



Genocide Perspectives VII

Essays on Holocaust and Genocide

Editor

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**The Indefensible and Unstoppable Australian Colonial Genocide: The
Nineteenth Century Demise of the Tasmanian Aborigine**

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Abstract

The chapter outlines the derivation of the concept of genocide developed by the lawyer-activist Raphael Lemkin that was embedded in the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. A mention of the particular vulnerabilities of autochthonous communities to modern conflicts precedes a discussion of the calamitous outcomes that befell the Indigenous First Nations People who referred to themselves as *Palawa* following European colonisation of the island of Tasmania. The work concludes with a history of the so-called 'Australian Colonial Genocide' and explores the aetiology leading to the total demise of the *Palawa*.

Keywords: Raphael Lemkin, *Palawa*, Genocide in Australia, United Nations Genocide Convention.

Preamble

The Nineteenth Century Tasmanian Aboriginal tribes were ultimately annihilated but not the Aboriginal race. The loss of up to 10,000 Tasmanian Indigenes fades in comparison with the estimated 100,000 deaths of one of the three ethnic groups in Rwanda,¹ the minority Tutsis together with some of the dominant tribal Hutu, in a little over a hundred days during the ethnocentric Rwandan genocide, from 7 April to 15 July 1994. Some 10,000 Rwandan people were individually killed each day every day during a brief three-month period towards the end of the Rwandan Civil War, making it perhaps the fastest genocide in recorded history (Kuperman 2001; Destexhe 1995). The Rwandan Civil War was fought between the Rwandan Armed Forces representing the government and the Rebel Patriotic Front (RPF) defending the Tutsi people, from 1 October 1990 until 18 July 1994. On the other hand, the extirpation of the *Palawa* was nonetheless an indefensible Nineteenth Century Australian colonial genocide.

Benjamin Madley (2008) proposed that Indigenous peoples, whether described as natives or tribal people, First Nations or the Fourth World, nonetheless have always faced the threat of annihilation. A common thread to the later atrocities committed by Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century English settlers was an unwavering belief that new overseas territories were deemed empty or uninhabited and were likely to remain so. To this end the British politicians contrived the doctrine of *terra nullius*.² The

¹ The ethnic groups of Rwanda are the Hutu (85 per cent of population) Tutsi (14 per cent) and Twa (1 per cent).

² The concept of *terra nullius* as applied to Australia was introduced within a proclamation made by the New South Wales (NSW) Governor, Major General Sir Richard Bourke (1777-1855) on 10 October 1835, NSW Government Gazette 1832-1890 (Sydney: Government Printer) State Library of NSW Q 83/76-78)

United States government was similarly deluded by the 'emptiness' of the far west and applied a concept seemingly borrowed from the enlightened English philosopher-*cum*-physician, John Locke (1632-1704), who wrote in the early paragraphs of the brief *Second Treatise of Government* (1690), the doctrine of *vacuum domicilium* or the 'empty domicile', 'vacant land'. The original Indigenous inhabitants of the gold-rich northwest lands of California were excluded from Californian state citizenship, so the Yuki tribes were therefore denied legal land ownership (Madley 2004). Imperial Germany orchestrated a similar scenario, *tabula rasa*, the idea of a clean slate that was applied to the Herero's land within the new German colony of Südwestafrika between 1884 and 1915. From 1968 the territory became known as Namibia (Madley 2004). The doctrines are best summed up by the earlier Seventeenth Century French phrase '*carte blanche*', blank document.

There are between 370 and 500 million Indigenous peoples worldwide, distributed in over 5,000 nations throughout 90 countries. They make up 5 per cent of the global population, yet account for about 15 per cent of the extreme poor (Ford *et al.* 2020.) Amnesty International (2025) suggests that the 476 million Indigenous people speak more than 4,000 languages and that the vast number of them, 70 per cent, live in Asia. Such figures are an approximation since many countries do not report their Indigenous populations thereby avoiding international enquiries or submitting to investigations by the United Nations and other agencies on behalf of their Indigenous peoples.

Polish Progressive Advocate, Raphael Lemkin

Following a meeting with President Franklin Roosevelt (1882-1945) between 9 and 12 August 1941 at the Naval Station Argentia at Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, where

the Atlantic Charter was ratified, Winston Churchill (1874-1965), on 24 August 1941, broadcast an address to the British nation which included the mention of the horrors of the Nazi exterminations and mass murders. He opined that 'we are in the presence of a crime without a name' (Churchill 2015, p6; Gilbert 2007, p 186). Less than two years later in 1943, Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959) a Polish lawyer, proposed the missing neologism. On 11 July 1944, Churchill replied to the Lord Henry Melchett, a committed Zionist and supporter of a Jewish State, describing the revelation of the accelerated murder of 434,000 Hungarian Jews by early July 1944. The mass homicide was perpetrated within the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp complex.

There is no doubt in my mind that we are in the presence of one of the greatest and most horrible crimes ever committed. It has been done by scientific machinery by nominally civilized men in the name of a great state and one of the leading races of Europe. (Churchill 1944).

The deaths of the Hungarian Jews was perhaps an unexpected occurrence given that since November 1940, the country was a client state of the Axis Alliance.

A multilingual Jewish lawyer-*cum*-activist, Lemkin originally practised as a public prosecutor with a primary interest in criminal law. In 1939 he fled to Lithuania then through Scandinavia carrying copies of a large number of Nazi decrees and ordinances. He ultimately reached Canada and the United States. Based at Duke University in North Carolina, Lemkin analysed the Nazi documents and published his investigations in 1944 that recounted the German occupation policies in an encyclopaedic tome, *A Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*. Within Chapter Nine spanning 16 pages,

entitled *Genocide*, he explained the derivation of the term by compounding the Greek prefix *genos* for race or tribe, with the Latin suffix, *cide* for killing (Lemkin 1944).

Lemkin considered 'mass murder', the term in use at the time, to be inadequate since it failed to account for the motive of the crime. Genocide motives include race, religion and nationalism and have nothing to do with the conduct of war. Genocide thereby was not a war crime, an understanding already stipulated at The Hague in 1907. Lemkin more explicitly wrote that genocide was not, 'only a crime against the rules of war, but a crime against humanity itself' (Lemkin 1944, p. 79). Genocide differs from all other crimes against humanity since it implies an intention to completely exterminate the chosen group. The specificity of genocide does not then arise from the extent of the killings but entirely from the intention of the crime, the total destruction of a group. Proposed later by a section of the international Jewish community, the *Shoah* a 'calamity', was the name given to the Holocaust in an effort to emphasise that this genocidal catastrophe was something of a unique example of mass human destruction. Whether it was unique or not, the mass destruction of two-thirds of European Jewry fitted Lemkin's understanding of an incomplete genocide. The Nazis perpetrated widespread murder on countless Gypsies, a disparaging term not synonymous with the ethnonym Roma, Poles, Slavs, Soviet and Polish prisoners-of-war, homosexual people, the mentally ill, the disabled, and political dissidents (Rosenbaum 1998).

What is genocide?

Article 2 of the *United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide (UNGC)*, a document of 19 articles adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1948 (Resolution 260 (III) A), defined genocide as any of the following

acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. Killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (Short 2022). The UNGC definition of genocide is based on four constituent factors: a criminal act; an intent *mens rea*, the criminal state of mind to exterminate an ethnic, national, racial or religious group; and specifically chosen as such. The convention only once stipulates killing as one of the five genocide practices and fails to identify the state as the authoritative perpetrator, the genocidaire. Article 2 thereby includes the two fundamentals of the crime of genocide: the mental element, meaning the intent to destroy, and the physical element, which includes the range of five acts, *vide supra*. A crime must include both elements to be called genocide. Since the intent, defined as the 'anticipated outcome', precedes the actual acts of killing or harming, any form of genocide requires anticipation and preparation (Finzsh 2007).

In accordance with the requirements of Article 2 of the UNGC, the Government of the Republic of South Africa submitted an application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 29 December 2023 advising that the state of Israel, a co-signatory of the UNGC, with committing genocide against the Palestinian citizens of the territory of Gaza. On 12 May 2024 the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Egypt had joined South Africa's genocide action against Israel at the ICJ. The ICJ referred the matter to the body with the responsible jurisdiction to hear individuals or nations accused of war crimes or crimes against humanity, the International Criminal Court (ICC) at The Hague, The Netherlands. The 15 members

of the ICJ, each elected for a nine-year tenure, handed down a judgement on 26 January 2024 (General List No. 192) ordering Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent its troops from committing genocide, to punish acts of incitement, to take steps to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza and to report on its progress in one month. The UNGC clearly stipulated that the authors and instigators of a genocide, and the incitement of a genocide, must be brought to trial. Under the conditions of Article 8, any government may call upon competent United Nation bodies 'to take such action under the Charter of the UN as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in Article 3' (Ratified by the General Assembly resolution 260A (III) of 9 December 1948, entry into force: 12 Jan 1951, in accordance with article XIII). The court's orders, including the warrants of arrest for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Mr Yoav Gallant,³ were issued a day before the 79th International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January 2024, the day marking the liberation by the Red Army of the Nazi concentration camp complex at Auschwitz-Birkenau in south-western Poland. Whilst Israel is not a party to the Rome Statute, nevertheless the ICC still maintains jurisdiction.⁴ Earlier, on 17 March 2023, the ICC issued a warrant for the arrest of the Russian president, Vladimir Putin and Ms Maria A. Lvova-Belova, Commissioner for Children's Rights, for war crimes, the first head of state of a UN Security Council Member to be charged. However, accomplishing Putin's arraignment is unforeseeable.

³ <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-state-palestine-icc-pre-trial-chamber-i-rejects-state-israels-challenges>

⁴ The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is the international treaty that founded the court.

Susceptibilities of Autochthonous Communities to Modern Conflicts, Climate Change and the COVID-19 Pandemic

There is no single entirely agreed definition of the locution 'Indigenous peoples'. The 1987 Independent Commission on Humanitarian Issues outlined four components in the definition of Indigenous humankind. The characteristics include pre-existence, non-dominance, cultural difference and self-identification as Indigenous (Icihi, Sadruddin Aga Khan and bin Talal 1987). Thus people who are descendants of the original population residing in a country, who are usually ethnic minorities and in general do not control the government where they live, are broadly regarded as Indigenous (United Nations Development Program 2005). The fifth volume, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (Shakya 2021), contained the State of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Rights of Lands, Territories and Resources, wherein the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in 2000 and set for achievement by 2015 were defined and developed without Indigenous representation and without mentioning Indigenous peoples in any of the goals. Instead, the MDGs emphasised economic growth with little attention given to environmental sustainability and social equity (Shakya 2021). Indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable to the exigencies of climate change and the continuance of COVID 19 across the world. The crucial factor determining exposure to these and usually with an inferior health outcome is due to the inefficient and sheer lack of health care facilities plus the lack of access to educational services for Indigenous peoples (Global Human Rights Defence 2022).

Indigenous peoples have strong ties to the land and its resources, yet face destruction of their territory for profit. They live largely below the poverty line, have poor health and nutritional standards coupled with high infant mortality rates and achieve low

educational and literacy levels. Racism and classism also underpin their usually marginalised political and legal status, often they are treated negatively by courts, and particularly in Australia and Canada, In Australia, Aboriginal inmates comprise 20 per cent of the prison population whereas they comprise 2.1 per cent of the total population. Likewise in Canada such peoples approximate 2.0 per cent of the population yet make up for 18 per cent of incarcerated felons in 2001 (Nielsen & Robyn 2003).

Indigenous people face a disproportionate burden of malnutrition, with an estimated two billion food insecure Indigenous people worldwide in 2022 with rural women amongst the worst affected (United Nations Human Development Report 2020). As many as 828 million people were affected by hunger in 2021, 46 million more than from a year earlier and 150 million more than 2019 (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations *et al.* 2022). Yet Indigenous peoples and minorities throughout the world are blighted with other age-old markers: vulnerability to mass killings, massacres and murders. Today, all too often international arms corporations, with the assistance of their governments, are ready and willing to provide a range of weapons systems to disaffected Indigenous groups, often directed to the harsh control-systems of dissident movements. Such movements comprise individuals who are non-conformists who believe they are acting for the good of a society. Indigenous inhabitants endure forced relocations, enslavement, disappearance, vandalism, overt and symmetrical warfare and genocide.

Jewish minorities have previously suffered devastation in the form of organised massacres by early Twentieth Century Russians who gave such massacres the name '*pogrom*' Those eastern Jewish communities who escaped a *pogrom* were

often deported. The German NSDAP-led German⁵ *pogrom* during November 1938 (*Kristallnacht*), was a Nazi party organised slaughter of Jewish German citizens and was a mid-Twentieth Century revival of one of the numerous German atrocities that befell the Jews (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2025). For centuries a litany of atrocities has visited minority groups who were vilified by generation-long negative stereotypes across national boundaries. Such atrocities are now sometimes defined as ‘ethnic cleansing’. The barbarity of ethnic cleansing first entered academia and then the popular press in 1992 during the first stage of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina when Bosnian Serbian forces attacked the minority Bosnian Muslims (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2013). Ethnic cleansing encompasses the practices of mass killing, rape, torture, bestiality, starvation and confinement in labour camps (Lieberman, 2012).

Today Indigenous peoples form organisations that are clearly political in nature and may be singled out for vigorous repressive treatment. Nowadays Indigenous communities would clearly benefit from a broadened genocide definition. Politicides are a separate trauma impacting minority Indigenous peoples, whereby victims are defined entirely in terms of their political position that is deemed to be in opposition to the state or a dominant group. In this context, the modern Indigenous groups caught up in conflicts between governments and local insurgent organisations, increasingly are forced by totalitarian governments to undertake counter-insurgency operations. Some authors contend that politicides are now more numerous and just as deadly as genocides (Gurr and Harff *et al.* 1992).

⁵ *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter-Partei*, the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, abbreviated to Nazi Party.

Australian Indigenous people

Australian Indigenous communities are the most imprisoned people on earth, with an incarceration rate 16 times that of the Caucasian population. The Australian Bureau of Statistics documented during the September quarter 2023 that the Aboriginal and Torres Island imprisonment rate was 2,500 persons per 100,000 of the adult Aboriginal and Islander⁶ population, up from 2,470 in the June quarter 2023. Some 42,215 persons were in custody during the September quarter and that had remained stable since the June quarter, coupled with another 81,348 persons serving community-based corrections orders, up 2 per cent from June 2023 (Corrective Services Australia, 2023). Similar to all Indigenous groups, past and present, Aboriginal people seem not to qualify for all the basic human rights. They suffer partial denial of the human needs for food, housing, health and education; basic decencies to protect against torture and illicit detention with few participatory rights in the processes that control their lives and security rights (McConnochie 1973).

The Nineteenth Century *Palawa* People

On 12 September 1803 some 49 European colonists-*cum*-invaders, led by naval Lieutenant John Brown (1780-1827), settled at Risdon Cove on the east side of the Derwent River estuary on the south coast of Tasmania. The third governor of New South Wales (NSW), Phillip Gidley King (1758-1808) instructed that the site be called 'Hobart Town'. Neither the Europeans nor the local First Nations inhabitants had any concept of the calamitous outcome that would soon befall the autochthonous peoples of the island, known between 1642 and 1855 as Van Diemen's Land, (Hurst

⁶ In Australia, the term 'Indigenous' has come to cover both Aboriginal people and the people of the Torres Strait Islands

1938). It is a heart-shaped island with a landmass of 68,401 m², a little larger than Sri Lanka, and was renamed 'Tasmania' in 1856 (Wallenfeld 2025).

One of the terms Tasmanian Aboriginal people used when referring to themselves was *Palawa* (or *Pakanda* or *Parlevar*), the name of the 'first man' who was created from the kangaroo by a creation spirit. The kangaroo became a metaphor for *Palawa* identity in Tasmania. The *Palawa* population suffered a serious decline in numbers within three decades of European settlement such that by 1835 only some 400 Tasmanian Aborigines of unmixed ancestry survived. Most of the survivors were confined in various camps where all but 47 died within the following 12 years.

(Lehman, 2006) The death of one of the last Aboriginal Tasmanians occurred on 8 May 1876 due to a combination of old age and neglect (Pybus 2020). The passing of 64 year-old female Truganini (c1812-1876) at Oyster Cove camp near Hobart in 1876, almost marked the expiration of the Tasmanian Aborigines within just three generations of the interaction with European colonists (Lemkin 2007). The death coincided with the ending of the English colonialists' programmed persecution upon the many Tasmanian Indigenous tribal language groups. Another Indigene, Fanny Cochran Smith (1834-1905) was born at the Wybalenna settlement on the western side of Flinders Island, married in 1865 and bore 11 children with 100 per cent survival. Truganini never bore children, despite her many partners during her earlier years, usually whalers and sawmillers at Adventure Bay on Bruny Island off the south coast of Hobart. Truganini possibly suffered venereal pelvic inflammatory disease with consequent non-patent Fallopian Tubes and subsequent infertility (Dayan, 2006).

Ryan (2012) segregated the Tasmanian Aboriginals into nine nations or political units, each composed of between six and fifteen clans or social units that monitored different territories; each clan of about 40 to 50 people consisted of two to

six extended family units. The Indigenous Tasmanian island population in 1803 has been variously estimated at between 7,000 (Lourandos 1997; Calder 1875) and 10,000 (Ryan 2012; Lemkin 2007). Before the advent of early scientific racism in the late 1860s, primitivism vied with western superiority to permit white explorers, colonists and imperialists to transcend the Indigene by way of enslavement, exploitation, forced labour, menial work and eventual genocide (McConnochie 1973).

In 2021 the Australian Census of Population and Housing Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders reported a total of 30,000 in Tasmania, representing 5.4 per cent of the Tasmanian population, a rise from 4.6 per cent in 2016 and from 4.0 per cent in 2011. Of the 30,000 who identified themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, 91.9 per cent identified themselves as Aborigines, 4.1 per cent as Torres Strait Islander and 4.1 per cent from both cultures. The majority of the 30,000 Aboriginal and Islander population were aged between 5 and 24 years with the median age of 25 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics: Census 2021).

The concept of 'full blooded' or 'pure' Aboriginal people can be contentious and is often regarded as out-dated, the preferred alternative descriptor is 'unmixed ancestry'. Today, some thousands of people living in Tasmania describe themselves as Aboriginal Tasmanians since a number of *Palawa* women bore children to European men in the Furneaux Islands and mainland Tasmania. Modern *Palawa* claim their ancestry as a Bass Strait Island heritage through Manalaganna, his daughter Dollydalrymple⁷ and the *Palawa* cultural leader Fanny Cochran Smith.

⁷ This refers to Dolly Dalrymple (c 1808-1864) an Aboriginal matriarch born in the Furneaux Islands in Bass Strait, daughter of Mannariargenna, a chieftain from north-east Van Diemen's Land. She was fostered as a child by the surgeon at Port Dalrymple on the north coast of Tasmania and baptized in March 1814.

According to the *Palawa* there is but one line of descent (Tasmanian Aboriginal Historical Services 2000-2003). The *Palawa* are a multiracial people who have achieved state recognition, federal government recognition and recognition from other Indigenous Australians.

Legal advocate Raphael Lemkin wrote that

Genocide has two phases. One is the destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and colonisation of the area by the oppressor's own nationals. (Lemkin, 1944, p. 79).

Lemkin's two genocidal phases provide a linkage between genocide and colonisation, particularly European colonisation (Moses, 2000) . Early Twentieth Century Australian historians were by and large reluctant to propose an Australian colonial genocide despite the fact that the Indigenous population declined from around 750,000 in 1788 to 31,000 by 1911. Besides Lemkin, several contemporary writers have subsequently regarded the loss of Tasmanian Aborigines as a genocide (Hughes 2003; Attwood 2005; Boyce 2010; Ryan 2012; Lawson 2014). The early Nineteenth Century European colonisers regarded the Australian Aborigines as a unified people in spite of the fact that many of the 600 Indigenous cultural-linguistic groups regarded themselves as separate peoples (Moses 2004). The Aboriginal census of 1911, at best a crude aggregate, represents a 95.9 per cent cohort reduction from that of 1788, a stark statistic that seems to have made no obvious impact on either State or Commonwealth agencies responsible for the treatment of Indigenous communities. Land was the focus of the tensions between the white settler, as landowner, and

Indigenous natives, as land-user, and was evident throughout the entire colonial process across Australia. Charles Darwin viewed Aboriginal extinction as inevitable, 'we can see that the cultivation of the land will be fatal in many ways to savages, for they cannot, or will not, change their habits' (Moses 2004, p. 20).

Tasmanian Colonisation During the Nineteenth Century: The Demise of the *Palawa*

English colonisation in Australia was basically ethnocidal or cultural genocide as well as physically genocidal. The colonisation process involved the seizure of Aboriginal land without recourse to compensation or negotiation. International market forces determined high agricultural returns both for self-sufficiency and international exportation. Nomadic Indigenous groupings thus lost irreplaceable food sources. Yet settler resistance was provoked. Failure of the land annexation and subsequent cultivation and grazing processes spelled economic ruin for the Europeans and probably the outright failure of the Tasmanian colonising programme. The Aboriginal peoples had to be subdued at all costs, a fact particularly manifest within the small island of Tasmania with its limited pastoral lands. The elimination, not only extermination, of Indigenous mainland First Nation people was also evident quite early in the Nineteenth Century. Steep declines in Aboriginal numbers were consequent to malnutrition, chronic hunger-related diseases, alcohol, neglect, murder, frontier violence with settlers and conflicts with rival Indigenous, reduced fertility and high perinatal mortality (Moses, 2000).

Within a year of the commencement of the English settlement at Risdon Cove on the Derwent River in 1803, anti-Aboriginal violence erupted that commonly led to death. Progressive native resistance stimulated even firmer oppressive measures by

the colonists with martial law proclaimed on 1 November 1828. During the 'Black War' from 1824 to 1831, an imaginary 'Black Line' was conceived in 1830 for the purpose of driving natives south towards the point of the southeast Tasman Peninsula where it was hoped they would be captured. It, too, failed, with only two Indigenous caught (Madley 2008). The term 'Black War' was coined by Australian journalist-author and editor of the Hobart *Colonial Times* from 1830 to 1839, Henry Saxelby Melville (1799-1873) (Melville 1835). The final solution proposed by the authorities in 1831 involved the civilising banishment first to a refuge on Gun Carriage Island (Vansittart Island) lying between Flinders and Cape Barren Islands in the eastern Bass Strait, and later in the year incarceration on Flinders Island. This, too, ultimately collapsed. In 1847, 47 Indigenous returned to the mainland at Oyster Cove, only 16 remained at the end of 1854. In un-published papers, Lemkin described the loss of Tasmanian Aborigines as a genocide (Lemkin 2007). The so-called peaceful occupation of the Bass Strait islands by the Indigenous group was not a state of satisfaction⁸, it was the very essence of what the Norwegian sociologist and founding figure in modern peace research, Johan Galtung (1930-) described in a 1964 editorial of the newly established *Journal of Peace Research*, as 'negative' (p. 51) peace or simply the absence of war and conflict. There were no elements of satisfaction. There was insufficient food, clothing, shelter, sewerage, tribal interaction and health care. There was no justice and equity, social oppression persisted and there was no observance of basic human rights. All the important features of Galtung's concept of 'positive peace' (p. 51) were absent (Galtung 1964). Overriding the deficiencies

⁸ Johan Galtung's *Theory of Peace and Conflict* contains a fundamental concept of 'satisfaction' that refers to the provision of basic human needs encompassing identity, reputation, security, as well as well-being (Galtung, 1990).

endured by the Tasmanian Aborigines during the peace was the complete absence of hope.

Australian historian, Henry Reynolds counter-argued in 2004 that the loss of the Tasmanian Indigene did not constitute a case of genocide, rather the consequence of the Colony immersed in fierce guerrilla warfare from late 1820s through to the early 1830s, a conflict sanctioned by official instructions (Reynolds 2004). Governor George Arthur's (1784-1854) administration was in place between 1823 and 1837. A devout Christian, he was Australia's longest-serving Colonial Governor and the first Colonial Governor to argue that a treaty should have been negotiated with the early Tasmanian Aborigines. But Arthur was highly sensitive to the slightest criticism. During his administration there were lengthy periods of systematic violence between settler-colonist and the Indigenous native (Reynolds 2012; Chapman 2008). Ryan in 2008 provided a comprehensive register of the multiple killings of Aborigines at various sites between 1804 and 1835. Although the violence was an important factor, the militia-led attacks represented but one modality of the frontier interface-related turbulence that befell the Tasmanian Indigene.

A characteristic feature of the frontier process was the severe depopulation of tribal peoples that was reported from all parts of the world over the last 150 years. Between 1780 and 1930 world tribal communities were reduced by at least 50 million as a result of the spread of global-scale cultures. For approximately 60,000 to 70,000 years, Australian Indigenes were isolated from the rest of the world and totally cut off in Tasmania for 12,000 years when the 6,000-year-long melt of the last glacial period created Bass Strait (Corbett et. al, 2014). Subsequent frontier settler-Indigene racial interactions triggered by settlements at Risdon Cove in 1803 caused early onset native deaths, soon compounded by rapid population decline as the consequence of

infertility and widespread ill-health amongst the Aborigines (Cameron, 2006). The Tasmanians, for example, were drastically reduced to a population of barely 111 as early as 1833 (Bodley 2002). Denied their normal and reliable food sources by either settler competition or settler-imposed eviction, the degenerative processes of malnutrition, starvation, alcohol-related disorders, self-harm and suicide soon impacted the vulnerable Indigenous communities (Morris *et al.* 2016). Malnutrition provokes a range of lethal disorders such as immune deficiency infectious diseases, vitamin deficiency diseases of scurvy, beriberi, pellagra and ariboflavinosis. Food shortages exacerbated the potentially fatal introduced highly contagious Old-World diseases, pulmonary tuberculosis, recurrent influenza, smallpox, viral exanthemata such as measles and sexually transmitted diseases. Malnutrition further compounds the infertility secondary to venereal disease and is associated with high maternal, perinatal and infant mortality rates. Dietary protein deficiency induces skeletal muscle loss, visual impairment and dementia, adverse disorders that affect autochthonous hunting skills. Enhanced exposure risks to extreme weather conditions that affect all age groups. Finally, during the end stages of gaunt hunger, cachexia rapidly appears with the onset of mental apathy, inanition and the loss of the will to live (Viramontes-Horner *et al.* 2022). Such a lingering tragedy perhaps at times is touched by the fear of dying alone (monatophobia).

Old World Diseases Transmitted to the *Palawa*

The ravages of smallpox on humankind, documented since 1350 BC in Egyptian papyri, and between that time and the commencement of the Eighteenth Century, ‘nearly one-tenth of all mankind had been killed, crippled or disfigured by the disease’ (Oldstone 2010, p.74) During the Seventeenth Century alone smallpox killed an average of 400,000 Europeans each year (Oldstone 2010). Acting Surgeon General Thomas Jamieson (1753-1811) performed the first successful smallpox vaccination on children at Sydney Cove in October 1804 prompting Governor King to immediately despatch the viable lymph to Norfolk Island and Van Diemen’s Land. Jamieson wrote of the success of the important vaccination programme, *General Observations in the Small-Pox*, printed in the 14 October 1804 edition of the *Sydney Gazette and NSW Advertiser* (1803-1842), the second medical article printed in Australia. The first medico-surgical article in the new Colony was by assistant surgeon Thomas Jamison (c 1753-1811) practising at Norfolk Island. He noted a favourable outcome using a novel dysentery (the *flux*) treatment, *vitrium antimonii*⁹ that had been recommended in 1787 by Dr Benjamin Mosely (1742-1819) in *A Treatise on Tropical Diseases*. Jamison’s observations were reported within a lengthy article in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (1797) (Short 2021). By 1804, the Hobart settlement was transferred to Sullivan’s Cove across the Derwent River from Risdon Cove. The senior of three surgeons, William l’Anson (1761-1811) reported on 19 December 1805 that five children, four girls and an Aboriginal boy named Robert Hobart May, had been successfully vaccinated (Bennett 2009). Similar to the 1789 smallpox

⁹ Crushed fine powder of antimony glass

epidemic that erupted around Port Jackson and the surrounding regions, after 1803 smallpox outbreaks increasingly bedevilled Tasmanian Indigenous with similar devastating fatality rates.

By 1830 there was an estimated population of island Indigenous, from as few as 250 up to 450, and children accompanying adults were seen less frequently, an observation first noted as early as 1823 (Roberts-Thomson 2014). By 1833 there existed only 111 weak and sick survivors from the 7,000-10,000 original vigorous people. Thus death from direct violence consequent to frontier fighting was a secondary player to the much higher mortalities due to the structural violence characterising the genocide. The ethnological historian Brian Plomley (1912-1994), a former expert within Tasmanian Aboriginal scholarship noted that disease played an important part in exterminating them (Plomley, 1989) and estimated that the original Aboriginal population in 1803 numbered between 4,000 and 6,000.

The First Nations People of Tasmania were without innate and adaptive immunity to a vast range of introduced Old World micro-organisms and within 24 years of the colonial presence, in July 1827, the Aborigines were afflicted by the first respiratory epidemic first reported in mainland Australia and soon after in Tasmania. It was diagnosed as an 'epidemic catarrhal fever' (an influenza-like illness) (Cumpston, 1989). Epidemics of acute respiratory disease recurred in Tasmania at regular intervals, the next in the winter of 1829, then in 1830, 1831, 1832, 1833, 1837, 1839, 1847 and 1860, each outbreak was attended by high mortalities (Cumpston 1989). There is no paleopathologic or ethnohistoric evidence prior to 1788 to suggest tuberculosis was present in mainland Australia, Tasmania or New Zealand. Of 32 post-mortems performed in Tasmania during a two-year period, 1837-1838,

tuberculosis was reported as the cause of death of at least 13 Aborigines (Basedow 1932), a significant incidence of 40 per cent.

Canine zoonotic diseases were unknown to the Tasmanian Aborigine prior to European settlement and the Asian wild dog (dingo, *Canis familiaris*), probably brought by northern dwelling traders to the Australian mainland approximately 4,000 years ago, was unable to cross the water barrier of Bass Strait. The excellent innate hunting ability of the colonists' dogs for killing kangaroo, wallaby, emu and wombat was not lost on the local Aborigines who rapidly sought to acquire them either by theft or trade. By the 1820s most Tasmanian tribes had acquired dogs that were closely guarded and cared for by family members. Dogs with the mange, canine scabies, readily transmitted the tiny mite infestation to the native owners who soon developed a chronic dermatitis that the settlers labelled, the 'Native Itch' or 'Black Scab'. Dogs also transmitted canine hookworm and roundworm, hydatid disease, human diarrhoeal diseases from contact with canine faeces contaminated by pathogenic gut bacteria and amoebic parasites (Cumpston, 1989; Jones, 1970).

Conclusion

Between 1810 and 1820-1825 Aboriginal numbers in Tasmania were reasonably stable. During the mid to late 1820s numbers began to rapidly decline throughout the island. A rough estimate offered by a surgeon from Calcutta, John Henderson, stated that the Aboriginal population in 1829 was about 600 with depopulation most evident within the western, southern and southeastern groups of natives (Henderson 1832). Roberts-Thompson (2020) surmised the causes of the rapid decline during the 1820s were a combination of several inter-related factors that included the introduction of fatal diseases, particularly the early devastation caused by influenza, tuberculosis and

smallpox. Whilst fatalities due to hostilities with white settlers amounted to 362 deaths between 1800 and 1835, Roberts-Thompson (2020) offered perhaps a more realistic number of between 500 and 600. Abduction or the trade of native women by sealers in Bass Strait and the documented kidnapping of Aboriginal children accelerated the decline in native numbers. The early introduction of sexually transmitted disease, gonorrhoea often co-infected with *Chlamydia trachomatis* in young women, with the subsequent high incidences of infertility due to Fallopian Tube occlusions, accelerated the population losses. The combination of female abductions, female infertility and the dislocation of tribal cultural traditions, resulted in a calamitous reduction in the Indigenous birth rates.

The degenerative medical processes representing the final outcomes to a programmed genocide victimised an unwanted land-dependent nomadic Indigene. By whatever means, the fact remains that many Tasmanian Indigenous tribes were entirely lost to humanity. A dominant constituent obliterated a chosen victim, no matter how many or how few, how quick or how protracted — this is the quintessence of what later became known as a genocidal process. Indeed, all five practices enunciated in Article 2 of the 1948 *UNGC* were perpetuated on the Tasmanian Indigenous populace. They were killed and murdered outright, they were physically and mentally harmed, they were subjected to grave and fatal neglect, they were malnourished sufficiently to the point of developing widespread infertility and whole groups, including children, were forcibly transported to Bass Strait islands. The Nineteenth Century Tasmanian genocide proved irreversible, unstoppable and ultimately ignored. Few genocides in recorded history have been so complete as to have totally expunged the targeted minority. Furthermore, the Tasmanian Indigenous loss was an intentional programme to harm a specific minority group. The expeditious

loss of the Nineteenth Century Tasmanian First Nations People is a clear example of a completed genocide, one of the very few within modern times.

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Biography

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