

It's who I am

Meanings of Aboriginality in Tasmania

No matter how much you dilute
Mix, match and try to pollute

Our identity remains intact
Something you can't change, that's a fact

Our spirit is not measured by the shade of our skin
But by something stronger found within

A place you cannot touch or take away
It will remain shining out till our dying day

We all connect with it again
No matter how far we've been.

Deidre Currie (2007)

Marije Valk

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Universiteit Utrecht

**Masterthesis ter afronding van de Master Culturele Antropologie:
Multiculturalisme in Vergelijkend Perspectief**

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Abstract

Most sources indicate that Tasmanian Aborigines are eradicated and extinct, though this is not the case. Tasmanian Aborigines are present, though they are mostly urbanized people. Issues relating to Aboriginality in Tasmania are highly sensitive and political. Tasmanian Aborigines have been subject of subjugation and eradication since the arrival of the first Europeans. Until a referendum in 1967 Aborigines were not classified as citizens of Australia¹. Since that referendum the emphasis on a (racist) biological definition shifted to a more social definition and in June 2005 the Tasmanian Legislative Council introduced a renewed definition of Aboriginality. This definition states that a person is a Tasmanian [Aborigine] if: he / she has Tasmanian ancestors, he / she recognizes this ancestry and the community recognizes this origin. By means of personal perspectives, stories, observations and literature I will argue that the recognition of Aboriginality can be important to people, though it doesn't seem to have influence on the forming of one's individual identity as one should expect, because recognition doesn't change ones sense of being Aboriginal. In contrast to what some scientific literature argues with regard to identity and recognition, (a lack of) recognition doesn't necessarily mean an individual change with regard to self-esteem or self-image. It appears that struggling for recognition is more than a personal business, it's a struggle for justice and it appears to be important for the continuum of culture. Therefore –and also because of the governmental approach with regard to Aboriginality- identity becomes subject of politics and a vicious circle is created in which Aboriginality remains a sensitive and primary topic.

¹Angleitner La Croisette (1999).

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Foreword

'I'll see you in 15 minutes at Elizabeth Mall, I'm wearing a red shirt'. After two weeks of trying to get in contact with people, I suddenly got a phone call. In just one minute I could decide my future as an anthropologist. Where was I and how fast could I be in the centre? I guess I can be there in 15 minutes? A bit of a strange and whispering voice, but it may be the change of my life. Build a bridge and get over it. Within two minutes I was running down the street on my slippers, barely noticing the rain. I was too excited to think about what I was going to ask or talk about. In the middle of Elizabeth Mall I saw a red shirt'. – Fieldwork notes on Tuesday 19th of February 2013, Hobart.

A few days prior to the phone call above, I asked myself why I was on my own on the other side of the world to do research. I will tell you why. Four years ago I was in Australia to do a traineeship for the teacher training education I did at the time. The internship was in the south of Australia, in Adelaide. Through the grapevine I got the chance and opportunity to go to Elcho Island (Galiwinku) in the Northern Territory. Elcho Island is a quite isolated Aboriginal area where 'outsiders' normally aren't allowed access, but as a trainee I was allowed to take a look at the only school on the Island. I was intrigued by the contradictions I saw everywhere and at the same time I was shocked. Through The Intervention (The Northern Territory Emergency Response) the government was trying to close the (welfare) gap between Aboriginal communities and mainstream Australian society, but the situation on the Island showed that against all intentions the gap wasn't closed and at some points it became even bigger. I went back to the Netherlands, back to my normal life, but the things I saw on Elcho Island continued to keep me busy. I started to read about Australian (Aboriginal) history and issues and at one point I obtained the book from Ad Borsboom (2006): *De Clan van de Wilde Honing*. Not knowing he was an anthropologist, I was fascinated by his research and the way he wrote his book. With this book in mind and the wish to go back to Elcho Island someday to find out more, I decided to look for another education after my graduation. I wanted to become an anthropologist.

Two years later my plan to go back to Australia took form. Elcho Island was still on my mind, though I wanted to go further than I had ever been. An island, an urban setting and quite unknown but present Aboriginal issues; Tasmania seemed the perfect

place to do my first and final fieldwork. That my research would be sensitive, emotionally and politically loaded I knew in advance, but to prepare yourself for that is almost impossible. There were many times I thought I wasn't suitable to do this fieldwork, many times I felt like failing. But in the end there are always people who help you through tough times. Many people who deserve a word of thanks, a few who I will mention here. First I want to thank my supervisors Sofie Smeets and Ad Borsboom for their substantive feedback, for sharing expertise and for continuing reminding me that there is no fixed way of doing research and that no data can be data too. For telling me to just keep going and never give up. I want to thank the (former) teachers and lecturers Mitchell Rolls, Terry Moore, Carol Pybus, Kristyn Harman and Ian McFarlane from the University of Tasmania (UTAS) for sharing their knowledge, pointing me in the right direction and for bringing me in contact with people relevant to my research, even if it was against their own interest. My thanks go to Samuel Dix, for understanding the difficulty of doing research in a strange country, for helping me as much as he could and for the linguistic and grammatical revision of my thesis. I want to thank the members from the Weetapoonna Aboriginal Corporation for inviting me to go mutton birding, for making me feel welcome and sharing their ideas, values and culture with me. A special thanks to Rodney Dillon, Helen Ransom and Brenda and Bill Hodge for taking me in tow and letting me be a part of their lives. Though I haven't mentioned everyone here, I want to thank everybody who supported me one way or another. I'm grateful. I want to note that writing this thesis wasn't always easy as participants became friends, friends I care about. Sometimes I felt uncomfortable to write about people's personal stories, ideas and emotions, but without these this thesis wouldn't mean anything. I think and hope that sharing can provide a better understanding. Thank you for letting me understand.

Introduction

The lounge. A grey carpet, grey walls with large red spots. Posters with people in brightly coloured clothes hang on the walls of Riawunna Centre, a study and support centre for inter alia Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, located at the campus of the University of Tasmania. A red-yellow flag with a black print and a piece of art with brown, blue and black dot patterns –Aboriginal art- are hanging on the same wall. There is a leather sofa, two black reddish striped chairs and five red poufs. About 15 plants, a closet with Aboriginal literature and two coffee tables with newspapers that nearly fill up the rest of the room. The windows overlook gumtrees, not entirely showing their full length, and a valley with several university buildings. While waiting for my appointment with sociologist Dr. Moore, I think about yesterday when I was walking down the streets in Hobart. I get a strange feeling in my stomach and I feel something is not right. This lounge has a total different appearance than the Tasmanian street scene. Walking down the streets in Hobart, it looks like an average Western city. Tourists, working people, children. No recognizable Aborigines. It emits a kind of nationalism intertwined with a terrible convict history. Colonial buildings with colonial inscriptions, colonial street names, monuments and at the same time a great pride, Aussie –Australia- this, Tassie –Tasmania- that. Dishes with a nationalistic flavour, names of hostels and hotels with the name of Australia or Tasmania in it, national flags. And then there is the unspoken Aboriginal heritage. The number of memories of an Aboriginal history are nil. There are a few neighbourhoods with Aboriginal names: Taroona, Dynnyrne, Warrane. That's pretty much it. When you ask people, you are told that there are no Tasmanian Aborigines. Extinct. Also there seem to be no more descendants. Only by asking specified questions more information comes to the surface: people tell me descendants just want money, there is nothing Aboriginal to it. And everybody wishes me success with this research. It still seems to be a sensitive issue. I become aware of the lounge again and the present profusion of Aboriginal objects and information. Even in this Aboriginal section of the university I can feel the tension. Critical books in the closet, a critical woman behind the desk. When I tell her why I'm in Hobart and what my research is about, her smile disappears, I tell

my story and her enthusiasm turns into a sorry state. 'Well, you are going to have a hard time'. - Fieldwork notes on Tuesday 14th of February 2013, Hobart.

Whoever reads about Tasmanian history will probably learn that the last Tasmanian Aborigine, Truganini, died in 1876. Those who dig deeper into the statistics will find a current population of about 15,000 Aborigines². Those who think this is one united community could not be more wrong. Division characterizes current Tasmania. Division about Tasmanian history, division about Aboriginality, division between individual and collective Aborigines, division between whitefellas -people with no Aboriginal ancestry- and blackfellas -people with Aboriginal ancestry-, division on a state level. Division seems to be the key word. Where does this division come from? We need to briefly go back in time to be able to get an understanding of the issues that characterize Tasmania today.

The First Fleet, consisting of eleven ships with mainly British convicts, reached the Australian coast in 1788, Botany Bay to be exact. In 1803 the British landed with two ships on the large island off the southern tip of Australia, Tasmania (Hughes 2011). From this moment on, people started writing down Tasmania's history. As Tasmanian Aborigines had no written language and oral transmission was an important way of gaining knowledge on society, there is a lack of written and documentary Aboriginal perspectives and sources (Plomley 1977). This doesn't mean that the moment Europeans started writing down Tasmania's history and societal characteristics, is when Tasmania's history starts, since Aboriginal history on Tasmania –according to whitefella³ sources- goes back about 40,000 years ago. Whereas there was a rich Aboriginal tradition of oral transmission, scientific and historical literature is written from first an English and later from an European (academic) perspective. This is where the gap between oral history and science starts. Although a start was made at the end of the Second World War with a new balance in historical perspectives, the ongoing discussion shows that this gap -though on a different level- still remains between

²See Appendix 2.

³By using the term 'whitefellas' I do not necessarily mean the part of the population that has a light skin. What I do mean are the people of the Australian society that are non-Aborigines. It should be noted that non-Aborigines are not homogenous and that they are not even a group at all. The same applies to 'blackfella'. Likewise 'blackfella' doesn't refer to a dark skin colour, but means being able to trace back ancestry to Tasmanian Aborigines'.

academics and Aborigines involved in education about inter alia what should be taught in schools and who should teach this.

This thesis contains a lot of controversy and contradictions. One of the reasons is the use of specific terms to categorize people. Division about the meaning of Aboriginality emerges in all layers of Tasmanian –including the whole Australian-society. For each individual Aboriginality means something else, people do not agree with the interpretation of the concept, whitefellas as well as blackfellas. Academics discuss the significance of Aboriginality and don't come to an answer. Aboriginal organizations point at each other because of different perspectives on inter alia the meaning of Aboriginality. The terminology used is not always clear and changes over time and space. Besides contributing to confusion this also creates tensions, as people don't always agree on which terminology should be used. Even within Aboriginal society there is no agreement. On a state level the government struggles with the terminology and the legislature of the Australian federation has made numerous attempts to define Aboriginality. According to the official guidelines that the Tasmanian Legislative Council introduced in 2005 a person is an Aborigine if: this person can prove he / she has Aboriginal ancestors, this person acknowledges this ancestry and if the community acknowledges this ancestry. But with facts and evidence on one hand and personal feelings and emotions on the other hand it does seem to be an impossible task. I'm aware of the fact that categorization of people creates ethical dilemmas, though for practical reasons as readability it's almost insurmountable. I would like to clarify some of the terms I use throughout this thesis and to emphasise that these terms and categorizations are not always so clear nor accurate.

- Aborigine: person who can trace back ancestry to Tasmanian Aborigines.
- Recognized Aborigine: person who can trace back ancestry to Tasmanian Aborigines through official guidelines.
- Non-recognized Aborigine: person who can trace back ancestry to Tasmanian Aborigines through oral history, but can't prove it through official guidelines.
- Whitefella: person with no Aboriginal ancestry.
- Blackfella: person with Aboriginal ancestry.

Being Aboriginal or blackfella in Tasmania has nothing to do with skin colour as one would expect. Most people have a fair skin and Aboriginality is not recognizable by appearance. 'Black' refers to the ancestral lineage, but also to the feeling of being Aboriginal. I experienced that in the Tasmanian case (and also in broader Australia) the terms blackfella and whitefella are commonly used, mostly by blackfella's, while scientists and academics prefer the term Aborigines in contrast to the broader society. Eriksen (2010: 99) states that 'although most scientists had abandoned the concept of race by the 1920s, cultural notions of race continue to exist in folk taxonomies'. Whitefella is a term mainly used by blackfellas to define people with no Aboriginal ancestry. According to the Oxford dictionary, whitefella refers specifically to Australian citizens without Aboriginal ancestry. Interestingly, also people from outside Australia with a fair skin could be called whitefellas. In the same way, some whitefellas are called blackfella. Thus skin colour is no characteristic of being blackfella, but when it comes to being whitefella, skin colour seems to play a part as people with no fair skin are never called whitefellas. Eriksen (2010: 99-100) goes on by stating that 'the physical appearance of a person may in this sort of society serve as a convenient shorthand way of telling other members of the society what 'kind of person' he or she is. Such categorizations, and their accompanying evaluations and stereotypes, are the work of colonial history and a particular division of labour and political power'. Though the terms blackfella and whitefella derive from the colonial history, physical appearance does not function as a marker for these categories. Notwithstanding the biological base, blackfella and whitefella function particularly as social categories. According to Eriksen (2010: 100) 'the fact of being defined by the hegemonic white groups as black also contributed to their internal cohesiveness'. At one point I agree with Eriksen's theory that there is a political power in naming these categories with the terms blackfellas and whitefellas, but I disagree with the statement that this contributed to internal cohesiveness. I would even suggest that by naming Aborigines 'Aborigines' or blackfellas and hence approaching them as a homogenous group, internal division became more prominent. On the other hand and at the same time, terms such as blackfellas and whitefellas (and even so Aborigines and non-Aborigines) are still commonly used and could be seen as a way to strengthen and maintain polarization between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. It's a complex situation whereby different, sometimes conflicting, strategies are used at the same time and where there is no theoretical framework that

provides sufficient consolation. Later on I will come back to these biological and social constructions of Aboriginality.

In this thesis I will elaborate on issues relating to Aboriginality in Tasmania. Whereas I first had chosen to immerse myself further in a limited group, I decided later to expand the research with anyone willing to talk. Therefore and as a consequence the people who participated in my research cannot be seen as one group or one people, nor do they represent all Aborigines in Tasmania. By means of personal perspectives, stories, observations and literature I will argue that the recognition of Aboriginality can be important to people, though, as I will explain later, it doesn't seem to have influence on the forming of one's individual identity as one should expect, because recognition doesn't change one's sense of being Aboriginal. In contrast to what some leading scientist⁴ argue with regard to identity and recognition, (a lack of) recognition doesn't necessarily mean an individual change with regard to self-esteem or self-image, it shows that struggling for recognition is a struggle for justice and it appears to be important for the continuum of culture. Therefore –and also because of the governmental approach with regard to Aboriginality- identity becomes subject of politics. The meaning of Aboriginality is negotiated on a political level and these politics of identity comes from two sides: Aboriginal organizations can and sometimes are forced to use identity and Aboriginality on a political level in order to get things done or to claim special benefits. Special benefits can be obtained in the form of money, funds or services. These include inter alia Aboriginal home buyers assistance, scholarships and health services. At the same time that Aborigines use their identity, the state puts a focus on identity and Aboriginality and therefore ensures it becomes and stays important and creates a situation where identity and Aboriginality can be used as (political) tools. Some people argue that Aboriginality or 'race' shouldn't play a role anymore in this modern and urbanized society, but where funding and services on the basis of Aboriginality are involved it's not possible to put the debate on identity and the definition problem aside. Though, not every person with Aboriginal ancestry thinks it's necessary to get (official) recognition nor believes they are entitled to special money and services. Whether people want recognition or not, whether they think they are entitled funding and services or not, Aboriginality seems to come forward particularly on a spiritual level. A deep inner connection with ancestry and other Aborigines and the certainty to feel where you come

⁴ See inter alia Taylor (1994) and Anderson (1997).

from and who you are predominate and it seems that (a lack of) recognition doesn't have influence on this sense of spirituality.

On the basis of fieldwork experiences I will connect daily practice with scientific literature and debates and I will show how these can be interwoven. Through all the chapters I will show how different groups and people are facing each other, which divisions are present and how gaps between science and everyday society, between academics and non-academics occur at both an abstract and a concrete level. In the first chapter a scientific historical view on Tasmanian Aboriginal history, dreaming stories and land connection will be compared to oral stories viewing Tasmania from an Aboriginal perspective, whereby it becomes clear that friction arises from different perceptions on what should be told and who should be entitled to talk about historical and contemporary Tasmania. In the second chapter cultural practises that are taking place today will be examined. Although cultural practices are not always accurate according to historians, they have an important role in the rebuilding of culture. It shows how traditional practises and believes go very well together with an urban lifestyle. I will use mutton birding as an example of a cultural practise which shows that for some people it's not about the actual practise itself, but the personal and collectives meanings may be assigned. Following this argument, I will address the meaning of being Aboriginal in the third chapter, as being Aboriginal does not only mean performing traditional cultural practises or having Aboriginal ancestors. As people told me, being Aborigine is being who you are. You feel it inside, you know who you are. I will use theories on identity and recognition from inter alia Taylor (1994), Anderson (1997) and Grey Postero (2007) and I will show that reality can have a different dimension. It appears that struggling for recognition is more than a personal business. It's a struggle for justice, a struggle sometimes served on a political level. It's about getting recognition for Aboriginal people and culture in general. Fighting for people so they can practise their culture and pass it on. In the last chapter I will elaborate on the political and economical side that plays a significant role in the issues relating to Aboriginality. Tensions arise from the fact that only the people of one organization, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC), are officially recognized by the government as 'real' Aborigines and that TAC members are entitled to special Aboriginal jobs, functions and money. I need to note here that there are other organizations and corporation that receive benefits, though many of them do not agree and their structures are complicated.

Though not everybody says they are after these benefits, it seems to play an significant role and a source of tension. I will show different perceptions on possible solutions and the future of Tasmania that derived from my fieldwork. A highly sensitive and political Tasmanian climate with regard to issues on Aboriginality will come forward between the lines. Fragments from my travelogue and quotes from people in the field will be used as starting points of every chapter. In addition to these I will elaborate on the meaning and importance of Aboriginality through cases and vignettes. Scientific perspectives and literature-derived from the field and from general scientific sources-will be used to either support, nuance or counterbalance my argument.

Methodology

'The beginning researcher is urged to practice at every opportunity the specific skills that are important in participant observation. Those skills include both learning to be an observer and learning to be a participant. Among them are: fitting in, 'active seeking', short-term memory, informal interviewing, recording detailed field notes, and, perhaps most importantly, patience (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002: 16)'.

Patience was the keyword during my fieldwork. Before I arrived in Tasmania the necessity of being patient became clear to me. The first e-mail to my potential research group, the Lia People, was sent a few months before I would leave. The Lia Pootah people are a group of non-recognized Aborigines with an organization in Hobart. After a series of e-mails from my side and one e-mail back, I decided –with the support of the University- to just go to Tasmania and try get in contact while I'm there. Try to fit in and seek actively. Two weeks of actively trying –not added the couple of months before my fieldwork- to get in contact resulted in a failed appointment and a literal refusal to further contact. I decided not to focus on the Lia Pootah people anymore, but to expand my research group. Even though ideally I would have wanted to immerse myself further in a limited group, I decided to expand the research with anyone willing to talk. Again, patience was the only way to survive my fieldwork. I want to note here that anthropological fieldwork in an urban setting requires a different approach than traditional and classic fieldwork. Kottak (2011: 89) states that one should start by identifying key social groups in the urban context. I soon found out how typical

anthropological fieldwork methods, to find these key groups or even individuals, did not work for me in an urban politically sensitive environment like Hobart. No recognizable potential participants, no places I knew of for hanging out to find potential participants, no key informant I found or who came to me and a lot of people who weren't keen on sharing their experiences and ideas with me. It was evident that I would not get far through the official routes. The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, Town hall, Service Tasmania and even the Office of Aboriginal Affairs gave me negative responses. It will become apparent that the people I've met during my fieldwork don't think positive about organizations like the TAC, but because of the unwillingness to speak with me, I was not able to include their perspectives in this thesis. Eventually, by telling everybody I met about what I was looking for, people started to refer me to other people. Those people referred me to other people. And then on to other people, and so forth. I came in contact with people with Aboriginal backgrounds through lecturers from the University of Tasmania, people who were willing work with me. After six weeks I only had two appointments with people from Aboriginal descent and I decided to include other people's stories as well. Therefore this thesis is based on observations and stories from a varying group of people; whitefellas, blackfellas, recognized and non-recognized Aborigines ranging from children and young adults to elderly people. This thesis contains individual stories, personal views and it should be kept in mind that generalizations are very difficult to make and that they maybe shouldn't be made at all. Though, for the purpose of scientific research and cross-cultural comparisons is it inevitable to place personal perspectives and experiences in a framework in order to draw general conclusions.

As mentioned before, I also had to change the approach of my research during my fieldwork period as issues on Aboriginality appeared to be highly sensitive and political. From colonial times Aboriginality is an emotionally charged subject. Besides that personal and professional relationships are historically linked and intertwined in daily life, conflicts of interest and issues relating to money and power are involved. A disadvantage of the sensitivity of the subject of this thesis is the difficulty to conduct in-depth discussions. Therefore, informal conversations and unstructured interviews were my most common methods. Due to the sensitivity of my research this was a comfortable way for me to get an understanding of important issues and for my participants to talk without feeling attacked or threatened. Furthermore this way it was more likely for me

to get in contact with other people. The first half of my research –while trying to get in contact with people- I've been mainly involved in document analysis and theoretical research. To get a general overview of historical happenings and a better understanding of issues relevant in Tasmania with regard to Aboriginality, I've been in contact with experts and (former) academics from the University of Tasmania. The last few weeks – after establishing some sort of rapport- I have made particular use of participant observation. I've spoken to and engaged with members of the Weetapoonna Aboriginal Corporation which is based on Bruny Island. Through casual conversations, informal interview techniques and life histories I tried to get information and make personal portraits of some people involved in my research. By using questionnaires I've made an attempt to make outcomes comparable and to outline a context. In addition I used anyone who was willing to speak to me on the subjects covered in this thesis as a source of information. Most of the people who participated in this research live in or around Hobart, and are through their ancestry or occupation involved in Aboriginal issues. I've made use of a travelogue and diary in order to remember important happenings, thoughts and emotions and to be able to analyse these later on.

My research started in Hobart, which is the main capital of Tasmania and is inhabited by about 200,000 people, nearly 40 per cent on a total Tasmanian population of around half a million people. Hobart is the largest of a few quite small cities which contains most residents. Large areas on the island are uninhabited and with 45 per cent reserves, World Heritage sites and National parks, Tasmania looks a lot like a smaller version of mainland Australia. Though most of my research took place around Hobart, I will begin this thesis with a meeting in the North of Tasmania (Table Cape), where I've met a man who disarranged my whole research. He confused me, puzzled me and confounded me.

Chapter one: Science vs. oral history relating to land

'If you want to know rubbish, go to the [Tasmanian] museum' – Ian McFarlane

Ian McFarlane, besides being a Tasmanian citizen, is also a historian and former lecturer in Aboriginal studies at the University of Tasmania. I've met McFarlane on Monday the 15th of April. With two months behind me and only one month to go I felt some time pressure and I was keen on meeting McFarlane in order to get his academic perspective on Aboriginal issues and with that I expected to get information and arguments in order to support my acquired knowledge. It turned out to go otherwise. McFarlane spoke against my hitherto acquired knowledge by using scientific arguments, published in his book *Beyond Awakening* (2008). He doesn't agree with a number of (historical) books, told me everything I learned to be wrong and stressed not to trust many sources on Tasmanian (Aboriginal) history. In his view, as seen in the quote above, even the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery wasn't telling the truth.

In this chapter, I will compare McFarlane's scientific historical perspective – derived from both his book and our conversations- on the Tasmanian Aboriginal history with other (scientific) literature, oral stories viewing Tasmania from an Aboriginal perspective and experiences from the field, as it appears that there is much disagreement between and within different parties and between individuals. Even within scientific culture there is a lot of division on specific subjects, such as on the first Aborigines in Tasmania, dreaming stories and the spiritual importance of land. McFarlane's view is one of many and I don't want to state that his view represents all scientific perspectives, I will use his view as an example to show that gaps exist between different views. A complete overview of Tasmanian history is unfeasible and for this thesis undesirable. I will therefore focus on what has emerged from my fieldwork experiences. Central in this chapter is the connection to land. On mainland Australia a quite clear connection to land is still visible and also important, while in Tasmania this importance and visibility seem to have faded away over the years. Though, the debate on former connection and hence the contemporary connection to land is important as reconciliation remains a continuing topic on the political agenda of Tasmania. Hill (1995: 303) explains that 'during the early years of British settlement, Aborigines were considered a problem of 'unsocial acts' such as spearing cattle and sheep as well as confrontations with white settlers. [...] By that time [1920s], Aboriginal people had been

dislocated from traditional lands to make way for white pastoralists and farmers'. People were left dislocated, internally displaced and without a culture. The question is whether Aborigines are entitled to reconciliation and the debate regarding land connection emerges on a political level, where some Aborigines are trying to gain (ancestral) land through lawsuits and court cases and whereby the government returns land under the guise of making up for former suffering and territorial rights of Aborigines. This process is, according to many people I spoke with (both blackfella and whitefella), controversial and corrupt, though it's also an important part of reconciliation. The basis on which land should be returned and to whom is not clear and the state is torn between different scientific views on former and contemporary connection to land on the one hand, Aboriginal perspectives on the other hand and all varying views in between. The most important conclusion of this chapter: The truth is not important, nor somewhere in the middle. It appears that facts are important to academics like McFarlane, the emphasis is scientific evidence, while for Aborigines oral history is of great importance, but more importantly sticking to a remnant that is left. It's not so much one truth against one another, it's about the underlying emotions and feelings involved. The discussions held and the way they are conducted reveal these underlying emotions and feelings.

Dreamings and land connection

The first discussion point on history is the arrival of the first Aborigines in Tasmania, their establishment and hence the importance of territory and the spiritual significance of land. Archaeological evidence shows that the first Aborigines already lived in Tasmania about 40,000 years ago. Morley (2010) states that the Bassian Plain, a land bridge linking south-eastern Australia with modern day Tasmania, allowed people to move from either Mount Gambier in South Australia via King Island or from southern Victoria via the Furneaux Islands onto the Tasmanian Peninsula. In the same way McFarlane (2008: 3) states that Aborigines moved from the mainland of Australia to the island Tasmania: 'It is now widely accepted that the first human inhabitants to arrive in Tasmania migrated by the way of the Bassian Landbridge which was open between 36,000 to 29,000 years ago and again from about 20,000 years to its submersion around 8,000 years ago'. He doesn't mention which route the first time people have taken, though he refers to Kutikina cave where 40,000 (archaeologist Samuel Dix corrects it to

35.000) year old stone artefacts are found. The fact that McFarlane speaks about 36,000 years –which means a gap of 4,000 years- isn't the most notable part nor the absence of the migration route, the first words of McFarlane's sentence are interesting: 'It is now widely accepted'. It shows that this view is not the only one and more perspectives are present. One of the dissent perspectives comes from Uncle Bill, non-recognized Aborigine:

'You know the story that all the people in the world come from Africa and that they spread all over the world? That they moved to Australia and after that to Tasmania? Well, I believe in a different version. I think the first people were from Tasmania. They moved to the mainland, not from the mainland to Tasmania. If people from Africa moved up to Europe, and people from South America moved up to North America, why wouldn't people from Tasmania moved up to the mainland? I know they are going to find evidence soon that people where here more than 100,000 years ago'.

Fascinating is that this view -that Tasmanian Aborigines originate from Tasmania- is also shared by Morley (2010: 27), who at the same time argues that the first Aborigines arrived 40,000 years ago by using the Bassian Plain. He states: '10,000 plus years before present. Aborigines believe that they emerged from their traditional lands, and that they belong to the original essence of the law of land'. There is no historical, archaeological or any scientific evidence for this to be true, and as McFarlane bases his view point on this kind of evidence one can assume McFarlane wouldn't agree with Uncle Bill and Morley on the claim that Tasmanian Aborigines emerged from their traditional lands.

McFarlane (2008: 4) continues his book with the discussion on the size of the total Aboriginal population at the time of the British settlement. While numbers differ, the estimates tell us there were 'nine major tribal groupings with most calculations varying from 3,000 – 4,000 in the lower range to 4,000 – 5,000 as an upper estimate'. Morley (2010: 3-4) agrees with the numbers and groups McFarlane uses as he is using the same overview of tribes and clans, though Morley is speaking about nations rather than tribes as he argues that a nation is 'the most appropriate term to describe a tribe. 'Tribe' is regarded by some Aboriginal people as a demeaning term. A Nation was made up of a number of clans that lived in adjoining territories and spoke the same language

or dialect and shared the same cultural traits'. Although the exact size of the population and the tribes/nations at the time is unknown, McFarlane, in contrast to Morley, is clear about the fact that these people were not connected to the land as people from mainland Australia were. While sitting on a bench near the water at Dip Falls, McFarlane explains to me why there is no land connection as on the mainland:

'Aboriginal culture was different in Tasmania. In contrast to the land-based religion on the mainland, Tasmania had a sky-based religion, with no sacred places nor dreamings. There were corroborees (ceremonies with religious outcomes; on the mainland they are a re-enactments of the history of the dreaming.), but people in Tasmania would only do it while in exile on the islands. Furthermore, the ceremonies in Tasmania were based on full moon, not on land. They were used to cremate people instead of giving them a final resting place in the (sacred) soil. When Robinson walked with Truganini through Tasmania, she didn't tell him anything about sacred places'.

This would mean that connection to land was not as important, at least not on a religious, spiritual or sacred level (though other literature argues that -like in mainland Australia- a combination of sky- and land-based religion is very well possible). That Truganini didn't tell Robinson about sacred places could be because she wasn't ought to talk about it⁵. The lack of land connection is also seen in the features of Tasmanian society. There were nuclear families and small tribes, every spring Tasmanian Aborigines would go to one place to marry. Migration was a key characteristic and 'collectively and singly, these families travelled during seasonal, cultural and foraging expeditions'. Land was important in the sense that these families 'were based in, and operated from, a common territory for which they possessed a developed sense of ownership (McFarlane 2008: 8)'.

An important feature in which a (spiritual) connection with land is visible, is the presence of dreaming stories. Dreaming stories about the creation of the world and particularly of Australia are present in mainland Australia. In the Aboriginal Dreaming, McFarlane (2008: 28) explains that 'the Aborigines see a Creator producing an Ancestral Being that gives birth to Spirits and Ancestors. These Ancestral Beings are often

⁵ See Charlesworth (2005) for more information on secret and sacred men's and women's knowledge.

portrayed as having human, animal and spirit natures, or sometimes just animal and spirit such the Rainbow Serpent. [...] The embodiment of the spiritual power of the dreaming into particular sites creates 'sacred ground', that is, it places these areas apart from the profane world and they are 'potentially dangerous to those who have no rights to them'. The following story -published in Touch the Morning, Tasmanian Native Legends (1979) shows how Tasmania was shaped in the Dreamtime:

The beginning

In the beginning was the Dreamtime and all things took their shape in the Dreaming. Trowenna, the heart shaped island we call Tasmania was very small, just a tiny sand-bank in the southern seas. So it remained all through the early Dreamtime for countless ages, in complete darkness. Then from out of the sea rose Parnuen, the sun, flashing fire, and his wife, Vena. They travelled across the sky together and sank into the sea on the other side of Trowenna.

[...]

One day as Vena followed her husband's journey across the sky, the ice berg on which she lay, melted and Vena sank beneath the ocean. Only in the night time would she return.

All through the Dreamtime, the seeds sprouted and became threes and more trees. The leaves fell down and mixing with the sand, became earth. The shell fish grew and became numerous, and as the old ones died they became the stones and rocks of the great mountains. And that is how Tasmania rose from the Dreamtime.

Timlers' Story (Timler was High Priest of the Islands Religious Hierarchy – The Brayleny)⁶

The existence of the story above means a lot to a number of Aboriginal people in Tasmania, but from a scientific point of view, the story does not originate in Tasmania. According to McFarlane's scientific interpretation, Tasmanian Aborigines had a sky-based religion, no obvious relationship between land and spirituality is visible in

⁶ See Appendix 1 for the complete story

ethnographic material, and therefore this dreaming story is expected to be an invention from later times –around the 1970s-, when a focus on Aboriginal identity appeared. According to McFarlane (2008: 31), ‘stories and practices orientated towards the heavens, linking stars with the source of rivers and fire as well as the origins of men are common’. He states that ‘the myths that serve the ‘dreaming’ function of combining ancestral beings, a landmark and people –a formula that provides the basic for many mainland claims- are virtually unknown in Tasmania’. According to McFarlane, the absence of original dreaming stories in Tasmania support the view that there was a lack of (spiritual) connection to land. His scientific interpretation contradicts the existence of dreamings in Tasmania, though –as seen in the examples above and below- there are still dreaming stories that are told and passed on. Another one of these stories is displayed in Growing Respect Garden, a kid’s guide to growing and using Tasmanian bush foods, developed by The Salvation Army (TAS) and funded by the Australian Government:

The Whale Story

There was once a mother and baby whale coming up the Channel near Bruny Island. A giant shark was chasing them. A sea eagle was telling the mother whale where to go so they could get away from the shark.

They came up past Nine Pins Point. There is a big rock arch there. We believe it was formed by the whales jumping through to escape the shark.

As the mother whale was coming up the channel, she was using her tail to flick the sand at the shark, trying to scare it away. This formed many of the beaches down there.

As they were escaping from the shark past Bruny Island, the baby swam too close to the island and chipped off the small island called the Iron Pot.

‘This is a tradition Tasmanian Aboriginal story that has been passed down through my family. It explains how the land down the Channel and near Bruny Island was formed. This story teaches us to never give up’ - Rodney Dillon.

This story is one of many dreaming stories that goes around in Tasmania and there are even books and story collections of Tasmanian dreamings. The existence of these stories seems to indicate, opposite McFarlane's perspective, that there was -and maybe still is- an important connection to land. According to Morley (2010: 3) The Dreaming 'is central to the existence of traditional and many semi-traditional Aboriginal people and, to a lesser extent, to urban Aboriginal people. The Dreaming determines lifestyle and culture, values and beliefs and their relationships with every living creature and every feature of the landscape. [...] Their [ancestor] spirits still exist in these features of the natural world today'. That not everybody knows about these stories is, according to Rodney Dillon (Aborigine and involved in diverse Aboriginal related pursuits), because some knowledge is secret or sacred; 'You don't tell everybody, you have to ask permission to tell the stories'. That books and single stories are published and free for everyone to read seems to contradict this, but at the same time publishing ensures that the stories remain in the world and that they won't get lost. Further on in this thesis I will elaborate on the importance of preserving (Aboriginal) remnants. Notable, even Aborigines mutually disagree. An example is given by Tony Brown, Aborigine and Senior Curator of Indigenous Cultures at Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. While he was giving me a private tour through the museum, Tony told me the following when I asked him about dreamings stories: 'There are no dreamings left, no sacred places. Everything is gone'. This would mean that today Aborigines have no religious or spiritual connection with the land anymore, though they had it before.

Following the examples described above, it turns out that different views on the accuracy and even on the existence of these stories and hence the connection to land are present. But even though the land could have had a different meaning for Tasmanian Aborigines than mainland Aborigines –who had and still have a land-based religion- there was definitely some sort of connection; 'Aboriginal activities have also left markers in the landscape. [...] These special places and their associated cultural landscapes show that Aboriginal people in the past had a special relationship with the land. They also indicate why Tasmanian Aborigines today feel so strongly about the land – these heritage places connect them with ancestral use and allow people to reconnect with the land and tell stories (Morley 2010: 16). These special places and landscape or cultural markers can be stone artefact scatters, shell middens, rock shelters, quarry

sites, hut depressions, rock engravings, etc. Morley (2010: 6) states that these cultural markers 'are to Aboriginal people today what history books, museums and historic sites are to non-Aboriginal Australians'. He doesn't explain what is exactly meant by this, though Morley (2010: 16) argues that 'visible damage and disturbance of their heritage places and their landscape is very upsetting. We should respect people's values and do nothing to harm them'. Various other perspectives on connection to and importance of land came up during my fieldwork. Where Leslie Dick (Aborigine) tells me that 'land is important because it feeds and clothes you', uncle Bill (non-recognized Aborigine) goes further by saying that 'We don't own the land, but the land owns us. Part of being Aboriginal means being aware of nature. It is spiritual. I'm agnostic and I'd rather believe in dreamings'.

(Un)Importance of truth

These examples show that a connection to land can go beyond a physical place of belonging. Nanificy (in Espiritu 2003: 11) states that 'home' is a significant place, created by acts of imaginations. In the same way, land –whether a physical space or a symbolical place- can become meaningful as people attach significance to it. These meanings of land derive from the earliest historical times but also appear to arise from colonial times. The tension discussed above between McFarlane's scientific interpretation and different Aboriginal perspectives seems a lot like the ongoing tension between whitefellas (non-Aborigines) and blackfellas (Aborigines) since the arrival of the first Europeans. As Rodney Dillon says: 'Whitefellas always know what's best for Aborigines'. Since colonial times whitefellas overruled Aborigines in many ways and people today still feel like there is a whitefella dominance with regard to writing of Tasmanian Aboriginal History. Angleiter La Croisette (1999: 11) argues that 'there is a desire to give an Aboriginal version of history, to emphasise the continuity of Aboriginal residence in Australia. The focus upon black Australian history not only serves to establish Aboriginal pride in indigenous heroes or former generations, but also shows the historically oppressed indigenous minority group whose memories are very bitter'. Besides letting Aboriginal people have their own voice Angleiter La Croisette (1999: 14) argues that one should keep in mind that when discussing translations of Aboriginal songs and tales –hence the interpretation of Aboriginal history and culture- it's important to realize that 'these have not only been translated into a different language

but also within a different culture and that they are previously unknown kinds of texts'. With translation comes interpretation of stories, which can cause a loss of meaning. In the next chapter I will elaborate on authenticity of Aboriginal heritage, important here is that whitefella interpretation of blackfella stories and sources have caused and could still cause a sense of lack of understanding and maybe ignorance. What whitefella people –including academics- might overlook is the fact that facts in Aboriginal stories weren't as important as spirituality and it could be that the spiritual layer in historical narratives might still be more important today than facts.

That there is a gap between and within scientific knowledge and some Aboriginal views on Tasmanian history can be concluded from the examples above. It's also clear that the latter differ in their perspectives. But as mentioned before, it's not just about the facts and an (mis)interpretation of historical evidence, conversations and observations reveal that there is more below the surface. The question whether connection to land was and hence is important and whether the existence of the dreaming stories provides enough support for the connection to land is not relevant. Historical sites, and even so dreaming stories, are important for people because it contains their connection to the past. They are not only memories but ideas, beliefs, values and little pieces of history that live on in people today. Leslie Dick tries to explain to me how his great-grandmother used to tell him stories;

'From a baby on I was going to my great-grandmother. You would go into the centre of the earth when looking into her eyes as her eyes were that dark. I spent a lot of time with her. She would teach me as a kid, and she would tell me stories. When she died in '73 it was a big loss for me. It felt like a big hole that you can't fix. She was my link with my history'. – Table Cape 2013, Tuesday 16th of April.

What Leslie's great-grandmother's stories were about did not come up during our conversations, that was not what was important. The loss of his great-grandmother would mean a loss of stories and hence a loss of connection to history. The same applies to historical sites. 'Once they [Aboriginal sites] are gone, they are gone for good. Each time an Aboriginal site is destroyed it is a major loss (Caleb Pedder in Morley 2010: 16)'. It's not so much about the factual truth of these stories or places but it demonstrates how participants made meaning of their experience by connecting the past with the

present through their own life stories or their sense of justice. The symbolical meaning and the emotional connection predominates. Whereas scientists like McFarlane attach importance to and base their arguments on facts, Aboriginal culture has a focus on oral tradition. Whether the stories contain facts and / or are from Tasmanian origin does not matter *per se*. It's about the right to talk about Tasmanian (Aboriginal) history and hence present from an Aboriginal point of view and making sure that the stories won't get lost.

In the same way as hanging on to Aboriginal ways to view historic and present Tasmania, Aboriginal practises are a way for people to hang on to something that is left. In the next chapter I will examine cultural practises that are taking place today. I will argue that Aboriginal practises that take place today, whether historically authentic or not, are important to keep an almost lost culture alive and have an important role in the preservation and rebuilding of culture. Through the debate on authenticity and original culture I will show that traditional practises and characteristics are subject of change and are never static, hence the underlying emotional or symbolical meaning should get more attention.

Chapter two: Dead culture or living history?

'We will be getting mutton birds in the next 3 weeks'. – Rodney Dillon

I've met Rodney Dillon (International Indigenous Rights Campaigner at Amnesty International) on the 19th of February in Elizabeth Mall, Hobart. He was wearing a red shirt. It was my first interview with someone with Aboriginal ancestry. After our second meeting I asked Rodney Dillon to take me to Weetapoonna, a corporation on Bruny Island he told me about. In response to my question I received the following e-mail: 'We will be getting mutton birds in the next 3 weeks'. Three weeks later I was standing on the boat to Bruny Island, not exactly knowing what was going to happen or what to expect.

Mutton birding

The sun has just risen. Four wheel drives gather in front of the Shearers Quarters, located on a working sheep farm on Bruny Island. People with torn blouses, pants with dirt, rain pants or protective gaiters and high boots wander around in silence, waiting. They are all members of the Weetapoonna Aboriginal Corporation on Bruny Island. After a few minutes everyone gets in the cars and the convoy departs. Through a gravel road we drive to Cape Queen Elizabeth, a closed and protected nature area in the southern tip of the North Island of Bruny. The last gate is closed and we have to wait a while for ranger Bernard from Parks and Wildlife Services. Meanwhile, one person begins to search for sticks, medium sized and solid, and more people follow. A man with a long beard tells me that we will use the sticks later to protect us against snakes or to poke the birds from the burrows. I marvel at the fact that there are also a number of children participating today, including three-year-old Noah. Half an hour later, Bernard - wearing a green body warmer and a white t-shirt, both with Parks and Wildlife- emblems- arrives and we can continue. Driving is a big word when you consider that we should hold on firmly to not be thrown out of the car. We park the cars on top of the hill and Ben, the chair of the Weetapoonna Corporation, makes a welcome word. Wearing a white checkered blouse with a large crack on the left side he explains how he was arrested for illegally mutton birding by Bernard thirteen years ago and that he is proud that Bernard now participates and through his position in Parks and Wildlife Bernard is able to facilitate this day. And then the mutton birding can start. A groups of sixteen men, women and

children stomp down the hill, taking turns going down on the ground and stubbing their arms in burrows where young mutton birds 'live' until they are large and strong enough to leave. The burrows are quite deep, so you really should be on the ground to get your whole arm in a hole. Pull the bird out, break the neck and put the dead mutton bird in a burlap bag. And the most important thing: don't hesitate. The ease with which the men and women, but especially the children, manage to find and kill the young birds is fascinating. Although mutton birds are protected and it's not allowed to hunt them, Parks and Wildlife granted a permit for taking up to 200 mutton birds. This license is only valid for today. After four hours, quite a number of burrows are emptied, burlap bags are full and the people are exhausted. If the blouses and jeans weren't torn before, they are torn now.

The story above took place on Saturday the 20th of May. I was invited through the e-mail above to participate on the mutton birding weekend with the Weetapoonna Aboriginal Corporation on Bruny Island, Tasmania. Though people told me no more Aboriginal practises or traditions are taking place in Tasmania, this story shows otherwise. In several places throughout Tasmania mutton birding takes place on a regular base. According to McFarlane (2008), mutton birding in former days was not of big importance; 'Although some adult mutton birds were consumed by Aborigines –there are descriptions of them being roasted on spits after the feathers had been singed off– the main food derived from the mutton bird was most likely the eggs. Archaeological remains found in middens suggest that the birds themselves provided only a small part of the Aboriginal diet'. He argues that 'the current practice of mutton birding began with the sealers in the Furneaux Group of Islands', as the mutton birds became the Islanders' economic support; initially for feathers, eggs and oil and then for the salted chicks. According to this perspective, mutton birding is not originally an Aboriginal practise as it was adopted from the sealers. In his book on the Tasmanian Aborigines Plomley (1977) doesn't even mention mutton birding as a food source nor as leisure time, nor as a cultural or social practice. This seems to indicate and hence support the previous perspective that mutton birding wasn't important and maybe not even an Aboriginal practise. In contrast to what McFarlane argues, Morley (2010: 110) states that 'sealing was soon replaced by the Aboriginal practice of mutton birding, which became an

important part of the new community's culture and livelihood'. He argues that mutton birds were harvested on an annual base by Aborigines for at least 20 000 years, though he admits that over the years mutton birding became an industry and main source of income with a peak in the 1920s. Concluding there is a lot of disagreement whether mutton birding was an important activity or cultural practise and if it was even an Aboriginal practise at all. By using different views on inter alia mutton birding (and throughout this thesis on other subjects), I want to show that it's not about the discussion on what is authentic, what is 'real', I want to show that the contents of the discussions are not important. The examples and perspectives used are to illustrate that it's about people's perceptions on practises like mutton birding and the friction arising from these differing perceptions. As described in the previous chapter, there appears to be a gap between perspectives on historical facts and evidence on the one hand and something more personal and sometimes deeper on the other hand and even these perspectives are intertwined. This also appears to be the case with practices like mutton birding. It's useful to think about whether it's important for this practise to be fully Aboriginal or if it could be invented and used for broader and/or deeper reasons than just practising culture. I will show a few examples of reasons why people want to continue practicing mutton birding and what it means to them.

Rodney Dillon tells me how he has been fighting and challenging at court level over and over again, so people would be allowed and able to go mutton birding. For him, mutton birding is important, because it's about rebuilding culture and keeping Aboriginal culture alive: 'To share culture is important, I want reconciliation and I am willing to share.' In an ABC-interview(2004)he tells: 'Mutton-birding is a very important part of Aboriginal culture here in Tasmania. You know, it's part of our lives, the way people have lived. It's something they've done every year. There are even sayings that we have through the year, like just a common saying, you know, "We'll pay you back after birding.' But mutton birding is more than rebuilding culture: 'Mutton birding is more than just that, It's about making a family. We're all family'. In the same way, Helen Ransom (non-recognized Aborigine and member of Weetapoonna) tells me how much activities like the mutton birding weekend means to her: 'I feel welcome here, they are like my family'. When I think back of the mutton birding weekend I can agree with what Rodney and Helen say about making a family. During the time I've spent with the Weetapoonna members I have experienced that being together and cooperate boost

morale, hence it creates a sense of belonging. According to Morley (2010: 113) mutton birding 'enables them to maintain kinship networks and a sense of solidarity, as well as to participate in an activity which goes back to before the arrival of Europeans. To all Aboriginal families who have ever gone birding the focal point was, and still is, kinship – the getting together, family reunions, storytelling, talking about the old days and the old days and the ghost yarns'. During the mutton birding weekend not only people with Tasmanian Aboriginal ancestry participated in the mutton birding; seven people have no Aboriginal ancestry, almost half of the participants. Whereas Parks and Wildlife only allows people with Aboriginal ancestry to go mutton birding, the Weetapooona people, who are not one kinship group themselves, but a composite groups of families and individuals –with or without Aboriginal ancestry-, don't seem to have much problems with allowing other people to participate. This seems to support the view that mutton birding is more than practising culture; that it's also about sharing and making a family, in a broader sense than kinship.

In the same way Rodney states that one reason to continue mutton birding is to rebuild culture, Alan Wolf (Aborigine and former head of Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation) and Tony Brown argue that it's important to keep the culture alive, because it's what they've learned and who they are: 'We learned how to fish, hunt, collect bush food, use bush medicine, mutton birding. It is who we are'. Though he admits that after the sealing industry, mutton birding became an industry: 'some people lost trace about tradition, what tradition is and what is not'. Alan agrees with this by saying that 'commercial mutton birding is not cultural. I want to go mutton birding, because I want to practise my culture'. For Leslie Crook, an Aboriginal woman from the mainland –where mutton birding is unknown-, mutton birding is meaningful in a different way: 'Mutton birding is not really important to me, it's not my culture. Although, in some sense it's important, because we have to teach the children. Pass the culture on, otherwise it will be gone'. By saying this she demonstrates that passing on culture, whether passed on by Aborigines or non-Aborigines, is of great importance. Interestingly, culture here is seen as transmitted rather than inherited. Nurture rather nature. The fact that both whitefellas and blackfellas participated in the mutton birding and that everybody found it more important to pass on a cultural practise –even if from a blackfellas' point of view mutton birding is not a whitefella practise- than to put an emphasis on originality or authenticity.

According to Manyard (in Penberthy 2011: 24) 'it's [mutton birding] also a key point of contact, a tradition that has survived despite Tasmania's chequered history, including the Black War (1804-30), once thought to have largely wiped out the Aboriginal population. The birding is not just cultural tucker, but a gathering'. Even though there have been some changes to the birding over the years and mutton birding might not have been a traditional Aboriginal practise in former days, it's something that is still there something people want to hang on to as there is hardly any Aboriginal heritage left. As there might have been other and maybe more significant practises that did not survive the test of time, mutton birding can be seen as an important link to the past. On the website of the National Museum Australia (2003-2013) the following quote is displayed: 'Much of our culture has been lost but we as Tasmanian Aboriginal people have been able to hold on to some of our traditional culture and are continuing to reclaim more. Mutton birding is an extremely important link to our past. More importantly the birding season provides us with a period of time each year when our elders, youth and indeed all Aboriginal people can work alongside each other to catch our cultural food, share stories, teach our children and our youth. This lets us strengthen our connections to our community and the land. It also instils pride of our heritage in our youth. We are proud to be Aboriginal and being able to go birding, as our ancestors have done before us, brings joy to our hearts and renews our souls for another year. During each mutton bird season families reaffirm their identity and their connection to kin and country'.

The examples above indicate that mutton birding is done for several reasons; practising a learned culture, sharing with the broader community, strengthen family ties –in a broader sense than kinship- and passing on culture so that Aboriginal heritage won't get lost. Furthermore mutton birding is an important link to the past. Another important issue and subject of debate is the revival of Aboriginal language. Is Aboriginal language something that is left and can therefore be revived, or is it lost and should we create a new one?

Language

'While Tony Brown, Senior Curator of Indigenous Cultures at Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, starts our private tour through the museum and tries to tell me something about the bark canoe, a loud and squeaky voice predominates our

conversation. The voice comes from a sound box in the corner of the room, the singing sound of Fanny Cochrane Smith'. – Fieldwork notes on Tuesday 26th of March, 2013.

'In 1899 Tasmanian Aboriginal Fanny Cochrane Smith recorded some Aboriginal songs in her own language. They are now the only known recordings of a lost language (Morley 2010: 116)'. Attempts are made by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and other Aboriginal communities to rebuild this lost Aboriginal language through adding together fragments 'of their original language from European records and oral histories to create a hybrid language, known as Palawakani, 'blackfellas' talk (Morley 2010: 116)'. The languages from Tasmanian Aborigines were not written, they were entirely verbal. The records that exist are transliterations of words and phrases done by Europeans. Except for the song from Fanny Cochrane Smith, no first hand records from native Tasmanian languages are available. Research points out that there were at least a dozen distinct and separate languages spoken before the Europeans started to settle in Tasmania. By consequence the revival or rebuilding of Tasmanian Aboriginal language is a complicated and controversial process.

According to McFarlane, Tasmanian Aboriginal language is a fabrication. Again, I want to note that McFarlane's view doesn't necessarily represent all scientific perspectives, I want to use his view to illustrate that different perspectives on (the revival or rebuilding of) language are present. While we have been talking for over an hour on the bench next to the waterfall at Dip Falls, McFarlane tells me that the name given to the hybrid language, Palawa (or Palawakani), means 'men'. Palawa are five languages added together, therefore it has nothing to do with authentic or Aboriginal language. McFarlane argues that Cochrane Smith's language can't be rebuilt as there is nothing left. He even asks himself why people would bother, as there was no literature, no written language in the first place. Interestingly, nobody seems to disagree with the fact that the rebuilding of Tasmanian Aboriginal language leads to a new language, in a sense a construction. Helen Ransom, explains what she thinks: 'I support the restoration of language, it's important, it's something that is left. It doesn't matter if it's not accurate, as long as we acknowledge that'. She knows the language that people are trying to rebuild has never been a real language. She knows there were many different languages and different words. Most of the knowledge is gone, but there is still something left:

'everybody should acknowledge that the language we put together is made up of chosen words and that there are other words which could have been used. It is not important that this language didn't exist before, the words existed and we should try to save them. It means a lot to people'. In support of the view that veracity of language is not important, Plomley (1977: 32) argues that language doesn't remain static and changes with time. He states that 'language change would have become much more rapid from the time of contact with Europeans', because Aborigines came in contact with new technologies, plants and animals, language changed in order to communicate with Europeans and tribes were mixed so a need for intertribal communications arose. Having this in mind –and besides the fact that most of the languages are lost- it would be impossible to restore languages that were subject of change and have never been static. Like no language is ever static or isn't subject to change.

To understand the underlying significance of the restoration or creation of language, it's important to take into account that language and the use of language are, according to Fernández (2000), always the source of social identity, that we may identify as linguistic identity. Fernández states that at least individuals may feel as though they belong to a group sharing a way of speaking. Though, in the Tasmanian case one cannot talk about a way of speaking, as there is no Aboriginal language spoken today. However, language can go beyond its communicative function. Lapresta and Huguet (2008: 263) argue that languages sometimes 'become a symbol of ethnic and/or national identity. This must be seen as a socially constructed relationship, which has its origins in a specific tradition of ways of thinking with specific aims'. A sense of community and membership, of belonging and social identification (the genesis of the group itself) can be created through the language of the group. Although no collective Aboriginal group identity seems to be present today, attempts towards this are made through the restoration or creation of a shared language.

Flexible features of culture

Both examples above can be seen as features of culture. Although I do not want to discuss the debate on the notion and understanding of culture too deep, I would like to briefly touch the concept culture as it seems that it cannot be ignored. The state is urged to make legal changes and give funding in order to preserve culture. The problem is, as Rolls (2011: 6) argues, 'that the rhetorical use of culture is uncontested, and it becomes

mobilized in broader claims about culture. But without a clear understanding that these issues are cultural, or in what way, it's not apparent what governments and others are being asked to protect, consider and/or respect'. In short, are current practises like mutton birding or the restoration of language really characteristics of culture and should the state therefore make an effort to preserve the so called 'Aboriginal culture'?

Rolls (2011: 3) states that 'anthropologically at least, culture is generally understood as something shared. To have social meaning and significance, and to be cultural, an individual's proclaimed cultural practice or space must have resonance through a broader collective'. According to this view, there must be a broader collective. Both the mutton birding event and the revival or restoration of language seem to go beyond an individual desire, it appears to be for the greater good. Can we therefore see these practises as culture? Rolls (2011: 3) goes further by arguing that 'it is also generally accepted, at least anthropologically, that culture, or the cultural, is an aggregation of attributes, and that such ensembles are distinctive. Those of particular culture can be distinguished culturally from those who are not. Furthermore, as already stated, for something to be cultural it must be relational, and these relations are usually expressed symbolically'. Looking at the mutton birding, it 's noticeable that the event is not only attended by people with an Aboriginal background, but also by whitefella guests and members. Though the relational and hence symbolical meaning can be recognized -in the sense that mutton birding is a way of making a family-, the distinction of people with Aboriginal background and people without this background and therefore 'from Aboriginal culture' cannot be made.

Rolls (2001: 9) argues that Aboriginal cultures and identity only exist in relation to colonial times; 'besides the problematic conflation of identity and culture, overlooked is the critical point that there is no Aboriginal culture without the cultures of the colonisers and subsequent settler-Australians'. One cannot extract the traditional Aboriginal culture, as there is no original Aborigine. Rolls (2001: 9) explains this by saying that 'all expressions of identity and the Indigenous cultures in which those identities move, challenged or otherwise, are bound inextricably to the colonial and other historical processes that they have had to negotiate'. This means that Aboriginal cultures are always negotiated, as well as practises like mutton birding and the creation of a language today. Lambert-Pennington (2007: 332) gives the example of Kooris at La Perouse (an Indigenous community in Sydney), who seek reconciliation through the

repatriation of ancestral remains. They had to create a reburial ceremony in order to address the repatriation; 'Knowledge or the lack of it, did not close off the possibility of creating a culture. Kooris at La Perouse variously registered their support, protest, or indifference to the reburial by drawing on history, knowledge, personal experience and politics. The debates that surrounded the reburial evince Kooris' struggle to corral the complexities of contemporary culture-making into something meaningful. [...] it demonstrate how participants made meaning of their experience by connecting the past with the present through their own life stories and their sense of justice'. In the same way the people in my research are not restrained by (the lack of) knowledge in the process of preserving, (re)inventing or creating a culture, this process should be seen in the broader desire of belonging, reconciliation and hanging on to (historical) remnants.

Summarizing one can conclude that some historical and scientific views (like McFarlane's) tell us that practises like mutton birding might not be original or authentic Aboriginal practises and that the restoration of Aboriginal language causes a creation of a new language. Though, at the same time, they tell us that cultural practises and languages are hybrid, dynamic and subject of change through influences from the inside and outside, which make changes in traditions, practises and languages inevitable. Having in mind that cultures are always changing, dynamic and a reaction on internal and external pressures and influences, it seems otiose to discuss the originality or purity of Aboriginal practises and culture and hence the legitimacy of mutton birding or the restoration of language. If it's not possible to extract the original Aboriginal, it's not possible to point out original cultural or traditional practises nor original language. For Aboriginal people –and even for some whitefellas- more important than the accuracy and legitimacy of Aboriginal culture, practices and traditions is, in the same way as in the chapter before, to stick to something that is left. Mutton birding today might not be original or authentic and the new language might be a creation, but if people stop passing these features on, they will be forgotten and eventually lost. In a few years or a few generations no more Aboriginal heritage will be left and this seems to hurt people more than not knowing or not being able to practise original Aboriginal culture. And if this happens, the discussion will be once again reduced to whitefellas telling blackfellas what is right, what is wrong and what is best for them.

Passing on culture and knowledge with regard to historical and contemporary Aboriginal cultures and values have a close connection with the demand for recognition,

as official recognition enables people in a social, cultural and financial way to prevent these Aboriginal cultures and values from getting lost. In the next chapter I will elaborate on the (changing) meanings of Aboriginality since the increased and intensified state's focus on relating issues in the 1970s.

Chapter three: I know who I am

'I did try but I didn't get recognition, I needed it for this job I wanted. I can see where they are coming from, I try to understand. It doesn't change me, I just know who I am. I don't need recognition really from anybody'. – Helen Ransom

I've met Helen during the mutton birding weekend. She is and has been involved in a range of activities with regard to Aboriginal culture and heritage as inter alia being a member of the Weetapoonna Aboriginal Corporation and Indigenous project officer at the Department of Education Tasmania. Despite her engagement, Helen is not officially recognized as an Aborigine. She applied for recognition last year, not for a personal change, but in order to get a specific 'Aboriginal job': 'I applied for recognition because I needed approval to get a job I wanted. I applied in April and in October they told me 'no'. My ancestry wasn't right, they have done it wrong. I couldn't get that job, because I didn't got approval'.

Aboriginality

At different levels -international, national and local- and between different groups - government, unrecognized Aborigines, recognized Aborigines, blackfellas and whitefellas- tensions have arisen that indicate the complexity of recognition and identity with regard to power relations. The Tasmanian state today has to do with historical power relations and the development of recovery of these relationships, in order to facilitate a harmonious society and justice between (Aboriginal) groups and individuals, as Aboriginal identities are inseparable from the Tasmanian colonial history. Upon restoration of colonial relationships and recognizing identity, comes the problems associated with the sense of identity and indigenouness forward. According to Rolls (2005: 64) 'Descendants of mixed heritage were not granted the liberty to exist in their own complex right. They were instead conceived as a group to whom things needed to be done in order to provide them with culture and an identity, or alternatively, to rid Australia of their presence'. According to Grieves (2003: 194-195) 'from the earliest times of colonisation Indigenous people have expressed concerns about the theft of land and the lack of recognition for them. [...] The 'great Australian silence', in Indigenous history until the last three decades, is testimony to the fact that Australian settler colonialism is overwhelmingly characterised by denial'. To come to terms with the past,

the present and 'with the dynamics of race in our society and how racism and colonialist attitudes manifest (Grievess: 2003: 194)', the Tasmanian state must now respond responsibly to greater pressure from Aborigines to be recognized with respect to identity and their demand for recognition and compensation for injustices suffered. The restoration of colonial relationships and recognizing identity, reveals the problems associated with the sense of identity and indigeness. Under international pressure, a referendum was held in 1967 with the outcome that Aborigines were now recognized as Australian citizens with voting rights. From this moment on more laws were passed and funding and services became available under the guise of reconciliation. I don't want to elaborate on all the changes in approach and policies since the colonization of Tasmania, I will briefly touch on the 1970s. According to people I've met during my fieldwork in Tasmania a time which proved to be a key period.

Since the founding of the TAC (Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, representative for all Tasmanian Aborigines) in the 1970s, their call for Tasmanian Aborigines to stand up and the growing number of (officially) identifying Aborigines, tensions have arisen in regard to the meaning of Aboriginality. Whereas till the 1970s Aboriginality didn't seem to be important –Aborigines weren't even seen as people allowed to vote on their behalf-, in the 1970s –due to international pressure- a focus on rehabilitation created a climate in which space occurred for Aboriginal organizations to be founded. Some people in my research group were only kids or young adults in the time of the occurrence of these organizations and they have experienced the change. One of these people is Tony Brown, who grew up at Cape Barren Island, a former reserve; 'People at Cape Barren didn't talk about being Aboriginal, although we knew. It became important when we left the Island and went to high school'. He tells me that with more focus on identity a climate of even more racism occurred. Interestingly, a few of the people I talked to weren't aware of their Aboriginal background when they were younger. In a time of racism, in which a (positive) government focus on indigeness was not present, you can expect Aboriginality not to be discussed or even kept secret. Rosemary, Helens mother, tells me that she didn't know she was Aborigine, because her mother kept it hidden, probably because of shame and racism. It wasn't until she passed away that Rosemary and her sister found out about their ancestry. After she found out, she became really interested and wanted to learn more. She now identifies more with her Aboriginal ancestry than with her English background. The founder of the TAC, Michael

Mansell, with ancestry from Cape Barren Island –'Islander', proclaims himself proud Aborigine. Ancestry from Cape Barren Island is now one of three kinship lineages that is officially accepted as Tasmanian Aboriginality. Two other lineages are also accepted:

'It appears that some –possibly many- of the 'new' Aborigines originated in the Bass Strait, just like the Islanders, but their families had settled on the mainland at least a century earlier, as a consequence of which they had, to varying degrees, assimilated into white society. They traced their ancestry back through two nineteenth-century matriarchs, Fanny Cochrane Smith and Dalrymple Mountgarrett (Dolly Dalrymple) Briggs, both the offspring of sealers and Aboriginal women. [...] Two matriarchs, two very sizeable families – potentially there were thousands of descendants, Dolly's living mainly in the northwest, around Latrobe, Cochrane Smith's in the south, in the Huon Valley and Channel Country. A second category boosting the census figures consisted of people claiming to be descended from Aborigines who remained on the mainland following Robinson's round-up. With no documentary evidence of an Aboriginal ancestor, they relied on oral history family photographs or an unexplained gap in their genealogy' (Marks 2013: 183).

As Marks points out above, Aboriginality can be seen as a kinship lineage and therefore as a biological fact, but on the other hand and at the same time biological facts don't seem to be enough to determine Aboriginality. The legislature of the Australian federation has made numerous attempts to define Aboriginality. The authentic Aborigine was defined in the context of developing intellectual traditions and changing colonial relations. Skin colour, nose shape, ceremonial practices and language have been used as defining features of indigenusness. Over the years the emphasis shifted from a focus on racial categories to a focus on culture (Anderson 1997), although in the Aboriginal determination of 2005 -in which evidence of Tasmanian ancestors is a part- a racial focus can still be seen. According to Rolls (2001: 8) 'under this regulation, Aboriginality is both determined and assumed. It considers that one's biological heritage alone is insufficient a basis upon which to claim an Aboriginal identity'. Grey Postero (2007: 12) states the following: "'indigenous' took on a specific meaning in the context of the times'. Experiences during my fieldwork show that indigenusness in Tasmania

changed meaning and practical application over the years, though the power-laden political relation is continuously reflected.

In current Tasmania one can have (proven) Aboriginal ancestry and therefore identity as Aborigine. Though, community acceptance is needed in order to be an recognized Aborigine and be placed within that biological and social category. One can only be Aborigine, if one 'acts' like an Aborigine, 'those who differ from popular perceptions of the 'real' find their Aboriginality questioned (Rolls 2001: 20)'. People with Aboriginal ancestry can choose not to identify as Aborigine and be placed in the non-Aboriginal category. I've also seen people without Aboriginal ancestry being adopted within the Aboriginal community. Bruce, member of the Weetapoonna Aboriginal Corporation, has no Aboriginal ancestors –as some people say: 'as far as he knows'- but isn't seen as non-Aborigine. He participates with activities like mutton birding, shares values such as looking after nature and environment, he is not seen as any different than anybody else within the Weetapoonna organization. He is seen as a blackfella. Another example is given by Rolls (2001: 14), the example of Mudrooroo who wants to believe he is Aboriginal, though he cannot prove it on biological grounds; 'Mudrooroo acknowledges that his Indigenous identity is a social construction, a textualization of identity. He also points out how for many Aboriginal people such a construction is not exceptional'. Rolls (2001: 14) states that (cultural) boundaries 'are not impervious but permeable'. While no Aboriginal ancestry is present or demonstrable, people –by means of negotiation- can move back and forth by through the boundaries of categories.

The examples above show that focus on (one part of) identity can change over time. Grey Postero (2007) states that, like any identity, Aboriginal is not an undisputed category of dominance or domination, but a conditional category that is negotiated by individual and collective subjectivities. Following the examples in this thesis, one can see that in the Tasmanian case, being Aboriginal is a conditional category and complexities come forward. Rolls (2001: 12) states that –under the legislation- one cannot become an Aborigine, one simply is one; 'In rejecting Aboriginality as a social construct, the colonial binary of 'us' and the 'other' is maintained. Whilst Aborigines might construct themselves as non-Aborigines – or be placed into this category – only 'real' Aborigines can ever be real Aborigine'. During my fieldwork I've seen situations wherein Aboriginality as biological and social constructs are intertwined and boundaries of

categories are being negotiated. In the same line of argumentation, Álvaro García Linera (in Grey Postero 2007: 11) suggests that identity formations are as 'enunciations of meaning that demarcate social boundaries and that invent a sense of authenticity and otherness, with the practical effect of developing the subject thus constructed'. Anderson (1997: 5) supports this by stating that Tasmanian Aboriginal identities are series of meanings through which continuity and change can be negotiated. Identity is not only perceived by kinship, but also by emotions and embodied experience: 'My own identity was formed both out of my sense of family, shaped by an oral tradition in which present-day kin relations are connected to the movements and lives of our ancestors throughout colonial history'. Identities are therefore largely determined in relation to others.

Returning to Aboriginality as a construct, there are also people who know they have Aboriginal ancestry, but don't identify as Aborigine. One of these people is Natalie Conlan, a 25 years old girl who chooses not to identify as Aborigine. I got to know her through Sam, archaeologist, and interestingly he didn't know his friend has an Aboriginal background. Sam wanted to help me with finding people with Aboriginal ancestry who were willing to speak with me, as he knew it was very hard for me to get in contact with these people. After asking Natalie if one of her friends might be willing to talk, she told Sam: 'He doesn't want to cooperate, but maybe I can help as I have Aboriginal ancestry myself?' A couple of weeks later Sam and his wife Laura invited me and Natalie for dinner at their house in Forcett. We spent hours on the couch talking about how she found out about her ancestry, the resistance she got and how she decided later on not to identify as Aborigine. this is a short paraphrased version of her story:

'I found out in primary school that I had aboriginal heritage, my mom had found out early in her life. Their family decided to not recognize it, they felt that other people treated them differently. When I was going through primary school, my teacher put the idea in mom's head that we should explore it and embrace it a little bit. So we started going down that road. Mom told us that her great grandmother was either full or a half Aborigine. My brother and sister didn't want to find out more, probably because of negativity towards Aboriginal groups in Tasmania. I thought it couldn't hurt. Mom and I started going to this group in school called ASPA [Australian Secondary Principals Organization], it were basically people who identified as Aboriginals. There were weekly meetings, we

would do activities and learn about the history. I actually really enjoyed it for the first little bit, we went on camps together, we went to Bruny Island, learned about the history. After a year, when we tried to find more about our family history, it started getting a little bit funny and mom started getting a lot of negativity from the Aboriginal community. It seemed that the more we wanted to get involved the more they were trying to push us away. All parents were just complaining: We should have these rights and we shouldn't have to pay for this. The politics started to come into the primary school group and that ruined it for me. I was enjoying the idea of exploring that side of our family history but as soon as it started to become very political and you had to be one of them, it was very confronting. This isn't something that I wanna be a part of. I don't see myself as any different to my best friend who wasn't identifying as an Aboriginal so why should I be entitled to something that she is not? I decided not to be involved in any of the community activities anymore. I basically choose not to identify as Aboriginal. I would have gladly embraced it and been more involved if it wasn't so full on at the beginning. – Forcett 2013, April 8th.

Summarizing, after Natalie was told she was Aborigine she wanted to find out more about Aboriginal history, culture and her ancestry. The more she got into it, the more the resistance she and her mother got. In the end she decided she didn't want to find out more, as this would mean she had to decide to either identify as an Aborigine or not. It became too political for her, she didn't want to associate with the Aboriginal community she got to know and she choose not to identify as an Aborigine. This examples shows, against what some scientific literature⁷ argues, that counteraction or resistance from an authority doesn't necessarily mean that people counter react, videlicet that people will fight harder. It also indicates that (the meaning of) Aboriginality is strongly connected to a political climate, an ambiguous political environment in which it seems that it's a conscious choice for people to either identify or not identify with their Aboriginality.

So, with regard to people who do identify as Aborigine, what does being Aborigine mean today? Fieldwork experiences reveal that being Aborigine doesn't necessarily mean performing traditional cultural practises. As people told me, being

⁷ See Fairbrother (2003) and William (2008).

Aborigine means more than having Aboriginal ancestors: It's how you've been raised, your level of spirituality. You feel it inside, you know who you are and no recognition is needed to give way to or strengthen this feeling. To show what it means for people to be a Tasmanian Aborigine today I use quotes derived from my fieldwork. I added these quotes together and formed a conversation. This conversation never took place but I made it to illustrate how many similarities there turn out to be with regard to the meanings of Aboriginality. It also shows that 'the' Aboriginal doesn't exist, many perspectives exist and therefore it would be better to speak of 'a' instead of 'the'. Some quotes in the following conversation are paraphrased or slightly changed in order to fit into the conversation.

The sun is already set. We are standing around the barbecue at Kirby Lodge, a Weetapooona property on Bruny Island. We started this morning at 7.30am and after a whole day of catching, plucking and cleaning, the mutton birds are now roasted. Feelings of fulfilment and togetherness are mixed with the intense and typical aromas of the mutton birds. I decide it's the right time for me to ask the following question: What does it mean to be Aboriginal?

Leslie Dick: 'First of all, being Aboriginal means having the bloodline and spiritual link to history and people of this land. It's more about a feeling and spirit inside. We sense being in touch with everything around you'.

Alan Wolf: 'It's more than that. Being Aboriginal means welcoming each other, helping each other. It means the world to me. I'm spiritual. I didn't choose it, it's in me. It doesn't bother me if other people don't see me as Aboriginal. I know who I am'.

Leslie Dick: 'Exactly. I know who I am. Like a tree knows it's a tree'.

Patricia Hodge: 'I don't know how it feels to be Aboriginal, I don't know how it is to be not. I guess it's different for everybody'.

Helen Ransom: 'But it's interesting how strong you identify with your Aboriginal Ancestry. It's much deeper than ancestry, it's more spiritual. I'm just who I am. I'm not sure what it means exactly to be Aboriginal or not, but I guess ninety per cent of my daily life I'm aware of my Aboriginality. It influences the things I do and the choices I make'.

Alan Wolf: 'We also have a spirit of fire in our hearts. It's sacred'.

Annette Sculthorpe: 'Something pulls us. I feel where I come from, I don't need a white men's paper to prove I'm a blackfella'.

Uncle Bill: 'I didn't know for a couple of years that I was Aboriginal, but I did Aboriginal things, people called me Aboriginal. It didn't surprise me'.

Natalie Conlan: 'I don't think everybody identifies. I know a lot of people who don't identify or don't need recognition. For me it's not really important'.

Ronita Barratt: 'It is for me, I would like to get recognition, not for my personal change, but for justice. I do identify. It's cruel to question or challenge our identity. How can we make our kids strong and send them strong into the world if we keep questioning them?'

Uncle Bill: 'I don't think I feel different than anybody else. I don't identify with English or Viking background nor with all Aborigines or blackfellas. I can't prove my ancestry. I don't need recognition, I know who I am.'

Helen Ransom: 'I did try but I didn't get recognition, I needed it for this job I wanted. I can see where they are coming from, I try to understand. It doesn't change me, I just know who I am. I don't need recognition really from anybody'.

Rodney Dillon: 'I got my Aboriginality challenged a lot. I think government recognition is important, but family recognition is more important to me'.

Helen Ransom: 'Yes I think so too. I always wonder what if I was born somewhere else? Would I be the same? Would I feel the way I feel now? I think I would come back'.

Annette Sculthorpe: 'I think you would be a confused girl'.

As seen in the quotes above, being Aboriginal is for a lot of people more than ancestry. It can mean many different things for different people. It has to do with inter alia nurture, education, connection with nature and spirituality; both inherited and transmitted features. Interestingly, the issue of recognition comes up frequently.

Recognition

Taylor (1994) suggests that our identity is partly made up of the recognition or lack of recognition of others. An individual or a group can suffer damage caused by the society

through keeping them a limiting, demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. The lack of recognition or false recognition can damage and can be a form of oppression. It can keep someone trapped in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being. To understand the close connection between identity and recognition we must, according to Taylor (1994), consider a crucial feature of the human condition that is almost made invisible by the overwhelming monologic tendency of mainstream modern philosophy. This crucial aspect of human life is the fundamentally interactive character. We define our identity, according to Taylor (1994), in dialogue with, and sometimes in the struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us. According to this view, recognition is important and could be crucial for the forming of identity. One should expect that the lack of recognition or a false recognition of Aboriginality would have a great influence on people and that it could change them in a way. Nevertheless, apparent from my fieldwork experiences and as seen in the examples above, it turns out that recognition doesn't have the influence on the forming of identity as one should expect, in contrast to what *inter alia* Taylor argues with regard to identity and recognition.

For the purpose of this thesis and on the basis of interviews present in this thesis I want to briefly discuss personal or private identity and social or collective identity. I know that in reality it's not possible to separate these and I'm aware of the fact that this distinction is contested and a non-conventional separation in the current and leading literature, though it's inevitable to clarify the Tasmanian case. With personal or private identity I refer to an individual state of mind (*inter alia* self-esteem and self-confidence) independent from feelings of belonging to a social category. The quotes in the conversation above and my fieldwork experiences (wherein most people said they don't need recognition from anybody to know and feel they are Aborigine) indicate that recognition doesn't necessarily mean an individual change with regard to self-esteem or self-image. When people told me recognition wouldn't change who they are as a person, I would say it wouldn't seem to change their personal or private identity. Thus, (a lack of) recognition doesn't have an influence on the (private) feeling of being Aborigine.

There are other dimensions of identity, with social identity as one of these dimensions. According to Lapresta and Huguet (2008: 262) 'social identity is specifically referring to that part of the individual's self-concept which comes of knowledge of their group membership, together with the emotional significance and the importance of association with such membership'. In a way, this specific social identity can be

abstracted to an ethnic identity, as Aborigines are connected on biological grounds. Though, the Tasmanian case is complicated, as the biologic basis (an inherited one) is not sufficient for a sense of membership. Lapresta and Huguet go on by arguing that 'the notion of group implies that individuals view themselves as belonging to the same social category or that they share a social identification of 'themselves'. Interestingly, in the Tasmanian case, there is no demarcated social category, no heterogeneous Aboriginal group. The quotes and vignettes in this thesis show that Aborigines agree on this heterogeneity and that (bases of) feelings of belonging differ. This would imply that a collective identity is absent. Though, as intricate as this may seem, a collective identity does exist or at least people endeavour one. Moore (2003: 180) talks about a discussion wherein an Aboriginal panellist alluded to the nature of Aboriginality: 'saying that, on the one hand, it is not an essentialist identity, that 'there are several Aboriginalities, we are all different' and that 'we are a diverse community'. On the other hand, he also made some strongly political statements that implied his membership of a distinct, oppressed community: 'This is our history, not yours' and 'our demand for justice will continue for as long as injustice continues''. Thus, although a collective identity may seem to be absent, one is endeavoured and is present in specific (political) situation.

The pursuit of a collective identity is closely linked to the struggle for recognition. It appears that struggling for recognition is more than a personal business. It goes deeper than that. It's a struggle for justice. It's about getting recognition for Aboriginal people and culture in general. Fighting for 'their own' people so they can practice their culture and pass it on. There seems to be a paradox. People involved in Aboriginal organizations, practices or activities seem to strive for a collective identity. Examples can be seen in the mutton birding and the restoration/creation of an Aboriginal language. At the same time, people want to emphasize and make clear that Aborigines are not one homogenous group and that one person or one core group doesn't represent all Tasmanian Aborigines. Though, Aborigines who are not part of the core group (TAC) share this common denominator. To counterbalance the core group –who claim to have a collective identity (and authentic culture)- or compete for the right the share the dominant discourse, an attempt to create a collective identity is needed.

In the next chapter I will elaborate on the emergence of the TAC in a political climate wherein a space to give more attention to Aboriginal identities is created. Hence I shall discuss the consequences of the state's focus on need for people to prove their

Aboriginality and the guidelines the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) made up in order to adjudge who gets funding. I want to state that a vicious circle is created, in which an emphasis on ancestral evidence, biological lineages and communal recognition creates a political space in which people have to put forward and prove one part of their identity. Subsequently, this space is maintained as a public Aboriginal identity becomes important.

Chapter four: Family trees, funding and future

'It is Tuesday, the sixteenth of April. After a short touristic tour, Ian McFarlane brings me to his house in Table Cape. In the orangery, between colonial furniture and Chinese artwork, a man with a denim jeans and a denim jacket with small pins (one with an Aboriginal flag) is waiting for me. Ian leaves me and Leslie alone to talk. The ocean view makes up for the first few quite uncomfortable minutes. Leslie buries me under forms, readers and evidence and before we know it, two hours have passed and Ian comes in to say that we really have to go'. - Fieldwork notes on Tuesday 16th of April 2013, Table Cape.

The day after our first meeting Ian McFarlane brought me to his house, where I met one of his friends, Leslie Dick. Whereas McFarlane states that the state should stop the funding with regard to Aboriginality in order to preserve culture or under the guise of reconciliation and hence states that a focus on Aboriginality should be delisted, Leslie argues that recognition is important, though his own case is complicated. He is recognized by the Federal Court of Australia (which gives him privileges on mainland Australia), but he didn't get Tasmania's recognition which is controlled by the TAC. He has been involved in diverse court cases to get his ancestry approved and hence to be allowed to vote in Tasmania, but until today he got no success: 'They said that I couldn't vote because State overrides Federal Court, which is wrong'. He wishes for an inclusive Tasmania, but he feels there is still a long way to go to a better future as a lot has to do with power relations and money.

Power relations within a political space

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) was founded in the 1970s and this organization called on Tasmanian Aborigines to stand up and be counted and they did so, in staggering numbers, with a census count in 1971 of 617 people identifying as Aborigine up to a 19.263 people in 2011 (Marks: 2013). Aboriginal organizations were established, more than thirty Aboriginal organisations or corporations are nowadays present in Tasmania, governmental departments excluded. Still, only the people of one organization, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, are officially recognized by the government as 'real' Aborigines and representative of the entire Aboriginal population.

While he is driving me around in his car for a short scenic drive through the North of Tasmania, McFarlane explains to me that the head of the TAC, Michael Mansell, was the first to officially identify as Aborigine and he started to organize people. Because he was first to do this, the government accepted his organization and his rules on Aboriginality. Against all intentions, this has helped create division among the already non-homogeneous Aboriginal population. Tensions arise from the fact that TAC members are entitled to inter alia special Aboriginal functions, services and money. Recognition from the TAC means access to these benefits. Though not everybody says they are after these benefits, it seems to play an significant role and a source of tension.

After Ian McFarlane came into the room to tell me and Leslie we really had to go, he took us to both Stanley, where I was supposed to meet Alan Wolf, former head of Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation. Ian dropped Leslie and me off at Alan's house and before I could properly introduce myself, the conversation had already started. Passionately Alan explained to me that he is an Aboriginal elder and how he has been fighting for recognition for himself and his people for a long time. Alan supports the view that the TAC is a source of problems:

'The reason we don't get recognition is because of the deal with Mansell. They don't want us here. Everything is fraud, they [the TAC] will go to every length. I'm not interested in money and power, I want to stop Mansell, who makes deals under the table'. – Stanley 2013, April 16th.

Later on, while we sat with the four of us at a picnic table in the centre of the small town Stanley, Ian, Leslie and Alan continued their conversation. Three totally different people, with totally different backgrounds and perspectives, yet agreeing on one thing: money and power have a major influence on the ongoing problems in Tasmania and the TAC is part of it. Leslie explains what he thinks is going on:

'When I was in my twenties I got involved into recognition and political stuff. I got approval to vote, but when I tried to vote last year I wasn't allowed. Something with section 3A.. There is a lot of corruption. When the TAC didn't hold an election, no one questioned it. Also, the TAC is in every government organization. I didn't wanna vote, why would I vote for the TAC to get a position? I just wanted

my document approved. I got no reason to vote. You can fight for your own country, but at the same time your own organization doesn't recognize you. It's all about money and corruption. It is in every Aboriginal organization. The TAC recognizes only 300 people, but we are all mixed blood. They claim to have only Aboriginal blood and cling to one piece of their ancestry to get money and services. Money is a problem, it causes division and racism in the broader community. No money, no TAC'. – Table Cape 2013, April 16th.

Following the examples above, it's clear that tensions are present and that money and services have a lot to do with this. Yet I think it's too short-sighted to state that the TAC has caused the contemporary issues in Tasmania and that the end of the TAC would mean the end to all the problems, even though the TAC would come up in every conversation I had in the field. To understand how an Aboriginal organization like the TAC functions and can function in the first place, we need to look at how governmental power relations in Australia produce Aboriginal 'self-sufficient' subjectivity capable of fulfilling government policy requirements. Although Lindroth (2012) refers to the PF (Permanent Forum, an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council), a comparison can be made with other bodies and organizations. According to Lindroth (2012: 546) 'The political space in the PF is always contested and is a site of multiple struggles and resistances. Here, space refers to a shared political, physical and discursive space that helps foster indigenous unity and identity, enables and constrains indigenous peoples and reproduces existing power relations'. From these power struggles and resistances follow paradoxical indigenous political subjectivities; 'one example being when the heterogeneity of indigenous peoples is forced into a more homogeneous form due to a strategic need to present collectively in a certain way (Lindroth 2012: 546)'. The legacy from the colonial past continues to influence indigenous-state relationships, and certain positions are created in order to conduct an effective political struggle. It's likely that the TAC isn't as inclusive as to reduce the likelihood of heterogeneity and hence divisions within their organization. As mentioned before, Tasmanian Aborigines are not one people, not one homogenous group and for the purpose of effectiveness one could imagine for the TAC to draw sharp directives with regard to membership and recognition. Though, TAC's position and their lack of inclusiveness cause a lot of tension within the Tasmanian (Aboriginal) society. According to Moore (2003: 181) 'several

distinct groups within the Aboriginal population compete for the right to share the dominant discourse of Aboriginality, and the legitimacy and access to funds that accompanies it'. Here the issue with recognition and ancestry comes up again. Not being able to prove your ancestry does *inter alia* mean no access to funding, services and jobs. Before I will elaborate on this, I will show the connection between recognition and family trees, because where money and services are involved it's not possible to put the definition problem with reference to Aboriginality aside.

Genealogies

Because of the political approach –asking people to prove their ancestry- and the everyday debate on Aboriginality, there is a large focus on kinship lineages and it's therefore not surprising that knowing and studying family trees occupies an important place in the lives of both whitefellas and blackfellas. 'I'm a descendent from Manalargenna' was an often-heard assertion, just like 'I'm a descendent from Fanny Cochrane Smith'. Though I knew a (political) focus on lineages is present, I was intrigued at how many people had chosen to sort out their genealogy, some tracing back more than two hundred years. The Tasmanian situation is complicated as Aboriginal people in Tasmania cannot be recognized by *inter alia* skin colour, use of language or distinctive cultural features. A focus on kinship lineages seems an indispensable step for the state to define Aboriginality and for Aborigines it seems to be the only way to represent themselves as coherent people. Rolls (2001: 11) states that Aborigines need to overcome the long history of denial, as is mentioned before in the previous chapter, and that they need to represent themselves with a sustainable historicised subjectivity. According to this view 'this results in Aborigines paying careful attention to genealogies in order to demonstrate their biological links to a cultural heritage. Blood and 'race', the cause of so much trouble for Aborigines in the colonial context, re-emerge as the hallmarks of authenticity, with Aborigines themselves articulating a discourse of racial essentialism'. It's argued that Aboriginality is rejected, by Aborigines themselves, as a social construct as one cannot become an Aborigine but simply is one, leaving out the previously discussed analysis of Aboriginality as both a social and biological construct. The former and contemporary state's focus on race and biological links would now be adopted by Aborigines themselves to prove their Aboriginality.

However, the seemingly neutral method of recognition through proof of Aboriginal ancestry appears to be a contested process and Aboriginal people still encounter significant barriers during the application procedure. Some people cannot prove their ancestry due to the absence of documents or birth certificates: 'My grandfather was a blackfella, but I can't prove my ancestry, I don't have any of his documents (Uncle Bill)'. There are also situations in which one family member is officially recognized while the other is rejected. Some people can prove their ancestry, but it's simply not recognized, like in Leslie's case: 'A lot of documentation was destroyed, so it was hard to get all the information. I got everything, I could prove everything. My great grandmothers name was Annie Gertrude House nee Boskell and my great great grandmothers name was Margaret Ellen Leonard. I've got my whole family tree documented. But my application got denied on the basis of section 3A. I'm not sure what that is'.

It seems obvious that the process to apply and hence gain recognition is not clear and contested. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies website (2012) herein provides a good example; 'The following [confirmation of Aboriginality] is intended as a guide only. Guidelines and procedures may vary from region to region. The AIATSIS Family History Unit is not able to comment on, prove or provide confirmation of anyone's Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Heritage. Your Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander heritage is something that is personal and you do not need a 'letter of confirmation' to identify as an Indigenous person. However you may be asked to provide a confirmation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander form or letter when applying for Indigenous-specific services or programs'. According to Jens Korff (2013), which is in line with The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies website, there is no standard for recognising Aboriginality and several problems impede recognition of Aboriginality: 'Organizations do not recognize each other's paperwork, there appears to be a lack of consistency between agencies, there is no governing body regarding Aboriginality, it's left up to the individual organizations to interpret government rules, no national register or directory of Aboriginal people exists. Services insist on confirming Aboriginality to avoid misuse. Like any system of services that aims to provide a benefit to a minority of society, Aboriginal services are subject to abuse by a small number of dishonest people'.

The examples above show that rules and guidelines vary by location and organization and personal relationships also seem to play a role. Like no other country in the world, Australian Aborigines can claim Aboriginality (and hence special rights) with 'one-drop-of-blood'. Uncle Bill explains how the one-drop-of-blood rule, according to his view, can be justified: 'You have a glass with coffee. Add milk, it's still coffee. Add more milk, it's still coffee. It will always stay coffee'. In this perspective, it doesn't matter which 'percentage' of you is Aboriginal, as you cannot separate your identities. This doesn't mean that other identities necessarily are less important or significant. In fact, in the same way one can argue that for example having English ancestry means one cannot choose which part is English, you just are. In the same way Raymond (2013), Aborigine, tells about his experience of identity: 'I'm Aboriginal. It's all or nothing, you can't choose a part of it. I guess it's like being pregnant, it's either you're pregnant or not. You can't be ten per cent pregnant'.

The sensitivity lies in the connection between (proof and recognition of) kinship lineages and additional amends. Despite the question on which basis benefits can and should be claimed, a lot of Aboriginal organizations and corporations are founded and claim special rights on the basis of their ancestry. The discussion whether money and services should be based on need instead of on 'race' is very sensitive as reconciliation continues to be a recurring item on the political agenda. For a lot of people (both whitefellas and blackfellas) there is no justification for people to make claims on the basis of their ancestry, though perspectives differ. However, the political climate in Tasmania provides a space wherein a focus on this ancestry and hence contemporary identity is maintained and sustained.

According to Rolls (2005: 66) Aboriginal heritage is 'formally and popularly recognized through the assumption of Aboriginality'. People are in a way forced to choose a particular identity and 'pressures to adopt particular identities remain (Rolls 2005: 66)'. Following the example of the previous chapter, in which I briefly touched on the political approach which ensures that Aborigines are forced to lay emphasis on their identity, Rolls (2005: 68) argues how the political approach affects the current situation: 'Notwithstanding the Indigenous desire to reclaim a sense of authenticity formerly denied, there is an obvious political efficacy in Aboriginal communal and individual advocacy (both grass root and elite) to sway people of mixed descent to forego their non-Indigenous heritage and proclaim loudly their Aboriginality. Aboriginality, not

recognition of mixed heritage, determines access to targeted services, and is a requisite underlying the ability to make successful land rights and native title claims, amongst other things'. I agree with Rolls in the sense that for political purposes or in order to get things done, people need to put emphasis on a particular part of their identity. As Grant Finlay told me: 'There is always that dilemma in a political climate: people change identity to negotiate identity with the broader community. There is a dilemma between when you have no rights at all, you have to express your identity more. When you have recognition you can adjust, you don't have to negotiate anymore. It's not a change of identity, but more emphasis on one aspect. Identity changes in context'.

Returning to and against what Rolls (2005) argues, *videlicet* that people choose Aboriginality as their main identity and ignore their mixed heritage, my fieldwork experience shows that non-acceptance or non-recognition of mixed heritage is not an issue. Even though people can put an emphasis on their Aboriginality, other parts of identity can be embraced at the same time, like Rodney Dillon: 'I acknowledge both my Irish and Aboriginal ancestry'. Though people like Rodney, Helen and Ronita –and with them many more- identify as Aborigines, they also acknowledge their other non-Aboriginal background. But, where a focus on (one part of) identity is present, it's expected that this identity is propagated stronger. According to Eriksen (2010: 170) 'minority identity is activated from the outside through acts of exclusion; as Hannah Arendt (cited in Bauböck in Eriksen) puts it: 'If I'm attacked as a Jew, I can only defend myself as a Jew''. Likewise, if people in Tasmania are addressed or attacked as Aborigine, the only way they can respond is as being Aborigine.

One can conclude that a major part of the problem is an attempt to or an emphasis on the separation of identities in order to respond to the political climate existing in Tasmania. A recurring question is how *inter alia* the state, but also members of society should respond or react in order to move towards another –according to many people hopefully more inclusive- society.

Future of hope

One week before I left the field, I had a really interesting conversation with Grant Finlay, PhD at the University of Tasmania and Minister of Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. He is involved in the uniting church which has a national network of Christian Aboriginal groups. They encourage cultural practices and express Christian

faith through Aboriginal practices. It's a combination of Christian beliefs and Aboriginal culture and they offer a respectful place where people can think about their own spiritual experiences. In café Lazenby's at the campus of UTAS, we talked about current problems and I asked Grant if he knew what the main problem was and how he thinks the problems could be solved;

'There are several problems. Sometimes there is a conflict between different representative councils; TAC and the Land council. Then there is a mix of family history, personal relationships, change of mixed generations with different historical experiences, people who work for TAC and the government. You probably cannot lead it back to one thing. We are multilayered and have cross-over identities, that is why it's not easy for the government to come up with one solution. I think we should encourage people working together; like in our church where a bunch of people get together and work together, they cooperate. When you discuss things, you understand different opinions and is it easier to have a meal together. It's good for us as a community to keep Aboriginal cultural practise alive, but we are tied in family trees and white records. It's crazy and complicated. In fifty years, I like to see all kids learning something about Aboriginal culture. We need more education in primary schools, but also more education for society in general. It would be great to see Aboriginal people in government or parliament functions to help and make law, rather than being consulted. Realistically, I can't see everything I wish for happening in fifty years, but I see little changes. We have to keep trying and keep talking about it. Little changes over time. Like our church.

Summarizing what Grant Finlay says is that the main point seems to be to try to get a better understanding of other people through education and communication. Though this does seem to be an obvious solution, reality shows that this is more challenging than one might think. In the following section I will illustrate this reality through a composed conversation. I've asked several people what they think should change in order to solve the problems that are present in Tasmania, what they wish for the future, what they hope for and what their dreams are. Though everybody kind of agrees on what should happen and everybody seems to want the same things in the end, there seems to be a

lack of communication. To illustrate what is going on in Tasmania today, as I experienced it, I added quotes and pieces of conversations together. I've put together a conversation that never actually took place but symbolizes -again as I've experienced- the way people talk about Aboriginal issues related to solutions to the ongoing problems. It appears that people actually concur in the sense that they all want mutual respect, to accept people who identify as Aborigines and for everybody to live in harmony no matter what background. However, people mainly talk at cross purposes without really communicating with or trying to understand each other and to illustrate this I have deliberately not adjusted the quotes in order to make it a better conversation. In short, the following conversation and the setting are composed, though it's conceivable that it could have taken place.

A huge long table is placed in the middle of the lounge in the Riawunna Centre. Scientists, lecturers, Aborigines and non-Aborigines, recognized and non-recognized, and people who transcend the boundaries of these categories are sitting around the table. They stare ahead, probably looking out the window at the large trees in the communal garden, not really looking at each other.

Kristyn Harman: 'Aboriginal descendants are statistically disadvantaged.

Funding can help to close the gap. It's a class thing with a continuous line from the colonial history. I'm not sure if recognition has an influence on disadvantage, it's colonial legacy'.

Mitchell Rolls: 'The problems of recognition are the material consequences. We need to know the nuances. There is an argument that assistance should be need based, not based on identity'.

Ian McFarlane: 'Money the government gives is based on guilt, it's an industry. The middle class understands this system and gets the money. The lower class is victim of the middle class. You have to take race out of the money system, because you get racism by institutionalizing it. There is no need for the government to support culture, it will work itself out. No groups should discriminate each other or themselves. It creates victims. Aborigines shouldn't victimize themselves. The solution? End the funding'.

Uncle Bill: 'Money can be a good thing in some aspects. People in Centre Link

(low on the socio-economic scale) should all get a budget or a shopping card'.

Patricia Hodge: 'I think it starts with education'.

Samuel Dix: 'We should be men enough to acknowledge what happened. Breaking a barrier from education. Language is important, learn the Aboriginal language and giving a little bit of ownership of the country to everyone. You share the connection, it creates respect and pride.

Leslie Dick: 'I like to see, instead of separate bodies, one body and one people'.

Uncle Bill: 'Division wouldn't be solved. The people that cause division [TAC] don't want this. We cannot cure the current generation but through education maybe the next generations'.

Tony Brown: 'We need to be a united front as Aborigines. It couldn't happen overnight, but over an extend period of time'.

Rodney Dillon: 'What should happen? Education. Teach about Aboriginal wars. Teach the teacher, let them take Aboriginal studies. Tasmanian Aborigines were the first ones to fight for our country. To share our culture is important. I want reconciliation'.

Natalie Conlan: 'We need a fundamental change in viewpoint; apologies aren't 100% necessary but they can't hurt, but we need compromising on both sides and find a way to move forward. But I have no idea how to change it. Government can't force it, it has to be a fundamental route.

Helen Ransom: 'I don't want to be like some people. I want to 'fight' the peaceful way, try to understand them. One of my tasks is to strive to be a good person. If I could get funding, I would use it to educate myself'.

Alan Wolf: 'I want land on the West for the people, to teach the kids our culture. Accessible for everybody, but some small parts just for our people'.

Leslie Dick: 'I want for all descendants to live together in harmony. No more division. I would like no differentiation and everything accessible for everyone. I don't know this ever happens. Maybe, if I still be here. We can only hope'.

Given the heterogeneous nature of Aboriginal communities (and individuals) it's not safe to assume, according to Lambert-Pennington (2007: 332), that there would be communal consensus on the what, why and how of a process like repatriation or, in this example, reconciliation. Though the conversation above shows that, as Lindroth (2012: 553) states: 'although indigenous peoples are a very heterogeneous group, they share similar experiences of colonialism and the common aim of seeking justice'. So if people are actually agreeing with the idea that there should be mutual respect, recognition and acknowledgement, what then is the problem and hence the solution? As is evident in this thesis, a complicated mix of problems with regard to identity, reconciliation, benefits and needs aren't easy to be solved.

Structural problems and solutions

As mentioned earlier, I want to state that a vicious circle is created, in which an emphasis on ancestral evidence, biological lineages and communal recognition creates a political space in which people have to put forward and prove one part of their identity. Subsequently, this space is maintained as a public Aboriginal identity becomes important. Lindroth (2012: 551) argues that 'paradoxical indigenous subjectivity of victim [Aborigines]/actor [state] is produced in which the victim acquires the tools to put pressure on states due to the increased recognition of indigenous peoples' rights. The subject position of victim has made indigenous peoples into active subjects'. I do not want to state here that Aborigines use self-victimization consciously as tool, but I want to argue that the political space present in Tasmania forces certain subjectivities. In SBS Insight (Tuesday, 7 Aug 2012) Greg Lehman, Aborigine, says: 'We have learned some very, very bad habits from the coloniser. The weapons of the oppressor become the weapon of the oppressed and we rip each other to shreds'. According to Lindroth (2012: 552), Indigenous peoples have been blamed for shunning away development, and now self-technology of victimization is used by Aboriginal people to gain moral leverage. Moreover, Lindroth states that 'looking for redress from states and using victimization as a political tool is a problematic political strategy, especially for indigenous peoples whose current situations are caused by the very states they seek redress from'. Money and funding are ways of redressing and compensating for former wrong-doings, but they only seem to function as salve on the wound.

Concluding one can say that there are different things going on and several problems which need to be addressed. The Tasmanian state has to do with colonial relationships from the past that must be restored in order to facilitate a harmonious society and justice between (Aboriginal) groups. Upon restoration of colonial relationships and recognizing identity, comes the problems associated with the sense of identity and indigenoussness forward. It's evident, according to Rolls (2001: 9), that the focus on (cultural) identity 'keeps the colonial subject alive. It does this by bolstering rather than contesting former colonial binaries, but now it is Aborigines asserting that they are different'. With the founding of the TAC as the only officially recognized and representative Aboriginal organization and the designation of responsibility for the management and distribution of public money, tensions have arisen. In order for other people to get access to TAC's benefits, ancestral proof and communal recognition are needed and hence an emphasis on a public display of Aboriginality is powered. Some argue the end of the TAC will be the end of all the problems, whereas others go further by saying that the end of money will eliminate the tensions in the Aboriginal community and hence whole Tasmanian society. However, as long as there is a political space with a biological focus on ancestry on the one hand and a cultural focus on lifestyle or beliefs on the other hand in order to define Aboriginality, the contested environment will remain. According to the people in the field education on Aboriginal issues, history and contemporary meanings, equal distribution of and access to money and services, attempts at understanding and mutual respect should lead to justice and hence a more harmonious Tasmania. The tensions with regard to existing and ongoing division between individuals and (borderless) groups and the gaps that are present on different levels need to be studied and addressed in order to get a better understanding.

Conclusion

'History, by its very nature, is an ongoing discourse. The sources that inform us of our past have to be trawled over and over again, in the light of new understandings, and layer upon layer of interpretations over time. Deeper understandings of the complexities of our histories will enable us to chart an optimal future for this country. That is, a future free of the colonial yoke, informed by new understandings of humanity and the need for social justice, reflected by the intelligentsia and in popular culture'. – Grieves (2003: 198).

In this thesis I have tried to show that Tasmanian Aborigines are still present and that issues relating to Aboriginality in Tasmania are highly sensitive and political. I argued that gaps on many levels are present, though these gaps are not empty spaces between two or more factual truths, but spaces in which conflicting interests and struggle over meaning exist.

In the first chapter I showed that many views on the history of Tasmania and dreaming stories -and hence the (contemporary) connection to land- are present and the most important question is who has the authority to decide inter alia which version of history will be accepted as the correct or authentic one. In the same line of argumentation I argued in the second chapter on Aboriginal practises –like mutton birding and the restoration of language- that gaps exist between views on authenticity and legitimacy of these practises. Though mutton birding and language might not be original, they stem from tradition and became metaphors important to people. I argued that how in a similar way the ongoing discussions –besides being about the survival of an almost lost culture- can be led back to a power struggle on who has the right to speak. According to Bruner (2005: 151) the 'sense of authenticity –and the question of who has the authority and the power to authenticate- is always present in the background, at least for museum professionals, insiders, locals, and scholars, and at times of open dissent it becomes even more prominent'. In the third chapter I argued that Aboriginality is inextricably linked to colonial history, though it can mean many different things to many different people. I showed that a collective Aboriginal identity is absent, though attempts are made to create and use one in the struggle for recognition

in order to be able to practise and pass (features of) Aboriginal culture on. Taylor⁸ argues that recognition influences the way people look at themselves, though as shown in this thesis this doesn't seem to be the case. In the fourth chapter I showed that a vicious circle is created, in which an emphasis on ancestral evidence, biological lineages and communal recognition creates a political space –with the TAC as an important player- in which people have to put forward and prove one part of their identity.

The underlying question in every chapter is who should decide what it means to be Aboriginal and who should decide how Tasmanian society and government should deal with this. The right to speak, reconciliation, justice and sticking to a piece of heritage are part of a (contested) collective and political Aboriginal agenda. In a certain way these tensions are leading back to the colonial struggle between whitefellas and blackfellas, but the struggle today is more than a battle between these two contested and ambiguous categories and a deeper layer can be recognized. I want to use the words of Moore (2003: 180) to summarize what I've explained is going on: 'we see the key elements in Indigenous politics at collective and individual levels. At the collective level we see the dominant discourse of liberal governance in respect of Aboriginality (acknowledging contestation between commonwealth and Tasmanian government interpretations of that discourse). We see the Aboriginal counter-discourse, which is dominated by the cultural/political elite of the Aboriginal community but is itself the site of intense internal (intra-community) contestation. We see the utter centrality of the relationship with state/government to Aboriginal people, in terms of access to funds and services but also identity. We see how the official discourse is legitimating claims to Aboriginality by previously unknown groups, and that people from those groups are now subject to informal exclusion on the basis of counter-definition by an Aboriginal discourse. Furthermore, we see the possibility of an alliance between the state and Aboriginal political elite'.

So different individuals and groups are involved, but these categories are connected and intertwined on collective and individual levels and therefore it's not easy, maybe not even possible, to unravel the Tasmanian situation and place it within a theoretical framework. For the same reason one cannot find solutions from the current (theoretical) conceptual framework in order to find a way for reconciliation and hence reduce ongoing tensions. As cultures and identities are always contested, constructed,

⁸ See chapter 3, page 43.

mutable, subject of social processes and change, it's not about authenticity. It's 'a struggle in which competing interests argue for their own interpretations of history (Bruner 2005: 163)' and contemporary society. The gaps between different realities, interests, aims and values should be studied in order to get new understandings of issues relating to Aboriginality in Tasmania and hence humanity and the need for social justice in general.

How can we ever find solutions of the ongoing problems and tensions in Tasmania? Would the end of the TAC be the solution? End the money and services? Or should we rigorously address the problems by abolishing Aboriginality? I don't think either of these are structural solutions as they are solutions made within the same theoretical and conceptual framework, which only functions as salve on the wound. Listening to the (Aboriginal) people in the field, it becomes clear that the subjects in this thesis are just metaphorical for underlying issues. Listening, observing and talking to people reveals that the categories of blackfella and whitefella, Aborigines and non-Aborigines are still used and cause friction, but thinking in terms of these categories won't bring solutions. Major gaps exist in perspectives, aims, beliefs and values. A lack of understanding is caused by the lack of effort, and the ignorance and the reluctance to step out of a certain mind frame in order to study and understand these gaps. I want to refer to Ingold (2011) here, an anthropologist who inspired me before, during and after my fieldwork period to look at the world differently. He argues that we should see people not as beings, but rather as 'becomings' moving along lines. The world is a meshwork of lines, not single dots that exist on their own. If we want to understand where the problems and tensions are coming from, we should approach people as changing lines in the social world. Placing people in categories, won't help us understand letting alone finding solutions. People I spoke to emphasize regularly that they cannot be seen as one people, not even as one person in the sense that they also move and change along lines. As long as we don't acknowledge the limitations of finding solutions within the same conceptual framework, we won't understand issues that are present in Tasmania and in a broader sense humankind within the social world.

I don't know the solution, as one solution might not exist at all. One solution cannot provide sufficiency in a world existing of moving lines. However, an attempt should be made by trying to study and hence understand the movement of lines, the movement of people and the gaps that might have a major influence on these

movements. With this thesis I have endeavored to make a start. Let's go back to the people, listen and try to understand what makes them move the way they do and become the way they become.

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Appendices

1. The beginning - Touch the Morning, Tasmanian Native Legends (1979)
2. Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Tasmania (2006)

Appendix 1

Touch the Morning, Tasmanian Native Legends (1979)

The beginning

In the beginning was the Dreamtime and all things took their shape in the Dreaming. Trowenna, the heart shaped island we call Tasmania was very small, just a tiny sand-bank in the southern seas. So it remained all through the early Dreamtime for countless ages, in complete darkness.

Then from out of the sea rose Parnuen, the sun, flashing fire, and his wife, Vena. They travelled across the sky together and sank into the sea on the other side of Trowenna. Vena, being a woman, could not travel as fast as Parnuen, so he carried her in his arms, right in the centre of his huge disc-like body. On the next day he sprinkled them with rinadina, the rain drops. On the next day, he dropped shell fish into the seas all around the island.

On the next day their first little baby Moinee was born. He was a strong shining boy and Parnuen and Vena placed him high in the sky above the icy lands to the south of Trowenna. He was a great South Star. On the next day their second son, the gentle Dromerdene, was born, shining just like his brother. They gave him a home in the sky also, midway between themselves and Moinee, the great South Star. We call him Canopus who still watches over the island. On the next day, the twins Beegerer and Piminer were born. They became the great stars that we call Sirius and Betelgeuse.

On the next day came a great and terrible storm. Wind and rain and huge seas almost washed away the little island. Moinee in the far south was showing his anger and his loneliness, so Parnuen sent his two servants, Une the Lightning and Bura the Thunder to live with his son in the sky above the snow and ice of the Great South Land. All through the ages of the Dreamtime ice bergs from the Great South Land floated around the island. Sometimes Parnuen the sun would set his wife Vena down on one of these white islets. She would watch him all day as he crossed the heavens. Before he sank into the sea Parnuen would return for her and they would slide over the rim of the world together.

One day as Vena followed her husband's journey across the sky, the ice berg on which she lay, melted and Vena sank beneath the ocean. Only in the night time would she return. In his grief and fury, Parnuen melted all the ice bergs and they too disappeared. And in his grief and fury he gave the island to Moinee the South Star who has watched over it ever since.

All through the Dreamtime, the seeds sprouted and became threes and more trees. The leaves fell down and mixing with the sand, became earth. The shell fish grew and became numerous, and as the old ones died they became the stones and rocks of the great mountains. And that is how Tasmania rose from the Dreamtime.

Timlers' Story (Timler was High Priest of the Islands Religious Hierarchy –
The Brayleny

Appendix 2

Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Tasmania (2006)

SUMMARY CHARACTERISTICS, TASMANIA

As at 30 June 2006, the preliminary Estimated Indigenous Resident Population (ERP) in Tasmania was 16,900 (3.5% of all people in Tasmania).

Some key characteristics of the Indigenous population in Tasmania, based on 2006 Census usual residence data, are listed below.

- More than half (57%) of Indigenous respondents were under 25 years of age.
- On average there were 3.0 people per Indigenous household.
- 43% of respondents aged 15 years and over stated Year 10 or equivalent as their highest level of schooling. 21% stated Year 12 or equivalent.
- 60% of Indigenous respondents aged 15 years and over were in the labour force. Of these respondents, unemployed persons accounted for 14%.
- The most common Occupations reported were Labourers, Technicians and Trades Workers, and Community and Personal Service Workers (18%, 14% and 11% respectively).
- The most common Industries of employment reported were Retail Trade, Manufacturing, and Health Care and Social Assistance (12%, 12% and 11% respectively).
- 44% of Indigenous households were living in rented dwellings and 53% of households were living in dwellings that were owned with or without a mortgage.

Summary Characteristics, Tasmania

	Indigenous			Non-Indigenous		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.	no.
Persons(a)						
Estimated Resident Population(b)	8 447	8 453	16 900	233 144	239 878	473 022
Language spoken at home						
English only	8 011	8 219	16 230	..	..	..
Australian Indigenous Languages	9	24	33	..	..	..
Other Languages	60	60	120	..	..	..

Total(c)	8 080	8 303	16 383	..	..	..
Education						
Attending						
Pre-school	137	101	238	1 875	1 842	3 717
Infants/Primary	1 431	1 362	2 793	20 703	19 489	40 192
Secondary	830	849	1 679	13 980	13 811	27 791
Technical or Further Educational Institution(d)	299	364	663	5 481	6 173	11 654
University	84	176	260	5 881	7 908	13 789
Other/Institution not stated(e)	250	287	537	2 960	3 708	6 668
Total(c)	3 031	3 139	6 170	50 880	52 931	103 811
Highest year of school completed(f)						
Year 12 or equivalent	866	1 199	2 065	54 691	61 914	116 611
Year 11 or equivalent	492	615	1 109	14 029	16 559	30 585
Year 10 or equivalent	2 067	2 198	4 266	59 789	61 386	121 179
Year 9 or equivalent	826	722	1 549	18 718	18 231	36 950
Year 8 or below	479	386	869	12 750	13 316	26 067
Did not go to school	40	31	72	653	564	1 217
Total(c)	4 779	5 153	9 931	160 634	171 980	332 614
Highest non-school qualification(f)						
PostgraduateDegree	19	21	40	3 573	2 679	6 252
Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate	11	21	32	1 609	2 650	4 259
Bachelor Degree	124	238	362	14 323	19 962	34 285
Advanced Diploma and Diploma	108	236	344	9 711	12 430	22 141
Certificate Level	1 098	839	1 937	43 728	21 568	65 296
Total(c)	1 360	1 355	2 715	72 944	59 289	132 233
Work						
Labour force status						
Employed	2 835	2 568	5 402	104 981	92 629	197 610
Unemployed	491	368	857	7 420	5 964	13 384
<i>Total labour force</i>	<i>3 324</i>	<i>2 936</i>	<i>6 261</i>	<i>112 398</i>	<i>98 592</i>	<i>210 988</i>
Not in the labour force	1 711	2 429	4 143	55 125	80 577	135 703
Top three industries for Indigenous persons(g)						
Retail Trade	239	406	645	..	..	..
Manufacturing	496	141	637	..	..	..
Health Care and Social Assistance	108	484	592	..	..	..
Top three industries for non-Indigenous						

persons(g)						
Retail Trade	..	..	..	10 022	13 563	23 585
Health Care and Social Assistance	..	..	..	4 636	17 963	22 599
Manufacturing	..	..	..	15 540	4 788	20 328
Top three occupations for Indigenous persons(g)						
Labourers	664	449	1 113	..	..	..
TechniciansandTradesWorkers	713	140	853	..	..	..
Community and Personal Service Workers	181	509	690	..	..	..
Top three occupations for non-Indigenous persons(g)						
Professionals	..	..	..	15 764	19 498	35 262
TechniciansandTradesWorkers	..	..	..	24 217	4 629	28 846
ClericalandAdministrativeWorkers	..	..	..	6 452	21 393	27 845
Mean weekly equivalised household income (\$)(h)	..	..	483	..	..	629

Dwellings

Occupied private dwelling(i)	..	..	7 924	..	..	173 978
Averagehouseholdsize	..	..	3.0	..	..	2.4
Average number of Children under 15	..	..	0.9	..	..	0.5
Housingtenure						
Ownedoutright	..	..	1 435	..	..	67 356
Owned with a mortgage	..	..	2 737	..	..	58 052
Rented						
Private	..	..	1 836	..	..	28 022
State/Territoryhousingauthority	..	..	1 318	..	..	9 065
Community housinggroup	..	..	80	..	..	1 008
Other	-	-	170	-	-	2 372
Landlord type notstated	..	..	91	..	..	1 617
<i>Total Rented</i>	..	..	3 495	..	..	42 084

- nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

(a) Based on place of usual residence.

(b) Estimates at 30 June 2006 are preliminary and subject to revision. See Glossary. Note: Final estimates have now been released and are available in publication **3238.0.55.001 - Experimental Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, June 2006**.

(c) Excludes persons whose response was not stated.

(d) Includes TAFE Colleges.

(e) Other includes persons who are attending but did not indicate the type of institution.

(f) Persons aged 15 years and over.

(g) Employed persons aged 15 years and over.

(h) Comprises persons in households in which there were no temporarily absent adults and all incomes were fully stated.

(i) Excludes non-classifiable households and visitor only households.

Note: . . . not applicable

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