



Assessing Magnitude: Tasmanian Aboriginal Population, Resistance and the Significance of Musquito in the Black War

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Abstract

In August 1824, there was a fierce attack by 200 Tasmanian Aboriginal men¹ on James Hobbs's property at Eastern Marshes, near Oatlands in Van Diemen's Land. Hobbs's stockmen fired to deter the approaching Aborigines, but having discharged their weapons, they were overwhelmed before they could reload, and one man, James Doyle, was beaten to a pulp.² The rest fled in terror to Hobart, refusing to return.

The influence of Musquito, the renegade Sydney Aborigine was suspected. His campaign of terror that began about 1824 alarmed the colony, but what was more frightening was the fact "that no Natives [were]...observed on any part of the coast" having moved into the interior and "lately formed themselves into one formidable body."³ It appeared the coastal Oyster Bay tribe had formed an alliance with the interior Big River mob.

There was strong suspicion that "Musquito and other blacks"⁴ brought up among Europeans were behind these new attacks, but it was difficult to pin responsibility on Musquito. Aborigines came from a considerable "distance to place themselves under [his] command",⁵ but he tended to manipulate forces obliquely. Musquito "kept the tethers": "He would lurk about, gain information, lay his plans in a skilful manner and then from his retreat, dispatch his band to carry on the warfare."⁶

He was by all accounts a formidable, charismatic figure who "had high notions of his own worth." He would "stalk into the cottages of the settlers" and "seat himself with great dignity," while his followers, upwards of several hundreds, would patiently await "his signal to approach." According to John West, as his influence "enlarged, it became more pernicious" and influenced not only his immediate followers "but propagated his spirit" and deeds "of great enormity were committed at his direction; several by his own hand."⁷

1. *Assessing Magnitude*

The attack on Hobbs's men in August 1824 was certainly significant, but just how significant is difficult to judge. Was it alarmingly large or simply a nuisance? The problem in Van Diemen's Land is that while numbers appear small, the magnitude, the proportion of the population, is not. The mob that attacked Hobbs's farm may well have been relatively substantial, but this can only be judged by the comparative demographics. This raises a central controversy in Tasmanian Aboriginal history: the size and decline of the Tasmanian Aboriginal population from 1803 to 1830.

1.1. PRE-CONTACT ABORIGINAL POPULATION

The question of the pre-contact Aboriginal population is vexed, and Keith Windschuttle ignited debate by insisting on the "accuracy"⁸ of contemporary estimates and advancing a firm pre-contact population of no more than 2000.⁹ Ironically, by claiming the population was so

low, he magnified the proportionate level of slaughter thereafter, resulting in a death toll that he then sought to deny.¹⁰

Population estimates by other authors vary by methodology. The reported sizes of groups seen by settlers are unreliable, so any conclusion must be tentative. Those of Rhys Jones and Plomley,¹¹ based on the size and number of bands, range from 3000 to 5000, but other pre-contact population¹² estimates generally range from 2000¹³ to 9000¹⁴ with some being as large as 15,000¹⁵ to 20,000¹⁶ – which combined with the diverse methods of counting the island's Indigenous population adds to the uncertainty.¹⁷ For the purposes of this paper, however, cautious reliance is placed on the estimates of Rhys Jones and Plomley, the two most highly regarded authorities on the subject, noting the consensus to favour Plomley's upper estimate of the pre-contact size of Aboriginal society as about 5000.

Even so, while further archaeological analysis may provide greater accuracy, current findings would appear to justify an upward revision. Tasmanian Aborigines have tended to be seen as a littoral population clinging to a coastal toehold, when in fact they intensely utilised more than half the island, and the consequent level of landscape modification might indicate a higher pre-contact population.

While Tasmania in 1803 would have been expected, botanically, to be almost entirely rainforest cover, Gammage suggests nearly half was in fact a precisely fired landscape of grassland and eucalypt that was the basis for the carrying capacity of both people and animals.¹⁸ The abundant grasslands¹⁹ were created over aeons and by 1803 required a vigorous sustainable Aboriginal population to maintain it. Maintaining this landscape was the central Aboriginal task upon which sustained existence depended.²⁰ Population decline after white intrusion disrupted its maintenance, accelerating an ongoing population decline by shrinking resource “carrying capacity.”²¹

1.2. ABORIGINAL POPULATION DECLINE AFTER 1803

The population decline of Tasmanian Aborigines after white intrusion is not disputed, though its speed and causes certainly are. Disease was probably a factor, as Windschuttle emphasises. Other conquest studies²² have implicated disease in rapid Indigenous depopulation whenever Europeans confronted a society without comparable “herd immunity.” This is particularly true of catastrophic diseases like smallpox²³ though Tasmania was fortunately spared this disease. The role of other diseases like measles, tuberculosis²⁴ and the common cold are difficult to ascertain with the early record relatively silent.²⁵

Disease, however, is not always a primary factor exacerbating depopulation.²⁶ In fact, the Tasmanian Aborigines were generally thought by Europeans to be remarkably healthy.²⁷ More subtle factors of population stress may have been sufficient to trigger depopulation: humankind is like any species. In the case of hunter/gatherer societies, population stressors can be magnified by changes in the intimate relations between land and its resources that determine population size. What appears a relatively small intrusion of colonisers can have a significant impact, contributing strongly to depopulation. Historians of colonial conquests often overlook this.

Land exploited by foraging societies has a modest carrying capacity, an under-population to our way of thinking. It is moreover fragile, and the recurring shortages caused by white consumption of kangaroo meat²⁸ in the early years of the colony placed inordinate strain on the resource that inevitably impacted on Aboriginal society. If, as Lourandos suggests,²⁹ the pre-contact Aboriginal population was actually *increasing*, then they may have been moving towards a Malthusian crisis,³⁰ contributing *even further* to population decline.

If we add white intrusion to the breakdown of landscape maintenance, attacks on the social fabric by the abduction of women and children, as well as violence towards Aboriginal groups,

then a suite of factors precipitating demographic decline is almost complete even before we take account of the likely impact of venereal disease on fertility and birth rates.³¹

This combination of social stressors was clearly more significant and devastating than generally assumed. The white population in 1815 was only 1933,³² but this was equivalent to nearly 40% of the pre-contact Aboriginal population, and a considerably greater percentage, probably closer to 60%, of the Aboriginal population at that time. The numbers are small, but the magnitude is immense and emphasises the considerable population stress and pressure on food resources even well away from the nodes of white settlement. Add to this the animals – sheep and cattle – that came in the train of white settlement competing for water and grass and the pressures were compounded.³³

Intruders beyond the main settlements exacerbated these stressors. Marginal personalities, some reclusive, some banditti, in addition to game hunters, shepherds and small holders were drawn to the inland. Small in absolute numbers, they nevertheless added to Aboriginal social stress by their presence, their occasional marauding and their demands on food, women and children.

For all these reasons, the Aboriginal population had steadily declined, but the rate of collapse rapidly accelerated with the resumption of convict transportation and the arrival of free settlers after 1817. Passenger fares to Van Diemen's Land halved in the 1820s.³⁴ White population increased from 2367 in 1817, to 4037 by 1819, to 7740 by 1823 and to 9514 by 1824³⁵ – a more than fourfold increase in 7 years. Sheep numbers exploded when the duty on wool in 1822 was reduced giving preferential treatment to Tasmanian production.³⁶ Sheep and people, the relative weight of impact is difficult to discern, but the combined impact was great.

The rapid acceleration in white population tellingly coincided with a spike in Aboriginal violence about 1824. It was a constantly recurring colonial phenomenon that “spasms of intense Aboriginal resistance correlate with booms”,³⁷ demographic or economic. 1824 represented the tipping point when the flood of British compelled Aboriginal reaction and resistance.

1.3. 1824 – POPULATION COLLAPSE, CONFLICT AND THE RISE OF MUSQUITO

Estimating the Aboriginal population by 1824 is as problematic as estimating pre-contact population, but a figure of about 1200³⁸ is arguable. If this was the case, then Aboriginal numbers in 1824 were about a *quarter* of the original population, which is an extraordinary decline – indeed a population collapse. If Plomley's figure of only 500 Aborigines in 1824 is credited, then there was an even more catastrophic decline, with barely 10% of the original population remaining. Even Reynolds's more optimistic estimate of about 30% is alarming, but whatever the estimate, the figures are startling and indicate a disastrous level of social collapse – which renders it astonishing that these people continued a sustained campaign for another 7 years despite the population dropping to probably less than 300 Aboriginal individuals by 1831.

In the central and eastern area, the “settled districts” where Musquito operated, and the region where the Black War was most intensive, the Aboriginal population by 1824 was probably about 1000.³⁹ This estimate enables us to go some way towards assessing the magnitude of the attack on Hobbes' property in 1824. The battle group of 200 represents from 20 to 40% of the male cohort of the region, which is huge.

If as suggested, Musquito was mustering Aboriginal men and coordinating assaults, then his impact was as considerable as settlers suspected. Even allowing for some inflation, the fact that Musquito was able to sway from 100 to 200 people, according to West, would mean that he could sway some 10 to 20% of the population of the central settled district. It seems more likely though that in mustering warrior parties of 200, he was drawing on a much wider circle of men

than the one West records. But whatever the case, the scale of his influence was dramatic and surprising in its magnitude.

The extent of the influence of Musquito, and the frequent assertion that he was a catalyst for the Tasmanian Black War, has always been controversial. Before Musquito, the Tasmanians, Bonwick suggests, had “never committed any acts of cruelty, or even resisted the whites.”⁴⁰ The only ones who had “done any mischief,” he argues, were corrupted by Musquito, who “with much and perverted cunning, taught them a portion of this own villainy.”⁴¹

It was claimed that Musquito’s “villainy” propelled the colony into 7 years of vicious, sporadic conflict that commentators, in its aftermath, elevated to a status of capitalised importance. It was the Black War⁴² – the only time the term “war” has been used as a proper noun for conflict on Australian soil – such was the magnitude measured in per capita death rates.⁴³ This is not the only unique attribute of the Black War: not once was there ever rape of white women by Aborigines,⁴⁴ though the rape of Aboriginal women was routine.

1.4. MUSQUITO AS CATALYST OF THE BLACK WAR?

Musquito made an ideal scapegoat as the “cause” of this sustained conflict. In 1813, when he arrived in Van Diemen’s Land, half the population was from Norfolk Island, where he had been banished for 8 years. Hence, he was very widely known, or known of, by a remarkable number of the island’s 1192⁴⁵ or so white souls. He had lived peaceably and even aided in the apprehension of bushrangers like Michael Howe, so his reversion to marauding resistance seemed gross ingratitude for his acceptance into white society.

His notoriety in the colony persisted, and his infamy lingered long after his death. It exploded once more with the “History Wars” centred on the historiography of Aboriginal–Settler relations. Lyndall Ryan first published her work on the Tasmanian Aborigines in 1981 and opened up an archival storehouse.⁴⁶ It was a pioneering work to which many owe much, including Keith Windschuttle who gained wide public attention by excoriating her reputation. In 2002, Windschuttle published his *Fabrication of Aboriginal History*,⁴⁷ which provoked what became a virulent academic exchange, and in a perverse way, was to stimulate much of recent scholarship.⁴⁸

Windschuttle’s work turned on the analysis of Ryan and others’ archival footnotes; but as James C. Scott has cautioned, often those who focus on “close reading of the historical and archival evidence” tend to confirm the dominant cultural view.⁴⁹ In Windschuttle’s case, despite his immersion in archives, he has emerged with what was essentially a 19th-century perspective largely intact. For as Naomi Parry emphasises, blaming Musquito for the Black War was commonplace in 19th century Tasmanian historiography⁵⁰ and Windschuttle had done little more than reiterate this old interpretation, thus allowing Musquito’s “transgressive influence”⁵¹ to “percolate” into the 21st century.

Windschuttle’s polemic *Fabrication* treats the Black War as little more than an outbreak of common criminality that “never rose above or beyond robbery, assault and murder.”⁵² He depicts the Tasmanian Aborigines as so addicted to tea, sugar and other European commodities⁵³ as to have been little different from present-day “junkies stealing from a petrol station.”⁵⁴ There was no guerrilla war, no resistance⁵⁵ nor anything like it, simply bushranging lawlessness learned from Musquito. As for white violence, he argues that “[m]ost colonists were Christians to whom killing the innocent would have been abhorrent”⁵⁶ – a remarkably naïve observation.

Naomi Parry defends the Tasmanian Aborigines as having been denied agency for their own actions by Windschuttle attributing leadership to Musquito. She reminds us of Melville’s verdict that “Many deeds of terror are laid at Musquito’s charge, which it was impossible for him to have committed.”⁵⁷

Dismissing resistance on the scale witnessed in Tasmania as simply criminal diminishes the historical significance of its occurrence and diminishes the participants. However, the manner in which Parry tides Musquito to one side to allow the Tasmanian Aborigines agency in their own struggle also diminishes the figure of Musquito. To suggest, as she does, that Musquito was largely a peripheral figure leaves him literally hanging for his criminal misdeeds. His exact role may be contested, but he was obviously no bit player with simply a “walk on part.”⁵⁸ Parry’s interpretation moreover is conflicted: she argues that he was a formidable resistance figure on the Hawkesbury, but a less important participant in Tasmania, even though his notoriety was far greater in magnitude in the latter of the two theatres of conflict.

The latest work on the Black War, by Clements,⁵⁹ similarly dismisses Musquito’s significance. He acknowledges that accounts of the “corrupting influence” of Musquito “remained popular both during and after the conflict,”⁶⁰ but he believes “contemporaries vastly overstated his role as a catalyst for the Black War.”⁶¹ Even so, the portrait of Musquito that emerges is again one acknowledging his persistent presence as no ordinary player.

The sum of the evidence confirms that Musquito was of charismatic and organisational significance, but the question remains whether he was of catalytic importance. Nineteenth-century commentators saw Musquito as “a notorious troublemaker,”⁶² who was pivotal to the upsurge in violence. They regarded his subsequent capture, trial and hanging in January 1825 as triggering the subsequent outbreak of war. Plomley, writing in the late 20th century, sees 1824 as marking “the beginning of the Black War”⁶³ but regards three events as greatly contributing to “the eventual state of warfare”⁶⁴: the first was the firing on natives peaceably visiting Launceston in January 1825, the second was the hanging of Musquito and Black Jack in the same year, with the third event being the execution of Jack and Dick in May 1826, after which hostilities truly began.⁶⁵ Even so, we would also do well to see that these events occurred in the context of a demographic explosion of white presence, which caused a catastrophic decline in the Aboriginal population, a decline that clearly was a factor in desperate retaliations against the British.

Musquito was spoken of as a “desperate leader,” appearing so “prominently in the Black War” as to “demand separate and particular notice.” More to the point, the formidable assault on Hobbes’ property confirms that Musquito’s “vigorous intellect and indomitable will”⁶⁶ demonstrated an ability to turn raids into military manoeuvres that went well beyond simple pillaging. The objective was to erase white presence by slaughter, choosing the vulnerable as well as those whose violence demanded retribution.

Even so, it is important to consider the import of Musquito’s contemporary portrayal as a figure whose followers “kept the land in a state of terror.”⁶⁷ Terror is commonly the only weapon the weak can use against forces exceeding their capacity to confront.⁶⁸ Musquito used guerrilla tactics to make continued white presence untenable, but he clearly did so knowing that the attacks he orchestrated would cause a terror amplifying alarm and fear among settlers and townfolk, creating an inflated view of his power and effectiveness. But that is exactly the point of such tactics.

Musquito was not just a recognisable scapegoat upon whom blame could be heaped, but a man commanding a fearsome capacity to inflict terror. Moreover, employing tactics arousing terror not only underpinned his legendary reputation among the whites but also without doubt his authority with the Tasmanians. His reputation would have spread via the gatherings, corroborees, dances and songs where Aborigines celebrated deeds and successes.

As well as great gossips and storytellers, the Tasmanian Aborigines were consummate negotiators⁶⁹ who were able to suspend internecine “broils”⁷⁰ to negotiate and resolve alliances.⁷¹ Musquito was able to capitalise on this to facilitate alliances. Some likely proved only temporary; but by this stage, escalating violence drove people into coalitions as much as they were drawn

together. Indeed, they were united in one thing only: a political ideology of hatred to whites. As contemporary commentators observed, they considered “every injury” inflicted “upon White Men as an Act of Duty and patriotism” and considered those who suffered “punishment as Martyrs in the cause of their country.”⁷² Despite fierce common cause, however, the acceptance of an outsider like Musquito would not have been possible without his long association from the moment of his arrival in 1813 and the exigency of social collapse that made it possible for an outsider to infiltrate the interstices and command with awesome power.

2. Conclusion

The slow-motion social collapse and population decline of the Tasmanian Aborigines was triggered primarily by the pressure of British presence, the breakdown of landscape maintenance and the competition for resources, exacerbated by violence and attacks on the social fabric by removal of women and children. Musquito was drawn into this same social maelstrom. It was a world with which he was deeply familiar. The return to warfare was, for him, a return to warrior regard, the abandoned path of a remembered past. The experience and charisma he brought to the Tasmanian Aboriginal cause enabled him to muster significant numbers, drawing together a greater and more widespread coalescence of Aboriginal forces than previously imagined.

Musquito's presence was one of those historical occurrences marked by the emergence and social elevation in hazardous times of a particularly charismatic personality. His history is in large part the story of a fortuitous conjunction of time, place and personal temperament – an indomitable figure of pure hate, remarkable charisma and organisational aptitude. The Black War had barely commenced when he was hanged, and the Tasmanian Aborigines were to exhibit a ferocious determination and capacity to prosecute for seven more years a war of attrition to the point of exhaustion. Nevertheless, his pivotal contribution cannot be ignored. A catalyst accelerates the rate of reaction; it does not cause it. And in that sense, Musquito can be seen as a catalyst.

The determination of colonial authorities to capture Musquito saw him apprehended in August 1824⁷³ and tried with an accomplice Black Jack in December 1824.⁷⁴ They were not defended, they could not give evidence and they could not cross-examine; but they were found guilty and sentenced to death. Musquito had been painted all hues of awful, and his execution was hopefully imagined as deterring further attacks.

From among the morbid milling in the square below the Hobart Town Gaol, George Augustus Robinson watched as Musquito was hanged on 26 February 1825. Seven years later, with the end of the Black War, he would take the war-weary remnants of the Tasmanian Aborigines onto Flinders Island and into exile. But for now, he watched the man blamed for their turbulent resistance hang; it was a brutal scene. Musquito stood quietly, preserved in “sullen silence.”⁷⁵ Along with Jack Roberts,⁷⁶ his Aboriginal accomplice and six other condemned prisoners, he faced his execution, strung up among thieves and murders. The “melancholy arrangements”⁷⁷ were far from satisfactory, and Robinson watched the botched hangings with dismay as slip-shod arrangements saw the men “put to great suffering,”⁷⁸ slowly strangled, their legs thrashing in air.

It was an event that not only attracted the curious but the condemnation of many. “The trial was... a mockery. The execution a bloody act of vengeance”,⁷⁹ wrote the surveyor John Helder Wedge. His account was to be endorsed by later historical commentators like Henry Melville⁸⁰ and James Calder.⁸¹ They saw Musquito as a legitimate prisoner of war and the trial and execution as a travesty of British justice. Executed as a criminal and seen as warrior, these are the polarities encountered in writing the history of Musquito, but his crucial contribution cannot be ignored.

Short Biography

Michael Powell is a lecturer in History in the School of Humanities, University of Tasmania. He is the author of *Manual of a Mystic: FL Woodward a Buddhist Scholar in Ceylon and Tasmania* (Karuda Press, 2001) and writes on 19th-century British colonial history in Ceylon and Australia. He is currently awaiting publication of his analysis of the Aboriginal resistance figure, Musquito, on both the Hawkesbury (Sydney) frontier and in Van Diemen's Land as well as the legal significance of British imperial banishment to Norfolk Island where Musquito was exiled for 8 years.

Notes

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¹ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 6 August, 1824. See Johnson & McFarlane, *Van Diemen's Land: An Aboriginal History* (forthcoming) for a contrary view.

² *Hobart Town Gazette*, 29 October, 1824, 2.

³ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 6 August 1824. The paper is referring to the involvement of Tasmanian Aborigine Black Tom, Kickerterpoller.

⁴ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 6 August, 1824.

⁵ Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, 94.

⁶ Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, 95.

⁷ West, *History of Tasmania*, 267-8.

⁸ Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume 1*, 364.

⁹ Windschuttle, *Fabrication* 367, 372. He bases his figure on James Backhouse Walker in 1898, who in turn drew on Milligan's population density model which was crude at best. See Milligan, "On the dialects and language of the aboriginal tribes of Tasmania", 275-282.

¹⁰ See Finnane "Just like a nun's picnic". Violence and colonisation in Australia." 299-306.

¹¹ Jones, "Tasmanian Tribes", 325, estimates 3-4000 but accepts up to 5000; Plomley, *Tasmanian Tribes and Cicatrices*, 12, estimates 4-5000; Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, 4, estimates 5-7000 and Ryan (2012) estimates 7000.

¹² Flood, *The Original Australians*, 67. Flood counts influenza as a factor in depopulation prior to actual settlement, which contributes further uncertainty to pre-contact figures.

¹³ Milligan, 275-282. Windschuttle, *Fabrication*, 371.

¹⁴ Pardoe, "Population Genetics and Population Size in Prehistoric Tasmania", 1-6, and Pardoe, "Isolation and Evolution in Tasmania", 1-12. Pardoe estimates up to 9,000 based on genetic drift and crania. This is discussed in Mulvaney & Kamminga, *Prehistory of Australia*, 339.

¹⁵ Atkins, *Wanderings of a Clerical Eulyssees*.

¹⁶ Melville, *The History of Van Diemen's Land Part 1*.

¹⁷ I am grateful to Lyndall Ryan for access to her unpublished article, "Estimating the Aboriginal Population in Tasmania 1803: A History". Ryan discusses pre-contact figures in her *Tasmanian Aborigines*, p14. Ryan assumes a pre-contact population of 7000 and a population in 1819 of 5000. This is at variance to her estimates in her previous edition [*Aboriginal Tasmanians* 1996] of a pre-contact population of 4000 and a population in 1818 of less than 2000. This is the difference between a decline of 30% or 50%, either way significant.

¹⁸ Gammage, *The Biggest Estate on Earth*, 11ff. I am grateful for further clarification of this point in personal communication with Gammage.

¹⁹ Jackson, "Vegetation" p30 and Jackson "The Tasmanian legacy of man and fire", 1. Also Gammage *The Biggest Estate on Earth*. Jackson does **not** suggest pre-contact population levels greater than those already suggested, but his research lends itself to a greater population.

See also Silcock, Piddock & Fensham "Illuminating the dawn of Pastoralism: Evaluating the record of European explorers to inform landscape change", 321-331.

²⁰ Gammage personal correspondence. I am grateful to Bill Gammage for emphasising this point.

Tasmanian Aboriginal Resistance and Musquito

- ²¹ Blainey, *Triumph of the Nomads*, 273. Carrying capacity was the basis of Blainey's pre-contact population estimate of 7–8000, which may be closer to the truth. He defers, however, to Jones' earlier estimate of 4000.
- ²² Schroeder, "Introduction: the Genre of Conquest Studies".
- ²³ Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*.
- ²⁴ Dowling, "'A Great Deal of Sickness': Introduced diseases among Aboriginal people of colonial southeast Australia, 1788–1900". Dowling suggests TB as a factor in depopulation in the early period.
- ²⁵ Influenza struck the D'Entrecasteaux Channel area from 1827–29, and when G. A. Robinson gathered the Tasmanians on the west coast and on Flinders Island after 1830, they died rapidly from respiratory illnesses.
- ²⁶ Jones, "Virgin Soils Revisited", 703–42.
- ²⁷ See Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*.
- ²⁸ See Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, 45ff.
- ²⁹ Lourandos, *Continent of Hunter-Gatherers*, 281.
- ³⁰ Malthus suggested population would rise until it exceeded resources and then decline rapidly.
- ³¹ See Butlin, *Economics of the Dreamtime*.
- ³² *Historical Records of Australia* 3:3, 251.
- ³³ I am grateful to Wendy Aiken for emphasising this additional stressor.
- ³⁴ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 272.
- ³⁵ ABS Historical Statistics. Other sources inflate these figures a little. Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania*, 17 suggests in 1823 the population first exceeded 10,000 based on Hull *Statistical Summary of Tasmania 1816–1865*, 3.
- ³⁶ This is a point made strongly by Broome in his *Aboriginal Australians*.
- ³⁷ Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 263.
- ³⁸ Plomley, *The Tasmanian Aborigines*, 27, estimates about 500 which seems very low, while Reynolds, *An Indelible Stain*, 71, estimates about 1500 which accords with the *Hobart Town Gazette*, 4 February, 1826, which was thoroughly aware of the decline and estimates a figure of 1200–1500 in 1826.
- ³⁹ Clements, "Frontier Conflict in Van Diemen's Land", 332, estimates about 1000 based on Reynolds total population in 1824 of 1500 though Reynolds is working on a more generous base of a pre-contact population of 7000.
- ⁴⁰ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 16 July, 1824, 2.
- ⁴¹ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 16 July, 1824, 2.
- ⁴² Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, 92.
- ⁴³ See Finnane, "'Just like a nun's picnic'. Violence and colonisation in Australia." 299–306.
- ⁴⁴ Bonwick, *Last of the Tasmanians*, 125.
- ⁴⁵ *Australian Bureau of Statistics – Historical Statistics 2008*. Other sources propose larger numbers.
- ⁴⁶ Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*.
- ⁴⁷ Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*.
- ⁴⁸ The works are many and varied and the list incomplete. Clements, *The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania*; Parry, "'Hanging no good for blackfellow': Looking into the Life of Musquito", 53–76; Harman, *Aboriginal Convicts*; Fox, 'Constructing a Colonial Chief Justice: John Lewes Pedder In Van Diemen's Land, 1824–1854'; McFarlane, *Beyond Awakening: The Aboriginal Tribes of north west Tasmania*; Johnson & McFarlane, *Van Diemen's Land: An Aboriginal History*.
- ⁴⁹ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden*, xii.
- ⁵⁰ Parry, "More on Windschuttle", 70.
- ⁵¹ Parry, "Hanging no good...", 168.
- ⁵² Windschuttle, *Fabrication*, 129.
- ⁵³ Windschuttle, *Fabrication*, 125.
- ⁵⁴ *Roundtable on Aboriginal History*, Launceston, 2003. Comment by Windschuttle. Videotapes in possession of the Author.
- ⁵⁵ Windschuttle, "Guerrilla Warrior and Resistance Fighter? The Career of Musquito".
- ⁵⁶ Windschuttle, *Fabrication*, 32.
- ⁵⁷ Melville, *The History of Van Diemen's*, 32.
- ⁵⁸ Parry, "Hanging no good..." 170.
- ⁵⁹ Clements, *The Black War: Fear, Sex and Resistance in Tasmania*.
- ⁶⁰ Clements, "Frontier Conflict in Van Diemen's Land", 95.

- ⁶¹ Clements, "Frontier Conflict..." 95. Clements provides a number of examples to support his assertion, CSO1/323, TAHO, 170-74, 191-92, 310-15, 337; *Tasmanian*, 28 March, 1828, 2; *Colonial Times*, 1 December, 1826, 3; *Examiner*, 2 October, 1847, 4-5.
- ⁶² Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 5.
- ⁶³ Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash in Van Diemen's Land 1803-1831*, 6.
- ⁶⁴ Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 4.
- ⁶⁵ Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, 5.
- ⁶⁶ Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, 92.
- ⁶⁷ Bonwick, *Last of the Tasmanians*, 96.
- ⁶⁸ See Copland, *Europe's Great Game*, 65-73.
- ⁶⁹ Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, 149.
- ⁷⁰ Jorgenson to Burnett, 24 February, 1830. CSO1/320 TAHO, 367.
- ⁷¹ Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, 257.
- ⁷² Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, 489.
- ⁷³ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 13 and 20 August, 1824.
- ⁷⁴ *Hobart Town Gazette*, 3 December, 1824.
- ⁷⁵ Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, 103.
- ⁷⁶ *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser* 5 January, 1827. This is the only record of his name as Roberts and indicates (along with his language and literacy) that he was probably a Tasmanian Aborigine raised in a white home.
- ⁷⁷ *Hobart Town Gazette* of 25 February, 1825.
- ⁷⁸ Robinson's Journal, 25 February 1825; Rae-Ellis *Black Robinson*, 16.
- ⁷⁹ Wedge *Autobiography*, 7.
- ⁸⁰ Melville, *The History of Van Diemen's Part 1*.
- ⁸¹ Calder, *Some Accounts of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits etc. of the Native Tribes, of Tasmania*.

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