

IN SEARCH OF AN AUSTRALIAN AB- ORIGINAL RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

Master Thesis to complete the Master Religion in the Modern World

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INTRODUCTION

The true beginning of this story lies back in 2006 when after graduating from the Faculty of Education at the HAN University of Applied Sciences in Arnhem, the Netherlands, I decided to go backpacking in Australia. Naturally, I was fairly excited over going to the land down under, even though, or maybe because of the fact, I did not know what to expect, where I was going to or what I would be doing. I used to watch the Australian television series Heartbreak High every day whilst at secondary school, I knew who Steve Irwin was, I had seen Crocodile Dundee, I was familiar with Aboriginal Art and I had been going through dozens of travel magazines, but these being my only references, Australia to me was a new world yet to be discovered.

My travels took me through most of the Australian continent and left me with the most inerasable experiences. These experiences for Western Australia and the Northern Territory do not just include impressions and memories of the beautiful Pinnacle Desert, the magnificent rock formations of Kalbarri National Park, the incredible views at Shark Bay, the breathtaking flight over the Bungle Bungles, the waterfalls I saw coming down from Uluru, the thunderbolts illuminating the red desert or even just the stunning scenery from the coach. I believe what stayed with me most is what I saw on the streets of the places I visited, by which I am not referring to general observations like the fact that the Australians at that time were the second fattest people in the world, which I did not expect to find at all, or the amount of people not wearing shoes or shirts in public or the fact that distances in the outback are most often measured in stubbies, cans (of beer), to name a few. The one thing that I could not escape on the streets, the one thing that really moved me and surprised me for I was not expecting to come across this at all, was what I saw of the Australian Aborigines and the marginalized position they appeared to be in. These experiences were the main reason for me to study Religion in the Modern World at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands and to now go back to Australia, were it all started for me, to write this piece on the problematic.

I can understand it must be difficult for those who have not visited Australia, or maybe those who have visited Australia but never made it to Western Australia, the Top End or the Red Centre to visualize or comprehend what it is I am referring to, what these experiences I am referring to comprise; wherefore I will try to describe this situation in the next subsection. If I would not have visited the country or have travelled these areas I would not have been aware of the problematic since all I knew about the Australian Aborigines before travelling through the country was their artwork, their Dreamtime as well as the manufacturing and use of boomerangs and didgeridoo's and I had seen pictures of the Australian Aborigines on which they were painted with bright dots on their

smiling faces. I never considered the chances of coming across non-smiling indigenous faces or finding unlucky people in what is believed to be 'the lucky country'. I never looked into the way the land came to be Australia as we know it, simply because I did not know what Australia as we know it really looks like.

On the Greyhound coach in Western Australia I had my first experiences with Australian Aborigines. The Aborigines I met there looked unclean, their clothes were torn, they smelled of alcohol and sweat and they were shouting at one another whilst others were trying to sleep on the coach. In Broome I came across a group of Australian Aborigines lying in the park by the trees, some watching the football game which was being played on the grass, whereas others were asleep being surrounded by empty stubbies and others were asking people for money in front of the liquor store. I was told not to walk home by myself at night there, for it was too dangerous for a young 'white' woman to do so, like I was later told again in Darwin, in Kununurra as well as in Alice Springs. In Kununurra I remember Aborigines were lying in the shade of the trees in the park in front of the supermarket, some asking for money, groceries, cigarettes or alcohol, some were asleep, most of them were surrounded by empty stubbies. When some tried to enter the supermarket in a group, they were denied their way in. On the coach to Darwin from Kununurra the coach driver scared me with his stories on croc attacks in the Top End trying to make sure that I would not even consider going near the water, for it was too dangerous to do so. Walking by myself at night seemed about to be just as dangerous according to him, telling me that I should be accompanied by someone else at all times and should always take a taxi home, because of the Aborigines. In Darwin I found a lot of Aboriginal people sitting on the streets again, for this was basically what I saw everywhere in the Top End. Aboriginal people were asking and begging people for money or cigarettes, making music hoping to make a little bit of extra money, running after one another shouting, screaming and cursing, picking up cigarette butts from the ground to smoke, sniffing petrol or stealing food. Local European Australians as well as backpackers were calling the Australian Aborigines names, degrading them by making jokes about them, pointing at their physical appearance, squeezing their noses when passing them, by reproducing the sound of their clapping sticks or asking friends to 'spare me a dollar, mate' and even by deciding to leave the city for a place where they hoped to come across less Aboriginal Australians. When travelling on the local busses it appalled me when bus drivers closed the doors of the bus thereby preventing Aborigines from getting in, what appalled me even more so, was the laughter on the bus after these incidents. Like in Darwin I was told not to walk by myself in Alice Springs, where I ended being picked up and brought to the backpackers where I was staying by police officers in the cage of a police car warning me of the dangers of the city, warning me for Aboriginal people, telling me not to go out at night ever again, for chances were that I would not

have the chance to do so ever again afterwards. What I heard, what I felt and what I saw was a group of people in a marginalized position, being discriminated and living of the crumbs which fall of the white man's table.

What I have seen and described of the situation of the Australian indigenous population only reflects, as mentioned above, the situation of the people on the streets. This is what most people, Australians as well as non-Australians, see of the Australian Aborigines. This, however, does not mean that all 517,200 people of indigenous descent living in Australia, as counted in the 2006 Census, representing 2,5 per cent of the total Australian population¹, live in cities. The indigenous population is defined as 'a person of Aboriginal or Islander descent, who identifies as an Aboriginal or Islander and is accepted as such by the community with which he is associated.' Of the entire Indigenous population 463,900 peoples were of Aboriginal descent, 33,100 of Torres Strait Islander descent and 20,200 of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent². According to the 2006 Census 32 per cent of the indigenous population was living in cities, whereas 43 per cent in inner and outer regional areas and 25 per cent in remote and very remote areas³. With the purpose of showing where these people live a map of Aboriginal Australia has been added to this piece, which will be found attached as an appendix.

The fact that I have not been to any of the Aboriginal communities in the remote areas makes my description of the situation fairly one-sided. I am completely aware of this fact. The entire situation of the indigenous population, comprises of Aborigines living in both remote and non-remote areas, however has been described in the scientific material which I turned to to build this piece. By only using academic material I am hoping to do justice to the entire indigenous population and the situation the indigenous population finds themselves in. I have decided to solely use scientific material for this piece, because I believed it was right to do so for two reasons. First, as Levett-Olsen, the director of Nungalinga College, pointed out to me, there is the issue of exploitation. For over two hundred years the Australian indigenous population has been exploited by the 'whites' for several reasons. Paulson, nephew of "Australia's first and still Queensland's only ordained Indigenous Baptist minister"⁴ and "youth leader and speaker in many Baptist and other churches in Australia"⁵, refers to this as "exploitation of our cultural way of

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., Canberra, 2008, retrieved from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10583> on 18-06-2009

² Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 2

³ The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxi

⁴ <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/relig/enc/stories/s1421793.htm>, visited on: 28-09-2009

⁵ Indigenous Australia, A Dialogue About the Word Becoming Flesh in Aboriginal Churches, Pattel-Gray, A., and Brown, J.P. (eds), WCC Publications, Geneva, 1997, p. x

being”⁶. He argues that “academics and anthropologists ask us to tell them about our spirituality and then they use what they learn for their own purposes”⁷. To avoid contributing to this cultural exploitation I decided not to ask the Australian Aborigines about their spirituality and the situation they find themselves in today. The second reason that made me decide to solely turn to academic material is closely connected to the first reason. This issue is addressed amongst others by Pattel-Gray, “the first Aboriginal person in history to earn the Ph.D. degree in religion”⁸ and founder of the “Aboriginal & Islander Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia”⁹. She also addresses the ever continuing exploitation of the indigenous people. She claims that “white people exploit Aboriginal people for academic work all the time; then they dictate to Aboriginal people what our culture is about. Only someone from another culture, it is thought, can be an expert on our culture”. This idea makes her feel the need to “make ourselves proud of our Aboriginal culture and heritage and church”¹⁰. This search for self-identity from a theological perspective is something I would not want to interrupt and therefore I have decided to avoid the possibility to do so and to confine myself to solely academic material on the topic.

I have mentioned above that I believe the Australian Aboriginal population to be in a marginalized position. This belief originates from my experiences on the streets, which I have communicated above. This position is also reflected in percentages which makes the situation more tangible. These percentages are addressed in the chapter concerning social circumstances. It will be hard to overlook how bad the social circumstances of the indigenous population are when looking into their young age profile, high mortality rates, low educational achievements, their low employment rates as well as their low income, when compared to the income of non-indigenous Australians. This position is also reflected in the socioeconomic situation of the indigenous population as well as their social emotional wellbeing, which will also be addressed in the chapter on social circumstances.

These social circumstances are the result of the Australian colonial legacy as described in the chapters on historical circumstances and political circumstances. A result of special importance for this particular research comprises of the arrival and deeds of the European missionaries coming to Australia to preach the gospel for it was believed that the Indigenous were unreligious heathens. The coming of the missionaries in the first half of the nineteenth century has evolved in the spread of Christianity divided by different denominations resulting in a multi-Christian society, including Roman Catholics, Angli-

⁶ Paulson, M., *Indigenous Australia*, p. 44

⁷ Paulson, M., *Indigenous Australia*, p. 44

⁸ *Indigenous Australia*, p. x

⁹ *Indigenous Australia*, p. x

¹⁰ Pattel-Gray, A., *Indigenous Australia*, p. 49

cans, Lutherans and Uniting Church members. Interesting in this is that today the proportion of Aboriginal Christians is higher than the proportion of non-Aboriginal Christians in the Australian society. Before the arrival of the Europeans and even up until today the Australian Aborigines believe(d) in what has been called the Dreaming by white anthropologists. "The Aboriginal concept the term 'the Dreaming' attempts to convey refers to an essential part of reality, a spiritual dimension of reality that has existed from the beginning"¹¹. The Dreaming was the time when the supernatural beings shaped the earth to what it is now, teaching the people how to live. This belief comprises of a strong spiritual connection to the land, which must be seen as a mutual belonging. A sense of an ever continuing circle or an interconnectedness of past, present and future also is of special importance here.

My experiences down under made me wonder why it was that this situation existed. It made me wonder how it could be that in a Western 'civilized' society, in a first world country, there were people living this way? The high amount of Christians amongst the indigenous population, the marginalized position they are in as well as the foreign cultural wrappings¹² in which the gospel was preached to them made me think of Christian intercultural theology and in particular of liberation theology. I was wondering if there was such a thing as an Australian Aboriginal intercultural theology and what this would consist of. What was it that caused this situation and would it be possible to find liberation out of this situation for the indigenous people? Whilst reading into the topic, learning more about Australia, learning more about the Australian Aborigines, I could not help but wonder whether or even believe that religion played a part in all this. For, as will be described in the upcoming chapters on historical, political and social circumstances, the main result of the colonial legacy have been the influences of the dispossession of the land. These influences do not just comprise of political and economical results, but most importantly in light of this piece are the spiritual results because of the sacredness of the land for the Australian Aborigines. This spiritual loss combined with the obtained Christian faith in particular made me want to research intercultural theology arising in this context. Due to a lack of information in The Netherlands I soon realized that the only logical and fruitful place to research the topic would be in Australia.

Whilst still in The Netherlands I came into contact with Levett-Olsen, who was kind enough to open the doors of the Keith and Merle Cole Library at Nungalinga College for me, being the only theological library in the Northern Territory. I believed this to be a wonderful and exceptional opportunity for Nungalinga College is named to be an authori-

¹¹ Rainbow Spirit Theology, Towards an Australian Aboriginal Theology, the Rainbow Spirit Elders, ATF Press, Hindmarsh, 2007, p. xi

¹² Burridge, K., 'Aborigines and Christianity', in: Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions, Ethnographic and Historical Studies, Swain, T., and Bird Rose, D. (eds), The Australian Association of the Study of Religions, Adelaide, p. 24

ty on Aboriginal theology in many of the books I had read on the subject, teaching the indigenous Australians in their own culture on the Bible; the decision to write my master thesis in Darwin was therefore easily made. The opportunity was of special importance to me since I had made the decision to solely commit myself to literal sources wanting to avoid the risk of scientifically exploiting the Australian Aborigines, as mentioned above.

The research question I formulated addressed Australian Aboriginal intercultural theology. Since I had been reading books on the subject while I was still in The Netherlands I was convinced of the existence of such an intercultural theology and went to Australia to research what this intercultural theology consisted of. Whilst in Australia I fairly soon found that there was no such thing as an 'Aboriginal theology', that there was no theology arising from the Australian Aboriginal context at this moment and that the books I had read on the subject were no longer, or maybe never had been, representing the present situation. Therefore, the reason that made me decide to go to Australia in the first place did not exist; how could that be? I had flown to the other side of the world to research a phenomenon, which I hoped could change the situation of the Australian Aborigines for the better and then it turns out not to exist; what about those books I had read, what about those people, was there going to be change for them in a different way, was there a way in which they were trying to inflict change upon themselves, perhaps, or did they develop such a thing as 'lived theology' by any chance?

I was hoping that a phenomenon like 'lived theology', as suggested by Frederiks, could form a new starting point for my research. Unfortunately a comparison between 'lived theology' and Aboriginal theology did not seem to be an ideal starting point of my research either, since there did not appear to be such a thing as 'lived theology' amongst the Australian Aboriginal people. I found this on the streets as well as in the academic material I had been using, I could however not find any scientific reason or proof for this. Levett-Olsen explained to me when I visited Nungalinya College on June 5th 2009 that there was indeed no such thing as 'lived theology' for the Australian Aborigines living in remote areas were experiencing a sense of nostalgia towards the time of the missions and therefore not experiencing the need for an intercultural theology. When it comes to the Australian Aborigines living in the cities, Levett-Olsen argued that those people consider the church to be part of the issue, part of the problem from which their position originates. For it was the church that amongst others took their land, that took their children and that took their identity, creating a sense of loss and can therefore as a contributor to the position not contribute to a liberation from this position.

The lack of a question shaping my research undoubtedly caused a lack of shape evolving in an period of undefined research and caused me a headache for I came to Australia to write on Aboriginal theology, a subject on which I had been reading books and on which I had been focusing all this time whilst planning my travels; it simply had

to be real, but it was not. All I had been wanting ever since I had my first experiences with Australian Aborigines, which simply swept me of my feet, was for others to know, to open their eyes, to open their hearts for the position the Australian Aborigines are in. I was simply not able to believe or comprehend what it was that I saw, how could it be that I did not know of this situation? How could it be that none of my friends nor my family at home knew of this situation? How is it possible that every single backpacker I met, no matter what nationality, no matter what origin, had not known of this situation before coming to Australia? And worse of all, how could it be that the Australians I discussed the topic with, did not know how this situation ever came to be, not knowing anything of the way Australia came to be and now looks the way in which we know it.

At university I had been going into intercultural theology, learning that any theology in essence is contextual since 'it arises from a specific historical context and it addresses that context'¹³. I was taught on some of the theologies arising from Asian contexts, African contexts and American contexts. Everywhere around the world theologies are rising, helping people on their path. Since I had been reading books on the Australian context and even on Australian intercultural theologies, I found it hard to relate to the fact that I could not find an actual theology rising from the Australian Aboriginal context. All I wanted to find and then show was that these people were not as helpless as so many people took them for, that they were not just 'sitting down', but that they were doing something, that they were trying to find a way to cope with the position they are in, even if this way would only be small. There had to be something.

This longing made me go back to the scientific literate material we had used at university to go into intercultural theologies. Parratt describes in the introduction of 'An Introduction to Third World Theologies' the characteristics all Third World Theologies or intercultural theologies share, however differing by content. These shared characteristics are a colonial legacy and anthropological poverty¹⁴, referring to 'the denigration of integrity, humanness and culture'¹⁵. It goes without saying that the Australian Aboriginal context is characterized by the same characteristics as those areas where Third World Theologies have already risen. Parratt argues that the innovative thing of Third World Theologies is 'a dynamic search for self-identity, an identity which takes seriously the traditions and cultures in which it is located, but at the same time seeks to address the social world in which Christians now live'¹⁶. Describing this dynamic search for self-identity seemed to me a way to fulfill the longing I mentioned above and the closest way to describing Aboriginal theology, what I had been wanting to do in the first place. Describing this dy-

¹³ Parratt, J., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, Parratt, J. (ed), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 2

¹⁴ Parratt, J., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, p. 3-5

¹⁵ Parratt, J., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, p. 5

¹⁶ Parratt, J., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, p. 7

namic search for self-identity would enable me to show the Australian Aboriginal context to everyone who wants to know of this situation. The one thing I was hoping to find was a light springing from the shadows, a taste or an experience of liberation from this situation for the Australian Aborigines.

The use of Parratt's theory enabled me to turn to the research as I had intended it, namely showing what is happening in the domain of Australian Aboriginal intercultural theology, by answering the following question: '*Does Australian Aboriginal Theology exist and if so, what does it consist of?*'. To answer this question I turned to Parratt's theory and in particular the search for self-identity he mentions. To do so I decided to use Parratt's arguments as a framework. Parratt argues that to understand the rise of intercultural theologies one needs to take notice of the circumstances in which it arises, being the historical circumstances, discussed in chapter 1, political circumstances, discussed in chapter 2 and social circumstances, discussed in chapter 3¹⁷. In this, the impact of colonialism, Western missions and the situation of religious plurality, according to Parratt being the primary factors shaping what he calls Third World epistemology¹⁸, will be emphasized. I will conclude this piece with a conclusion. This conclusion will try to provide an answer to the research question posed above. The conclusion will be followed by a summary of this piece in Dutch and a bibliography.

¹⁷ Parratt, J., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, p. 3

¹⁸ Parratt, J., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, p. 9-10

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1 HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter the historical circumstances influencing the present situation of the Australian indigenous population will be addressed. In the second paragraph attention will be paid to the alleged 'discoverer' of Australia, James Cook, who claimed and enabled the dispossession of the land by the concept of 'terra nullius' in 1770. In the third paragraph the period starting in 1788 will be entered when the first convicts arrived after Australia had become a penal colony. In this paragraph the sacredness of the land, or more justly put the desecration of the land due to the arrival of the British convicts and their actions, will also be addressed in this paragraph. What started as a penal colony soon became a place of 'settlement', which will be mentioned in the fourth paragraph of this chapter. In the fifth paragraph the alleged superiority of the whites will be addressed. This belief led to several political regulations, which will be introduced in the mentioned paragraph and will be further explored in the second chapter on political circumstances influencing today's Australian Aboriginal context after briefly listing our findings in this chapters conclusion, being the sixth paragraph.

1.2 James Cook and the concept of 'terra nullius'

On 29 April 1770 Captain James Cook entered the eastern coast of Australia at Botany Bay and took possession of the land by the name of New South Wales¹⁹ for His Majesty King George the Third of Great Britain. Even though Cook was the first to have claimed the land, he was not the first to 'discover' or enter Australia. It was the Dutchman Willem Jansz who, more than a century and a half before Cook's arrival discovered the great southern land in 1606, which he then called New Holland. Even before this encounter, it is known that the indigenous population have been in contact with Indonesian fishermen and tradesmen for several centuries.

As it had been anticipated that Cook would 'discover' the great southern land, he had been issued with the following unambiguous orders:

¹⁹ Elder, B., Blood on the Wattle, Massacres and Maltreatment of Australian Aborigines since 1788, National Book Distributors and Publishers, French Forest, 1988, p. 193

*"You are ... with the consent of the natives to take possession of convenient situations in the country in the name of the King of Great Britain, or, if you find the country uninhabited take possession for His Majesty by setting up proper marks and inscriptions as first discoverers and possessors"*²⁰.

The Australian indigenous population had already been encountered by the Dutch who described them as "wild, cruel, black savages ... poor and abject wretches"²¹. This encounter led to the word 'Balanda', the Aboriginal word for white men originating from the word 'Hollander', which is being used up until this day. William Dampier, who had been on the north-west coast in 1688, believed the inhabitants of the country to be "the miserablest people in the world"²² differing "little from brutes"²³. Cook himself was obviously well aware of the presence and existence of the indigenous population when taking possession of the land writing that "All they seemed to want [...] was for us to be gone"²⁴.

Therefore it cannot be that Cook took possession of the whole eastern coast under the delusion that the country was uninhabited²⁵ and it would seem more likely that "he was breaking his original order"²⁶. "This sequence of events is what is often described as the notion of 'terra nullius'²⁷, meaning unoccupied land. This can mean that the land was uninhabited, "as in a case like Antarctica, but no one ever pretended there were no Aborigines actually"²⁸ there. For this reason the explanation of the concept can neither be true nor believed by James Cook to be true when he took possession of the land. "Terra nullius mostly meant a land which was inhabited but which the inhabitants could not possess"²⁹ either due to incapability of the inhabitants derived from the concept of the "primitiveness" of the indigenous population due to the lack of sophisticated titles or legal documents to the land³⁰ wiping out all rights "to land which had been occupied for 40,000 years, for 1600 generations and more"³¹. No agreements or treaties on the use of the land were made. As a consequence "as many as half a million people, living in several

²⁰ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood, Racism in Australia*, American Academy of Religion, 1998, p. 15

²¹ Moorehead, A., *The Fatal Impact, An Account of the Invasion of the South Pacific 1767-1840*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1966, p. 101

²² Moorehead, A., *The Fatal Impact*, p. 101

²³ Moorehead, A., *The Fatal Impact*, p. 101

²⁴ Moorehead, A., *The Fatal Impact*, p. 105

²⁵ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 193

²⁶ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 193

²⁷ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 193

²⁸ Harris, J.W., *We wish we'd done more, Ninety years of CMS and Aboriginal issues in north Australia*, Open-book Publishers, Adelaide, 1998, p. 433

²⁹ Harris, J.W., *We wish we'd done more*, p. 433

³⁰ Harris, J.W., *We wish we'd done more*, p. 433

³¹ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 17

hundred tribal groupings, in occupation of even the most inhospitable corners of the continent, had in a single instant, been dispossessed³², by the concept of *terra nullius*.

1.3 A penal colony and the sacredness of the land

After Cook's departure the indigenous population of Australia remained undisturbed for eighteen years. But the British defeat in the American War of Independence in 1781 asked for "a convenient dumping ground for criminals"³³ since the American colonies could no longer be used. From 1788 onwards, due to the necessity "to set up a penal settlement in some other country"³⁴ British convicts invaded the Australian land, dispossessing the indigenous population, "parcel by parcel, to make way for expanding colonial settlement"³⁵.

The first fleet of British settlers arrived in 1790. They had "no sentimental or emotional attachment to the land. They were, for the most part, city folk"³⁶. "For them the land was nothing more than a commodity to be bought, exploited and sold. Land was the basis of wealth. Wealth was measured in terms of property. And property was sacrosanct"³⁷. The British exploited the land, whereas the indigenous peoples respected the land. "The Aborigines knew, loved and respected their land. It was their total *raison d'être*. It was their source of spirituality and strength"³⁸; whereas the settlers were building "a British suburb on a foreign shore"³⁹ and turning the land into Britain's granary, using the fertile continent for farming as well as grazing activities.

The cultivation of the land led to a transformation of the sacred, for the land is sacred to the Aborigines and closely connected to their religion and culture. The land, including her flora and fauna, is part of the world the Aborigines believe to be created by the Supernatural Beings during the Dream Time. The land does not belong to men, for it is the Creator Spirit who is the true landowner⁴⁰. "Human beings are like trustees, responsible to the Creator Spirit for the care of this land"⁴¹. The land may neither be cultivated nor appropriated, wherefore the indigenous peoples lived as food gatherers and hunters.

³² Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 17

³³ Moorehead, A., *The Fatal Impact*, p. 134

³⁴ Moorehead, A., *The Fatal Impact*, p. 134

³⁵ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 16

³⁶ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 11

³⁷ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 11

³⁸ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 11

³⁹ Smart, N., *The World's Religions*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 511

⁴⁰ *Rainbow Spirit Theology, Towards an Australian Aboriginal Theology*, the Rainbow Spirit Elders, ATF Press, Hindmarsh, 2007, p. 35

⁴¹ *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, p. 35

The life of the Aborigines as food gatherers and hunters was destroyed by the settlers, because the Aborigines' preys fell a prey to the cattle the British imported and the cultivation of the land led to the disappearance of the berries and seeds the Aborigines used to gather. To appease their hunger the Aborigines ate the colonists' cattle, making them thieves in the colonists' eyes. They were punished severely by the colonists for something they did not consider to be wrong. The natives did not understand the concept of property that the invaders were preaching⁴². "They thought that their tribal hunting grounds were their own, and when they found that this was not so, that they owned nothing, that they had virtually no rights of any kind [...] they were aliens in their own country"⁴³.

"Sources of food supply but surely disappeared, and they were sent away to unfamiliar places, compelled to change their mode of life, to clothe themselves in the attire of strangers, to eat foods unfitted for them, to live within walls"⁴⁴.

The indigenous peoples believe history, present and future to be connected like a circle. They believe creation to be an ever continuing process. "The concept of the Time of the Dreaming is not by itself very well suited to explain change, for it fixes rites and customs in a kind of timelessness which is well suited to those who wish to maintain continuity"⁴⁵. Due to the arrival of the British this ever continuing process, this circle as well as the harmony they sought was disturbed. "The result was inevitable"⁴⁶. The two cultures were so different, so polarized, "there was no possibility of compromise"⁴⁷.

1.4 White 'settlement'

The land claimed by Cook and the use of the land as a penal colony soon led to what non-Aboriginal people refer to as white settlement, what Aborigines call the white invasion⁴⁸. At first the natives and the settlers approached one another in curiosity; no guns were fired, no spears were thrown. When the settlers went to explore the land they depended on the "expertise of their black guides; they followed Aboriginal paths, drank at their wells; slept in their gunyahs and were often passed on from clan to clan by

⁴² Reynolds, H., *The Other Side of the Frontier*, Aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of Australia, Penguin Books Australia Ltd., Melbourne, 1981, p. 199

⁴³ Moorehead, A., *The Fatal Impact*, p. 169

⁴⁴ Moorehead, A., *The Fatal Impact*, p. 175

⁴⁵ Smart, N., *The World's Religions*, p. 513

⁴⁶ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 11

⁴⁷ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 13

⁴⁸ Bourke, E., 'Images and Realities', in: *Aboriginal Australia, An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*, Bourke, C., Bourke, E. & Edwards, B. (eds), University of Queensland Press, Lucia, 1994, p. 4

people who constantly monitored their progress through a landscape the Europeans chose to call a wilderness"⁴⁹. But relationships between the two were to deteriorate rapidly and the 1799 "arrival of more than a thousand whites in a prison without walls inevitably strained relations between whites and blacks to breaking point"⁵⁰ in 1799.

The indigenous population of the land, the 'ab origines', had never been exposed to European diseases; they were not immune and were easily killed by the diseases the British carried, like smallpox, syphilis and influenza⁵¹. "The resilience and will of the Aborigines had been broken without a single shot"⁵². The ones who did survive the 1789 epidemic "did not know how to adjust themselves to the new social climate that was closing in around them"⁵³. Alcohol lowered their self-esteem even further. "Fighting and brawling"⁵⁴ became normal. The settlers took the indigenous peoples' reason to exist, wherefore they took the bottle and in turn were accused of drunkenness and laziness by the colonists⁵⁵. "The removal of Aborigines from their traditional pursuits [...] created a sad dependency on white food and clothing"⁵⁶. The British considered them to be 'in the way'; obstacles to progress, which had to be removed⁵⁷ and so they did. They 'civilized' them, by killing them:

"We are indeed a civilizing race... when we came here, the aborigines covered these wide plains in thousands. Where are they today? We have 'civilized' them - they are dead".

David MacDonald in *Gum Boughs and Wattle Bloom*, 1888⁵⁸

"I look on the blacks as a set of monkeys, and the earlier they are exterminated from the face of the earth the better".

A member of the jury which tried white men for the murder of Aborigines in Myall Creek, 1838⁵⁹

"Well Mister ... all black-fellow gone! all this my country! pretty place Botany! Little pick-aninny, I run about here. Plenty black-fellow then; corroborry; great fight; all canoe about. Only me left now, Mister. Poor gin of mine tumble down and die. All gone! Bury her like a lady. Mister; all put in coffin, English in fashion. I feel lump in throat when I talk about her; but - I buried her all very genteel, Mister ..."

Mahroot, the last man of the Botany Bay tribe, date unknown⁶⁰

⁴⁹ Reynolds, H., *The Other Side of the Frontier*, p. 200

⁵⁰ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 14

⁵¹ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 15

⁵² Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 16

⁵³ Moorehead, A., *The Fatal Impact*, p. 169

⁵⁴ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 23

⁵⁵ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 200

⁵⁶ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 23

⁵⁷ Moorehead, A., *The Fatal Impact*, p. 169

⁵⁸ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 154

⁵⁹ Harris, J.W., *We wish we'd done more*, p. 435

What started in the Sydney region soon became a pattern, spreading across the country. Killings followed “in the Bathurst region, on the north coast, in the New England Ranges, along the Darling, in Queensland, and in Victoria. It was a ripple in a pool. Spreading wider and wider, further and further, until the will of the Europeans was imposed upon the whole of the land”⁶¹. The white settlers even turned to the natives to rid themselves of the ‘black menace’⁶². The ‘Native Police’ was being rewarded with food, tobacco, guns, horses and attractive uniforms for the tracking and killing of defenseless indigenous peoples living in the ‘wilderness’.

“The Aboriginal response to invasion was much more positive, creative and complex than generations of white Australians have been taught to believe”⁶³. The Aborigines knew their weapons could not compete with the settlers’ weapons. Their spears could not defeat the guns, muskets or revolvers the invading settlers were carrying. “They responded in the only way they could”⁶⁴; actively and directly by following the whites’ moves and by stealing their food, tobacco and clothing. The indigenous peoples killed those who had offended them, had harmed them or simply wandered too far. “It was hardly an organized attack on the invaders but it did harass and unsettle the new colony”⁶⁵.

1.5 White superiority

The British settlers did not seem to care about the people inhabiting the land they invaded. Neither did they seem to care about their human rights, for they did not consider them to be human. They considered them to be non-humane, to be ‘filthy, dirty beasts’⁶⁶, referring to them as ‘animals’ and ‘savages’⁶⁷ and calling them by other degrading names. The British believed their culture as well as their religion to be superior, more civilized in comparison to the culture and religion of the indigenous peoples. “This ideology provided the philosophical and pragmatic grounding for their denial of Aboriginal human, social, political and other rights, in the rapacious advance of European colonization”⁶⁸.

⁶⁰ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 24

⁶¹ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 24

⁶² Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 82

⁶³ Reynolds, H., *The Other Side of the Frontier*, p. 198

⁶⁴ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 16

⁶⁵ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 16

⁶⁶ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 170

⁶⁷ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 19

⁶⁸ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 19

The believed superiority of the settlers led to the idea of raising and re-educating the natives. To become like 'the whites', taking their values, law and tradition, and being happy with being "second class citizens"⁶⁹:

"Black Men,

We wish to make you happy. But you cannot be happy unless you imitate white men.

Build huts, wear clothes, work and be useful.

Above all things you cannot be happy unless you love God who made heaven and earth and men and all things.

Love white men. Love other tribes of black men. Learn to speak English".

South Australia's Governor Hindmarsh, 1836⁷⁰

The settlers intended to turn 'the blacks' white on the inside, thereby enabling them to participate in the newly introduced white 'civilized society'. The future of the indigenous peoples, "if they had one at all, was to become a servant class or, at best, peasant farmers"⁷¹. Aborigines were taken from "their families and land, and placed onto white farms, stations, reserves or missions"⁷² not being allowed or enabled to leave.

Indigenous children were being taken from their homes since the arrival of the white settlers for several reasons. "The first Aboriginal children taken into white households were those looked after by kindhearted settlers following the devastating epidemic of 1789"⁷³. Children who were sick or who had lost their families were taken care of by the settlers, whose parents had given them into care. These children were "in genuine need when adopted"⁷⁴ and the "colonists were often motivated by compassion. But their subsequent longer-term intention was to change the children's culture and loyalty"⁷⁵, to re-educate them, to civilize them. Children were also taken for other reasons of a less than savory nature; there are the occasions when settlers killed the children's families and took any surviving children for sexual purposes or labour.

The settlers believed they had to civilize the natives, before making them Christian. Therefore the children of the natives had to be taken from their families and their society⁷⁶. The reason the children were taken into care by the settlers was because of the prevalent view that children could still be changed. The settlers considered it "not feasi-

⁶⁹ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 172

⁷⁰ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 18; on <http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=112> visited on 02-09-2009 it is however argued that this speech was fact held in 1838 by Governor Gawler and that Governor Hindmarsh's proclamation was read in 1836 non-containing the above quotes they were Gawler's.

⁷¹ Harris, J.W., *One Blood, two hundred years of Aboriginal encounter with Christianity: a story of hope*, Albacross Books Pty Ltd, Sutherland, 1990, p. 829-830

⁷² Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 20

⁷³ Harris, J.W., *We wish we'd done more*, p. 311

⁷⁴ Harris, J.W., *We wish we'd done more*, p.311

⁷⁵ Harris, J.W., *We wish we'd done more*, p. 313

⁷⁶ Harris, J.W., *We wish we'd done more*, p. 314

ble to try to change the Aboriginal adults⁷⁷. By converting the children they did not have to convert entire families. A more economical reason for the focus on children was the fact the settlers believed "that evangelization was only possible with the continuing presence of Aboriginal people in settled mission communities"⁷⁸, based on daily attendance at school. "Throughout Australia, therefore, missionaries constructed dormitories, so that children could be accommodated near the mission schools, and provided them with meals and European clothing. With this strategy began the long missionary practice of segregating Aboriginal children in institutions"⁷⁹.

"The memories of my years with the Mission are not all good ones, and some things might have been better. But I can truly say that I was very happy there and was given a home when no-one wanted me".

Constance Bush, 1972⁸⁰

"We were part Aboriginal so what did they care. Nobody wanted us. They just wanted to ram religion down our necks that's all, not all of them. But a lot of them thought of us as human beings and cared for us but we were always reminded that we weren't as good as the white people".

Constance Bush, 1972⁸¹

The children who were 'stolen' from their families, communities, society and culture between 1920 and 1969 due to the Aboriginal Acts are referred to as the 'stolen generations'. Up until today it is unknown how many children were in fact removed from their homes, for "many records have not survived. Others fail to record the children's Aboriginality"⁸². Several scientist have been attempting to name amounts, which really varied in quantity. The stolen generations as well as other political phenomena and systems will be addressed in the next chapter concerning political circumstances.

⁷⁷ Harris, J.W., We wish we'd done more, p. 313-314

⁷⁸ Harris, J.W., We wish we'd done more, p. 314

⁷⁹ Harris, J.W., We wish we'd done more, p.314

⁸⁰ Harris, J.W., We wish we'd done more, p. 348

⁸¹ Dewar, M., The 'Black War' in Arnhem Land, Missionaries and the Yolngu, 1908-1940, Australian National University, North Australia Research Unit, Darwin, 1992, p. 26

⁸² Bringing them home, National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, Commonwealth of Australia, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997, p. 36

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the historical circumstances influencing the present situation of the Australian indigenous population have been addressed. We have learned that James Cook, who was not the first to enter Australia, but however the first to claim the Australian land did so by the concept of 'terra nullius'. This concept enabled the Europeans to take possession of the land, denying Aboriginal sovereignty. The land that at first had been intended to serve as a penal colony was soon found profitable and attracted many British settlers. The British considered the indigenous Australians to be obstacles to progress which had to be removed and that is what they did, at first by killing them later by assimilating them to the newly imposed 'civilized' society. These regulations were ordained by the Australian government. These and other political circumstances will be addressed in the next chapter.

2 POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter the political circumstances influencing the present situation of the Australian indigenous population will be addressed. In the second paragraph the taking to missions of indigenous children, who are now referred to as the stolen generations will be entered. The reason for systems of protection and assimilation, of which the stolen generations are an example, came into being because of the fact that the indigenous population did not die out, against 'white' expectations. This topic will introduced in this chapters third paragraph. In the fourth paragraph the struggle for civil rights for the indigenous population will be addressed. In the fifth paragraph the closely connected struggle for land rights for the Australian Aborigines will be addressed. In the sixth and last paragraph of this chapter this chapters findings will be listed.

2.2. Missions and stolen generations

Indigenous children were forcibly taken from their homes, to re-educate or "inculcate European values and work habits in children, who would then be employed in service to the colonial settlers"⁸³. The novelty of the first school for Aboriginal children, which opened in 1814, was "an initial attraction for Indigenous families but within a few years it evoked a hostile response when it became apparent that its purpose was to distance the children from their families and communities"⁸⁴.

The Australian Aborigines became subject to British law upon settlement by the concept of 'terra nullius'. After having received word of several massacres and atrocities afflicted upon the indigenous peoples the British Government "appointed a Select Committee to inquire into the condition of Aboriginal people"⁸⁵ to protect them in 1835. The negative results of the inquiry concerning the treatment of the Australian Aborigines led to major changes into the way the indigenous people were treated after the proposition of the Protectorate System in 1837. The system contained of policies of segregation and education, "based on the notion that Indigenous people would willingly establish self-sufficient agricultural communities on reserved areas modelled on an English village and would not interfere with the land claims of the colonists"⁸⁶.

⁸³ Bringing them home, p. 27

⁸⁴ Bringing them home, p. 27-8

⁸⁵ Bringing them home, p. 28

⁸⁶ Bringing them home, p. 28

By 1911 the Northern Territory and all of the states, except for Tasmania, had 'protectionist legislation' known as the 'Aboriginal Acts', for the management of the indigenous population, "giving the Chief Protector or Protection Board extensive power to control Indigenous people"⁸⁷. "These Aboriginal Acts all adopted an approach which emphasized 'protection' and the restriction of liberty"⁸⁸. The Acts enabled the 'Protectors' to determine "where Aboriginals could live, whom they could marry and if they could raise their own children"⁸⁹. Tasmania, obviously, was an exception in this; for there were no Aborigines left, since the indigenous peoples had been wiped out by the islands' settlers and all they had left were 'some half-castes', according to the state's government.

"In some States and in the Northern Territory the Chief Protector was made the legal guardian of all Aboriginal children, displacing the rights of parents"⁹⁰. This enabled the Government to remove Aboriginal children from their parents and institutionalize them. During the 1920s schools, institutions and missions were opened by the state and territory governments. They were working together with the churches in this, which are often referred to as agents of the government policy⁹¹, ripping Aboriginal babies and young children from their mother's arms and placing them into these many institutions⁹². "With a view to encouraging the conversion of the children to Christianity and distancing from their Indigenous lifestyle, children were housed in dormitories and contact with their families strictly limited"⁹³. There are many stories of how the children were 'stripped' of their cultures and traditions and in the end totally estranged from their traditions and cultures, from their homes and from their families. Gilbert argues that this is where hell came in:

"Hell comes into it when you get greed and oppression and ego. Or when one man comes along and says, 'That didgeridoo is the music of the devil. Your lingo, that's the talk of the devil. You stop that tongue or I'll go and wash your mouth out with soap, and cut your hair off!' This happened to us, we weren't heathen, we were civilized people. We didn't need to war, we didn't need to kill"⁹⁴.

It must not be forgotten that there are sources claiming the existence of missions where children were taught how to write and read in their own native tongues and were

⁸⁷ Bringing them home, p. 28

⁸⁸ Harris, J.W., We wish we'd done more, p. 320

⁸⁹ Pattel-Gray, A., The Great White Flood, p. 198

⁹⁰ Bringing them home, p. 29

⁹¹ Kidd, R., The Way We Civilise, Aboriginal Affairs-the untold story, University of Queensland Press, 1997, p. 60

⁹² Pattel-Gray, A., The Great White Flood, p. 171

⁹³ Bringing them home, p. 29

⁹⁴ Gilbert, K., 'God at the Campfire and That Christ Fella', in Aboriginal Spirituality, Past, Present, Future, Pattel-Gray, A. (ed), HarpersCollinsPublishers Australia Pty. Ltd., Blackburn, 1996, p. 56

introduced to their own traditions and cultures as well as to Christianity. Then again there are many stories of missions where physical abuse as well as sexual abuse were known to be practiced, whereas it is also known that other missionaries lovingly looked after the children on their missions. It goes without saying that the missions were not of a uniform nature, depending on the area they were working in, depending on the missions' denomination and most importantly depending on the missionaries working on the missions. The missionaries, as anyone else, were only "human and fallible"⁹⁵ and "sometimes failed the society, themselves and the gospel"⁹⁶, as put by Harris:

"There was not [...] always love and harmony between every missionary and every Aboriginal person, nor even between the missionaries themselves. Some missionaries allowed their opinions, their feelings, or their convictions to damage their relationships and thus hinder the very work they most wanted to do"⁹⁷.

The Protectorate System was changed into a system of assimilation after the first Common-State Native Welfare Conference was held in 1937. The intention of the system was to assimilate indigenous people into non-indigenous society. The law changed in the way that now the care for indigenous as well as non-indigenous children as well as "the removal of Indigenous children was governed by the general child welfare law"⁹⁸. Under this new law "children had to be found to be 'neglected', 'destitute' or 'uncontrollable'"⁹⁹ to non-indigenous observation to be removed from their families. Poverty was also counted into this meaning. The institutions and missions were financially boosted by the Federal Government.

The stolen generations have only recently been criticized on, but it was not until 1995-1997 that the 'National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families' took place. Its report, the 'Bringing Them Home' report was released in 1997, amongst others describing that what had been inflicted on the Indigenous population was in fact an act of genocide. The usage of this word to describe the stolen generations being the acts of the Australian government caused a lot of disturbance among the white Australian population.

Some form of an apology for what now had been referred to as an act of genocide was however what the Australian Aborigines had been waiting for. The then Prime Minister John Howard however refused to make a national apology, for he believed that today's generations could not be held responsible for what had happened in the past. For

⁹⁵ Harris, J.W., We wish we'd done more, p. 62

⁹⁶ Harris, J.W., We wish we'd done more, p. 62

⁹⁷ Harris, J.W., We wish we'd done more, p. 191-192

⁹⁸ Bringing them home, p. 30

⁹⁹ Bringing them home, p. 30

his veto against a national stolen generation apology Howard received firm public support¹⁰⁰. This refusal as well as its support will be addressed in more depth in the next chapter.

Even after the disturbing outcome of the national inquiry, it still took more than ten years since the publication of the 'Bringing Them Home' report for the Australian indigenous population to hear the government say 'sorry' for what had happened in the past. It was on February 13th 2008 when the Australian government through the words of the Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologized 'for the pain, suffering and hurt'¹⁰¹ as had been inflicted upon them:

"I MOVE that today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment. We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations – this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians. We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. [...]

To the stolen generations, I say the following: as Prime Minister of Australia, I am sorry. On behalf of the government of Australia, I am sorry. On behalf of the parliament of Australia, I am sorry. I offer you this apology without qualification"¹⁰².

2.3 A dying race that did not die

The settlers had been removing the natives by killing them, either intended or non intended, through violence and disease, characterized "as a natural process of 'survival of

¹⁰⁰ Beresford, Q., and Omaji, P., Our State of Mind, Racial planning and the stolen generations, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Hamilton Hill, 1998, p. 244

¹⁰¹ Rudd, K., Sorry Speech, in: National Link-Up News Edition 10 May 2008; for a copy of the whole speech see: http://www.pm.gov.au/media/speech/2008/speech_0073.cfm

¹⁰² Rudd, K., Sorry Speech

the fittest”¹⁰³. Another way of removing the indigenous population was by turning the blacks white on the inside, by making the Australian Aborigines lose their culture, making them more acceptable to white Australia¹⁰⁴, thereby enabling them to access “the trappings of ‘civilised’ life”¹⁰⁵, also named ‘assimilation’ or cultural genocide.

This heralded the beginning of the questioning concerning the survival of the indigenous population. The settlers were starting to believe that the indigenous peoples were a ‘dying race’, since “the Aboriginal birthrate did not begin to overtake the death rate until the 1920s, and it took even longer for that fact to be realized”¹⁰⁶. For this reason it was believed best to totally separate indigenous children from their families and communities to raise them into the white community. The institutions and missions helped in this by totally isolating children from their families by moving institutions to distant places far away from the communities where they had been living. The next stage in the ridding process was the encouragement of mixed-race marriages, institutionalizing resulting children to “absorb them into white society and thus, eventually, be rid of the Aboriginal race”¹⁰⁷. This process would not just make the indigenous peoples white on the inside, but on the outside as well. “This process would be complete when ‘there were no more virile full-bloods remaining alive”¹⁰⁸. The missionaries and the government were now to smooth ‘the dying pillow’¹⁰⁹.

When the first convicts and few settlers arrived in 1788, they did not, or hardly, bring any women with them; to fulfill their sexual needs they used Aboriginal women, either through rape or prostitution. “Among them the abuse of Aboriginal women was commonplace and widely condoned”¹¹⁰. The abuse of the women outraged the indigenous peoples, leading to conflicts between the natives and the settlers. It confused the kinship systems the indigenous peoples lived by and led to a mixed descent population, at that time referred to as ‘half castes’. In contrast with the indigenous population of full descent, which was obviously declining, the indigenous population of mixed descent was in fact increasing¹¹¹;

“[They] didn’t have any women of their own and they shot the tribesmen and chased the women – and they got them to. They never just shot at them; they slaughtered a lot of the Aborigines to get the women... that’s where the change of colour often came in”¹¹².

¹⁰³ Bringing them home, p. 28

¹⁰⁴ Beresford, Q., and Omaji, P., Our State of Mind, p. 257

¹⁰⁵ Beresford, Q., and Omaji, P., Our State of Mind, p. 257

¹⁰⁶ Harris, J.W., We wish we’d done more, p. 320

¹⁰⁷ Harris, J.W., We wish we’d done more, p. 321-22

¹⁰⁸ Harris, J.W., We wish we’d done more, p. 322

¹⁰⁹ Bringing them home, p. 28

¹¹⁰ Harris, J.W., We wish we’d done more, p. 348

¹¹¹ Bringing them home, p. 29

¹¹² Harris, J.W., We wish we’d done more, p. 349-50

There was a place for mixed indigenous peoples in white society, albeit a lowly one, for they had white blood themselves. But the 'half castes', the indigenous population of mixed descent, did not consider themselves to be European; they did not feel white after being raised by their Aboriginal mothers and grandmothers without any ties to the white community. They were Aboriginal in their own eyes, but not always in the eyes of the communities they lived in. They had European blood, but were not always considered European in the eyes of the settlers or accepted by their fathers, wherefore the indigenous children of mixed descent were most commonly suffering from an identity crisis and most likely taken from their Aboriginal families and placed in missions for in a way the transition to become white was not as challenging for them as it would be for 'blacks'.

2.4 The struggle for civil rights

In 1901 "a national state across the entire continent"¹¹³ was created, called the Commonwealth of Australia. At this time it was believed, as mentioned above, that the Indigenous were a 'dying race'. As a consequence hardly any attention was paid to Aborigines in the Constitution and "only two relatively substantive references were made to them"¹¹⁴. They "were denied the right to vote in Commonwealth elections, were not counted in the census, and issues concerning Aboriginal people continued to be under the stringent, regimented control of state rather than Commonwealth legislation"¹¹⁵. The Aborigines were not considered to be Australians. And since they were believed to be a 'dying race' "the Aborigines did not count, hence they did not need to be counted"¹¹⁶.

The Aborigines had been protesting against the way they were being treated by the white Australians for as long as the colonists had been present and settled on Australian soil in various ways. These protests came to a climax on Australia Day, January 26th 1938, when the white Australians were celebrating 150 years of white settlement. Aboriginal leaders declared this day to be a 'Day of Mourning' for white settlement had not been good news for the indigenous population. They presented their feelings in a document called 'Aborigines Demand Citizenship Rights', more commonly known as the Aboriginal Manifesto, claiming that:

¹¹³ Maynard, J., *Fight for Liberty and Freedom: the Origins of Australian Aboriginal activism*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2007, p. 36

¹¹⁴ Attwood, B., and Markus, A., *The 1967 referendum: Race, Power and the Australian Constitution*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2007, p. 1

¹¹⁵ Maynard, J., *Fight for Liberty and Freedom*, p. 36

¹¹⁶ Attwood, B., and Markus, A., *The 1967 referendum*, p. 3

"You are the New Australians but we are the Old Australians. We have in our arteries the blood of the Original Australians, who have lived in this land for many thousands of years. You came here only recently, and you took our land away from us by force. You have almost exterminated our people, but there are enough of us remaining to expose the humbug of your claim, as white Australians, to be civilized, progressive, kindly and humane nation. By your cruelty and callousness towards the Aborigines you stand condemned in the eyes of the world"¹¹⁷.

William Cooper of the Australian Aborigines League or AAL, which he erected in 1932, had been writing at least seventy-seven letters to several politicians in the years before and after the Day of Mourning. One of these politicians whom Cooper wrote was King George V whom he petitioned about the plight of Aboriginal Australians¹¹⁸. His Majesty however turned Cooper down, like all the other politicians he had contacted. As Bourke mentions the erected Aboriginal organizations, of which the AAL is the most well known example and in particular the Day of Mourning which they brought to life, which is being celebrated up until this day during the National Aboriginal Week celebrations, are expressions of Aboriginal identity¹¹⁹. This Aboriginal identity or Aboriginality will be addressed in the fifth chapter.

The struggle for civil or indigenous rights came to an abrupt end when Australia became involved in the Second World War. Everything people like William Cooper and Bill Ferguson of the Aborigines Progressive Association had been fighting for was put on hold until the war was over. Their cause became even more apparent when the Australian Aboriginal men, who fought for 'their' country, which in fact was not theirs at all for they weren't even considered citizens of Australia, were not allowed to celebrate the victory with their fellowmen back in Australia, but were instead sent back to the outback. The men found that they had been fighting for a cause similar to theirs, being cultural genocide. They had been fighting for people in First World countries who were treated in an inhumane manner, a situation the Aborigines were more than familiar with.

By the late 1950s Aborigines supported by non-Aborigines started campaigning for equal rights again and a change of those laws that deprived the Indigenous of civil liberties¹²⁰. Since William Cooper had died in 1941, Doug Nicholls, his nephew, stepped in his footsteps, fighting for the same cause, in the words of William Cooper:

¹¹⁷ Russel, P.H., *Recognizing Aboriginal Title, The Mabo Case and Indigenous Resistance to English Colonialism*, University of Toronto Press Incorporated, Toronto, 2000, p. 134-135

¹¹⁸ Bourke, E., 'Australia's First Peoples: Identity and Population', in: *Aboriginal Australia, An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*, Bourke, E., Bourke, E., and Edwards, B. (eds), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, p. 40

¹¹⁹ Bourke, E., *Australia's First Peoples: Identity and Population*, p. 41

¹²⁰ <http://indigenoustrights.net.au/area.asp?aID=1>, visited on: 18-06-2009

"As it is the proud boast of Australia that every person born beneath the Southern Cross is born free, irrespective of origin, race, colour, creed, religion or any other impediment, we the representatives of the original people, in conference assembled demand that we shall be accorded the same full rights and privileges of citizenship as are enjoyed by all other sections of the community"¹²¹.

One of the most discussed issues whilst fighting for Indigenous rights has been the Warburton Ranges controversy in 1957, when after nuclear testing Australian Aboriginal people living as nomads in the Western Australian desert turned sick, blind and some even died. These people had not been warned for the rockets that would be flying through the air crashing into the desert and most apparently had not been cared for by the Australian government which showed the inequality between white and black the Aboriginal organizations had been fighting against all these years. As well as that, for the incident drew a lot of media attention, the eyes of the Australian citizens had now been opened for the terrible conditions in which these people were living.

The fact that the Aboriginal race against all odds had not died out, that they were in fact growing in numbers, but still were not considered citizens of the Commonwealth of Australia and miserably treated finally led to the 'Yes-vote' of the Citizenship Referendum on May 27th 1967. The referendum "equated the constitutional changes proposed with the Commonwealth role in Aboriginal affairs, the overthrow of racially discriminatory laws and the winning of rights or citizenship for Aborigines"¹²². The Australian voters were asked the following:

"Do you approve the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution entitled – 'An Act to alter the Constitution so as to omit certain words relating to the People of the Aboriginal race in any State and so that Aborigines are to be counted in reckoning the Population'?"¹²³

The result of the referendum was an overwhelming 'yes'. "All states voted in favour of the proposition, and of the formal votes 90.77 per cent were 'Yes' and only 9.23 per cent 'No'"¹²⁴. This 'yes' vote is often seen as "the expression of 'a changing public opinion'"¹²⁵; the belief that something was wrong and needed to be changed. It is not the

¹²¹ <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/reconciliation-resources/1967-referendum/perspectives-on-the-referendum/in-the-footsteps-of-fred-maynard>, last visited on: 18-06-2009

¹²² Attwood, B., and Markus, A., The 1967 referendum, p. 44

¹²³ Attwood, B., and Markus, A., The 1967 referendum, p. 54

¹²⁴ Attwood, B., and Markus, A., The 1967 referendum, p. 54

¹²⁵ Attwood, B., and Markus, A., The 1967 referendum, p. 59

two adjusted clauses that are still being celebrated; it is the symbolism behind these adjustments¹²⁶.

The referendum is regarded to be a historic moment, a moment of victory, and a turning point in Australian history, which had been fought for for decades. It is remembered as the moment Aborigines received citizenship rights, where in fact they were 'only' counted in the census from that moment on. It "helped Aboriginal people become real Australian citizens because it alerted them to their rights and gave them the confidence to exercise these"¹²⁷. This context, of changed political and social relationships between Aborigines and non-Aborigines¹²⁸, created opportunities for other campaigns concerning Aboriginal affairs fighting for indigenous rights, among others concerning rights and compensation for the loss of Aboriginal land.

2.5 The struggle for land rights

The unjustifiable dispossession of the land by the concept of 'terra nullius' was an important consequence of the colonization for the indigenous peoples. The Aborigines did not just lose their land, their food, their home; the spirituality of their land was being denied. Their reason to exist was taken from them. They were no longer able to practice their religion, their tradition, their culture in the way they had been taught. The land was "inextricably linked to the vitality of their society, and hence the spiritual and cultural beliefs of that society exert a strong influence on the ways in which the land is used"¹²⁹, as mentioned above. The Indigenous population believes the land is theirs, claiming that they were 'ejected and despoiled of our God-given right and our inheritance has been forcibly taken from us'¹³⁰. Aboriginal land rights became "one of the most fiercely debated issues in Australian history"¹³¹. The issue has been captured in a petition for land rights for a particular Aboriginal area in 1963:

"This land belonged to our forefathers from time immemorial, and many of our people have been killed while trying to regain it. Therefore we feel that morally, if not legally, the land is ours and should be returned to us. The very name by which you call us, 'Ab-

¹²⁶ Attwood, B., and Markus, A., The 1967 referendum, p. 66-67

¹²⁷ Attwood, B., and Markus, A., The 1967 referendum, p. 69

¹²⁸ Attwood, B., and Markus, A., The 1967 referendum, p. 66

¹²⁹ Young, E. A., 'Managing the Land: Land and Aboriginal Community Development in Australia', in: Indigenous Land Rights in Commonwealth Countries: Dispossession, Negotiation and Community Action, Cant, G., Overton, J., and Pawson E. (eds.), Department of Geography, University of Canterbury and the Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board for the Commonwealth Geographical Bureau, Christchurch, 1993, p. 222

¹³⁰ Hemming, S., 'Changing History: New Images of Aboriginal History', in: Aboriginal Australia, An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies, Bourke, C., Bourke, E. & Edwards, B. (eds), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, p. 17

¹³¹ Hemming, S., Changing History, p. 25

*original', acknowledges our prior claim to this country in which we are now a depressed minority*¹³².

The social situation of the Indigenous population has been negatively influenced since 1770 due to the arrival of James Cook and in particular by him claiming the Australian land for Great Britain's Crown. These events are referred to as the Saga of Captain Cook, for the claim and dispossession of the land were unjustly legalized by the concept of terra nullius. The land was not uninhabited when Cook came across the land and then claimed it; it had not been for at least 40,000 years. No wars were fought over the land and no arrangements or agreements were made by the settling colonists with the natives. The colonists simply came in and took the land wherefore the Australian Aborigines believe themselves never to have been given a fair go;

*"Aboriginal people did not like this 'and that's why these Aboriginal people make an army'. But are spears a match for guns? 'That been beat him. If whitefellow been come got no bit of a gun, couldn't been roundem up, killing all the people. They never been give him fair go*¹³³.

*"Captain Cook went longa Sydney Harbour and people been live over there. And why didn't you ask them? You, Captain Cook, when you came through*¹³⁴.

"Despite Aboriginal resistance, England declared itself the sovereign ruler of Australia¹³⁵, thereby undoing the sovereignty of the Indigenous population. By extending their British laws to the Australian land and their natives, it is even more believed by the Indigenes they were never given a fair go. Due to the concept of terra nullius the settlers were able to deny Aboriginal law, as well as Aboriginal sovereignty and Aboriginal rights and apply British law on the land's natives. "So long as Australia was seen to be settled under the doctrine of *terra nullius* there need be no common law recognition of Aboriginal land rights – or, indeed, any Aboriginal law¹³⁶.

"Him bring lotta book [Rose here interpolates 'law'] from Big England right here now'. And that 'book' enables a 'lotta government'.¹³⁷

¹³² Attwood, B., Rights for Aborigines, Allen & Unwin, 2003, p. 275

¹³³ Rowse, T., After Mabo, Interpreting indigenous traditions, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1993, p. 2-3

¹³⁴ Rowse, T., After Mabo, p. 3

¹³⁵ Bourke, C. & Cox, H., 'Two Laws: One Land', Aboriginal Australia, An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies, Bourke, C., Bourke, E. & Edwards, B. (eds), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, p. 52

¹³⁶ Bourke, C. & Cox, H., Two Laws: One Land, p. 53

¹³⁷ Rowse, T., After Mabo, p. 3

The dispossession of the land and mainly the way in which this was done led to the debate about Aboriginal land rights. The issue was discussed "in England even before Admiral Arthur Philip and the First Fleet set sail for Botany Bay"¹³⁸ and has frequently been discussed since. Public interest in the matter grew to a highpoint in the 1930s, but faded due to the Second World War. In the 1970s Australia again started to focus on land rights. The Citizenship Referendum had enabled the indigenous population to negotiate for a share in everything they had lost. In turn the Anglo-Australian settled colonists were now enabled to right the wrongs of the colonial past.

Indigenous rights had been demanded for and by the indigenous peoples, to be described as "the rights of a people who are 'the people of the land' or the first peoples of the land"¹³⁹. These demands included rights for land and compensation for dispossessed land, resting on the claim that the indigenous peoples believed to have an inherited right to the land; for the simple reason that "Aboriginal people were and are the first peoples of this country, and non-Aboriginal people were and are not."¹⁴⁰ These rights were known as 'land rights'.

It has long been communicated and viewed that the claiming of the Australian land by the usage of the concept of terra nullius was in fact a legal act. This view was "fundamental to the English law of real property, that the Crown is the source of all title to land"¹⁴¹. The Indigenous population has been trying to fight this since the arrival of the settlers, since they believe the land is morally theirs. Their efforts had been mainly unsuccessful until the Blackburn Judgement in 1971. In the 'Milirrpum versus Nabalco' case "Justice Blackburn maintained a well-established doctrine of Australian common law: that the Crown's radical title in Australia is not encumbered by pre-existing 'native title'"¹⁴²;

"After hearing voluminous evidence about traditional Aboriginal society Blackburn was very clearly of opinion, upon the evidence, that the social rules and customs of the plaintiffs cannot possibly be dismissed as lying on the other side of an unbridgeable gulf. The evidence shows a subtle and elaborate system highly adapted to the country in which the people led to their lives, which provided a stable order of society and was remarkably free from the vagaries of personal whim or influence. If ever a system could be called 'a government of laws, and not of men', it is that show in the evidence before me..."¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Harris, J.W., We wish we'd done more, p. 429

¹³⁹ Attwood, B., and Markus, A., The 1967 referendum, p. 71

¹⁴⁰ Attwood, B., and Markus, A., The 1967 referendum, p. 72

¹⁴¹ Bourke, C. & Cox, H., Two Laws: One Land, p. 52

¹⁴² Rowse, T., After Mabo, p. 7

¹⁴³ Reynolds, H., Aboriginal Sovereignty, Three Nations, One Australia?, Allen & Unwin, Maryborough, 1996, p. 10

With Blackburn's judgement being as it was the foundations of the Australian society and law were encountered and challenged. As well as this the judgement demonstrated a real relationship between Aborigines and the land¹⁴⁴, thereby opening the way for, or even encouraging, the Indigenous quest for land rights. This quest found another high point in the High Court case of 'Mabo and Others v. State of Queensland', which will be discussed shortly.

The real relationship between Aborigines and the land originates from the belief that the land was given to the Indigenous population. It was given to them by the mythic beings, Supernatural Beings or Dreamtime Heroes during the Dreaming or Dreamtime. For it was 'god-given'¹⁴⁵, which is most particularly seen in particular sites of special spiritual, cultural and religious importance. The Aborigines believe the land to be their 'god-given' right. The Aborigines did not and will not own the land, not even before the settling colonists arrived and dispossessed the Indigenous population of the land, for the land belongs to the Supernatural Beings. The Aborigines care for and take care of the land as they were taught by the Supernatural Beings and in turn the land cares for and takes care of the Aborigines. The caring land, which is always with the Aborigines, which they are always in and surrounded by and which they always experience, both personally and socially, is therefore sometimes referred to as their mother. "Their social world was expanded to include the natural world. Conversely, their natural world was humanized and this was true for the land as such"¹⁴⁶.

A particularly spiritual and personal linkage for Indigenous with a specific site or area originates from birth. For it is believed that "for a child to be born, a spirit must first enter the mother's womb to give the child life. The spirit derives from one of the various sites associated with the Dreamtime heroes"¹⁴⁷. This particular part of the land *is* the Indigenous person him or herself, the land is part of them as they are part of the land, sharing the same spirit or life-essence with all other species and elements in the area¹⁴⁸. "It cannot be removed from him (her)-not even by death, since the concept is relevant to both past and present generations and the spiritual part of man/land is considered as being eternal, returning on death, for re-cycling, to the mythic being concerned or the sphere associated with such beings"¹⁴⁹.

The quest for Indigenous land rights received major international media attention in the year after the Blackburn Judgement. After the Prime Minister's Australia Day speech in 1972 Aborigines sat themselves down on the lawn in front of Canberra's Par-

¹⁴⁴ Griffiths, M., Aboriginal affairs, 1967-2005, Seeking a solution, Rosenberg Publishing Pty Ltd, Dural Delivery Centre NSW, 2006, p. 24

¹⁴⁵ Berndt, R. & Berndt, C., The World of the First Australians, Aboriginal Traditional Life: Past and Present, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1988, p. 138

¹⁴⁶ Berndt, R. & Berndt, C., The World of the First Australians, p. 137

¹⁴⁷ Griffiths, M., Aboriginal affairs, 1967-2005, p. 53

¹⁴⁸ Berndt, R. & Berndt, C., The World of the First Australians, p. 136

¹⁴⁹ Berndt, R. & Berndt, C., The World of the First Australians, p. 138

liament House “with a beach umbrella and a few placards”¹⁵⁰. They declared themselves to be the Aboriginal Embassy; “the rationale being that Aborigines are treated like aliens in their own land”¹⁵¹. Soon more Aborigines followed their example and several tents were erected, which led to the demonstration being named the ‘Tent Embassy’. The ‘Tent Embassy’ proved to be attractive for the media and could neither be ignored by federal politicians having to walk past the Embassy to get to work, since they were sitting on their doorstep. More media attention for the quest for land rights was given when several marches in the 1970s and 1980s were held across Australia.

The Aboriginal Land Rights Acts came through in 1976 in the Northern Territory and came on 26 February 1977 into force in the territory. “It was a piece of legislation unique within Australia and without any true counterpart outside this country”¹⁵² and ensured that official recognition is given to cultural and religious beliefs of Aboriginal Territorians¹⁵³. The aims of recognizing land rights for Aborigines were listed by Justice Woolward:

- i. *“the doing of a simple justice to a people who have been deprived of their land without their consent and without compensation;*
- ii. *the promotion of social harmony and stability within the wider Australian community by removing, so far as possible, the legitimate causes of complaint of an important minority group within that community;*
- iii. *the provisions of land holdings as a first essential for people who are economically depressed and who have at present no real opportunity of achieving a normal Australian standard of living;*
- iv. *the preservation, where possible, of the spiritual link with his own land which gives each Aboriginal his sense of identity and which lies at the heart of his spiritual beliefs; and*
- v. *the maintenance, and perhaps, improvement of Australia’s standing among the nations of the world by demonstrably fair treatment of an ethnic minority”¹⁵⁴*

¹⁵⁰ Griffiths, M., *Aboriginal affairs, 1967-2005*, p. 33

¹⁵¹ Griffiths, M., *Aboriginal affairs, 1967-2005*, p. 33

¹⁵² Seven Years On, Report by Mr Justice Toohey to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* and Related Matters, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1984, p. 1

¹⁵³ Review of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, Preliminary Submission of the Northern Territory Government, 1997, p. 2

¹⁵⁴ Review of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, Preliminary Submission, p. 6

A high point in the Indigenous quest for land rights was reached twenty years after the Blackburn Judgement in the 'High Court case of Mabo and Others v. State of Queensland' in 1992. The struggle of Eddie Koiki Mabo is referred to by Berndt & Berndt as "the most dramatic and successful example of Indigenous Australians fighting to reverse the consequences of colonial conquest and dispossession that had defined them in white law as an inferior caste unfit to own and occupy land in British, and, later, Australian law"¹⁵⁵. Eddie Koiki Mabo himself has been referred to by Peter H. Russel as "a shit-disturber *par excellence*"¹⁵⁶. The case, simply put, concerned the fact that since the settlers came to the land which belonged to Mabo and his people, being the islands of Mer, no longer belonged them, but that they were told that the land now was Crown Land by the Queensland Government. Mabo fought for the land, saying it was his and not the Crown's. The High Court decided in favour of Mabo, thereby denying the concept of terra nullius and "the indigenous people continued to maintain a legal interest in their ancestral territories which survived until it was formally extinguished"¹⁵⁷. Before the Mabo Case it was believed, as put by Justice Dawson, that "if the traditional land rights claimed by the plaintiffs ever existed, they were extinguished from the moment of annexation"¹⁵⁸. For this reason 'native title' was recognized in the Mabo Judgement. The recognition of native title in the Mabo case led to federal parliament passing the 'Native Title Act' in 1993, which took effect on 1 January 1994. In the end, it had been admitted that "the history of Aboriginal Affairs is littered with mistakes but I have to say that the mistakes were not made by Aboriginal people"¹⁵⁹.

Aboriginal lands are now being distributed all around Australia, in all states and territories. This occurs in various ways depending on "the varying types of land rights legislation which operate in different states and territories"¹⁶⁰; for there is no national legislation. All states determine their own system and rights to land are distributed differently all around the country. Only the Northern Territory, being a territory and not a state, is bound to federal legislation. Due to these different systems of legislation different rules to land claims apply. However, land can only be claimed, throughout the entire country, when all estates and interests in the land were "held by or on behalf of Aboriginal people"¹⁶¹. Aborigines have been restricted to claim land that is already being used for other purposes, like mining activities or when land is already inhabited by others. "For these reasons Aboriginal-held land is very unevenly distributed"¹⁶².

¹⁵⁵ Berndt, R. & Berndt, C., *The World of the First Australians*, p. 377

¹⁵⁶ Russel, P. H., *Recognizing Aboriginal Title*

¹⁵⁷ Reynolds, H., *Aboriginal Sovereignty*, p. 116-117

¹⁵⁸ Reynolds, H., *Aboriginal Sovereignty*, p. 2

¹⁵⁹ Griffiths, M., *Aboriginal affairs, 1967-2005*, p. 94

¹⁶⁰ Young, E. A., *Managing the Land*, p. 219

¹⁶¹ Review of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*, Final Submission of the Northern Territory Government, 1998, p. i

¹⁶² Young, E. A., *Managing the Land*, p. 219

Land rights are being retrieved in various ways, according to legislation, and distributed in various ways, according to the piece of land which is being claimed and the way in which that piece of land is yet being used. The returning of dispossessed land to their traditional owners is an important and difficult process, for the indigenous peoples claiming the land need to be identified as the traditional owners of the land. Claims can only be made supported by written proof of which the Aborigines usually lack. The way in which land then can be claimed is by "a present consensus among witnesses about what happened"¹⁶³ to support their claims.

After having been returned the land the traditional owners use the land in various ways. Their choice in this is usually limited due to a lack of capital and as a result having to rely on, financial, assistance of the government to carry out their plans¹⁶⁴. Aboriginal land can be managed for reasons of conservation, employment, education, community, infrastructure, essential services, enterprise, traditional ownership, environmental health and degradation¹⁶⁵.

An issue of main importance in the claiming and accordingly in the distribution of Aboriginal land is the issue of 'sacred sites'. The term 'sacred site' is randomly used for sites of special meaning to Aboriginal people. 'Sacred sites' may concern good sites, bad sites, forbidden sites, restricted sites, harmless sites and deadly sites¹⁶⁶. "Some places must be protected because they are historical sites, some are mythological sites, some are traditional burial grounds, some contain irreplaceable ancient art, some are ceremonial grounds, some may indeed be best described as sacred"¹⁶⁷. The Australian Aborigines were dispossessed of these sites by the whites, as they were of most of their land. The colonists did not seem to care about any special meaning appointed to the land by the natives, using the land in the way that seemed most productive to them. The actions of the whites denied the spirituality and the sacredness of the sacred sites and of the land in general. Gondarra described how this must have felt for the Australian Aborigines by referring to the imaginable feelings of "the Israelites if the ark were about to be crushed under the tracks of a bulldozer"¹⁶⁸.

The consequences of the loss of the land as well as other results of the colonial legacy will be addressed in the next chapter concerning the social circumstances influencing the lives of the Australian indigenous population.

¹⁶³ Layton, R., 'The Pitjantjatjara processes and the structure of the Land Rights Act', in: Aborigines, Land and Land Rights, Peterson, N., Langton, M. (eds.), Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1983, p. 228

¹⁶⁴ Young, E. A., *Managing the Land*, p. 222

¹⁶⁵ Young, E. A., *Managing the Land*, p. 227

¹⁶⁶ Harris, J.W., *We wish we'd done more*, p. 468

¹⁶⁷ Harris, J.W., *We wish we'd done more*, p. 469

¹⁶⁸ Gondarra, D., *Let My People Go*, Series of Reflections of Aboriginal Theology, Bethel Presbytery, Northern Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia, Darwin, 1986, p. 31

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the political circumstances influencing the present situation of the Australian indigenous population have been addressed. We have learned that the Australian government attempted to 'protect' the indigenous population by controlling the Aborigines. This system of protection was later changed into a system of assimilation. These regulations were considered to be necessary by the white government for, where it was first believed that the indigenous population would die out and the government was to 'smooth the dying pillow', the Indigenous however did not and had to be dealt with. A system of assimilation was erected attempting to assimilate the indigenous population to the newly imposed 'civilized' society by turning the blacks white on the inside. This was pursued by the placing of Aboriginal children in missions far from their homes, families, traditions and cultures. These children as well as the phenomenon itself have come to be known as the stolen generation for which in 2008 apologies were made by PM Rudd. These apologies were one of the achievements of those fighting for civil rights for the indigenous population. Other examples of this struggle are the Day of Mourning which we still know now as NAIDOC Week, the Citizenship Referendum as has been the struggle for land rights. Examples of this struggle are the Blackburn Judgement, Mabo, the Tent Embassy, the Aboriginal Land Rights Acts and the Native Title Act.

3 SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

3.1 Introduction

The indigenous population of Australia has been and still is being disadvantaged due to the colonial history of dispossession as described in the previous two chapters on historical and political circumstances. Several circumstances contribute to the social circumstances influencing today's context. One of these is the socioeconomic situation the indigenous people find themselves in today, which is "characterised by poverty and powerlessness"¹⁶⁹, as will be described in the second paragraph of this chapter. The socioeconomic situation the Indigenous population is presently in, can be shown by statistics, being the Indigenous peoples' population, age, education, employment, income, welfare and housing. This situation is closely connected to the physical and mental health indigenous people experience, which will be addressed in elsewhere in this chapter. In the third paragraph of this piece health risk behaviours and health risk factors contributing to the health status of the indigenous population will be addressed. These behaviours and factors are influenced by the circumstances the indigenous populations finds themselves in, thereby worsening the health status, examples of these being, amongst others the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. The health status of the indigenous population will be entered in the fourth paragraph of this chapter. In the fifth paragraph attention will be paid to what is known as the social and emotional wellbeing of the indigenous population resulting from all of the above circumstances influencing Australian Aboriginal life. In the sixth paragraph and important component of social and emotional wellbeing will be entered, being racism and discrimination. The findings of this chapter will be listed in this chapters conclusion, being paragraph seven.

3.2 The socioeconomic situation of the Australian indigenous population

3.2.1 *Explaining the socioeconomic situation*

The socioeconomic situation the Australian Aborigines find themselves in today can be explained by several factors, as described above in the historical circumstances influencing the lives of the Indigenous population. The life the Aborigines led before colonial settlement was based on the gathering of food and hunting; "there was no inten-

¹⁶⁹ Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., Perth, 2008, p. 3, retrieved from: <http://www.healthinonet.ecu.edu.au/health-facts/overviews>, on: 18-06-2009

sive agriculture or industrialization¹⁷⁰. The settlers brought in the concept of property, which the Aborigines did not understand. The settlers dispossessed the Aborigines of everything they owned, being the land, and they ended up with nothing. The colonial material wellbeing the settlers created for themselves led to Indigenous underdevelopment¹⁷¹. Up until 1967, when the Citizenship Referendum was held, the Australian Aborigines were not counted in the Australian Census and denied as citizens of the Commonwealth of Australia, as mentioned above. As a result they were denied "as members of a modern welfare state"¹⁷² and excluded from its profits and institutions.

Other important factors contributing to the marginalized economic position the Aborigines are in to this day are the geographic dispersion of the Indigenous population¹⁷³ as well as the young age profile in the current structure of the Indigenous population. Since "almost one-quarter of Indigenous people live in areas classified as 'remote' or 'very remote' in relation to having 'very little or very restricted access to goods and services and opportunities for social interaction"¹⁷⁴ the Indigenous population lack the opportunity to become educated or employed. "Combined with low employment rates, the mixture of demographics and labour-force results in a very high economic burden for Indigenous people"¹⁷⁵.

Cultural factors are contributing to the marginalized socioeconomic situation the Indigenous population is in. Indigenous people tended to remain living in the way they always have; in multi-family households and in polygynous marriages, using Indigenous languages and performing traditional rituals and ceremonies, for which they need to return or stay in their land. Most of the Indigenous people, especially in remote areas, tend to remain living off the land, as they always have been, being uncomfortable, unwilling or unable to "suit labour-market requirements at the expense of their Aboriginality"¹⁷⁶.

Another main factor contributing to the marginalized socioeconomic position the Indigenous population is discrimination. Discrimination of the Indigenous population started almost as soon as the colonial settlers arrived, as mentioned above, and, after more than two hundred years, still is practiced today. The labour-market is no exception in this. Discrimination is found in lower income for Indigenous workers than non-Indigenous workers, lower occupation classification, higher unemployment rate for Indigenous people and the denigration of Indigenous workers by referring to them as being unreliable.

¹⁷⁰ Altman, J., 'The Economic and Social Context of Indigenous Health', in: *The Health of Indigenous Australians*, Thomson, N. (ed), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p. 33

¹⁷¹ Altman, J., *The Economic and Social Context of Indigenous Health*, p. 33

¹⁷² Altman, J., *The Economic and Social Context of Indigenous Health*, p. 34

¹⁷³ Altman, J., *The Economic and Social Context of Indigenous Health*, p. 34

¹⁷⁴ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 2

¹⁷⁵ Altman, J., *The Economic and Social Context of Indigenous Health*, p. 34

¹⁷⁶ Altman, J., *The Economic and Social Context of Indigenous Health*, p. 36

3.2.2 Population

The Indigenous population is defined as 'a person of Aboriginal or Islander descent, who identifies as an Aboriginal or Islander and is accepted as such by the community with which he is associated.' It has been estimated there were 517,200 people living in Australia of Indigenous descent in 2006, representing 2,5 per cent of the total Australian population¹⁷⁷. In New South Wales the largest number of Indigenous people was counted, namely 148,200 persons, representing 2,2 per cent of the entire population of the state and 28,7 per cent of the entire Indigenous population of Australia¹⁷⁸. Of the entire Indigenous population 463,900 peoples were of Aboriginal descent, 33,100 of Torres Strait Islander descent and 20,200 of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent¹⁷⁹. In the Northern Territory the highest percentage of Indigenous people was counted, namely 66,600 persons, representing 31,6 per cent of the entire territory's population¹⁸⁰. The highest amount of Indigenous people were living in New South Wales, namely 148,200 persons, representing 28,7 per cent of the entire Indigenous population, being 2,2 per cent of the state's entire population¹⁸¹. Most Torres Strait Islanders were living in Queensland, and in New South Wales¹⁸². Of the Indigenous population 32 per cent were living in cities, in 2006, 43 per cent in inner and outer regional areas and 25 per cent in remote and very remote areas¹⁸³.

3.2.3 Age

The Australian Indigenous population has a younger age profile than the non-Indigenous population, "with a median age of 21 years, compared with 36 years for the non-Indigenous population"¹⁸⁴. In 2006 about 37 per cent of the Indigenous people were

¹⁷⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., Canberra, 2008, retrieved from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10583> on 18-06-09

¹⁷⁸ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 1-2

¹⁷⁹ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 2

¹⁸⁰ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 2

¹⁸¹ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 2

¹⁸² Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 2

¹⁸³ *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxi

¹⁸⁴ *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxi

aged less than 15 years, compared with 19 per cent of the non-Indigenous people¹⁸⁵. About 3 per cent of the Indigenous people were aged 65 years and over, compared with 13 per cent of the non-Indigenous people¹⁸⁶.

3.2.4 Education

Indigenous children start attending school at an older age than non-Indigenous children¹⁸⁷. Indigenous children stop going to school at an earlier age than non-Indigenous children¹⁸⁸. Only one-quarter of the Indigenous population reported having a post school qualification, compared to almost one-half of the non-Indigenous population¹⁸⁹. Of the Indigenous population 1,7 per cent was attending university in 2006, compared to 4,1 per cent of the non-Indigenous population¹⁹⁰.

3.2.5 Employment

According to the Australian census less Indigenous people than non-Indigenous people were employed in 2006. "The unemployment rate for Indigenous people in 2006 was three times the rate for non-Indigenous people"¹⁹¹, being 16 per cent compared with 5 per cent¹⁹². More Indigenous people than non-Indigenous people were not in the labour force¹⁹³. The most common occupation classification of employed Indigenous people was 'labourer', earning the lowest median gross weekly, compared to 'professional', earning the highest median gross weekly, for the non-Indigenous population¹⁹⁴.

¹⁸⁵ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 2

¹⁸⁶ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 2

¹⁸⁷ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 2

¹⁸⁸ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 3

¹⁸⁹ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 3

¹⁹⁰ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 3

¹⁹¹ The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxi

¹⁹² The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxi

¹⁹³ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 4

¹⁹⁴ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 4

3.2.6 Income

The median gross individual income for Indigenous people was \$278 per week compared with \$473 for non-Indigenous people¹⁹⁵. “The mean equivalised gross household income for Indigenous persons was \$460 per week¹⁹⁶, being approximately 62% of the mean equivalised gross household income for non-Indigenous people, being \$740¹⁹⁷, according to the ‘Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet’. Other numbers are being named by ‘The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare’, namely \$362 per week being the mean equivalised gross household income for Indigenous people, as much as 56 per cent of that for non-Indigenous people, being \$642 per week.

3.2.7 Welfare

Indigenous people are over-represented among welfare benefit and program recipients. “In 2002, just over half (52 per cent) of all Indigenous people relied on government pensions and allowances as their main source of income (27 per cent)¹⁹⁸. Even the Indigenous households in urban and regional areas, compared to the Indigenous households in remote and very remote areas, “are still three times as likely to experience financial stress as non-Indigenous households¹⁹⁹.

3.2.8 Housing

The rate of home ownership for Indigenous households increased to 34 per cent in 2006, being half the rate of other Australian households, namely 69 per cent²⁰⁰. Half of the “Indigenous households were receiving some form of government housing assistance²⁰¹. This can either mean living in public or community housing, or receiving rent

¹⁹⁵ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 4

¹⁹⁶ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 4

¹⁹⁷ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 4

¹⁹⁸ Walter, M. & Mooney, G., ‘Employment and Welfare’, in: *Social Determinants of Indigenous Health*, Carson, B., Dunbar, T., Chenhall, R. D. & Bailie, R. (eds), Allen & Unwin, Crows, 2007, p. 163

¹⁹⁹ Walter, M. & Mooney, G., *Employment and Welfare*, p. 163

²⁰⁰ *The Health and Welfare of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxi

²⁰¹ *The Health and Welfare of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxii

assistance²⁰². In 2006 14 per cent of the Indigenous households were overcrowded and 27 per cent of the Indigenous population was living in overcrowded conditions²⁰³.

3.3 Health risk behaviours and factors contributing to the health status

The historical circumstances nor the political circumstances nor the socioeconomic situation the Australian Aborigines find themselves in do not entirely explain the actual health status of the Australian Aboriginal population. Health risk behaviours, like tobacco smoking and the use of alcohol and drugs, and other health risk factors, like housing, as discussed above, and family violence²⁰⁴ as well as nutrition, breastfeeding, physical activity, bodyweight and immunisation need to be taken into consideration concerning this matter. Health risk behaviours and health risk factors influence the socioeconomic situation of the Indigenous population and are in turn influenced by the socioeconomic situation. All of these factors influence the health status of the Indigenous population. The health risk behaviours as well as the health risk factors can equally be regarded as factors within the context of 'social determinants of health'²⁰⁵. "These 'determinants', which are complex and interrelated, include income, education, employment, stress, social networks and support, social exclusion, working and living conditions, gender and behavioural aspects"²⁰⁶. These determinants contribute to the present health status of the Indigenous population, which will be addressed in the next paragraph.

3.3.1 Tobacco smoking

The '2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey' claimed that 50 up to 57 per cent of the Indigenous adults, between 18 and 54 years, were regular, meaning daily, smokers at the time. This amount represents almost twice the rate of the non-Indigenous adults, being 29 per cent²⁰⁷. This amount of smokers di-

²⁰² The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxii

²⁰³ The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxii

²⁰⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, The Social Environment and Health, retrieved from http://www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous/health/socio_economic_context_of_indigenous_health.cfm on 17-06-2009

²⁰⁵ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 32

²⁰⁶ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 32

²⁰⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Drug use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples: an assessment of data sources. Drug statistics series no. 17. Cat. no. PHE 76, Canberra, 2006, retrieved from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/phe/duaatsip/duaatsip-c00.pdf> on 19-06-2009, p. 9

vided by gender represents 51 per cent of the total of Indigenous men and 49 per cent of Indigenous women. The age at which the Indigenous population starts smoking is younger than the age for the non-Indigenous population. The '2001 National Drug Strategy Household Survey' claimed that 45 per cent of the Indigenous children at the age of fourteen and older were smoking daily, which was twice the proportion of non-Indigenous children at the same age, being 19 per cent²⁰⁸. Active as well as passive tobacco smoking being a health risk behaviour obviously influences the health status of the Indigenous population. "Smoking tobacco increases the risk of cardiovascular disease, some cancers, lung diseases, and a variety of other health conditions"²⁰⁹.

3.3.2 Alcohol use

The '2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey' claimed that 16 per cent of the Indigenous adults had consumed alcohol at a long-term high risk level during the week in which the survey was taken. "High risk' is defined as daily consumption of more than six standard drinks for males and four for females"²¹⁰. This proportion was similar for non-Indigenous adults²¹¹. In fact, Indigenous people are "less likely to drink alcohol than non-Indigenous people"²¹². Indigenous people are even less likely than non-Indigenous people to have been consuming alcohol during the year before which the survey was taken²¹³. However, when they had been consuming alcohol Indigenous people were more likely to drink alcohol at a high risk level²¹⁴. The '2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey' found that 11 per cent of the Indigenous males and 8 per cent of the Indigenous females consumed alcohol at a high risk level; compared to six and three per cent for the non-Indigenous males and females²¹⁵. Alcohol use being a health risk behavior influences the health status of the Indigenous population. Alcohol use, when at a high risk level, can "contribute to liver disease, pancreatitis, diabetes, some cancers, epilepsy [...] and cardiovascular dis-

²⁰⁸ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 34

²⁰⁹ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., 34

²¹⁰ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 34

²¹¹ The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxii

²¹² Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 34

²¹³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Drug use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, p. 9

²¹⁴ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 34

²¹⁵ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 34

ease"²¹⁶. It is a well known fact that the use of alcohol can as well contribute to violence and therefore to injury, again influencing the health status of the Indigenous population.

3.3.3 Drug use

It is widely believed that alcohol and drugs were introduced by the colonial settlers, for instance considering the story of James Cook offering the natives wine upon arrival, which they in turn spat out. Due to their uncommonness with alcohol or drugs it is said they never created laws concerning the matter. There are also records that show "that Aboriginal people harvested, prepared and ingested a variety of mood-altering substances, made from naturally occurring flora"²¹⁷. As well as that, it is believed that the Macassan fishermen imported drug implements and substances into the Australian land, before the arrival of the European colonists. Words for 'bottle' and 'drunk' were introduced by the Macassans and are used up until this day²¹⁸. The drinking of kava, a beverage made from the root of a pepper plant, which has spread rapidly among Indigenous communities and is still being used today, was only introduced in 1981 by Aboriginal men who imported the plant from Fiji.

There are major differences between the substances used by the Indigenous population per geographic location due to differing availability of substances. Drugs like heroin and amphetamines are commonly used by Aborigines living in urban areas. Whereas the sniffing of petrol is very common among Aborigines in more remote areas²¹⁹. The use of drugs influences the health status of the Indigenous population, depending on the substance used. The sniffing of petrol, which is an underestimated, but major issue in Indigenous communities, being used by both boys and girls from a young age, for instance, "can cause long-term neurological damage. The causes of deaths associated with chronic petrol sniffing include accidents, cardiac failure, pneumonia and asphyxia"²²⁰.

3.3.4 Family violence

Violence occurring in differing forms, including sexual violence, within Indigenous families is a major issue for the Australian Indigenous population. Since the interpreta-

²¹⁶ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 34

²¹⁷ Brady, M.A., 'Alcohol and Drug Abuse' in: The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander History, Society and Culture, Volume 1, A-L, Horton, D. (ed), Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, 1994, p. 41

²¹⁸ Brady, M.A., Alcohol and Drug Abuse, p. 41

²¹⁹ Australian Institute Health and Welfare, Drug use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, p. 9

²²⁰ Brady, M.A., Alcohol and Drug Abuse, p. 42

tion of the concept of family differs from the Western interpretation the term 'family violence' is preferred by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe these differing forms of violence. "Indigenous people may view family violence as occurring between members of their larger family network including aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins and others in the wider community"²²¹. The '2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey' claimed that "around one in four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 and over reported being a victim of physical or threatened violence in the 12 months before the survey"²²². Indigenous people who were unemployed, who had been removed from their natural families, who were in the age of 15 to 24, who were disabled, who had experienced a high number of stressors, who were living in low income households or were female were more likely to report being a victim of violence²²³. Indigenous adults were twice as likely to be a victim of violence, according to the survey, both physical as threatened, than non-Indigenous adults²²⁴. The survey claimed that 41 per cent of the Indigenous population being over fifteen years of age and living in remote areas considered family violence being a community problem²²⁵. Family violence being a health risk factor obviously infects the health status of the Indigenous population. "In 2003–04, there were 4,500 hospitalisations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons due to assault in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined"²²⁶. Between 2000 and 2004 150 Indigenous people died as a direct result of family violence in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory²²⁷. Indigenous women were 35 times more likely to be hospitalized due to results of family violence than non-Indigenous women. Indigenous men were 22 times more like to be hospitalized than non-Indigenous men due to family violence²²⁸.

²²¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Al-Yaman, F., Van Doeland, M. & Wallis, M., Family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Cat. no. IHW 17, Canberra, 2006, retrieved from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/ihw/fvaatsip/fvaatsip-c00.pdf> on 19-06-09, p. 51

²²² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Al-Yaman, F., Van Doeland, M. & Wallis, M., Family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, p. 51

²²³ Aboriginal Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Al-Yaman, F., Van Doeland, M. & Wallis, M., Family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, p. ix

²²⁴ Aboriginal Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Al-Yaman, F., Van Doeland, M. & Wallis, M., Family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, p. 51

²²⁵ Aboriginal Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Al-Yaman, F., Van Doeland, M. & Wallis, M., Family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, p. 51

²²⁶ Aboriginal Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Al-Yaman, F., Van Doeland, M. & Wallis, M., Family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, p. ix

²²⁷ Aboriginal Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Al-Yaman, F., Van Doeland, M. & Wallis, M., Family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, p. ix

²²⁸ Aboriginal Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Al-Yaman, F., Van Doeland, M. & Wallis, M., Family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, p. ix

3.3.5 Nutrition

Malnutrition as well as undernutrition as health risk factors remain issues of grave importance for the Indigenous population. Especially undernutrition in remote areas is a common issue for Aborigines²²⁹. Under nutrition originating from poverty results in underweight, whereas malnutrition results in overweight or obesity. "Poor nutrition is a common risk factor for overweight and obesity, malnutrition, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, osteoporosis, and tooth decay"²³⁰.

3.3.6 Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding obviously is very important for the health of infants. Breast milk works anti-infective and provides immunity against early childhood diseases²³¹. The amount of Indigenous children who were breastfed for a certain period of time is lower than the amount for non-Indigenous children according to the '2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey'²³².

3.3.7 Physical activity

Physical activity or more precisely formulated the lack of physical activity, as a health risk factor contributes to "cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, depression, and overweight and obesity"²³³. There are different data on physical activity for Indigenous people. The '2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey' claims that 49 per cent of the Indigenous population is involved in some form of physical activity. Whereas the '2001 National Health Survey' claimed that 29 per cent of the Indigenous people were involved in some form of physical activity²³⁴.

²²⁹ Thomson, N.J., 'Health Status' in: The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander History, Society and Culture, Volume 1, A-L, Horton, D. (ed), Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra, 1994, p. 463

²³⁰ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 32

²³¹ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 33

²³² Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 33

²³³ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 33

²³⁴ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 33

3.3.8 Bodyweight

Bodyweight, both overweight as well as underweight, is a problematic issue for the Indigenous population. According to the '2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey' 57 per cent of the Indigenous population at the time were overweight or obese²³⁵. Being overweight or obese increases "the risk for cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, respiratory diseases, renal disease, certain cancers, osteoarthritis, pregnancy complications, and psychosocial problems"²³⁶.

3.3.9 Immunisation

Vaccine-preventable diseases still represent an important health risk factor for the Australian Indigenous population. Vaccine-preventable diseases are diphtheria and tetanus, whooping cough, hepatitis B, Hib; Haemophilus influenzae type b and MMR; measles, mumps and rubella²³⁷. Immunisation is an important process to control vaccine-preventable diseases for they present a greater burden for Indigenous people than for non-Indigenous people. The amount of Indigenous people fully immunised against vaccine-preventable diseases is higher in non-remote areas than in remote areas. Indigenous people being fully immunised in remote areas represent 52 per cent compared to 80 per cent for Indigenous people in non-remote areas. All these immunisation percentages are lower for Indigenous people than for non-Indigenous people²³⁸.

3.4 The health status of the Australian Indigenous population

Indigenous people represent "the least healthy sub-population in Australia"²³⁹. The social environment the Australian Indigenous people live in, the socioeconomic situation, health risk behaviours and health risk factors all contribute to the health status of the Australian Indigenous population. The social environment one lives in includes "the neighbourhood in which one lives, one's position in the workplace relative to others, the

²³⁵ The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxii

²³⁶ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 33

²³⁷ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 33

²³⁸ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 33

²³⁹ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 34

quality of one's social connections with friends, family and the community, and the degree to which one feels included or excluded by society"²⁴⁰. The degree in which one can or cannot control or influence one's life contributes to the social environment as well.

A modus to indicate overall health is self-assessed health. Self-assessed health reflects an individual's perception of his or her own health and thereby indicates overall health. "This measure is dependent on an individual's awareness and expectations regarding their health, and may be influenced by factors such as access to health services and health information"²⁴¹. According to the '2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey' 29 per cent of the Indigenous adults reported their health as being poor, compared to 15 per cent of the non-Indigenous adults²⁴². Indigenous adults who were unemployed, or taken from their natural families or were female were more likely to report their health as being poor than other Indigenous adults without these social experiences²⁴³. Indigenous adults were also twice as likely to report high or very high levels of psychological distress, compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts²⁴⁴. Psychological distress will be addressed in the next paragraph concerning social and emotion wellbeing.

3.4.1 The history of Indigenous health

The health of the Aborigines has suffered under the history of colonial settlement. In fact, the health of the Aborigines has suffered under colonial rule since the day the colonial settlers arrived. The settlers carried diseases, like smallpox, syphilis and influenza, as mentioned above. The natives had been isolated from these diseases for thousands of years. Due to these diseases a high proportion of the Indigenous people died. This high amount of deaths among the Indigenous population led to "a phobia about Indi-

²⁴⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *The Relationship between Socio-economic Status and Health*, retrieved from : http://www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous/health/socio_economic_context_of_indigenous_health.cfm on 18-06-2009

²⁴¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians', in: *Year Book Australia* Canberra, 2007, retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/7d12b0f6763c78caca257061001cc588/99c147d03e9be8f9ca2572360002caa4> on 17-06-09

²⁴² *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxii

²⁴³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *The Relationship between Socio-economic Status and Health*, retrieved from http://www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous/health/socio_economic_context_of_indigenous_health.cfm on 17-06-09

²⁴⁴ *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxii

genous people 'contaminating' white Australia"²⁴⁵. This in turn led to segregation, excluding Indigenous people from public areas, like swimming pools.

Indigenous people became 'cheap labourers and domestic servants'²⁴⁶ for the settlers since the moment of colonial settlement. They did not have any human or citizenship rights and were therefore treated in an inhumane fashion. Medical care was hardly available for the Indigenous population, for it was believed by the settlers that medical care for the Indigenous people was a waste of resources;

"All you want for treatin' them niggers is epsom salts an' aspro an' maybe a bit of ointment. That's if you want to bother doin' anythin' at all with 'em".

White employee in Berndt & Berndt²⁴⁷

The Aborigines were rewarded with little means in return for their work, like clothing and tobacco, they were housed poorly by the settlers and were fed too little. In fact, they were fed in that little proportion that they were hardly able to survive, let alone work;

"The food that many half-castes obtain only enables them to function at the lowest levels of vitality compatible with survival... such folk show little of the joy of living, never, in fact, being properly alive... the sequel to improved and planned diets would be the ultimate transformation of many of these folk into useful, if lowly, members of society".

Henry Reynolds discussing the South Australian situation in the 1940s²⁴⁸

The Aborigines believed that the settlers were to treat the Indigenous population in a proper manner, for they got their good country for nothing²⁴⁹. When this, by far, was not the case the Aborigines started to believe that the settlers were trying to exterminate them;

"We want to be absorbed into the Nation of Australia, and thus survive in the land of our forefathers, on equal terms. Our accusation is that the system of Government protection does not protect, but slowly exterminates."²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ Mitchell, J., 'History', in: Social Determinants of Indigenous Health, Carson, B., Dunbar, T., Chenhall, R. D. & Bailie, R. (eds), Allen & Unwin, Crows, 2007, p. 51

²⁴⁶ Beresford, Q. & Omaji, P., Our State of Mind, p. 261

²⁴⁷ Mitchell, J., History, p. 50; Berndt & Berndt, 1987, p. 218

²⁴⁸ Mitchell, J., History, p. 53; Reynolds, 1972, p. 80

²⁴⁹ Mitchell, J., History, p. 48

²⁵⁰ Mitchell, J., History, p. 54

3.4.2 Indigenous health today

To describe the present status of Indigenous health accurate information on the Indigenous population is required. Improvements in this area have been made in recent years by the 'Australian Bureau of Statistics' as well as by the 'Australian Institute of Health and Welfare' and by the 'Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet'. Most of the information used in this piece to describe the health status of the Indigenous population originates from the 'Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet'.

*"The Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet is an innovative Internet resource that aims to inform practice and policy in Indigenous health by making research and other knowledge readily accessible. In this way, the HealthInfoNet aims to contribute to 'closing the gap' in health between Indigenous and other Australians."*²⁵¹

'The Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet' encourages the sharing of information, which will lead to current as well as nationwide information. However, the information provided is not watertight due to several factors. These factors include "differences in the definitions used for Indigenous identification, and the failure, in many cases, to record a client's Indigenous status"²⁵². Information provided in this piece may therefore be slightly inaccurate, but according to currently available information.

3.4.3 Indigenous births

In 2006 4.7 per cent of all registered births in Australia were with one or both parents identified as Indigenous, representing 12,496 births²⁵³. It is estimated that only 96 per cent of all Indigenous births were registered wherefore the indicated amount of Indigenous births may slightly underestimate the actual amount of Indigenous births in 2006²⁵⁴. Indigenous women tend to have more babies than non-Indigenous women. Indigenous women also tend to have children at a younger age than non-Indigenous women. "The median age of Indigenous mothers was 24.6 years, compared with 30.8 years

²⁵¹ About us, Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, Perth, retrieved from <http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/about/> on 16-06-09

²⁵² Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 1

²⁵³ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 4

²⁵⁴ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 4

for all women²⁵⁵. The total fertility rate for Indigenous women was 2,118 births per 1000, compared to 1,814 births per 1000 for non-Indigenous women²⁵⁶. The average birth weight of Indigenous babies was more than 200 grams less than the average birth weight of babies born to non-Aboriginal mothers. Indigenous babies are twice as likely to be born low of birth weight, which can cause several health problems and even risk of death²⁵⁷. The birth of a baby born to low of birth weight can, among others, be caused by health risk behaviours inflicted upon the baby by its mother, like the use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs during pregnancy, socioeconomic disadvantage, including the lack of education and health risk factors, like under nutrition or malnutrition.

3.4.4 Indigenous deaths

When it comes to Indigenous death rates or records no consistency can be achieved yet. Australia-wide “only 55 per cent of Indigenous deaths were identified correctly²⁵⁸. Death rates can therefore only be estimated, which has to be kept in mind reading the upcoming information. It can be estimated that the death rate numbers are “four times higher than the numbers expected from the age-sex-specific death rates for the total Australian populations²⁵⁹; others estimate these numbers to be three times higher²⁶⁰. Both Indigenous men and women are expected to live seventeen years less than non-Indigenous men and women²⁶¹. The most frequent causes of death for both Indigenous men and women are cardiovascular disease, cancers, endocrine, nutritional and metabolic disorders, injuries and diseases of the respiratory system²⁶². The maternal death rate for Indigenous women in 2003-2005 was three times higher than for non-Indigenous women²⁶³. The infant mortality rate is, according to the estimations of death rates, far higher for Indigenous infants than for non-Indigenous infants, being almost 1.5

²⁵⁵ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 4

²⁵⁶ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 4

²⁵⁷ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 4

²⁵⁸ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 6

²⁵⁹ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 7

²⁶⁰ The Health and Welfare of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxii

²⁶¹ The Health and Welfare of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxii

²⁶² Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 9

²⁶³ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 9

times as high²⁶⁴. The infant and children mortality rate was even three times higher for Indigenous children compared to non-Indigenous children²⁶⁵.

3.4.5 Specific health conditions

Heart and circulatory diseases, also known as cardiovascular diseases represent a major burden for the Indigenous population. According to the '2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey' 12 per cent of the Indigenous population were suffering from cardiovascular disease. The amount of Indigenous people suffering from cardiovascular disease in remote areas is slightly higher than the amount of people living in non-remote areas, being 11 per cent compared to 14 per cent. Cardiovascular diseases were 1.3 times more common among Indigenous people than among non-Indigenous people. Cardiovascular diseases were the most prominent cause of death for Indigenous people. The rates for Indigenous men were 3.1 times higher than for non-Indigenous men. The rates for Indigenous women compared to the rate for non-Indigenous women were 2.6 times higher²⁶⁶.

For as far as information on cancer incidents and deaths are available as well as accurate it is most likely that the rate for cancer incidents among Indigenous people is lower than the rate for non-Indigenous people. The rates for resulting deaths in turn are higher for Indigenous people than for non-Indigenous people²⁶⁷.

Indigenous people are more likely to suffer from diabetes than non-Indigenous people. Diabetes was, according to the '2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey', 3.4 times more likely for Indigenous people than for non-Indigenous people. 8 per cent of Indigenous deaths are directly related to diabetes²⁶⁸.

Renal disease is more common among the Indigenous population than among the non-Indigenous population. The rate of death resulting from chronic kidney disease, most common among renal diseases, was ten times higher for the Indigenous population during 1999-2003 than for the non-Indigenous population²⁶⁹.

²⁶⁴ The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxiv

²⁶⁵ The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, Pink, B., & Allbon, P., p. xxiv

²⁶⁶ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 13

²⁶⁷ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 14

²⁶⁸ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 14

²⁶⁹ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 18

Respiratory diseases are one of the leading causes of death among the Indigenous population. The '2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey' claims that 27 per cent of the Indigenous population was suffering of respiratory diseases. The amount of Indigenous people living in non-remote areas suffering from respiratory diseases is far higher than the amount for Indigenous people living in remote areas. Being 30 per cent for the non-remote areas, compared to 17 per cent for the Indigenous people living in remote areas. Asthma is the most common respiratory condition for the Indigenous people with 15 per cent of the Indigenous population suffering from the condition. The amount of Indigenous people suffering from asthma was 1.6 times higher than the amount of non-Indigenous people suffering from respiratory condition²⁷⁰.

Communicable diseases are of important influence to the health status of the Indigenous population. Indigenous people in this light mainly suffer from diseases as "tuberculosis; hepatitis (A, B, and C); sexually transmitted infections; HIV/AIDS; Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib); pneumococcal disease, and meningococcal disease"²⁷¹. Obviously the rates for all of these diseases differ per disease. The rate for Indigenous people suffering from HIV/AIDS has not changed over the last few years, remaining 1.7 cases per 100,000 people. The rate of HIV/AIDS cases for non-Indigenous people has decreased during the last years to 1.2 cases per 100,000 people²⁷².

Eye health is an often discussed health issue in relation to the Indigenous population. According to the '2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey' 30 per cent of the Indigenous population were suffering from eye or sight problems. Eye health issues occur a little less frequently in non-remote areas than in remote areas²⁷³.

Ear diseases or the loss of hearing are more common among the Indigenous population than among the non-Indigenous population. Ear diseases are most common among children and young adults. According to the '2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey' 12 per cent of the Indigenous population was suffering from ear conditions²⁷⁴.

²⁷⁰ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 22

²⁷¹ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 23

²⁷² Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 28

²⁷³ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 29

²⁷⁴ Overview of Australian Indigenous health status, November 2008, Thomson, N., Burns, J., Hardy, A., Krom, I., Stumpers, S., Urquhart, B., p. 29

3.5 Social and emotional wellbeing of the Australian indigenous population

Mental health is influenced by and influences all the above mentioned social circumstances. Mental health is an important part of the overall health status of the Indigenous population and therefore could have been addressed in the previous paragraph. Considering the Indigenous belief of “the inter-related nature of mind, body and spirit”²⁷⁵ as well as the holistic view of health, life being health and health being life²⁷⁶, the issue should have been addressed in the previous paragraph. However, with the importance of mental health in mind, in the light of the subject of this piece, addressing the issue in a separate paragraph seems to be most appropriate.

The term mental health is used in health statuses to address mental illnesses or mental disorders. The term ‘social and emotional wellbeing’ however will be used in this paragraph for it addresses mental illnesses, disorders and problems as well as components relating to mental health. Mental health is considered to be “a state of emotional and social well-being in which the individual can cope with the normal stress of life and reach his or her potential”²⁷⁷. Obviously, social and emotional wellbeing covers a broader range of issues than mental health. These issues can “result from unresolved grief and loss, trauma and abuse, domestic violence, removal from family, substance misuse, family breakdown, cultural dislocation, racism and discrimination, and social disadvantage”²⁷⁸.

Another reason to use this term here is because the term is preferred by Indigenous people over the term mental health, as mentioned in ‘The National Mental Health Plan, 2003-2008’. Indigenous people tend to consider the term to be more positive than ‘mental health’, to contain holistic connotations and to acknowledge emotional and social aspects of Indigenous health²⁷⁹:

²⁷⁵ Milroy, H., ‘Preface’ in: Volume 2, The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey: The Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal Children and Young People, Zubrick, S.R., Silburn, S.R., Lawrence, D.M., Mitrou, F.G., Dalby, R.B., Blair, E.M., Griffin, J., Milroy, H., De Maio, J.A., Cox, A., Li, J., Curtin University of Technology and Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, Perth, 2005, p. xvi, retrieved from http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/files/user17/Volume2_Complete.pdf, visited on 19-06-2009

²⁷⁶ Milroy, H., Preface, p. xvi

²⁷⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Measuring the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Cat. no. IHW 24, Canberra, 2009, retrieved from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10685> on 18-06-2009, p. 2

²⁷⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Measuring the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, p. 3

²⁷⁹ Garvey, D., A review of the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous Australian peoples – considerations, challenges and opportunities, 2008, retrieved from http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/sewb_review on 19-06-09

"It [...] accommodates a more meaningful recognition of aspects of Indigenous history, particularly the periods and practices resulting in trauma and grief that have been identified as underlying the great burden of mental health problems among Indigenous people and which may lead to 'mental illness'"²⁸⁰.

Social and emotional wellbeing is influenced by several themes according to Indigenous people. These themes are "(i) culture and spirituality; (ii) family and community kinships; (iii) historical, social and economic factors; (iv) fear and education; and (v) loss"²⁸¹. Loss can be defined in several ways. Loss can refer to the loss of the land inflicted upon the Indigenous people by the colonial settlers. Loss may involve the loss of particular 'sacred sites'. Loss may also involve the loss of people or relationships with people.

These variable losses have variable negative impact on the social and emotional wellbeing of the Indigenous population. These impacts may involve "subsequent delinquency and behavioural problems, loss of cultural heritage, broken families and communities, experiences of racism and undermined parenting skills"²⁸². Beresford and Omaji defined resulting impacts of the loss of people and relationships with people due to the separation of Indigenous children from their families. These results are "overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the justice system, family violence, welfare dependency, substance and alcohol misuse, breakdown of traditional family structures, loss of cultural and spiritual identity, loss of individual self-esteem, security and happiness and health problems - physical, mental and emotional"²⁸³. Resulting negative mental health is by Indigenous people preferably referred to as 'disturbed behaviour' instead of mental illness; believing that the effects are only a passing phase.

Due to the diversity of Indigenous experiences of the colonial history it is hard to define one simple influence of the Australian colonial history on the social and emotional wellbeing of the Indigenous population. Three themes were identified by Milroy "that emerge from a psychological analysis of Indigenous history: the denial of humanity, the denial of existence and the denial of identity"²⁸⁴.

²⁸⁰ Garvey, D., A review of the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous Australian peoples – considerations, challenges and opportunities

²⁸¹ Garvey, D., A review of the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous Australian peoples – considerations, challenges and opportunities

²⁸² Garvey, D., A review of the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous Australian peoples – considerations, challenges and opportunities

²⁸³ Garvey, D., A review of the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous Australian peoples – considerations, challenges and opportunities

²⁸⁴ Garvey, D., A review of the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous Australian peoples – considerations, challenges and opportunities

*"The denial of Aboriginal people's humanity, existence and identity can be seen in racial classification, denigration and criminalisation; incarceration, exclusion and removal; assimilation, welfare and 'mutual obligation' with the vehicle for action being within policy and legislative control"*²⁸⁵.

Due to the Indigenous history 9 per cent of the Indigenous adults were feeling nervous all or most of the time, according to the '2004-05 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey'. 7 per cent of the Indigenous adults were feeling without hope all or most of the time. 7 per cent reported feeling that sad that nothing could cheer them up all or most of the time. 17 per cent of the Indigenous adults claimed that everything was an effort to them for all or most of the time. And 12 per cent of the Indigenous adults were feeling restless all or most of the time²⁸⁶. All these results are all believed to be related to "trauma and grief" or loss²⁸⁷.

3.6 Racism and discrimination

An obvious, actual example of experiencing trauma or grief inflicted upon the Indigenous population since colonial settlement are racism and discrimination. Up until this day it is common that Aborigines are looked upon by non-Aborigines as being dirty and foul smelling, diseased, unable to hold their alcohol, lazy, unpunctual, thriftless, unreliable, addicted to gambling and inferior in mental capacity to whites²⁸⁸. When in 2003 a research project was held in Western Australia 35 per cent of the questioned Indigenous people responded "they were both emotionally upset and experienced physical stress due to an experience of 'being treated differently on the basis of race'"²⁸⁹. The 'National Inquiry into Racist Violence' which was released in 1991 reported that racist attitudes and practices both consciously and unconsciously severely pervade Australian institutions²⁹⁰. As an important example of Australian institutions pervading racism the police force was named, "due to the widespread involvement of police in acts of racist violence, intimidation and harassment"²⁹¹. However, the Anglo-Australian population does not admit to racism, wherefore Pattel-Gray compared the Anglo-Australians to the proverbial three monkeys:

²⁸⁵ Milroy, H., Preface, p. xvii

²⁸⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

²⁸⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians

²⁸⁸ Bourke, E., 'Images and Realities' in: Aboriginal Australia, An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies, Bourke, C., Bourke, E. & Edwards, B. (eds), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, p. 13-14

²⁸⁹ Paradies, Y., 'Racism', in: Social Determinants of Indigenous Health, Carson, B., Dunbar, T., Chenhall, R. D. & Bailie, R. (eds), Allen & Unwin, Crows, 2007, p. 66

²⁹⁰ Moss, I., Making Multicultural Australia, National Inquiry into Racist Violence: Summary, Sydney, 1991, p. 2, retrieved from http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/racediscrimcomm_1.pdf on 03-07-09

²⁹¹ Moss, I., Making Multicultural Australia, National Inquiry into Racist Violence, p. 4

"Australia does not see, hear or speak of the evil, and is completely "in-sensitive" to the flagrant racism being perpetrated upon Aboriginal People because it has its hands over its eyes, ears and mouth"²⁹².

Racism originates from a belief of cultural superiority based on genetic superiority²⁹³. It does not necessarily has to be a matter of attitudes, which could explain why the Anglo-Australian population is not admitting to racism. Since racism can also be shaped by action and institutional structures²⁹⁴.

The Stolen Generations is one of the main examples or maybe the one main example of racism or alleged racial superiority in the colonial history of Australia. Aboriginal children were taken from their parents, families, communities and culture to assimilate to the 'civilized', 'white' society. This form of segregation originated from a belief of cultural or racial superiority, which is racism. Even up to this day the separation of Aboriginal children from their parents is believed to be a good thing by the majority of the non-Indigenous population. This belief originates from an either conscious or unconscious belief of cultural and racial superiority claiming that the children were 'saved' and that they were given the opportunity to live in a 'better' society;

"I am amazed [...] that there is no reference to the reasons why these children were taken from their families. Was it not to give them better opportunities in the white man's world – better health care, better education and better employment opportunities? If this had not been done and accepted by them, would not the children have tried to return to their families and would not these families have tried to assist them to do so?"

A letter in the *West Australian* after the release of the 'Bringing Them Home' report²⁹⁵

Research however shows that forcibly removed Indigenous people are not better off at all. The '1994 Australian Bureau of Statistics survey' reported that "forcibly removed people are not better educated, not more likely to be employed and not receiving significantly higher incomes than people who were raised in their communities. However, they are twice as likely to have been arrested more than once in the past five years, with one in five removed people having this experience"²⁹⁶. Indigenous people who were forc-

²⁹² Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 208

²⁹³ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 2

²⁹⁴ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 2

²⁹⁵ Beresford, Q. & Omaji, P., *Our State of Mind*, p. 245

²⁹⁶ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing them home: A guide to the findings and recommendations of the National Inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families*, 1997, p. 19

ibly removed from their families are almost twice as likely to report their health status as being poor or fair compared to those who were not removed from their families²⁹⁷.

The Inquiry into the Stolen Generations resulting in the 'Bringing Them Home' report claimed that by the removal of children from their homes their human rights were violated. By violating the human rights of these children Australia, 'as a member of the United Nations from 1945, committed itself to abolish racial discrimination'²⁹⁸. The inquiry even claimed that the removal of Aboriginal children from their homes was an act of genocide. For by removing the children they were to assimilate to the 'Western Australian' society, they were to estrange from their culture which would lead to the disappearance of the Indigenous population or group, which is genocide²⁹⁹.

The term genocide used by Wilson in the 'Bringing Them Home' report led to fierce reactions;

"The comparison with the Holocaust is a intemperate slander. The worst that can be attributed to white settlement is that of neglect and assuming too easily that a Stone-age culture could be shed after having led a hunter-gather existence for thousands of years".

A letter in the *West Australian* after the release of the 'Bringing Them Home' report³⁰⁰

"What happened in Australia was, without doubt, paternalism of the worst kind... here was never an intention to destroy the Aboriginal race and any attempt to equate this policy with the events listed above, by using the word 'genocide' is historically, intellectually and morally dishonest".

A letter in the *West Australian* after the release of the 'Bringing Them Home' report³⁰¹

After the release of the report the then Prime Minister John Howard was asked for an apology for the Stolen Generation, which he refused. Howard claimed that the "Australians of this generation [...] should not be required to accept guilt and blame for past actions and policies over which they had no control"³⁰². For this veto Howard received public support of the majority of the non-Indigenous population. And, as mentioned above, even today, even after the release of the 'Bringing Them Home' report and after the apology to the Stolen Generations by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, the majority of the Anglo-Australian population is still not willing to confront racism as experienced by the Indigenous population. Pattel-Gray described this attitude by claiming that;

²⁹⁷ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing them home*, p. 19

²⁹⁸ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing them home*, p. 27

²⁹⁹ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing them home*, p. 27

³⁰⁰ Beresford, Q. & Omaji, P., *Our State of Mind*, p. 249

³⁰¹ Beresford, Q. & Omaji, P., *Our State of Mind*, p. 250

³⁰² Beresford, Q. & Omaji, P., *Our State of Mind*, p. 245

"The children of the invaders say they cannot be held responsible or be considered guilty for the sins of their parents. Yet they have continued to benefit from those structures established by their forebears, and they are maintaining their privileged status and "rewards"-like the slave-owner whose child inherits the slaves, and says "I cannot be guilty because I did not enslave them," and continues to exploit them and profiteer off them"³⁰³.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to form an image of the social circumstances influencing today's Aboriginal context. The dispossession of the land has had political, economical, social and spiritual consequences for the indigenous population. The colonial legacy has resulted in today's socioeconomic situation in which the indigenous population depends on welfare, which has come to be known as 'sit-down money'. This governmental financial aid provides the indigenous population in the necessities of life, but that is as far as it goes, it does not provide any spiritual healing or social emotional wellbeing, which is reflected in, amongst others, the high amount of Indigenous smoking tobacco, the high amount of Aborigines abusing alcohol and the high amount of Aborigines abusing drugs, influencing the Australian Aboriginal health status. The health status as reflected in this chapter shows the terrible health situation of the indigenous population, being the worse of any group in the Australian society. This fact, as well as all the circumstances discussed above as well as racism or discrimination, naturally influence the social and emotional wellbeing of the indigenous population, who are experiencing a loss of self-identity. This loss of self-identity will be discussed in the upcoming chapter.

³⁰³ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 1

4 A SEARCH FOR SELF-IDENTITY

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the Aboriginal search for self-identity as described by Parratt will be the main focus. In the second paragraph it will be described why it is necessary to go in search of a self-identity due to the loss of self-identity originating from a colonial legacy and anthropological poverty. According to Parratt's theory people in search of their self-identity go back to their traditions and cultures³⁰⁴. To describe the traditions and cultures of the Australian Aborigines one has to go back to the traditions and cultures as they were before the colonial legacy and anthropological poverty were inflicted upon the Aboriginal Australians through the denigration of integrity, humanness and culture, which will be discussed in paragraph three. Apart from going back to indigenous traditions and cultures the search for self-identity concerns and needs to address the present social world the Aboriginal Australians find themselves in³⁰⁵, which will be addressed in the fourth paragraph. In this paragraph the arrival of the colonists, of the missionaries and of the immigrants will be addressed. The combination of both traditions and cultures as well as the modern context shape a supposed Australian Aboriginal self-identity, which will be addressed in the fifth paragraph. The sixth paragraph is this chapter's conclusion.

4.2 The loss of self-identity

Parratt argues that a dynamic search for self-identity is what is innovative about Third World Theologies or intercultural theologies³⁰⁶, as mentioned in the Prelude. The Australian Aborigines have lost their sense of self-identity by those things that characterise Third World Theologies, namely by being exploited through a *colonial legacy*³⁰⁷ and *anthropological poverty*³⁰⁸. The colonial legacy, obviously, includes loss, loss which as discussed above, mainly involves the loss of the land as well as the loss of relationships and people as has been inflicted upon the Australian Aborigines by the settling colonists. Anthropological poverty through "the denigration of integrity, humanness and culture"³⁰⁹ as well, goes without an introduction, since the ways in which anthropological poverty has been inflicted upon the Australian Aborigines has already been discussed above through the systems of protection and assimilation by the white Australian government

³⁰⁴ Parratt, J., An Introduction to Third World Theologies, p. 8

³⁰⁵ Parratt, J., An Introduction to Third World Theologies, p. 8

³⁰⁶ Parratt, J., An Introduction to Third World Theologies, p. 7-8

³⁰⁷ Parratt, J., An Introduction to Third World Theologies, p. 3

³⁰⁸ Parratt, J., An Introduction to Third World Theologies, p. 5

³⁰⁹ Parratt, J., An Introduction to Third World Theologies, p. 5

intended to make the indigenous population “lose their culture and become more acceptable to white Australia.”³¹⁰ The main way to accomplish this has been through the removal of indigenous children from their families, thereby removing them from their traditions and cultures.

4.3 Traditions and cultures

4.3.1 *The Dreaming*

Australian Aboriginal traditions and cultures originate from a religious belief system which has been called the ‘Dreaming’ or ‘Dream Time’, a name which has been introduced by white anthropologists to describe the indigenous peoples beliefs. The name the ‘Dreaming’ or ‘Dream Time’ seems to refer to a period of time or a mental stage which is not real, something “vague or dreamlike”³¹¹. The narratives to describe the creative acts of the ‘supernatural beings’ during the Dream Time are often referred to as ‘Dream Time stories’ or myths. These terms again seem to communicate that the creation stories of the Australian Aborigines are not true stories, communicating a sense of unreality, belonging to a “fantastic domain where the laws of logic do not apply”³¹². The terms seem to show that the beliefs, traditions and cultures of the Australian indigenous population were not taken seriously by the ‘whites’ who invented the names. This explains why Aboriginal Australians try to avoid using these terms, however since the terms are that commonly known and used, it is, as Charlesworth argues, “probably too late to get rid of the term ‘the Dreaming’, but it remains true that it distorts our understanding of the complex set of phenomena it purports to refer to”³¹³. Since the names are known and commonly used they will also be used in this piece, however understanding and remembering that the terms do not do the beliefs of the Australian Aborigines justice.

4.3.2 *The creation of the world*

The Australian indigenous people believe, as mentioned above, in what has been called the Dreaming. “This is that period long ago (yet still somehow present to us in everyday life) when the deities moved about on the earth giving shape and substance to

³¹⁰ Beresford, Q., and Omaji, P., *Our State of Mind*, p. 257

³¹¹ *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, p. XI

³¹² Charlesworth, R., *Religious inventions*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1997, p. 73

³¹³ Charlesworth, R., *Religious inventions*, p. 72

the land, generating human beings, and arranging the rules of society³¹⁴. These deities, more commonly known as 'supernatural beings' or totemic ancestors, came from the earth and after shaping the world to what it looks like, even up until this day, they withdrew themselves again back into the earth, being tired from their creative activities. The places where the supernatural beings retreated and are now to be found asleep under the earth are filled with their sacred presence.

All across the 'world', by which Australian Aborigines refer to the Australian continent, marks or 'proof' of these creative acts can be found and the presence of the supernatural beings can be felt. These marks are referred to as 'sacred sites' by white anthropologists. Through these sacred sites the Dreaming can be experienced at various places at any time. These sacred sites "were infused with sacred particles which were the relatively dormant supernaturals. They had to be activated by human rituals, performed by the men's lodge of the relevant clan. Without the carrying on of such rituals the land and the people would not stay prosperous³¹⁵. For this reason the ways the supernatural beings went and the places they visited are being revisited by the Australian Aborigines to regain contact with the sacred world.

Indigenous people experience the sacred world at any time, all day, every day, feeling connected to the sacred land at any time. Indigenous people experience a feeling of belonging to the land, as the land belongs to them, for they are part of the land and the land is a part of them.

4.3.3 Dreamtime stories

The stories or myths explaining how the world came to be tell of the wanderings and activities of the supernatural beings, coming from one area, moving on to the next. In the course of these wanderings "they modified the landscape, produced plants and animals, and performed a series of "rituals" which ever since have been scrupulously repeated by the aborigines³¹⁶. These stories, which are referred to as Dreamtime stories or creation stories, as mentioned above, are sacred to Aboriginal Australians and "serve as foundations and justifications for the entire religious life of the tribe³¹⁷. The creative acts of the supernatural beings are various in form and shape, as the Australian country, stretched as it is, varies in form and shape and therefore a lot of creation stories are told.

The creation stories are passed on from one generation to the next between men and women separately, for they are familiar with different stories. This means that the

³¹⁴ Smart, N., *The World's Religions*, p.178

³¹⁵ Smart, N., *The World's Religions*, p. 179-180

³¹⁶ Eliade, M., *Australian Religions, An Introduction*, Cornell University Press, London, 1973, p. 2

³¹⁷ Eliade, M., *Australian Religions*, p. 2

stories of the men are kept from the women, as well as the women keep their stories from the men. The passing on of stories of importance to the clan, also referred to as tribe or mob, occurs after a certain stage in life, for one has to be initiated to be allowed to be part of and familiar with the stories influencing Australian Aboriginal life. Since one has to be initiated to learn of the indigenous creation stories it has been hard for white people to learn of the Australian Aboriginal creation stories. But there have been some who were allowed to hear them, who were introduced to the sacred stories of the indigenous traditions and cultures. Some of these white people, being mainly anthropologists, have written the stories they were told down for others to read and thereby share their knowledge of what is sacred to the indigenous peoples, in turn

"Black people have expressed disappointment in many histories written by white historians because they have misused or ignored that which is central to gaining a black perspective – the oral tradition"³¹⁸.

Australian Aboriginal people live together in clans, as mentioned above. A clan is "a group which is constituted by, most commonly, patrilineal descendants"³¹⁹ of a supernatural being or a totemic ancestor. Being linked to a particular supernatural being means being linked to a particular Dreamtime story, telling the story of the supernatural being the clan is connected with. However, the clan does not own a complete 'myth', but only a section of the story concerning their supernatural being, as is argued by Berndt & Berndt;

"the men over the next stretch of country may own another section and can perform the rites associated and so on, all over the country. Members of several local groups come together from time to time to perform their separate, but linked, sections. But the myth is never acted in toto because all its owners could not meet, and in fact would probably not even know one another"³²⁰.

4.3.4 Indigenous rituals and ceremonies

Australian Aborigines use rituals by means of reestablishing "contact with the Supernatural Beings and of immersing oneself in the sacred time of the "Dreaming"³²¹.

³¹⁸ Pearson, N., 'Guugu Yimidhurr History; Hope Vale Lutheran', in: Maps, Dreams, History, Race and Representation in Australia, Koicumbas, J. (ed), Sydney Studies in History No. 8, Department of History, University of Sydney, St Ives, 1998, p. 135-136

³¹⁹ Smart, N., The World's Religions, p.179

³²⁰ Berndt, R.M., and Berndt, C.H., The world of the first Australians, p. 243-244

³²¹ Eliade, M., Australian Religions, p. 84

These rituals can be seen as repetitions of an event revealed to the tribe by the supernatural beings³²². Rituals are usually performed by male members of the clan, but depending on the particular ritual being or event being dramatized, women can sometimes fulfill a role in rituals as well, sometimes even side by side with the men. The rituals are usually performed at the dancing ground, a particular area where all sacred rituals are being acted by the men or at a particular other area according to the content of the particular ritual. When performing a ritual the men are decorated with paint and attributes, according to the ritual being performed. As well as rituals ceremonies are performed by the Aboriginal Australians. Ceremonies can be sacred, but there are also ceremonies of a non-sacred nature, being referred to as 'playabout'. And then there are the ceremonies with religious elements, which are to be placed somewhere in between sacred ceremonies and non-sacred ceremonies³²³.

As mentioned above, one has to be initiated to learn of the Australian Aboriginal stories and to be allowed to become part of their sacred rituals and ceremonies, which is known as the 'sacred-secret' issue, basically meaning that what the Indigenous consider to be 'sacred' is kept 'secret' from those who are not allowed to know. One needs to do so for one's identity needs to be revealed to him by means of initiation rites³²⁴ in which death and resurrection are being symbolised. These initiation rites are performed at the beginning of puberty, when the novice leaves childhood behind by means of a symbolic death and then "prepares himself for rebirth as a spiritual being"³²⁵. It is through initiation that the "the novice discovers that the world has a hidden meaning"³²⁶ which is explained to him/her by the elders.

4.3.5 *The way indigenous life was organised*

Australian Aborigines were living in clans in which descendants of one supernatural being or totemic ancestor were living together. The descendants were not connected through blood lines, but shared the same name, which is known as kinship. Australian Aboriginal kinship systems seem to be "similar in many respects, but to have many variations in others. The variations can be classified with reference to the form of marriage and the number of lines of descent in the kinship terminology"³²⁷.

³²² Eliade, M., *Australian Religions*, p. 84

³²³ Berndt, R.M., and Berndt, C., *The world of the first Australians*, p. 260

³²⁴ Eliade, M., *Australian Religions*, p. 84

³²⁵ Eliade, M., *Australian Religions*, p. 88

³²⁶ Eliade, M., *Australian Religions*, p. 96

³²⁷ Keen, I., 'Twenty-five years of Aboriginal kinship studies', in: *Social Anthropology and Australian Aboriginal Studies, A Contemporary Overview*, R.M. Berndt and R Tonkinson (eds.), Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1988, p.80

Gender roles or socially constructed roles for men and women were of particular importance in the life of the Australian Aborigines. These roles were part of the doctrine constructed by the supernatural beings inflicted upon the Australian Aborigines through creation stories. To live morally correct the indigenous population needs to live by these rules and according to their roles. The most importance difference in these roles is the fact that the men represent the transcendent, for they are in contact with the spiritual world. Whereas the women represent the physical, for they are in contact with nature.

4.3.6 *The search for indigenous traditions and cultures*

All Australian Aboriginal groups lived according to systems of kinship. These systems however differed fairly from one another, in the rules they lived by as well as by the stories they told, which are, as mentioned above, connected to one another, but concerned with different creation stories involving different totemic ancestors, from whom they believed to be descending. Due to these differences it is clear that "the constellation of ritual, mythology and material representations, with the beliefs expressed through them, is not uniform throughout Australia"³²⁸. In a land as stretched as the Australian continent, where indigenous groups were living that far apart that they were living in different climates it is impossible to speak of a "unitary people, or a nation with a unitary culture or way of life: 'Australian Aboriginal' is an umbrella term covering very deep and wide differences"³²⁹. Therefore "it would be more accurate to speak of Aboriginal Australian *cultures* in the plural and Aboriginal *religions* in the plural"³³⁰, as argued by Charlesworth.

Despite these differences, it can however be stated that all of these Australian Aboriginal cultures and Aboriginal religions shared a strong spiritual connection to the land as well as a belief that the past, present and future were connected like an ongoing circle, for they believed that the world's creation was not a onetime ordeal, but an ever continuing process. This ever continuing process was roughly disturbed by the arrival of the colonists, by whom the spirituality of the land as well was denied, which will be addressed in the next paragraph.

³²⁸ Berndt, R.M., and Berndt, C.H., *The world of the first Australians*, p. 244

³²⁹ Charlesworth, R., *Religious inventions*, p. 54

³³⁰ Charlesworth, R., *Religious inventions*, p. 71

4.4 The modern social world

4.4.1 *The arrival of the colonists*

The lives of the Australian Aborigines undoubtedly changed due to the arrival of the British colonists in 1788 when the Australian Aborigines were “in a single instance”³³¹ dispossessed of their land by the concept of terra nullius, as declared by James Cook in 1770, as mentioned in the first chapter concerning the historical circumstances influencing the lives of the Australian Aborigines. The dispossession of the land did not just lead to the spiritual denial of the land and thereby of everything the Australian Aborigines believed to be sacred, but also to the loss of their homes and their traditional food supply, which led to even more miscommunication between the ‘whites’ and the ‘blacks’.

Aborigines, for instance, were not acquainted with the concept of theft, because they were not acquainted with the concept of property, since everything belonged to the land. When the colonists started cultivating the land and brought along their cattle, the Australian Aborigines were no longer able to gather food like they had done for tens of thousands of years before the arrival of the colonists and their prey’s were being preyed on by the newly arrived cattle. To appease their hunger the Aborigines ate the colonists’ cattle, making them thieves to colonists’ eyes and as a result the Indigenes were punished severely for something they did not consider to be wrong.

Berndt & Berndt have referred to the arrival of the settlers and the dispossession of the land as a ‘deathblow’³³², meaning “the complete destruction of the Aboriginal way of life and, in a number of cases, of the people themselves as well”³³³. The people were destructed since they were looked upon as non-humane, as ‘filthy, dirty beasts’³³⁴, as obstacles to progress, which had to be removed³³⁵ and so they were. Looking upon the indigenous population as ‘animals’ and ‘savages’³³⁶ provided grounding for the settling colonists to treat the indigenous population in an inhuman manner, denying the natives any human rights and deciding to ‘civilize’ them by killing them³³⁷, both intended as non-intended by means of massacres and diseases. In the words of Budden “the path has been and remains rugged”³³⁸:

³³¹ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 17

³³² Berndt, R.M., and Berndt, C.H., *The world of the first Australians*, p. 518

³³³ Berndt, R.M., and Berndt, C.H., *The world of the first Australians*, p. 518

³³⁴ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 170

³³⁵ Moorehead, A., *The Fatal Impact*, p. 169

³³⁶ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p.19

³³⁷ Elder, B., *Blood on the Wattle*, p. 154

³³⁸ Budden, C., *Doing Bible Study in a Multicultural Society*, p. 54-55

"Aboriginal people were poisoned, women raped, land taken, and the people subjected to a variety of ever-changing policies, nearly all of which denied them a place in Australian society"³³⁹.

The colonists' belief of superiority led to the Protectorate System, which enabled the appointed 'Protectors' to determine *"where* Aboriginals could live, *whom* they could marry and *if* they could raise their own children"³⁴⁰. This system was later changed into a system of assimilation, by means of which the colonists were intending to turn 'the blacks' 'white' on the inside, intending to hereby enable the indigenous population to participate in the newly introduced 'civilized' society. The most discussed and revenged example of this system undoubtedly were the stolen generations, which lasted from 1920 till 1969, when indigenous children were forcibly taken from their homes to be ridded of their culture.

White settlement is up until this day celebrated by the white Australian population on the 26th of January, on Australia Day. The Australian Aborigines however do not consider the arrival of the settlers as good news, but as "the beginning of a long and seemingly unending period of personal and cultural decline"³⁴¹. which is why they protested against Australia Day naming the day a Day of Mourning in 1938. Australia Day is often referred to as the Day of Invasion by the Australian Aborigines, for they believe that the land had been invaded, instead of settled as communicated by the British. Australia Day has also been referred to by the indigenous population as the Day of Survival, since survival became a struggle for the indigenous population due to the white invasion.

4.4.2 The arrival of the missionaries

"The first fleet did not transport God to Australia in 1788, along with the convicts. God was already here, present and active as Creator and Sustainer of every remote corner of the earth. God was not indiscernible to Aboriginal people, a religious people who sought to relate to their environment in spiritual terms.

What the Christians among the white settlers did bring, whether they realized it or not, was the knowledge of Christ"³⁴².

The first missionary, the Rev. William Walker of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, arrived 33 years after the first colonists in Australia in 1821³⁴³. Most missionaries, cer-

³³⁹ Budden, C., *Doing Bible Study in a Multicultural Society*, p. 54-55

³⁴⁰ Pattel-Gray, A., *The Great White Flood*, p. 198

³⁴¹ Attwood, B., *Rights for Aborigines*, p. 335

³⁴² Harris, J.W., *One Blood*, p. 17

tainly at first, did not look into Aboriginal religions, traditions or cultures telling the indigenous population that their religion was heathen, demonic and unworthy. The missionaries brought indigenous children to missions in cooperation with the Australian government under the system of assimilation. At the missions it was attempted to rid the children of all attachments to their cultures and traditions and to be introduced to the Christian faith according to the missionaries' denomination. This diversity of Christianity comprised mainly of, as mentioned in the introduction, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans and Uniting Church members from all over Europe. Since the missionaries from all these various denominations believed the Australian Aboriginal belief system to be heathen they did not attempt to assimilate the Christian faith they were intending to inflict upon the indigenous children to their cultural beliefs. The missionaries were appointed several pieces of land on which they built their missions and churches. These missions and churches were governed only by Christian Europeans.

Walker was the first to baptize Aborigines, which happened soon after this arrival. He baptized two Aboriginal boys named Jemmy and Thomas, who was the son of the famous Bennelong, 1764-1813, who was the first Aborigine to become educated, to write in English and had been baptized by Walker as well. Bennelong, who had become white on the inside, but naturally remained black on the outside, could not handle being rejected by the white and no longer felt to be part of the Australian Aboriginal community and therefore went in search for solitude. His son Thomas and Jemmy died soon after having been baptized by Walker of European diseases. For Walker it was a great mystery why "God should have permitted this to happen"³⁴⁴. And, as put by Harris: "He was not the last missionary to be brought almost to a state of despair by the deaths of their converts. It was a long time before the conversion rate exceeded the death rate"³⁴⁵.

What the missionaries as a consequence brought to the Australian Aborigines was "not just a foreign faith which might have been as acceptable to them as to anyone else but a faith in foreign cultural wrappings"³⁴⁶. These 'cultural wrappings' made it hard for the Australian Aborigines to relate to the western gospel and made them believe that God was a god for the white men.

The intention of the missionaries was "to change the socio-cultural systems *and* the individual lives of the people with whom they worked"³⁴⁷. The European missionaries did not just preach Christianity, they preached a western way of life, which to them was more civilized and thereby unintendedly showed the Australian Aborigines inequality. The

³⁴³ Breward, I., *A History of Australian Churches*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1993, p. 22

³⁴⁴ Harris, J.W., *One Blood*, p. 51

³⁴⁵ Harris, J.W., *One Blood*, p. 51

³⁴⁶ Burridge, K., *Aborigines and Christianity*, p. 24

³⁴⁷ Berndt, R.M., and Berndt, C.H., 'Body and Soul', *More than an Episode!*, *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions*, *Ethnographic and Historical Studies*, Swain, T., and Bird Rose, D. (eds), *The Australian Association of the Study of Religions*, Adelaide, p, 45

missionaries, as the colonists, did not consider the indigenous peoples to be equal to the settled colonists. An example in this would be the strong sexual morality the missionaries were preaching, but which they were not always practicing themselves, which made the missionaries hypocrites to indigenous eyes³⁴⁸. This phenomenon has often been referred to as a double standard, "one for Aboriginal Christians and one for white Christians"³⁴⁹. Murabuda Wurramarrba for instance claims;

*"I never hear of any white people being sent away from church. There are rules for Aboriginal Christians, strict rules, but white people can do what they like. What about (name withheld). He was a missionary and now he's left his wife and married someone else. But he's still a minister in a church"*³⁵⁰.

4.4.3 The arrival of the immigrants

The Second World War made the Australian government aware of the Japanese threat imposed on Australia during the war, opening their eyes to the fact that the Australian population was "too small to defend adequately such a vast continent"³⁵¹. This thread could only be overcome by increasing the Australian population. "The preference was of course for British migrants first and foremost and, with the white Australia policy still in force, any migration had to be European"³⁵². The white Australia policy, logically, concerned the idea that only white Europeans, most preferably British Europeans, were allowed to migrate into the Commonwealth of Australia. Richards claims this policy to be "a bitter catalogue of racial discrimination", arguing that Australia "was in danger of becoming a pariah, not far removed from South Africa"³⁵³.

Due to the Second World War the white Australia policy was changed from a policy of assimilation to a policy of immigration³⁵⁴. Hereto immigration restrictions were liberalized from the mid-1950s through to the 1960s "until a completely non-discriminatory policy was introduced in the mid-1970s"³⁵⁵. By this newly imposed policy migrants were allowed to enter the country, but in turn expected to adapt to the British-Australian norms and abandon their old culture³⁵⁶. With this new policy the Australian government was aiming at "the maintenance of the homogeneity of the society"³⁵⁷, which however

³⁴⁸ Harris, J.W., We wish we'd done more, p. 64

³⁴⁹ Harris, J.W., We wish we'd done more, p. 68

³⁵⁰ Harris, J.W., We wish we'd done more, p. 68

³⁵¹ Porter, M., Land of the Spirit?, The Australian Religious Experience, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1990, p. 67

³⁵² Porter, M., Land of the Spirit?, p. 67-68

³⁵³ Windschuttle, K, The White Australia policy, Macleay Press, Sydney, 2004, p. 1

³⁵⁴ Porter, M., Land of the Spirit?, p. 69

³⁵⁵ Windschuttle, K, The White Australia policy, p. 8

³⁵⁶ Porter, M., Land of the Spirit?, p. 69

³⁵⁷ Porter, M., Land of the Spirit?, p. 69

turned out to be impossible. The change of the migration policy changed “the face of the Australian society”³⁵⁸ into a multi-cultural and multi-religious society. As mentioned by Hally, the Anglo-Celtic homogeneity of the Australian population in a single generation was replaced by a poly-ethnic diversity³⁵⁹. The fast change from a ‘mono-cultural-society’, which is as a term not entirely correct, obviously, to a multi-cultural-society, as mentioned above, was ‘a rugged path’. Windschuttle discusses the term ‘racist pariah’ after Richards³⁶⁰ to refer to the land for using this policy. When this policy was changed examples of the term Richard introduced are to be found in the way the immigrants were welcomed by the Australians, as listed by Budden:

“The Chinese were subjected to slander, libel, denigration and finally violence. The Irish were considered second class citizens in what was seen to be an English colony. Each wave of new arrivals since the second world war has been met by racist humour, stereotyped comments about their eating habits, work record, the ‘ease’ with which they make money, and the [54-55] way they congregate together, and often by vicious slogans and pamphlets put out by racist organizations”³⁶¹.

4.4.4 Today’s context

As mentioned in the Prelude Third World theologies or intercultural theologies are characterised by what Parratt has called a colonial legacy as well as by anthropological poverty through the denigration of integrity, humanness and culture³⁶². Both these characteristics have influenced today’s Australian Aboriginal context, as discussed above, through the James Cook Saga and the alleged superiority of the white colonists and all of the following results as inflicted upon the Australian Aborigines.

The arrival of the settling colonists undoubtedly caused the denigration of indigenous integrity, humanness and culture, due to the alleged superiority of the colonists. The colonists treated the natives in an inhumane manner by dispossessing them of everything they owned and held to be sacred. By doing so the ‘whites’ destroyed the world of the ‘blacks’, their cultures and traditions as well as the native population itself. The destruction of the Australian Aboriginal world as imposed on the natives by the British led to a further destruction of the Australian Aboriginal world imposed upon the natives by themselves who *en masse* discovered to the ‘comforts’ of alcohol, petrol and other drugs to ease their pains and forget the hopeless situation they are in. As Rev Harris mentions;

³⁵⁸ Porter, M., Land of the Spirit?, p. 94

³⁵⁹ Hally, C., ‘Inculturation and Poly-Ethnicity’, in: The Cultured Pearl, Houston, J. (ed), Australian Readings in Cross-Cultural Theology and Mission, Victorian Council of Churches, Melbourne, 1986, p. 32

³⁶⁰ Windschuttle, K, The White Australia policy, p. 1

³⁶¹ Budden, C., Ding Bible Study in a Multicultural Society, p. 54-55

³⁶² Parratt, J., An Introduction to Third World Theologies, p. 3-5

*"It is not laziness, drunkenness or violence.
It is our hopelessness which you are really seeing"³⁶³.*

The Australian government was helped by the missionaries to assimilate the Australian Aborigines to the newly imposed 'civilized' white society. This process of assimilation was intended to rid the Australian natives of their traditions and cultures as well as of their families. This system of assimilation, mainly inflicted upon the Indigenous by means of what came to be known as the stolen generations, has caused many Aboriginal Australians to have lost all bonds and contact with traditions, their cultures, their families and thereby their identity. The children who were stolen from their families no longer knew where they came from, confusing their sense of cultural identity³⁶⁴. As well as that they still had not been accepted by the white Australians as members of the white Australian society which reinforced a negative self-image³⁶⁵, thereby leaving the Indigenous nowhere, apart from in an identity crisis.

The arrival of the European missionaries, as intended, brought knowledge of Christ to the Australian Aborigines, as mentioned above. The work of the missionaries has been 'fruitful' since "many Aboriginal people believed the gospel and accepted Christianity, and many continue to do so. There are now, as well, Aboriginal families with several generations of Christians"³⁶⁶. In fact, the amount of Australian Aboriginal Christians today is higher than the amount of non-Aboriginal Christians. Christianity has remained the biggest religion in Australia since the colonial days, with 79.3 per cent of the Australian citizens professing Christianity in 2000, according to Barrett³⁶⁷, whereas ABS claimed a total of 68 per cent of professing Christians in 2001³⁶⁸. However, as a result of the change of the immigration policy in the 1970s and the arriving migrants with various nationalities and professing various religions as a result of this change, Australia became the multi-religious and multi-cultural country it is today:

³⁶³ Harris, C., 'Rev Charles Harris', in: With One Accord, The Beginning of Aussie Awakening, Nanscakwen, A. (ed), Anzea Publishers, Sydney, 1989, p. 128-129

³⁶⁴ Pattel-Gray, A., Through Aboriginal Eyes, The Cry from the Wilderness, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1991, p. 1-2

³⁶⁵ Pattel-Gray, A., Through Aboriginal Eyes, p. 1-2

³⁶⁶ Harris, J.W., One Blood, p. 846

³⁶⁷ Barrett, D. B., Kurian, G.T., Johnson, T.M., World Christian Encyclopedia, Second Edition, A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World, Volume I: The World by Countries: Religionists, Churches, Ministries, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p. 81

³⁶⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Religious Affiliation', in: Year Book 2006 Australia Canberra, 2007, retrieved from: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/46d1bc47ac9d0c7bca256c470025ff87/bfdda1ca506d6cfaca2570de0>, on: 15-07-2009

*"In 1995, 80.1% of the population claimed to be Christian, down from 91.7% in 1971. The 4 largest denominations (Roman Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Church of Australia, and Presbyterian Church of Australia Continuing) together have 77.7 % of the nation's Christians. Australian Christianity reflects the independent spirit and immigrant heritage of the country, with 216 total denominations"*³⁶⁹.

4.5 Aboriginal identity

4.5.1 The search for self-identity

The content of a search for self-identity, according to Parratt, namely "an identity which takes seriously the traditions and cultures in which it is located, but at the same time seeks to address the social world in which Christians now live"³⁷⁰, has been mentioned repeatedly throughout this piece. This Australian Aboriginal self-identity has been influenced by the described colonial legacy and by anthropological poverty making the Australian Aborigines confused after having lost their sense of self-identity. For the Australian Indigenous population after years of struggling for survival it is of importance "to restore the collective"³⁷¹. Most of the protests of the Australian Aborigines against differing results of colonisation and exploitation have been local protests, in which an Indigenous group or a particular country or land was focusing on their own needs and not on the needs of the entire Indigenous population. The individual is not capable of assuring the survival of the Australian Aboriginal culture or Aboriginality alone, the individuals need to restore the collective again by standing "together, united and proud"³⁷² in the survival of their culture;

*"We can return to the dreaming to heal, to rest for a while and have our spirit restored, to find our place on the serpent and recover our purpose in this life. We have to trust that we will be cared for until we can walk again, taking sustenance from the tree of life that has sustained us over generations. Our ancestors watch and wait patiently for our return"*³⁷³.

³⁶⁹ Barrett, D.B., World Christian Encyclopedia , p. 82

³⁷⁰ Parratt, J., An Introduction to Third World Theologies, p. 5-6

³⁷¹ The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey: The Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal Children and Young People, Volume 2, p. xii

³⁷² The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey: The Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal Children and Young People, Volume 2, p. xii

³⁷³The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey: The Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal Children and Young People, Volume 2, p. xii

4.5.2 Standing together

A reason for the Australian Aborigines not always standing together can be explained by the fact that the indigenous groups were living on different lands, in remote areas, distanced far from other indigenous groups and therefore familiar with different local conditions. This variety in communities is also reflected in differing cultural backgrounds and in "the degree to which they have been subjected to dispossession, dispersal and the destruction of their economies and law during the colonization process"³⁷⁴.

Roberts argues that not two Australian Aboriginal communities are identical, because of their exclusive culture, their sole history and their unique locality³⁷⁵. Despite these particular differences the Aborigines do share "a common cultural heritage as well as a history of oppression by white society"³⁷⁶. When referring to a shared cultural heritage one refers to several dimensions that are shared in the experience and profession of their religions, traditions and cultures. The mentioned shared history is the colonial legacy that affected all Aboriginal Australians, however in different ways and to different extents. This shared history concerns "exclusion from white society, subjection to special laws, and a subordinate and powerless status relative to white Australians, though not within their own groups and communities"³⁷⁷.

Australian Aboriginal self-identity, known as Aboriginal identity or Aboriginality, therefore contains of at least two aspects. The first being part of the identity of or the belonging to a specific indigenous group, the other being of what is known as 'pan-Aboriginal identity', being the unity of all Australian indigenous groups. Parratt's theory is reflected in this for what he believes a search for self-identity to concern of are traditions and cultures as well as the modern social world the Australian Aborigines find themselves in, as mentioned. The traditions and cultures as mentioned by Parratt are reflected in the sense of belonging to a particular indigenous group which particularly involves the cultural uniqueness of the group. The modern social world Parratt mentions concerns of today's multicultural and multi-religious society in which the Australian Aboriginal population is only a small, discriminated and overlooked minority. The only way in which the indigenous population is able to survive and to overcome their shared history of exploitation is through pan-Aboriginality, by standing "together, united and proud"³⁷⁸.

³⁷⁴ Roberts, D., 'Self-determination and the Struggle for Equality', in: *Aboriginal Australia, An introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*, Bourke, C., Bourke, E. and Edwards, B. (eds), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, p. 213-214

³⁷⁵ Roberts, D., *Self-determination and the Struggle for Equality*, p. 213-214

³⁷⁶ Tonkinson, M.E., 'Is it in the Blood?', in: *Cultural identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific*, Linnekyn, J., and Poyer, L. (eds), University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1990, p. 192

³⁷⁷ Tonkinson, M.E., *Is it in the Blood?*, p 192

³⁷⁸ *The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey: The Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal Children and Young People*, Volume 2, p. xii

4.5.3 Pan-Aboriginal identity

Aboriginal identity thus contains of two aspects. The first aspect, pan-Aboriginal identity, will be discussed in this subparagraph, the second, which I would like to refer to as local-Aboriginal identity, will be discussed in the next. Before doing so I will briefly address Perkins' view on achieving Aboriginal self-determination and the struggle the Australian Aborigines have to go through to achieve this. Perkins claims that if the Australian Aborigines ever want to experience change from the modern context they should never stop remembering that they are the only people who are in fact able and willing to make that change³⁷⁹. Standing together as one group, proud of a shared cultural heritage, finding reconciliation in a history of oppression and exploitation³⁸⁰ is how I would like to describe what is called pan-Aboriginal identity or pan-Aboriginality. Russel describes pan-Aboriginality as "an identity embraced by persons of Indigenous background who wish to make common cause with others of the same background to get a better deal for all Indigenous peoples in the nation-state in which they reside"³⁸¹. This common cause has been addressed by Perkins, claiming that:

"There's only one person that is going to do it, and that is that black face you see in the mirror when you wake up in the morning.

*That is the person that is going to change Aboriginal affairs for the better, and for your children"*³⁸².

It needs to be emphasised that Aboriginal identity does not concern being 'black'. Aboriginal identity concerns being the 'other'³⁸³ and recognising being the other as the Aborigines were defined by the colonists. The need for Aboriginal identity evolved out of the Australian colonial legacy and the loss of their cultural heritage. Aboriginal identity therefore does not consider being black apart from being the obvious other by a different colour of skin, not having the intention of being "submerged among other dark-skinned people who have suffered through a colonial experience"³⁸⁴.

One of the features of pan-Aboriginality is the struggle for land rights. The loss of the land has been and still is one of the most important consequences of the colonial legacy. The loss of the land did not just have economical consequences for the indigenous population, by means of loss of property and food, it also had political and moral consequences for the land and the law were connected. Most important in these are the cultur-

³⁷⁹ Roberts, D., Self-determination and the Struggle for Equality, p. 233

³⁸⁰ Tonkinson, M.E., Is it in the Blood?, p 192

³⁸¹ Russel, P.H., Recognizing Aboriginal Title, p. 135

³⁸² Roberts, D., Self-determination and the Struggle for Equality, p. 233-234; ABC Education TV, 1993

³⁸³ Russel, P.H., Recognizing Aboriginal Title, p. 135

³⁸⁴ Berndt, R.M., and Berndt, C.H., The World of the first Australians, p. 529

al, spiritual and social consequences arising due to a strong spiritual connection to the land. Aboriginal cultures and traditions were lost due to the dispossession of the land which could function as “a link to an honourable and proud history”³⁸⁵. Pittoch argues that as such “‘land rights’ were essential for ‘a sense of security, dignity and self-respect’”³⁸⁶.

Aboriginal organisations, like the political organisations joined in the Aboriginal Land Rights Movement, are expressions of Aboriginal identity³⁸⁷. Bourke argues that “while they have been established with a view to meeting Aboriginal needs, they also serve to bring to the fore a distinctive Aboriginal cultural heritage and an Aboriginal presence”³⁸⁸. Wilson addressed the same notion in 1983, claiming that:

*“If you are an Aboriginal Australian [...] you are robbed of your identity and heritage! Instead of being a proud guardian of a spiritually and physically beautiful country you are captured in poverty and hopelessness!”*³⁸⁹

Whilst protesting for land rights during the late 1960s and 1970s the Aboriginal protestors found they needed a symbol, something prominent, like an outstanding banner and the idea for the Aboriginal Flag was born. The flag was designed by Thomas in 1971 who used the colors black, red and yellow: “the black represents the Aboriginal people, the red the earth and their spiritual relationship to the land, and the yellow the sun, the giver of life”³⁹⁰. Since the Tent Embassy in 1972 the Aboriginal Flag has been adopted by the Australian Aborigines as their symbol and was in 1995 proclaimed a ‘Flag of Australia’ by law. Sometimes one comes across a ‘new’ Australian Flag in which the Union Jack in the left upper corner of the Australian Flag has been replaced by the Aboriginal Flag. Thomas, however, believes the Aboriginal flag should not be treated that way, for it stands on its own³⁹¹.

The Australian Aboriginal people, related to one another through kinship, land and the Dreaming³⁹² have been protesting white ‘settlement’ from the day the settling colonists arrived. The Europeans however have been celebrating ‘white Australia’ every year on Australia Day, which as mentioned above is celebrated on January 26th. In 1938 prominent Aboriginal protestors declared Australia Day to be a Day of Mourning, protesting against the way the Indigenes had been and still were being treated by the settlers,

³⁸⁵ Attwood, B., Rights for Aborigines, p. 287

³⁸⁶ Attwood, B., Rights for Aborigines, p. 287

³⁸⁷ Bourke, E., Australia’s First Peoples, p. 41

³⁸⁸ Bourke, E., Australia’s First Peoples, p. 41

³⁸⁹ Bourke, E., Australia’s First Peoples, p. 41; Mattingley & Hampton 1988, p. 265

³⁹⁰ ‘Aboriginal Flag’ retrieved from http://www.ausflag.com.au/aboriginal_flag.htm on 15-07-2009

³⁹¹ http://www.ausflag.com.au/aboriginal_flag.htm

³⁹² Yunupingu, G., ‘Concepts of Land and Spirituality’, in: Aboriginal Spirituality, Past, Present, Future, Pattel-Gray, A. (ed), HarpersCollinsPublishers Australia Pty. Ltd., Blackburn, 1996, p. 5

which evolved into another strong symbol of Aboriginality. The Day of Mourning became an annual event which changed through the years in meaning and intention from a day of protest to a week of celebration, known as NAIDOC Week:

*"NAIDOC Week celebrations are held across Australia each July to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. NAIDOC is celebrated not only in Indigenous communities, but by Australians from all walks of life. The week is a great opportunity to participate in a range of activities and to support your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community"*³⁹³.

4.5.4 Local-Aboriginal identity

Local-Aboriginality is, as pan-Aboriginality is, a part of Aboriginal identity or Aboriginality. For some both these identities are equally important, for others, one of the two identities takes precedence³⁹⁴. Local-Aboriginality arises from the fact that the Australian Aboriginal community is not just one community, "but a myriad of different communities, with distinct histories that have rendered each a different tale of cultural retention, evolution, interaction, transformation or destruction"³⁹⁵.

After local-Aboriginal identities having been destroyed deliberately by the Australian government through systems of protection and assimilation, noticeable in indigenous people having lost all knowledge of and connection with their families, their communities and their cultures and tradition, amongst others communicated by Miller³⁹⁶. She mentions that by finding her family, she received "a new sense of identity"³⁹⁷. The recovery of family, community, tradition and culture is an important theme in local-Aboriginality. This theme was used in 1978 as the theme for that year's NAIDOC week, the theme being "Cultural Revival Is Survival"³⁹⁸, thereby supporting and stimulating Australian Aborigines to track down their families, like many stolen generation children have done before them. Several organizations offer their services to indigenous people who have up until then not been successful in the finding of their families. It is hoped that through meeting family members Aboriginal people will experience a sense of belonging again, which they had lost for so many years. This re-discovery, this reversed experience of loss comprehends what is happening today concerning Aboriginal heritage, in which local heritage is concerned as well as the heritage of the entire indigenous community. Berndt & Berndt

³⁹³ 'NAIDOC Week Celebrations' retrieved from <http://www.naidoc.org.au/NAIDOC-about/naidoc.aspx> on 19-08-2009

³⁹⁴ Tonkinson, M. E., *Is it in the Blood?*, p. 191

³⁹⁵ Pearson, N., *Guugu Yimidhirr History*, p. 138

³⁹⁶ Tonkinson, M. E., *Is it in the Blood?*, p. 191

³⁹⁷ Tonkinson, M. E., *Is it in the Blood?*, p. 191; Miller, 1985, 138 and further

³⁹⁸ <http://www.naidoc.org.au/naidocPoster/photoPosters.aspx>

use the term Aboriginal renaissance³⁹⁹ to describe this phenomenon. Practically this Aboriginal renaissance comes down to Australian Aboriginal people who have the chance to learn (more) of their traditions and cultures doing so. This would come down to being initiated, to be introduced to sacred sites, to songs and dances, to be introduced to ceremonies and rituals including those rituals and ceremonies telling and showing creation stories. By doing so spiritual linkage between Aboriginal communities and their stolen generations is being restored and Aboriginality experienced again.

4.5.5 Another example of Aboriginality

The most familiar examples of Aboriginality have been presented above; these however are, by far, not all possible examples of Aboriginality that could have been presented here, that simply would have been impossible. There are Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal organizations working on or another issue concerning Aboriginality. These groups provide information to Aboriginal Australians as well as non-Aboriginal Australians on the issues requested. Then there are organisations actually dealing with issues like alcohol abuse, drug abuse, physical abuse, mental abuse, sexual abuse and spiritual abuse. Then there are groups education people on Aboriginality, on Aboriginal traditions and cultures thereby attempting to bring the non-Aborigines closer to the Aborigines. All of these organisations attempt to involve the Australian Aborigines in today's Australian society by teaching the indigenous population as well as the non-indigenous population. By doing so people hope that the gap, amongst others where it comes to social circumstances, will be made smaller and that maybe one day Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people can live in the Commonwealth of Australia, standing "together, united and proud"⁴⁰⁰.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter the search for self-identity as well as the need for this search as the results of this search have been explored. Aboriginal identity or Aboriginality as has been shown comprises of two forms of Aboriginality, being pan-Aboriginality and local-Aboriginality. Another example of Aboriginality is the search or the need for an Australian Aboriginal intercultural theology. This example will be addressed in the next chapter.

³⁹⁹ Berndt, R.M., and Berndt, C.H., *The world of the first Australians*, p. 531

⁴⁰⁰ *The Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey: The Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal Children and Young People*, Volume 2, p. xii

5 AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL THEOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter my findings of a search for examples of an Australian Aboriginal Theology will be described. In the second paragraph of this chapter the need for an intercultural theology is clarified in which issues as superiority and inequality will be addressed. Symbols as the strangler fig and the potted plant will be entered in this paragraph as well. The necessity for an intercultural theology is, amongst others, proclaimed by Rosendale, an Aboriginal Lutheran bush minister, whose ideas will be entered in the third paragraph of this chapter. Rosendale was named to be the spiritual elder of the Rainbow Spirit Elders who are responsible for the creation of Rainbow Spirit Theology, the contents of this intercultural theology will be addressed in the fourth paragraph of this chapter. The fifth paragraph will enter the spiritual motive of incarnation, which is a motive as communicated within liberation theologies, which comprises of one of two motives; the other being the spiritual motive of exodus which will be addressed in the sixth paragraph. The seventh paragraph will enter the process of interculturalisation, the process of correlation between gospel and culture. Similarities between the Gospel and the Dreaming will be addressed in the eighth paragraph. These similarities as well as all other addressed examples of inculturation are listed in the ninth paragraph of this chapter. What is found here will then again be addressed in this chapters final conclusion.

5.2 The necessity of an intercultural theology

"Long ago all men were white; they lived in houses and food was abundant and easily obtained. Their chief was wise and powerful, and told them what was good to eat, and what to avoid. One fruit, a berry growing in clusters and called unmoi, he particularly told them not to touch.

One day some men and women saw this fruit and said, "Why should the chief prevent our eating this; it looks good, let us try it; he will never know we have eaten it." So they plucked some and ate it and found its taste good. But a man saw them and went to the chief saying, "Look at those people; they have plucked and eaten unmoi."

Then the chief got very angry and calling the culprits said, "You bad men, did I not give you plenty of good fruit to eat, was there not plenty of white fruit and green growing on the trees? Now because you have not obeyed me but have eaten black fruit (un-

moi=black) you and your children shall have black skins; you shall have no more houses and no more clothes, you shall walk about naked and you shall have hard work to find your food, which, since you like dirty food, you shall find in the ground. But I and the people who have obeyed me will go to another place.”⁴⁰¹

This story is told by the Otati clan of the eastern Cape York Peninsula. The story has been adapted by the indigenous group to provide a hold on the newly imposed multi-cultural and multi-religious society due to the arrival of the white colonists. The story also presents a clear example of the belief of cultural and religious superiority of the whites as imposed on the indigenous population. This alleged superiority imposed a feeling of inequality on the Australian Aborigines, even through the religion the missionaries preached them and was as a result believed by the indigenous population. From this belief of inequality as well as from the foreign cultural wrappings⁴⁰² in which Christianity has been presented by the missionaries the need for an Australian Aboriginal intercultural theology arose. This necessity for an intercultural theology has been referred to as a “matter of life and death”⁴⁰³, since the attitude of the colonists, including the attitude of the missionaries, caused the Australian Aborigines a “deep spiritual crisis”⁴⁰⁴ resulting from “a deep sense of shame, a lack of worth and a feeling of being lost”⁴⁰⁵. This feeling of being lost continues to exist even today for the gospel is usually still explained by means of an European expression of the message to the Aboriginal Christians.

The fact that the Christian message still not has been adapted to the Australian Aboriginal traditions and cultures makes the indigenous people suffer. The Aborigines “could not see Jesus in the European context”⁴⁰⁶ and experience being choked by the western cultural wrappings⁴⁰⁷ in which their religion is presented to them in the way a strangler fig chokes a tree. The Aboriginal Christians believe they need to cut all the roots of the strangler fig and start an Aboriginal church or an intercultural theology from the stump⁴⁰⁸. It is alleged that only then the Aboriginal Christians will be freed of “the terrible burden of believing that they need to think and live like Europeans before they can be Christians”⁴⁰⁹. It should not have to be necessary for the Aboriginal Christians “to

⁴⁰¹ Bird Rose, D., and Swain, T., ‘Introduction’, in: *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions*, Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions, Swain, T., and Bird Rose, D. (eds), The Australian Association of the Study of Religions, Adelaide, 1988, p. 1

⁴⁰² Burr ridge, K., *Aborigines and Christianity*, p. 24

⁴⁰³ *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, p. 4

⁴⁰⁴ *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, p. 4

⁴⁰⁵ *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, p. 4-5

⁴⁰⁶ Rosendale, G., ‘Aboriginal Myths and Customs: Matrix for Gospel Preaching’, in: *Aboriginal Spirituality, Past, Present, Future*, Pattel-Gray, A. (ed), HarpersCollinsPublishers Australia Pty. Ltd., Blackburn, 1996, p. 106

⁴⁰⁷ Burr ridge, K., *Aborigines and Christianity*, p. 24

⁴⁰⁸ Rosendale, *Indigenous Australia, A Dialogue About the Word Becoming Flesh in Aboriginal Churches*, Pattel-Gray, A., and Brown, J.P. (eds), WCC Publications, Geneva, 1997, p. 62

⁴⁰⁹ *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, p. 6

cross cultural barriers to convert to Christ⁴¹⁰, as mentioned by Nichols, a non-Aboriginal Anglican lecturer; by means of an intercultural theology this no longer would be necessary. By renewing the Aboriginal Christians through their teachings Rosendale argues that these teachings "can be a big shady tree for people to come in and find peace and rest"⁴¹¹.

The belief as symbolized by the strangler fig has also been symbolized through the idea of a potted plant. The western cultural wrappings⁴¹² made the Australian Christians feel as if they were locked up as a plant in a pot⁴¹³:

*"And the white man comes along and gives us artificial fertilizer, puts water on us, trying to keep us alive. That little plant gets root-bound because the pot is too small, and so it starts getting sicker; and that is the sickness in our community. We are so sick that we are dying. And the freedom that is available, not only for us but our captors, is to let us go and we will blossom"*⁴¹⁴.

5.3 George Rosendale

The necessity for an intercultural theology arising from the Australian Aboriginal context is expressed, amongst others, by Rosendale. Rosendale is an Aboriginal Lutheran pastor, a bush minister and lecturer. Rosendale, when he was sent out as a missionary, he went as, what he called "a white missionary – a black man in a white man's coat"⁴¹⁵. Whilst telling his fellow Aborigines stories about Jesus, Rosendale believed the Aborigines understood. Later he found that he had been "punching air most of the time"⁴¹⁶. To change this he decided to sit down with the old people, whereupon he was initiated and learned from them. The stories he knew from the Bible were stories the Aborigines told as well and from them it was he learned the deep meanings of these stories.

Rosendale believes that if he had not gone back to his ancestors he would have been lost⁴¹⁷. It is for this reason that he believes that Aborigines need to go back to their

⁴¹⁰ Nichols, T., 'Psalms and Hymns and Didgeridoos, Aboriginal Christian Leadership and White Pressure', in: *The Cultured Pearl, Australian Readings in Cross-Cultural Theology and Mission*, Houston, J. (ed), Victorian Council of Churches, Melbourne, 1986, p. 260

⁴¹¹ Rosendale, *Indigenous Australia*, p. 62

⁴¹² Burridge, K., *Aborigines and Christianity*, p. 24

⁴¹³ *Indigenous Australia*, p. 60

⁴¹⁴ *Indigenous Australia*, p. 60

⁴¹⁵ Rosendale, G., *Indigenous Australia*, p. 10

⁴¹⁶ Rosendale, G., *Day One "Yesterday": Speeches and Yarnin'*, in: *Gathering of the Voices, Conference Book, National Ecumenical Gathering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 7-9 June 2001*, Indigenous Ministries Unit, Indooroopilly, 2002, p. 24

⁴¹⁷ Rosendale, G., *Indigenous Australia*, p. 32

"cultural roots and build from them"⁴¹⁸. Rosendale calls for the reclaiming, renewal and rebuilding of Aboriginal cultural roots⁴¹⁹; for culture is the Aboriginal way of living and through this a new way to present Christ must be found. Culture is also the way in which the Aborigines can be united again and they must be united again, according to Rosendale, for "many of our people are no longer walking on their own land; we are refugees in our own country. Many are living far from their traditional lands; many have no land and have taken a position in between whites and Aborigines. They have no theology. They do not know who they are. They are surviving between two cultures and two spiritualities. Denominations have divided us further. We need something to bind us together as one Aboriginal people"⁴²⁰. Rosendale claims that when the Aborigines do not go back to their culture and will not be obedient to their own laws they will die like the bees in the following creation story:

"One day a colony of native bees decided to move to an island. They moved from their homeland until they came to the tip of the mainland, where they decided to camp under a big paper bark tree. In that tree, an osprey had his home. He heard the bees talking about crossing to the island. He said to them, "You cannot go to that island. This channel is patrolled by a giant sea ray. He is dangerous. He will destroy you. He is terrible."

"Oh well, we will fly high above the water."

"No, please, don't try. He will kill you. Don't go."

But they went away. And when they were halfway across, the sea ray saw them. With a flap of his wings, he hit the water, and the spray knocked some of the bees down and they were drowned. Other flew back to the mainland. The osprey felt so sad and said, "I told you he is bad and terrible."

"We still want to go over, but now we are frightened."

"Do not worry, I will help you, but you must trust me. I will hide you in my feathers."

So the bees got into the osprey's feathers, and he took them across to the other side and to this day they are there on the island"⁴²¹.

Rosendale was named the spiritual elder of the Rainbow Spirit Elders. The Rainbow Spirit Elders are a group of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Christians who are responsible for the creation of what they called 'Rainbow Spirit Theology' of which it's content will be addressed in the next paragraph. For Rosendale the printing of Rainbow Spirit Theology has fulfilled his goal in life, namely "to awake the Churches to understand

⁴¹⁸ Rosendale, G., Indigenous Australia, p. 32

⁴¹⁹ Rosendale, G., Indigenous Australia, p. 32

⁴²⁰ Rosendale, G., Indigenous Australia, p. 46

⁴²¹ Rosendale, G., Indigenous Australia, p. 15-16

and accept that we Aborigines are a unique part of the Churches in Australia. We have our own culture and our own religion and understanding of God and creation⁴²².

5.4 Rainbow Spirit Theology

Rainbow Spirit Theology has been created by both Aboriginal as non-Aboriginal Christians with “the aim of integrating the traditions of Aboriginal culture with the traditions of Christianity⁴²³. The theology was developed during workshops in 1994 and 1995 by Rosendale, Coolburra, Corowa, Law, Leftwich and Archie. The book on the intercultural theology was first published in 1997 after which it has been reprinted several times. Rainbow Spirit Theology is the only true intercultural theology I have been able to find during my search. Other examples and ideas of inculturation are described in the upcoming paragraphs.

Rainbow Spirit Theology originates from the belief that God has been speaking through the culture of the Aborigines to the Aborigines from the first moment of creation. The Rainbow Spirit Elders chose the Rainbow Spirit, also known as the Rainbow Serpent, as a symbol for this intercultural theology, because it symbolizes life and rebirth. The snake is one of the supernatural beings that shaped the earth and left his marks for the Aboriginal eye to see and is often used as a symbol for Jesus Christ as well, particularly by Rosendale. The Rainbow Spirit is “a symbol of the ancient mystery of our culture and the promise of a new beginning⁴²⁴.

Rainbow Spirit Theology functions with the model of the directions of the land, North, East, South and West. The Northern, Eastern and Southern directions come together in the Rainbow Spirit flowing into the fourth direction, the West⁴²⁵. The Southern stream represents the Aboriginal culture and is represented by the emu, the bird known for tracking and searching the land as the Aborigines are now tracking and searching the land for remains of their traditions and cultures⁴²⁶. The Northern stream represents “the ancient wisdom of Christians who came to our land⁴²⁷ and is symbolized by a sheep, for it were the Europeans who brought sheep to Australia and sheep is what Christians are expected to be⁴²⁸, following the Shepherd. Both the Bible and the Church influence this stream⁴²⁹. The Eastern stream represents Christ as well as the message He proclaimed,

⁴²² Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. XIII

⁴²³ Rainbow Spirit Theology, cover

⁴²⁴ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 14

⁴²⁵ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 15

⁴²⁶ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 16-19

⁴²⁷ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 19

⁴²⁸ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 19-20

⁴²⁹ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 20-21

the Gospel⁴³⁰. This stream was chosen for the Gospel message of Christ for "direction is determined by the movement of the sun across the sky. We determine our bearings from the East, from the sunrise"⁴³¹. The kookaburra was chosen to symbolize what is good news for the Aborigines, for it is this bird that announces the coming of the sun, the coming of a new day⁴³². From the East the sun moves to the West, this direction represents "hope for the future and strength for the people who live this theology to affirm their Aboriginality as Christian"⁴³³. Rainbow Spirit Theology is seen by the Rainbow Spirit Elders as "a possible future, a new direction for Christian Aboriginal people"⁴³⁴. This future, this new direction is symbolized by the kangaroo, for the kangaroo always jumps forward and never backwards⁴³⁵.

Within Rainbow Spirit Theology the land is of special importance. For it is the land that has been shaped by the Rainbow Spirit, who still is present in the land. The land was entrusted by the Rainbow Spirit or the Creator to the people, who feel strongly connected with the land and therefore connected with the Creator Spirit⁴³⁶. Due to the colonial history of dispossession the Aborigines, the land and the Creator Spirit are crying. They are suffering from the bond that has been minimized, because the land has been desecrated and the Aborigines are no longer able to fulfill their responsibilities, because they were dispossessed or no longer know to what part of the land they belong, because they were taken from their land⁴³⁷.

The Rainbow Spirit Elders believe in an Aboriginal Jesus, in a Jesus that camped among them as a human being. "By camping among us as a human being in a form common to all of us, God has become one of us. As one of us, Christ is in our camp, in our land, and is part of our culture"⁴³⁸. It is Christ who understands the suffering of the people and the suffering of the land and brings strength again, strength "to confront the Western-oriented church with the cry of God's people throughout history: 'Let my people go!'"⁴³⁹.

5.5 The spiritual motive of incarnation

Apart from Rainbow Spirit Theology there have been some other ideas for the Australian Aborigines to blossom again. To do so, it is believed that Christ has to be

⁴³⁰ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 20-24

⁴³¹ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 21-22

⁴³² Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 22-23

⁴³³ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 24

⁴³⁴ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 24

⁴³⁵ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 25

⁴³⁶ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 29-41

⁴³⁷ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 42-54

⁴³⁸ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 60

⁴³⁹ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 74

planted in fertile Aboriginal Australian soil⁴⁴⁰. This fertile soil contains of today's context which has to function as the starting point for an intercultural theology, as discussed by Parratt⁴⁴¹. The theological ground for which is "the fact that the Son of God was incarnated within a specific human history and culture, through which grace has been made available to all"⁴⁴². Through this idea of conceptuality Christ can be believed to be an Australian Aboriginal. The idea of a black Jesus is an example of what is known as a spiritual motive of incarnation, amongst others communicated by Robb:

*"What colour is Jesus?
I wonder all the time
is he really a white man
dressed in robes so fine.
What colour is Jesus?
Paintings reveal him as a blond Jew
But if we were to be logical
we would know this is just not true.
What colour is Jesus?
This fact needs to be set right
can anybody answer me
or prove that he really was 'white'.
What colour is Jesus?
Did he suffer because he's black
Was his oppression and life sentence
part of a racist attack?
What colour is Jesus?
Biblically what is the fact?
Do we surrender our thoughts to majority
by not considering that indeed he was 'black?'"⁴⁴³*

The spiritual motive of incarnation concerns the idea that since Christ incarnated within "a specific human history and culture"⁴⁴⁴ and He could have incarnated in any human history and culture. The Australian Aborigines find comfort in the belief that Christ is one of them, arguing that "Christ is in our camp, in our land, and is part of our cul-

⁴⁴⁰ Gondarra, D., *Let My People Go*, p. 21

⁴⁴¹ Parratt, J., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, p. 8

⁴⁴² Parratt, J., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, p. 8

⁴⁴³ Robb, L., 'A Homeless Spirit', in: *Aboriginal Spirituality, Past, Present, Future*, Pattel-Gray, A. (ed), HarpersCollinsPublishers Australia Pty. Ltd., Blackburn, 1996, p. 119

⁴⁴⁴ Parratt, J., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, p. 8

ture⁴⁴⁵. The Gospel tells the story of the Son of God being incarnated as a Jew in Galilee during the Roman oppression. Budden argues that this image is comparable to the situation of the Australian Aborigines today, for both the Galileans as the Australian Aborigines are people struggling to “overcome multiple rejection”⁴⁴⁶.

The knowledge of Christ was brought to the Australian Aborigines by the missionaries. Rosendale claims that, as God has been, “Christ has been in our culture for thousands of years, perhaps not revealed as we see it in the New Testament, but he was there”⁴⁴⁷. The only way to find Him now is through their own traditions and cultures, he believes. As for Rosendale Christ for Pattel-Gray comes alive through traditional ceremonies, claiming that that is where Jesus is⁴⁴⁸, “naked, out of the wrappings of Westernism and dancing in our ceremonies”⁴⁴⁹. By means of finding Christ Australian Aboriginal life will be whole, for it is Jesus who completes the lives of the Christian Aborigines⁴⁵⁰. The Aboriginal Christians had been missing Jesus all this time, as the kangaroo had been missing his tail. Today, the Christians Aborigines have been completed, like the kangaroo in the following story:

“He (the kangaroo) was very proud and handsome. Being proud, no one liked him. That broke him and made him sad. One day he said, “I am not going to live here anymore. No one loves me; no one cares for me.” He went off along the beach with camping gear and looked out to sea where he saw something that looked like a crocodile. He thought, “It cannot be a crocodile. It would be moving.” He waited, and by and by it came shore. It was a piece of driftwood. The kangaroo thought, “Can I use this?” He tied it onto his head. But as he travelled on, it got caught in the scrub, and besides it made a hole in his head. That was no good, so he took it off. Then he put it on his backside and made a tail with it. That gave him balance and speed and was just right”⁴⁵¹.

In the previous chapters multiple examples of rejection, rejection as argued by Budden as mentioned above, have been introduced, one of these being the alleged racial superiority of the whites. This belief imposed a feeling of worthlessness on the blacks in comparison to the ‘superior’ whites. The belief that black skin is of less worth than white skin, for instance, was communicated by stories as the one reproduced in the beginning of this chapter, in which being black was explained as a punishment. It made the Aboriginal Australians ashamed of being black. God however created men in his image, as part

⁴⁴⁵ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 60

⁴⁴⁶ Budden, C., *Doing Bible Study in a Multicultural Society*, p. 59

⁴⁴⁷ Rosendale, *Indigenous Australia*, p. 16

⁴⁴⁸ Pattel-Gray, A., *Indigenous Australia*, p. 26

⁴⁴⁹ Pattel-Gray, A., *Indigenous Australia*, p. 26

⁴⁵⁰ Rosendale, G., *Indigenous Australia*, p. 34

⁴⁵¹ Rosendale, G., *Indigenous Australia*, p. 34

of God's creation⁴⁵², as described in Genesis 1:27. This message has been communicated in the story of the black and the white cockatoos:

"The cockatoos were brothers who lived long ago. When they became men, the black cockatoo realized he was different. He did not like it. He became very angry with his father because he made him black. He decided to change the way things were. One day he was found by his brother the white cockatoo, sitting under a tree, very upset and angry. 'What is the matter with you, my brother?' he asked.

'I'm very angry with my father,' he answered. 'He made you white and he made me black. I don't like it. I'm going to change my colour.'

He went to his uncle who lived over the range, He asked him for honey and clay. His uncle gave him what he wanted. He took the clay and made it into powder; then he put the honey all over himself and sprinkled the powdered clay over the honey. He looked at himself and said: 'Now I am like my brother.'

His grandfather, the storm bird, was very angry with the foolish brother. He called the North wind to bring rain. The monsoons came, and it rained and rained and rained, and washed all the clay and honey away.

Later, his brother found him again sitting under the tree, angry, sad and sorry for himself. He said, 'My brother, you did a foolish thing to hurt our father. We are his sons. He made both of us and he loves us. Come on, be happy! Our father loves you just as much as he loves me. We both belong to him. Be happy and rejoice.'

To this day the black cockatoos are happy. They even sing while flying and eating".⁴⁵³

It shows that there are stories in which the experience of 'being black' is being addressed. Despite stories like the story of the cockatoos and 'onmoi' as well as examples of inculturation through, for example, thinking of Jesus as a black Jesus, the Australian Aborigines do not consider themselves to be black, as mentioned above. The Australian Aborigines do not want to be counted as one of the black peoples suffering from (the results) of a colonial legacy, for being black does not make an Aborigine Aboriginal. There has however been a political Aboriginal organization who called themselves the Black Panthers after the Black Panthers in the United States of America. Despite of the way in which the American Panthers were fighting for their cause to which these young Aborigines were drawn, they soon discovered they were not fighting for the same cause which stopped the Panthers.

⁴⁵² Pattel-Gray, A., *Indigenous Australia*, p. 49

⁴⁵³ Rosendale, G., *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, p. 71-72

5.6 The spiritual motive of exodus

Parratt mentions that “the fact that the Son of God was incarnated within a specific human history and culture, through which grace has been made available to all”⁴⁵⁴ is the theological ground for intercultural theology. This spiritual motive of incarnation is a motive explicitly found in liberation theology, an example of an intercultural theology that originated in Latin-America. A particular liberation theology contains one of two possible spiritual motives, one of these being ‘incarnation’, the other ‘exodus’.

The spiritual motive of exodus refers to the Bible story in which the people of Israel are led out of Egypt and slavery by God. The motive concerns the idea of a people trying to find their way as in a continuing exodus like the people of Israel were trying to accomplish “deliverance from slavery in Egypt”⁴⁵⁵ and were then saved by God. His act of salvation is focused in mercy on the victims of his broken creation. “Let the broken victims go free”⁴⁵⁶. The motive does not really focus on liberation itself, it focuses on the suffering and pain the people will have to suffer whilst finding their way to the Promised Land. The Promised Land can become reality for generations to come, this possible reality can only be realized by today’s people. The experience of brokenness, the feelings of pain and suffering are for this reason particularly addressed in the spiritual motive of exodus. In the Australian Aboriginal context the motive of exodus has mainly been argued by Gondarra, an Aboriginal United Church minister and lecturer, through what is referred to as “the cry of God’s people throughout history: ‘Let my people go!’”⁴⁵⁷ or “You give me freedom to decide for myself”⁴⁵⁸.

The origins of the Australian Aboriginal hurting by experiencing feelings of brokenness, suffering and pain, as have been mentioned above, concern spiritual losses. Rosendale goes into this hurt by comparing the hurt to the hurting of a sore finger; you know when you have a sore finger and you know you can fix this hurting by means of ointment and bandage⁴⁵⁹. The hurting discussed here, however, is a hurt that is experienced deep down, that can only be touched and fixed by Jesus⁴⁶⁰, which is a spiritual motive of incarnation. Jesus is capable of touching the paining for He is able to identify with the Australian Aborigines:

⁴⁵⁴ Parratt, J., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, p. 8

⁴⁵⁵ Gondarra, D., ‘Overcoming the Captivities Western Church Context’, in: *The Cultured Pearl*, Houston, J. (ed), Australian Readings in Cross-Cultural Theology and Mission, Victorian Council of Churches, Melbourne, 1986, p. 180

⁴⁵⁶ Gondarra, D., *Overcoming the Captivities Western Church Context*, p. 181

⁴⁵⁷ *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, p. 74

⁴⁵⁸ Gondarra, D., *Let My People Go*, p. 25

⁴⁵⁹ Rosendale, G., *Day One “Yesterday”*: Speeches and Yarnin’, in: *Gathering of the Voices*, Conference Book, National Ecumenical Gathering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 7-9 June 2001, Indigenous Ministries Unit, Indooroopilly, 2002, p. 23

⁴⁶⁰ Rosendale, G., *Day One “Yesterday”*: Speeches and Yarnin’, p. 23

"This Jesus still identifies with us. Don't you think that's wonderful? Don't you think that should give us some upliftedness. To know that this great Jesus, than sinless one, identifying himself with a person like me!"⁴⁶¹

The Australian Aborigines suffer from the loss of their traditions, cultures and the broken linkage between the Indigenes and their land. This suffering is not only experienced by the people, but by the land and by God as well:

"The Creator Spirit is crying because the deep spiritual bonds with the land and its people have been broken. The land is crying because it is slowly dying without this bond of spiritual life. The people are crying because they long for a restoration of that deep spiritual bond with the Creator Spirit and the land."⁴⁶²

5.7 Inculturation

The process of inculturation has been described by Crollius as "the integration of the Christian experience of a local church into the culture of its people, in such a way that the experience not only expresses itself in elements of this culture but becomes a force that animates, orients and innovates this culture so as to create a new unity and communion, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the church universal"⁴⁶³. This, more simply put, implies a process of correlation between gospel and, in this case, Australian Aboriginal culture. Inculturation as a process starts when gospel and culture meet, when the story is told and heard.

The Christian message was hard to embrace and understand for the Australian Aborigines, as mentioned above, for the gospel was preached in foreign cultural wrappings. These foreign cultural wrappings have to be disposed of by the Christian Aborigines for the gospel to really touch their hearts. The western cultural cloth put on on Jesus by the European missionaries has to be taken off of Him for Him to come alive dancing naked in Australian Aboriginal ceremonies⁴⁶⁴, as visualized by Pattel-Gray, and to be truly understood by the Aboriginal Christians. "There is no culture in the world which

⁴⁶¹ Rosendale, G., Day One "Yesterday": Speeches and Yarnin', p. 25

⁴⁶² Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 42

⁴⁶³ Hally, C., Inculturation and Poly-Ethnicity, p. 35; Crollius, R., What's so new about inculturation? In Gregorianum, No. 57, 1978, p. 735

⁴⁶⁴ Pattel-Gray, A., Indigenous Australia, p. 26

cannot be Christianized"⁴⁶⁵, as has been asserted by King. Since "all cultures can be used by God"⁴⁶⁶ as a means to express faith through, the Christian Aborigines, need

"a recognition that God has been with the Aboriginal people before they knew Christ and that their culture is as valid a vehicle for the Holy Spirit as any culture".⁴⁶⁷

It is proclaimed that God has been living with the Australian Aborigines since creation and used their culture, their living culture⁴⁶⁸, to speak to them. It was God who gave the Australian Aborigines the Dreaming⁴⁶⁹ and who was there with them since time immemorial. The following prayer as led by Harris, an Aboriginal reverend of the Uniting Church, is a product of the process of inculturation, an expression of Christian faith through Aboriginal culture, addressing faith and the peoples' strength. The prayer functioned as a start of the marches on Australia Day 1988 as a protest against the 'white' celebrations. To me personally, it has been one of the most powerful examples of Australian Aboriginal inculturation, as well as of power and strength through faith, I came across whilst doing research:

"God of the Dreamtime, you who are with us for these 40,000 years or more before 1788, you who gave us our ceremonies, and the law, and our stories, and our sacred sites, you who gave us our Dreaming, you who gave us our this land; you were with us then; you are with us now. You march with us today as we march through the streets of Sydney in the march for freedom, justice and hope.

You were with us through the last 200 years of onslaught, of terrorism, and of apartheid that has been administered to our people in this land. And you have helped us and enabled us to survive through the odds that were against us.

We pray that you will avenge your people, the Aboriginal and Islander people. Show to the world, today, the evil deeds of those who came and robbed us, raped our land and our people, murdered and lied to our people. Expose them to the world.

Look and see the chains of oppression that keep your people, the Aboriginal and Islander people, in bondage. Hear the cry, and the call, and the plea for justice to be done in this

⁴⁶⁵ Trompf, G.W., 'The Gospel and Culture : A non-Aboriginal perspective', in: Martung Upah, Black and White Australians seeking Partnership, Pattel-Gray, A. (ed), HarperCollinsPublishers Pty. Ltd., Blackburn, 1996, p. 176

⁴⁶⁶ Williamson, S., 'From mission to church', in: Martung Upah, Black and White Australians seeking Partnership, Pattel-Gray, A. (ed), HarperCollinsPublishers Pty. Ltd., Blackburn, 1996, p. 82

⁴⁶⁷ Williamson, S., From mission to church, p. 82

⁴⁶⁸ Gondarra, D., 'Aboriginal Spirituality and the Gospel', in: Aboriginal Spirituality, Past, Present, Future, Pattel-Gray, A. (ed), HarpersCollinsPublishers Australia Pty. Ltd., Blackburn, 1996, p. 43

⁴⁶⁹ Porter, M., Land of the Spirit?, p. 92-93

land. Show the people that you are the God of justice and, Lord be praised, the God of the Dreamtime.

*Bring freedom, bring justice, and bring hope*⁴⁷⁰.

5.8 Similarities between the Gospel and the Dreaming

Many, particularly Aboriginal, theologians have gone in search for similarities between stories from the Gospel and the Dreaming. Some of these theologians were attempting to show the 'white' Christians that Christian values are also found in Aboriginal stories thereby trying to eliminate the western belief that Aboriginal spirituality as well as Aboriginal beliefs and cultures are primitive, evil or demonic. Others have been trying to unwrap the Gospel of its cultural wrappings attempting by comparing them to values and symbols known to the Aborigines, originating from their own cultures and believes, to make the Aborigines embrace the gospel and understand the stories better.

An example of this is the idea of the Rainbow Spirit as the Creator. The Rainbow Spirit was the supernatural being that gave life "to all our ancestors and all the creatures – the trees, plants, animals and birds – and to the landscape itself"⁴⁷¹. The actions of the Rainbow Spirit were quite similar to the actions of the Creator God in Genesis. The Rainbow Spirit is also the supernatural being involved in the ceremonies performed at initiation rites. It is through the Rainbow Spirit that the children die to their childhood and are reborn again as adults, ready to learn of what is sacred in this world.

The Rainbow Spirit as a deity is known in many Aboriginal communities as the creating supernatural being. There are also stories known of another god, who is known by, amongst others, the name of Djankawu or Baiame, who revealed himself on earth to men as a man and to women as a woman, being the thought–power of Baiame, which implies that it was not the actual Baiame. This Man, and sometimes Woman, was the incarnated Word of God. "He was seen as a divine person but, at the same time, he communicated as a human. He taught our people how to live a life of harmony and humility. He taught them that all living creatures are their friends and that they must care for them"⁴⁷². The resemblance between Baiame and Jesus is not easily missed. Then again I have also come across a story in which also a resemblance between Baiame and Adam can easily be discovered. The transition from the first Adam, Adam himself to the second Adam, as Jesus has been named by some, is therefore quite interesting; since it

⁴⁷⁰ Hemming, S., 'Changing History: New Images of Aboriginal History', in: *Aboriginal Australia, An Introductory Reader in Aboriginal Studies*, Bourke, C., Bourke, E. & Edwards, B. (eds), University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994, p. 21-22; Davis et al., 1990, p. 332

⁴⁷¹ *Rainbow Spirit Theology*, p. 14

⁴⁷² Gondarra, D., *Aboriginal Spirituality and the Gospel*, p. 44

is a totally different subject the connection between Adam and Jesus will not be discussed here, I would however like to show a part of the story I was referring to:

"As he walked through the earth, the Man, that was the thought–power of Baiame was lonely. Strange feelings surged through him, undiscovered desires. He needed a companion to share the wonder of the world, and he sought for one fruitlessly. He went to Kangaroo and Wombat, Snake and Lizard, Bird and Flying Fox, Fish and Eel, Insect and Earthworm, but in vain. He was kin to them because they loved the Great Spirit, but there was only a little part of Baiame’s mind in each of them, and it was not enough to satisfy the hunger of Man’s spirit.

He turned to trees, and to grasses, and to flowers. Their beauty intoxicated him, but they appealed only to his senses, for the eternal spirit of Baiame had not been conferred on them. The flaming flowers of the waratah, the golden glory of the wattle, the scented leaves and grey bark of the eucalyptus were a delight to eyes and nose. He drew deep breaths of fresh perfume, but still his soul was not at rest.

In the evening he went to sleep near a grass yacca tree. All night he was troubled with strange dreams, in which his desires seemed to be on the point of fruition. When he woke again he found that Yhi [the sun-goddess] had thrown her rays across the plain. They seemed to be concentrated on the tall flower stalk of the yacca tree. He gazed at it for a long while, until he was roused by the sound of heavy breathing. He looked round and was astonished to see that the whole animal creation had gathered together on the plain. In the air was a feeling of expectancy.

He looked back at the tree. It was changing. The flower stalk grew shorter and rounder. Limbs began to form, and with a shock Man realized that the tree was changing into a two-legged creature like himself.

But there was a difference. The limbs were smooth and soft, rounded breasts swelled before his eyes, there was a proud tilt to the shapely head. Man held out his hands to Woman. She clasped them and stepped gracefully across the grassy base of the tree. Men held her in his arms and together they surveyed the waiting world. The animals danced with delight and then ran off into the distance, satisfied that the loneliness of Man was ended"⁴⁷³.

5.9 Australian Aboriginal Intercultural Theology?

An intercultural theology arises from a context. The Australian Aboriginal context can be defined by the evident consequences of a colonial legacy and a denigration of in-

⁴⁷³ Reed, A.W., *Aboriginal Stories*, Reed New Holland, Frenchs Forest, 2006, p. 20

tegrity, humanness and culture or anthropological poverty, after Parratt's theory⁴⁷⁴. From these phenomena the necessity for an intercultural theology arises. The Rainbow Spirit Elders, responsible for the concept of Rainbow Spirit Theology, referred to this necessity as a "matter of life and death"⁴⁷⁵. Some such an intercultural theology needs to address the context, which supposedly is what has defined the search for self-identity which supposedly lies at the root of the particular intercultural theology. One true theology I have found, being Rainbow Spirit Theology as has been addressed in this chapter.

During the time I was able to spend on my research whilst in Australia I found it hard to find examples of current ideas, developments, let alone breakthroughs concerning an Aboriginal search for self-identity or of an Aboriginal intercultural theology. The literature I have used here, as you might have noticed, cannot be referred to as recent, for all the books concerning Aboriginal theology, as I have used in this chapter, are at least ten years old. Others may disagree on this, for ten years within the world of theology may not be a long time, however ten years ago, for example, Howard was not willing to apologize for the stolen generations and nationwide supported for this, whereas today the apologies in fact have been made and ask for following action, what I am saying is that the context has changed. The fact that the books are not that recent does not mean that the ideas reflected in the books are not interesting, but it does however mean that the books are addressing a dated context whilst the context functions as the starting point of a probable intercultural theology. The fact that no new books have been written on the subject can also show a lack of enthusiasm or interest in the matter. I have entered this before, when arguing that the Aborigines do not want or need a theology.

Information on any examples of a search for Aboriginal self-identity has been hard to find, just as it was hard to come across information concerning a probable result of a search for self-identity being an intercultural theology. The things I did find were the things that made me come to Australia again in the first place, undeniable examples of discrimination, examples of Australian Aborigines feeling lost, examples of continuing exploitation, et cetera.

In Darwin I visited several churches hoping to find examples of Aboriginal cooperation in the services, unfortunately I did not come across any in the churches I visited in the city centre. There are however Aboriginal congregations. These congregations' clergy are experiencing difficult times, for they have no role models⁴⁷⁶, no examples to following. Harris enters the issue by claiming that;

⁴⁷⁴ Parratt, J., *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*, p. 3-6

⁴⁷⁵ Rainbow Spirit Theology, p. 4

⁴⁷⁶ Harris, J.W., *We wish we'd done more*, p. 82

“.just as the Aboriginal communities are close to destroying themselves with alcohol, petrol-sniffing, violence and materialism, Aboriginal people are being ordained and asked to minister in contexts where the pressures are immense and impact on their own families.”⁴⁷⁷.

Finally, the colonial missionary history needs to be addressed. To speak to more Aborigines the churches have to open their hearts to the suffering of the Aborigines, recognize their mistakes and apologize for the pain and suffering that was caused. The churches first took the land of the Indigenes and then took their children, what is needed is a church of healing:

“Let Christ be in a centre with truth. It’ll always have God at the campfire”⁴⁷⁸.

5.10 Conclusion

In this chapter we have been searching for examples of an Australian Aboriginal Theology. The one and foremost example addressed is Rainbow Spirit Theology which focuses on the land and on Jesus as an Aboriginal Jesus who brings understanding and strength. Rosendale has been paid special attention to, because of his experiences as a bush minister and was named the spiritual elder of the Rainbow Spirit Elders responsible for the creation of Rainbow Spirit Theology. Rosendale argues for the need for the Aborigines to unite through a shared Aboriginal identity and the need to go back to the traditions and cultures. Other ideas which have been addressed and explained in this chapter are the symbols of the strangler fig and the potted plant. We have addressed incarnation, in which Jesus can be incarnated as a black Jesus or an Aboriginal Jesus. Exocus has been addressed, the spiritual motive as discussed has mainly been proclaimed by Gondarra. In this chapter it has been shown that several both Aboriginal as non-Aboriginal theologians have been focusing on the need for an intercultural theology arising from the Australian Aboriginal context. We have also seen that these ideas have not been developed any further in the last ten years and a recent intercultural theology I have not been able to find during my research.

⁴⁷⁷ Harris, J.W., We wish we’d done more, p. 82

⁴⁷⁸ Gilbert, K., God at the Campfire and that Christ Fella, p. 61

6 CONCLUSION

This piece originated from a feeling of unbelief and shock after learning of the situation of the Australian Aboriginal population. With many Australian Aborigines having been converted to Christianity I went in search of an intercultural theology deriving from the Australian context. The question I was intending to answer was: 'Does Australian Aboriginal Theology exist and if so, what does it consist of?'. Parratt's theory led me from historical, political and social circumstances to a search for self-identity of which a possible intercultural theology, since deriving from the context, would be an example. Ideas for an intercultural theology I have come across, thanks to people like Pattel-Gray, Gondarra and Rosendale. A new direction for the Aborigines could be Rainbow Spirit Theology we one true intercultural theology I have come across. Most of the ideas I have come across, however, are no longer modern or recent ideas; finding their origin over a decade ago. An intercultural theology arises from the context, the context is primary for the theological task. Without addressing this modern context one cannot speak of an intercultural theology. Besides that, the fact that there are no new recent books on the theological ideas addressed in the books I have read shows me that these books either have not been picked up or have been put aside. This leaves me to answer my research question 'Does Australian Aboriginal Theology exist and if so, what does it consist of?' to which I can only answer that Australian Aboriginal Theology does not exist and that I do not expect Australian Aboriginal Theology to develop soon. After reviewing this piece I believe and hope that the Australian indigenous population will find strength to struggle for survival through Aboriginality, for I believe the Australian Aborigines find more strength in standing together proud through means of a shared Aboriginal identity.

7 SAMENVATTING

In 2006 vertrok ik naar Australië. Hetgeen ik daar ervaren heb heeft mij er toe gezet de Master 'Godsdienst in de Moderne Wereld' te volgen, mij daarin met name te richten op interculturele theologie en nu mijn scriptie te schrijven over Australian Aboriginal Theology. In dit onderzoek stond de vraag 'Bestaat Australian Aboriginal Theology en zo ja, waar bestaat het uit?' centraal. Om een antwoord te kunnen geven op deze vraag heb ik de theorie van Parratt als frame gebruikt. Parratt geeft aan dat om het ontstaan van een bepaalde interculturele theologie te kunnen begrijpen men zich dient te verdiepen in de historische omstandigheden, de politieke omstandigheden en de sociale omstandigheden waarbinnen de theologie ontstaat. Binnen deze omstandigheden liggen twee factoren ten grondslag aan de inhoud van de omstandigheden, namelijk een 'colonial legacy' en 'anthropological poverty'. In het geval van de Australische Aboriginals wordt de koloniale erfenis met name gekenmerkt door het verlies van het land, waarmee zij een sterke spirituele en sociale band ervaren. De antropologische armoede, waarmee het denigreren van de menselijkheid en de cultuur van de Aborigines beoogd wordt, wordt voornamelijk gekenmerkt door het in eerste instantie niet willen zien van de 'zwarten' door de 'blanken', daar waar de kolonisten het gevoel hadden superieur te zijn aan de inheemse bevolking. Dit gevoel van superioriteit uitte zich later in wetten, waardoor men poogde de Aborigines aan de binnenkant 'blank' te maken, opdat ze zich aan zouden kunnen passen aan de nieuwe samenleving. Dit systeem van assimilatie functioneerde aan de hand van het wegnemen van kinderen bij hun familie, waarna alle banden met de tradities en culturen verbroken werden, met als gevolg dat de 'gestolen kinderen' later het gevoel hadden dat er hun stuk identiteit ontnomen was. Deze ontnomen identiteit wordt sterk zichtbaar in de huidige zwakke sociale omstandigheden van de Aborigines. De Aborigines hebben elkaar nodig om hieruit te komen en zullen moeten verbinden. Daarom is het van belang op zoek te gaan naar de eigen Aboriginal-identiteit, hiertoe dienen de Aborigines zich zowel te richten op hun tradities en culturen alsmede op de huidige wereld waarin ze leven. Uit deze zoektocht komt een lokale identiteit naar voren en een gedeelde identiteit die samen aboriginal identity vormen, waardoor men in staat is trots samen sterk te staan. Doorgenomen theologische literatuur lijkt voornamelijk een vorm van bevrijdingstheologie te beslaan, gekleurd door de eigen identiteit. Deze boeken waren verouderd, terwijl een interculturele theologie dient voort te komen uit de moderne context. Waaruit ik op maak dat de boeken die ooit geschreven met een interculturele theologie als doel niet in enthousiasme ontvangen zijn door de Aboriginals, aangezien er ook geen verdere overdenkingen te vinden zijn. Dit brengt mij tot de conclusie dat er geen interculturele theologie bestaat in de huidige

Australian Aboriginal context, ondanks interessante pogingen van personen als Pattel-Gray, Gondarra en Rosendale.

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