.
...He wants you and your children. You better go, all of you, go down there.

And Gerardine speaking of her own experience:

I was promised to an old man. I didn't see his face. He passed away before I was born. So my mother brought me along to the convent...My mother sent me.¹⁹

The differing versions and interpretations of Catholic missionary intentions and activities give different perspectives of a range of colonial and Christianising interactions, as well as different reactions to Gsell's 'marriage activities'. However, even with the inclusion of Martina's story, mostly, later-day Catholic missionaries, government authorities and Australian historians, have chosen/choose to ignore the negative implications that resulted from the interference of westerners in Aboriginal daily life, including especially, the Tiwi marriage system. Western historians and other writers instead, tend to exaggerate and embellish missionary activity, (regardless of location and denomination), as the crown or apex, the ultimate point of convergence of colonisation. Not only do these westerners avoid in-depth analyses of the impacts of the two-fold aims of colonisation and conversion, but they strenuously avoid overall re-assessment of the entire project that was missionary activity. Even when presented with evidence such as testimonies given by ex-inmates of missions who try valiantly to have their voices heard, western missionaries, government authorities, academics – especially historians and anthropologists, refuse to accept that they effectively killed the growth potential of a large portion of Aboriginal society.

¹⁹ Gerardine Tungutalum, *The Arrival of Father Gsell – June 8, 1911*, Nguuu Nginingawila Literature Production Centre, Bathurst Island, Northern Territory, 1983, p.5

PART FOUR – CHRISTIANISE, CIVILISE AND INTEGRATE

Chapter Ten - Finalising the colonial agenda in the north: Darwin and other dioceses of the Top End (1899-1911)

The Daly River Mission would also result in failure for the Jesuit priests and this venture virtually ceased operations in 1899 and by 1902 the Jesuits had left the Northern Territory altogether. John O’Loughlin anguished over the lack of Catholic influence in the Northern Territory due to the departure of the Jesuits. In his “The History of the Catholic Church in the Northern Territory”, he spoke of the concern felt by the Bishops of Australia at this situation. Not only were they concerned with the lack of Catholic missionaries to service the Northern Territory, the other concern highlighted by O’Loughlin was that “...all the people connected with mission work in Australia were not Australians, they weren’t even British”.¹ O’Loughlin states that the Benedictines in Western Australia were Spanish, most Jesuits were German and Czechoslovakian, Italian missionaries were at Stradbroke Island and German Pallotine Fathers were at Broome.

By 1905 Catholic Bishops in Australia, especially at the headquarters in Sydney, were extremely concerned that there was no one to administer the Catholic services in the Northern Territory. Bishop Kelly of the Geraldton diocese had raised concerns that his diocese was already too large to administer and that he could no longer cope with the added responsibility of the Northern Territory. It is recorded that Bishop Kelly reported to the Plenary Council of Bishops in Sydney, in the hope of an appeal being lodged to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in Rome:

I have got my own diocese of Geraldton which is big enough but I have also got to look after the Northern Territory which is more than a million square miles. To get to it I have to travel by sea 2,500 miles.²

Bishop Kelly apparently offered a suggestion that the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart could be situated in the Torres Strait at Thursday Island. They could visit the Top End of the Northern Territory via steamship routes that travelled between Sydney, Thursday Island, Singapore and other destinations in Asia. As well, Catholic Bishops, according to John O’Loughlin, were increasingly concerned with the lack of numbers of Aboriginal people they had been able to reach in the Northern Territory.

¹ John O’Loughlin. Op.Cit., 1986

They complained that the new settlers enriched themselves materially in this country and yet impoverished, and what is more corrupted, the Aborigines because they didn't hand on any Christian beliefs which they possessed.³

The Catholic Bishops were convinced that the missionary effort conducted in New South Wales was beneficial to Aboriginal peoples that they came into contact with in that region and this encouraged them to go ahead with the spread of the mission into the Northern Territory, even though:

Not a great deal had been accomplished yet sufficient to prove that the endeavour was not fruitless and to remove any doubts about the capacity of Aborigines to embrace the Christian doctrine and to practice the Christian way of life...⁴

Not only were the Catholic Bishops concerned by reports of cruel persecution and extermination of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, it seems they all agreed that for their missions to work properly they must be established away from the white settler communities. They expected to be offered land that would in turn offer segregation from the greater Anglo community. It was further recommended that:

...missionary personnel should not only be sacerdotal but there should be lay brothers amongst them who could give instruction and impart practical skills to those amongst whom they worked...[and]...that an annual collection should be taken up by Churches until the mission should become self-supporting.⁵

O'Loughlin lamented in his paper, that while the collection took place, the Catholic Church in Australia still awaited the day for the mission to be self-supporting. He does not record whether it was noticed that persecution and extermination of Aboriginal residents of the Northern Territory, even with the presence of Catholic missionaries, had not ceased or changed in significant ways.

Before the French missionary Gsell arrived in Darwin, Catholic records indicate that two others had visited Darwin to perform baptisms and marriages. Father Guis and Bishop Bach, who both lived at Thursday Island, travelled on occasion to Darwin to carry out Catholic rituals. However, it is probable that their visits were in response to requests from the European Catholics of the town and that they were not there to administer to Aboriginal people.

² Ibid.

³ John O'Loughlin. Op.Cit., 1986, p.6

⁴ Ibid.

John O’Loughlin reminisced about Gsell’s early days in Darwin and spoke of him as a “zealous and active young missionary” who worked hard in what must have been a depressing place at the time. O’Loughlin had the opportunity to discuss those early days as Gsell was still in Darwin when O’Loughlin arrived in 1949. Francis Xavier Gsell had been administering to the Tiwi at Bathurst Island since 1911. He, along with German lay Brother Lambert, Dutch Brother Philippe and a priest named Father Cros, were responsible for the conversion of Aboriginal and the proselytization of non-Aboriginal residents of that region of the Top End. All these men were in some part also responsible for the building of churches at Darwin and Pine Creek, and the convent and school at Darwin.⁶

John O’Loughlin credits Gsell with why he eventually went to the Northern Territory as a Missionary of the Sacred Heart as he had very distinct memory of Gsell while as a student in Sydney. He remembered the Catholic Mass ritual being conducted by Gsell in a very deep and loud voice:

He had a very deep voice and a very big beard and he used to make us laugh as students when he said Mass for us because they were the days of the Latin Mass and he just happened to be there during the Octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi. I still remember the initial words of the Mass, “Cibavit” and he used to start right down low “Cibavit” and we would all burst out laughing, and then look forward to the next morning when the Mass would be said.⁷

This description by John O’Loughlin is typical of the many reminisces of Aboriginal people about the Catholic Mass ritual performed by O’Loughlin himself. O’Loughlin though, did not have the same deep voice, in fact he is remembered as quietly spoken. Many people interviewed remembered the pomp and ceremony of the Latin Mass, and of the seriousness expected during such a ritual. In one interview a former Garden Point inmate spoke of having her ears boxed for laughing at O’Loughlin’s singing at one of his Masses. And this too is a typical tale “...because even though Mass was conducted in Latin, and we all spoke it, we did not have a clue what we were saying. We could have been talking dirty for all we knew”.⁸

Former Garden Point inmates, including Luke Morcom, speak fondly of John

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ John O’Loughlin, Op.Cit, 1986, p.7

⁷ ibid.,

⁸ Anonymous informant – now deceased – SS-OO/CC/GPM – No. 1/1

O'Loughlin as he and another Catholic priest, Frank Flynn, are remembered mostly for their gentleness and softly spoken manner. As well, many of Darwin's Coloured couples were married by either Father Flynn or Bishop O'Loughlin at the Catholic Our Lady Star of the Sea, Darwin and at the St. Therese's Church, Nguiu. Jim and Vai Stanton were among those married by Father Frank Flynn, at Darwin, in April 1948. Many Garden Point and Darwin Coloureds over several generations were confirmed into the Catholic faith.⁹

Port Keats Mission (now Wadeye)

The Catholic mission at Port Keats, established in 1935, was in an isolated region placed approximately halfway between Darwin in the Northern Territory and Wyndham in north-west Western Australia, between the Daly and Fitzmaurice Rivers. Non-Aboriginal people when speaking of this region often spoke of what they described as the "notorious" Aboriginal warrior known as Namarluk.¹⁰ The region was highly unsettled, with a number of miners, cattlemen and others interfering in Aboriginal social life as well as having disputes among themselves over a variety of issues, as is the norm it seems on any colonial frontier. Gsell was approached by government authorities to "send someone down to quieten those wild people of Port Keats." Subsequently Father Docherty, a former saw miller from south of Perth, was transferred to the mission.

Saving Aboriginal women at Port Keats

Christine Gordon¹¹ claims that the Catholic mission at Port Keats (now Wadeye) catered especially to the status of Aboriginal women as their lives "were under great duress and they lived in a state of terror". Gordon states "The Catholic Church has always held the status of women as a high priority since ancient times".¹² While this may have been true of the Catholic Church's attitude to women through the ages, its application may not necessarily have fitted the Port Keats' Aboriginal women's

⁹ The author of this thesis was confirmed into the Catholic faith by Bishop John O'Loughlin in 1956 at St. Mary's Star of the Sea Church, Darwin, Northern Territory.

¹⁰ Namarluk, described by some, including historian Alan Powell (*Far Country*, 1982), as an "outlaw." A curious description considering what a number of non-Aboriginal frontiersmen were doing around the same time in the Northern Territory. Namarluk was supposedly responsible for the killing of Japanese deckhands and for carrying out raids on cattle stations in the district.

¹¹ D.C. Gordon, *The Catholic Church and the Status of Aboriginal Women, Port Keats, 1935-1958*, PhD Thesis, Charles Darwin University, 2004

¹² D.C. Gordon, *Op cit.*, p.293

experience. While Father Docherty in his days at Port Keats tried to improve the status and security of women overall, the first imperative for this missionary and the work of the mission, was the conversion of these women to Catholicism. Gordon states that the position of Aboriginal women “was perceived” to be very poor due to “practices of polygyny, child betrothal, wife lending and punitive rituals” that were denigrating to women in general. This perception, both of a number of visiting anthropologists and of the Catholics at Port Keats, especially Father Docherty, basically meant their interference and disruption in the political and social organisation of ancient traditions and community structures. Frontier violence was something else, and while it is always reported that Aboriginal people requested Catholic missionary presence in their lives, it meant less attention was given by the Catholic and government authorities to those lawless frontiersmen and other ruthless pioneers, who were the real perpetrators of terror. These frontiersmen practiced unbelievable acts of paedophilia and were responsible for sexual crimes and other abhorrent acts against men, women and children, yet warranted less attention from Catholic missionaries, or government authorities.

Gordon might contend that the Catholic missionaries at Port Keats needed to protect Aboriginal women from Aboriginal men, as the former “had very little control over their bodies and were severely beaten and even killed for any perceived transgressions” but was it only Aboriginal men to blame for this situation? Illicit sexual intercourse may have taken place “with the very small girls”, the promising of young girls to older men, and wife lending may have been rife but stories from the frontier also tell of white or Anglo-men committing the same offences, yet this is given little attention. There is an entire untold story of ‘the Drover’s Boy’ which has nothing to do with romance or even ‘saving’ of young women (girls) from lecherous old Aboriginal men and promised marriages.

Aboriginal women reading Gordon’s thesis would deem some findings and comments highly offensive, especially such comments as:

Aboriginal women were sometimes able to improve their status in the new settler society by using their sexuality as their main power base. However, this practice was often physically dangerous and they were subjected to increased exploitation by both Aboriginal and white men. Legislation was introduced, ostensibly to protect them, but in reality exacerbated their position still further.

Any power or prestige that they may have gained in the sexual arena was severely curtailed and the right to use white men as protection against the rigour of their own society was denied.¹³

Gordon states that Father Docherty offered these Aboriginal (Wadeye) women protection from white, other, or Aboriginal men, because he was able to give them safe passage back to their own country. He did this by intervening in fights and breaking the men's spears; offering blanket protection "from the institutionalised abuse of their own society". He supposedly copied Gsell's practice detail of purchasing the marriage rights of young girls in an effort to prevent 'promised' marriages. Gordon's claims also include those which tell of Docherty's "medicine man" status, and his introduction of Catholic nuns as part of his plan to 'liberate' the young girls and Wadeye women. She further states that as soon as the nuns arrived Wadeye parents and Elders were requesting that they take the girls to live with them thus making the point that the situation at Port Keats Catholic mission was very different to that at Garden Point. Gordon refutes any notion of forced child removal:

The sisters were taken aback and protested that they had no room but the people were very insistent. Their enthusiasm refutes any notions that the missionaries forcibly took the children away from their families.¹⁴

While a small number of Coloureds might be thankful for their 'removal' to Garden Point Mission, and many interviewed did reflect that they may have been rescued from inevitable slaughter on the wider frontier, they all expressed sorrow in regard to separation from family and kin at such a young age. All keenly felt the effects of being separated from traditional homelands, and the various responsibilities attached to such, and despaired at the loss of language in particular. Mostly, it was not until late adulthood that any of them had any conception of such notions as their own clan spiritual values, as they had only known Catholicism all their lives. While a small number apologised on behalf of missionaries, stating that they were "probably" well-intentioned people in most part, in hindsight they were bewildered as to what the overall experiment was meant to achieve. Luke Morcom stated that only now, did he understand that part of the "promise" was "education that would lead to independence and self-determination for all the Tiwi mob" – "we've all been ripped off".¹⁵

¹³ D.C. Gordon, *Op cit.*, p.294

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp 295-296

¹⁵ Luke Morcom, "Luke Morcom interview, Malak (Darwin), 2 September, 1999".

Gordon, and other western historians who uphold their beliefs, not only make it difficult for Aboriginal people, most specifically Coloureds, to come to terms with their experiences as both colonised and Christianised subordinated, or to substantiate their variety of claims against Catholic and other missionaries, but perpetuate white denial and responsibility for the devastating impacts of white interventionist policies that decimated Aboriginal society overall.

The continued documentation of white validatory histories regaling the good deeds of white missionaries, and others, denies the true ethnocentric bias and racist ideology of colonists and their intentions, both in earlier times, and now. As Jean Paul Sartre expresses

[The colonised] do not even need to be exterminated anymore. No, the most urgent thing...is to humiliate them, to wipe out the pride in their hearts, to reduce them to the level of animals. The body will be allowed to live on but the spirit will be destroyed. Tame, train, punish...those are the words that obsess the coloniser.¹⁶

Indigenous historians and writers accept that western authority, including missionaries, were confronted with foreign/alien cultures, completely beyond their understandings. However, even though they were members of an 'enlightened society' themselves, these people never abandoned or modified their white superiority to any degree. They relied on distorted reports, mostly from amateur sociologists and anthropologists, and based decisions on a plethora of confused and unproven fantasies and half-truths. They fluctuated in their approaches to dealing with the 'Aboriginal problem' and especially the 'Coloured problem' with a variety of strategies/responses ranging from condescension to wilful cruelty.

Western historian apologists might argue that most missionaries and government agents, made decisions and carried out their work with 'good intentions'. By doing so they too, not only contribute to the notion that the colonised assisted in their own destruction, but also help to reinforce, through their personal reflections, the general contempt and disregard they have for Aboriginal culture, including Aboriginal belief systems. It is pathetic that contemporary writers and historians continue to rely on the old excuses of ignorance and ideological predisposition when documenting or making

assessment; that is, justifying earlier missionary activity. This type of pathological justification must stop if white Australia, and specifically, Catholic authorities, expect Aboriginal societies that they helped to destroy to journey anywhere near to recovery.

Collecting Children Throughout the Territory

In 1940 the government policy from Canberra dictated that all Coloured children from different regions throughout the Northern Territory should be rounded up from the Aboriginal camps and be interned at different missions throughout the Territory. Coloured children from different regions, different cultural and social backgrounds, different languages and worldviews, were all dumped at various Christian missions and/or similar institutions. It is almost as if government decided that it would carve up the different mission sectors by region and numbers of Coloured inmates in a purely systematic order so as to best cater to and give balance to the competing organisations – a type of lottery draw. For example, in the Northern Territory, Methodists and Church of England missions were allocated sites in Arnhem Land and Catholics were given the Tiwi Islands and a couple of other locations.

In the northern part of the Territory...children are sent to the Garden Point Mission Station, the Croker Island Mission Station, or the Retta Dixon Home, Darwin. In the southern portion, the institution used for this purpose is St. Mary's Hostel.¹⁷

Most of the children who ended up at Garden Point in the early stage of the mission were from the well-known “stolen generations” institution known as the Bungalow at Alice Springs. Warrumungu children from the Tennant Creek region, children from around the Ti Tree region, many children from the Daguragu and Kalkaringi (Wave Hill) districts, as well as some of Darwin's Coloured children were placed at Garden Point. Patrol Officer Evans in his report to the Administrator of the Northern Territory was not to be deterred in his duty despite reporting chaotic and traumatic scenes. He made several recommendations none which were meant to halt removal as he was “satisfied” that the removal of “coloured boys and girls from native camps and nomadic lifestyles” was “in accordance with the Government's policy of assimilation”. His main recommendation was that children not be removed by aircraft

¹⁶ Jean Paul Sartre, *Colonialism and Neo-colonialism*, Routledge, London, 2001, p 76

¹⁷ Patrol Officer Evans report to the Administrator of the Northern Territory. In Rowena MacDonald, *Between Two Worlds: The Commonwealth and the removal of children of part descent in the Northern Territory*, IAD Press, Alice Springs, 1995, p.55-56

if there were other means of transport available:

The removal of children from Wave Hill by MacRobertson Miller aircraft was accompanied by distressing scenes the like of which I wish I never see again. The engines of the 'plane are not stopped at Wave Hill and the noise combined with the strangeness of an aircraft only accentuated the grief and fear of the children, resulting in near-hysteria in two of them. I am quite convinced that the news of my action at Wave Hill preceded me to other stations, resulting in the children being taken away prior to my arrival.

I endeavoured to assuage the grief of the mothers by taking photographs of each of the children prior to departure and these have been distributed among them. Also a dress length was given (to) the five women. Gifts of sweets to the children helped to break down a lot of their fear...¹⁸

Those later arrivals, the so-named “mixed-race” or “half-castes”, the Coloureds – or as they have come to be known in more contemporary language, the Stolen Generations, also have their own various and conflicting stories that range from happy memories to the usual stories of abuse, separation and religious indoctrination. However, in the main part, the majority speak of happier experiences than some of the familiar stories we have come to hear about and from the Stolen Generations at other religious and government institutions. It appears that the Tiwi Islanders were far more receptive of these newcomers, and it has meant that a quite strong relationship developed between two discrete groups thrown together at one of the many colonial crossroads. All Coloured inmates of Garden Point Mission were totally accepted into the local community during and after their Catholic mission experiences had ended and were to be regarded as Tiwi by the Tiwi Islanders. They have remained fiercely loyal to and respectful of their Tiwi Islander hosts, their traditions and philosophies. Most too, have remained just as loyal to the Catholic Church and its missionaries.

Garden Point Mission, Bishop Gsell and the community of Catholics

Sister Annunciata was in charge of the first group of fifteen girls collected from all over the Northern Territory. They were taken to Garden Point on the *St. Francis* on 25 June 1941. Enroute to Melville Island another fourteen girls who had been living with the nuns at Bathurst Island were collected. These girls ranged in age from eighteen months to fourteen years. Brother Bennett had already picked up young boys ranging in age from two to fourteen years and had taken them to Garden Point in April 1941.¹⁹

¹⁸ Patrol Officer Evans report to the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Op cit., p.55

¹⁹ Brother E. Bennett, MSC in Thecla Brogan, *The Garden Point Mob: stories about the early days of*

The mission had to be evacuated during Australia's engagement with the war and Japan. This meant that the Sisters and the girls at least, departed the island. Father Connors and the Brothers remained at Garden Point with the boys while the Sisters and girls were evacuated, first to Darwin, then to Carrieton near Port Augusta, South Australia. They arrived back in Darwin in April 1948. By no means was their Catholic instruction ceased or ever interrupted during their absence from the mission. The children were constantly exposed to the teachings of the Gospel according to Sacred Heart missionaries' interpretations of such matters. They were constantly reminded that they were now privy to a new set of ideas about the universe and other matters, and should appreciate the opportunity to adopt a different attitude to living. This new way of living it seems best expressed life often found lacking in the non-Catholic background from which they had been 'saved'.²⁰

Thecla Brogan's compilations of stories²¹ are in the most part positive and happy memories from loyal servants of the Sacred Heart Missionaries. They are typical of the memoirs of Aboriginal Australians who have had heavy and confined contact with Christian missions, government institutions and their servants. As Peter Brogan states:

...the place in which the children of Garden Point grew up and which they loved and looked upon there as their country lasted only 28 years. All...grew up together and the Island was truly "one enchanted Island".²²

This mood and attitude is reflected in the *Melville Island Song*:

Nature has planted a garden
Here by the blue sparkling sea
Island of fruit and flowers
Clear springs and towering trees.

...Island of joy, hope and promise
Bright may your future be
God's blessing rest upon you
May you ever be free

Chorus: Melville Island, Melville Island

Home so fair
Land of joy and laughter
Drive away all care
Happily we dwell besides the waters blue

the Catholic Mission and the people who lived there, Historical Society of the Northern Territory, N.T., 1990, pp 14-15

²⁰ Some of this comment from an anonymous informant – now deceased – SS/OO/GPM No. 2-1/2

²¹ Thecla Brogan, Op cit.,

²² Peter Brogan in Thecla Brogan. Ibid., 1990, p.84

Where kind hearts are true
Shining skies are cloudless overhead
Moonlight shimmers on the sand

Melville Island, Melville Island
Home so fair
Beautiful Island home.²³

While this song reflects some of the happy moments and tells of the beauty of their adopted Melville Island home, the children taken to Garden Point were subjected to restrictive and quite deliberate re-education in a totally foreign environment. They were isolated, and confined and exposed to cultural values, ideologies and behaviour patterns very different to the environment from whence they came. They all were, and especially the babies, perfect specimens for the Catholic mission and Australian government experiments. It is true that some children would not have even had the opportunity to learn of their home environment as they were removed not long after birth. One such child, Luke Morcom, was taken from his mother at Borroloola when he was one week old. Luke expresses his feeling about his ordeal through a lot of his poetry. Some words from his poignant poem titled *Separation* convey the reality and emotion of the situation for him:

The pain of separation
Much greater than before
When taken from my Yanyuwa mother
As a one week old boy

Then it was government policy
That was carried out on command
Taking brown-skinned children
From ancestral tribal land

Grew up on Catholic Mission
Then adopted to family south
Learnt about modern living
There he grew into a man...²⁴

The rewards of assimilation

But there are other voices not yet heard. However, they may never be heard because of a combination of reasons: reluctance to criticise the Catholic Church; an inability to express themselves in an articulate form, often because of a lack of very basic

²³ Sister Anunciata, *The Melville Island Song*, in Thecla Brogan, Op cit., p 85

²⁴ Personal communication – Luke Morcom. Recorded interview – transcript SS/LM/CC-GPM, No. 1/3, 2 September 1999 at Darwin, N.T.

education; no forum to voice their version of the conversion experience. These stories to be told, yet to be recorded, would tell of negative experiences similar to those typical of, and detailed in the Stolen Generations report. They speak of abuse, manipulation, and contempt for authorities who removed them from their families. There are stories of coercion, the old tool of conversion. There are too, a number of stories not that different to stories told about both Australian and international missions and organisations. Basically, the missionising experience for all Indigenous peoples around the world has been about paternalistic superiority. For those who experienced the Catholic version of this, even at Garden Point Mission, it would have been conducted by a persecuting Church, a hierarchical institution highly intolerant of those who deviated from or resisted its teachings and doctrines.

It has been claimed by some individuals, in that group of Coloured children rounded up and taken to Garden Point Mission in the early 1940s, that they owe the Catholic missionaries for their lives - that in itself is a tragedy.²⁵ The tragedy is that they left behind families, and Mothers, shattered communities and clans whose cohesiveness was destroyed as a result of removal of core people from its ranks – all at the whim of Anglos who decided they could provide something better, but never delivered fully on that promise. It is only now, and probably since the release of the Stolen Generations report, that some Christian missions, sometimes reluctantly, have admitted their complicity in government policies of removal, protection and assimilation.

A statement issued at National Sorry Day, 1998 stated:

We, the Catholic Bishops of Australia, wish to take the opportunity offered by this occasion of remembrance to ask the victims of the policy of breaking up indigenous families their forgiveness for any part the Church may have played in causing them harm and suffering. We note with regret that lamentable chapter of Australian history which saw the unjustifiable separation of Indigenous children from their families. We express our deepest sorrow for the suffering of hurt inflicted on Indigenous Australians which have consequences still in evidence today – social dislocation, loss of culture and identity, and a continuing sense of hopelessness in the lives of many of the First Peoples of our nation...In the spirit of sorrow and forgiveness, we, the Catholic Bishops of Australia, wished to record our commitment to continue the healing process for the benefit of the victims of the unjust policies of the past, to support the needs of indigenous peoples today, and to contribute to the quest for national

²⁵ Personal communication – Anonymous informant: recorded interview – transcript SS/OO/CC/GPM – No. 3/5. 15th June 2000.

reconciliation.²⁶

Some, including some members of the Catholic Church, now acknowledge the wrongful policies of the past, even if only because they have been exposed. However, it must be noted that the Catholic mission at Garden Point assisted with the continuance of the policy well into the late 1960s. All Catholics surely understood, and thereby knew of the implications of the White Australia Policy for Aboriginal people long before National Sorry Day 1998. They all knew it to be a policy which truly exemplified the assimilationist ideology which was then, and still is, the linchpin of Anglo Australian nationalism. Post-war immigration and Aboriginal assimilation kept Australian policy makers busy for many decades. Coerced assimilation, agreed between governments and Catholic missions, perhaps not overtly as in formal written agreements and memorandums, but certainly as covert collaboration, was a combined effort. It arose, and was precisely engineered and implemented specifically in response to government attempts to segregate, indeed eliminate, Aboriginal peoples' cultural difference from white, especially Anglo society.

Perhaps it is time that Australian society as a whole refused to accept the excuse that governments and missions, and others, held a naïve view that their assimilationist policies and practices would 'help' Aboriginal peoples to better integrate into the wider (mostly) Anglo Australian community. It needs to be accepted by a majority of Anglo and other Australians that those policies were more about exclusion than integration or inclusion and that they were essentially about solving what was considered "the Aboriginal problem" – meaning 'how do we get rid of them?' The assimilation approach to 'the problem' has been described as a benign onslaught in which the objective was to integrate Aboriginal peoples into Anglo Australian society as it had become obvious that they were not going to die out and disappear after all.

The situation for the Coloureds, the surprise 'hybrids' that resulted from the practice of miscegenation was not that much better. Their situation as 'different' people was precarious as well. Some of that Anglo attitude and fear of 'the new Aboriginal' is expressed by Peter Read in his book, *rape of the soul so profound*:

²⁶Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Statement, National Sorry Day, May 26 1998. In *Social Justice Report* 1998, p.90 (6th Report – by Acting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Zita Antonios), Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

The difference between the ways in which the Indigenous and non-Indigenous identified Aboriginality was complicated by white assumption that the part-European genetic inheritance, interpreted crudely by lighter skin colouring, allowed the programming of an individual for life amongst the Europeans. At base, however, the “half-caste” distinction was convenient. It was political. In the Northern Territory, part-Aboriginal children were institutionalised in large numbers because the government feared that otherwise they would swamp the small white population. Even in the south, where the disproportion of whites to Aborigines was huge, the fear remained that the state might be threatened by the uprising of a ‘wild race of half-castes’.²⁷

Northern Territory Chief Protector of Aborigines Cecil Cook took assurance in this simple analysis of the state of play of the cross-section of population in Darwin during the 1930s. In relation to identifying and categorising Aboriginal people, the ‘old’ and the ‘new’, Cook had this to say:

Generally by the fifth and invariably by the sixth generation, all native characteristics of the Australian aborigine are eradicated. The problem of our half-castes will quickly be eliminated by the complete disappearance of the black race, and the swift emergence of their progeny in the white...²⁸

Sixty years later Mick Dodson said this about the evil practices of assimilation:

Assimilation was and is a massive abuse of human rights. The ridiculous thing is that human rights had no application to Indigenous Australians...unless they were fully assimilated into the dominant culture. Despite the existence of international human rights instruments human rights did not inherently accrue to Aboriginal people but were, instead, a reward if they would renounce their Aboriginality and embrace the dominant status quo.²⁹

The destructive and contradictory nature of Australia’s assimilation policy, along with the haphazard nature of State legislation, especially in the timeframe that this thesis concentrates, that is twentieth century Australia, and more specifically 1937, is clearly outlined in the comments made at the Commonwealth State Native Welfare Conference where it was declared that:

...the destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not the full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth [followed by] ...that all efforts be directed to that end.³⁰

²⁷ Peter Read, *a rape of the soul so profound: the return of the stolen generations*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1999, pp.21-22

²⁸ Ibid. p.177. Also see Marcus (1990), p.93: HREOC, p.137

²⁹ Professor Michael Dodson, Chair, ANU Institute of Indigenous Australia, Australian National University; former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner with the Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission (1993-1998)

³⁰ Transcript of conference, *Aboriginal welfare. Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities*, Canberra. 21-23 April 1937. In John Gardiner-Garden Social Policy Group *From Dispossession to Reconciliation*, Research paper 27 1998-99, Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, 29 June 1999, p. 4

Most Coloureds did not make the choice to renounce their Aboriginality, and just as many were not keen to embrace the status quo as set down by the dominant culture. But a combination of two forces – removal and conversion, meant dispossession from family as well as from land. The laws ushered in under the guise of assimilation, with the powerful force of Commonwealth welfare legislation of ‘protection’ soon stripped Coloureds at Garden Point Mission of any semblance of rights, international or other. Ad hoc practices of State officials, church authorities, even individuals, soon turned into systematised strategies involving removal and ‘protection’ which in turn became coercion and conversion while alienating and oppressing large numbers of disoriented dispossessed individuals. There can be no logical reason or justification for the removal of children from families, and especially based on the vague notion of skin colour, or blood colour. Jeremy Becket is both perplexed and critical of the “contradictory nature of the Assimilation policy” and highlights this by stating “...[it was]...used [as] the goal of eventual entry into the community as a justification for segregating Aborigines on settlements, and the goal of eventual citizenship as justification for curtailing their civil rights”.³¹

³¹ Jeremy Beckett, “Aboriginality, Citizenship and Nation State”, in Aborigines and the State in Australia, Special Issue Series, *Social Analysis*, 24, December, 1988, p.10

CONCLUSION

Religions do not appeal to evidence, they appeal to human gullibility and to the strong human desire to believe in miracles. They fulfil the emotional needs of the mortal man, who faces the inevitable darkness of death, is puzzled by the complexity of the world, and desperately wants to find meaning in his existence.¹

Catholic missionaries, from the early days of Gsell's missionary motivations, had concluded that the moral and social situation of Coloureds necessitated the establishment of Garden Point Mission. Evangelisation of the local Tiwi was seen as an added bonus for westerners who viewed Aboriginal culture and practices as crude, and in need of western civilisation. Gsell's earlier ideas that held strong and clear opinions about Coloureds and those opinions he had formed of "mixed-descent" children were to be carried through to all Sacred Heart missionaries that followed:

It is remarkable that these half-caste children, the offspring of white men, are inferior to the children of coloured men.

The pure native children are intelligent in the main and, if taken in hand at a fairly young age, they can become useful citizens of their country. But how easily the little half-caste beings can sink into a condition of moral squalor or, at the least, into passivity if they are not cared for with much vigilance. The adventurous spirit and moral laxity of their white fathers does not mix well with the instability of the black.²

Little consideration was given of the impact to child and mother and extended family in relation to the removal of these children. Neither were those small number of white or non-Aboriginal fathers who were involved in their children's upbringing ever given consideration. As with official government policy, it was deemed that it was the responsibility of non-Aboriginal government officials and Christian missionaries to remove these children from what was considered situations of moral and material neglect. This was to be carried out at as early an age as possible when it was deemed that their minds and souls were more receptive to 'civilized' ideas and Catholic notions. When Gsell was asked if this practice of removal was cruel, he responded:

The question is naïve. What homes and what natural affection have these little ones? Yes, if they had families, and if they were surrounded by that love and affection family life offers to the young even amongst primitive peoples, it might be cruel. But these creatures roam miserably around the camps and their behaviour is often worse than that of native children. It is in fact a mercy to remove them as soon as possible from surroundings so insecure.³

¹ Mark Perakh, "Incompatible Magesteria" at: <http://www.talkreason.org/articles/magesteria.cfm> posted 27 August 2002. Accessed: 11 October, 2006

² F.X. Gsell MSC, *The Bishop With 150 Wives*, Op cit., p.153

Consequently Gsell, and in compliance with government authorities and the relevant funding body, established something of a schooling system to accommodate “these creatures”. The first “school” for Coloured girls was established by the Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at their Darwin convent in the 1930s. The ultimate aim of Cecil Cook’s policy of assimilation, based purely on eugenics and with no other rational reason, was that these girls would then marry non-Coloured men, and would be assisting assimilation by further “diluting black blood”. However, Peter Hearn states that this policy of Coloured girls marrying white men on reaching adulthood “was not followed at Garden Point”.⁴ Hearn also claims that Gsell was none too happy with being somewhat coerced into commencing the mission for Coloureds, even though it seems he clearly embraced the “half-caste” mission idea, and created a system that was to extend well into the late 1960s. Hearn cites Father W. H. Flynn MSC, superintendent of the mission in 1945, in a letter to provincial office in Sydney:

...he really never wanted the Mission started here in the first place and seemed to indicate that his hand was forced by my predecessor [Fr W Connors MSC]. He maintained that to take this place for the half-castes was against all principles of right and justice. He said it was signing the death warrant of those blacks whose country this is.⁵

It is difficult to take this claim with much seriousness in light of the earlier remarks Gsell had made in relation to “half-castes”. Even if Coloureds were a drain on the Catholic mission economy in those early days, Gsell and his community of Catholics were keen to have the opportunity to increase the number of converts. As well, missionaries truly believed in the objectives of assimilation, that is, they were complicit with government in their attempts to eliminate possibilities of *sangre infecta*. While patrol officers and missionaries accepted that the “half-caste” problem needed attention, and there may have been some genuine concerns in relation to neglect and danger, overall, these authorities were more interested in the politics of assimilation, and the breeding out of colour. As noted previously, Hasluck among others was primarily concerned with the rapid multiplication of Coloureds and its supposed threat to white Australian security and nationalism and Norman Tindale noted in the 1930s that:

... interbreeding with the whites over several generations would enable the mixed bloods to merge with the Europeans without causing material

³ F.X. Gsell MSC, *The Bishop With 150 Wives*, Op cit.,

⁴ Peter Hearn MSC, Op cit., p. 40

⁵ Sr Mary Venard FDNCS, *History of the Australian Province of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*, Private Circulation, Provincial House, Kensington, NSW, 1974, p. 171, in Peter Hearn MSC, *Ibid.*, p. 41

disturbance of the white community, some observers had suggested that this might be an undesirable solution and that taking in an ethnic strain so primitive as that of the Australian aboriginal might be a cause of permanent injury to the “white” stock.⁶

It is evident that race and caste were the predominating principles that drove both government authorities and missionaries in the Northern Territory from those very early days of frontier colonialism and were to be refined during the years from 1941 to 1967. While the path of assimilation was to be littered with many broken lives, it was also a pathway to nowhere for Coloureds because even though part of the promise of assimilation was education and subsequent absorption into white society, the racial lines were well drawn. Education was not a primary motive for the incarceration of Coloured children or ‘wards’ at Garden Point Mission and the 1953 Welfare Ordinance was still only interested in matters dealing with ‘neglect’ and morals before all else, even though Hearn suggests otherwise: “Missionaries too, operated out of a position of power with regard to Aboriginal people associated with their establishments –education, health-care and employment opportunities”.⁷

Bishop O’Loughlin, who attended and spoke at the 1955 Missions/Administration Conference in Darwin, while having no substantiation, claimed that “halfcaste children were often unwanted and infanticide was still not uncommon”.⁸ These claims were often used as further justification for the ‘protection’ of Coloureds in Catholic mission activity in the Tiwi Islands. Even though several other Catholic missionaries cited infanticide as a primary reason for Catholic intervention, it is not recorded if this was also the justification given for the removal and protection of other babies taken from other Northern Territory locations. Peter Hearn recorded that Gsell included in his memoirs that new born “mixed descent” babies, supposedly the progeny of Japanese pearl divers and local Aboriginal women, “were buried alive”. Father Cosgrove at the 1955 Conference also backed up O’Loughlin’s claims and stated that the mission “had answered an urgent need at the time”.⁹ Hearn also states that along with Gsell, there were other Catholic priests who made such claims in relation to infanticide. They also made claims in relation to Aboriginal women’s alleged prostitution but seldom, it seems, made moral judgments about white men and some

⁶ N.B. Tindale in Henry Reynolds, *Op. Cit.*, p.194

⁷ Peter Hearn, *Op. Cit.*, p.48

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44

even within their own Order. Other non-Aboriginal men and their activities were also mostly ignored, except maybe the Japanese pearl divers in the region of the Tiwi Islands in that earlier period of mission activity.¹⁰

The 1955 Missions/Administration Conference discussed the very same issues that were raised by Elkin at the first conference in 1948, where he advised that the overall policy in relation to both 'natives' and "half-castes" had changed little since the original McEwen plan of assimilation. That assimilation plan replaced the earlier 'protection' plan which also had not worked in safeguarding either group. Neither had the status of Aboriginal people overall been changed in any way. They were still under the various government Acts and ruled by both government and mission policies which were bereft of any semblance of rights of citizenship.

Minister for Territories Paul Hasluck, was still pushing the assimilation agenda, even though it was obvious this and other measures were not working. He clearly insisted on sticking to the plan, and stated:

Assimilation is the objective of native welfare measures. This means that the aborigines and persons of mixed blood are expected eventually to attain to the same manner of living and to the same privileges of citizenship as white Australians and to live, if they choose to do so, as members of a single Australian community, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians. Their education and training and the provisions in regard to housing, health and employment will be gradated according to their progress towards this eventual goal. Any discrimination between the treatment of the white and the coloured person is to be regarded as a temporary measure based, not upon colour, but the existing needs for their guardianship and tutelage and is to be removed as soon as the need for it disappears.¹¹

It is important to re-visit these and other pronouncements – of government ministers, authorities, and Christian missionaries, because it seems that all non-Aboriginal people tend to forget that most of this activity took place in that period when the United Nations had declared a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The very preamble of that declaration insisted that there would be recognition and respect of the rights and respective liberties for all peoples, in all countries. While westerners spend some time offering different perspectives and interpretations of this United Nations declaration, they never express that this concept of rights was designed specifically

¹⁰ Peter Hearn, *Op. Cit.*, p. 44

¹¹ Paul Hasluck, *Native Welfare in Australia: Speeches and Addresses by the Hon. Paul Hasluck, M.P.*,

for westerners only or that those rights were only meant to protect westerners' rights. Aboriginal peoples economic, cultural, social and political rights are always given little attention and usually are dismissed as simply aspirations, not enforceable rights such as those expected by westerners.

Since the dismantling of missions and the alleged abolition of assimilationist programs, the Catholic Church now offers a range of explanations and reasons for its involvement in the objectives of the 'two-fold aim' of Australian government. However, most of these pro-indigenous rights and considerations were only seriously set in place during the Papacy of Pope John Paul II. Pope Pius XII, by contrast, had ignored, or was not interested in the implementation of such rights being extended to Indigenous Peoples. Australian Catholic authority, almost from the time of invasion of Aboriginal homelands, ignored the rights of Aboriginal people, even though, in 1845 Archbishop Polding, presented his Church's views to a "Parliamentary Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines". He followed this up in 1869 in a pastoral letter to the "Bishops of the Province" and he outlined his concerns thus:

We have dispossessed the Aborigines of the soil, at least we have deprived them of that use of it from which they gained a subsistence...In natural justice, then, we are held to compensation...The stain of blood is upon us – blood has been shed far otherwise than in self-defence – blood, in needless and wanton cruelty...¹²

Less than 25 years after those words, Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* might have offered hope to Aboriginal people if they had heard the message:

Today more than ever, the Church is aware that her social message will gain credibility more immediately from the witness of actions than as a result of its internal logic and consistency. This awareness is also a source of her preferential option for the poor, which is never exclusive or discriminatory towards other groups.¹³

Yet, somehow the Catholic conscience allowed the mistreatment of Aboriginal people, and subsequently forgave Catholic moral blind spots. Obviously Catholic conscience allowed dismissal of moral obligations to the poor and needy, the dispossessed, the kidnapped; the Coloured children. The Catholic Jesus' visions and

Minister for Territories, Paterson Brokensha, Perth, 1953, p. 14, in Peter Hearn, Op. Cit., p.62

¹² The Pastoral Letter of the Archbishops of the Province, 1869. Sandie Cornish, "The Catholic Human Rights Tradition and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples", *ACSJC Occasional Paper* No.21, Collins Dove, North Blackburn, Victoria, 1994, pp.18-19

¹³ Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* 1891. As quoted in pope John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus* marking the 100th anniversary of Pope Leo's encyclical, in Neil Brown, "Christian Conscience and Social

values for all humans, did not extend it seems, to Aboriginal people in Australia, nor to Coloureds at Garden Point Mission.

The words offered by Archbishop Polding prove that Catholic authority had full knowledge of what was happening to Aboriginal people in this country. Yet the Catholic Church chose to become involved in the further dispossession of Aboriginal people, and was to later play significant roles in the implementation and maintenance of government policies, that assisted a range of abuses of rights – genocide, extermination, dispossession, racism and removal. Australian Catholic Bishops might have met often to discuss such issues, and they were to become more vocal especially from the early 1970s in issues to address Aboriginal social welfare, including land rights, but that was some 182 years after the invasion of Aboriginal homelands. Indeed it was also some years after those ‘protection’ and assimilation programs had been implemented and practised, and assisted by missionaries of various orders. It took until 1993, and possibly only after Indigenous Catholic clergyman, Patrick Dodson guided Catholic clergy in producing documents that gave legitimacy to the Aboriginal voice in the Church, for Catholic authority to make strong political statements in relation to human rights of Aboriginal people. As a result, the document *Recognition: The Way Forward* was produced “through a collaborative effort of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council”.¹⁴

The Way Forward, and other Catholic documents such as the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference’s “Sharing the Country Through Understanding” and in particular the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference’s (ACBC) 1990 Pastoral Letter may have finally articulated the Church’s new attitude in relation to Aboriginal rights when it declared:

Aborigines are entitled to preserve their cultural identity, while remaining open to others. Aborigines should not be forced to assimilate...Having the right to maintain their identity, Aborigines should have the opportunity to choose their lifestyle. If they integrate into the surrounding society, it should be as a free choice.¹⁵

However, those and similar words have come far too late for both groups affected by

Justice”, *Catholic Social Justice Series*, No. 45, ACSJC, North Sydney, 2002, p.13

¹⁴ Sandie Cornish, “The Catholic Human Rights Tradition and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”, *ACSJC Occasional Paper*, No.21, Collins Dove, North Blackburn, Victoria, 1994, p. 19

combined government and Catholic policies – the people of the Tiwi Islands and all the Coloured children who were removed to Garden Point Mission in the years 1941-1975. Present-day arguments based on religious liberty and the right to maintain culture, even the notion that there might be significant cultural and spiritual rights to land, appear to have relevance today whereas in the earlier periods in Aboriginal-Catholic interaction they were absent. As Sandie Cornish observes:

...respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality had not always been present in the approach or pronouncements of the Church...papal teachings too have been slow to come to grips with the relationship of indigenous peoples to the land and the fact that the land is essential to the spirituality and traditional religious beliefs of some indigenous peoples.¹⁶

Some might argue that Tiwi design, as is evident in robes and other Church adornments – for example the image of (Aboriginal) Mother and Child, or Aboriginal Madonna, on display in Saint Mary's Star of the Sea cathedral in Darwin has a design on the clothing, and images in the background that are distinctly Tiwi. This is a somewhat belated attempt by the Catholic Church to acknowledge Tiwi in some small way.

Only a small number of Aboriginal people from these four main sectors – Tiwi Islands, Port Keats, Daly River and Coloureds from Garden Point Mission would enter into the religious order in a much later period, which perhaps indicates that Catholic conversion, or was it 'Catholic education'?, was not as total or successful as might have been at first envisaged or expected. The most successful convert was Sister Basil, a graduate convert of Port Keats Mission. She entered the special Sacred Heart society as Demkardith Kilingkiling Thardim in the early 1960s – the first Aboriginal woman to enter any religious congregation. It was recorded by her contemporaries of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Congregation that "she entered lasting life in the Dreaming on 12 April 1999".¹⁷ One of those contemporaries, Elizabeth Pike, while finding it difficult to express in words "the boundaries of love for those born into a new life with Jesus, lamented:

Today, many of our Aboriginal communities are suffering from the loss of their ritual and ceremony. This has deprived the young of their beliefs and close-knit family relationships...Many hearts and spirits are broken and have become damaged beyond repair and can no longer find the way back in order

¹⁵ ACBC 1990 Pastoral Letter, in Sandie Cornish, Op. Cit., pp.20-21

¹⁶ Ibid., p.21

¹⁷ Elizabeth Pike, "The colours of spring", *Madonna* [A Jesuit Publication], July/August 2006. <http://www.madonnamagazine.com.au/articles/spring06/pike.html>. Accessed 3 Nov. 2006

to go forward...I...strongly believe that the saints and our ancestors are still singing their songs and stories through many people today. It is vital that the stories are continually heard and lived out in our rituals and ceremonies.¹⁸

The supposed moral superiority of white women was used as a measurement in judgement of Aboriginal women, indeed Aboriginal people as a whole, as it was subsequently deemed that Aboriginal people lacked moral codes of any order. Consequently, Aboriginal people needed white missionaries to right that discrepancy. White women insisted, and were backed by white men, that their claim to moral superiority was inherent and therefore valid due to their maternal roles and capabilities (or potential), yet Aboriginal women somehow missed out on these inherent female attributes. On the frontier, this moral code firmly entrenched a superiority which not only dictated a moral ordering of the sexes, placing (white) women at the very top of the colonial hierarchy, it subjugated Aboriginal people, not just Aboriginal women, to sub-human status.

Antoinette Burton¹⁹ highlights the effects of imperialism and colonialism on Indian women in general. She emphasises that historians need to re-examine “the imperial feminist past”, so too does this historian remind all that historians need to re-examine a broad cross-section of the ‘imperial Australian past’. One only needs to superimpose ‘feminism’ with ‘Aboriginal’ to clearly hear Burton’s message:

It is tempting to see history, as...historians have tended to see empire, as something “out there”, separate from everyday life and from the politics of contemporary struggle. And yet if feminist movements are to be genuinely historically grounded, they cannot “draw the line”. They must be willing to enter into dialogue with them; they must acknowledge the historicity of the present.²⁰

Peggy Brock speaks of this superiority and colonial hierarchy, and long-lasting religious change in the introductory chapter of *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change* :²¹

The introduction of Christianity to communities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries occurred within a complex globalizing context which frequently, but not inevitably, led to colonial interference. Sometimes the uptake of Christianity pre-dated formal colonialism, sometimes it followed

¹⁸ Elizabeth Pike, “The colours of spring” *Madonna* [A Jesuit Publication], July/August 2006, Op cit.

¹⁹ Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill & London, 1994

²⁰ Antoinette Burton, Op. Cit., p.24

²¹ Peggy Brock, Op. Cit., p.1

colonialism, and in many communities it continued as an important religious influence long after colonial rule ended.²²

An important factor to be remembered is that during colonial rule, and to the present, the appropriation and monopolisation of Christian knowledge and overall missionary zeal is continued by colonised peoples themselves. “Many of the people involved in the process of religious change were [are] members of the societies being proselytized”.²³ These statements from observers such as Burton and Brock help reinforce those notions of white superiority in general, and especially remind us just how much white women have let Aboriginal women down. The author of this thesis details some of this when challenging the claim that the 1894 *Constitution Amendment Act* (SA) granted inclusive female enfranchisement:

The unsubstantiated claim regarding all women’s suffrage has perpetuated a myth ensuring the determined denial of the rights of Indigenous Australian women...the claim of an inclusive women’s suffrage is a serious misrepresentation of a significant chapter in white Australian women’s history. Long before the Australian Constitution’s Section 51 excluded Aboriginal women, they had been disqualified from full participation in white society. While the concept of equality, especially equality before the law, is regarded as hallowed in the traditional Australian legal and political frameworks, it was not honoured in regard to the Indigenous people...of this country”.²⁴

The sad fact is that the 1894 Bill is still widely regarded as some type of benchmark in Australian women’s liberation, yet a century on still had Aboriginal women, Coloured children and Coloured women subjected to regressive and racist legislation and controlled within white regimes of powerful bigotry and prejudice. “While white South Australian women and their male supporters celebrated and congratulated themselves and South Australian society on being a “moral” one, Indigenous women, and men, and children sat and starved, or were enslaved on the periphery of that society. They remain seated there today”.²⁵

²² Peggy Brock, Op. Cit., p.2 in reference to J.D.Y. Peel. *Religious Encounter and the Yoruba*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2000, p.7 Peel made the important observation and comment when analysing the impact of Christianity and eventual religious change on Indigenous peoples, and specifically Yoruba people : “Christianity cannot possibly become Yoruba without some Yoruba first becoming Christian”.

²³ Peggy Brock, Op. Cit., p.2

²⁴ Sue Stanton, “Sisterhood, Citizenship and Social Justice: How far have Indigenous Women’s Rights advanced at the New Millennium?”, Elizabeth McMahon and Brigitta Olubus (eds.), *Women Making Time: Contemporary Feminist Critique and Cultural Analysis*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, WA, 2006, p. 156

²⁵ Ibid. pp.160-161

According to Burton, nineteenth century white women, especially those who claimed feminist status were insistent that “women were not only inherently more moral than men; they were also the vessels through which the moral improvement of society could be achieved...both historically and culturally, [the role] resonated with Christian evangelical principles...”²⁶

There were those nineteenth century feminists, such as Sarah Lewis, who advocated that Christianity was that which “brought to light the true value of women” as well. Later feminists contributed to the emancipation of (western or Anglo) women “to the triumph of Christian principles”.²⁷ Burton states that Lewis made comparison between the treatment of women in Christian countries as opposed to women’s positions in the former ‘pagan’ countries, Greece and Rome. Burton also quotes Josephine Butler’s claims that although “no God-fearing rulers could justify imposing regulation on conquered peoples...it is a happy thing that the Anglo-Saxon race still holds firmly to principles which are derived from the Ethics of Christ and which will always so long as they exist gain the ascendancy”.²⁸

As Burton explains “it was this Christian ethic that explained and ultimately justified Anglo-Saxon supremacy over native races”.²⁹ However, Anglo-Saxon supremacy, and the various experiments carried out under a number of Christian codes including Catholicism, has done little to improve the life chances and choices of most Aboriginal people. Even though it is claimed that some mission societies provided haven for many fleeing from frontier violence, at a number of locations Australia-wide, governments and missions alike, according to some interpretations, condoned, or at least ignored settler practices. Some would go as far as to justify their complicity in government programs by stating “it was for their own good”. The haven and “education” program that was created on the Tiwi Islands offered much in the way of Catholic conversion, but little else.

The ‘education’ experiment that was part of the three pillars of Catholic policy, in most part, proved a failure in the Tiwi Islands. Catholic Education NT issued the news

²⁶ Antoinette Burton, *Op. Cit.*, p.42, see also Catherine Hall, “The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology”.in Sandra Burman, (ed.), *Fit Work for Women*, Croom Helm, London, 1979, pp.15-31

²⁷ Sarah Lewis, *Woman’s Mission* (1839), pp.10-12; 141 as quoted in Burton, *Op. Cit.*,

²⁸ Josephine Butler , *British Parliamentarian 1890s-1900s* in Antoinette Burton, *Op. Cit.*, p.153

²⁹ *Ibid* p. 153

that a report in *The Australian* stated that some Aboriginal schools were to expel the influence of the Catholic Church from their classrooms after some 90 years of “Catholic education”. The article titled “Aboriginal schools look to ‘expel’ Church”³⁰ cited Nguiu community president Gawain Tipiloura who supposedly claimed that the Church was not providing sufficient education service to the community’s children. Gawain Tipiloura commented:

I believe they have got to move on. They are not really up to the job. We really need to take control of the education in our community. That’s something we have never really been involved in.³¹

The Catholic schools on the Tiwi Islands and four other remote community schools have, for quite some time, been run by the Catholic Church and fully funded by the government. Dr Bill Griffiths of the Darwin-based Northern Territory Catholic Education Office responded to *The Australian* report, by acknowledging the “woeful” state of remote education stating that “the church would stay only if it had the confidence of the communities – [adding]...We are in these communities by invitation. If we are not wanted, we will not be there”.³²

While Tiwi people have had numerous cross cultural encounters with peoples of different nationalities mostly they have only been exposed to the Catholic ‘education’ system. Nowadays Tiwi, even though they have been acculturated, not educated, to the same degree as the Catholic missionaries they remain strong in their own life direction. This is a sign of their strong cultural ethos, enabling them to make such decisions as Gaiwan Tipiloura speaks of in *The Australian* article.

The earlier chapter in relation to understanding Aboriginal religion leads to a similar type of consideration that could and should be applied in attempts to understand the differences, and perhaps too, the similarities between Aboriginal interpretations of magisteria, and that held/understood by western Christianity. Why was it incomprehensible for Christianity, and for the purposes of this study, Catholicism, to understand that Aboriginal religion, like western Christianity, was peoples’ way of trying to comprehend the world they lived in? Both branches of religions are based on faith – the ‘Dreaming’ has been so wrongfully interpreted and consequently

³⁰ This article available at: <http://www.cathnews.com/news/507/169.php>.

³¹ Gawain Tipiloura, as quoted in *The Australian*, 29 July, 2005, at: <http://www.cathnews.com/news/507/169.php>, Accessed 2 August 2005.

³² Dr Bill Griffiths, as quoted in *The Australian*, 29 July, 2005, at:

demeaned when, in reality, it was the expression of faith. If the “*credo quia absurdum*” (I believe because it is absurd), can be applied by Christians to Aboriginal ‘Dreaming’ or religious concepts, so too might it apply to the religious concepts of Catholics, or overall Christianity. Just as there are those who might scoff at ‘Dreaming’ stories as wistful myths and fantasies, so might one describe Catholicism’s belief in Sacred Scriptures – supposedly written by God as fanciful and symbolic.

Mark Perakh in his article “Incompatible Magisteria” illustrates what some may consider ‘fanciful and symbolic’ when he presents his argument about the incompatibility of science and western religion, and the many justifications that may be offered in support of either western science and organised western religion :

These are all serious and respectable reasons. They deserve analysis and discussion. They assure religions’ enormous power of survival. They belong in philosophy and theology...Neither religion nor science can answer many vexing questions regarding the intrinsic essence of the world we live in, but science does not pretend to know more than it is capable of discovering through observation, experimentation and interpretation, based on facts and reason. Religions, on the other hand, claim to know the ultimate truth, based on supposed revelations via channels unreachable through scientific methods...There is *only one science*, which freely admits its imperfection...There are many thousands of *different* “ultimate truths” claimed by various religions. This mere fact makes it doubtful that religious dogma may be trusted even to such the limited extent which would constitute just a small fraction of the level of trust in science.³³

It has been claimed by some individuals, in that group of Coloured children rounded up and taken to Garden Point Mission, especially in the early 1940s, that they owe the Catholic missionaries for their lives – that in itself is a tragedy.³⁴ The tragedy is that they left behind families, and Mothers, shattered communities and clans whose cohesiveness was destroyed as a result of removal of core personnel from its ranks. All because Anglos decided they knew better and they had the capacity, the resources and the will to destroy these communities and clans. Moreover they never delivered fully on their promises. It is only now, and probably since the release of the Stolen Generations report that some Christian missions, sometimes reluctantly, have admitted their complicity in government policies of removal, protection and

<http://www.cathnews.com/news/507/169.php>. Accessed 2 August 2005.

³³ Mark Perakh, “Incompatible Magisteria” at <http://www.talkreason.org/articles/magisteria.cfm> posted 27 August 2002. Accessed: 11 October 2006.

³⁴ Personal communication – Anonymous informants: recorded interview – transcript SS/OO/CCGPM – No. 3/5. Darwin and Daly River, 15 June 2000

assimilation.

Colonialism's culture, ably assisted by Christian 'ethic' was kept alive by the culture of terror, quite often accompanied by violence. Fear was upheld and disseminated through the channels of prayer and supposition, rumour, heresy and gossip, and narration. Concepts of wildness and savagery, and some unfathomable secret obsession and fascination, indeed addiction and desire, drove coloniser authorities, including Christians, Catholic missionaries and associates. Nicholas Dirks reflects on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, as he too, recognises this:

[For Anglo colonisers] Culture is seen both as horrific excess and as societal self-fashioning, for the history that constructed the categories of rational and wild, civilized and savage tells Conrad's story over and over again: the heart of darkness is at once the collective psyche of the colonizer and the totalizing culture of domination enabled by colonial rule.³⁵

This Heart of Darkness mindset is also reflected in the previously referred to fictional work of *The Germ Growers*, whose Anglo characters come into contact with "ungodly" and "non-spiritual" Aboriginal people in the Kimberley area of Western Australia. All these styles of fictional writings, together with government policies and agendas, influence Anglo thinking by intermixing an alien theme into all descriptions and interpretations of Aboriginal spiritual tenets.

Ian Watt³⁶ regards Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as "the enduring and most powerful literary indictment of imperialism". Many make comparison with these, and other works of fiction, such as Sven Lindqvist's "*Exterminate All the Brutes*"³⁷ in the search for answers and reasons to European imperialism, and genocide. Intellectual and academically sanitised journeys into these hearts of darkness are made from the safe distance of theses, chapters, and books, but they do not succeed in explaining to conquered Indigenous peoples that the catastrophic consequences of European imperialism was a historical journey needed to be undertaken. European, and in the Australian setting, British world expansion, accompanied by various acts of dispossession and genocide, shamelessly defended right into the twenty-first century, created habits of superiority and language and ensured political subjugation that endures.

³⁵ Nicholas B. Dirks (ed.), *Colonialism and Culture*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1992, p.18

³⁶ Ian Watt, *Conrad: In the Nineteenth Century*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1979

³⁷ Sven Lindqvist, "*Exterminate All the Brutes*": *One Man's Odyssey into the Heart of Darkness and*

European imperialism and capitalist expansion created the Diaspora of Aboriginal peoples in Australia today. While terms such as Diaspora seem to be reserved for other more widely dispersed peoples in other lands, that term, as with the term refugee, are easily applicable to Aboriginal people, including Coloureds. The Diaspora of Coloureds, from Garden Point Mission and from missions throughout the Northern Territory, formed vibrant communities in several Territory locations. Ultimately, they all played major roles in the development of the northern region of Australia. Perhaps then, the assimilation programs they were forced to be part of did work for Anglo expansionism and imperialism after all.

Even though social policy of the day may have recognised some of the special situations of disadvantaged and underprivileged Coloureds, certain privileges were conferred only to those who were inmates of various missions and government institutions. Not all 'urban-dwelling' Coloureds had access to the rewards of assimilation. Just as the idea of an ideal 1950s Australia exists as an Anglo urban phenomenon, there is also the myth that all Coloureds or assimilated Aboriginal people were interactive and inclusive partners in the Australian contract. This is simply not true. While removing Coloured children from families and incarcerating them at places such as Garden Point Mission assisted in the easing of the so-called threat to white Australia, it created long-lasting problems for those Coloureds which remain today. Consequently these actions have ensured there is no possible way these societies could be ever reconstituted.

The bigger population centre of the Top End, Darwin, was meant to provide a great northern province that would be the base for hinterland settlement, supported by a busy port which would ply lucrative trade with Asian neighbours. Unfortunately it remained trapped in the colonial mindset of conqueror mentality and instead devoted much energy to the cultural assimilation of Aboriginal people in those early days. Like the rest of Australia, well into the post-World War II period, the Northern Territory revelled in its frontier identity, while still having flashbacks to imperial British roots. Colonialism was its most forceful driving agenda.

Post World War government made some feeble attempts at dismantling some of the

racist policies once used as the basis of legislation and control. However, no one got the message to the main centre of white suburbia. Coloured women, some of which had spent their earlier years at Garden Point Mission, but also other women from other centres and institutions, gravitated toward Darwin in the post-war years. Though this period may be described by western writers and historians as a new and more progressive period in the history of the Northern Territory, especially the Top End, for the Coloured population it was still a period when they were controlled by a neo-colonial government. Governments, its authorities and associates such as Christian missionaries, continued to dictate the social order, and it was not just white men who were determined to keep the clean lines of colonial social order in place. White women too were complicit in this racist social ordering. They were also jealous of Coloured women's sexuality and their sexual attraction to white and other men. This is well-documented by authors such as Ann McGrath in their writings of frontier black and white relations. The post-war northern frontier was still nervous about hybridity. The old nagging colonial fear of it continued and "half-caste" offspring still found their way to institutions such as Garden Point and Retta Dixon Home.

Blacks and Coloureds, whether they were within their own urban, rural or remote communities, had their own values, orientations and social rules, and it was because of these codes of conduct such communities as Garden Point sustained daily life, not because of the introduction of Catholicism. Their own rules were important in the white dominated and controlling mission world. Overall, the "half-caste" culture, which had its northern beginnings at Kahlin Compound, moved with the released inmates as they made their homes in little shanty communities around Darwin proper – at sites known as Police Paddock and Parap Camp. The origins of Coloured culture and community struggle and solidarity was certainly evident well before the establishment of the later-day Garden Point Mission. It was sustained and its affirmation expressed through the involvement of young Aboriginal men involved in local football – both in Darwin and in the Tiwi Islands. Such organisations as the 1930s formed Australian Half-caste Progressive Association, under the 1950s leadership of Jack McGinness, supported by the North Australian Workers Union, still fought for answers to child removal, workers' rights and equal wages. Even the local paper, *The Northern Standard*, reported on the 9 March 1951 meeting, "condemning the Federal government for its persecution of not only the Half-castes

but the ‘full-bloods’ as well”.³⁸

While Garden Point Mission inmates were not part of these activities, and the issues in relation to equal wages and workers’ rights may not have been specifically relevant to them, they too were still under the repressive *Aboriginal Act* legislation and restrictions. However, they were in similar situation to those Aboriginal refugees from far-flung Territory communities held for processing at what was known as the “Berrimah holding yard”. The establishment of Garden Point Mission, first as a place to process “incorrigible natives”, later as a “school” for Coloureds, was essentially designed for the same purposes as Retta Dixon Home in Darwin. Isolated and securely controlled institutions were established, in the main part, in response to those assimilation policies that arose out of the fear of miscegenation and its perceived threat to white racial purity. That is, mostly it was a way of maintaining control of Coloured females’ reproduction capacity. By the 1950s, it responded to and was mainly restricted to redemptionist ideals of Christian and Catholic missionaries. The north of Australia may have been rendered a safe place for white folk, but for Coloured and other colonised peoples of the region, it was not the lifestyle of their choice. They were incarcerated, marginalised, disempowered, and had no legitimate status within the broader Australian contract.

The forces of colonialism that this thesis focuses on legitimated dispossession and genocide and those authorities, government bureaucrats and Catholic missionaries of the Sacred Heart, were complicit in both dispossession and genocide. There were three major participants affected by these processes – the perpetrators, the victims and those who claim they were merely bystanders. Those bystanders, whether wittingly or unintentionally, involved themselves in the conspiracy that was western colonialism. Just as Goldhagen in his book, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* rightly identifies perpetrators and bystanders as dual participants in “crimes against humanity”, so does Colin Tatz make reference to those “companions to events”. Tatz also identifies a definition of genocide that Australia is guilty of – under the auspices of Article II of the United Nations resolution – that is “the systematic attempt to destroy, by various means, a defined group’s essential foundations”.³⁹ Colonial genocidal intent, and

³⁸ As reported in *The Northern Standard*, 9 March 1951 in Sue Stanton, “The Australian Half-Caste Progressive Association: The Fight for Freedom and Rights in the Northern Territory”, *Journal of Northern Territory History*, No. 4, 1993, p.41

³⁹ Sue Stanton, “The Australian Half-Caste Progressive Association: The Fight for Freedom and Rights

companionship, and their long-term after-affects are real, and Robert Manne and Raimond Gaita are others who also believe and reinforce the notion that “genocide can be committed by non-murderous means, such as the biological assimilation of Aborigines”. Hannah Arendt is one of many who brought this idea in regard to other definitions and perspectives on terms such as genocide, and how these attacks on culture and group dynamics place groups, indeed entire societies, in serious jeopardy. State sanctioned removal of children and subsequent ‘civilising and Christianising’ programs under the auspice of assimilation, even integration surely describe those destructive systematic attempts.

Raimond Gaita especially spoke strongly of this complicity and will not excuse the actions of governments and missions, and ordinary white citizens for their involvement in genocidal actions through complicity in assimilationist agendas and programs. According to Gaita all are connected, even in the present, by virtue of what he describes as “the inexpungable moral dimension”.⁴⁰ Tatz too states “one can be a companion to something even in the act of opposing it”, and he adds “it seems never to occur to those who deny involvement, or legal or moral guilt, or who distance themselves from past events, that they were, and are, indeed companions, and therefore in some degree complicit.”⁴¹

It is clearly evident that the legacies of colonisation, remains mostly unchanged for Aboriginal people, even at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Aboriginal people, including those Coloureds who were given special education at Garden Point Mission so as they could be useful and productive members of society, have not been offered much in the way of socioeconomic equality. A combination of several factors such as past and present cultural conflict, unsympathetic and continuing inappropriate policy making, and current socioeconomic disparity guarantees the ongoing success of alienation and assimilation as they means by which Aboriginal people are denied full participation in the overall Australian social contract. Larissa Behrendt reinforces this hypothesis in regard to past government policies, such as child removal experienced in Indigenous communities and families today. But as the *Kruger* case illustrated, this has been compounded by the absence of a rights framework that can protect from

in the Northern Territory”, Op cit., p.6

⁴⁰ Raimond Gaita, “Genocide and Pedantry”, *Quadrant*, July-August 1997, pp. 41-5

⁴¹ Colin Tatz, *Genocide in Australia*, AIATSIS Research Discussion Paper No.8, AIATSIS, Canberra, 1999, p.4

unfair and racist policy making.⁴² As well, there is also the absence of an education policy that includes the re-education of Anglo and other Australian people who are still active in the repression of Aboriginal people.

Just as Coloured children were kidnapped and incarcerated under past welfare and assimilation policies, there still remains, for colonised Aboriginal people living within the colonial state, a vulnerability and exposure to the constraints of colonial policies. The policy of “protection” offered no guarantees of safety or any semblance of rights, just as present-day legislation and interpretations of law, definitions of terms and actions of past government authorities offer no apologies or recompense for past injustices. The Kruger⁴³ case was the first Stolen Generations case to be tested in Australia’s High Court that was summarily dismissed on the grounds that Alex Kruger and others were not disadvantaged or violated by any effects that the Northern Territory Ordinance, which allowed for the removal of Coloured children from their families. The High Court decided that such claims by Coloureds in relation to violation of rights, including freedom of movement and denial of equality, as well as denial of the right of freedom of religion, under s.116 of the Constitution, were non-substantial. Consequently Alex Kruger was given a clear message that, once again, he had no rights in this country – back then or even now.

Mostly, those colonisers who spearheaded the conversion activities truly believed in their peculiar enlightened generosity that everyone in the world should be rewarded with entry to a higher society. In most instances that was to be based on British society. As with colonised Indigenous peoples, in the most part, they were both curious and keen to engage with new peoples from other cultures. What the colonisers did not, and mostly still do not appreciate, is that Indigenous peoples prefer to do most things their own way, at their own pace, and for their own reasons and specific needs. The cultural struggle, during and even after the legacies of assimilation has been never-ending as “the agencies of conversion included European modes of capitalism, and Christianity, law and alienation”, and education.⁴⁴

⁴² Larissa Behrendt, “Indigenous Self-Determination: Rethinking the Relationship of Rights and Economic Development”, *University of New South Wales Law Journal*, Vol. 24, No.3, 2001, pp.850-861. Reproduced in Gus Worby and Lester-Irabinna Rigney (eds.), *Sharing Spaces: Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Responses to Story, Country and Rights*, API Network, Australia Research Council, Curtin University of Technology, WA, 2006, pp. 276-287

⁴³ *Kruger v. Commonwealth (1997) 190 CLR 1.*

⁴⁴ Judith Simon and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, (eds), *A Civilising Mission ? Perceptions and Representations of the New Zealand Native Schools System*, Auckland University Press, Auckland,

When the term assimilation is used in contexts such as in this recording of the Garden Point Mission experience, and in other Indigenous peoples' experiences with Christian missionaries and government authorities, most non-indigenous people become extremely sensitive and feel they must make justification for such practices. Instead of being able to acknowledge the destructive forces of such an agenda they usually misunderstand and misinterpret what the Indigenous researcher/writer is attempting to do, and claim that indigenous bias guarantees criticisms that are unwarranted and unfair. It is clearly evident for the Indigenous researcher/writer, or social historian, that assimilation was never meant to be an exercise that saw Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples acculturated into European or Christian society as equal - in the eyes of God or (white) man. The purpose of assimilation was about a so-called civilising agenda, which included dual Europeanising and Christianising purposes. Assimilation was never to be understood as an attempt to integrate Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples into the wider European or non-Indigenous society.

It is a well-known fact that in most 'civilising' or Christianising experiences, languages other than English, (or in the early days of the Australian Catholicising mission, also Latin) were not permitted to be spoken. As far as the survival of Tiwi language, it can only be concluded that this is due more to Tiwi resistance and resilience than the benevolence of Catholic missionaries for Tiwi language and culture. Perhaps there may have been more intercultural accommodation that I care to give credence to, but still I am left wondering just how much of the following Maori experience could be related to the Ngui or Tiwi Island experience, taking into account the isolation of the Tiwi Islands, especially prior to the current period.

...it was Pakeha who translated books into Maori and published them. Though *Robinson Crusoe* was translated in 1852...books in Maori were generally restricted to religious texts. As Maori leaders such as Wiremu Tamihana knew full well, literacy in English gave their people independent access to global knowledge. In communities where Maori was the language of everyday life outside school, education in the medium of English did not seem a threat...As late as 1930, 96.6 per cent of Maori pupils of native Schools spoke mainly Maori at home. Despite the bitter memories of being strapped for speaking your mother tongue, it was not the native School system, but mass urbanisation after 1945, that brought the Maori language to its knees in the 1970s.⁴⁵

2001, Foreword p.ix.

⁴⁵ Judith Simon and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Op cit.,

Questions to be asked are – when will this happen to Tiwi language?, considering the islands are no longer isolated. Or is it already happening? How important is isolation to preservation of language and culture? As with the history of Coloured women, as well as men, in most Australian Aboriginal history, and is especially so of the northern frontier, it is difficult to assess impacts or implications, or what roles those people themselves played in a number of settings in bringing about the destruction of their own languages and cultures. Due to the isolation of Garden Point Mission it is also no wonder that there is a lack of materials to source from for more detailed information from Coloured in-mates, and Tiwi people generally. Furthermore, because the focus of the mission was one concentrated on the lives and experiences of Catholic Missionaries, their agendas and objectives, and the purpose of the mission in general, Coloured convertees had only warranted scant attention in both literature in the timeframe in which this thesis is set. Peggy Brock⁴⁶ notes that in “missionized communities”, most of the record of interaction “is generated by the missionaries and their organizations”.⁴⁷ This is true of the Garden Point Mission and overall Tiwi Island experience.

Mostly the realities of the lives of Coloureds at Garden Point Mission have been obscured. The Coloured children and others arrived from various locations throughout the Northern Territory, as a result of different circumstances, some of which will never be known. Many were due to government racial and biological agendas, legitimated through various legislations – all as part of the overall assimilation agenda. Due to the fact that Garden Point was an isolated and exclusive community within the larger and also relatively isolated Tiwi Island community, there were not the same outside influences and interferences as most mainland communities. It may be described by some as a segregated community. It was segregated from the mainland and especially from other mission stations as well as non-Aboriginal communities and people. In fact, during the Catholic mission period, the Tiwi Islands did not have the same Aboriginal or “ethnic” diversity as, for example Darwin, which is only a relatively short distance away. Therefore the presence of the Catholic Church and its missionaries, lay people and others, became the primary unifying factor for residents of the Tiwi Islands. The mission at Garden Point became a refuge as well as a prison, for Coloureds taken to the Tiwi Islands especially. While offering some

⁴⁶ Peggy Brock, Op cit.,

⁴⁷ Peggy Brock, Op cit . p.6

criticisms of their removals from homelands and families, as well as some complaints of missionaries, all Coloured informants agreed that the Mission was the cornerstone of unity for them. For it was here they were also offered emotional, spiritual, social, and some psychological support, but surprisingly, most informants credited Tiwi Islanders for providing this support more than anyone else.

This thesis does not claim to be a comprehensive examination of what has eventually proven to be the complex relationships between Aboriginal people and western authority, especially Christian authority. It is only a partial, exploratory investigation, and is far from inclusive of all players in the missionising matrix of colonialism and imperialism. Many people played vital roles in a number of historical contexts, from 1788 – colonial men, white women, Aboriginal women, men and children, British and Australian authorities, missions (of several denominations), including the Coloureds at Garden Point Mission. Most of these mentioned continue to play vital roles today, and we (both black and white) have to grapple to analyse and understand when such contradictory historical legacies are presented to us.

The purpose of this thesis was to examine and discuss some of the factors and processes that led to and impacted on Coloureds taken to Garden Point Mission as part of the colonisation and Christianising mandates of western authorities. As Mark Perakh points out human gullibility and the strong human desire to believe in miracles made conversion all that easier for Catholic missionaries at Garden Point. Missionaries preyed on the innocent and the naïve and, with the assistance of government legislation, were able to coerce or force their religious beliefs onto vulnerable and captive converts. Coloureds had no choice but to comply. They had no alternative but to accept the Catholic “truth” for it met the emotional requirements of confused and powerless captives. Both Coloureds and the invaded Tiwi Islanders desperately sought meaning to their separations, their usurpation, and their changed worlds. Their very survival meant all captives of Catholics at Garden Point, and the Tiwi Islands overall, whether desperate or otherwise, had to find meaning to their existence. They found comfort by embracing the philosophy and theology of the Catholic faith, without fully understanding the complex myriad of vexing questions, answers and messages which that philosophy and theology represented. Nor did any of those captives of Catholics know of the intricacies that drove colonialism. They all simply became entangled in a matrix of western colonial observation, interpretation,

and experimentation based on a western religious myth named Christianity. This Christianity is only in its infancy in comparison with Aboriginal religiousity.

Coloureds and Tiwi Islanders were expected to rely on Catholic 'truths' without knowing that mostly they were suppositions, that is, they were supposed 'truths' which did not contain specific or certain knowledge necessarily applicable to them. Just as many western scientists and rational others might question the validity of Christian 'truths' and be sceptical of certain revelations and miracles that are not supported by facts and reason, Aboriginal people too might have found these Catholic 'truths' to be incongruous with their own beliefs and reasoning. But were their belief systems, ways of knowing, and their explanations ever considered or afforded any respect whilst Catholics persisted in their pertinacious preaching and conversions? They were not.

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Personal Knowledge & Experience

Parap Camp, now known as Stuart Park, was the areas surveyed prior to the Second World War. Westralia, Charles and Duke Streets are the only streets left which still reflect the aligned tracks set out during the military occupation of that area. A.I.F. battalions occupied this area as it was the Army Staging Camp during the war years. Iron structures erected were known as Sidney William huts. In 1948 the Northern Territory Administration purchased these huts from the Army, along with some smaller huts at what was known as K9 Camp, a former Civil Construction Corps camp built in 1941. The Sidney William huts and the smaller fibro structures of K9 camp and surrounds were later to be occupied by both paying tenants and squatters and thus developed the Parap Camp Coloured community. The author's father purchased one of these ex-Army fibro structures in Charles Street and it remained the family home until the late 1970s.

Kurrindju – the head of Kungarakan country, southwest in the Wagait Reserve. Knowledge passed from Alyandubu (Wetjie), George Abalak (Jimin), Vai Stanton (Kurrung): "Kurrindju is always called the head of Kungarakany country" (evidence/transcript No. 784) in Mr Justice Toohey, *Report by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the Administrator of the Northern Territory*, Interim edition, Canberra, 1981 in *Finniss River Land Claim*, p.70

Many people, including Aboriginal and other ask what this landmass (Australia) was called before the arrival of Europeans and especially before its naming by the British. I can only surmise that different clans or nations of Aboriginal people had their own names for their own countries and estates. For example, particular portions or estates within Kungarakan country are known as Lok, followed by a name of particular significance for that particular area or region and the name for the bigger area which encompasses all these is Kurrindju.

The term ‘forced’, when describing what transpired in relation to conversion as part of the colonial experiment at Garden Point Mission was met with serious objection when I first submitted my PhD proposal and application for ethics clearance to the Human Ethics Committee at then Northern Territory University and outlined as part of my investigation “the forced conversion” of Coloureds to Catholicism. I am as perplexed about that objection now as I was in 2001.

The term “first Mother” (Kurrung) is deliberate as this denotes “biological”. Mother’s sisters are also Mothers.

The author of this thesis cannot successfully argue that her clans’ beliefs and religious concepts and spiritual ideas were not influenced to any degree by early Christian teachings, language or ritual. However, what can be asserted is that there are concepts and beliefs that are held, especially by Kungarakana that are not European/Christian or Indonesian or Asian. And neither can they be as most religious understandings, obligations and responsibilities are related to specific areas in Kungarakana country and revolve around animals and/or the natural landscape.

The term “sacred site” should be understood to mean a place of ceremonial significance where reaffirmation and re-focus on traditional or customary law is symbolically embedded, through song, story, dance and more often now depicted through representations in art. They are not places of worship as understood in a Christian sense and should not be thought to be analogous to the ark of the covenant or compared to Christian cathedrals or churches although some would argue that there are many parallels, especially with the Pentateuch or Torah.

Some Aboriginal and/or Indigenous philosophical, other understandings and principles may be described in the modern context mostly as “traditional ecological knowledge” or TEK, once also described by westerners as “folk science”.

In the present there are possibly even more categories of ‘Aboriginal’ designated to Aboriginal people by non-Aboriginal people.

The procuring of young girls needs to be clearly understood for what it really was, by those who would romanticise this part of Northern Territory history, and who tell stories of ‘true romance’ or companionship, by covering up the truth of the story of ‘blackboys’ and ‘drovers’ boys’. The other suggestion that those white men were ‘saving’ the young girls from tribal marriage or camp life is also misleading. The big story is yet to be told about those kidnappings, and of paedophilia, or perhaps what this author names ‘cross-dressing on the frontier’. The stories remain a large part of the oral history passed down through several generations, still largely unrecorded but well-known, even to this author. However, at present informants and contributors ask to remain anonymous for a variety of reasons.

During interviews conducted with a number of former inmates, some spoke of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, but were not prepared to have these matters documented in the thesis. Three informants have since withdrawn consent for use of their interviews and demanded that the materials be destroyed and another two are now deceased. Their materials have been destroyed as well.

The author of this thesis was confirmed into the Catholic faith by Bishop John

O'Loughlin in 1956 at St. Mary's Star of the Sea Church, Darwin, Northern Territory.

Sonia Smallacombe is Maramanindj from Daly River. Former Senior Lecturer at Charles Darwin University who is currently recording oral histories of former Garden Point Mission inmates.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Ngati Awa and Ngati Porou, Associate Professor in Education and Director of the International Research Institute for Maori and Indigenous Education at the University of Auckland.

Larissa Behrendt, Professor of Law and Indigenous Studies. Director of the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at UTS, Sydney, Director of the National Institute of Indigenous Law, Policy and Practice, UTS.

Although, essentially Aboriginal sovereignty was recognised in *Milirrpum v Nabalco* its scope was seriously limited and could be described as a lesser inherent sovereignty, with extremely limited rights.

In informal conversations with Larrakia Elders and others, the opinion was that there was a small population of Tiwi people who frequently travelled between the Tiwi Islands and the beaches of now-known Mindil, Casuarina and Rapid Creek. Also in old Darwin Aboriginal folklore there are stories about interaction with Tiwi and mainland Aboriginal groups, especially Larrakia. Tiwi and Larrakia tell stories of the coming to Darwin mainland beaches to perform ceremonies and burials, from the greater Darwin area to the area known as Buffalo Creek. Rapid Creek is still a significant meeting place for Larrakia. [Personal communication with several Larrakia people during a lifetime of listening to Larrakia stories, some of which are verified in the Sam Wells publication *Saltwater People: Larrakia Stories from Around Darwin*, recent Native Title hearings, Federal Court, Darwin, observation and participation as a Larrakia supporter in the Kenbi Land Claim



Ellen Rowena Abala Stroud
(24 July 1928 – 19 December 2002)

Source: S & B McDowell collection

Figure 1

**Certificate of Exemption for Vai Stanton 1950
granted under Aboriginals ordinance**

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA
Aboriginals Ordinance 1918-1943. Section 3A
No. 219

CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION

This is to Certify
that Violet STANTON
of DARWIN

is exempt from the provisions of the
ABORIGINALS ORDINANCE 1918-1943.

This certificate may be revoked at any
time by the Director of Native Affairs.

Dated this 20th day of June 1950

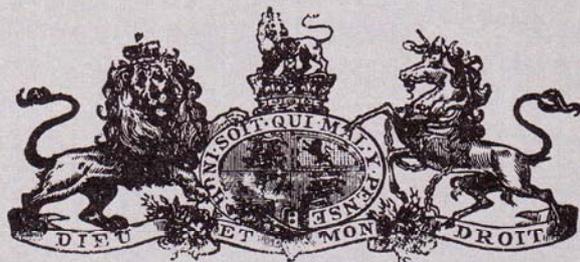
Garney
DIRECTOR OF NATIVE AFFAIRS



Vai Frances McGinness Stanton
born Mataranka, N.T. (19 September 1929 – 28 May 1995)

Source: Sue Stanton

Figure 2



Commonwealth of Australia Gazette.

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY.

[Registered at the General Post Office, Melbourne, for transmission by post as a newspaper.]

No. 2.]

MONDAY, 8TH JANUARY.

[1912.

THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA.

No. 16 of 1911.

AN ORDINANCE

Relating to Aborigines.

BE it ordained by the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, with the advice of the Federal Executive Council, in pursuance of the powers conferred by the *Northern Territory Acceptance Act 1910* and the *Northern Territory (Administration) Act 1910* as follows:—

1. This Ordinance may be cited as the *Aborigines Ordinance 1911*. Short title.

2. (1.) This Ordinance shall be incorporated and read Incorporation. as one with the *Northern Territory Aborigines Act 1910*, an Act of the State of South Australia in force in the Northern Territory as a law of that Territory.

(2.) In this Ordinance the expression "the Act" has reference to the *Northern Territory Aborigines Act 1910* as incorporated with this Ordinance.

C. 18459.

General power of custody and control of aboriginals vested in Chief Protector.

3. (1.) Without limiting or affecting any other powers conferred upon him by the Act, the Chief Protector shall be entitled at any time to undertake the care, custody, or control of any aboriginal or half-caste if in his opinion it is necessary or desirable in the interests of the aboriginal or half-caste for him to do so.

(2.) The powers of the Chief Protector under this section and the two next succeeding sections may be exercised whether the aboriginal or half-caste is under a contract of employment or not.

Delivery of custody or control of aboriginals or half-castes.

4. Any person having the custody or control of any aboriginal or half-caste or on whose premises any aboriginal or half-caste is living shall, on demand in writing by the Chief Protector, deliver the aboriginal or half-caste, or take all reasonable steps in his power to facilitate the delivery of the aboriginal or half-caste, into the custody of the Chief Protector or into the custody of a Protector or police officer authorized by the Chief Protector to receive the aboriginal or half-caste into his custody, and if he fails to do so shall be guilty of an offence against the Act.

Authority to police officer to take aboriginal or half-caste into his custody.

5. (1.) The Chief Protector may by writing authorize any police officer to take into his custody any aboriginal or half-caste.

(2.) The police officer so authorized may enter any premises where the aboriginal or half-caste is or is supposed to be and may take him into his custody.

(3.) A police officer who has taken any aboriginal or half-caste into his custody in pursuance of this section shall deal with the aboriginal or half-caste in accordance with the instructions of the Chief Protector.

(4.) Any person on whose premises any aboriginal or half-caste is shall, on demand by a police officer acting under this section and on production of his authority, facilitate, by all reasonable means in his power, the police officer in taking the aboriginal or half-caste into his custody.

Removal of aboriginal or half-caste from control where not properly treated.

6. (1.) Where any Protector or police officer has reason to believe that any aboriginal or half-caste is not being properly treated by any person having the custody or control of such aboriginal (whether as employer or otherwise), he may remove such aboriginal or half-caste from the custody or control of such person.

(2.) The Protector or police officer removing an aboriginal or half-caste in pursuance of this section shall forthwith give notice in writing, to the person from whose custody or control the removal is made, of the reason for the removal, and report to the Chief Protector the fact of the removal and the reasons therefor.

(3.) The Chief Protector may, if he thinks that the aboriginal or half-caste was removed for insufficient cause, direct that the aboriginal or half-caste be returned to the custody or control of the person from whose custody or control he was removed.

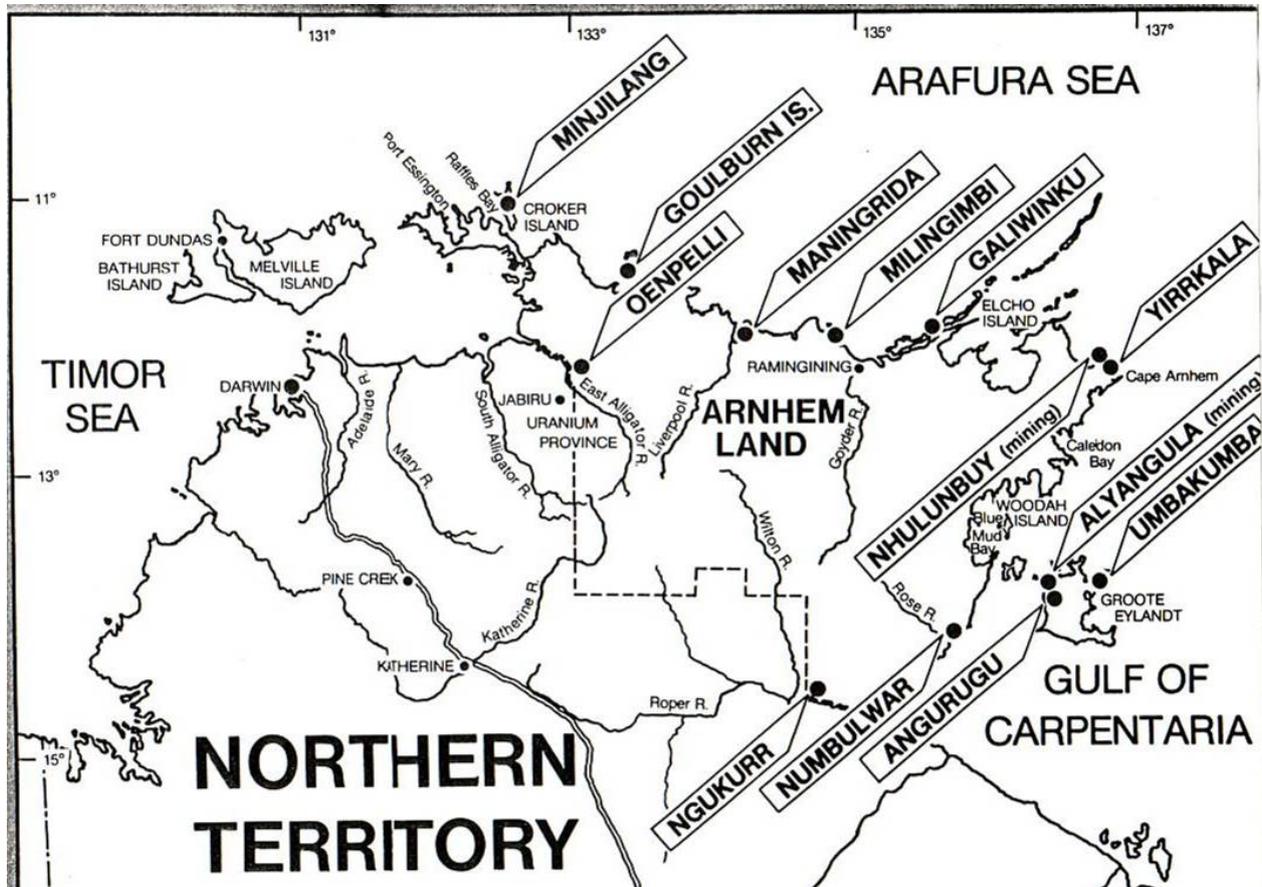
Unlawful entry on reserves.

7. (1.) Any person (not being an aboriginal, a Protector, a police officer, or an authorized official) who enters or remains on a reserve for aboriginals shall be guilty of an

Ordinance relating to Aboriginals.

Source: Northern Territory Archives

Figure 3

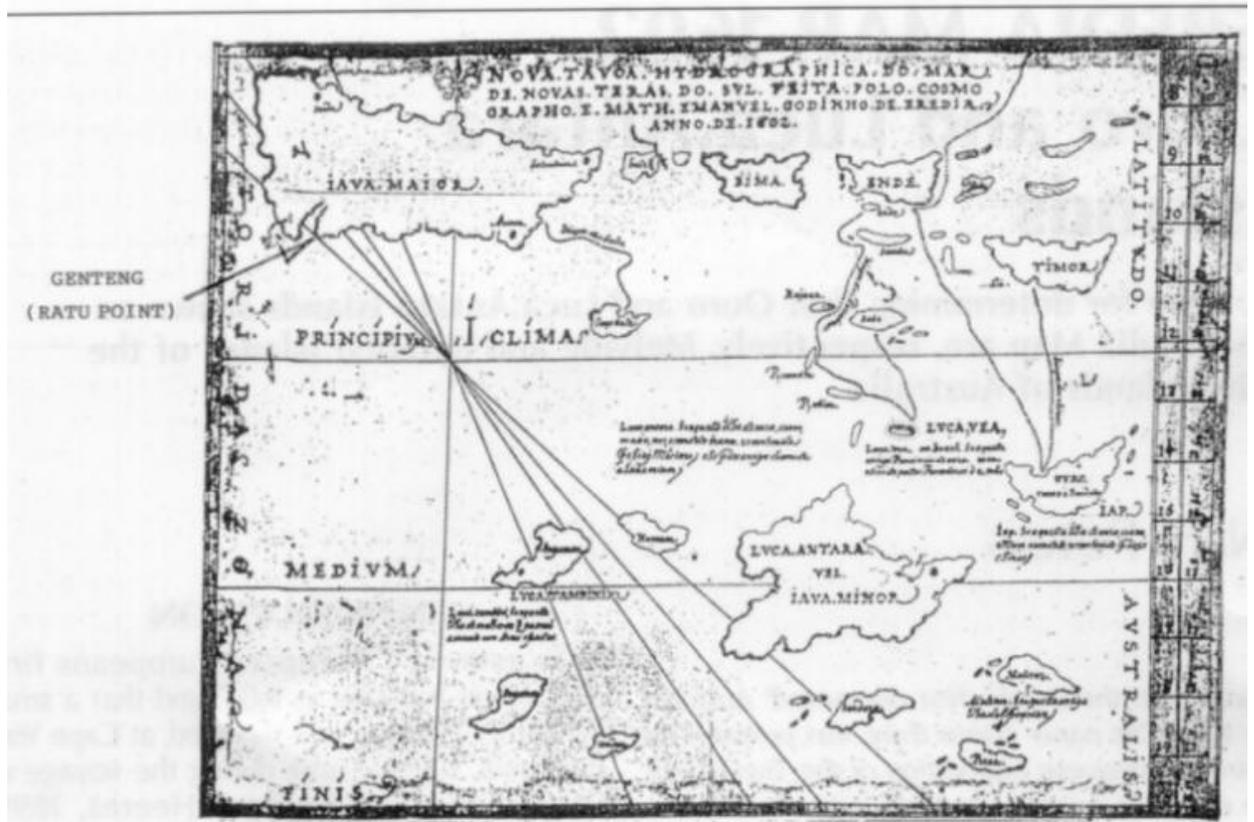


Northern Territory map showing Bathurst, Melville and Croker Islands to the north.

Source: Northern Land Council, Darwin

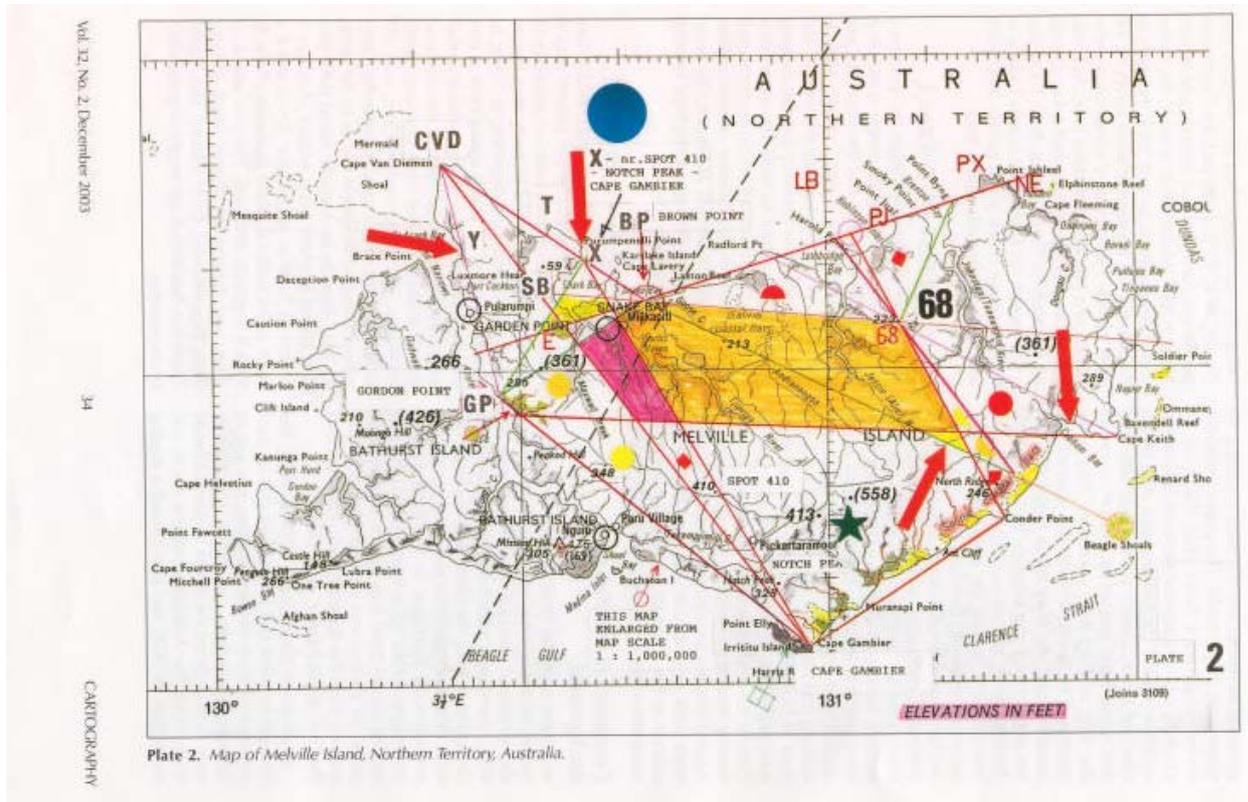
Figure 4

Eredia Map 1602



Emanuel Godinho de Eredia, Cartographer, of Goa, devised such map around 1600-1610.

Map showing the northern coastline of Australia joined to “Nova Guinea” with Indonesia, many of the Torres Strait Islands, Melville and Bathurst Islands.



Contemporary map superimposed showing how the Eredia map fits the northern area of the Australian coastline above Darwin

Source: *Cartography*, Mapping Sciences Institute, Australia, December 2003

Figure 5



Rowena Abala (3rd right back row) with other Coloured convertees on evacuation from the mission to South Australia during World War II. Taken at Saint Joseph's School, Balaklava, September 1943

Source: Uncle Doc Baban Collection

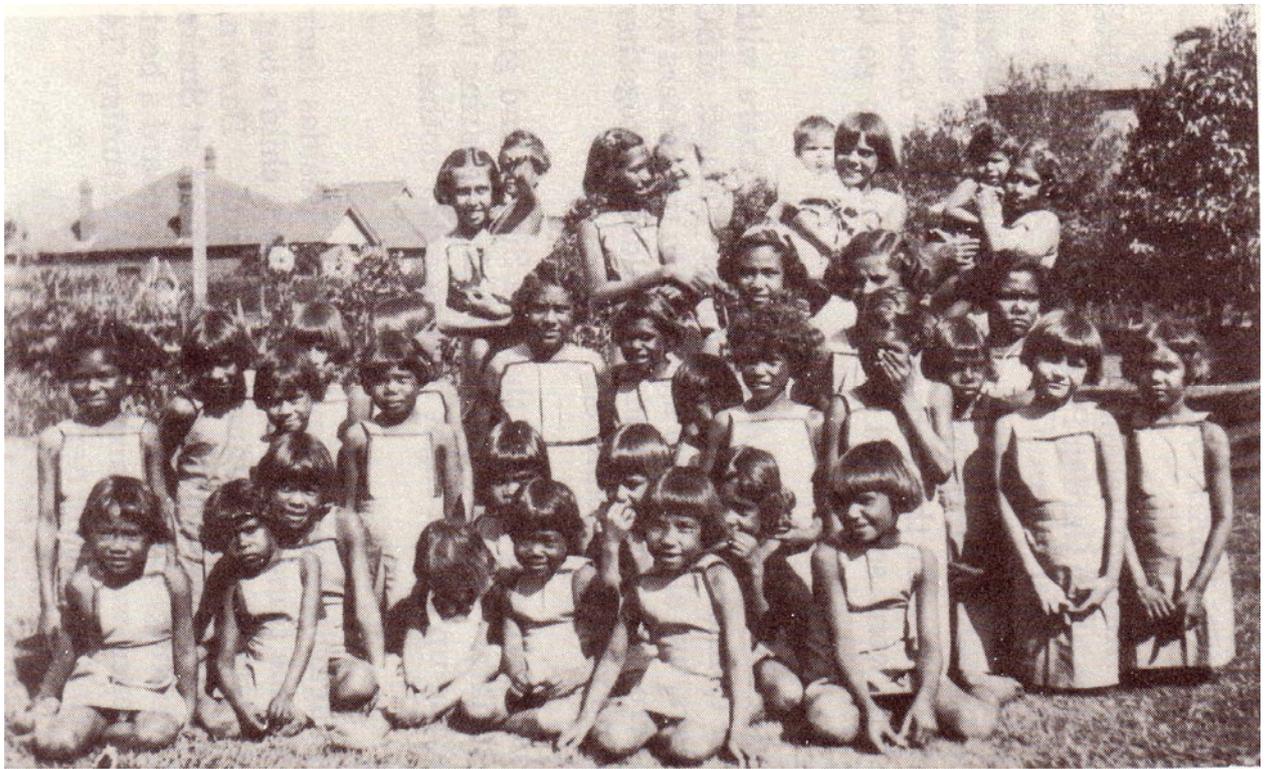
Figure 6



**Going Home Conference, Darwin 1994.
Some of the ‘survivors’ from the Northern Territory**

Source: Bringing them home- A Guide to the findings and recommendations of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. 1997

Figure 7



“The Trip South: all 35 of Melville Island Mission evacuated to Toorak”, Victoria.

Rowena Abala as a teenager holding Margaret (2nd from right back row)

Source: Thecla Brogan, *The Garden Point Mob*

Figure 8



**“The trip south: In Melbourne”, May 1942
Coloured Children performing “corroboree”.**

(Rowena Abala 2nd from right at rear) Source: Thecla Brogan, *The Garden Point Mob*
Figure 9

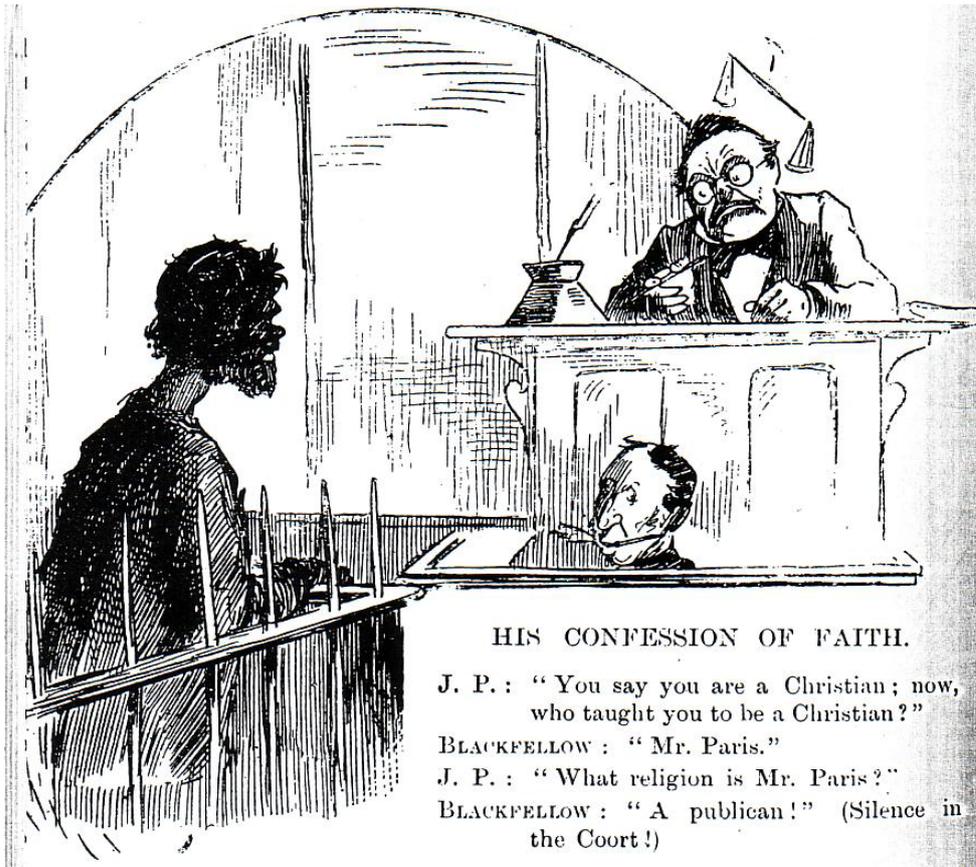


**Death and Destruction: Coercion and conversion
courtesy of colonisation**

Source: Image from front cover, C.D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*. Figure 10



The Bulletin 29 May 1890 **Civilisation: Colonisation, Conversion and Genocide**

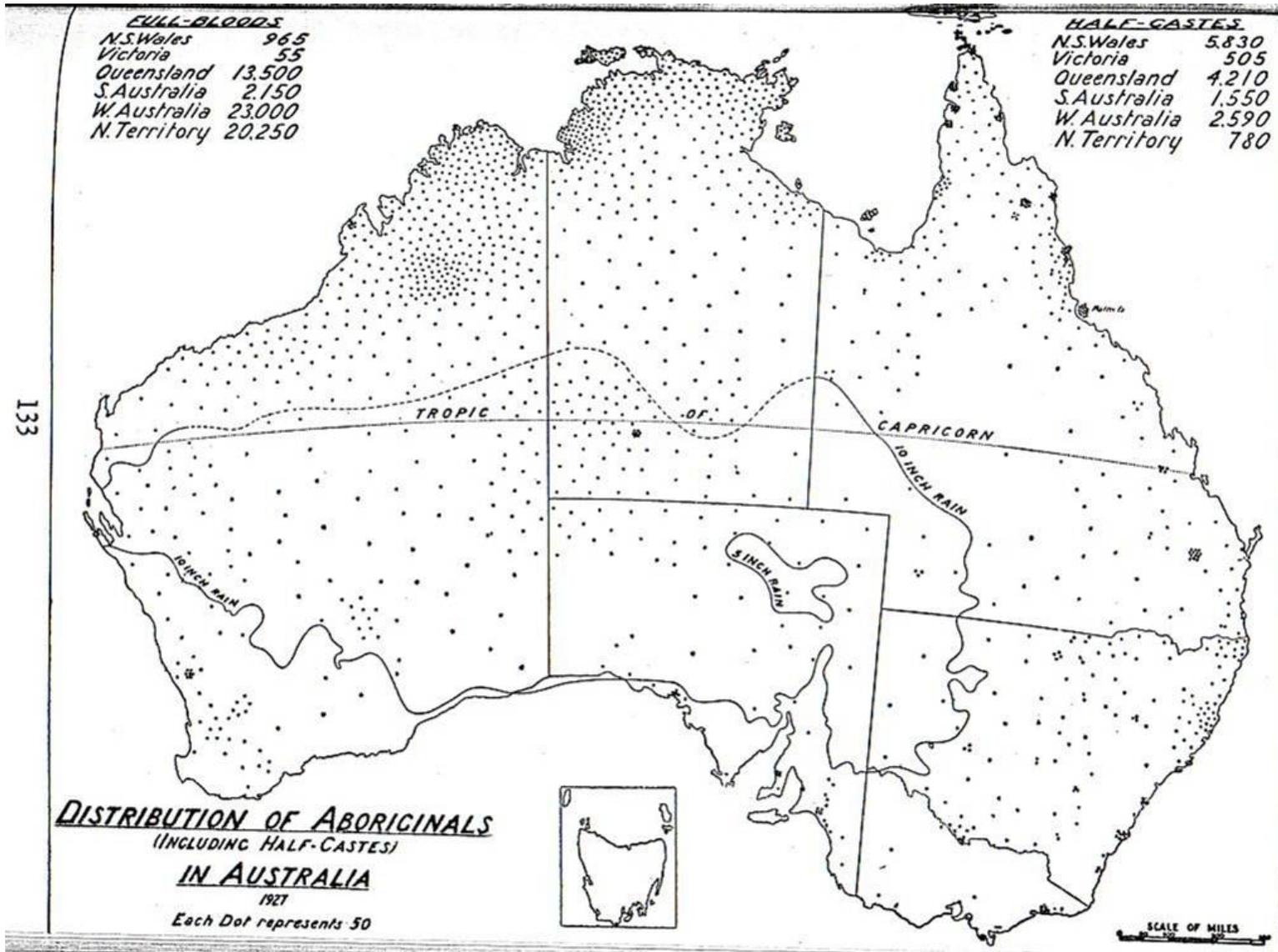


The Bulletin 7 June 1890

Confession of Faith

Figure 11

Distribution of Aborigines including "half-castes" (or Coloured) population map.



Source: A. Grenfell Price, *White Settlers and Native Peoples*

Figure 12



Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner – Darwin 1999



**Peter Gunner and Sue Stanton – Federal Court Darwin 1999
[Kwememjty 10 April 2005]**

Source: Sue Stanton

Figure 13



Larrakia

Source: Front cover *Saltwater People: Larrakia Stories from around Darwin.*

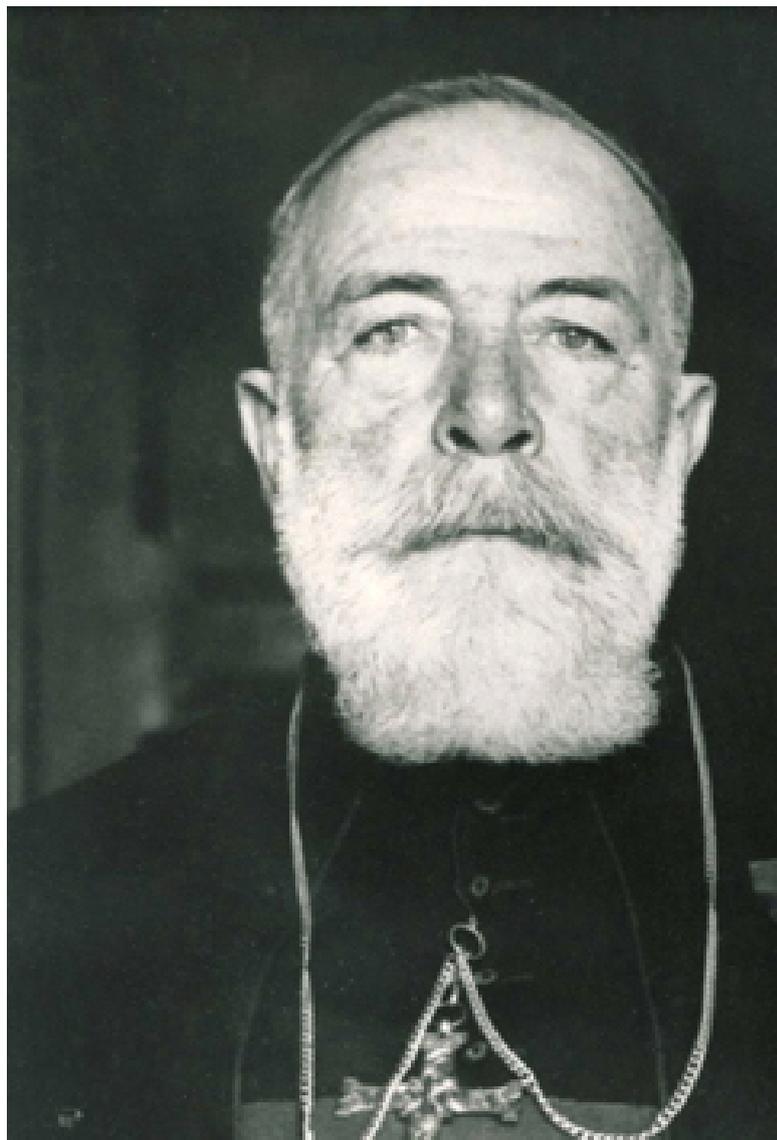
Figure 14



John O'Loughlin MSC

Source: John Mulligan's Photograph Collection

Figure 15



BISHOP GSELL M.S.C. (1872-1960)

Source: St Mary's Star of the Sea - Darwin
Church Centenary Edition 1982

Figure 16



First Arrival of Sisters at Port Kents, Bathurst Is, Easter week 1941. (Lent for copying by Rev. Glouter.)

First Arrival of Sisters at Port Keats – Easter week 1941

Source: “Pure and Clean and True to Christ”, Tony Scanlon, in *Hecate*
Figure 17



Bathurst Island Mission School

Source: National Archives of Australia
Figure 18

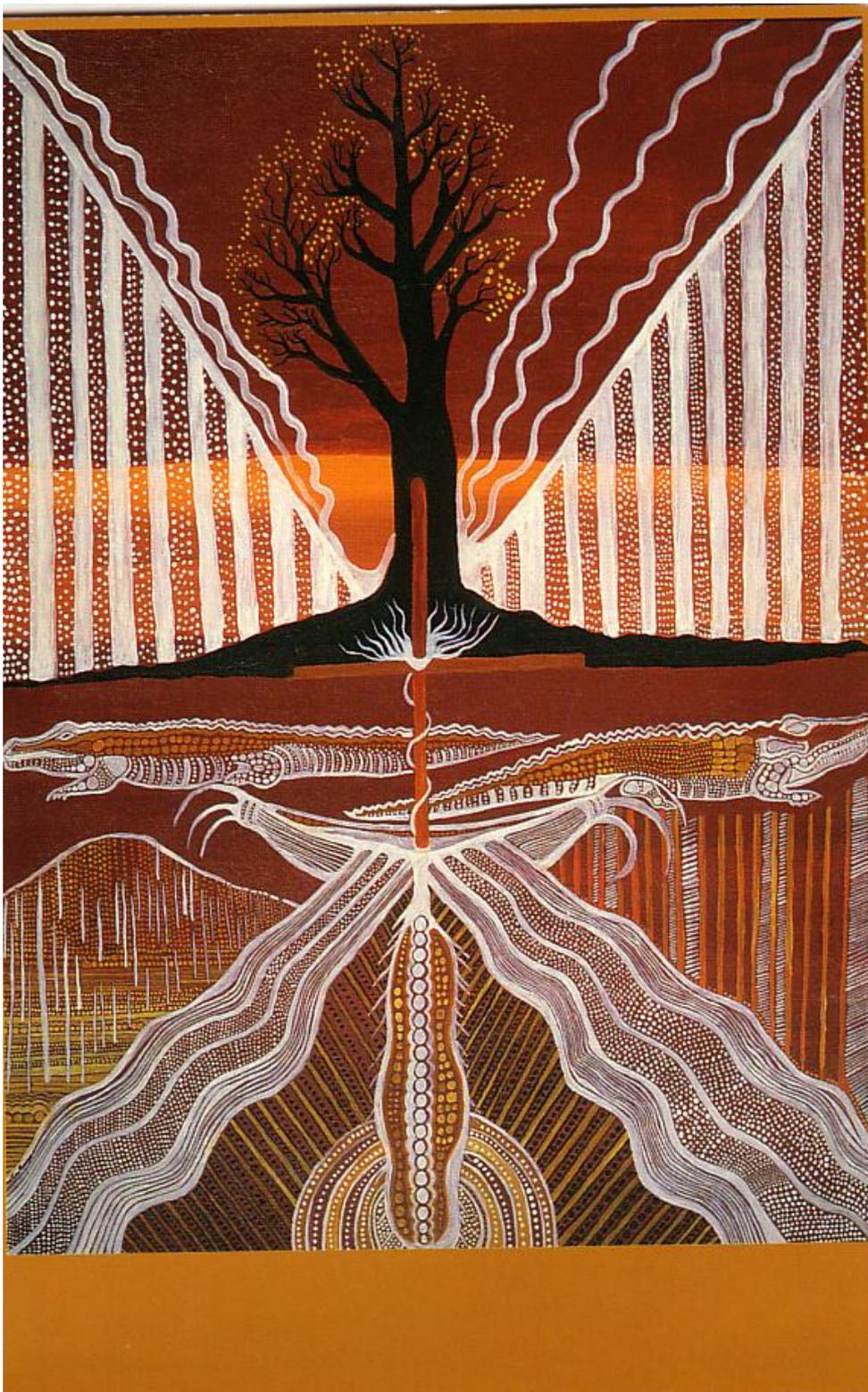


Aboriginal Mother and Child or Aboriginal Madonna
Design on the clothing and images in the background are distinctly Tiwi.

The Madonna is at St Mary's Star of the Sea Cathedral, Darwin
Artist: M. Karel Kupka, Paris - circa 1960.

Source: St Mary's Star of the Sea Centenary edition brochure, 1982

Figure 19



“Tree of Life” – by Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Bauman of Daly River, Daly River, 1988.

The painting hangs in St. Mary’s Star of the Sea Cathedral, Darwin. The Tree of Life represents the different seasons of “wet” and “dry” and not only represents seasonal cycles, but the plants and animals that are around at those different times. According to Miriam-Rose, her painting essentially, represents silence or stillness – and, “The bottom of the painting is us. The circles and lines coming from them mean that we have been washed with Jesus’ blood running from the paper-bark chalice. The yam under the cross is Jesus’ body. The cross means that Jesus died for our sins and rose to life again. At the top of the cross there are flames coming from fire sticks. Jesus is the light of the world. The tree in the middle of the painting represents the aboriginal people...and relates to the talk from the Holy Father when he said: ‘You are like a tree standing in the middle of a bushfire sweeping through the timber. The leaves are scorched and the tough bark is scarred and burned, but inside the tree the sap is still flowing, and under the ground the roots are still strong. Like that tree you have endured the flames and you still have the power to be reborn.’”

Source: - St. Mary’s Star of the Sea postcard depicting Miriam Rose’s art work. Figure 20



Daryl Stroud Darwin – July 2004

Source: Sue Stanton

Figure 21



Mumuk Aunty Rowena

Source: Family Collection

Figure 22