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**‘There is lots of history here’: Memory, History and Subjectivity
among the Aboriginal people of Palm Island, North Queensland**

**English Summary
of the
Thesis submitted by Lise Garond
November 2011**

**For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Anthropology),
James Cook University, School of Arts and Social Sciences
Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales**

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the historical conditions and the practices of memory among Palm Island people. Located in the north-east of Queensland, Australia, about sixty-five kilometres off the coast from Townsville, Palm Island is also the name of an 'Aboriginal community' of some three thousand people. Drawing from my fieldwork research, carried out on Palm Island and in Townsville in 2006, 2007 and 2009, and from an approach based on the themes of subjectivity, history and memory, I look at the particular ways in which Palm Island people today consider and interpret their past, question its traces in the present, undertake to 'track back', 'heal' from, or 'keep' the past, and commemorate the fact that 'there is a lot of history here', as Palm Islanders often say.

I first look at the historical circumstances in which the Palm Island reserve was put into place in 1918, under the authority of the colonial, so-called 'protection' policy set up at the end of the 19th century. From this period onwards, Aboriginal people living in Queensland were massively relocated to reserves such as Palm Island. They were subjected to various colonial ambitions of isolation, control, discipline and 'reformation' of the Aboriginal 'subject'. The political upheavals of the 1960s and the 70s did not lead to the end of the colonial regime but to a new frame of power between the state and Aboriginal people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. It is in this context, at the crossroads where historians and Aboriginal activists met, that a new discourse on the colonial past, on the oppressive and destructive nature of colonial policies, emerged, as well as a new place for memory. In this thesis, I consider the weight of these historical circumstances on 'memory' on Palm Island. I ask in which particular ways this 'place' is occupied, and to what extent the 'positions' attributed to Aboriginal subjects in the colonial and 'postcolonial' eras are embodied, resisted or repossessed.

Although many anthropologists have taken into account the significant effects of the 'recognition era' on the various ways in which Aboriginal people identify and represent themselves in terms of cultural difference, fewer studies have specifically focused on the changing ways in which the past, and especially the colonial past, is being questioned and reinterpreted today by Aboriginal people.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims at understanding how the past inhabits the present for Palm Island people. An island near the North Queensland coast, Palm Island is home to a population of about 3000; many people who actually live on the mainland, also call Palm Island ‘home’. Palm Island is where I conducted my field research, also coming and going between the island and the coastal city of Townsville, during several periods between late 2005 and August 2007, and then again in 2009.

One way to interpret the history of Palm Island, is in fact to specifically focus on the relationship between the island and the mainland. Palm Islanders often use the term ‘mainland’ to characterise ways of doing, talking, and being that are different from those of the Island, that is, non-Aboriginal or *migaloo* (white) manners. But the island is not separate from the mainland. Their contours are continuously defined by their relationality, according to their respective positions. Palm Islanders very frequently travel by ferry boat or by small aeroplane to Townsville, 65 km away. They may shop in Townsville and/or spend a few days there visiting members of their families. Many Palm Islanders also have kin who reside hundreds of kilometres away in various locations around Queensland. ‘Mainland’ people also come to the island for various periods of time: doctors and nurses, police officers, teachers, tradesmen, various government and non-government agents and, regularly, journalists. When island children meet a non-Aboriginal person for the first time they tend to first ask him or her where or for whom they work: the hospital, the school, the police and so on. In fact, I was also asked this several times during my early field work.

Currently, there are two schools on Palm Island, a kindergarten, a hospital and a police station, as well as a government -owned supermarket, a fish and chip shop, a butcher shop, a pub, two small petrol stations, a little grocery store, a post office, and a bank. There are also three churches and a catholic convent with two nuns, an employment centre (Job Find), a technical and further education college, a social security office (Centrelink), a Community Development Education Program (CDEP) office, and old people’s home. There are also local organisations such as the Kootana Women’s Centre, the Alcohol Rehabilitations Centre and the Community Justice Group. The island, which became a shire in 2006, is administered by a Council, that is, the Palm Island Aboriginal Community Council. Thus, Palm Island is the name of the island and also the name of the “the Aboriginal community”.

The expression ‘Aboriginal community’, commonly used by Palm Islanders themselves, became in the course of the 1980s the term officially used in Australia to designate places that were previously called ‘Aboriginal reserves’. These were administered by the state and/or by missionaries of various denominations. In the case of Palm Island, it was the state of Queensland that administered the reserve but there was also a strong presence of representatives from different churches. From the end of the 19th C, until the early 1970s, several thousand Aboriginal people were removed to

reserves and missions from all over Queensland and notably in case of Palm Island, also people from the Torres Strait Islands.

After several decades of brutal colonisation, during which Queensland became an independent colony (1859), Aboriginal people were placed under the *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act* (1897). The legislation was intended to protect Aboriginal people from colonial violence (physical violence inflicted by settlers and police as well as disease, hunger and exploitation of their labour). The Act operated as a legal instrument of unlimited control over those placed under its authority. Numerous administrators around the state (often local police officers) were appointed to oversee the movements of Aboriginal people, their ways of life, subsistence and conduct. They had the authority to order their removal from their homelands to a reserve at any moment. It was under this Act that the Palm Island reserve was established in 1918. A few years earlier, the island had been selected by the government for its isolation from the mainland. The Aboriginal population of the island (about 20 people at the time) were removed to another reserve but after this reserve was destroyed by a cyclone they were returned to the island, which was then established as the Palm Island reserve.

Of all the reserves in Queensland, Palm Island was the one to which the greatest number of people were removed from multiple places all around the state and frequently from other reserves and missions. Often the reason people were sent to Palm Island was because they were deemed to have been disobedient towards the administration, but removal orders could be invoked for many other reasons. One could be ordered to be removed if one was unemployed or unable to work. Children were often removed if they were deemed to be abandoned by their parents. Young women could be removed if they were thought to be at risk of sexual ‘promiscuity’. One could also be removed if one was sick or suspected of carrying a disease. The protection administration appointed itself to regulate all aspects of everyday life of Aboriginal people within the reserves. To live ‘under the Act’ as older people on Palm Island often say (the reserve continued to be administered by the state until the 1980s), meant more than living under high surveillance (see Ch 2).

During my fieldwork on Palm Island, I was often told by Palm Islanders that ‘there is a lot of history’ (and not histories, or stories), ‘here’, or ‘in this place’; a statement which would often introduce or conclude narratives about life ‘under the Act’ and which also suggests that for them the past, or history, inhabits the present.

The field research

At the time I went to Australia in August 2005 to start my PhD in anthropology as a cotutelle student at James Cook University in Townsville, supervised by Barbara Glowczewski and Rosita Henry, I had in mind a completely different research project. I was interested in Aboriginal initiatives in eco-tourism north of Townsville. I wanted to observe how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people related to one another through such ventures. However, while living in Townsville, my attention was drawn to Palm Island, a change of perspective which I owe partly to Barbara Glowczewski but also to the Palm Island people that I met through her in Townsville. In fact, the first meeting I attended was in December 2004 when I visited Townsville for the first time

during my Masters degree in anthropology at EHESS. I went with Barbara Glowczewski, who is an Adjunct Professor at JCU, to a public meeting in a church (St Theresa's) in a neighbourhood where many Aboriginal families live. Often political meetings organised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activists take place in this church. At that meeting, the words and emotions expressed by the participants revealed to me (although from hazy distance) the existence of a brutal reality which I had not realised in course of conducting my masters research on dance and Aboriginal performance, a reality that was far from what I had thought I had learned about Australia. The participants seemed to be in a state of shock: they talked about the death in custody of a Palm Island man, a riot, the intervention of a special police force and arrests (Glowczewski 2008:55-6). Since my arrival in Townsville I had been exposed to the media frenzy about these recent events of November 2004.

In the morning of 19 November 2004, a Palm Island man, Cameron Doomadgee, was walking home. Seeing that another man was about to be arrested by the police, he stopped on his way. According to certain witnesses, he talked to the Aboriginal Police Liaison officer that accompanied the police officer, Christopher Hurley. According to other witnesses he was singing a song and then just passed by. Yet, police officer Hurley judged that Cameron Doomagee's conduct was disorderly enough to allow him to arrest him as a 'public nuisance' and for being drunk in a public place (a street). He was immediately driven to the police station and was found dead in a cell less than an hour after his arrest. A week after his death, the results of the first autopsy were made public. The island's mayor read the results out in front of a large number of people who had gathered in the central square of the island. The report revealed the gravity of the injuries leading to the death (four broken ribs, traces of bruising on the face, liver almost split in half and a severed portal vein leading to major internal haemorrhage). The report did not simply describe the lethal injuries but also said that they had been caused by 'compressive force' and concluded that these were the result of an 'accident' and 'a fall'. Some people became angry on hearing these results and a large number of them walked towards the front of the police station to express their anger and ask for explanation. Some windows of the police station were broken and a fire was started, while the police officers, who had been inside the station, retreated to the private police barracks across the road, where some of their colleagues were already grouped. The police officers again faced those who asked for explanation on the other side of the street behind a high barbed wire fence, after which people dispersed. The police officers then walked to the nearby hospital to wait for police reinforcements. Anti-riot police were sent to the island in full combat gear and the Queensland government declared a state of emergency. During the dark hours of the next morning, and during the following weeks, more than twenty people were charged with 'rioting with destruction'. According to the Queensland Criminal Code, they faced from three years to life imprisonment. Barbara Glowczewski followed the committal hearings in April 2005. Those who had been charged with rioting were placed on bail in Townsville and were forbidden to go back to the Island or to meet with one another (Glowczewski 2008a: 85-98).

When I came back to Australia in September 2005, I had the opportunity to meet people from Palm Island in Townsville through Barbara Glowczewski. I was taken by the way people seemed to insist that Palm Island was not 'like they always portray us in the media'. The Palm Island community

had indeed been represented, and it continued to be represented, by most of the regional and national media as a dangerous, depressed place, a place prey to all evil – alcoholism, unemployment, violence, despair. The images that Barbara Glowczewski had filmed on the island in September 2005, during a ball organised in honour of the elders of Palm Island (a debutant ball) displayed something different (Glowczewski 2008a: 106-109). Barbara shared her enthusiasm for the energy that Palm Island people seemed to employ in rejoicing in their lives, despite all that had happened. Some of them who had not been able to come to the celebration asked for copies of the film, while others wanted to see these images again and again and took great pleasure in commenting on them. The ball seemed to have been an opportunity not so much to deny the depressing images of the community that were conveyed by the media, as to see themselves in another light. This intricate relationship which appeared to exist between the ways the media, or more generally people of the mainland, represented them and the way Palm Islanders thought of themselves, appeared almost taken-for-granted. However, it had become more perceptible since the 2004 events. Nevertheless, it is the product of a long history.

This very question of their representation by, and relationship with, the ‘mainland’, around which conversations centred during my first encounters with Palm Island people, already positioned me as a participant observer. While bringing this topic up, the people that I met seemed to interrogate my gaze upon them. It was by finding myself so ‘interpellated’ that I started what was to become my fieldwork, with the desire not to be just one more non-Aboriginal observer. But I also sensed that I was inevitably inscribed within a historicity not of my own choosing and also that this desire was probably going to be questioned by Palm Island people.

Situating Memory

Since the 1980s we have seen in history, anthropology, sociology a ‘memory boom’ (Winter 2001). This interest in memory follows from an increased interest, since at least the turn of the 1980s, in the historicity of socio-cultural forms and contexts that anthropology had long considered ‘out of time’ (Fabien 1983, Cohn 1980, Wolf 1982, Thomas 1989, Sahlins 1985, Asad 1987). It also followed from an increased interest in the manners in which the past is considered and interpreted in the present by those that anthropology had long considered as ‘people without history’ (Wolf 1982; Appadurai 1981, Peel 1984). Increasingly, since the late 1980s such interests have been assimilated into memory studies. The notion of memory seemed an appropriate way to consider history as lived from a subjective point of view, and from various social, historical and cultural perspectives. While anthropologists were questioning their methods, tools and the authority of their discourse, and also the studying the effects of colonisation, memory appeared able to take into account the experiences of the colonial and postcolonial situation. However, according to some authors, the uses of the notion of memory, although varied, tend to be excessive when memory is taken to designate ‘every little trace of the past in the present’ (Berliner 2005:202).

Even though the notion of memory tends to be imprecisely defined, it has gained rhetorical power (Gillis 1994b:3; Kansteiner 2002; Klein 2000; Geddi and Elam 1996; de L’Estoile 2008). There are many ways that the notion of memory can be defined. It is commonly, although not uniformly, agreed that memory cannot be simply defined as a repository recollections, of knowledge or ideas,

neatly arranged and always available for retrieval, and that memory is not strictly a mental process, since emotions, sensations, impressions, visual perceptions, can be sources and vectors of memory and be part of mnemonic techniques (Seremetakis 1994; Severi 2007). It is also commonly agreed that a perspective on memory as a category of the mind, separated from the body, and also subsequently as the foundation of an individual self, is based on a Western model of the person. To pay attention to other forms of memory, is also to pay attention to other forms of persons or a 'subjectivity' (Radstone and Hodgkin 2009 [2005]; Lambek 2002, 2009 [2005]). Things start to get more complicated when memory is defined as something that leaves a trace that is visible in ways of talking, doing, interpreting the world, culturally and socially constituted and transmitted in practice and through time: that is, what Pierre Bourdieu (1980) has described as 'the habitus'. Such views of memory, which have now become common (Papoulias 2009 [2005]), in the end equate to a particular perspective on culture itself as social practice situated in time. To a certain degree I adhere to this perspective in my approach to the ways in which the colonial past constitutes memory for Palm Island people, to the extent that for social subjects these ways of talking, doing and situating themselves in relation to others are viewed more or less explicitly as memorial practices, that is, as significant traces of a particular lived history.

A third aspect, which is nonetheless not separable from the two others, concerns the emergence, the constitution and the social and cultural transmission of versions of the past; that is, interpretations of the past where political identity and ethical questions are at stake and which are re-elaborated in the present according to perspectives that can be ambivalent or even contradictory (Werbner 1998; Cole 1998, 2001). I find it problematic to define habitus and these versions of the past in terms of the concept of 'collective memories' remembered or forgotten by a social body or a social group, as Maurice Halbwachs (1997[1950] has put it, as if the social body were itself a person, a stable sum of individuals and a structure transcending social practice. It is also problematic to reject the term history to name these versions of the past, as if 'history' could only be applied to certain kinds of western narratives about the past, and 'memory' was able to designate all 'other' forms of narratives.

'History' against 'memory'?

The increasing interest in the notion of memory in the social sciences may be linked to the critique of 'History', as a regime of discourse, and as and temporal perspective, particular to 'the West'. According to historian Kervin Lee Klein (2000: 128), the increased use of 'memory' in the humanities since the 1980s goes hand in hand with the 'postmodern' critique of 'meta-narratives', not the least 'the totalizing aspects of historical discourse' (see White 1973, 1987, Chakrabarty 2007[2000]). Several dimensions are at stake in this relativist critique: 'History' is both a particular perspective on time, and a category of discourse which makes of time its object with authoritative claim to objectivity. At the hands of dominant powers, History serves to celebrate the victorious, while 'forgetting' the 'vainquished' (This critique has notable precedents, the most famous being probably those of Friedrich Nietzsche – 1998, Walter Benjamin – 2000 – or Claude Lévi-Strauss – 1995).

As Michel de Certeau (1975), Reinhart Koselleck (1985) or Constantin Fasolt (2004) have argued, the constitution of History, in the Western world goes with major changes in the perception of temporality. While it becomes linear and progressive, a 'present' emerges, which continuously differentiates itself from a 'past' from which it extracts itself towards a 'future'. 'History making' becomes synonymous with a force in motion towards 'progress'. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, the 'history of historians' posits itself as 'out of time', pretending to be able to judge everything with an 'apocalyptic objectivity'(Foucault 2001a: 146): whatever happened may be known and replaced in a linear logic (a perspective which culminates with the 19th century historicism).

There is a direct link between the emergence of this 'writing of history' as Michel de Certeau (1975) remarks, and the colonial enterprise - a link which also closely concerns the emergence of the anthropological project. The 'writing of history', in a broad way, objectifies 'the other', whether this other is 'the past', or 'the savage' (ibid. : 10). It can be taken as an image of the colonial project itself, which 'writes its own will' on the conquered lands, or on the bodies of the colonised, while constituting a knowledge about them. This parallels the work of Michel Foucault on power and knowledge, and that of Edward Saïd (1978) on colonial discourse as an 'orientalist' discourse, in which representations of the 'East' intimately participates in the colonial enterprise. Building on these insights, the postmodern and postcolonial critique, as the critique of western - as well as colonial - modernity, took on itself to 'provincialize Europe' by relativising and re-signifying its concepts (Chakrabarty 2007[2000]). By centering the critique of history on the deconstruction of its epistemological premises however, one important challenge may become lost from attention, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues (1995 : 5-7) : that is, the historical 'silence' effects engendered in the production of dominant historical narratives. Trouillot looks, in particular, at how western historiography managed to 'silence' the revolutionary upheaval in Haïti; he shows how the production of dominant historical narratives starts, in a very concrete manner, with the taking into note or the dismissing of particular events, continues in the production of archives, the interpretation and reinterpretation of 'sources', the constitution of narratives, all these steps participating in a struggle for power to maintain other narratives 'silent'.

If the historical discourse, at the hands of dominant powers, and as itself a discursive power, installs its authority by silencing, or doubting, subaltern histories, is it however always judicious to oppose, precisely, in the course of analysis, 'History' as a western category, and as an object of hegemonic power/knowledge, to every other forms of historicities, and to 'memory', as what differs from it, or even 'resists' it? For a number of authors who write in the broad field of memory studies, here lies precisely the risk of a 'romanticization' of 'memory' (Lambek 2009[2005], Gable & Handler 2000, Stoler & Strassler 2000). Memory, as the 'counter-history' of colonized people, would in itself provide a critique of dominant power. Ann-Laura Stoler and Karen Strassler (2000: 7-8) underline the fact that in such perspective, what prevails is a 'storage model', according to which experiences of the colonial, for instance, would be 'stored' in memory as if it was itself a repository of critiques of the colonial power, only waiting to be given a 'voice'. The paradox, here, lies in the fact that while much attention is given to colonial discourses and practices, 'memory' is assumed to have somehow remained immune from the subjectification effects of such discourses. Another issue with

the 'storage model' of 'memory', as Trouillot (1995 : 14-16) remarks, is that while memory is often opposed to history, it becomes, in fact, a kind of 'memory-history' (ibid. : 14). It is indeed from the perspective of a retrospective reading of history that it is often said that a past has been kept in the 'collective memory', or that it has been 'forgotten', or again, that it is 'repressed' from memory (with the frequent use, in memory studies, of a 'psychotherapeutic' vocabulary). What risks to be unacknowledged, here, are all the questions that social actors, as subjects, ask themselves about the presence of the past, including the effects of colonial power and discourses, which should remain a hypothesis, rather than a given, in its analysis. Finally, I do not pay attention to 'memory' as what differs from 'History'. If the particular perspective which is historicism, to which the notion of 'History', within its critique, is often assimilated, is only one of the possible modes of 'historicity' - that is, to be at once situated in time, to be aware/conscious of it, and to draw relations and interpretations between past, present and future (Hirsch & Stewart 2005, Lambek 2002 : 12), the main challenge in this thesis is not to describe in which manners the 'memory' and the modes of historicity of Palm Islanders differ from a 'western' historical model. Rather, I attempt to situate Palm Islanders' attitudes towards the past, and interest for the past, in a historical perspective; and, notably, to situate it in relation to the emergence of the 'new history'.

'New histories'

From a critique of History as the 'official history', serving the interests of dominant powers, several projects of 'new histories' started: one may think here of the authors of the 'history from below', such as E.P. Thompson, Georges Rudé, E.J. Hobsbawm or Charles Tilly, who, since the early 1960s, in their histories of 17th to 19th century peasants and workers in England and France, worked to render visible the lives and agency of those that the 'grand narratives' had ignored. It is with similar goals, although engaged in a more theoretical and postcolonial critique, that the authors of the subaltern studies movement, initiated by Ranajit Guha in the early 1980s, engaged in a critique of dominant historiographies of India, in which subaltern voices remained invisible (Pourchepadass 2000).

Although not constituted around a particular theoretical reflexion, the 'new history', in Australia, can be paralleled with such initiatives. Gillian Cowlshaw (2006 : 182) calls the 'the new history' the work of historians (such as C.D. Rowley, Henry Reynolds, Noel Loos or Raymond Evans, among others), who, since the 1970s worked to reveal numerous aspects of a colonial past which had been 'hidden, negated or ignored' (see chapter 3). While recognising the great value of their work, Cowlshaw also remarks that their field of inquiry, although often termed 'Aboriginal history', has been mostly centered on the colonial policies and practices (an object of research which is surely very important), and much less on the ways in which such policies and practices have actually affected Aboriginal societies and cultures (Cowlshaw 2006: 182). While it is the object of national debates, arguments, cynical denials by neo-conservative historians and politicians, and practices of official recognition, Aboriginal people, in multiple ways, are intimately concerned by this 'new history', and what is at stake here, is not simply to establish a historical truth. As Cowlshaw also suggests (ibid., 2004: 201-232), there is not just a 'new history' of the historians, 'new' to non-Aboriginal people (whether, or not, it is being recognised). The manners in

which Aboriginal people on Palm Island, as it is, consider, interpret and question their past suggest that if this past is not 'new' in itself, it is 'unfinished': it is being reinterpreted and questioned, in many and complex ways.

Many anthropologists have paid interest to Aboriginal modes of historicity, to memory and the historicity of Aboriginal myths and rituals (Glowczewski 1983, Morphy & Morphy 1983, Beckett 1994, Merlan 1994, Rose 1984, Rumsey 1994, Sutton 1988): these studies have focused on the question of a cultural particularity of Aboriginal modes of historicity. If such perspective is, surely, of interest, it is precisely within cultural contexts which can be qualified as different from that of Palm Island that such studies have been conducted. One of the aims here is not so much to discern the differences and resemblances between a western historical perspective and the perspective that Palm Island people have of their past, than to consider this perspective as itself carrier of a changing historicity, notably in relation to the 'new history', and the postcolonial 'era of recognition'.

Questions at stake

Many studies have been conducted about the effects of recognition of Aboriginal cultural identity and difference within the multicultural nation (see Povinelli 2007[2002]; Babidge 2004; Henry 1999; Smith 2008). These studies have taken into account the power effects of recognition discourses on the way Aboriginal people articulate their cultural identity and difference and their territorial attachments. They have taken into account the ways in which such discourses are not simply imposed from the outside but have been appropriated and have come to be closely linked to Aboriginal subjectivities. It is within such a perspective that I consider the emergence of a discourse of recognition of the colonial history, through which a 'place for memory' (Kenny 1999) is constituted. In this 'place', memory does not emerge as ready-made, but the past comes to be reinterpreted, it comes to be the vector of political power, constraints, hopes, desires and questions.

My hypotheses are formulated in terms of questions concerning the notion of subjectivity. Within memory studies, notably, the notion of subjectivity is often associated with a person's interiority; that is, the fact that a person thinks, feels, perceives, taking into account that these modes of thought, affect and perception are socially and culturally constituted (Ortner 2006:115). Here the notion of subjectivity is more or less synonymous with the notion of person. However, I also use the notion of subjectivity in a somewhat different sense. The subjectivity of the subject is constituted through and by a discourse and an address (that is, the fact that one can address the subject and thus recognise him or her and that he or she can, in turn, recognise being addressed). On this matter, Judith Butler (1997: 10-11) writes: "the subject" is sometimes bandied about as if it were interchangeable with 'the person' or 'the individual'. The genealogy of the subject as a critical category, however, suggests that the subject, rather than be identified strictly with the individual, ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a place-holder, a structure in formation. Individuals come to occupy the site of the subject (the subject simultaneously emerges as a 'site'), and they enjoy intelligibility only to the extent that they are, as it were, first established in language. The subject is the linguistic occasion for the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility, the linguistic condition of its existence and agency. No individual becomes a subject without first becoming subjected or undergoing 'subjectivation'. Far from implying that there is only

submission, only subjectification to a standardizing discourse that has uniform effects, this perspective on the notion of subject presupposes that there is no subject outside of a discursive power that gives it a position or place. Nevertheless, this does not imply that the subject at stake is identified with an individual according to a Western model of the person. Nor does this imply a lack of interest for what Ortner (2006:115) defines as subjectivity, that is the modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, which are culturally and socially constituted. Although social subjects may not be just the occupiers of positions, as Ortner points out, what they express of their affects, their desires, their thoughts, their memories, what hurts and what makes them rejoice, allows us to actually grasp their efforts to make their own places (subject positions).

I often use in the course of this thesis, the expression ‘to deal with’: to deal with, for example, life conditions and attributed places on the reserve. By the use of this expression, I do not imply that ‘to deal with’ means to accept domination, to bend to a power that assigns subject positions. There may well be resistance here, refusal, and subversion against these attributed positions. In other words, there are many possible ways to ‘deal with’ but there are no ways to deal without, that is, without a position at all. For the Aboriginal residents of the former Palm Island reserve, colonial power was exercised through attributing them subordinate positions, over determined by racial significance. This does not mean, however, that these positions were strictly endorsed and that the colonial power always succeeded in its subjectifying aims.

How do Palm Island people today deal with these positions attributed to them during the colonial period and then again during the postcolonial period within the ambivalent space of recognition? This is a question that Palm Island people themselves ask in multiple ways. I suggest that the ways they consider and interpret the past, the things that for them make memory and the ways according to which they undertake to make memory may all contain the seeds of this question and their attempts to answer it.

CHAPTER 2: A HISTORY OF PALM ISLAND ‘UNDER THE ACT’

This chapter provides a history of Palm Island ‘under the Act’. More broadly, I look at the historical conditions in which the ‘protection’ policy directed at Queensland’s Aboriginal people (or the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*) was put into place, and the reserve system. I propose a description of some of the aspects of life ‘under the Act’ in the Palm Island reserve until the 1960s, including the question of resistance. I try to adopt a thematic, and a ‘genealogical’, rather than a strictly chronological, perspective, following the work of Michel Foucault (1971, 2001a): that is, rather than simply situating a succession of historical moments, I look, especially, at the deployment of particular colonial discourses and practices, and their effects on Aboriginal people’s lives. I make use of the work of historians (notably the work of Joanne Watson on Palm Island – 2010), as well as of government and other archives and newspaper articles that I researched, and quote the words of Aboriginal residents of the former reserve. But this chapter (as well as the following one) is meant to be ‘a’ history, rather than ‘the whole story’, and it has no pretention of representing the past as Palm Islanders actually experienced it: later chapters of the thesis will allow us to consider aspects of this experience, and the complexities of Palm Islanders’ perspectives on their past.

2.1 The colonial fantasy of ‘the island’

I begin by looking at what I named the colonial fantasy of ‘the island’: this was an image of ‘untouched’ lands, territories to ‘conquer’, which drove the colonial enterprise of taking ‘possession’ of the land. Philosopher Michel de Certeau (1990[1980]: 199-202) compares this colonial image with that of the ‘white page’: an ‘island’ which is imagined as ‘blank’, waiting to be ‘written’ on, taken possession of. This is a metaphor for a colonial fantasy put into practice, from the ‘discovery’ of a ‘terra nullius’ by Captain James Cook, the sending of convicts to Australia, the ‘settlement’ of the new colony of Queensland – with the role of the ‘Native Police’ forces, to the putting in place of the ‘protection’ policies, and the setting up of Aboriginal reserves. With examples and references to the actual fantasised role of islands (including Palm Island) in this fantasy – places to be conquered, settled, places to start a ‘new beginning’ or to isolate ‘undesired’ populations – this first section is an introduction to the rest of the chapter.

2.2 ‘Protection’

I then look more closely at the setting up of the ‘protection’ policies, from the end of the 19th century. I consider the Protectors’ ‘ambitions’, in their advocacy for the policy, in particular Archibald Meston and Walter E. Roth: ambitions that, motivated by their perception of Aboriginal people and by the racial ideology of the time, were in fact multiple and often very ambivalent. Aboriginal people were, depending on the way they were perceived, either admired or despised, seen as in need of ‘protection’ or isolation, assistance or discipline, and these intentions in fact often merged. In effect, after the implementation of the ‘protection’ policy, all aspects of Aboriginal people’s lives became legally controllable by the new administration: where, how, and with who they lived, where they went, their social relations and sexuality, their money and labour.

I pay detailed attention to the question of removals, relying notably on the recent work of historian Mark Copland (2005): I look at the ‘reasons’ of removals across Queensland until the early 1970s, with particular reference to cases relating to Palm Island, including the circumstances of removal, from Palm Island to Hull Reserve, of the Aboriginal people who lived on the island before the reserve was set up in 1918.

2.3 Within the Palm Island reserve: the time, space and discipline of the reserve

Here I describe some aspects of life within the Palm Island reserve. I focus on the disciplinary aspects of the life conditions, with reference notably to the work of Michel Foucault (1975) on prisons and disciplinary institutions, showing how they worked to ‘model’ individuals, to induce in them new behaviours and ways of being. I describe the spatial organisation of the reserve, designed around an administrative ‘centre’, around which Aboriginal ‘camps’ were scattered, while other islands were used as secondary places of isolation, with Fantome Island being used as a locked hospital and as a leprosy. Among other aspects of life on the reserve and examples of disciplinary practices, I look at the role of ‘the bell’, as described by a former resident of the reserve. Here, the bell, which signalled times to go to work or to go home, also appears as an instrument of discipline, inducing certain behaviours, preventing others. More than simply a bell, it was the manifestation of ‘the Act’ itself, which made individuals ‘discipline’ themselves; a power which pervaded bodies and minds. ‘To me, the Act wasn’t just a physical effect. It also had a psychological effect [...] You woke up every morning and it was there’, Fred Clay, a former resident of the reserve explained to his friend and author Bill Rosser (1985: 143). Perhaps the most important ‘effect’ of ‘the Act’, of being subjected to it, was that Aboriginal people were made to feel as subordinate subjects. This ‘effect’, a ‘psychological effect’, as Fred Clay described it, did not just take place when people were physically subjected to force, to poor treatment: it was something that took place on an everyday basis, something that people were repeatedly meant to integrate, through everyday practices, at work, at school, when being told by a white person to do something, etc.

If the Act wasn’t ‘just a physical effect’, as Fred Clay stated, authority was also nonetheless exercised in an often ‘physical’, brutal way. With reference to Anglican missionary Ernest Gribble’s correspondence, and his critics of the reserve’s administration, I also look at the particular ways in which rules, already fundamentally unjust by nature, could also be manipulated and perverted by individual superintendants to exercise their authority.

2.4 The Dormitories

In this section I look in more details at the dormitories, secondary reserves within the reserve, in which numerous young boys, girls and young women were placed and locked. With reference to archives, I look notably at the disciplinary purposes of the dormitories, which were used, notably, to exercise surveillance and control on the sexuality of young adults, especially young women, whose life choices were very limited, between marriage at an early age which had to be approved by the administration, and work placements on the mainland.

2.5 Tourists and other visitors of the reserve

Here I comment on those who visited the reserve: if Palm Island had been chosen as a location ‘out of sight’, ‘out of mind’, by the ‘protective’ administration, numerous white visitors regularly came to the island, most often missionaries and tourists. Memoirs and other texts from the various missionaries who came to the reserve give an idea of the very moralistic discourse of the churches, who played a very important and active role within the reserve. Palm Island was also one of the favourite destinations for tourists in the Townsville area. Many texts from tourists and travellers who visited the island portray the reserve uncritically, not questioning the reasons why Aboriginal people were maintained at the reserve, and what were their actual life conditions. Visitors would usually never venture outside of the centre of the reserve, escorted by the white staff. They would only stay for a short time, and would be entertained with Aboriginal and Torres Strait dances. Only rare visitors were more critical of what was taking place. Overall, these visits of tourists, who came and went, and who only perceived, from their usually narrow point of view, what was taking place in the reserve, exemplifies a fundamental dimension of the life conditions of the Aboriginal people who lived in the reserve and were maintained there ‘out of sight, out of mind’.

2.6 Resistance

In this section I look at the question of resistance: how was it possible to resist or counter the authority of the administrators in the reserve, in such conditions? Following the work of Foucault and other authors on the question of resistance, I argue that it was not only a matter of overt resistance or opposition to the rules of the Act and its agents, because the power at stake was meant to pervade the very consciousness of those who were subjected to it. However, even though this colonial power was somehow ‘everywhere’, surveillance was incomplete, authority was countered. Very often, in their reports and correspondence, administrators mentioned that people escaped from the reserve, by sea or by taking off to the hills. They also mentioned that gambling was taking place in the reserve, or that some behaviours were ‘undisciplined’ or ‘immoral’. I quote, in particular, extracts of correspondences between administrators who express worry about the dormitory fences, which often had holes in them, about the young inmates escaping, or about their general behaviour. If this accounts for the administrators’ obsession with controlling the Aboriginal inmates, it also accounts for this control’s at least partial failure. This doesn’t mean, however, that the power at stake was weak, or that it was possible to ‘escape’ it simply by escaping surveillance. In fact, to pay attention to resistance is also to pay attention to the power which is being resisted, the forms it takes and its points of intensity. I pay here detailed attention to the strike of 1957.

2.6 Place, memory and subjectivity

This last section of the chapter, as a form of conclusion which opens on the questions asked in the thesis, focuses on the interplay between the separation from familiar places and the forced resettlement in a foreign and disciplinary environment, memory and subjectivity. Space, as anthropologist Rosita Henry argues, becomes ‘place’ as it is imbued with experience and memory; familiar places can thus be imbued with the sense one as of oneself, and ‘the forcible removal from place can lead to a profoundly disorienting loss of self’, as the memory of those places, if not erased, is ‘mutilated’ (Henry 1999: 40-41, 67-68). This was, precisely, part of the ambitions of the ‘protectors’, when they removed children, especially, from their familiar environment. What

becomes then of the memory of being separated from familiar places, of living in the reserve? As much as memories continue to be 'made', a sense of place can emerge, even in alienating circumstances. If the reserve was a disciplinary space, it was also a 'place', for those who remember it today, and, as it also appears in the next chapters, it came to be made of other dimensions, including a strong sense of familiarity, and 'home'. Subjectivities, even in alienating circumstances, and even while they are deeply affected by oppressive circumstances and disciplinary practices, continue to exist.

CHAPTER 3: A HISTORY OF THE CONDITIONS OF THE 'POST-RESERVE'

In continuity with the previous chapter, this chapter considers the historical conditions of the 'post'-reserve: that is, the conditions in which the reserve, and life in the reserve 'under the Act', evolved, rather than radically changed, between the late 1960s and the 1980s. As critiques of the state's policies directed at Aboriginal people became more numerous and vocal, and Aboriginal political movements became more visible, the Queensland state, reacting aggressively to these, introduced new policies. This is a period of continuity and change through which were put into place the conditions of the 'post'-reserve, a particular 'postcolonial' situation.

3.1 'The Act' revisited

In the first section of this chapter, I describe this period of the 1960s which saw the development of an activism movement bringing together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people demanding civil and equal rights for Aboriginal people, the involvement of the federal government into 'Aboriginal affairs', and, in Queensland, the passing of new legislation regarding Aboriginal people. I look into the discourse of 'assimilation', which assumed that Aboriginal people had to, or were going to, 'adapt' to the 'mainstream' population, a caricatural version of which was still favoured by the Queensland government in its dealing with Aboriginal people. The new legislation of 1965, and then of 1972, introduced some minor changes to previous ones, as Aboriginal people living in reserves were still living in a disciplinary environment, under the official authority and paternalistic attitude of white administrators. However, critiques of the Queensland government's treatment of Aboriginal people, especially in the reserves, were becoming more numerous and vocal.

3.2 Political struggles and 'racial fantasy'

With particular reference to Palm Island, I then pay attention to the developing Aboriginal activism of the early 1970s, and aggressive responses to it by the Queensland government. If the Aboriginal councils, introduced in the Queensland reserves in the 1960s, were given little authority, the council of Fred Clay on Palm Island in the early 1970s engaged in political action, making contacts with Aboriginal organisations and activists from the mainland, some of which were becoming more radical in their revendications, embracing the discourse of 'Black Power' and taking an active role in the Tent Embassy movement. I look into this period with reference, notably, to interviews of Fred and Iris Clay by Bill Rosser (1985), as well as to the locally-printed journal, *Smoke Signal*, edited by Bill Rosser with Fred and Iris Clay in 1974. While people were becoming more politically active, they were directly targeted and dubbed to be 'trouble makers', as Fred Clay and his family were at the time.

I argue that these very aggressive responses, by the administration and police of the time, to what they perceived as 'dangerous' threats against their authority was typical of what anthropologist Barry Morris (2001, 2005) has called 'racial fantasy': that is, the fantasy that the social order, which had been built on unequal power relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, based on a notion of racial inequality, would not only change, but reverse, threatening the former tenants of authority in their very identity. If not reversing, things were in fact starting to change, in the very way Aboriginal people thought of themselves, as no longer 'the objects of assimilation to be acted

for or acted upon', but increasingly as 'indigenous subjects in their own right' (Morris 2001: 245). However, I also argue that this was no simple process, and that the possibility of divergent opinions must also be taken into account among, in this case, people on Palm Island at the time, in circumstances where it remained in fact also very 'risky' to oppose the white administration and authority.

3.3 The constitution of a 'new history'

In this section I pay attention to the constitution of what anthropologist Gillian Cowlishaw calls the 'new history' movement: a movement growing in the 1970s with the ambition to research, and re-write a misrepresented, if not only denied, colonial past. The progressive constitution of this 'new history' was not solely the result of the work of non-Aboriginal historians; these historians, such as Henry Reynolds (who started researching the colonial past in the late 1960s at James Cook University in Townsville), were taking part, at the time, in activist groups, or in the broader political movement for civil rights for Aboriginal people and later for Aboriginal land rights: that is, they were in contact or making contact with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders involved in this movement. While doing so, as historians, they discovered a reality that they didn't know, or didn't know well about, and they started to look into this in a more historical perspective. I look in particular to the case of historian Henry Reynolds(2000[1999]: 7-9), who described his first visit on Palm Island in 1968 as part of a group of organisations inquiring about the living conditions of Aboriginal people in reserves as a decisive moment for him in this process. There was more broadly a new discourse being constituted about the colonial past, the history of dispossession and oppression of Aboriginal people, and this new discourse was part of the political movement. In the journal *Smoke Signal* of 1974, this new discourse is present, together with revendications about Aboriginal land rights, or about the oppression of 'the Act', for instance. In this newspaper, as well as his later successor, the *Palm Islander* (of the late 70s-early 80s), a marked interest also appears for what is described as the 'old days', life 'before' the reserve as well as in the reserve.

I then look at the making of the film *Protected* on Palm Island in 1973, with film-makers Carolyn Strachan and Alessandro Cavadini: the film told the story of the strike of 1957 on the island, with Palm Island residents playing their own roles, or that of their forebears. The film exposed the life conditions of Aboriginal people at the time of the strike; but it was also a story which, being told at the time, had much political significance for the present. The making of the film in early 1974 was highly criticized by local state officials in several articles of the *Townsville Bulletin*. It was argued that this was only going to 'cause trouble', inciting people to 'riot'; a few ex-Palm Island residents, who now lived in Townsville, also expressed concerns (through the press): they were perhaps afraid to be themselves 'in trouble', if they took part in the film. Less surprisingly, an official from the department of Aboriginal affairs claimed that the film 'could not be authentic', since access to the state archives in which official reports about the strike were kept, had not been granted to the film makers. In effect, it was near impossible, at the time, to do any research in the state archives, which were not open. Ironically, the administrator was pointing out to what made this film unique, and so valuable: it was giving Aboriginal people a 'voice', a space to tell their own experiences, and to celebrate a history of resistance which the administration had meant to 'silence'.

I argue here that the making of this film was perhaps not only about telling history as it had been experienced; it was perhaps also about constituting this history, in the present, while finding the space where it was at once possible. New value was perhaps given to this hidden history, memories were being disclosed, maybe told for the first time as part of a collective history now openly proclaimed as valuable.

Later during the decade, and during the next decades, histories of life ‘under the Act’ were published, such as Willie Thaiday’s *Under the Act* (1981), Marnie Kennedy’s *Born a half-caste* (1985), and Renarta Prior’s *Straight from the Yudaman’s mouth* (1989). The extracts which I quote reveal the growing importance which seems to take, for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, at the time, the theme of recognition, by non-Aboriginal people, of the life experiences of Aboriginal people ‘under the Act’, of the value and veracity of Aboriginal testimonies.

3.4 ‘After’ the reserve, some of the conditions of the 1980s ‘community’

This last section is about later developments in the late 1970s and the 1980s, a period during which the previous legislations were replaced with new ones, officially aimed at abling previous reserves to become ‘self-determined’ ‘communities’. In 1984, the Queensland government implemented the *Community Services (Aborigines) Act*, which made of the former reserves communities administered by the local Aboriginal council, which was also to be the trustee of the community lands (the DOGITs – Deeds of Grant in Trust). Historian Rosalind Kidd looked into this period, notably, in details, and showed how the conditions put into place supposedly for the self-determination of Indigenous communities during this era by the Queensland government (and by the federal government) could only allow very little self-determination in practice.

CHAPTER 4: EVENTS AND THEIR ‘MIRROR-EFFECTS’

This chapter is centred on the events that took place on Palm Island in November 2004: the death in custody of Cameron Doomadgee and, a week later, the movement of revolt which took place on the island. I do not offer a detailed account of the circumstances in which these events occurred (this has already been done by several authors, notably Barbara Glowczewski 2008a, Chloe Hooper 2008, and Jeff Waters 2008), but I do consider them in light of the way they were represented in the media. I also look at some aspects of the judgement of ‘the riot’ in court (with reference to a particular court case that I attended in March 2007). I then consider the ways in which the events, as such, marked time, followed by many ‘aftermaths’, sometimes of a dramatic nature, which continuously affected the ways in which the events were interpreted by people on Palm Island as well as by others on the mainland, including the many observers who commented on them in the media. I look at how, by marking time, the events triggered, for those who experienced them, or commented on them, ‘mirror-effects’: that is, they became the point of reference through which people from the island (that is, Aboriginal people who call Palm Island ‘home’) and people from the mainland (non-Aboriginal people) looked at themselves, at one another, at what had become and what was becoming of their relationship with one another.

4.1 An economy of language and prevision

In the first part of this chapter, I firstly look at the issue of Aboriginal deaths in custody, and to the conclusions of the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody of 1991, and to how this closely relates to the circumstances of the death of Cameron Doomadgee (that is, how the circumstances, notably of arrest, and detention of Doomadgee went against these recommendations). Among many other issues, the RCIADIC drew attention to the role of the media in representing Aboriginality as linked to the theme of alcohol and criminality; on this matter, I then focus on the representation of the death and of the situation on Palm Island after the death, in the media, especially the local newspaper of the *Townsville Bulletin*. I argue that the language and the tone used to portray the situation on Palm Island, and Palm Islanders, tended to strongly make use of usual stereotypes that the RCIADIC had criticised. Palm Islanders, as I observed, seem to be generally paying attention to what is said about them in this newspaper, which is widely read on the island, and which, more than any other, somehow represents this non-Aboriginal ‘neighbour’ from the mainland, Townsville, which usually represents Aboriginal people, and Palm Islanders especially, in a more or less derogatory way. In the days following the death, I show how, while the police’s version of events were given a value of objective truth, Palm Islanders’ concerns and questions about the death and responsibility in the death were represented as ‘gossip’ and signs of disruptive behaviour. This ‘economy of language’, which made use of certain modes of language, went together with an economy of prevision, with fears voiced in the newspaper about the breaking out of a ‘riot’ on the island. I argue that this economy of language, which is not solely imputable to a single newspaper, but operates at a broader level in the way ‘the mainland’ often talks about – when it actually pays attention – to ‘the island’, played a direct role in actually triggering the revolt.

I then move on to the term of 'riots', paying attention to the significance of the term as it is used; as a number of authors have argued, the term 'riot' may be used in a 'prose of counter-insurgency' (Guha 1983) to counter resistance movements to hegemonic powers, and justify the use of repressive force, which broadly applies, I argue, to this case, where Aboriginality itself came to be represented as disruptive of 'law and order', notably again, in the media. While the justice system engaged action against those who were accused of taking part in the riot, I look then at the way in which the riot itself, the moment of its occurrence, seemed to become, on Palm Island, and among Palm Islanders, something which it was impossible to openly evoke; the simple evocation of its cause, the motives of those who took active part in the revolt, became in the months following the events something which had to remain silent, or it could be incriminating. This probably plays a role in the 'work of memory' about the events, particularly the riot, which history will perhaps only be able to be constituted, and memorialised, later on (perhaps similarly to the history of the strike). At the same time, in court (with reference to a court case which I attended in March 2007), the judgment of those accused of take part in the riot did not allow for the taking into account of what preceded the riot, that is the death. I examine here into some details extracts of the court transcripts, which show, among other things, how the legal definition of a riot constructs it as a particular kind of event of an extraordinary nature, which threatens the authority of the Crown/the state, and which exists entirely outside of its context and its causes. In contrast to this authoritative discourse and its use in court, I describe the situation of those who were accused and members of their family, their uncertainties and their use of humour in this difficult situation, and look more generally at the often precarious character of Aboriginal activism in this context where activism can be easily represented as 'riotous'.

4.2 Events and their 'mirror-effects': perspectives on the relationship between 'the island' and 'the mainland'

In this second part of the chapter, I firstly focus on the notion of 'event'. Many authors have commented on what events 'do' (such as French philosopher Gilles Deleuze 1969a & 1969b): they do not only 'happen' by themselves and for themselves, but they happen for those who actually make the experience of, suddenly, being caught in a transformed reality which at first does not make sense; it is suddenly different, other than usual. From then on, we try to give meaning to what has occurred, and time is divided between what was 'before' the event', and what is now occurring 'after' it. We try to give meaning to it by examining what has occurred before it, we try to see why it has occurred, what triggered it, and when it is a tragic event, such as the death in custody of Cameron Doomadgee, the questions are more intense. What happens next is affected by the event, it is looked upon for clues, for further meaning. The past and the present are so marked by the event, which may give shape, in a more or less decisive manner, to a new temporality.

I then look at the many 'aftermaths' that followed the original events, and sometimes changed and reversed again the course of the situation in a dramatic manner: the public report of the second coronary inquest into the death in custody which incriminated senior sergeant Chris Hurley, followed by the DPP decision not to charge the policeman, who was however charged with manslaughter a few weeks later, and then acquitted in June 2007, are examples of such dramatic 'aftermaths'. I pay attention here, to the ways in which these ongoing developments affected – and

are still likely to affect – the perception and interpretation of the original events, their meanings for Palm Islanders – who do not all necessarily share the same interpretation of the events, especially of ‘the riot’.

I then consider again the mediatic representations of Palm Island, following the 2004 riot, but also in other – older circumstances. In the aftermaths of the 2004 riot, journalistic commentaries made much use of the ‘paradise lost’ metaphor to describe the situation on Palm Island. With some different points of view, they usually tried to ‘explain’ the events by situating them in relation to ‘problems’ of different sorts – ‘social’, economic, etc. Within these explanations, the events themselves disappear, and tend to be transformed into mere symptoms of what is often described as a ‘dysfunctional’ situation. But the ‘lost paradise’ metaphor was not only used, in a recurrent manner, after the 2004 events, but also very often during the previous decade. I show that there is a visible trend in how ‘the mainland’ perceives Palm Island: that is, precisely, as an ‘island’, which is suddenly discovered, and re-discovered, chronically, and usually when something dramatic, or rather tragic occurs. I am not arguing that all representations of ‘the island’, that is, more generally, of Palm Islanders, and Aboriginal people, are the same, from a ‘mainland’, non-Aboriginal perspective, which would be unilateral. Points of view vary, as well as intentions or orientations towards the island, but they still seem to often have in common this ‘discovery’ and ‘re-discovery’ mode of attitude towards ‘the island’. This chronic character of the ‘discovery’ also implies a chronic ‘forgetting’. More ancient, and similar, comparisons of Palm Island as a ‘hell in paradise’ exist: meant to denounce the poor living conditions of Aboriginal people, and the injustices which existed when Palm Island was a reserve. The much more recurrent use of this comparison today, is, I argue, emblematic of a ‘postcolonial’ era – not of a postcolonial discourse, inspired by postcolonial studies: an era in which the ‘colonial’, whether its impact is recognised or downplayed, tends to be assumed as ‘past’, and the present as ‘post’, with a question mark as to what happened ‘in between’. Hence the chronic discovery, and re-discovery, of ‘problems’, in ‘Aboriginal communities’, problems which come to be seen as ‘anomalies’ or abnormalities – or ‘dysfunctionalities’ - in the ‘postcolonial’ era, which chronically question (before being perhaps forgotten again) the nature of the ‘post’ and of the relationship between the island and the mainland.

I then look at how ‘the mainland’ is perceived from Palm Island. There is not a single perception of the mainland, but diverse, and changing ways in which the mainland is perceived from the position of ‘the island’; overall however, the mainland is viewed through its attitudes towards the island, through the signs that it shows of its interest or indifference, concern or disrespect, for the island. I provide several examples of Palm Islanders reactions towards general representations of Palm Island in the media, as well as a description of a particular social event, the coming of the disco band Boney M to the island. On this occasion, the band members were invited to a luncheon organised in their honour, as well as in honour of the Palm Island elders. Explanations about the island’s history, a film about it as well as songs and dances were presented to the ‘visitors’, and gifts were given to them. This was an occasion, for Palm Islanders, as I show throughout the description of this particular moment, to present another image of themselves to these ‘visitors’: that is, an image different, or differently presented, of the island, from what had been generally shown of Palm Island in the ‘mainland’ media since the 2004 riot.

Overall, the attitudes towards the island are interpreted in relation to the history of the relationships between the mainland and the island; in these attitudes, signs of change or continuity in the nature of these relationships are sought. Here, the 2004 events are a reference point in the light of which change and continuity is interpreted, and reinterpreted. In the final section of this chapter, I look at Palm Islanders' perceptions, in light of the policies introduced since the 2004 events, of the community's relationship with the state, somehow viewed as the representative of 'the mainland'. It seems that there exists hesitations and questions about 'where' the state is located; perceptions of the state oscillate between views of it as an entity separate from the community – much as the mainland is often described as clearly distinct from the island – and views of it as possibly more intricately in relation with it. In light of the 2004 events and their aftermaths, there are interrogations about the changing – or not so changing, relationship with the state.

CHAPTER 5 : ABORIGINAL SUBJECTIVITY AND THE ‘ARCHIVE’

This chapter is concerned with Palm Islanders’s relationship to, and the interrogations that they have about what could be broadly called, including in a very concrete sense, the ‘archives’. In a restricted sense, the archives that Palm Islanders undertake to research, to question today, are those that were constituted during the colonial period by the successive departments of ‘Aboriginal affairs’: they contain, notably, a wide quantity of information about those who were placed ‘under the Act’. More broadly, ‘archives’ were the instruments, and are traces, of the colonial power/knowledge which attributed to Aboriginal ‘subjects’ certain ‘places’ – literally, places of living, racial categories, new names - denying them others.

Research that Palm Island people undertake about their family, their past – researching, notably, but not only, government archives - somehow reveals some of the interrogations that they have about the past and its ‘traces’, about what has been lost and what is ‘left’ or can be ‘re-traced’, about the effects of the colonial past. The apparently developing interest among Aboriginal people for researching their family history is also a consequence of ‘postcolonial’ practices of recognition – notably policies put in place to assist Indigenous people researching government – and other – archives. This chapter aims at describing a dynamic process: a developing interest for the past among Palm Islanders, and the multiple further questions that it seems to trigger for them.

5.1 A Keeping place at the Bwgcolman School

In the first part of this chapter I look at the particular case of the setting up of a ‘Keeping Place’ on Palm Island. I was employed at the state school, or Bwgcolman community school, for a few months to take part in this project. Keeping Places, which are sometimes also called ‘resource centres’, Indigenous Knowledge centres or cultural centres, have widely developed across Australia in the last two decades. The ideal purpose of these kinds of places is for Indigenous people to be able to locally keep and preserve cultural objects and knowledge, rather than them being kept in museums and other kinds of ‘mainstream’ institutions. But questions emerge, as it was the case in the setting up of the Bwgcolman Keeping place, as to how and what, in fact, to keep in such a place, and how, then, to call these resources, and the place in which they are to be kept. I emphasize the underlying interrogations that seemed to be at stake for participants in the project: what is ‘our culture’, and/or what has become of it? ‘Culture’, or rather ‘Aboriginal culture’, is commonly represented by the general public as what has remained unchanged and can be identified as ‘traditional’, in order to be valuable, or ‘authentic’; underlying this representation, there is the assumption that ‘Aboriginal culture’ is what has remained untouched by ‘history’. This representation of ‘culture’ is not foreign to Palm Islanders, who also seem to see themselves as not corresponding to the recognised models of what ‘Aboriginal culture’ should be. At the same time, there is a marked perception of a clear difference between ‘our ways’, and ‘non-Aboriginal ways’, in everyday practice such as, for instance, in the use of language at school and outside the school, as well as in the unequal power relations which exist within the school between Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff members. While the colonial past appears as the period during which Aboriginal culture was ‘destroyed’, the past, or rather, as Palm Islanders often call it, ‘our history’, and traces

of it (in the form of old documents and photos) were the centre of much attention in the setting up of the Keeping Place. Attention to ‘old photos’, and Palm Islanders’ relationship with these ‘old photos’, that is photos taken during the reserve era, reveal some of the attitudes and interrogations that emerge for them in relation to the past, and how it affected them. It is altogether a source of pain and pride, self-definition and enduring questions.

In the last section of this first part of the chapter, I pay attention to the frequent use, by Palm Islanders, of particular references to skin colour: expressions such as ‘half-caste’, or ‘full-blood’, notably, are not banished from the local vocabulary, but used, on the contrary, quite frequently. Starting with comments made about the ‘old photos’, I also look at comments made in everyday speech to describe self and others, and to refer to family members and ancestors. This may be surprising, considering these were colonial racial categories, used to classify and control Aboriginal subjects. The use of such expressions is an example, as I try to show, of how the past inhabits the present, and as it is, the colonial past and colonial discourses, cannot be simply erased, but inhabit in complex ways present subjectivities, without them being simply ‘imprinted’ with the ‘colonial archive’.

5.2 ‘Researching’, ‘tracing back’ the past

In the second part of the chapter, I focus on the theme of ‘research’. Whether they actually research government archives, undertake to reconstitute their ‘family tree’, question older family members to learn more about their family histories, or simply express the interrogations that they have about their family history, or their desire to investigate it further, an orientation towards researching the past seems to have become more and more important to Palm Islanders in the last two or three decades. If it is not simply a result of this, I link this development to the fact that government archives have been made more accessible to Aboriginal people in the last two decades, while the diffusion of the ‘new history’ has also provided for renewed interpretations of the colonial past; the new possibilities of recognition of native title, which requires, notably, genealogical ‘proof’, especially in Queensland, also probably plays a role in triggering desires of ‘tracing back’ family histories, as Palm Islanders often use this expression. I look at the many questions of interest to those who evoke their research, or desires to undertake such research. The past here doesn’t present itself as already ‘made’, but as constantly questioned, subject to reinterpretations, and sometimes discoveries. The practice of organizing, or taking part in, ‘family reunions’, sometimes closely relate to this subjective orientation towards ‘research’, or to an actual desire to ‘trace back’, and sometimes find, family members.

Following this, I look more specifically at how researching family histories, is also about ‘locating’ them, in a geographic sense, as well as, very often, ‘locating’ lost family members or ancestors, who were removed to other, often unknown places, under the colonial removal policies. Because of the multiple separations and removals of Aboriginal people by the colonial government, Palm Islanders very often have kin across the whole state of Queensland (if not further afield). I use the expression ‘history of origins’ to describe again a ‘theme’ which appears to be subjectively profoundly important to Palm Islanders. In their accounts of themselves, they often evocate the history of displacements/removal of themselves or their forebears. Such an account is not

necessarily told to start with, but it occurs nonetheless as a kind of point of departure of a story, delimitating, as a form of 'event' a 'before' and an 'after', when everything is transformed. The emphasis on histories of origin can be linked to the emphasis on the continuity of links to 'traditional lands' in native title. For those who have been able to maintain some links with the people and the places from which they, or their forbears were separated, 'histories of origin' are located more precisely than for others, for whom it couldn't be the case. Not to be able to do so can be experienced as a fundamental 'lack', relating, in an important way, to the feeling of not corresponding to recognised models of Aboriginality. Often made of many points of interrogations, 'histories of origin' continue to be imagined, and trigger desires, sometimes 'impossible desires' (Povinelli 2007[2002]: 6) to 'trace' them 'back'. This expression, which contains in itself a geographical dimension, tells something of Palm Islanders orientation towards 'research', where the past in the present is not only experienced as made of loss and suffering, but also imagined as made of potentialities. This also appears when Palm Islanders make use of the image of the tree, a living trace of the past, witness to many upheavals, still growing. Rather than being simply concerned with essential origins, 'histories of origins', the interest and desires that they trigger are about 'becoming': a becoming deeply affected by colonial policies and which continues to unfold. The last section of the chapter provides a more theoretical discussion around these questions.

CHAPTER 6: 'MORE THAN FORTY DIFFERENT TRIBES': HISTORY, PRACTICE AND PLACES OF 'THE COMMUNITY'

This chapter focuses on histories of the present 'community', as 'made of', as Palm Islanders often say, 'forty different tribes', or 'more than forty different tribes'. Such expression supposes that the present community is made of an 'original' diversity, when the reserve was set up, and when people from many different places were removed to the island. Following on the theme of the previous chapter, this can be described as a 'history of origins', which supposes a collective becoming affected by the colonial policies. This history as it is told, imagined and commemorated today is also a history of 'dealing with' these policies, with imposed situations and locations.

In chapter 4, I considered how the community was imagined and practiced by Palm Islanders as that which in some relation with the mainland (with all this may mean). The community is here also imagined, and practiced, as made of a multiplicity, often described in terms of a multiplicity of tribes, that together constitute the community, itself often named as 'Bwngcolman'. Alternatively, Palm Islanders identify themselves with tribal names, often mentioning several tribal names as relevant to their particular family history and kin network.

As a number of anthropologists noted, the use of tribal names by Aboriginal people today can be linked to the particular contemporary context of the recognition of Indigenous land rights or native titles. The 'native title era' (see Fingleton & Finlayson 1995) designates this period of time when, at the beginning of the 1990s (with the passing of the Commonwealth Native Title Act of 1993, preceded by the Queensland Aboriginal Land Act of 1991 and the Mabo judgement of 1992), limited possibilities were opened for Indigenous land claims. The expression 'native title era' also refers to the changes provoked by the new possibilities of recognition, which carried their own constraints. It is in terms of continuity, the continuity of cultural practices relating to the land claimed, and the continuity of a genealogy (in the restricted sense), that proof needs to be articulated. More generally, whether Aboriginal people actually take part in land claims or not, the 'era of recognition' goes with a rearticulation of identities. If this dimension is certainly very much relevant here, I also try to show that other dimensions give shape, and meaning, in the case of Palm Island, to the history and practice of the island's tribes or the tribes within the island.

6.1 History of the tribes 'within'

In this section I look at the history of the 'tribes within' the island. As mentioned in chapter 2, different places were delimited on the island when the reserve was set up: a 'central' white area was maintained separate from the Aboriginal 'camps', and within this area, several 'tribal camps', as older Palm Islanders recount, were delineated. I am not interested, here, in trying to put together a 'historical' history – as I did in chapter 2 & 3, but in considering this history as it told by Palm Islanders. I am interested in understanding why this particular history matters to them, what are the questions at stake in this history. This history, the meaning of which may vary according to the different ways it is told, says something about past, as well as present conditions of living 'together' on the island, and 'dealing with' a number of constraints. Histories of conflicts and solidarity between the tribes supposes that not only power relations between Aboriginal people and

colonial agents mattered, but also the relations, including power relations, between the Aboriginal inmates of the reserve themselves. The question at stake in the history of the tribes, with its different possible meanings, could be described as such: how to live with one another (the Aboriginal residents) within the reserve, how to make one's place? This question, it seems, was not only relevant in the past, but continues to be relevant today.

I also look at what Palm Islanders say about 'Bwgcorman', the name commonly given to the present community. I look at the situation in which this name became more and more used by Palm Islanders, in parallel to the starting of a native title claim process in the early 90s: At the time, the island's 'traditional owners', as goes the official claim terminology used very broadly today, started to be officially recognised as the Manbarra people, while others, that is the wide majority of Palm Islanders, were categorised as the 'historical people'. The name 'Bwgcorman' started to be more often used to designate the 'historical people'. Together with 'historical', still widely used by Palm Islanders today, which is also of significance, the term itself, I argue, resonates in a particular way for Palm Islanders, who use it also to designate themselves. The name Bwgcorman, signifying 'Palm Island' in the Manbarra language, also can mean 'all Palm Islanders', and 'all one tribe'. Depending on the context in which it is used, the name thus carries nuances which bring together or, alternatively, distinguish people in relation to different histories. Here I thus pay attention to the meanings of the name Bwgcorman, and the different histories attached to it. It seems here also that the different versions which give meaning to the name Bwgcorman, which can change and sometimes conflict, have to do with a central questioning: 'how to live with one another, within the community', 'how to make one's place'? a question which is made relevant, in new ways today.

6.2 The NAIDOC celebrations: practice and negotiation of unity and differences

In this section I look at the celebrations of NAIDOC on Palm Island, and in particular I look at what is locally called and performed as the 'tribal banner march', and at the dances performed during the NAIDOC celebrations. During the tribal banner march, people literally engage in a march around the township's centre (the former administrative centre of the reserve), holding painted and beautifully decorated banners with the name of a, or several, tribes with which they associate. This event, which usually closes the NAIDOC celebrations on Palm Island, has occurred, almost every year, since the late 1990s, a period when Indigenous identities articulated in terms of Aboriginal language-named tribes had perhaps become more prevalent among the general population of the island. I give here a detailed description of one tribal banner march which took place during a NAIDOC week celebration I attended in 2007. I am especially interested in what people said about the tribal names to which they identified, about the particular histories that made those names significant to them. Here multiple identifications can cohabitate, revealing complex personal and collective histories. There seems to be an inherent tension, but not necessarily contradiction, between the different tribes to which people associate because of their particular family histories, and the 'Bwgcorman' tribe, which brings (almost) everyone together. The banner march can be viewed as a performance of identity and difference, unity and diversity: the multiplicity of individual identifications is what makes the community exist, while it also rests on the negotiation of differences and common identifications. This issue seems to be central to the way Palm Islanders

identify as such, and it is also an issue very much at stake in the community's relationship with the state.

In this section I also pay attention to the dances which take place during the NAIDOC celebrations. I argue, similarly, that one of the main issues at stake here, for the dancers as well as for the public watching the dances, is the play between the affirmation of differences, and the negotiation of differences, 'together', while all the different dance groups, dancing in a different 'style' from one another, perform on the island's central square. Both the banner march, and the dances at NAIDOC, can perhaps be described as kinds of practices of an 'embodied' memory, of the history of the 'many tribes', as it still matters today to Palm Islanders. I also argue that the fact that these performances take place in the centre of the township, and of the former reserve (an area which today bears some resemblance to its former configuration), is not meaningless: this is perhaps significant of enduring efforts to make one's place, that is, constrain and/or inhabit the Aboriginal subject positions attributed and reattributed by colonial and postcolonial discourses.

6.3 'Tribes' and places on the island

In this last part of the chapter I firstly look at the many ways in which the notion of 'tribe' is used by Palm Islanders to evoke social 'groupings' (such as 'families', sport teams, etc.), to talk about the community's social fabric, its points of tension and conflict, difference and commonalities. I then describe the ways in which these 'tribes', social groupings, which are not fixed but moving, are also localised on the island. If Palm Islanders talk about the 'tribal camps' in the past tense, places on the island continue to convey the memory, especially for older people, of the tribal camps. More generally, places of residence on the island, divided into 'neighbourhoods', or 'suburbs', are being differentiated from each others, as well as from today's 'camps', located on the outskirts of the island. I look here at the ways in which places are so differentiated by Palm Islanders, and how they express their attachment to several places in relation of their life and family histories. In these histories, it is also that of the limited choices in places of residence which appears. Overall the island, it seems, is imagined, and practiced, as a place made of many different places which relate to the history of the island's inhabitants as members of different 'tribes', different 'groupings', which together 'make' the community. I lastly look at other places, and other inhabitants of the island: that is, places inhabited by spirits and semi or non-human creatures, notably the 'Hairy man' and the 'Tall man', whose intentions towards the island's inhabitants can be hostile. The stories which are being told about these beings seem to closely relate to the history of living on the island, especially living in the reserve, since these creatures are especially likely to be encountered in places which are of important significance when Palm Islanders talk about the history of the reserve, such as Mango Avenue. Here Aboriginal 'spirituality', as Palm Islanders often evocate beliefs distinctively Aboriginal, and life experiences specific to the history of living in the reserve, seem to coalesce.

CHAPTER 7: MAKING MEMORY OF THE STRIKE AND THE DORMITORIES

This chapter is dedicated to the description of two commemorative events: the commemoration of the 1957 strike, and the commemoration of the island's former dormitories. While organised separately, and distinct from each other, both events were part of a common commemorative ensemble which took place during the same week of June 2007. For the organisers of the strike commemoration, the aim was to make the history of the strike known to the largest public possible, to proclaim its importance as a major event in the history of Palm Island, and to celebrate and publicly recognise the role of seven leaders of the strike. With the other commemorative event, the intention was firstly to bring together those who had been in the dormitories, a large number of whom travelled from the mainland for the occasion, so that they could share their experiences with one another, and so start a 'healing' process. Here I pay attention to the particular ways in which the past is evoked through these commemorations, to the ways in which the commemorations are thought to be relevant today, to the discourses about the past which are being elaborated, or which are being resisted.

7.1 The commemoration of the strike

In this first part I describe moments of the strike commemoration, with particular attention to the theatre play *Go for Broke*, written by Dulcie Isaro, the daughter of Willie Thaiday who was one of the leaders of the strike. Performed both in Townsville and on Palm Island during the commemoration, the play 're-enacted' the events which took place at the time of the strike. I am especially interested in the ways in which 'murri ways' were at work in the play, itself envisaged as a 'murri way' to tell about, and transmit, history. I pay attention to what the writer of the play, Dulcie Isaro, tells about it, her ambition of having the younger generations know about the strike, and I also look at the play's text, its enactment and the public's reactions to the play, as well as the actors' experience. Emphasis is put in the play on differentiating murri ways from white/colonial ways, with notably the performance of a number of confrontations between the superintendent and leaders of the strike. Ways of speaking, of moving and being are differentiated, performing the unequal power relations at stake, and the moments at which these are 'performatively' reversed. I look at how the 'moment' of the strike, that is, moments of rebellion against colonial agents, echo, for Palm Islanders who talk about the strike more generally, moments of their own, or of their forebears's experiences of rebellion against agents of 'the Act'. I look notably at the use of insults, with reference to Judith Butler's work (2002, 2004) on injury and performance: in moments of rebellion, when power relations are, momentarily, reversed, the direction of the insults, primarily directed at Aboriginal subjects, is reversed. The play puts in action 'murri ways', and shows how these have a particular historicity, which closely relates to life 'under the Act'; here, as well as more generally, in everyday practice, 'murri ways' bear something of a commemorative practice, that of the history of 'dealing with' the conditions of the reserve and the 'post-reserve'.

I also look at the way in which the commemoration of the strike, and the 're-enactment' of the strike through the theatre play, closely related, for many on Palm Island, to the 2004 events: for many there was a close relation between the strike and the 2004 'riot', as it is made especially

visible when people on the island commonly refer now to the strike as ‘the first riot’. For the actors of the play, as some of them expressed it, the re-enactment of the strike could be a moment when those who had been closely affected by the state’s retaliation to the riot in 2004 could ‘let go’ of the pain they still suffered. Other moments of the play were evocative of other kinds of ‘past’ suffering, inhabiting the present; I look in particular to the scene which opened the play, when the character of the dormitory matron cut Dulcie’s hair, which she judged too ‘messy’. The humiliating gesture, traumatic for the young girl, resonates with other humiliating experiences, notably the frequent medical examinations, that Dulcie as well as other older women recalled, and the cruel punishment of women who had ‘disobeyed’ the reserve’s rules, and who were made to sweep the streets and wear bag dresses, their hair often cut or shaved.

I pay particular attention to the role of emotions, in the context of the play and more generally, in the transmission of knowledge about the past: a knowledge which is about understanding the experiences of those who lived under the Act, by establishing an emotional proximity between them and the younger generations. This also concerns non-Aboriginal people, whose position as subjects in this context I also consider.

In the last section of this first part of the chapter, I pay attention to the question of memory as an object of ‘politics’. As an example, I relate some tensions which emerged between organizers of the strike and of the dormitory reunions. This is not to emphasize tensions between community members in themselves, but to show something more complex. For Palm Islanders, the commemorated past is both ‘collective’, as a past that all Palm Islanders can relate to, and it is also personified: particular individuals are more closely than others related, to particular events, situations and characters who played a particular role in the past, depending on their particular histories. Tensions may thus emerge about who is entitled to speak about the past, in which ways, about what and who should be recognised in relation to it. In the era of recognition, the past is thus not solely an object of recognition between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people or the state, it is also and perhaps equally importantly an object of recognition among Aboriginal people, a question which complicates usual arguments about the recognition of the past among historians, for example.

7.2 The Dormitory Reunion and the theme of ‘healing’

I then describe the Dormitory Reunion in more detail, looking especially at the central theme of the reunion, ‘healing’, the role of recognition and again of emotions. I also discuss the growing importance of this theme of ‘healing’ in relation to Aboriginal people’s relationships to their past. I identify the influence of a ‘psychotherapeutic’ discourse, which, I argue, can become constraining, and even imposing of a posture of reminiscing, voicing traumatic experiences in order to heal from them. I also look at the influence of Christian discourses on this theme, and look at the ‘mix’ which Palm Islanders often mention between Christian beliefs and images and Aboriginal ‘spirituality’. There isn’t mere imposition of the ‘psychotherapeutic’ discourse, or the Christian discourse, but rather, as I try to describe it, a more complex poetics of memory and healing which is present in the different ways in which Palm Islanders talk about the past, and evocate it, for instance, in songs.

As I move to the next sections, I still explore further the existence of a constraining discourse about healing, to which several Palm Islanders expressed resistance to, not attending, or refusing to

attend, for instance, the Dormitory reunion. However, this opposition is more ambivalent than it seems: while expressing resistance to what was perceived as an injunction to ‘share’ personal, and painful, histories, they also expressed the desire, in a more interpersonal context, in which the role of the non-Aboriginal subject plays a role, to evocate these histories and ‘touch’ their interlocutor. With reference to the recent example of the Redress Scheme, put in place in 2007 by the Queensland government to financially ‘redress’ the injustices experienced by those – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people – who had been separated from their families and placed in institutions (such as on Palm Island), I look at how recognition can in fact operate to doubt and put ‘on trial’ the memories of those from whom it is demanded that they provide proof of the suffering and injustices that they experienced in order to be recognised.

CHAPTER 8: AMBIVALENT MEMORIES OF LIFE ON THE RESERVE

In this last chapter, I focus more specifically on the memories of older people, who lived ‘under the Act’ on Palm Island: what interests me here is the complexity, and very often the ambivalence, which is present in these memories. In their accounts of their past experiences of life ‘under the Act’, older people often present a portrayal of the past which is not always ‘negative’, but which sometimes also contains more ‘positive’ elements (for instance, memories of ‘good moments’), and judgements of the past. This ambivalence, during my fieldwork research on Palm Island, often surprised me, because it unsettled my own interpretations of what I had learned about the colonial past, relying on the interpretative tools provided by the ‘new history’. In such historical accounts, Aboriginal accounts and testimonies often serve to further enhance the historian’s description of colonial alienation. This also complexified what I had understood from listening to accounts of life ‘under the Act’ by Palm Islanders of various ages, which are usually centred, at first, on the most significant characteristics of the alienation of ‘the Act’, for instance the bell, the rations, the dormitories or Mango avenue reserved for the use of white people. Ambivalences make themselves more obvious, and more recurrent, when one is perhaps able to listen to more individually detailed accounts, or when one doesn’t discard them as irrelevant in an overall supposedly more significant narrative. Their taking into account does not invalidate, or downplay, the ‘new history’ narrative, but makes it perhaps more complex, allowing for more complex hypothesis regarding the presence of the past and the subjectifying effects of colonial discourses and practices.

8.1 Some examples

I first present detailed examples of different accounts of past experiences at the Palm Island reserve by older Palm Islanders, in which ambivalent memories, more or less ambivalent appreciations of the disciplinary and alienating character of ‘the Act’ and its agents are expressed. I give a description of the commemoration of the implementation of the catholic mission on the island, as well as mention extracts of interviews relating to the role of the churches on the island. These examples reveal diverse, and often ambivalent perceptions of the role of the churches and the missionaries in the reserve. Other examples, of other detailed accounts of life on the reserve, which concern the dormitories or the bell, also show complex and ambivalent appreciation of living conditions and of the nature of ‘the Act’, while never downplaying its alienating character.

8.2 Interpretative hypothesis

In the second part of the chapter, I look at different possible hypothesis to interpret these ambivalent memories, the presence of which is generally ignored in historical narratives of the ‘new history’. I question this absence, which also exists in much work on the theme of colonial memory from a postcolonial perspective, which usually seeks to identify ‘resistance’ in the memory of the colonized. I look at different types of hypothesis which have been elaborated and could apply to the interpretation of these memories, such as Mikhaïl Bakhtin’s notion of ‘multivocality’, as well as Antonio Gramsci’s interpretation of ‘subaltern’ thought as necessarily contradictory and lacking ‘coherence’ because of hegemonic discourse’s grip on ‘subaltern’ consciousness. While these hypotheses are of relevance here, Gramsci’s hypothesis conveys a sense of a certain kind of

‘primitivism’ (A. Smith 2006: 252-253) and, while Bakhtin’s hypothesis may seem to be able to avoid this, it can also be used, eventually, to preserve a sense of a subaltern ‘voice’, ‘interior’ and ‘authentic’, preserved from the power effects of dominant discourses. I argue that it is necessary to leave a number of hypotheses ‘open’, in order to fully take ambivalences into account.

Firstly, I argue that it is important to accept that ambivalence does not disappear, while one tries to ‘explain’ it, as much as subjects cannot ‘erase’ their own complexities; hence, it is necessary to accept that some of those who lived ‘under the Act’ did, and continue to, find some aspects of their lives on the reserve, more ‘positive’ than others. It is also important to take into account the fact that agents of the colonial power, itself not always homogenous, were not all alike, at least in the eyes of the Aboriginal people who remember them, and often express, towards a number of them, some affective attachment. Colonial agents themselves could be ambivalent in the ways in which they exercised their authority, in which they made use of power. Secondly, it is important to recognise that all Aboriginal subjects are not interchangeable; interpretations of the past may vary from one person to the other, and they appear also to be flexible, subject to change and reinterpretations, enduring questions. There are also differences between the ways in which the younger generations, who did not experience life ‘under the Act’, talk about the colonial past, and the ways in which elders do so: while the former tend to adopt more unilateral discourse about the past as essentially oppressive, older people’s accounts are generally, but not always, more ambivalent. This ambivalence is sometimes interpreted by younger people as proof that people have been, in the past, ‘brainwashed’. However, I also see here again a wider complexity: the question of domination and resistance appears to always have been a crucial question, for those who were subjected to the Act: not that some people were necessarily more resistant, or on the contrary ‘accommodating’, than others. Ambivalent memories, here, are not attributable to a category of people, with a distinctive attitude towards the past.

Finally, I look at the frequent use of comparisons between the ‘old days’, and ‘today/these days’, when older people talk about the past. While there is in fact no clarity as to when the passage between these two ‘eras’ precisely occurred, there is often uncertainty about the nature of the changes that took place, and which do render ‘today’ different from ‘the old days’. It is in comparison to a present that appears, in many ways, problematic, that the past appears more ambivalent.

To pay attention to the question of memory and ambivalence can be an opportunity to treat memory work, and colonial power effects, as objects of investigation, questioning, rather than as a given (see Stoler & Strassler 2000). Ambivalences reveal complex subjectivities, profoundly affected by colonial discourses, policies and practices, but are not reducible to their effects, as much as they are not reducible to what would essentially counter, or resist, these effects. Rather than a division between contradictory experiences and interpretations, there seems to be the presence of fluctuating interpretations and appreciations of experiences and memories, there are hesitations and enduring questions about their meaning.

CHAPTER 9: GENERAL CONCLUSION

In this thesis I aimed not so much to describe the particular forms that memory (as opposed to history) takes among Palm Island people, as to interrogate the relationship between history, memory and subjectivity in terms of the questions that Palm Islanders ask themselves more or less explicitly and in diverse ways, in relation to these concepts. I make a tentative attempt to define a number of questions, one of which I specifically attribute to Palm Islanders themselves, that is, how do we deal with the way we have been ‘placed’? In other words, how do we deal with subject positions that have been attributed to us and that we have not chosen for ourselves? I argue that this question is expressed in practice through Palm Islanders interpretations of the past, their activities in relation to, and desires for, research about the past, and their memorial practices.

I have shown the many ways that the subject positions attributed to Aboriginal people during the colonial period were injurious to them” ‘aboriginal’, ‘half-cast’, ‘full-blood’, and ‘trouble-maker’, in need of rehabilitation, protection, correction, reform and capable of assimilation ‘into the total community of Queensland’ (Killoran, cited in Ch. 3).

In the era of recognition, during the post-colonial period, these ‘places’ or subject positions have been modified. Aboriginality is recognised within the dominant discourse only if it is ‘cultural’ and ‘traditional’, and also if it is wounded, alienated or disadvantaged by colonial oppression. The discourse of recognition is far from being uniform. One could include here the neo-conservative discourse that Aboriginal communities are dysfunctional; or even racial fantasies about Aboriginality as deviant, criminal, unpredictable, and in need of police intervention. One might even include here the revisionist discourse on history that downplays the ‘misdeeds’ of the past in relation to its advantages. Such discourses often accompany the discourse on dysfunctionality. It is possible to consider all these discourses together if one envisages the postcolonial era of recognition as an era of *re-cognition* of Aboriginality, an era in which knowledges about Aboriginality are being reconstituted, an era of redefinition of the ‘places’ of Aboriginality or the redefinition of the island in relation to the mainland, from the perspective of the mainland.

The mainland adopts diverse attitudes to the island. It may feel touched by the island, sorry for it; it feels the need to recognise it; yet it feels threatened by the island, by its unpredictability. It feels outraged by the version of history that is being made and that it does not want to recognise. It posits itself as being able to repair, to say ‘sorry’ and ‘to write a new page of history’ (Rudd).

The mainland attempts to erase the past by creating for itself a blank page. It says that it is going to put into place measures that will differentiate it from its ancestors. The mainland recognises the island as disadvantaged; in need of its help to ‘close the gap’ that separates it from the mainland. It proposes to recognise culture and land rights and it works to define the terms according to which this recognition will take place. It recognises difference provided that it is embodied and visible in the ‘right’ way. Contradictorily, it claims that the page of its history has never been stained and that those who claim that it has are lying, yet it proposes measures of practical reconciliation in order to render Aboriginality functional. It says that on the island there are “forty-two hostile tribes’

(Lindsay) who have lost their cultural heritage and who have received a lot of money to resolve their problems. It is frightened, or pretends to be frightened, by the threat of the island to its authority; by its threat to the mainland's public space through disorderly or unpredictable conduct. The mainland says that the island is the most dangerous place in the world and that it is a 'paradise lost'.

There are many other possible ways in which the island is recognised. I have also shown (Chapter 4) the different ways that Palm Islanders, in turn, recognise the mainland and bring into perspective the history and development of their relationship with one another.

Aboriginality has been placed or positioned in diverse ways during the colonial and postcolonial period and the defining discourses that are not homogenous. The various subject positions of Aboriginality do not emanate from the mainland as if the mainland were exterior to the island, imposing its discourses from a separate domain. These places (subject positions), as attributed by the mainland, have not been, and are not today, necessarily endorsed by the subjects that these places designate or interpolate. The interpolation itself is not always consciously articulated. The discourses that we use, within which we situate ourselves, are not always used purposefully. The interpolation is not always successful. Yet, even if there is resistance against assigned positions, there is never an absence of position. One needs to be able to be recognised as situated somewhere. It is probably not possible to make a blank page of oneself or to invent for oneself a position (even though this is the very desire that drives a certain Western way of writing history, as demonstrated in chapter 2). As Judith Butler (2004) shows and as discussed in Chapter 7 in reference to Murri ways, it is by virtue of its historicity (that is, the historical repetition of injury) that the injurious place may be resisted and may become the site of re-signification. Aboriginal identity is an example. However, this does not mean liberation, or the defeat of domination. Even where Aboriginality is written with a capital A (Glowczewski 1997) there is the potentiality for the continuous grafting of the 'curse of recognition' (Povinelli 2002).

In my frequent use of the expression 'deal with' I wish to emphasise that it is actually not possible for a subject to occupy a position/place outside certain attributed positions. This question is particularly sensitive for the people of Palm Island, displaced, categorised and re-categorised by colonial discourses, and subjected to disciplinary practices within the Palm Island reserve. To deal with these conditions, these attributed positions, in the colonial and postcolonial situation does not mean to accept or to bow to domination. Rather, than an opposition between acceptance and resistance, I suggest that there is a constant fluctuation between 'docility and resistance' (Henry 1999:60). Explicit resistance against discursive power is not itself situated externally to this power because 'where there is power there is resistance' (Foucault 1976) or 'where there is resistance there is power' (Abu-Lughod 1990). In Chapter 5, I raised the question of the social categories that were attributed to Aboriginal people during the colonial period and that Palm Islanders commonly use to designate themselves and one another. I provided a particular example of the way in which attributed positions are not simply passively endorsed but participate in a continuous process of subjectification, which is not simply and not necessarily experienced as alienating, even though it is often by reference to the attribution of these racial categories that the history of colonial oppression

is told. Perhaps this indicates more generally that to tell one's own story one has to deal with the discursive past, a historicity whose genealogy inhabits the present. This does not mean, however, that there are no ruptures, inflections, through which positions can be redefined, through which it has been possible for people to position themselves differently and to put this genealogy into perspective.

I looked at the 'New History' movement, not simply as the fruit of historians but as a movement itself inscribed in a changing historical and political context in which non-Aboriginal historians and Aboriginal activists met. The new history is not simply revealed to non-Aboriginal people, to the recognising (or not) nation (Cowlshaw 2006). I suggested in Chapter 3 and the chapters following that during the 1970s there was a movement among Palm Islanders to re-interpret their past together with the emerging and changing possibilities of Aboriginal identification. This movement was also nurtured by the desire for research, sometimes leading to discovery. As shown in Chapter 5, these desires are stimulated by the possibility of 'tracing back' places before the reserve era, displaced ancestors, lost kin, especially through the archives. The desire is at times constrained, disappointed or deceived, but is nonetheless continuously present. This movement for the reinterpretation of history is also both nurtured and constrained by the recognition of 'the culture' and Aboriginal territorial attachments as shown in Chapters 5 and 6. It constitutes a discourse on the national recognition of the colonial past and its struggles and sufferings. When the new history movement began (Chapter 3) Palm Island people were still under the Act, but power relations between Aboriginal people and the state were changing. The diffusion of a new discourse on the nature of the colonial past at the time constituted a political tool that enables people to express inequality in the present. As I suggested with the example of the film 'Protected', what we witness here is the constitution or affirmation of a discourse on the nature of the past and the present, rather than simply the revelation of a memory which is only now able to be heard. It is perhaps also because this discourse becomes possible, and because non-Aboriginal interlocutors put themselves in a position to be able to hear them, that memories of the strike took on new value. However, the diverse discourses of recognition may themselves be appropriated according to Murri ways of memorialising and particular ways of interpreting history. Discourses on recognition, reconciliation, and healing may of course also be questioned and resisted.

This movement towards the past and its reinterpretation among Palm Islanders has its own historicity, a historicity that is enhanced by for example Molly, who remarked: 'We used to live in the present'. She was emphasising that the practice among Palm Islanders of collecting and recording oral histories of the elders was a recent phenomenon – a practice that did not exist in the past ('in the old days'). The identification of and importance and value that people attach to the 'the old days' and their research and interpretation of these days has itself a historicity. It is not a simple consequence of 'the burden of the past in the present' (Attwood 2000), if by 'burden of the past' is meant what History reveals. If we define this burden as the simple result of the storage of the past in the present, then problematically memory itself is no more than a repository of the past and mere homogenous counter-memory that talks back to the archive (Stoller and Strassler 2000; Trouillot 1995).

This conclusion may seem to contradict my approach to memory practices, my approach to elaborations of versions of history, to practices of research, conservation, celebration and healing among Palm Islanders in their efforts to deal with a certain past in the present. The expression ‘there is a lot of history here’ itself suggests that the past is somehow stored somewhere. It is also important to note that history, not histories, is used here. This expression suggests that the past inhabits the island’s places and perhaps its people. Yet this expression could also be interpreted as a question: to what extent does the past actually inhabit the present? To what extent have we been made, unmade and remade by the past? To what extent have we made ourselves?

In the use of this term ‘history’ it is possible to perceive the historicity of the ‘new history’ movement as well as the recognition of ‘historical people’ (in contrast to traditional owners) (Chapter 6). In this use of the word ‘history’ can be perceived the emergence and re-emergence of these questions in new ways. For Palm Island people who appropriate these possibilities in their own way, these possibilities are also potential constraints. The way this word ‘history’ is used also reveals a profound attachment to it. This history is composed of suffering but it can also be cherished. The meaning of what happened ‘here’ in the more or less distant past is not given but is often pursued and interrogated. It is the source of hypothesis. The history that is at stake is a source of questions, doubts, tensions. It is a matter of politics and of desires. It is imagined and re-imagined at one and the same time as Palm Islanders imagine and re-imagine their own ‘becoming’.

In a way, we could compare the island and its places with its history (and the multiple histories that participate in this history) to a heterotopia, a space (or rather a place) which can be of a disciplinary nature, but where other forms of utopia than the reserve can be put into practice, or where such possibilities can be imagined. The reserve itself is a muddle of heterotopias. It is a place apart, where time and emplacements are regulated, exclusive of one another (the dormitories, Fantome Island, Punishment Island, the white area, the tribal camps, the ‘wild’ places, the forbidden places, the places of freedom and places that are haunted by spirits). It once was a place that was impossible to leave or enter unless one was ordered by force to do so, or had been issued with a permit. With its school, churches, its farm, the reserve was somehow a miniature reproduction of the mainland society, but where all values were almost inverted. There was no free circulation and no possible movement outside the reserve. The reserve was an anti-egalitarian space, in contrast to the egalitarian ideal of the nation. The contemporary Aboriginal community, in terms of its bureaucratic definition, is also a place apart, separated as well as in constant relationship of a differentiating kind with the mainland.

Perhaps it is not possible to do without, or undo, these places (as locations, and subject-positions); their historicity cannot be unmade. If Palm Island people often evoke the desire to leave the island to go and live elsewhere, or even to just go to the mainland for a few days, they also almost always mention their desire to come back. There is no desire here to change the history of Palm Island, and certainly not to change being Palm Islander, but a desire to continue to deal with this home, notably by interpreting and reinterpreting, researching, by continuing to imagine, the ‘becoming’ of its history.

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Figure 1 : Map of the Palm Islands

Dots indicate main places of residence and some camping areas. Farm, Top End, Bottom End, Reservoir ridge, Butler Bay, are also the names of some of the main residential areas on Great Palm Island

Seven Palm Island Natives In Custody

Seven handcuffed aborigines were brought ashore by police at Townsville on Thursday after having been transported by a R.A.A.F. crash launch from Palm Island.

Three squads of police, totalling 20 men, had gone to the settlement earlier in the week in response to a request for assistance on Monday by the Superintendent (Mr. R. H. Bartlam).

It was understood that a disturbance had been threatened by some of the aborigines when one native was to be transferred elsewhere.

The first police party, headed by Sub-Inspector J. J. Cooke, proceeded to the settlement in a crash launch early on Monday night. A second squad left Townsville on Tuesday afternoon, and a further detail travelled to the island on Wednesday night.

In an early morning operation on Thursday, police rounded up seven aborigines for transport to the mainland under a removal order. The operation passed off quietly at five o'clock.

This was reported on Thursday afternoon by the officer in charge of the Townsville police district, Inspector B. C. O'Sullivan.

The natives required to be taken into custody were on board the settlement launch before the remaining aborigines on the island were aware of it, the inspector added.

Later in the day, the natives and a party of 14 police, including Sub-Inspector Cooke, boarded a crash launch at the island for the journey to Townsville. The craft made the 46-mile trip in two hours, arriving shortly after 1 p.m.

The men in custody will be held at Townsville pending their despatch to other destinations.

Six other policemen, with Sub-Inspector V. L. A. Crank in charge, have remained at the island.

Inspector O'Sullivan said no trouble had been encountered by the police. No one had been hurt, and there had been no damage to property. The natives appeared to be settling down.

The crash launch on Thursday also brought back four other aborigines to be charged in connection with offences alleged to have been committed prior to this week's incident. They will appear in the Townsville Court of Petty Sessions this morning.

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25 Aborigines Removed From Palm Island

Twenty-five Palm Island aborigines left Townsville under police escort on the Brisbane mail train last night.

They were removed from the island by police in a "dawn raid" last Thursday. Six of the aborigines are under removal order. The other 19 are members of their families.

Three of the families will go to the Cherbourg settlement (Murgon) and the remainder to Woorabinda, near Rockhampton. A police escort of two sergeants and two constables is accompanying them on the trip.

A police spokesman said that the 25 aborigines had been kept in the Townsville watchhouse until their departure.

The spokesman added that there had been no further trouble on the island but two policemen had been detained there.

FIGURE 2 : STRIKE OF 1957 - TOWNSVILLE
BULLETIN - 14TH AND 19TH JUNE 1957.

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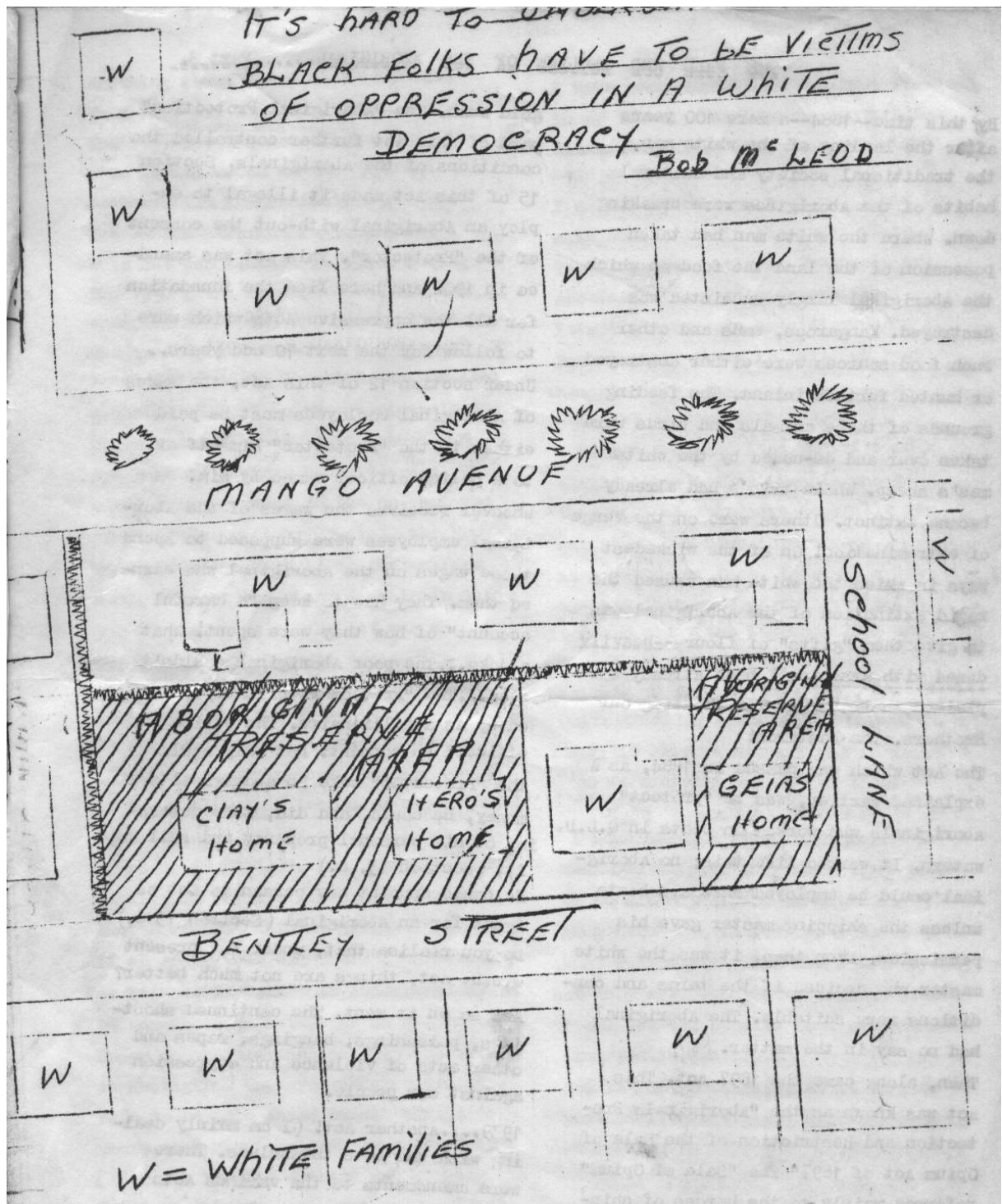


FIGURE 3 : MAP OF THE CENTRE OF THE RESERVE - 1974 - (SOURCE : BILL ROSSER, *SMOKE SIGNAL*)

This map drawn by Bill Rosser in 1974 showed how the homes of three Aboriginal families had been re-gazetted under the status of 'Aboriginal reserve' areas, following positions taken by the council of Fred Clay which unsettled the white administration's authority. At the top of the page is a quote from Aboriginal activist Bob McLeod. *Smoke Signal*, June 1974, n° 6, p. 3.

Figure 4 : Police intervention on Palm Island in 1973 (Source : *Canberra Times*)



Canberra Times,
8 novembre 1973

Figures 5 : The 'Palm Island riot' in the *Townsville Bulletin*, November 2004.



Townsville Bulletin
 27 novembre 2004



Townsville Bulletin, 27 novembre 2004

Figure 6 : Public protest in Townsville demanding that police officer Chris Hurley be charged, October 2006 – *Townsville Bulletin*



Townsville Bulletin, 11 octobre 2006



Townsville Bulletin
16 nov 2006

Figure 7 : Lex Wotton and John Clumpoint in the *Townsville Bulletin* – November 2006

Figure 8 : Queensland DPP decision not to charge Chris Hurley, December 2006 – *Townsville Bulletin*



Townsville Bulletin,
15 décembre 2006



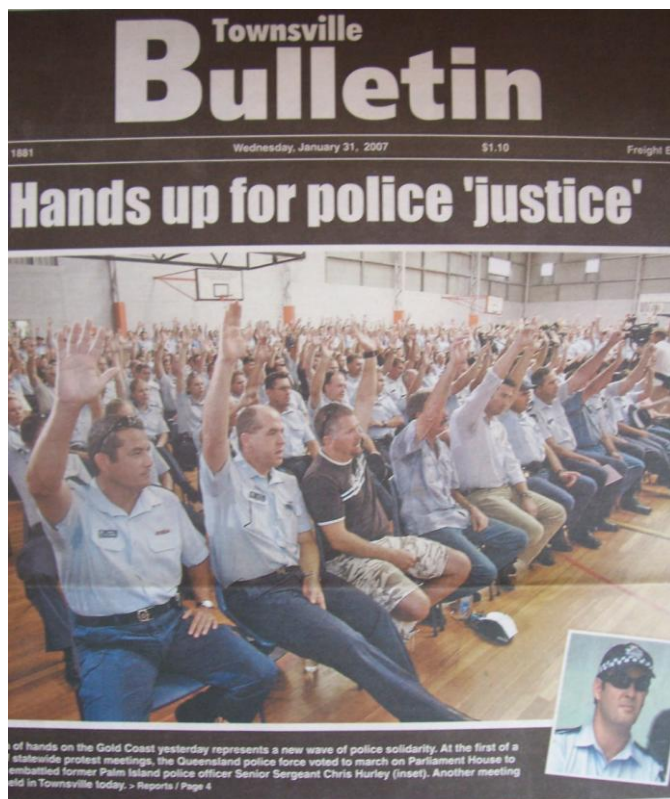
Townsville Bulletin, 21 décembre 2006

Figure 9 : Public protest in Townsville after the DPP decision, December 2006 – *Townsville Bulletin*

Figure 10 : Independent judge Lawrence reviews DPP decision – January 2007 – *Koori Mail*



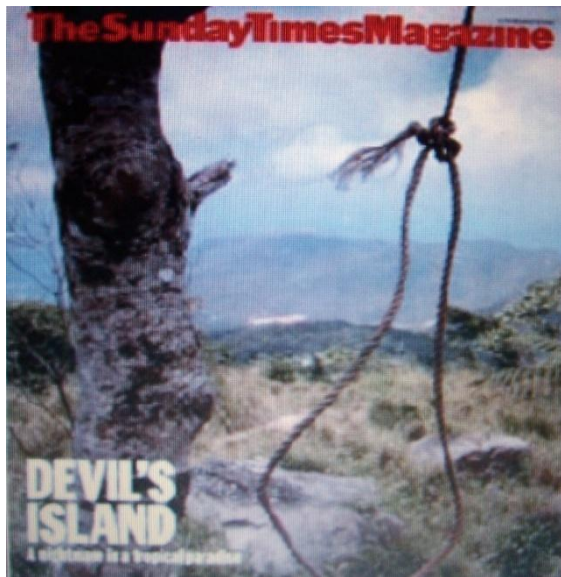
Koori Mail,
31 janvier 2007



Townsville Bulletin,
31 janvier 2007

Figure 11 : Police meeting in support of Chris Hurley – January 2007 - *Townsville Bulletin*

Figures 12 : Examples of representations of Palm Island in the media and the 'paradise lost' image



Sunday Times Magazine, 1st Feb. 1998



« Bitter Paradise », *The Weekend Australian*, 4-5th Dec. 2004 ; « Paradise Lost », *Courier-Mail*, 4th Dec. 2004 ; « The poisonous paradise », *The Australian*, 29th Sept. 2006

Figure 13 : 'Look at our Island Paradise !' : graffiti at the Palm Island airport (2006)

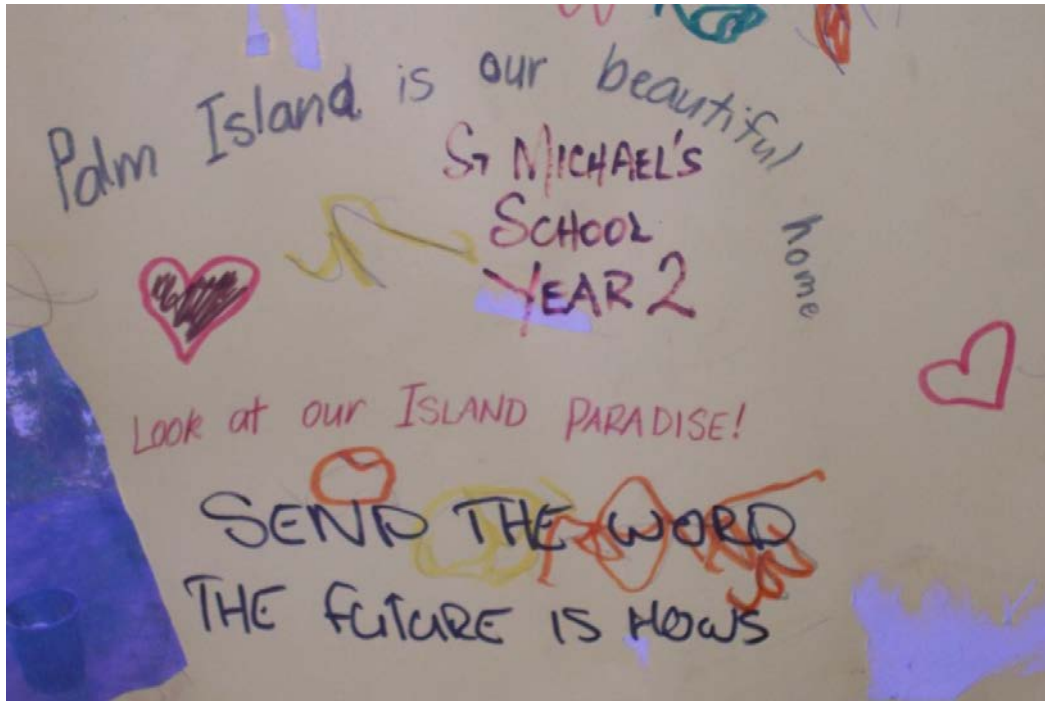
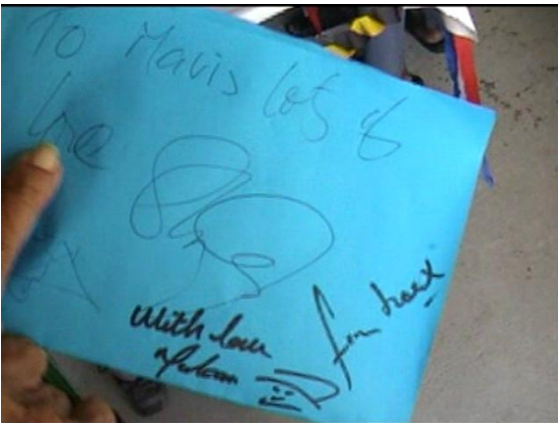


Figure 14 : Painting by Roger Shannon, displayed on the outside walls of the Palm Island council during the NAIDOC celebrations, July 2007.



Figures 15 : Luncheon in honor of the Boney M singers and the Palm Island Elders

From left to right and from the top: Dancers of the 'hula', Erikah Kyle (council mayor) welcomes the band, screening of a film about the history of Palm Island, Sheila Bonnick from Boney M receives a gift from Agnes Wotton, the Palm Island elders and traditional owner Allan Palm Island, the Boney M members sing a capella 'By the rivers of Babylon'.



The Boney M singers sign autographs. Mavis Foster gets her program signed and shows her signatures 'To Mavis lots of Love'.

Figure 16 : 'We will deliver ...' - Pamphlet presenting the newly established Palm Island Community Company – 2007

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Carol Petelida
Independent Chair



Mark Johnston
Old Gov. Nominee



Rhonda Phillips
Old Gov. Nominee



Paul Travis
Council Nominee



Jim Petrich
Council Nominee



Alan Palm Island
Palm Island Family Nominee



Community Shareholder Nominee



Mike Gilmour
Company Secretary

COMPANY STAFF



Services Manager



General Manager



Administration Officer

WE WILL DELIVER ...

1. We will provide corporate and business support services to non government organisations such as:
 - Financial and administration tasks;
 - Assistance in organising Board and Committee meetings;
 - Support in the preparation of funding submissions;
 - Assistance in finding specialists in law, finance, small business or other areas of expertise.
2. We will deliver a range of human services with non-government organisations such as:
 - Services for children and young people;
 - Family support services;
 - Services to people with a disability and their carers; and
 - Other services by negotiation.
3. We will assist community members to develop local businesses including:
 - Assisting with the management of small businesses by providing advice and mentoring.

SHAREHOLDERS

Ordinary Shareholders




Note: The Commonwealth Government has not yet taken up an option to be an ordinary shareholder

Community Shareholders



Note: the number of Community shareholders is unlimited



Figure 17 : Opening of the *Bwgc*olman Keeping place at the Bwgc



Figures 18 : The 'Tribal banner march' – NAIDOC celebrations - July 2007



Election of the best banner – Naidoc 2007



Figure 19 : The ‘Hula’ dance, NAIDOC 2007





Figure 20 : Young dancers performing a ‘corroboree’ dance, on a song about the history of the people of Palm Island– NAIDOC 2007

Figure 21 : Dancers perform Torres Strait Island dances – NAIDOC 2007



FIGURE 22 : PHOTOS OF THE THEATRE PERFORMANCE OF *STRIKE OF 57* ON PALM ISLAND - JUNE 2007



FIGURE 23 : UNVEILING OF A PLAQUE COMMEMORATING THE DORMITORIES, WITH THE FORMER DORMITORY INMATES – JUNE 2007



FIGURE 24 : PARTICIPANTS TO THE DORMITORY REUNION HOLD HANDS DURING THE 'LETTING GO' CEREMONY- JUNE 2007

FIGURE 25 : GOODBYES AT THE END OF THE DORMITORY REUNION- PEOPLE SING « *WHEN THE IREX SAILS AWAY* » - JUNE 2007

