

**'Indigenous' sense of place and community in a  
small island: Norfolk Island and the Pitcairn-  
descendant population**

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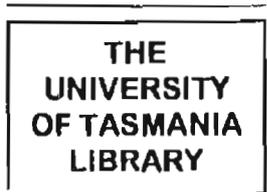
**Bachelor of Arts**

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for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours)

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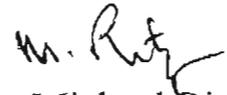
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## Statement of Authenticity

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any tertiary institution and to the best of my knowledge and belief the thesis contains no copy or paraphrase of material previously published or written by other persons except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



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## Abstract

This qualitative research project has highlighted a number of issues about islandness relating to identity, place, and belonging. The research examined how certain Pitcairn-descendants mobilise a claim that they are the indigenous population of Norfolk Island. The claim is mobilised from three main positions: they are the first (or is that last?) whole people to settle Norfolk island as a permanent, inter-generational ‘homeland’; they have a surviving culture, based on that developed on Pitcairn by their forebears, a culture that continues and evolves; and they maintain their own language.

The claim of indigeneity being made manifests in two main sub-communities of Pitcairn-descendant Norfolk Islanders; those making explicit political statements of an ‘indigenous identity’; and those making claims implicit in a lived and performed lifestyle – an ‘indigenous cultural life’. Both are people ‘at home’ and engaged with their environment. It is noteworthy that only among the first does the political claim to this particular identity appear to require an opponent (in this case the Australian government) to legitimate the claim for indigenous identity; equally the claim cannot exist without that opponent.

The claim implied by those descendants living and performing an ‘indigenous cultural life’ does not require or contest anything from such a political opposition and so is not engaged in the same political debate.

## Acknowledgements

I would like firstly to recognise the contribution of islandstate and the islandstate Island Studies Scholarship, without which this research would not have been undertaken.

I would like to thank the people of Norfolk Island for their assistance in this research. Without the support of informants, research into social processes cannot occur; the islanders welcomed me to their island, and gave their time and information freely and in detail. Without their support this work would be much less substantive.

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And so too, thanks to Stewart. And the other members of the Island Studies Community at the University of Tasmania.

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And Tamzin.

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# Preface

The ultimate lot of the non-indigenous man – to labour forever, to 'bring material in' and then the woman gets to choose. And so, on Pitcairn Island, the women chose; and The People became indigenous.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is 1788 and you are to labour, under a strict and physical regime, and receive food, lodging, and a company vehicle. Discipline is enforced with a whip. Your job is to take The Boss; wherever he wants. And you go there... far from home...

Five months leave, on the beach, with pay, and rum; you live and you learn a new world. In the tropics, with coconut milk and rum, bananas off the tree (my personal bias as researcher), all manner of fine and exotic treats. And rum.

You my lucky man, are in the 'fourth ever' group of European fellas to land in Tahiti. Paradise.

In Paradise.

## The Nine

Young males. From the British Empire. *They became bi-cultural*. And 'they got ink'; tattoos. The 'nine' "were much tattooed" (Denning, 1988, 35), the cachet of European colonial travels in the Pacific. And ... *tatau* is a Polynesian word that names particulars, not of the English world.

But *tatau* is a Polynesian initiation, and you have to go to Polynesia to get it. The 'nine' never left.            Except by death.            Although one, sort of, did...

## The Twelve

Some. With the 'nine'. The important visitors. On the beach. Doing most anything they could. Negotiating (managing?) the bi-culturation of the 'nine' among the 'many'. Very important work. With a lot of freedom. To escape a Polynesian initiation.

But you must escape Polynesia to keep your freedom.

The 'twelve' never escaped. Except by death. Although one, sort of, did...

## And the Six

Only some of them, too. On the Beach. The cachet of hanging out with only the fourth European strangers to visit. To whom they explained the world. With whom they shared *tatau*, "perhaps the broad black band all Tahitian men wore" (Dening, 1992, 35). But damn, those strangers kept the women ...

- and they were over-sexed, and they were over here.

And so, the 'six' died.

## And the women chose

Neddy Young and John Adams were their favourites and they were protected on Massacre Day. In October 1793, the women could easily have ended with any of the men they wanted - they held knowledge and secrets. They saved their favourites - 'by chance', they also got Matt Quintal and John McCoy.

There are beginning points, although where is questionable.

The 'nine' were British sailors unleashed, bringing a set of cultural knowledges, behaviours and skills. The 'twelve' brought another set of lore, skills, and ways through the world. And finally, the 'six', the matching skill sets to the 'twelve', an adjunct to the knowledges of the 'nine'. Appropriation and refinement began with the arrival of three sets of knowledge on Pitcairn in 1790; by 'first contact' in 1808, a new race, culture, people, or ..., had been created.

They arrived and displayed their personal positions. The Empire did *Best Colonial*, the 'Other' as chattel, the 'Woman' possession; the Women as *Island Seductress*, are desired and seductive; the Native men as *Naked Savage*, 'plot' in the jungle.

Cultures respond to these stereotypes, they have social mechanisms, dispute resolutions, codes of conduct, and rules to stop the fighting for mates. The 'nine', in alien space, had only might. Of the 'nine' and the 'six', this cost ten lives. Without shared culture, the men could only fight. When the 'six' were dead, the four remaining Empire Men shared an almost common culture, and for a time settled. That wasn't enough and three more died.

\* \* \* \* \*

But to return to the lot of the non-indigenous man; the man out of place. Without connection to a given space, not in a world that is known, not in a world where he knows how to live . . .

The proto-Pitcairnians lived Polynesian; first and last (and still?) they were living in a Polynesian world. Apart from the salvaged material of *Bounty*, and the skills brought by the 'nine', the People obtained most all their material goods from Polynesian

knowledge systems. Polynesian lifestyle, Polynesian food-ways, and Polynesian material culture – with the addition of a ship’s body of western materials. The growing of food, and the clothes worn, the world they saw named and carry still in their language; the dancing noted by visitors, in the ‘native style’ (Nicolson & Davies, 1965). Their religion, and singing, for which they were also renowned, trace back through their English forebears.

In less than four years, by October 1793 the ‘six’ were dead, and five of the ‘nine’, one of the ‘twelve’. The community lived as four polygamous households, seven children had been born. The first ‘true’ Pitcairn descendants (Denning, 1988, 1992; Shapiro, 1968). In the latter years of the 1790s, McCoy and Quintal ‘die’, as do two more women; eleven adults, the Polynesian child and now, 19 Pitcairn Descendants. They are a People, made in modern time (and problematically, in collective memory); made in hybridity, in the isolation of the ocean and the island. With the death of Neddy Young in 1800, the community, now 10 adults, 1 Polynesian child, and 23 Pitcairnners, has *become*.

There are beginning points, although where is questionable.

And, in the end, Adams, the English man, the only man, returned to the culture of his birth. The Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, the God of England, and ensured the children learned this.

And, in the end, nine of the ‘twelve’, returned to the culture of their birth; and raised the children in this.

In response to the events of the 1790s the women retreated from freedom, gained in their encounter with the Europeans, and returned to Polynesian initiations; a common life, separated from the men (Denning, 1988). They surrendered the freedom from custom permitted by their cross-cultured negotiations with Europeans in Polynesian space; where once these women had 'crossed onto the beach', they had 'returned into the island' and abandoned overt claims of equality with the 'nine' (Denning, 1988, 1992).

There are beginning points, although where is questionable.

In the beginning was adam and eve ... no that's not quite right...

It was Adams, with Maha'miti, and Teraura, Vahineatua, Mareva, Teahuaitea, Teehutea-Tuaonoa, Teio, Tinafornia, and Toofaiti. These are the adults who remained alive on Pitcairn Island in 1800, along with Sully, a girl entering teenage and 23 children aged ten and under (Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Shapiro, 1968).

In 60 years living on Pitcairn, with three 'new brothers', they grew to 192 (John Buffett, and John Evans arrived in 1823; George Nobbs in 1828). They lived together as a People; they ate as a group; they shared as a group, they cared as a group. They entertained guests who were, almost to a man, courteous in their reports and fulsome in their praise (Denning, 1988, 1992; Hoare, 1999; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Nobbs, R., 1984; Shapiro, 1968).

Together, the 'nine' joined with the 'twelve' joined with the 'six', had created something different. All left influences that continue today, none remained whole and

complete (Denning, 1988). Something new has arisen; a living language, exists and continues; a homeland, created from a discarded remnant of the Empire; and, a political struggle, for recognition of status, as a race, or ethnic group, or cultural group, or ...; as separate and distinct in their own right, not 'of Australia'.

\* \* \* \* \*

Descendants of The People from Pitcairn Island were the progenitors of the population on Norfolk Island. They arrived there in 1856, relocated to Norfolk Island at the agreement and invitation of the British Crown, which was to abandon the penal colony that had been re-established there in 1825.

There are beginning points, although where is questionable.

Denning describes the *Bounty* expedition as transformed "into a parable of transgressed sovereignty" (1988, 1). The Pitcairn Descendants of Norfolk Island somehow continue to transgress. Today, by *law*, under Australian sovereignty – yesterday they were of British sovereignty, the day before they were 'English' people, living on Pitcairn Island (Denning, 1988, 1992; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Shapiro, 1968).

Denning (1988) also sees the *Bounty* expedition as ambivalent – the voyage, naval, but commercial; Bligh, master, but not Captain; Christian, in authority, but not command (Denning, 1988) – ambivalence that has attached to, and never let go of the Pitcairn people; Pitcairn – British place, or Tahitian place; Pitcairn descendants – indigenous, or not indigenous; Norfolk – home, but not home; theirs, but not theirs; self-governed or directed.

Now there exists an 'assertion' that they are a unique people and have made a place of their own ...

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

I have conducted research into the indigenous identity espoused by members of the Pitcairn-descendant population of Norfolk Island. In this research I have examined ‘claims to indigenous identity’ among this culture group. These claims are advanced in a number of ways. The most significant is that, as the first, entire people to settle on Norfolk Island, planning for this to become and remain their homeland, they have necessarily become the indigenous population of the island.

A fundamental sense attending this research was the feeling of creation that accompanies the Pitcairn people. How is it they have ‘*become*’ – a new people, a new race, and a new culture? Is it time; is it a land of your own; is it some other factor?

This research process has a history and so, too, do researchers (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I have undertaken this project at the invitation of my supervisor who has an interest in island subjects, the suggestion arising in response to my interest in the field of Aboriginal Studies and the issues of indigenous life. My interest has primarily related to indigeneity on the Australian continent.

At the start of the project, I held particular ideas about what it is to be indigenous; the markers, the behaviours, and the cultural aspects of ‘genuine indigeneity’. However, I recognised the need to abandon such preconceptions and consider the possibility that Pitcairn-descendant Norfolk Islanders may have their own ideas of what it is to be an indigenous person on Norfolk Island (Hay, 2005; Hayward, 2005a; Smith, L. T., 1999;

Thaman, 2003). I then reconsidered how and what I would look for, and what I might consider to be the markers of indigeneity. According to Smith (1999) such a focus helps avoid the cultural imperialism of much previous research on indigenous Peoples. I would also acknowledge the contribution to my understanding of cultural hegemonies from private conversations over a number of years with Geoff Ferguson, an Australian Man.

Many of the claims about Norfolk Island identity are made by Norfolk Islanders in response to on-ground political realities and/or advanced in political forums (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1999; Norfolk Island Government, 2002; Parliament of Australia, 1991, 1999, 2001, 2002; Society of Pitcairn Descendants, 2001). Are they then simply 'claiming' indigenous status for political purposes? Or is there a performativity, cultural or political, that will clearly demonstrate that this is, indeed, an indigenous people? Is it a combination of these two, or possibly some third (or more) alternatives? It was ultimately my decision to enter the field with one question: are the Norfolk islanders *performing* an indigenous culture, and if so, how?

This research is timely for at least four reasons. First, the relationship of people to place is of paramount importance to the individual as well as the academy. How people feel about where they live, the relationship they have to their place and, through *there*, to *them* with whom they share that place; these are enduring questions.

Second, sub-national populations, in this case a population claiming a *people* status, and an *indigenous people* status as a subset of that, present a range of issues to a nation state. The disposal of these groups reveals much about the nation itself.

Third, island locations expand the issues the state must consider. Relationships between islands and mainlands raise a range of possibilities for study (Fletcher, 1992; Hayward, 2005a; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1999; Iakoba & al, 2004; King, R. & Connell, 1999; Muhlhausler & Stratford, 1999; Norfolk Island Government, 2002; Parliament of Australia, 1991; Society of Pitcairn Descendants, 2001; Wilson, 2003), enhanced by an apparent separation and isolation not found in metropolitan groups with other, similar characteristics (Clark, 2004; King, R. & Connell, 1999; Peron, 2004). In the case of Norfolk Island, the Pitcairn descendants have become a sub-national population of Australia (and of ‘their’ island), without any choice in this becoming, against many of their wishes over time, and with no apparent method of relief from it (Pitcairn Descendants, 2001).

Fourth, the past fifty years have produced a remarkable transformation in the reality of what Norfolk Island is, with significant challenges confronting the Norfolk Islanders, among them diverse cultural, technological, administrative, and political change (Australia, 1976a; Fossen, 2002; Hoare, 1999; HREOC, 1999; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1999; JSCNCET, 2002; Parliament of Australia, 2002; Treadgold, 1981).

In light of the foregoing, the particulars of this project were to:

- investigate the nature of claims made by a number of people on Norfolk Island, regarding the identity of descendants of the population who came from Pitcairn Island;

- examine how this population frames the claim that, as the first whole people, race, or ethnic group to settle voluntarily and permanently on the abandoned Norfolk Island, they are *necessarily* the indigenous people of that island;
- attempt to elucidate these claims, and develop an understanding of the manner in which the Pitcairn descendants claim this identity;
- examine ways of *belonging* that have become established in relation to both the community and the place; and
- consider the meaning and significance of issues around choice of identity and the salience of island location in the establishment of a 'new people' and, the creation of culture.

## Methodology

I am, in short, studying issues of belonging and identity, issues which cannot be studied with any depth or *gravitas* by means of quantitative methods alone. Such questions are impossible to elucidate through positivist or, as Creswell (2003) designates, 'post-positivist' paradigms. The purpose of this study is to interrogate the lifeworld statements of members of an enclosed community. This community separates into a number of semi-natural sets, with each appearing to have different (in some cases remarkably different) experiences and attitudes to the co-production of life on Norfolk Island. An appreciation of the power of knowledge claims is integral to that task.

Knowledge is generally accessible through one of two processes of methodology (or combinations of them): those of qualitative inquiry or of quantitative inquiry (Anderson & Gale, 1999; Creswell, 2003; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Feyerabend, 1978; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Mason, 2002). Over

many years there has been contention among practitioners about what substantiates knowledge claims. As a project looking at ‘meaning’, I saw little opportunity for the use of anything other than a qualitative methodology.

Denzin and Lincoln rate qualitative research as “a field of inquiry in its own right” (2000, 2). It is a way around the ideological battles of authenticity and validity, cross-cutting disciplinary lines, research fields, and fields of study, and “a complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions” (2000, 2). As Denzin and Lincoln note, qualitative research covers many and varied epistemological traditions, perspectives, and methods.

Knowledge claims are based on assumptions of how and what knowledge will be revealed. Creswell (2003, 3) highlights three elements of claims to knowing: “... philosophical assumptions about what constitutes *knowledge claims*, general procedures of research called *strategies of inquiry*, detailed procedures of data collection, analysis, and writing called *methods*”. They are representative of questions identified as the first points in research design (Crotty, 1998; Mason, 2002).

For Creswell, there are four main knowledge claim paradigms: postpositivist, constructivist, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatic. I would locate myself and this project in a constructivist paradigm. Constructivist knowledge claims rely on assumptions that the individual creates subjective meaning based upon interpretations of their experiences and interactions with their world (Creswell, 2003; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Mason, 2002; Neuman, 2000). Within and across social groups, meanings are varied, multiple and contested, and require researchers to look at complex views, focussed on specifics. Theory is not tested by the

experiences analysed; rather, the experience is examined and theory is inductively enfolded around it.

In the initial stages of the project I collected and read all the available secondary information on Norfolk Island and its geo-political actuality, information gathered from monographs, journal articles, and electronic media, as well as a range of government and parliamentary inquiries relating to Norfolk Island (Clarke, F., 1988; Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Dalkin, 1971; Fossen, 2002; Hazzard, 1984; Hoare, 1999; King, P. G., Fidlon & Ryan, 1980; Maconochie, 1973; Muhlhausler & Stratford, 1999; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Nobbs, R., 1988, 1991; Shapiro, 1968; Society of Pitcairn Descendants, 2001).

Parliamentary inquiries (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1999; Parliament of Australia, 1991, 1999, 2001, 2002) were used as source of names for initial respondents for my fieldwork.

Initial questions about this project revolved around issues of indigeneity, island life and individual and group identity. Primarily, these questions concern who the Pitcairn descendants were and are, how they came to be as a people, and how I could discover and understand their development as a community. I considered what methods would be required to investigate the respondent's meanings behind the statements that they were an indigenous people, and what approach would allow me to develop a full and rich understanding of these statements. A project such as this one, where depth of meaning is being sought, requires a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach. In the initial planning I considered a range of methodological options, eventually deciding to use a semi-structured interview instrument with relatively open questions (refer Appendix A,

p.67). I also considered secondary field research tools such as observation and text and photo analysis and considered what options may exist during fieldwork to expand the range of data sources that could be accessed. I would also need to obtain informed consent for this research from individual research participants and so an information sheet and consent form were drawn up providing as much information as possible, explaining the nature of the research and plans for the data once the analysis had been completed (Refer Appendix B, p.68;C, p.70). While preparing and completing Ethics related submissions I also commenced a secondary literature search for any material that I could use to provide historic and analytic information relating to Norfolk Island, Pitcairn Island, the Bounty mutiny and the Pitcairn descendants in their new homeland. Books and journals were searched and relevant material read and noted. I also began a consideration of the means to select informants, who to select and what information they may be able to bring to this research, such that useful and useable data, suitable for this project could be obtained. I also began a preliminary process of analysis and synthesis of the information that I had started to collect. Initial consideration of the idea of indigeneity and how that would 'appear' was also begun, including questions about what would indicate how this group structure their claims, and how it related (if at all) to probably more familiar ideas of an indigenous life in Australia.

The nature of the research required that I would be exploring 'sensitive cultural issues'. Much of this sensitivity is driven by Australian circumstances and the relationship (in Australia) between indigenous people and the mainstream population, and with Australian governments. As I had selected my initial set of respondents from publicly available documents (Commonwealth Grants Commission, 1997; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1999; Parliament of Australia, 2002), based upon personal, public submissions made to one or more of these inquiries, it was anticipated

that many of the ethical considerations regarding anonymity normally attached to social research would be attenuated; the respondents selected had all made one or more public submissions, identifying themselves and their views. I therefore assumed a strong likelihood that a preparedness to be identified would also exist with this research. This belief was borne out in the fieldwork component of my research with all respondents giving permission for most of their comments from interview to be freely identified.

Ethical approval was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network for this research to proceed, based upon a completed Social Science Application for Research Involving Human Subjects. After this approval, I sent letters of invitation to a purposive sample of 14 potential research informants. From these 14 letters I received one response which demonstrated the sensitive nature of the research, a very cool response to the questions I proposed as my research starting point. After three weeks I contacted as many of the respondents as possible by telephone to arrange initial agreement to, and where possible, interview appointments. As I made these phone calls I discovered that the majority of respondents were awaiting my call rather than responding directly. I made arrangements for three interviews prior to my departure, with a number of follow up calls arranged for my arrival on the island. Once on the island I made further attempts to contact and arrange interviews with a number of islanders. From the 14 mailed invitations, I managed to interview 6 respondents. An additional 4 interviews were conducted with respondents located through information supplied at the 6 interviews. On return, I transcribed the interview tapes and sent a copy to the respondents for checking for accuracy and the respondent's preparedness for publishing the information.

## Into the pirate's den

I conducted ten interviews on Norfolk Island, with eleven informants (one couple), beginning from a semi-structured interview process. The informants were six of my initial sample of fourteen and four snowball informants. I aimed to elicit information from a selection of islanders, enough to be able to gain some sense of the claims they make, and the variety of positions they mobilise for whatever particular reasons, and to highlight the particular strategies, discourses, and representations in which they engage.

As the narrative in the following chapters will show, Norfolk Island may not be just the idyllic paradise that the tourist brochures convey. It is, perhaps, a site of contention among differing member sets, and it may be redolent of cross-cutting and competing ideas about the Norfolk Island culture. Location within the set described as 'Pitcairn-descendant' may not automatically indicate acceptance of the claim to 'indigenous person', and non-location within that set may not preclude the belief that the claim is true. It may also be the case that some members of Norfolk Island's community argue that being indigenous is the least of the worries facing the islanders and their future. Among them are those with a history and family connection to the island which predates any Pitcairn-descendant.

Among members of this community, there may also be a performativity and sense of belonging that any indigenous person in any location would recognise and celebrate. Finally, although some proponents appear vociferously vocal, outwardly there may be little to indicate significant difference from the average Anglo-Australian in downtown Sydney or Melbourne. The majority of Norfolk islanders appear physically similar to Australians, they are engaged in similar occupations to those found in almost any

Australian city or town, and they have public concerns similar to those of most Australians. On the surface, there is not much to indicate a great deal of difference.

## Chapter 2

# Geographies of Norfolk and Pitcairn Islands

### Physical Geography

Norfolk Island, an Australian external territory, is the section of the Norfolk Ridge above sea level that roughly parallels the eastern coast of Australia, and joins Kanaky (New Caledonia) and Aotearoa (New Zealand) (Figure 1). Two other islands, Phillip and Nepean, plus the Northern Islets, make up this group of islands referred to as Norfolk Island (Figure 2).



Fig. 113. Norfolk Island

The built-up area of the settlement of Kingston is shown approximately by diagonal shading. Based on: (1) Admiralty chart no. 1110; (2) G.S.G.S. map no. 4317.

Figure 1 Map of Norfolk Island

Source (Admiralty, 1943-1945a)

:



Figure 2. Nepean and Phillip Islands; along with the Northern Islets and Norfolk Island make up the island group known as Norfolk Island Photo by Author

The smaller islands and islets are uninhabited reserves and part of the Norfolk Island National Park. Phillip and Nepean Islands are recovering from severe environmental degradation (Whitaker, 2000) and the smaller Northern Islets are reservoir sites of species threatened or extinct on Norfolk Island proper.

Pitcairn Island, a dependency of Great Britain, also the only occupied island in a group (Pitcairn, Ducie, Oeno, and Henderson) is located 4600 kilometres west of South America. It has been described as a 'high rugged volcanic island' and, although fertile, there is very limited flat ground (8 per cent by surface area), high coastal cliffs, and an active volcanic zone in the vicinity (United Nations Environment Program, 1998a).

There are many descriptions of both Norfolk and Pitcairn Islands (Clarke, 1988, Clarke, 1987, Dalkin, 1971, Dening, 1988, Hoare, 1988, Hoare, 1999, Irwin, 1990, Muhlhausler

and Stratford, 1999, Nobbs, 1988). These descriptions suggest they are ‘high islands’ (Dening, 1988, 1992; United Nations Environment Program, 1998a; Weisler, 1994); they are ‘mystery islands’ (Irwin, 1990; Weisler, 1994); and, that they are islands ‘seeded’ by Polynesians over past centuries (Dening, 1988, 1992; Irwin, 1990). Water resources are marginal, especially on Pitcairn (Dening, 1988) and, although settled by Polynesian people, both were abandoned by the time Europeans arrived (Clarke, F., 1988; Clarke, P., 1987; Dalkin, 1971; Dening, 1988; Hoare, 1988, 1999; Irwin, 1990; Muhlhausler & Stratford, 1999; Nobbs, R., 1988)

Although these islands are oceanic and receive large rainfalls by Australian standards, both have porous, volcanic soils, and surface water is scarce. On-island water resources were a major factor in the descendant’s decision to leave Pitcairn Island, while on Norfolk Island, the use of water continues to be of ongoing concern for some residents. A legal requirement for accommodation establishments to catch and store water for the use of guests was scheduled for 2005 but has not yet been enacted – “maybe the accommodation sector has more power than the government” (Snell, 2005, 12) – and may happen in 2006-7. Accommodation establishments currently purchase water sourced from the island’s subterranean aquifers. Once talked of as a ‘fine cascade’ in 1788, Cascades today is reduced to a trickle (King, P. G., Fidlon & Ryan, 1980) (Figure 3).

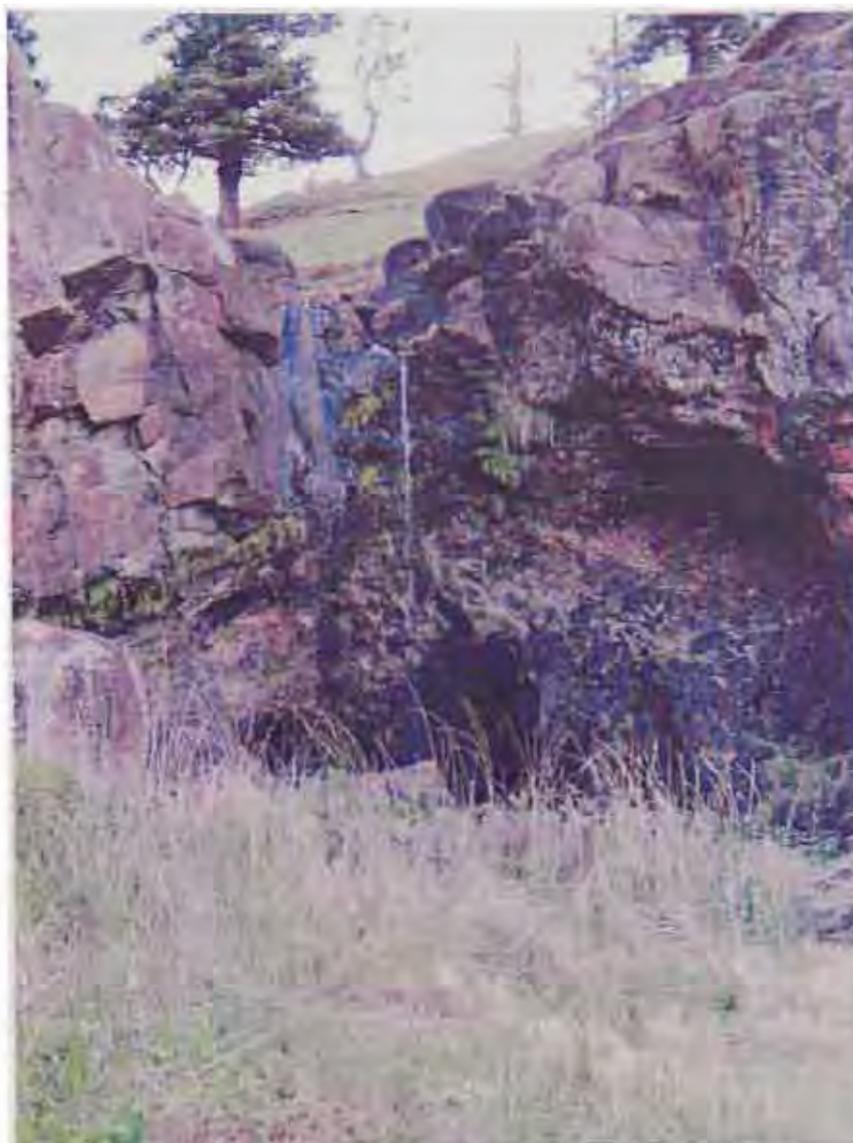


Figure 3. Cascades – Described by Phillip Gidley King, the first Governor of Norfolk Island as a ‘fine cascade of water’, this water body is much reduced today. Currently water is extracted from underground aquifers, annual rainfall has dropped, and surface water was not a particularly noticeable experience when I was on island Photo by author.

## **Political Geography**

### **Norfolk Island**

Prior to the Pitcairner’s arrival, Norfolk Island had no history of a democratic polity. Both earlier settlements had functioned as military facilities, especially the second which was without free settlers. The first, considered mainly an agricultural settlement (Whitaker, 2000), had large numbers of free settlers holding land and farming for the New South Wales market. These settlements have been sites of government enforced relocations (Dalkin, 1971; Hoare, 1999; Nobbs, R., 1988; Wright, 1986), cruel and

inhumane treatments of prisoners (Clay, 2001; Hazzard, 1984; Nobbs, R., 1991), and arguably, extra-judicial executions (Hazzard, 1984; Nobbs, R., 1991; Whitaker, 2000). As military colonies under the jurisdiction of New South Wales, the idea of separate national jurisdiction would never have been considered as a possibility (although some of the free settlers, forced off-island, in and before 1814, may have wished for this).

This history echoes in the modern Norfolk Island; as stated by Bernie and Mary (Christian-Bailey, B. a. M., 2005), the pre-1856 history of Norfolk Island is the island's history; it is not the history of the Pitcairn Island people (Christian-Bailey, B. a. M., 2005). I believe this impacts in island politics, through official Australian interest to maintain the cultural capital engendered through the historic relationship between Australia and Norfolk Island – another reason for Australian governments to hold Norfolk Island as part of Australia, making claims for an 'independent status', difficult to conceive.

### **Pitcairn Island**

The earliest political geography on Pitcairn Island to be considered relates to that of the arriving 'nine', 'twelve' and 'six'. Although some Polynesians were identified as allies of the 'nine' in the earliest days (Denning, 1988; 1992), most, particularly the women, were not, having been kidnapped by the 'nine'. The Polynesian members of this society were treated more like chattels and slaves as time progressed (Denning, 1988, 1992; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Shapiro, 1968). Ethnocentric reality arrived with the embodied settlers.

As "a sign of what was urgent in their relations with one another, they divided the land of the island into nine equal portions" (Denning, 1988, 81), with none for the

Polynesians; in time, the blacks came under “violent and reckless oppression” (Dening, 1988, 83). What is identified as an initial, organic solidarity (among the ‘nine’) – replacing the blacksmith’s ‘wife’ so the blacksmith remains was more important than its repercussions – became a feudal system of four ‘white’, ‘English’ men. Then three ‘white’ men became two ‘English’ men; and finally one ‘white’ ‘English’ man, John Adams, came to be ‘in charge of’ nine Tahitian women and twenty three children. Pitcairn had been created, a new people; basically ‘one family’ (Dening 1988; 1992).

From 1800, John Adams managed the public face of Pitcairn in the world. This began in 1808 with ‘first contact’ and continued until his death, by which time the story of the People in the island had been set on course. The twenty three children, with three new arrivals, Buffett, Evans, and Nobbs, established a self-sufficient ‘nation’ in a self-contained homeland, capable of dealing with most that the world brought to them.

As more seafarers learned of Pitcairn, and made use of its very limited trading facilities, the islanders discovered the need for the protection offered through political association with a larger power (in their case, Britain), an allegiance that would provide a degree of status in the face of visitors (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Nobbs, R., 1984; Pitcairn Islands Study Center, 2005a, 2005b, 2005d; Shapiro, 1968).

A democratic polity formed in 1838 (Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Nobbs, R., 1984; PISC, 2005a, 2005b; Shapiro, 1968) when Captain Elliott, of H.M. sloop *Fly* took the islander’s expression of membership in the British Commonwealth and oversaw the establishment of an electoral system. A world first universal suffrage; two elected representatives, a magistrate and assistant, with a second assistant appointed by the

magistrate. This system, like the decision to all relocate to Tahiti in 1831 and Norfolk in 1856, was another example of communal decision making; a tradition of creating a particular and placed reality and rules of conduct; a community acting as one.

These people were accepted as much as they gave allegiance; the British entered into a compact as well as taking their oath. They were 'in association' and considered a Crown Colony under the protection of the British Empire (Nicolson & Davies, 1965; PISC, 2005a, 2005b). The community had established a practice of allowing the captains of British naval vessels, as representative of the Crown, final arbitration of any unresolved disputes within the community. This democratic system of self government, one of the world's earliest, continued until the descendant's arrival on Norfolk Island and after.

## **Cultural Geography**

### **'Pre-modern' Pitcairn**

The community, prior to bad blood forming, worked individual landholdings, but shared resources communally (Dening, 1988, 1992; Shapiro, 1968). "For the children the Island was one household and every woman their mother" (Dening, 1992, 321). It is important I believe, to bear in mind that, in 1800 this community consisted of one European man, nine Polynesian females, and 23 Euro-Polynesian children under 10. The women "reared the children and made the rhythm of everyday... made the first and lasting interpretation of all things to do with food, clothing, and the ...physical environment" (Dening, 1992, 321). John Adams' behaviour as community leader, a more formal interaction, resulted in cultural behaviours learned from him forming into particular habits, notably a commitment to elementary literacy and religion.

The languages that developed, referred to today as "*Pitkern* and *Norfolk*" (Avram, 2003, 44), are identified as 'Atlantic creoles', with much 'English' input; many Polynesian words providing 'nouns' for the naming of the Polynesian world. These languages are endemic to Pitcairn Island and Norfolk Island, with *Norfolk* considered an offshoot of *Pitkern*. Both have been made official languages in recent years in their home islands (Avram, 2003).

## **Histories of Norfolk and Pitcairn Islands**

### **Britain and Norfolk Island**

Norfolk Island was highly desirable real estate in 1774; or so says Captain Cook. In the 'Great Game' of late 17<sup>th</sup> Century European political geography, England's trade with the world was harassed, threatened, or potentially halted by the actions of other European powers in the Far East, India, South America, and Africa (Fry, 1971). Further compounded by the loss of the North American colonies, new sites for exploitation were always being sought. Among a number of potential locations, New South Wales was one considered possible. Not only an 'empty country', it had particular strategic values as well. To some extent the decision to settle there is influenced by Cook's reports of excellent boat building timber and sail making flax on Norfolk Island (Clarke, F., 1988; Dalkin, 1971; Fry, 1971; Hoare, 1999; King, R. J., 1986; Nobbs, R., 1988). It was also argued that New South Wales would provide a 'refreshment' location for ships on the China run (King, R. J., 1986), and also a strategic launch harbour for raiding parties on South America (Fry, 1971). Blainey (1983) has claimed that without the resources identified on Norfolk Island, the settlement at Sydney would not have occurred.

There is no way to identify which of these reasonings made the argument, but 1788 saw the foundation of New South Wales, and six weeks later, the settlement began at Norfolk Island as well (Clarke, F., 1988; Dalkin, 1971; Hoare, 1999; Nobbs, R., 1988). Reality soon proved the great leveller on the island, the trees and flax were revealed as failing the imperial need, and the settlement's secondary purpose, that of a farm for New South Wales hampered by pest species which nearly starved the colony off the island (King, P. G., Fidlon & Ryan, 1980). With access to and from the island extremely difficult, a report from lieutenant-governor Grose in 1794, started "questioning the utility of the island as a convict settlement" (Hoare, 1999, 24). In 1803, the British began moving the settlement to Tasmania, a move halted temporarily in 1807 (Hoare, 1999). By 1809 the final decision was made to abandon the island (Hoare, 1999). This decision required moving off a number of free settlers who had chosen this island as



Figure 4. Some of the few remaining indications of the First British Settlement, Norfolk Island, 1788-1814 Photo by author.

home (Wright, 1986). No one was allowed to remain, and the settlement was destroyed. Today the only evidences of the first settlement are graves and memorials (Figure 4).

The initial utopian dreams for Norfolk Island were replaced with a dystopian, 1825, penal hell (Clay, 2001; Hazzard, 1984; Muhlhausler & Stratford, 1999; Nobbs, R., 1991). Widely reputed as a harsh and cruel place, with the exception of one short period of prison reform, that even today, seems ahead of all times (Clay, 2001; Fry, 1971; Hazzard, 1984; Maconochie, 1973; McCulloch, 1957). This settlement was much more substantial than the first with many stone and brick buildings which remain extant and in active use today (Hoare, 1999; Nobbs, R., 1991; Wright, 1986). It is a site of Australian cultural heritage and has been a site of conflict between Pitcairners and governments for more than 100 years (Christian-Bailey, B., 1975; Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Hoare, 1999; O'Collins, 2002).

### **Pitcairners and Pitcairn Island**

Pitcairner history began in January 1790 with the locating of the desert isle; it had been 'edenised' by Polynesians in the past, so not only empty and badly charted, this island was ready for people from the first day. With the skills of the Polynesians, the island was put into productive use immediately. The party had brought all the items they would need; to start from the beginning, to last till the end; they set about establishing themselves on the island.

Unfortunately they had not brought enough women; this being the ultimate cause of their demise. It appears that all parties played a significant part in the chaos that ensued; all bearing a degree of responsibility (Denning, 1988; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Pitcairn Islands Study Center, 2005c); base instincts run riot, alcohol, jealousy, and racism, among others. By the end of this period one can only imagine the state of mind of those

remaining on the island. We do know that Adams retreated to the scriptures and instilled this in his community. It also appears that he instilled a perception of 'blacks' as not to be tolerated, dangerous, and untrustworthy; also, that the Pitcairn Island people are not blacks themselves, but rather English.

The people grew their own language, cooked and ate like Polynesians, prayed like Englishmen, built houses using a mixture of islander and European styles, grew healthy and strong like 'natives', and developed an idealised Christian sensibility; a hybrid people, making use of the island in their way, with their interests as a community in mind. This people lived in isolation from 1790 until 1808 and the arrival of their first visitors. And then again until 1814 and their second visitors.

From the time the islander's existence was reported, they were an international curiosity. The fall from grace, the resurrection as a 'holy community' redeemed through good living, provoked a great deal of interest and support from outside the island. The community continued much the same but faced continuing concern over water resources, with several droughts making life on the island tenuous (Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Nobbs, R., 1984; Shapiro, 1968). Adams, recognising future problems, discussed the issue with visiting British Navy officers, who put in train a process that led to the islanders relocating to Tahiti in 1831. This decision created many problems for the islanders who must have considered the entire episode as a disaster after one in five died from illness contracted during the time spent there (Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Nobbs, R., 1984; Shapiro, 1968).

This people developed a society that was rich in terms of a subsistence lifestyle. It was a society that was contented – of the 277 persons identified as arriving to live on Pitcairn

Island or born there, only seven left the community, unless through death (Nicolson & Davies, 1965).

## Joining of Pitcairners and Norfolk Island

### What do the Pitcairners make of Norfolk Island

In 1856 the Pitcairn Island people chose to relocate, *as a whole people*, to Norfolk Island. From the literature available, the appearance is that they came, anticipating that the island would be theirs, in the same way that Pitcairn Island was theirs (Christian-Bailey, B., 1975; Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Hoare, 1999; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Nobbs, R., 1984; O'Collins, 2002; Pitcairn Islands Office, Undated; Robinson & Islanders, 2004; Shapiro, 1968; Society of Pitcairn Descendants, 2001). This has been, is still, and will continue to be, a point of contention between the Pitcairn descendants and the British and Australian governments.

Here, then, is a whole new version of settlement, and finally, a process of establishment on the island. As a people 'of an island', the Pitcairn people have become *established*, unlike the European *settlers* of previous attempts.

Although very different to their experience, Norfolk Island has many similarities to Pitcairn Island. Rather than the limited resources, reduced living space, and harder circumstances the British found on Norfolk Island, the Pitcairn people found themselves in a bigger world, a resource rich world and a world of improved circumstances. They were also a coherent and complete group; the community was (relatively) united in its choice to be there, all their members were there, and they had a clear and chosen decision to make this their homeland.

The Pitcairners arrived at Norfolk Island on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1856, and the weather was cold and wet (Nicolson & Davies, 1965). The technological and material world they found there was radically reformulated – both the island’s ‘traditional biological’ environment, and the ‘technological fabric’ for living. For many it was a disconcerting change that led to thoughts of return to Pitcairn Island. Buildings were radically different and larger, worked stone being unknown on Pitcairn Island, and simple wooden buildings their only experience. The working of metal was also an unknown skill for the new residents, and some livestock, such as cattle and horses, were also new to the islanders; all these skills needed to be learnt quickly.

Some members of the community were unable to accommodate the feelings of dislocation and homesickness; two parties returned to Pitcairn Island in the following years, the first in 1858, two families totalling sixteen people, and then, in 1863, a further four families, another thirty one people (Shapiro, 1968).

Norfolk Island had been a settlement operated with free, extensive, penal labour. Nearly the entire island had been in cultivation, maintained by a workforce of many hundred. The new Norfolk Island population totalled 193 on arrival, with a workforce much short of 100. Immediately, land went out of production and decay of infrastructure began. Although these issues were not of concern to the islanders, this was a point of criticism for many visiting officials to the island for many years (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Denison, 1870; Hoare, 1999; O'Collins, 2002; [www.pitcairners.org](http://www.pitcairners.org), 1996-2005a, 1996-2005e).

Initial intentions were that Norfolk Island was to be a home for the Pitcairners alone (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976). Entry to the island was limited but generally controlled by the community. A number of new settlers arrived, some established themselves on the island, marrying into the families; others did not find their place in the island and moved on (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976).

### **What does the outside world make of them**

Almost all reports of the Pitcairn Island people were fulsome in their praise of the virtues of this community. Begun in 1808 with their first contact, it continued through the years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These reports also attracted much attention from many interested parties around the world. The idea that one European man, from a low and degraded experience found redemption, and raised a community to Christian values, in the remote and wild Pacific Ocean, was a story too fantastic to be ignored. The churches were absorbed, the eugenicists were absorbed, and the general public were absorbed.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, missionary societies regularly sent the islanders books and clothes, the Pitcairn Benevolent Fund raised money for their needs. Political organisations of the day mobilised to assist the islanders where possible, the relocation to Norfolk Island being one example. When word had arrived in England of the precarious nature of their existence, the combination of the needs of the Pitcairners and the British coincided. British decisions to abandon the second settlement on Norfolk Island, and the wish to keep a 'British' presence there to exclude others, worked in the favour of the Pitcairn Island people (Buffett, 2004; Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Hoare, 1999; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Nobbs, R., 1984).

Once the Pitcairners reached Norfolk Island, they faced a more problematic relationship with the outside world. Where Pitcairn Island is extremely isolated and difficult to reach, Norfolk Island is suburban by comparison. They came under a regular gaze of the authorities in New South Wales charged by Britain with being the watching power. The island lifestyle of working when you needed, dressing according to weather, and cultivating only what will grow enough for your needs, created anxiety for the bearers of a Christian work ethic. Reports exist (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; O'Collins, 2002) showing how the Governor and various officials considered the Pitcairners not properly productive, not developing their land adequately, and not keeping up proper British ways of being in the island; this, despite the fact that in 1897, when the most damning report was written, the Pitcairners had already been in the island longer than any other European (O'Collins, 2002).

This type of interaction between the Norfolk Islanders and the authorities continued and continues today (Parliament of Australia, 2005). The 1914 Norfolk Island Act took much out of the control of the islanders, putting in place many changes, the most significant of which was the ending of their sole possession of the island. This has allowed new people to gain access to the island and has now eliminated the descendant dominance in the island's population. It has also led to the island now having residents from some 28 different nations.

The Second World War saw an influx of outsider bodies for military purposes, a number of whom returned in the post-war period as settlers. At least two of my respondents are children of such settlers and arrived in the early 1960's which appears to have been a time when many new settlers arrived. A time when there was much change happening on the island, as suddenly it began to transform from a home for the

Pitcairners, to a multi-ethnic living place, as well as a popular tourism location (Commonwealth Grants Commission, 1997; Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Hoare, 1999; Parliament of Australia, 2002, 2005; Treadgold, 1981, 1999).

## Chapter 3

### Political Performance of Norfolk Island

#### INSTRUCTIONS AND ADVICE ADDRESSED TO THE CHIEF MAGISTRATE OF NORFOLK ISLAND

*The objects of Her Majesty's Government, in transferring the Pitcairn islanders to their present residence were, first, to put them in a position to maintain their increasing numbers by their own industry, and second, to enable them to keep up, so far as the change of circumstances may permit, the peculiar form of polity under which they have hitherto existed as a community.*

Sir William Denison, Governor of Norfolk Island, 1856. (Dispatches from the Governor of Norfolk Island House of Commons Papers 29 May 1863 contained in British parliamentary Papers Colonies, Australia Vol 24 Sessions 1862-63 I.U.P. in (Denison, 1976a, 246)

There are two main strands of discourse on Norfolk Island in relation to islanders' identities: one political, the other cultural. In this chapter, I focus on the former, and examine claims to indigenous status as they gain expression through historical documents and key informant interviews: sources of data collectively interpreted as political performance; that is, statements of independence and cultural singularity, and declarations of difference from other Norfolk islanders and mainlanders.

The main political claim I am investigating is that the Pitcairn descendants have become the indigenous population of Norfolk Island. This declaration is complicated by frequent and clearly expressed statements, recorded since 1808, from the islanders themselves, 'we are English' (Christian-Bailey, B., 1975; Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Hoare, 1999; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Shapiro, 1968).

In terms of natural cycles and nation states Norfolk Islanders of Pitcairn descent are a culture that is a 'blink of an eye'. In political terms however, they are 170-year veterans of elected, universal suffrage democracy, with compulsory education for all children. A politics of making do, and a politics of self-government were vouched to the Pitcairners when they went to Norfolk Island (Denison, 1976a, 1976b). The community's own native political forms operated from the early 1800s until enforced change in 1897. It was a very small polity, familial and religious, without the political considerations of empires and nations.

The Pitcairners went to Norfolk Island with a particular intent to remain a 'whole people', to support themselves, support their Queen, and maintain their self-determined political ways. And for some years, the Pitcairners did that. It was also the intent of the British to keep the island 'reserved' for the Pitcairners. In a letter dated 5 July 1854, B Toup Nicolas, British Consul of the Society Islands, advised the Pitcairners, "I am desired further to make known to you that it is not at present intended to allow any other class of settlers to reside or occupy land on the Island" (in Commonwealth of Australia, 1976, 31). For some years thereafter, the Pitcairners' occupancy and democratic polity of Norfolk Island was spoken of as an 'experiment' (Denison, 1870; [www.pitcairners.org](http://www.pitcairners.org), 1996-2005e).

Then in the 1890s British concerns to be quit of the island led Governor Viscount Hampden to devolve authority for the island to the colony of New South Wales in 1897,

which ended independent self-government by the Pitcairn descendants on 'their' island. In 1914, Norfolk Island was made an Australian external territory, and that and all subsequent legislation to keep it 'subservient' to Australia has been resisted at every occasion by at least some Pitcairn descendants (Christian-Bailey, B., 1975; Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1999; O'Collins, 2002; Robinson & Islanders, 2004; Society of Pitcairn Descendants, 2001; www.pitcairners.org, 1996-2005a, 1996-2005b). In response to 'mainland' government of one form or another, that population has thus consistently maintained a politics of difference and resistance (Bennett, 2001; Christian-Bailey, B., 1975; Fossen, 2002; Hoare, 1999; Muhlhausler, Pre-publication Draft; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; O'Collins, 2002; Robinson & Islanders, 2004; Society of Pitcairn Descendants, 2001; www.pitcairners.org, 1996-2005a).

An independent people, with little prior experience of being told *could* or *could not*, nor who may move onto their island, the Pitcairners have nevertheless treated visitors with regard. Room on Norfolk is significantly greater than Pitcairn and new bodies have often been welcome. However, rapid immigration to Norfolk from Australia after 1960 has threatened the Pitcairn descendants' position as *the* polity. Since that time, the situation has gradually changed and, at the latest census of 2001, Pitcairn descendants comprised only 48 per cent of the island's population (Mathews, 2001) (Table 1). Long-standing struggles against a 'foreign' government are vastly different from new struggles within the community, yet both are encapsulated by the reintroduction of self-government in 1979 via the Norfolk Island Act because the Pitcairn descendants no longer have *self*-government as they understood it in the 1850s. Rather, the *island community* has been made self-governing, and many of the Pitcairners feel unwillingly transformed from '*self*' to '*self and Other*'.

Table 1 Population by Descent showing the percentage of population of Pitcairn descent, 2001 and 1996 (Mathews, 2001)

Particulars	Census, 7 August 2001				Census, 6 August 1996			
	Males	Females	Total	Percent of Total	Males	Females	Total	Percent of Total
<b>Under 15 Years -</b>								
Of Pitcairn Descent	107	101	208	67.3	92	102	194	65.8
Not of Pitcairn Descent	52	45	97	31.4	55	43	98	33.2
Not Stated	3	1	4	1.3	1	2	3	1.0
<b>Total, Under 15 Years</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>15 Years and Over -</b>								
Of Pitcairn Descent	298	250	548	43.3	271	218	489	41.6
Not of Pitcairn Descent	321	389	710	56.1	308	363	671	57.1
Not Stated	4	3	7	0.6	6	9	15	1.3
<b>Total, Over 15 Years</b>	<b>623</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>1,265</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>1,175</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>All Ages -</b>								
Of Pitcairn Descent	405	351	756	48.0	363	320	683	46.5
Not of Pitcairn Descent	373	434	807	51.3	363	406	769	52.3
Not Stated	7	4	11	0.7	7	11	18	1.2
<b>Total, All Ages</b>	<b>785</b>	<b>789</b>	<b>1,574</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>1,470</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The complex machinations of belonging and community membership on Norfolk Island thus have a long history. Political, social and cultural rhetoric highlight the differences between members and non-members (Avram, 2003; Buffett, 2004; Christian-Bailey, B., 1975; Clarke, P., 1987; Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Denison, 1976b; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1999; Latham, 2005; Norfolk Island's Select Committee into Electoral and Other Matters, 2003; Pitcairn Islands Office, Undated; Robinson & Islanders, 2004; Society of Pitcairn Descendants, 2001; Web Forum, 2005; www.pitcairners.org, 1996-2005a).

There is, however, a new reaction to these political forms that has arisen only since the large influx of non-descendant bodies that began in the 1960s. The island's 'political class' appears to have no systems in place to accommodate the communal effects arising from the heightened noting of difference, a matter worth elaborating on next.

## Politics of difference

Each time outsider ideas or bodies arrive, whether ‘the whole world changes’ or not, new political accommodations are made. For the ‘true’ Pitcairn descendants, Captain Folger began the debate in 1808 by invoking the first discourse on *who they were as a people*. By the 1830s, whaling ships and Captain Elliott provoked the first formal, written expression of their *laws and regulations*. In 1856, a first *international treaty*, arranging their transfer to Norfolk Island re-created them again and anew (Christian-Bailey, B., 1975; Commonwealth Grants Commission, 1997; Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Nobbs, R., 1984; Pitcairn Islands Study Center, 2005a; Shapiro, 1968; Society of Pitcairn Descendants, 2001). These three events have established the Pitcairn descendants as different. No other People have the same *Being As People* as they; no other People were *Established* under the same laws and regulations; and no other People have the same *History*. It is a clear and simple statement, easily defended; this *is* a People different from any other.

The consequence of ‘political work’ attending to, and contesting over difference is that some individuals are, and feel, marginalised; this is especially so when the difference is articulated along racial or ethnic divides and in such a small community (an Island impact). It is in this space, arguing the political differences of a sub-national group, in territory that is demonstrably part of the nation place of Australia, that the Pitcairn descendants become an indigenous people (Sissons, 2005). They also become separators of the polity on Norfolk Island, separators of the community, and *the* source of conflict. They destabilise the political focus of the island as a whole; a number of respondents noting the cost in time and money to maintain responses to inquiries and

investigations of political forms, and the islander's rights and status on the island (Christian, J., 2005; Christian-Bailey, B. a. M., 2005; Nobbs, K., 2005; Reeves, 2005).

## Politics of Resistance

Political resistance on Norfolk Island is long-standing and continuing (O'Collins, 2002; www.pitcairners.org, 1996-2005a). An activist group, the Society of Pitcairn Descendants, is currently the most outspoken. Its collective resistance is a discursive, text-based process; written and public submissions to Australian Government inquiries; claims lodged in the past with British political institutions; attempts to have the UN Special Rapporteur to the Committee of 24 on Decolonisation consider the islanders' status; and books and web-based statements of the descendants' claims (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Norfolk Island Government, 2002; Norfolk Island's Select Committee into Electoral and Other Matters, 2003; Robinson & Islanders, 2004; Society of Pitcairn Descendants, 2001; Web Forum, 2005; www.pitcairners.org, 1996-2005a, 1996-2005c). To be borne in mind in all this discussion of resistance, however, are the words of Sir John Nimmo in the authoritative Report of the Royal Commission into Matters Relating to Norfolk Island:

The main blame for the Island's problems does not rest in the Island. Most ... have had their genesis and perpetuation in slothful and inept mainland administration ... unable to activate ... and to achieve successful solutions to *the Island's obvious difficulties* ... in spite of the sterling and most conscientious work by some individual Administrators in the Island Australia's administration of Norfolk Island has been singularly unimpressive at the policy level (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976).

The *'Island's obvious difficulties'*: here gains expression one of the prevalent hegemonic ideas that characterise islands; that islands are remote and insular places, with problems attendant upon that, and that they are backward and somehow less than 'mainlands'. Yet, as Nimmo recognised, the descendants may have a reasonable and understandable reason to resist their wholesale assimilation to Australia despite the apparent 'disabilities' of islandness.

## Political performance as indigenous

Jeffrey Sissons (2005) writes of political performance having two main representations when demonstrating indigeneity. One of these he refers to as eco-indigenous and third world indigenous cultures and peoples. The Pitcairn Island people do not appear to me, in such a category of indigenous people. Rather, they are more easily located in the class of indigenous peoples commonly referred to by Sissons (2005) as First Nations peoples; those political minorities in New World settler societies – such as Australian Aboriginal populations, American and Canadian Native peoples, the Maori of Aotearoa. These are peoples engaged in political struggles against colonial rule that has arisen in the 200-300 years following the European expansion into the Americas, the Pacific Basin, parts of Africa and Asia. Theirs is a legacy of colonising, hybridising, and creolising acts that have made indigenous peoples difficult to identify legalistically and to define comprehensively (Corntassel, 2003).

It is my contention that the Pitcairn descendants can be defined as indigenous in this way:

**By circumstance:** the Pitcairn descendants are a separate people. They arose as a distinct island population, as Polynesian peoples have done for thousands of years; a *vaka* (a Polynesian sailing canoe) sails to an island, the people settle and over time

become a new people (Harre, 1968; Weisler, 1994): the Maori and Aotearoa, 700 years; Polynesian people in the Chatham Islands, 500 years; (Irwin, 1990); for the Pitcairners, 216 years.

**By circumstance:** Norfolk Island arises as a colony of Great Britain, as European colonies have done for thousands of years; a ship sails to an island, a flag is raised and over time a colony is built (Clarke, F., 1988): New Zealand, 165 years; Gibraltar, 300 years (Wikipedia, 2006a, 2006b); for Norfolk Island as a Pitcairn place, almost 150 years.

**By circumstance:** the British Empire left and the Pitcairn people came. The Pitcairners believed they had a new island, as Polynesian people have had new islands for thousands of years, through resident possession. The British imperialists believed they had a new colony, their flag still flew, as European flags have dominated islands for centuries.

**By circumstance:** Pitcairn Islanders went to a place that was not Australia; that has since been claimed, and declared administratively, as Australia. They became as a people, but they were also indentured into an Australian identity. In political terms this 'act of subjugation' may be seen to replicate what occurred to other First Nation peoples, albeit without the bloodshed that accompanied much of those other political projects: it has nevertheless been described as a 'Bloodless Genocide' (www.pitcairners.org, 1996-2005a).

This, then, is a people who have long believed themselves to be *both* a Pacific Island culture and a British colony (O'Collins, 2002). Their relocation to Norfolk Island is a further complicating factor since they are not in their homeland but rather in a new land

selected for and presented to them by a ‘parent’ for whom they had felt allegiance, and administered by a ‘guardian’ against whom they perpetually struggle.

## Political Claiming Today

A number of my respondents are among what I will hereafter label ‘political workers’ on Norfolk Island. These respondents are generally more interested in notions of ‘ownership’ – that Norfolk had been ‘given’ to the Pitcaimers – that Norfolk island is ‘not part of Australia’, and that Australia regularly attempts to ‘remove control’ from islander hands<sup>1</sup>.

### **Are they indigenous?**

Almost all the respondents I spoke with say that they believe the Pitcairn descendants of Norfolk Island are the indigenous people of Norfolk Island. One respondent abstained from the question when asked, and a number also said, ‘not in the same way as Aboriginal Australians. This assessment is based upon their being ‘the first whole people to settle permanently’, and the actuality of an ‘empty island’ on their arrival. Previous settlers on Norfolk, whether British or Polynesian, were neither a ‘whole people’ nor settled permanently.

Two respondents held strong opinions against the idea that the Pitcairn descendants are indigenous people and dismissed the claim with statements along lines that the question is not relevant. ‘If they want to waste their energy on the matter, go right ahead. There are more important issues’ (Buffett, 2005; Quintal, 2005). Nevertheless, these two respondents offered no argument against the ‘first whole people’ claim.

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<sup>1</sup> The respondents I will hereafter refer to as ‘culture workers’ (see Chapter 4) are, in contrast, rather more interested in questions of cultural authenticity and the ability to maintain culture through their involvement with the arts and island life.

Two other respondents also strongly advocated that we all carry multiple ethnicities and identities within, and cannot/should not, sustain one above the others.

Whether 'advocating political claims' or 'living cultural lives', respondents who support claims to indigeneity state that they are not seeking material gain – not claiming land rights, not claiming sole possession of the island. Rather, both 'recognition of difference' and 'cultural protection' are sought by some. For others, an 'act of self-determination' would be the desired outcome. For still others, these claims are an attempt to 'reduce Australian interference' in the running of the island.

The cohort whose members overtly make this claim for indigenous status is small. Although several respondents have been associated with the Society of Pitcairn Descendants (and its various incarnations over time) a number of them have since withdrawn. This lack of involvement is driven by a sense of *extremis* attached to some of the methods used to highlight the descendants' difference, in particular the Bounty Day March, an event mentioned to me by almost all respondents, some as a positive event, and others as particularly negative for the community as a whole. The issue of who marches seems divisive in the extreme. In recent years the March has become a strong marker of difference and the generally accepted position within the Society is that only 'true descendants' should participate. This edict leaves spouses and, in one case, 'half-siblings' watching from the sidelines as members of their family are wrapped in their community. Many non-descendant islanders feel excluded, the island divides and discontent spreads. This event has impact upon Pitcairn descendants as well, several respondents stating that the politics of the March are redundant because the issues that resulted in claims for exclusivity were apparently dealt with in the 1970s via the findings of the Nimmo Report and the beginning of self-government in 1979. At least two respondents withdrew from the Society over this issue alone.

## **Cultural protection as a political claim**

The second most obvious political claim for indigenous status is that, for the culture of the Pitcairn descendants to be protected, recognition of the descendants as separate is required. The respondents who highlighted the issue of cultural protection did not insist on indigenous claims as method but as reason. This position is mobilised much more among those I have designated ‘culture workers’, with many of the political operatives paying little attention to that particular issue. I have included at least two respondents within this category although they are not engaged in any particular cultural activity in a professional sense. Instead I saw their cultural connection as lived lifestyle; these respondents are living as ‘recognised descendants’, language speakers, ‘island dancers’, weavers and so on.

These respondents who focused upon cultural protection express concern that their lifestyle – small island, particular cultural life, community of descendants – is threatened by the ‘making sameness’ that occurs when Norfolk Island political forms are conformed to Australian norms. Issues such as, immigration control under Australian authority, leading to Australian-style development and cultural ‘swamping’ by an economic ethos; large-scale development leading to their children becoming the ‘native’ staff for the exotic tourism resort.

## **International systems**

There is a will by some Pitcairn descendants, to take indigenous and other political claims, into international and national fora. This desire has intensified since the 1970s as the descendants have intensified and expanded their political resistance. International political processes aimed at assisting indigenous peoples are not applied to the Pitcairn descendants of Norfolk Island. Although Pitcairn Island is recognised by the United

Nations Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization, it neither defines nor recognises Norfolk Island as a non-self-governing territory or as a trust territory (Special Committee of 24 on Decolonization, 2005a, 2005c, 2005b).

Other mechanisms exist, such as a unilateral declaration by the descendants of independent status, or nomination by a fellow Pacific State for their status to be considered by the Committee of 24. Some islanders believe that Australia uses its ‘muscle’, especially in the guise of financial aid, to prevent Pacific States from nominating the descendants to the Committee of 24, under threat of aid withdrawal. The alternative, a unilateral declaration of independence, is difficult on current population dynamics: with only 48 per cent of the total population now comprising descendants, meaning such a move would be unviable at vote.

An alternative option would be for the Australian government to offer the Norfolk Islanders an “act of self determination”. This mechanism gives choices of full independence, independence in association with Australia, or full integration into the Australian state. Australian political opinion is that the island is already fully integrated and Australian political change will provide adequate safeguards and options (Commonwealth Grants Commission, 1997; Parliament of Australia, 2002, 2005).

Widespread opinion on the island is that full independence is ‘financial suicide’, although three of my respondents argue that it is possible. Australia has no ‘in association’ relationships and seems unlikely to consider this option currently. I think that to give the Pitcairn people such a vote would have substantial implications in Australia in relation to other indigenous peoples; too large a can of worms to open, in short.

Most current political concerns on Norfolk Island are apparently prompted by an influx of migrants, begun after WWII, but gathering pace in the 1960s and 1970s. At the time

of the Nimmo Report in 1976, the population changes that have provoked this debate show the influx of residents through the 1960s and 1970s with the population rising from 844 in 1961 to 1846 by 1973 (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976) (Table 2).

Table 2 Population Changes through Time (From the Butland Report, 1974, in (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976), 85-86)

Inter—census summary

<b>Period</b>	<b>Original total</b>	<b>Subsequent total</b>
1914—21	710	717
1921—33	717	1198
1933—47	1198	938
1947—54	938	942
1954—61	942	844
1961—66	844	1152
1966—71	1152	1683
1971—73	1683	1846

Table 2 demonstrates that, although population fluctuation was not uncommon (greater than 60 per cent increase from WWI to the Depression, and a nearly 15 per cent reduction from the Depression to the end of WWII) from 1960 to 1976 a rapid and sustained population increase occurred, with population more than doubling in only twelve years. The impression of influx is sustained when length of residence in the island is considered. Table 3 reveals that in 1976, almost 65 per cent (347 of 536) of non-descendant island residents had arrived since 1966, and 77 per cent (411 of 536) since 1961. Table 3 also shows that fluctuation in population numbers has ended. Today the island is 'full' and has a queue awaiting residency.

Table 3 Length of residence of non-descendant Norfolk Islanders, as at June 30, 1976 (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976, 45)

Length of residence in Norfolk Island (years inclusive)	Number of non—Pitcairn descent residents
1 - 5	147
6 - 10	200
11 - 15	64
16 - 20	6
21 and over	119
total	536

Of 536 residents not born on Norfolk Island in 1976, 477 were born in Australia, New Zealand, or England (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976). From the most recent censuses, this high level of non-descendants in the population can be seen to be continuing (Table 4).

Table 4 Population by place of birth; showing the continuing predominance of Australian, New Zealand, or United Kingdom migrants and the ongoing high level of non-descendant residents (Mathews, 2001)

Country of Birth	Census, 7 August 2001				Census, 6 August 1996			
	Males	Females	Total	Percent of Total	Males	Females	Total	Percent of Total
Australia	255	271	526	33.4	220	239	459	31.2
New Zealand	152	174	326	20.7	153	180	333	22.7
United Kingdom	30	30	60	3.8	25	30	55	3.7
Other Countries	31	40	71	4.5	33	41	74	5.0
Total, Not born on Norfolk Island	468	515	983	62.5	431	490	921	62.6
Norfolk Island	309	268	577	36.7	298	243	541	36.8
Not Stated	8	6	14	0.9	4	4	8	0.5
Total	785	789	1,574	100.0	733	737	1,470	100.0

As another respondent pointed out however, there are benefits to be obtained from outside influences. Indeed, one of the great problems of communities that are small

and/or closely related led to the first major shift in Norfolk Island's political path. In 1885, one Henry Wilkinson, a Sydney magistrate, when reporting to the Governor of New South Wales, Lord Augustus Loftus, wrote:

One thing is most certain, that is, that the present form of government by an elected Magistrate will never do, and MUST be stopped at once, for there is neither justice nor order. Everybody is so closely related, and everybody lives in a 'glass house', and is afraid to throw a stone, so that the Chief Magistrate dare not administer even justice, or he would be pounced upon at once, and is in a constant fear of how a decision will be regarded by others, who may, and would retaliate, if they do not approve (Commonwealth of Australia, 1976).

The respondent who made this comment about the need to increase outside influences on Norfolk Island also talked about how many descendants 'forget' the benefits that come to the community from introduced 'bodies' and ideas. Although the concept of 'oppressive authenticity' (Sissons, 2005) is usually applied to indicate the manner in which new cultural forms are denied authenticity, on Norfolk Island it also applies from the inside-out by members – we are more 'true' than they are, 'the only real descendants'.

### **Insights resonate outward to other cases**

There are two final cases I would like to mention before leaving the political claiming on Norfolk Island. These are the particular cases of, firstly Tokelau, and secondly, Cocos Islands. These are instructive cases that highlight certain aspects of Australia's relationship with Norfolk Island.

First to Tokelau.

Tokelau is a largely self-governing territory under the administration of New Zealand. Its inhabitants are citizens of New Zealand. Despite outside influences, the traditional Tokelauan family and community-oriented way of life remains very strong. In the early 1860s the island's population fell to just 200 after a dysentery outbreak and raids by Peruvian slave ships (Radio Australia, 2005).

In 1860, Tokelau had a population of approximately 200; the Pitcairn descendants arrived in Norfolk Island 4 years earlier with 192. The population of Tokelau is considered part of New Zealand's citizenry; the peoples of Norfolk Island are Australian citizens. Both locations are 'largely' self-governing. Tokelau has a surface area of 12 square kilometres; Norfolk 24 square kilometres. Culturally, both are traditionally family and community oriented societies (Radio Australia, 2005).

In 2006, Tokelau will vote on an act of self-determination, arranged by New Zealand. Apart from the fact that New Zealand never ran a prison on Tokelau, I am not sure where the difference between Tokelau and Norfolk Island lies, although the Tokelauans are obviously not New Zealanders.

Also:

With New Zealand's agreement Tokelau is one of the territories in the list under the supervision of the Special Committee [of 24 on Decolonization] to enable the people of Tokelau to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, independence and sovereignty (Government of Tokelau, 2005).

This same United Nations Committee also maintains Pitcairn Island registered as trust territory administered by Britain. It is with New Zealand's agreement that Tokelau is on

the United Nations list of non-self-governing or trust territories: Australia chooses that Norfolk Island is not.

And now to Cocos Island.

When I was on Norfolk Island in July 2005 the circumstances of the 'creation' of the Cocos Islands were brought to my attention. Settled in 1827 by Captain John Clunies Ross and 'owned' by his family for over 150 years, Cocos Island became a Territory of Australia in 1955 (having been British previously). The people of the island are Cocos Malays, brought to the island in the 1830s, and they have their own 'unique culture', hybridised from a variety of sources (Department of the Environment and Heritage, 2005). Once again I struggle to see the outstanding difference between the story of Cocos Island and Norfolk Island – both a people brought from one location to their island, both hybrid cultures different to their originating culture(s).

The one difference from Norfolk Island that is simple to see however, is that in 1984, Australia provided for an act of self-determination for the Cocos Malays on Cocos Island. This act saw the Cocos Islanders opt for full integration into the Australian nation. Once again I fail to see the rationale for allowing the Act on Cocos but not allowing similar on Norfolk. Perhaps as one respondent put it:

... they were brought there as we were here. 'One law for one, another law for another' [perhaps] they simply don't recognise us as a people.

[But they do recognise the Cocos-Malays as a people?]

Yeah, how about that? (Robinson, 2005).

In light of these two examples it is easy to see that Australia appears to treat some locations differently, and that New Zealand possibly has a more democratic approach to its dependent territories than Australia appears to. For the Pitcairn descendants, the machinations of nation state politics are not always simple, straight forward, nor easy to follow.

Senator Ross Lightfoot, Chairman of the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories has just released his latest report on Norfolk Island (Parliament of Australia, 2005), *Norfolk Island Financial Sustainability: The Challenge – Sink or Swim*. In this report it is recommended that Norfolk Island be taken more completely into Australian control, through the extension of the Australian taxation and social welfare regimes. Attached to this report is a dissenting opinion by Ms Sophie Panopoulos, MP. Ms Panopoulos notes, firstly that although Australia has a role to play in Norfolk Island, it should be for the islanders to decide in full consultation with Australia, to do so “without the consent of the people of Norfolk Island is ill-conceived annexation by stealth” (Parliament of Australia, 2005), 89). She goes on to say “that once prosperous island states ... have become economic and social basket cases due to the removal of self-governance and total incorporation into Australia” (91) – the example she points to, is in fact Cocos Islands. “Where there was once full employment, there is now unemployment ... of 60%, and a raft of social ills” (91).

This point is exactly the one raised by Ric Robinson when I met with him on Norfolk Island.

## Chapter 4

### Cultural Performance of Norfolk Island

I noted earlier that there are two main strands of discourse on Norfolk Island in relation to the islander's identities, one cultural, the other political. This chapter will examine claims of indigenous identity as performed through island *cultural* life; lives lived and performed as 'Pitcairn Descendant'. This work will be mindful of the lives of 'others' who are also Norfolk Islanders. This strand of discourse on modern Norfolk Island identity, the lived culture of the island, comes in multiple forms and is somewhat removed from overt political discourse. It is, in a sense, an arbitrary division made by me to explain various claims to indigeneity. It has a permeable edge, then, and it is important to stress that political and cultural dichotomies are not indigenous concepts, but ones imposed by western scholarship in order to produce research suitable to the dissertation.

In the last chapter, I examined how political forms can support a claim to an indigenous identity, but how do the Norfolk Islander's perform 'culture work'? Norfolk Island culture *is* enmeshed with a political component, in particular, questions of authenticity and membership. Such questions appear to haunt many First Nation peoples, striving to have small sub-national groups and cultures recognised and protected (Gray, 2001; Iakoba & al, 2004; Sissons, 2005; Spoonley, 2000; Thompson & Tyagi, 1996; Trigger & Griffiths, 2003).

As with the word indigenous, culture is difficult to define (Williams, 1976), especially since social actions are always political *and* cultural *and* personal. In affective terms,

the Pitcairn Island culture arose from the activities of the Mothers, the 'twelve'. Politically it arose from the actions of the Father, John Adams. Through the personal and the political, is wrapped the cultural life of Norfolk Island. These discourses struggle on Norfolk although they are not in opposition.

There are numerous islanders engaged in what I have labelled 'culture work'. Five interviews were with respondents that I saw as performing a life, predominantly supported by, and/or supportive of, the culture of island life on Norfolk. These individuals were all Pitcairn descendant family members, but a range of opinions was expressed by them on questions posed by me. None came out and stated that 'I am a culture worker'; these are labels that I have applied as a result of analytic and synthetic work informed by method, methodology and the literature. The 'culture workers' do not wish for the political battles desired by those whose performances are discussed in chapter three, because these are issues which appear to divide the community and for the 'culture workers' such division is unconscionable. Nevertheless, they also hold a strong sense of difference from Australia, with many different ideas about the inappropriateness of Australia's role and control, and are particularly proud of their heritage.

## **From the 19th Century to 1980**

### **The performance of being Pitcairn**

The roots of the Pitcairn descendants of Norfolk Island are deeply enmeshed in cultural Polynesia. In the hybrid paradise of Pitcairn Island, Polynesian culture was publicly denied, through a process of 'claiming Englishness'. The reported visits we know of

since 1808 all derive from the hegemony of Empire – I have found no sources detailing visits by other Polynesian peoples, nor histories written from a Polynesian ‘paradigm’.

Until very recently, almost all the history of the Pacific was written by the Europeans who ‘conquered’ the islanders – with guns and bibles and western forms of knowledge production; who colonised the islands; whose culture came to dominate the world. It is not surprising that the Pitcairn descendants were figured as English people; it is not surprise that the families named themselves by the ‘nine’; that the political regimes run off the English side of descendant history. This is the nature of colonial and imperial power (Robinson & Islanders, 2004; Trigger & Griffiths, 2003; Wassmann, 1998). Yet the performance of the people has been a biblically Christian sensibility of loving God and your Brothers and Sisters, while living in a ‘traditional village’.



Figure 5. Tapa Cloth: Traditional Polynesian cloth made from the bark of the mulberry tree found on both Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands. A traditional artefact manufactured on both islands by the Pitcairners according to some Norfolk Islanders, but doubted by others to have occurred on Norfolk Island, this example was on display in the Bounty Folk Museum. Photo by author.

As the 'twelve' had been raised by their families, *so they raised the Pitcairners* (Figure 4.1). Of this influence, Denning (1988, 86) writes, it is "logical to see the women as the chief socializing force [on Pitcairn] but to admit we cannot say precisely how". By 1800, the children had only John Adams and nine mothers to care for them, yet the impact of the Polynesian culture through the mothers is unknown.

Through years on the island, the people were described physically, appearing *like* islanders, but *not quite*; the foods eaten were noted, traditional foods of Polynesian, cooked in traditional Polynesian ways; their clothing and manner of dress, described as similar to Polynesian peoples, except that at times, they wore their European 'best'; their homes, simple wooden structures in a combined European-Polynesian style; the language of the mothers (and the absent 'six') for the world they spoke, is carried still in the *Norfolk* language (Buffett, 2004; Denning, 1988; Hoare, 1999; Muhlhausler, Pre-publication Draft; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Nobbs, R., 1984; Pitcairn Islands Office, Undated; Shapiro, 1968).

Adams instilled a sense of Englishness, yet the Pitcairn descendants' bodily appearances suggest many islander traits (Buffett, 2004; Shapiro, 1968; Smith, V., 2003). Smith describes them as "Anglified natives" (2003, 118). If a colonial 'good' is that all maintain their position, Native or English, and if the Nativised Englishman is a colonial 'bad' – "a frightening degeneracy from the civilised" (Smith, V., 2003), 119) – then an Anglified Native appears 'better'. The Pitcairn culture "repeatedly figured as a successful experiment ... the best characteristics of the Polynesian and English races" (Smith, V., 2003), 125). This cultural hybridity is still figured on many Christian Web Sites, used as a morality play, demonstrating the redemptive power of the Bible and Prayer (Ferrell, 1988; Henderson, 2003; Riss, 1995).

In the hybridising of Pitcairn Island, the Polynesian culture has been discursively (but not materially) absent through a process of claiming the English. Exceptions occurred. Where the Pitcairner culture was criticised, it was often the islander influence 'at cause' (Denison, 1870); this despite the actuality that many of the attractive elements of the Pitcairn people most likely derive from Polynesian influences (Shapiro, 1968). Since 1800, almost all cultural additions have been European, largely Anglophile – British, Australian, or New Zealand.

Many reports exist of the Pitcairn descendants' welcoming manner to strangers and visitors – naval vessels from England, their connection to Empire, and transiting vessels and their crew. Almost all the reports describe the Pitcairners' behaviour as Christian and pious, decorous in their dealings with outsiders. One report tells how the women danced for the visitors but only for a short time as it was considered to be too frivolous (Nicolson & Davies, 1965). The community at times shamed less pious visitors by their adherence to Christian values, and the simple saying of grace (Dening, 1988, 1992; Hoare, 1999; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Pitcairn Islands Office, Undated; Pitcairn Islands Study Center, 2005a, 2005d; Shapiro, 1968; Smith, V., 2003).

There are a number of issues to consider in relation to this claimed English status, that they were not 'natives', and that they were members of the Empire.

After the violence on Pitcairn of 1793, the community lived as four households, reduced over six years to the one family. There was however a serious schism within that community, and Dening (1988) sees these early years as a time of 'two islands'; the women's and the men's. The spiritual culture of each was radically different, as evidenced by the women digging up and, until discovered, keeping the skulls of the

dead Europeans (Dening, 1988, 1992; Hoare, 1999; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Nobbs, R., 1984; Pitcairn Islands Office, Undated; Shapiro, 1968).

Dening (1988, 1992) suggests that, in the process of withdrawal from the violence that had occurred, the 'Women's Island' on Pitcairn was lost, and that "at least there was an emptiness in its landscape that needed to be filled. John Adams began its filling with his dream of Michael the Archangel" (1988, 88). And who taught the islanders? John Adams, the remaining Englishman, the survivor from Massacre Day, the man shot at close range by the 'blacks' and yet survived, the former drunk who had seen Archangel Michael telling him to be goodly/Godly or lose his mortal soul.

Secondly, among all the early reports of the Pitcairn culture, no-one ever asked (or at least, reported answers from) the women. The only known information from these founding Pitcairners are the reports told by Teehutea-Tuaonoa; interviews published in the 1820s and 1830s after she had finally 'escaped' from Pitcairn and returned home to Tubai. These reports deal exclusively with the violence and its aftermath, with no mention of the choices made regarding culture (Pitcairn Islands Study Center, 2005b, 2005c).

Finally, almost all these comments came from the first generation of the Pitcairn people – the young islanders, born before and after Massacre Day 1793. These must be learned responses; how else can a child, living on an island, thousands of kilometres from other people, and raised by Polynesian women, decide they are 'Englishmen', not 'natives' or 'blacks'?

## **'Pitcairners' becomes 'Norfolkese'**

In 1856, the Pitcairn people moved to Norfolk Island. Little changed.

Norfolk Island shares with Pitcairn a sub-tropical location; beyond that, the islands are quite different. In the main this diversity related to the British impact upon Norfolk Island during the periods of its two penal settlements, when Norfolk Island was largely denuded of its native vegetation and converted to an agricultural landscape (Figures 6 and 7).

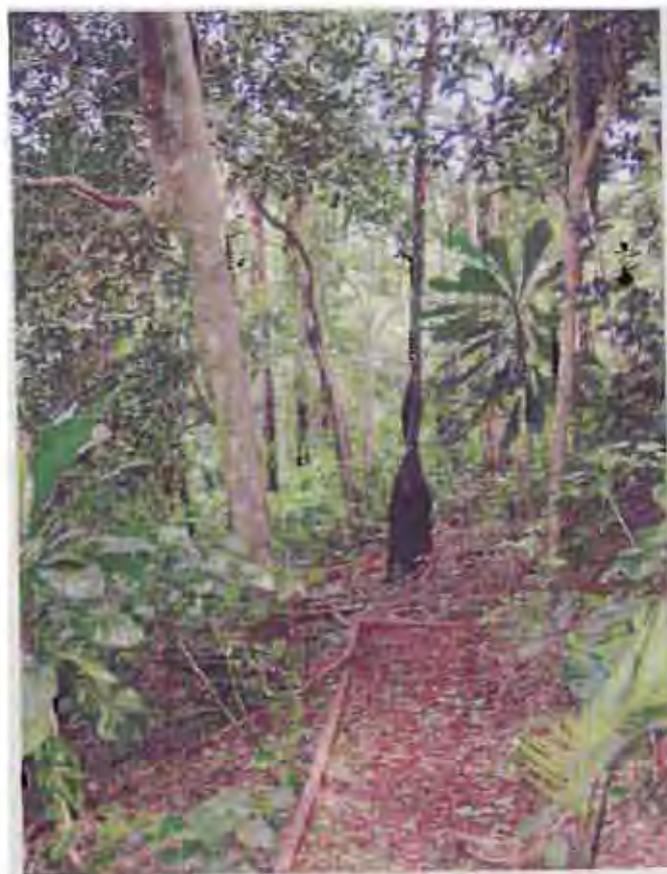


Figure 6: Remnant vegetation in Norfolk Island National Park. Photo by author



Figure 7: Much of Norfolk Island had been converted to agricultural landscapes prior to the arrival of the Pitcairn Islanders in 1856. Photo by author.

On Norfolk Pitcairn descendants were also confronted by a greatly changed different world in terms of technology. This change was unsettling for many and early on there was talk of returning to Pitcairn. George Hunn Nobbs was instrumental in preventing this, although not completely successful, with a number of families relocating back to Pitcairn over the next five years. Reports from the time record the Pitcairners' unease with the use to which Norfolk had been put by the British (Buffett, 2004; Commonwealth of Australia, 1976; Denison, 1870, 1976a, 1976b; Hoare, 1999; Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Nobbs, R., 1984; Treadgold, 1988; [www.pitcairners.org](http://www.pitcairners.org), 1996-2005e, 1996-2005d).

It appears that there were only limited changes to the culture of the Pitcairn descendants as a result of the move to Norfolk; a few new elements being added to their cultural and technological performance on their new island. A number of them joined the American

whaling fleet that was, at this time, working throughout the Pacific. They learned skills later brought back to Norfolk and used, although whaling was never a large industry, nor a particularly financially beneficial practice, ending within a few decades of the end of the Second World War (Hoare, 1999).

The cultural performance of Pitcairn identity slowly changed however, as new bodies began to arrive and new ways of being on-island began to develop. These were not radical departures from traditional behaviour, rather an incremental change over time. Although political disputation was beginning to arise this time is a quiet period in the history (and the historical record) of the island. It was not until the changes within the community generated by the arriving bodies of new settlers in the 1960s and 1970s that more obvious change began to occur. From my reading of historical information, coupled with information gathered on the island, I believe there is a particular change that has occurred in recent years. This has been a significant change in the descendant attitudes to outsiders, as demonstrated by their claiming of difference and seeking separation in some way from 'others'.

## **The 'present' – 1980 onward**

First let me deal with the issue of Pitcairn for today's descendants of Norfolk Island. This was not a significant issue for many respondents. One respondent however put it like this: "Just as England is where many Australians have descent from, England is not a significant place for many Australians after up to 200 years. In this way, although Pitcairn is the 'good place', Fenua Matai, it is the past". There are, nevertheless, contemporary connections with Britain, Australia and Tahiti. Bernie Christian-Bailey has just attended a Bounty Day reunion in Tahiti with descendants from around the

Pacific, their first in 217 years and it was “an incredibly moving experience ... an unmistakable kinship in spite of the language barrier” (Christian-Bailey, B & M., 2005). There are other connections, too, with occasional visits between Norfolk and Pitcairn, but it seems to me that the Pitcairn descendants, on the whole, now have their homeland on Norfolk Island.

The main cultural elements visible on Norfolk Island today are the Penal Colony history and *Bounty* mutiny/Fletcher Christian story on one hand, and the art and lifestyle of Polynesia on the other – again Father England and Mother Polynesia. The language of Norfolk Island, also highly ‘visible’ on the island, is exotic and foreign, but is still this combination of parental influences, and mainly English (Avram, 2003; Buffett, 1999, 2001; Muhlhausler, Pre-publication Draft; Muhlhausler & Stratford, 1999).

### **The Bounty myth – a resurgent story**

In the modern past, tourism has become a major element of the Norfolk Island economy. This industry has led to prominence of the *Bounty* myth on the island. Never absent, it is now the dominating theme. What was once something to be lived down has become a competitive advantage to be highlighted in almost all business, signage and documentary material on, and relating to, the island. Maps, books, tours and publicity material almost all connect with the story.

This emphasis is in contrast to what may actually initiate tourism, which revolves around the historic remnants of the *British* settlements. This element of the island’s past is also strongly underscored. The convict remains from the second penal settlement are widespread and well attended. Being such a small island, and with almost everyone

visiting for seven days, it is quite possible to see all the convict memorabilia as well as be entertained by the Pitcairner history.

Once on the island, most people take a series of tours, ranging from a few hours to full day. It is common for visitors to take in the Island Culture tour – highlighting Pitcairner cultural activities, the Convict Settlement Tour, as well as touring the scenic and biologic attractions. At night, the Fish Fry and Progressive Dinners introduce visitors to an experience of the lives of the islanders, and before they leave they can enjoy evenings of theatre, for a *Night as Convict* or before the mast on the *Bounty Show*.

One respondent, who has been an owner/operator of tourism accommodation, conducted her own research to investigate what it was that most engaged tourists on Norfolk Island. She discovered that those events which provide most enjoyment involve tourists visiting and interacting with the descendant families in their homes in Progressive Dinners and Behind the Hedges tours. This partial commodification of culture helps reinforce and enhance the viability of Pitcairner descendant 'being' on-island.

### **Polynesian culture – another resurgent story**

On Norfolk Island, there is also a revival and celebration of the once-forgotten and/or denied culture of the 'Tahitian foremothers'. This renewal includes the (re)appearance of island (or Tahitian) dancing, *ti'i* (tiki) carving, Polynesian-influenced figurative arts, and the development and production of new music (Christian, G. T., 2001) and musical styles (using instruments that have more of a history in other Polynesian islands). This, I

was informed by a number of respondents, also extends to some degree to a recent resurgence in the use of the *Norfolk* language.

As one respondent told me, the tradition of community picnic, Bounty Day and Thanksgiving, still celebrated today by the descendants, are common Polynesian activities. The sharing of resources, the finding of jobs when needed, these are communal notions that have long disappeared from many societies, but have existed among the Pitcairn descendants and Norfolk Islanders since their earliest days and, as at least two other respondents stated, still exist today.

Two respondents classified as culture workers are both males who were born off-island, one with one descendant parent, the other with two. Both are involved in the 'arts'. John a carver of bone *ti'i* images and 'island dancer', and Donald, a musician and community arts professional, both have been members of the Norfolk Island team at the Festival of Pacific Arts.

### **Emergence of questions of authenticity**

The 're-emergence of culture' is questioned by a number of members of the Norfolk Island community, descendant and not. There is strongly voiced opinion on the island that unequivocally states about a number of Polynesian influenced cultural activities 'No, we never did that. It is 'made up'. I have little doubt that this is an example of what Sissons calls oppressive authenticity (2005). Whether these cultural activities have ever been performed previously on Norfolk Island may be questioned, but, as Sissons points

out, “Why should first peoples ... have authentic identities while settlers ... remain largely untroubled by their own ill-defined cultural characteristics?” (2005, 37).

As John pointed out to me, it was perfectly feasible for him to undertake Asian martial art but try doing Tahitian dancing and immediately his family cried foul, with ‘do you think you are a coconut?’ being their response. He also pointed out that, while cultural practices are resurfacing in Norfolk Island, there are elements that have never really gone away but whose source is no longer remembered or understood.

By looking at the historical record, it is not difficult to find statements made through time that the Pitcairn women danced in the island style (Nicolson & Davies, 1965; Shapiro, 1968; Smith, V., 2003) – despite statements that ‘we never did that’. It may be true that they did not do this on Norfolk Island until recent time, but it is certainly part of the descendant heritage, even if largely forgotten or denied. Alternatively, culture could be viewed as a work in progress, and, just as you and I are part of developing cultures that continue and grow as time goes by, so Norfolk Island culture grows and changes. The point is equally applicable to *ti'i* carving. Although the people who returned to Pitcairn Island are well known carvers, this ‘was not done’ on Norfolk Island say some.

In his turn, Donald talked of the legitimating effect of the Festival of Pacific Arts. The festival, the major Pacific Island Cultures artistic forum is designed to allow the presentation of historically traditional works, not just for Norfolk islanders but among all Pacific Island cultures, while also encouraging and developing new cultural expressions (Hayward, 2005b), a process of living culture, neither ossified ‘true’ nor ‘pure’ ...

The writing of Norfolk Island songs for performance at the Festival of Pacific Arts is a legitimating act in itself according to one respondent, even when songs are written by non-descendant islanders (islanders who have arrived in only the past few years at that). That these non-descendant artworks are created at all is disconcerting to others, however, and yet holding restrictive controls over who can partake in the culture, based on descent and lineage, or on authenticity grounds, threatens the culture more than any political activities that take away political rights.

### ***Norfolk* the language**

Almost every respondent made some mention of the *Norfolk* language as a particular marker of identity. Although not Polynesian, it is an element of the culture that has been repressed in a variety of ways over the years (Commonwealth Grants Commission, 1997; Commonwealth of Australia, 1976). Most told how, for many of the older islanders, the use of *Norfolk* in the school playground was grounds for corporal punishment. Now, for many of those aged from the late teens to early adult years, the Norfolk language “is a marker that they start to use ... when they reach a certain age” (Christian-Bailey, B. a. M., 2005).

Many respondents reported that, although they have noticed a loss of vocabulary (commonly, ‘pure Tahitian’ words), language use has regained some strength in recent times, including it being introduced as a subject in the school. One respondent also pointed out that the etymology of words is being forgotten as well, having been told:

‘Stop using that ...rude word’. And why?

‘Because it comes from the English word, ‘f\*\*ked.’

But it doesn't, it comes from a Tahitian word. Here is an island person who has lost touch with where the language has come from. And... if that starts happening... it is a subtle denying of our Polynesian roots. This was a woman who is engaged in other cultural activities (John Christian, 2005).

Another 'culture worker' that I was able to interview was Alice Buffett, OAM, Norfolk Islander. Over many years Alice has worked on devising a written form of *Norfolk* (Buffett, 1999, 2001), which historically has only been a spoken language. There has been a previous attempt to create a written form of the language but Alice's has become the standard. However, as Donald advised me, when he uses Alice's spellings for the signs to his business,

it gets me into trouble [but he uses it anyway, because] it's the one that is recognised and works. When I came to the island I had no language and struggled to find someone who would teach me. As a child of a descendant, I was 'allowed', but an Australian or Kiwi would be ostracised (Donald Christian-Reynolds, 2005).

## Language as indigeneity

Crystal asks the question "is language an obligatory part of an indigenous culture?" (2000, 119). He also notes that such a simple question does not always have a simple answer. Peter Whitely approaches the issue of language rights and indigenous people from another angle. He notes that "language rights ideology [at times] reinforces social inequality, both transnationally and group-internally" (2003, 712). Personally, in the

case of *Norfolk* usage, I find this to be a compelling argument. Although I appreciate that this is the descendant's language, and a part of their unique cultural heritage, I felt that it was also a divisive and discriminatory element within the island society.

It became obvious to me that the use of *Norfolk* language is another version of oppressive authenticity, internal to the descendant community. Many descendants hold hegemonic beliefs that the language cannot, should not, be used by non-islanders (or even non-descendant islanders). I heard one prominent descendant islander denigrated because he came to the island later in life "and he can never sound like me" (Anon).

As Donald related to me, he sees individuals who refuse to countenance language use by non-islanders, even spouses, and as a result the language is not used at all. As he sees it "the language is going out the window", and he believes the language is threatened. A recent song-writing competition was won by an 'arrived' islander. For Donald it is definitely an island song and part of the islander's culture, the sense of the songs captures the sense of the island and its people, it carries its own authenticity. For others the opposite is the case.

There were two other respondent interviews with people I would recognise as culture workers who do not work at some particular 'cultural activity'. They are not carvers or weavers or dancers, although all most certainly would have the knowledge of them to various degrees. Rather, these were interviews, firstly with a 'mixed-race' couple, a long-time married English wife and descendant islander husband. The wife has lived on Norfolk for nearly fifty years, and although not a descendant, "... does not feel an outsider, I've been here long enough now" (Christian-Bailey, B. a. M., 2005). The second respondent was a young married descendant with a descendant partner. The

female had learned to weave and plait in traditional styles from her grandmother. They both learned their language in day-to-day living at home, from descendant parents, and the woman “only speaks Norfolk to my grandmother”. Both husband and wife have a childhood desire to visit Pitcairn Island and feel a very strong bond to there. But still also see themselves as Norfolk islanders first (Snell, 2005).

These two interviews in particular, highlight for me *the living culture* of the Pitcairn descendant Norfolk islanders, with roots back across generations, in ways learned on Pitcairn Island, in their traditional island homeland, that have come with them, and remain in a recognisable form today.

All these culture worker respondents had an idea of how indigeneity related to them. Three in particular talked about feeling they were the indigenous people of Norfolk because of this communal cultural history, the first people to reside on Norfolk as homeland. They are strongly involved as well in the performance of Norfolk values and traditions. Along with Alice, another culture worker will have no bar of the idea. But neither really gives an in-depth reason beyond suggesting that they were Anglo-Polynesian, that other Europeans have joined the mix, and that they are a mix: 'coconuts' appears to be the favoured term on Norfolk Island. Finally, one respondent describes himself as someone with many different ethnicities, and he chooses not to emphasise any one in particular. Rather, he expressed a strong intent to honour and respect all the various cultural inheritances, and then use them to make a new Norfolk island as he goes.

# Chapter 5

## Conclusions

For some reason I had hoped not to have make any comment on whether the Pitcairn Island descendants are or are not an indigenous people. I suspect that there is no such luxury or method of escape. The reason I would like to not make the statement is that I cannot see that it is my (or anybody else's) place to make it. I agree with the International Labour Organisation that it is the right of all people themselves to make self-determination decisions, without pressure from outsiders or governments. (Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2004).

The further I progress through the writing of this dissertation however, the more obvious it becomes that it is impossible to make statements that are totally neutral on the issue. By pointing out the nature of 'political indigeneity' (Sissons, 2005), the response of a population that is faced by a larger settler society that 'oppresses' the self determination of that population, it is implicit that they have become indigenous, simply through the struggle. Of course, like many things on Norfolk Island, there is no agreement on this matter.

So what did I find and what do I have to say about the project I have conducted.

Well Norfolk Island certainly is the paradise that shows in the tourist brochures.

Arriving there at 8 pm after leaving Hobart at 7 that morning, in the middle of winter, I started ripping off clothes as I got taken away in the hire car. And as I said, bananas off the tree. It wasn't long however before I found that Norfolk Island is also a site of

contention between sections of the island population. There are differing ideas about many things on Norfolk Island, not the least of which is whether the Pitcairn descendants are an indigenous people. I arrived not long after the Australian government had just removed the rights of a number of islanders to stand for election in the House of Assembly that governs Norfolk island, this of course so that some temporary resident Australians can vote after they have been on the island for six months rather than the wait of nearly three years that they used to have face. Of course the fact that John Christian, many years resident, son of Norfolk islanders back a number of generations can no longer put himself forward to represent his people. He's not even a citizen after all.

Of course it must have been anti-civil libertarian that a 19 year old Australian itinerant would have to wait to know whether he should vote for Ric Robinson or Alice Buffet perhaps.

I also soon found out that the question of whether they are or aren't, doesn't fall out very logically, or in any straight forward sort of way, when two resident islanders, not of Pitcairn heritage but each of 40 years experience on the island, told me two (only, which is something) completely different stories, one as to why this was true and the other as to why this wasn't true. Only to be told the very same stories by two descendants the next time I asked. There is no guarantee of agreement or disagreement on Norfolk island, even from seemingly equivalent cohorts, descendant/non-descendant or seemingly opposed cohorts, male/female, etc.

There are of course islanders who believe this is the most burning of questions while others think it really is fiddling while Headstones burns.

Before I left I thought quite a bit about what would indicate to me whether this was an indigenous people or not. In the end, until I met the islanders and actually heard what they had to say I could only think that it would be wait and see how they 'performed'.

I found that there were two main subsets within the population, those who were politically active and those who live like islanders. And once again there was no agreement about that either, John Christian, an artist islander, was very well informed politically; while Ken Nobbs, who struck me as quite the elder statesman of the political life on Norfolk island had a number of quite spectacular pieces of art photography that he sold at his shop.

No, Norfolk Island is not a straight forward place.

And Pitcairn descendants, what can one say. In 1808 they were absolutely certain they were not those 'blacks', they were good and true servants of the empire, Englishmen through and through. Just as Norfolk paradise would have been one hell of a hole to spend your time in chains, pit sawing pine trees for the term of your no longer so natural life.

All this is tempered of course by the realisation that has come to me, that I missed an entire class of Norfolk resident in this project. Who was living behind that beautiful stone wall that separates the entire north-west corner of Point Vincent from we mere poor people? There is a class of people I am 'reliably' informed are manipulating and busy washing money behind such fences.

When the Pitcairn people came to Norfolk Island they found a garden. One that grows everything from strawberries to pineapples I was told. And the Governors could never see why a proper Englishman would allow himself to fall into that indolent life of the strolling gardener/fisherman.

So once again Britain abandoned Norfolk Island. Sadly the people on the island this time couldn't just be told to leave with a happy heart. They might have said, if you don't want it, can we have it for real this time? And what the missionaries we sold those acres to? Let's give it to New South Wales.

Surely it didn't matter that here was the oldest democratic regime in the Pacific or that all the women could vote or that all the kids were in school. So why were they upset. Again. Why can't they just do what we know is best. We might let them try a bit more of that old self governing again eventually and review it in a few years once they get on their feet.

Australia and Norfolk Island work at pushing each other where they don't want to go. I can see why they are called colonialists by some. I can also see why having an Australian passport to get off the island if you are unwell is also very important to others.

The Norfolk islanders love their island, just as the pitcairners loved it on pitcairn as well. It shapes them, it establishes their relationship with the rest of Australia. Although outwardly the islanders don't appear all that different, this is a small, small spot in the vast Pacific. When you stand on the mountain you can see how vast their little bit of the Pacific is. On my last day I went back to the top and looked out. It suddenly hit me, you

are very lucky that you are related to everyone, or so it seems. If any misfortune should befall, it is very comforting to know that you will be looked after by your family, because you just know that you are all in it together. You can't be sure if that boat will come back or if that airline will keep flying in, it's no wonder really that the wife and kids run out on the lawn and jump and shout when the plane arrives. You are very much dependent upon each other, and you are all very vulnerable.

But the islanders have their culture. It has been very quiet for a long time, but they are remembering again. They have remembered that dancing is fun, if necessary they can even make some clothes from the tree down the road. And there is singing and music again, like the old, old days.

Norfolk island resists the attempts to make it the same. It is not Australia. Yes sure 'they' own it, but we were very much here first. And we are different to them. Grandma told us so, like her grandma. And she should know, her family has been here in the Pacific for thousands of years. And that rough tough Englishman she married back there, well he didn't stay. So we can rest back in the old native ways and get on with what the locals have always done. We will talk to ourselves, we have our own way of talking among ourselves as well. We aren't like them. And if they think they can tell us we are well, we will just decide for ourselves. Determine our own course and argue and resist all the way until they realise that we are our own people, with our way of talking, our way of being in the island, our way of cooking and all.

Because we are the native people of Norfolk Island.

# Appendix A

## The Research Questions

During the interview for this research project, the interview will be structured around, the following general areas of interest;

- 1 How has it arisen that the Pitcairn-descendant Norfolk Islanders view themselves as indigenous?
- 2 What does 'indigenous' mean for them?
- 3 Is it salient that this community has arisen and lives on an island?
- 4 Are there particular activities or cultural norms and practices that sustain the community as separate to other Norfolk Islanders and Australians?
- 5 How do the Pitcairn-descendants constitute and represent these ideas?

# Appendix B

## CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Analysis of the constitution of an 'indigenous' sense of place and community in a small island state: the case of Norfolk Island and the Pitcairn-descendant population.

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1. I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this study.
2. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
3. I understand that the study involves the following procedures: an audio-taped interview of approximately one hour's duration, discussing (a) the nature of the claim by the Pitcairn-descendants of Norfolk Island, that they are an indigenous people; and (b) the impact of their location on an island in the development of that identity. I understand that the interview will be transcribed, and that I will be given a copy of the transcript, which I may edit or modify.
4. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for at least five years, and thereafter will be destroyed if no longer required.
5. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
6. I agree that research data gathered from me for the study may be published, and recognise that although the researcher will seek to ensure that my comments are not identifiable to me should I so desire, a complete assurance of anonymity cannot be given.
7. I understand that, should I wish it, the researcher will not disclose my identity and that any information I supply to the researcher(s) will be used only for the purposes of the research.
8. I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without any effect, and if I so wish may request that any data I have supplied to date be withdrawn from the research.

Name of Participant:

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Signature:

Date:

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### Statement by Investigator

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation

Name of Investigator     Michael Ritzau

Signature of  
Investigator

# Appendix C

## Research Subject Information Sheet.

Date.

Research Project: Analysis of the constitution of an 'indigenous' sense of place and community in a small island state: the case of Norfolk Island and the Pitcairn-descendant population.

Chief Investigator: Dr. Elaine Stratford

Student Investigator: Michael Ritzau

Dear .....

I would like to invite you to join in a research project that I am undertaking with respect to the descendants of Pitcairn Islanders living in Norfolk Island.

My name is Michael Ritzau and I am carrying out this research, with the guidance of Dr Elaine Stratford, as the research component of my Bachelor of Arts, Honours degree in the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Tasmania.

Claims for status as 'separate people' or 'indigenous people' have been made by some members of the Norfolk Island community. It is my desire to investigate this claim, understand how it has come about, develop some understanding of what the claim means to the people who make it, and to gather some idea of the numbers of the population who hold such opinion. At the same time I will also seek to examine contrary views to such an idea, as well as seek out the views of the official Australian Government representatives such as the Administrator and members of the Department of Transport and Regional Services.

The benefits of this research project lie mainly in the extension of understanding of island peoples and cultures. What limited material benefit does exist will come to me, as it is a component of the requirements for completing my degree.

At the same time however, much of the information gathered will be publicly available, through the University of Tasmania's Island Studies web page maintained by my Principal Researcher, Dr Elaine Stratford. You will also receive an executive summary of the research, upon its completion, should you choose to participate.

It should also be noted that there is an intrinsic value in this research, which may assist in producing a greater understanding of the Pitcairn-descendants, their culture, and their relationship with Australia and place in the wider world.

If on reading this information sheet you decide to not be involved please feel confident to decline to be part of this research project. Should you agree to participate, you may of course withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice, and withdraw any information you have supplied to date.

While at Norfolk Island at the end of June 2005, I will conduct interviews with members of the Norfolk Island community who are interested in this research topic. Attached you will find a list of question areas that I will be researching, as well as a

consent form which, if you agree to participate, I will ask you to sign when I conduct this interview.

Such an interview would likely require about an hour of your time and unless you object, it will be tape recorded. A record of the transcript of the interview will also be sent to you so that have an opportunity to amend, add to, or delete from, that transcript.

I understand that there could be a risk of some social discord over this issue if you are identified as a having a particular point of view about the claim for indigenous identity. So if you should desire it, I will not use your real name in my report, or refrain from attributing your statements to any specific individual, thereby maintaining a degree of anonymity. However, you should note that although I will take all available steps to preserve your anonymity upon your request, the very nature of the study dictates that a complete assurance of anonymity cannot be given. If you are concerned by this, but nonetheless wish to participate, please bring to my attention statements you wish to make “off the record”. Carefully check the transcript for any information you consider may be identifying which you do not wish to be identifiable to you. Note also that you may decline to answer any question.

The information collected in this study will be stored safely at the University of Tasmania in a lockable cabinet for a minimum of five years.

Any questions or requests for further details can be addressed to Dr. Elaine Stratford who can be contacted as follows –

by telephone at	61 3 6226 2462,
by mobile phone	0413 036357
by fax at	61 3 6226 2989, or
by email at	<a href="mailto:Elaine.Stratford@utas.edu.au">Elaine.Stratford@utas.edu.au</a>

Alternatively such questions or requests can be addressed to Michael Ritzau

by telephone at	61 3 6226 2390, or
by email at	<a href="mailto:mjritzau@utas.edu.au">mjritzau@utas.edu.au</a>

This research project has received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network, a constituted and regulated organisation. If you have any concerns about this project, the ethical nature of the research or the manner in which it is to be conducted feel free to the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network; this is Ms Amanda McAully who can be contacted by telephone on

61 3 62262763, or

by email at [Amanda.McAully@utas.edu.au](mailto:Amanda.McAully@utas.edu.au).

I will be seeking to interview between thirty and forty individuals in the time that I am on Norfolk Island and am still seeking further individuals who may be interested to participate. If you are aware of any members of the community who may be interested in this topic, holding an opinion either supporting or disputing the idea that the Pitcairn-descendant people are an indigenous people, I would be happy for you to bring this project to their attention and invite them to contact me on the included telephone numbers or email addresses.

Thank you for your interest in this study.

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Michael Ritzau

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