Empire and Erasure: A Case Study of Pitcairn Island

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Abstract: Over the past few decades the Pacific region has undergone many changes through decolonization and postcolonial adjustment. Political change in new and existing Pacific nations is marked by efforts to reclaim identities, histories and futures. The smallest Pacific community with a separate identity is Pitcairn Island, the last British "colony" in the Pacific. Using critical ethnography this case study of Pitcairn examines the notion of *erasure* in relation to the history and politics of colonization and decolonization. Erasure is inextricably tied to the issue of power; the imbalance of power and the scrutiny of processes of social negotiation between centre and periphery. This paper argues that *erasure* has not been sufficiently well theorized in either island studies or postcolonial studies. As a subnational island jurisdiction the issue for Pitcairn is how to reclaim identity, maintain autonomy without sovereignty, and create a sustainable future for its small island community.

Introduction

> The concept of Empire is characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries; Empire's rule has no limits (Dirlik, 2002, p. 446).

Islands were the first territories to be colonized in the European Age of Discovery, and have been the last to seek and obtain independence (Baldacchino & Royle, 2010). In what is widely perceived as the postcolonial period, decolonization has occurred not in "the last colonies" but within existing states (Aldrich & Connell, 1998, p. 235); the "rush to decolonization has slowed to a stop" (Royle, 2010, p. 204). There are a number of factors contributing to the latter, not least the process of "upside down decolonization" and the definitive advantages in *not* being independent (Baldacchino, 2010). The politics of "upside decolonization" are, according to Baldacchino (2010, p. 47) the norm rather than the exception in today's non-independent (and mainly island) territories. Many are simply too small to contemplate any kind of existence without a powerful international protector and benefactor to provide defence, aid, transport infrastructure and welfare provision (Aldrich & Connell, 1998). Yet, the balance of power in these dichotomous relationships warrants closer examination if we are to move from explanation to understanding islands as ambiguous worlds of structure and process (Eriksen 1993). Per se, there is potential in investigating the intricacies of "decolonizing without disengaging" (Houbert, 1986) notwithstanding a key objective of the United Nations (UN) Special Committee on Decolonization is to progress the decolonization process in today's world, with a particular emphasis on the Pacific region (UN, 2010; Wolfers, 2010).

Baldacchino and Royle (2010, p. 140) point out that, apart from Gibraltar and Western Sahara, all 16 of the world's "non-self-governing territories" on the official UN list are islands. Of these, the Pacific accounts for five; one of these is Pitcairn.

The Pitcairn Island Group comprises four islands located in the South Pacific Ocean: Pitcairn, Henderson, Ducie and Oeno, of which Pitcairn itself is the only inhabited island with a resident population of 53 islanders (Government of Pitcairn Island [GPI], 2013). Discovered in 1767 by the British, Pitcairn was settled in 1790 by *Bounty* mutineers and their Tahitian companions. The island offered a chance at new beginnings, invisible and absent from the rigid imperial fetters against which the mutineers had rebelled (Trenwith, 2003). As such, isolation was the motivating factor for Pitcairn's settlement. Royle (2001) comments that isolation, together with scale, often distances islands from political power; a tendency I would argue simultaneously erases or minimizes the presence of island peoples.

Edmond and Smith (2003, pp. 5-6) argue that islands can act as "specific locations generating their own potentially self-reflective colonial metaphors; whilst Jacobs' (1996, p. xi) comments that, "there remain territories, mainly islands, caught up in remnant empires and which are thus, simultaneously, colonial and postcolonial". Pitcairn is one such case of both a literal and metaphorical island. Thus, this paper examines Pitcairn as a subnational island jurisdiction (SNIJ), created by an act of anti-colonialism (a mutiny), and some would argue of utopian ideals, now being reworked and adapted in the postcolonial present. Postcolonialism in this sense represents formations of meanings and practices; it refers to multiple forms of discourse, performance, politics, values and the "everyday" – past and present – that emanate from the history of colonialism (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffin, 1998; Madison, 2005). These formations include subordinated practices like *erasure* that occur on the margins of power, yet need to be brought to the centre of analysis. Erasure is a complex notion; it defies the imposition of clear geographic, socio-cultural and political boundaries. It has no single orientation. Nonetheless, erasure is inextricably tied to issues of power, and thus, the politics of de/colonization. It is the imbalance of power, the scrutiny of processes of social negotiation between SNIJ and metropolis, that has arguably tended to "slip the net of postcolonial theorizing" (Edmond & Smith 2003) and within island studies. Moreover, erasure is tied to any appreciation of identity; it is largely the act of neglect, looking past, and minimizing, ignoring or rendering invisible an o*ther* (Allahar, 2005, p. 125). We might trace such erasure to the 1500s and the way the Pacific and its peoples were rendered "invisible" by such European explorers as Balboa and Magellan (Ward, 1989). Following them, Cook and Bougainville 'discovered' the islands of the southwest Pacific although the area retained the image of a vast and trackless ocean, dotted with tiny islands. Emptiness still ruled: in the western imagination. Hence, identity is also linked to issues of inequality and social negotiation.

In this case study of Pitcairn, I examine erasure at the conjunction of social negotiation between centre and periphery. Results show that historically, Pitcairn has been subject to acts of political erasure arising from administrative disregard, and in contemporary times, to acts of political *disassembly*: by which I mean to conceal or disguise intent, to act with subterfuge or false appearance. Consequently, erasure and disassembly blur contemporary rhetoric of any clear and collaborative "pathway to prosperity" and "sustainability" (Foreign & Commonwealth Office [FCO], 1999) advocated by the colonial power. Pitcairn is governed as a United Kingdom Overseas Territory (UKOT) but some authors have censured the United Kingdom's (UK) relationship as being a "subject of imperial benign neglect" (Angelo & Townend, 2003). According to Oliver (2009, p. 3),

The UK has kept its colonial legal paperwork in order (Acts of Parliament, Orders in Council and Ordinances, and appointment of a Governor). It has paid, out of a Pitcairn fund fed largely by the sale of stamps, coins etc., for the running costs of the island, for education and healthcare, capital items such as longboats, tractors, and generators and the salaries of those holding 'government jobs'. But there has – until recently been no permanent or resident independent Crown presence on the island. The islanders have been left, more or less, to govern themselves.

Such criticism, as will be shown in following sections, amount to acts of erasure. Like many SNIJs, Pitcairn is affected by a number of issues unique to its temporal socio-political development that offer interesting departures from the conventional discourse of sustainable development and island development. There are lessons to be learned from SNIJs, lessons that can be exploited in other politico-economic settings (Lindström, 2005). From here, the paper proceeds to discuss some of the key features of erasure in relation to UKOTs preceded by a brief methodology section. Discussion then links erasure with the history of Pitcairn, framed around the pivotal episode of the island's settlement by *Bounty* mutineers in 1790. The remainder of the paper examines the contemporary context of Pitcairn following the well-publicized sexual abuse trials in 2004. Analysis in this section reveals practices of disassembly between centre and periphery that risk continuum of erasure. The concluding section emphasises key opportunities and constraints that will affect survival of this last remnant of British Empire in the Pacific.

A note on methodology

The methodology of critical ethnography is employed in this paper to discuss the complexities and tensions of socio-political change as it affects a small and remote island community. Research is supported by two and a half years of fieldwork on Pitcairn between 2008 and 2013. Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain and the ongoing reality of lived experience for peoples affected by the colonial encounter (Thomas, 1993). Consequently, criticism aims to disrupt the *status quo,* and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control (Madison, 2005, p. 5). Hence, this research is approached as a cross-fertilization of anthropological and geographical practice. Indeed, post-colonial studies have at their core, questions of geography. Who had control of particular spaces and places and who has that control now? What happened as a result of such control (Wightman, 2010)?

Such changes on Pitcairn are a result of en/forced socio-political re/structuring after the 2004 trials on the island (discussed below). Following these, Pitcairn was exposed to the forces of globalization and subject to those of victimization. In this sense, it is the secondary victimization by justice system personnel (read UK administration) that occurred after the event that lead to acts of disassembly. As this remote island community of only 53 people strives to create a viable future, attract new immigrants and seek to establish an identity beyond the trials, the complexities of "decolonizing without disengaging" (Houbert, 1986) continue to emerge. Ongoing scrutiny of these political processes consequently contributes to deeper theorization of, and synergy between, postcolonial theory and island studies.

Britain's remaining 'dots on the map': Overseas Territories

> Once Hong Kong goes, there remains only a cluster of islands: once strategically important, now just dots in the oceans of the globe (The Independent, 1997).

The UK Overseas Territories consist of 14 territories which fall under the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom. Although the UKOTs are united by their common British sovereignty, they are a mosaic of different cultures and diverse colonial administrative structures. For example, Gibraltar is a melting pot of English, Spanish, and North African influences and enjoys a large measure of political autonomy. The Falkland Islands are mostly populated by people of British origin. Bermuda and the Caribbean UKOTs are vibrant mixtures of diverse cultures and languages and these sunny UKOTs are popular tourist destinations for UK residents. South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands are doubly dependent, in that their administrations are legally subordinate to the Falklands. Likewise, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha are subordinate to those of St Helena (Connell & Aldrich, 1998, p. 34). Some UKOTs have unique languages or dialects. For example, Pitcairn residents speak "Pitkern", a mixed language of eighteenth century English dialect infused with Tahitian elements (The Telegraph, 2011). Of note, 12 of the UKOTs are islands (excluding Gibraltar and British Antarctic Territory) and include one of the world's richest communities (Bermuda), the most remote (Tristan da Cunha) and least populated (Pitcairn). Geographical remoteness both distances and differentiates these "dots on the map" - a form of spatial erasure reinforced by descriptions of islands like Pitcairn as "remote", "isolated" and "unique" (Birkett, 1997; Connell, 1988; Marks, 2008).

The term "erasure" is more often connected with postmodern critical discourse within the field of literature: especially in relation to issues of power. A prominent theme of postmodern critical discourse is the link between colonialism and inequities of race, class and gender. In relation to SNIJs, this paper extends the link to include geography and space. Geography provides an all-encompassing analysis of space, especially when examining interrelationships of centre/periphery and colonized/colonizer. One example of geographical erasure is the forcible removal of indigenous Ilois from Diego Garcia, their homeland, and British territory, in the Indian Ocean to Mauritius to make way for an American military base (Dodds, 2003). For over fifty years the Ilois have endured poverty and the socio-cultural and economic effects of geographic and spatial dislocation whilst this British-controlled territory has continually 'kowtowed' to US military might, helping to launch the Afghan and Iraq wars (Vine 2013). In contrast, unexpected environmental disasters such as volcanic eruptions have dislocated residents of Tristan da Cunha (1961) and Montserrat (1995). Both evacuations were temporary, whilst the UK "begrudgingly took on the cost of infrastructure replacement and reconstruction" (Baldacchino, 2010, p. 157). In the case of Tristan, Eshleman (2012, p. 71) argues that the 1961 disaster aided the "Colonial Office's plans decades before to shut the island down" and that once in England, the Colonial Office "tried to break up the community, refusing to consider the islanders' requests to return" (*also* Munch, 1964). Furthermore, the Montserrat disaster served to highlight several deficiencies in the UK-Montserrat relationship; including a confused division of responsibility for Montserrat between the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In a broader context, Clegg & Gold (2011, p. 116) make the case for Britain's inadequate organizational and regulatory framework as it related to the then named Dependent Territories in the mid-1990s.

The UK's an *ad hoc* approach to administering the territories is a situation according to Clegg and Gold (2011, p. 115), "that can be traced back to the compromises, fudges and deals characteristic of 'pragmatic' British colonial administration". Aldrich and Connell (1998, p. 35) also note:

> The lack of a single government department to oversee the territories itself indicates that the British had no unified global view of their overseas territories and the way in which they ought to be administered.

Originally called Crown Colonies the territories changed to become British Dependent Territories in accordance with the *British Nationality Act 1981* and under the *British Overseas Territory Act 2002* they became Overseas Territories (OTs): a change that better reflected the nature of a post-colonial "partnership" at the end of the twentieth century (Clegg & Gold, 2011). Of note, the *1981 Act* broke down the former category of 'Citizens of the UK and Colonies' of its precursor, the *British Nationality Act 1948,* into several distinct groups of British citizens with dramatically different rights. The inevitability of Hong Kong's transfer to China in mid-1997 prompted such regulatory steps in order to mitigate immigration to the UK. The variety of statuses previously suggested for the territories included "island and city states", "statehood", "federations", "freely associated states", and "associated states" (Aldrich & Connell, 1998) and perhaps indicate the UK's ambivalence toward recognizing equality of citizenship. Indeed, tightening of British nationality laws in the 1980s reduced privileges for territories' residents, giving them a "second-class form of citizenship" (Aldrich & Connell, 1998, p. 22) and a form of "paper identity" that turned them into "citizens of nowhere" (Oostindie & Klinkers, 2003, p. 195). It was not until 2002 that British citizenship – and so the right of abode - was extended to all the territories, a status that had previously only existed for citizens of the Falklands and Gibraltar; both notably 'white' populations.

Acts of erasure are also raised when Falkland Islands leapt into global headlines in the 1980s. Then British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was quick to recognize the equality of these two "island races" (Dodds, 2003). Paradoxically, Britain's historical approach towards the Falklands has been one of neglect according to Dodds, especially within the FCO. The strategy of race is evident in the Falklands lobby campaign which used references such as "loyal" and "kith and kin" to signify the "white" identity of the community. The concerted effort to defend the Falklands stands in stark contrast to the way in which the Ilois were treated: the politics of racial erasure and cultural identification highlighted in such disparity. However, unlike the collective identity that ensued between Britain and Falklands over the Argentine invasion, Pitcairn experienced socio-political marginalisation due to the well-publicized 2004 trials. The hybrid English/Tahitian descent of Pitcairners and mutinous actions of their forefathers tarnished their identity as British subjects. In the ensuing legal debate that followed the trials Farran (2007, pp. 148-149) argued that "having established that Pitcairn Islanders were British subjects, they should have been treated with the same due regard to their fundamental rights as other British subjects".

The British outposts appear something of an "obligation that they [the UK] would shoulder, though without great enthusiasm or sense of national purpose" (Aldrich & Connell, 1998, p. 31). Nonetheless, in recent years, the UK has made concerted efforts to re/engage with the territories issuing two White Papers – *Partnership for Progress and Prosperity: Britain and the Overseas Territories 1999* and *The Overseas Territories: Security, Success and*

Sustainability 2012 – in an attempt to refocus and renew the links between the UK and its OTs. Policies focus on issues of self-determination, responsibilities of Britain and the territories, democratic autonomy and provision for help and assistance with a clear commitment to good governance and democracy. The relationship aims to address the needs of the territories and instil confidence in Britain's commitment to the territories' future (FCO, 1999). Central to these aims are measures to promote more open, transparent and accountable government.

However, the record of achievement in these areas is patchy. Clegg and Gold (2011, p. 119) cite criticism of the UK in meeting its own objectives of "good governance" in the example of exposed corruption in the OT Turks and Caicos Islands. The latter indicates "grave failures in the post 1999 approach to UK-OT relations". Indeed, the realities of overseeing such a disparate and in most cases distant group of territories has resulted in failings and fundamental structural problems in the relationship between centre and periphery. Although the UK government has consulted with a range of interested parties in the process of developing White Papers, it has clearly been a British-led initiative (Clegg & Gold, 2011).

Distinguishing between the two White Papers, the 2012 publication echoes the discourse of "partnership" and "mutual responsibilities" espoused in 1999 but now focuses on new policies toward creating "flourishing communities" and "strong and sustainable economies" (FCO, 2012). As will be argued below, the 1999 White Paper has fallen short of "partnership", whilst "progress and prosperity" are somewhat hollow notions when juxtaposed with the reality of Pitcairn's socio-economic situation. It could also be argued that a somewhat compliant, complacent and complicit attachment between the UK and Pitcairn has fostered a culture of erasure.

Erasure and the socio-historical context of Pitcairn

Pitcairn is the setting in 1790 for the final act of one of the greatest sea dramas of all time, the mutiny on board His Majesty's Armed Transport Bounty on April 28, 1789. Inch for inch, it is the repository of more history – romantic history, blood history, bogus history – than any other island in the Pacific (Ball, 1973, p. 4).

The purpose of colonies has always been to enhance the well-being of the mother country strategically or financially, but Pitcairn has always been an exception. Incorporation into empire was "accidental" and according to Ball (1973) the island was totally useless to Britain's strategic and financial well-being. Two main events are pivotal when examining Pitcairn's 220 year colonial history. The first was the infamous and well documented story of the mutiny on the *Bounty*. The second is the 2004 sexual abuse trials. Both acts are treated here in terms of the concept of *jurisdiction*, defined as both an area of authority and administration.

The story of the mutiny has captured the imagination of seafarers, travellers, historians and writers for over 200 years. It is a classic tale of power and domination, command and rule, of colonialism and capitalism, and of hero versus villain – captured in no less than three major Hollywood movies: in 1935 starring Clark Gable; 1962 Marlon Brando; and 1985 Mel Gibson as the 'hero' Fletcher Christian and instigator of the mutiny. The *Bounty* embarked from Spithead, England, in 1787 under the command of William Bligh, on a colonial mission to collect breadfruit trees from Tahiti and transport them to the West Indies, to eventually provide cheap food for the slaves who worked the plantations (Lummis, 1997). After the mutiny, nine mutineers, together with twelve Tahitian women, six men and a baby settled on the remote and isolated island of Pitcairn. In short, Pitcairn represented a refuge from the harsh penalties of

colonial justice. Some authors also attribute the exotic and seductive island paradise of Tahiti, coupled with the tyranny of Bligh's command as motivation for mutiny. Upon arrival, the mutineers stripped and burnt the ship, securing their isolation and containment for nearly twenty years. But any utopian vision was soon shattered. Violence and murder between the mutineers and Polynesian men ensued over the unequal treatment of land and women. By 1800, only one mutineer, John Adams, was left alive with a number of women and mixed blood children. Even the women had tried to build a craft to escape the island during this bloody period (Lummis, 1997). Paradoxically, Adams turned to the bible for redemption, nurturing a moral and God-fearing community that was fostered by like-minded patriarchs after his death. As news of their discovery in 1808 by American whaling ship *Topaz* reached Europe and America, the *Bounty* story unfolded. Word reached other nations that an idyllic community of young people lived on the remote rock, motivated by the Bible to live in peace, piety and harmony (Kirk, 2008, p. 5). Over this time and influenced by Adams, early generations of Pitcairners adopted a predominantly English identity over their half Tahitian ancestry, a disposition that remained strongly embedded in Pitcairn culture.

A number of authors have commented on the islanders' passion for cricket, celebration of royal events (e.g. Queen's birthday celebrations) and a general tendency to promote their British rather than Tahitian identity (Ball, 1973; Clune, 1966; Shapiro, 1936). During the nineteenth century, Pitcairn increasingly came under the protection of visiting British naval ships, and officially became a British colony authorized by the British Settlements Act of 1887 (although the islanders usually date their recognition as a British territory to a constitution devised with the help of a visiting Royal Navy officer of H.M.S. *Fly* in 1838). Native Pitcairner Amelia Young (1894, p. 91) writes, "the flag of Old England was hoisted on the Pitcairn Island", with Captain Elliott observing, "You are now under the protection of the English flag". He strongly advised the people to have written laws by which they might be governed and further, to appoint a magistrate from among themselves to apply those laws. However, the then Colonial Office was less than enthusiastic noting the (dis)location of island/Britain both politically and geographically. They also acknowledged the problematic issue of annexing Pitcairn to the Government of New South Wales, which had no sort of connection with it (Lewis, 2009). The form of self-government established in 1838 lasted for over fifty years (Sanders, 1953) and a tradition of annual visits to the island by British navy ships continued until 1856 when, faced by depleted resources, the entire community migrated, with the aid of Britain, to Norfolk Island, a former British penal colony, some 3,700km from Pitcairn. Homesick for their island home, a number of families returned over the next seven years; their descendants still reside on Pitcairn today. Upon their return the islanders faced increased isolation as whaling ships no longer traded in the Pacific and there was minimal contact with British naval ships. As such, reliance on the sea for trade and sustenance, long periods of isolation and the necessity to grow much of their food led to the development of livelihood systems that cope under difficult circumstances.

Pitcairn fell under the jurisdiction of the British High Commission for the Western Pacific (WPHC) until 1952; it was then transferred to the Governor of Fiji. Evidence of tension between the island and its distant administrators were by then apparent. This is recorded, for example, by Albert Moverley, who was sent to Pitcairn in 1948 for a three year period to oversee the construction of a new school and dually act as government advisor. Administrative neglect (read erasure) is illustrated in his comment:

> The WPHC's inefficiency and complete lack of interest had dealt most of the death blows to the truly sound and constructive efforts for improvement of the colony. [Furthermore, the WHPC] was prepared to ruthlessly sacrifice everything … in its determination to slide out from under and to deliver Pitcairn to the Fiji Government with the minimum evidence as to the true condition of the Colony (Moverley, 2007, pp. 176-77, 179).

Evidence of colonial neglect has periodically been documented by outsiders like Moverley. His successor, Roy Sanders, who wrote a Master's thesis titled *A Study of Pitcairn Community in Transition*, noted that the "influence of administrative offices in Suva is real to the islander" (Sanders, 1953, p. 271) but alluded to this reality in a psychological sense. The 6,400 km (4,000 miles) distance between the two islands contributed to the lack of "hands on" administration in any real sense. Until then, the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Mission had provided the majority of external administration in the form of education and training after the islanders converted to the faith in 1886. But they too have been criticized for lack of continuity. In his anthropological survey of the Pitcairn community, Shapiro (1936) was not impressed with the attitude of SDA authorities towards Pitcairn and commented on the educational and cultural neglect of Pitcairn by those who might have been expected to assume some responsibility. Sanders notes that the period 1912-1928 lacked any "formal education", and relied on the assistance of untrained islanders; while during the period 1928-1934, there was no SDA pastor. Moreover, between 1912 and 1937, there was only one administrative visit by colonial officials (Moverley, 2007). In 1940, Harry E. Maude, Deputy Commissioner for WHPC, was sent to Pitcairn to reorganize the constitution, legal code and system of government. He stressed the need for the British Government to send an outside official to direct the activities of the local administration and act as an organizer and leader for the community (WPHC, 1940). Indeed, leading up to the 2004 trials, the lack of official visits was still evident with only one Governor of Pitcairn having ever visited the territory: this was Sir David Scott, British High Commissioner in New Zealand, who records a visit which he made as Governor in 1973 at the time of French nuclear tests in the Pacific (Lewis 2009, p. 59). Oliver (2009, p. 11) states:

> Over the years, there were very occasional, irregular, and short-term visits from officials representing the Crown. For the most part, these officers were resident in New Zealand.

Post 2004 trials, the FCO conducted its own post-mortem of Pitcairn's "neglect", finding that Britain's supervision of Pitcairn had been "light and distant" (Marks, 2008, p. 231).

When Fiji gained independence in 1971, administration of Pitcairn was transferred to Auckland within the jurisdiction of the British High Commissioner to New Zealand; the latter conjointly holds office as Governor of Pitcairn. Under the 1970 Order, the Governor has legislative authority for Pitcairn and is empowered to formulate laws on any subject. The 1999 Courts Ordinance provides that English common law and equity applies to Pitcairn (Levine, 2009). Locally, the Pitcairn Island Council (PIC) consists of seven members and is charged with managing internal affairs, headed by a Mayor elected for a three-year term. Subject to the orders and directions of the governor, the council generally enforces the law and may make or amend regulations and local bylaws. But ultimate control (read power) rests in the hands of the

UK as the territories are constitutionally subordinate (Davies, 1995). The Pitcairn Island Office (PIO) in Auckland has the dual function of carrying out the main administration of the island and representing Pitcairn Island in New Zealand, whilst a UK Governor's Representative now resides on the island (more on this below).

Pitcairn's settlement by mutineers is one that, taken literally was an act of rebellion *against* colonial authority. In the very act of mutiny, an illicit, disdained and criminal act punishable by death, these early inhabitants chose an existence that was both geographically and socially marginal. Historically, this act continues to mark the island and its inhabitants on the periphery of cultural systems of space; both geographical isolation and social dislocation are constraints that have contributed to the formation of a somewhat insular society. As a result, Pitcairn's formative social and cultural processes have involved a struggle, even if only psychological or virtual, with an external other. *Jurisdiction* then, defined as an area of administration, exposes acts of administrative erasure in the case of Pitcairn. Spatial separateness has also bestowed a strong sense of self-pride and identity, not to mention an image of exclusivity derived from its *Bounty* heritage. In a contemporary context, these Pitcairn traits may be at risk of erosion by acts of political disassembly by its UK administrator.

The 2004 trials

The second event under discussion would evolve some 200 years after the mutiny. Here, *jurisdiction,* defined as an area of authority, became a contested case of imperial neglect versus imperial domination. As a result of investigations by UK police in 1999 Pitcairn became enmeshed in legal proceedings over several years fraught with issues of constitutionality and sovereignty. Then followed a process of political dissemination and re/structure toward more accountability and self-autonomy but, ultimately I argue, towards a pathway of disassembly. The catalyst, now commonly termed the "trials" was the result of the aforementioned investigations whereby several Pitcairn men were convicted and jailed on the island in 2006 for historical criminal charges of sexual abuse against women and young girls dating back over forty years. Prosecutions resulted in compensation for victims and vindication of the failure to protect the basic human rights of vulnerable members of the community. However, it is not the purpose of this paper to examine these events (Marks, 2008; Oliver, 2009), but to note that the event itself divided the community and raised questions about the application of British law on Pitcairn. Indeed, some commentators argued that the prosecution represented the imposition of a set of external and alien legal norms by a dominant and overbearing metropolitan authority upon a small and vulnerable community (Trenwith, 2003).

The legal basis for the trials has been highly criticized and, according to Trenwith (2003, p. 6), it was "hurriedly rushed into existence … creating judicial processes and structures where none existed before … those subject to it have had little or no say in its creation, and will have almost no say in its implementation". A case in point being some 40 new ordinances introduced between 1999 and 2003 as a result of the pending trials, invoked because "there had been no clear legislative, judicial, or correctional infrastructure in place" (Baldacchino, 2010, p. 132). This action prompted a long-standing advocate for Pitcairn to say:

> Pitcairn's Governor has, in 2003 issued a flurry of ordinances, regulations, orders, and rules, some of which have been put into effect without counsel with the PIC -leaving the Pitcairn people feeling that their culture and remote island conditions need to be carefully factored into any law or regulation that affects them (Ford, 2010, np.).

The general and wide ranging powers of the Governor demonstrate that the power and control in Pitcairn is highly centralised (Ryan, 2006, p. 85). Moreover, it is questionable whether the concept of "self-autonomy" is that of independence of action on the internal or domestic level (Baldacchino, 2010, p. 91) or whether the rhetoric of "partnership" reiterated in UK White Papers is in fact practiced. Speaking at a regional seminar on decolonization in the Caribbean in 2010, a Pitcairn representative commented that the procedures being followed by the UK Government in the unfolding court case were seen to be socially divisive and could destroy the community through the loss of manpower (Ford, 2010). Indeed, the possibility of collapse of the community (if many of its menfolk were imprisoned) was of major concern. Farran (2007, p. 125) argues that the case in fact provided a vehicle for exercising colonial control over Pitcairn, perhaps at the expense of the very survival of these island people. The legal perspective focused on the reasoning used to exercise imperial rule over Pitcairn, highlighting that the powers of British colonialism remain intact and of contemporary relevance in the Pacific region.

Pitcairn: the contemporary context

Pitcairn's political situation is born of its unique geographical, social and historical status. Due to its remote location and difficult terrain, air travel is not possible (the island has no airfield). Pitcairn can only be reached by ship, a journey of 36 hours from Mangareva in the Gambier Islands, part of French Polynesia, 480 km to the west. Today, an irregular freighter service (four times a year) brings supplies and a handful of tourists and visiting personnel to the island. At around 50% of islanders' annual income, the subsidized cost of US$2,350 for return travel between Pitcairn and Mangareva for local residents is largely unaffordable. Of note, in the 1980s, a wealthy American submitted plans to lease nearby Henderson Island for 999 years and to provide islanders with a ferry boat and air access; these proposals were met with enthusiasm by locals (Winchester, 1985). The latter would also have improved access to emergency medical attention. Islanders still relied on radio communication to call for help to passing ships, which may be more than a week's journey to the island. The UK Government seriously considered the matter of leasing Henderson: the sum of a million dollars was offered by the wealthy American, thus negating any cost to the British taxpayer. But it was not to be. The World Wildlife Fund reminded the world that Henderson Island was a repository for natural treasure: various endemic flora and fauna must be protected (Winchester, 1985, 2003). The planned project was side-lined, and Henderson declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988. Today, Pitcairners still rue the injustice of the decision, and complain that they have "little control" over their own geographical space.

Moving beyond the trials

Following the trials, legal commentators have posed the question: "What will now happen to Pitcairn? Will the UK once again abandon Pitcairn to its own devices, or is it to keep a 'watching brief' and interfere ever more closely in the affairs of the Pitcairn islanders? (Farran, 2007, p. 150). Whilst re/engagement with territories is the objective of the two White Papers

(2009, 2012), as the following discussion highlights, in Pitcairn's case, there are anomalies between rhetoric and reality. The UK's intent to create "valued partnerships", to build "successful and resilient economies", and "flourishing communities" with a "commitment to providing assistance to territories in need", are herewith examined for acts of disassembly. These acts, I argue, amount to a continuum of erasure, when processes of social negotiation between centre and periphery are scrutinized.

Britain's remaining dependencies are, without exception, those that are still seen as too small to become independent and, in most of them, there is no significant support for this course (Lockhart, Drakakis-Smith & Schembri, 1993). Territories such as Pitcairn, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha and Montserrat all have significant natural and structural barriers to growth. Based on fieldwork I developed a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) analysis from which Pitcairn's main vulnerabilities are highlighted (Table 1).

Table 1: Vulnerabilities for Pitcairn.

Poor infrastructure: harbour facilities/sewerage/water supply/waste management
Telecommunications
Insularity
Climate change
Limited human resources
Ageing population
Limited access – reliance on infrequent transport
High cost of freight and supplies
Dependence on UK budgetary aid
Limited health care facilities
Education
Low income levels
Lack of professional and governmental expertise
Stigma and image of sex trials
Increasing bureaucracy
Reduction of traditional self-subsistence lifestyle

Source: Amoamo (2013)

The above vulnerabilities will continue to challenge UK white paper objectives. However, as a result of the trials the jurisdictional capacity of Pitcairn, although limited, has improved. Importantly, jurisdiction relates to the competence to pass laws, build effective administrative processes, encourage education and support the development of a climate conducive to economic growth (Baldacchino, 2006; Levine, 2009). In short, jurisdictional capacity is about effective linkages and good governance. One of the major outcomes of the trials is the effort to revitalize the socio-political and economic situation of Pitcairn with a focus on wealth creation, increased infrastructure and service in order to create a sustainable economy and attract much needed immigration. Much like the aftermath of the Falklands conflict, there began a program of investment in the islands and land reform (Royle, 2010).

Pitcairn: the political and economic context

Pitcairn has a fragile economy that is heavily dependent on a small number of activities. The main source of Pitcairn's very modest government income is derived from postage stamp sales and passenger landing fees. The former has declined since the 1990s due to increased use of technology such as email and the Internet, whilst the latter is highly weather dependent to land visitors on the island. More recently, alternative forms of income including selling the Pitcairn domain name (.pn), honey production and tourism have been developed. Pitcairners private income has long relied on making and selling souvenirs to passengers of visiting cruise ships. Today the development of greater diversity of economic activity is a key challenge and the UK has identified tourism as the major potential contributor to Pitcairn's economy. In fact, in 2012, the recognition of the Pitcairn Islands as a pristine marine environment by PEW Environmental Group has resulted in lobbying UK Government with a view to proposing a marine reserve in Pitcairn waters: an EEZ of some 800,000 km^2.

Pitcairn succumbed to budgetary aid in 2004 when revenue reserves from postage stamp sales dried up. The island is the costliest OT per capita for the UK and relies almost wholly on aid of around US$4million per year, and climbing. Since the trials, the secondment of professional personnel (e.g. police officer, medical doctor, community and social worker, Governor's Representative) has been effected at substantial cost. For instance, the 2011/12 Budget Review for Pitcairn shows that of the total salary bill of US$950,000 (27% of proposed budget expenditure) 21% is allocated for salaries, pensions and other benefits for islanders, whilst 79% goes toward off-island salaries (Summerfield, 2011). Islanders of working age hold various government jobs that pay a minimal wage of US$8.00 per hour. Pitcairners pay no tax since total annual income of between US$3,000 - $4,600 is below the required threshold for taxation. The inequity of income levels between off-islanders and locals is apparent. Pitcairners do accept, in principle, the need for professional expertise and support; yet begrudge that the included living expenses provided to the latter (e.g. quad bikes and fuel, electricity, communications, free freight on supplies) are drawn from "their" budgetary aid.

In 2007, a move to restructure the governance and government and devolve operational responsibility to the community was taken with the creation of GPI: the Government of Pitcairn Islands. According to then UK Commissioner Leslie Jaques – the role of Commissioner for Pitcairn was discontinued in 2009 – prior to this period the Island Council was composed of off-islanders to whom many deferred, there was a lack of self-esteem within the community and a lack of trust of outsiders, inevitable with people who had seemingly been let down for good (Jaques, 2012). A revised Constitution, including a bill of rights, was established in 2010, replacing a 1970 Order that "no longer serves the needs of those living on Pitcairn" and represents a "modern partnership" (read shared rule) between the UK and the island nation (FCO, 2010, np.). But in discussing Pitcairn's new Constitution, Eshleman (2012, p. 35) is at pains to state that "partnership is a voluntary association" and that the Pitcairn Constitution was enacted by London – which can change it unilaterally at any time and that, by the Constitution's own terms, none of the "partnership values" are enforceable.

By 2009, the creation of four divisions: community; finance and economics; natural resources; and operations headed by Divisional Managers and overseen by Portfolio holders (elected Council members) was implemented under what was to become a complex and overly bureaucratic structure: aptly dubbed by the locals as "The Christmas Tree". In reality, the number of "branches" has made for a somewhat cumbersome and inefficient system of island

governance for a tiny populace of fifty or so people. The confusing set of policies and procedures prompted the PIC in early 2007 to ask UK authorities to provide governance training to those on the Island. Of note, in 1940 Harry Maude advocated training for Pitcairners as was "usual in other parts of the Empire". Following their request the PIC were provided with a couple of hours seminar on "good governance" (Ford, 2010) and it was not until 2013 that more targeted seminars including performance management and employment relations were conducted on-island. Although more power was transferred from New Zealand to the PIC and to the four divisions, no political or managerial training was given to islanders who have never before been exposed to the intricacies of self-governance (Ford, 2010, p. 1). In 2003, both public education and dissemination of information were highlighted as critical for all overseas territories in a ten-point action plan on Self-Determination presented by the UN Committee on Decolonization. The UK committed itself to political education programs for the territories in UN Resolution 1541 of 1960, and UN Resolution 2625 of 1970 (Ford, 2010, p. 2).

Pitcairn's political restructuring has relied on a closer and more rigorous relationship with the Department for International Development (DFID), and the European Union (EU), and the need to secure external funding for new projects. The first stage of this process saw the rebuilding of the slipway and jetty at Bounty Bay and the construction of a concrete road up the aptly named "Hill of Difficulty". This iconic route has been the lifeline for Pitcairners – 90 metres of mud track on which to bring supplies and passengers from ship to shore. The road was eventually paved in 2006 (post trials), making transporting supplies and access much easier for the islanders. Following this, a newly rebuilt schoolhouse, new satellite communications system providing internet facilities, the building of a museum, and EU funding confirmed to construct an alternative landing at Tedside (western side of Pitcairn Island) resulted. The latter aims to alleviate the often difficult landing conditions at Bounty Bay and increase the number of cruise ship passengers landed on the island, which are pivotal to tourism growth.

Over the past few years DFID have worked toward committed, proposed and potential financial resource requirements for Pitcairn, mainly toward improving infrastructure. New projects will include improvements to provide 24-hour electricity by 2015, upgrading of the existing telecommunication system and progression of the alternative harbour. Under European Development Funds (EDF) 9, Stage I funds of US$1.6 million were allocated for a new access road, quarry and equipment for the first stage of the harbour project. Dependent on progress, Stage II funds of US$1.5 million will go towards the building of a new breakwater. In addition, funds of US$3 million under EDF10 will go toward further infrastructure and to support tourism services and development (PIC, 2012). Stages I and II will be undertaken by existing island manpower. However, progress to date on 24-hour electricity and the alternative harbour has been fraught with delays, cancellations, limited human resources, increased bureaucracy and a growing suspicion amongst islanders that they may never be completed. The release of funding tranches (take-up funds from EU) depends on evidence of progress; but to date Pitcairn has fallen well short of this and has requested extensions or risks losing the total allocation of funds. The latter would result in taking apart or the disintegration of, and disassembly, of partly built infrastructure.

Acts of political disassembly

One example of rhetoric not matching reality is the provision of electricity. The installation of wind turbines, for which funding was secured and a contract negotiated with an Australian contractor in 2006 was supposed to provide Pitcairners with 24 hour power. The US$2.6 million scheme was aborted in 2011 after DFID failed to "rigorously manage" the green energy plans. By 2010 the project was three years behind schedule; no turbines had been made and predicted costs had doubled (Aardvark, 2013). DFID deemed the project "not good value for money" and cancelled it "to protect UK taxpayer money". The question must be posed: why did it take five years to implement a project for just 50 odd people? Not surprisingly, the UK Government have been heavily criticized for "wasting £250,000 in aid on a failed wind farm project in the South Pacific – for just 55 people" (The Telegraph, 2011). Arguably, this much needed project would help islanders develop new business initiatives (as in tourism, agriculture, and fisheries) and help increase economic diversity. As such, the island continues to import expensive fuel for the current diesel generator (and which has its own ongoing maintenance problems). Until recently, cost has limited the provision of electricity to island homes and workplaces to ten hours per day and it was not until 2012 that provision of electricity increased to full day use (i.e. 7am to 10pm). Following formal termination of the wind project in March 2011, a DFID spokesperson stated, "The UK Government will be working with the Pitcairn Island Government to assess the current and future energy needs, including green options such as solar power". Given the failure of the proposed wind power scheme, it is questionable that a solar project will be advanced in the near future.

Another example is that of telecommunications. Although Pitcairners receive a 30% subsidy on basic necessities like electricity and telecommunications; these are still expensive in comparison to local incomes. Overall, improved telecommunications has increased Pitcairn's capacity to engage with both regional and global stakeholders, thus diminishing geographical isolation. But when the existing telecommunications system was upgraded in 2012 to include faster internet broadband capacity, the subsequent increase to usage costs far exceeded any affordable level for Pitcairn households. Consequently, limited technology means limited opportunity for economic growth and the ability to create "strong and sustainable economies". Such "progress", arguably, amount to disguised intent or false appearance. In other words, to acts of disassembly.

The current UK Governor, Vicki Treadell has (at the time of writing: August 2013) visited Pitcairn once since her appointment in 2010, although Deputy Governors have visited several times in recent years. Following her visit in September 2010, the Governor advocated, in an open letter to the community, a more "structured approach" to communication. She sought to hold monthly video meetings with the island mayor and quarterly meetings with the Council. However, based on fieldwork in 2011, 2012 and 2013, I have observed such meetings unfold in an *ad hoc* fashion. For example, only one video link between the Governor and PIC occurred between November 2012 and May 2013, during which time Council was under pressure to complete complex EU paperwork regarding the alternative harbour project. Concurrently, Council was also charged with completing a comprehensive Five Year Development Strategy Plan for Pitcairn. As mentioned earlier, little or no training has been provided to deal with such complex protocol. In addition, the new appointment of a UK Governor's Representative resident on Pitcairn has not always been conducive to maintaining mutually cooperative centre periphery relations. The annual change of such personnel brings with it a range of skills, attitudes and values. I have experienced five different "Gov Reps"

during my fieldwork. Moreover, the "honeymoon period" (first three months) typically elicits a rhetoric of positivity and progress but within six months, the attitude (of some) has become negative, destructive and parochial, resulting in fractious conflict between islanders, between islanders and off-island professionals, and between both groupings and the civil service in London. Admittedly, Pitcairners have had to adjust more rapidly than any other time to the influence and imposition of "outsiders". Of note, the term "off-islander" is used in official documentation supplied by the UK to expatriate employees. Employment contracts describe the latter as being a "key member" of the team of "off-islander(s)". During my first year on Pitcairn, in 2008/09, a frequently used term was "accommodation syndrome": a term coined by British Authorities with regard to off-island professionals becoming too "close" or empathetic to islanders. There was an administrative effort to maintain boundaries between "us" and "them", socially and politically; an effort I deem is akin to an act of erasure.

Pitcairn's newly established Constitution has resulted in the need to update many of the island's laws and ordinances which no longer align with White Paper objectives and human rights issues. One of the most important issues for Pitcairn's future sustainability is the need for immigration. Figures from Pitcairn's Immigration Policy state that the population of Pitcairn in 2012 is 53 people. The population could best be described as ageing: there are 11 people aged over 65 years and a relatively higher proportion of both men and women in the 45-64 year age bracket (GPI, 2013). Population growth is zero, there are only eight children on the island, and there are only seven residents of reproductive age (aged to 20 to 39). The implications threaten the sustainability of the island in terms of economic productivity and dependency. Analysis indicates that, between 2013 and 2020, the resident population will decline by 18%; 75% of the population will be over the age of 50, and 40% will be in retirement (GPI, 2013). In reality, Pitcairn has struggled for several decades to increase the population base past this number. One particular area of ongoing conflict between Pitcairn and the UK involves a sound immigration policy and the issue of child safety on Pitcairn.

Since the trials, strict child protection policies have been implemented and biannual Child Safety Reviews are conducted by external personnel. Community members have willingly undergone several educational programs and implemented guidelines to ensure child safety and increased community awareness of potential risks. The Governor's Representative holds the role of 'Children's Officer' and off-island professionals are charged with a contractual commitment to monthly "information sharing" meetings on this topic. Current immigration policy pertaining to visitors with children states "visitors wishing to travel to Pitcairn with children under 16 years for a day visit will be given a safety briefing on, or before, landing on the island" (GPI, 2013). All visitors that arrive by yacht are presented with a declaration – which they must sign – explaining the background and potential "risks" that Pitcairn may present to those with children. Notably, the last offence committed by a Pitcairn man occurred some fifteen years ago. Officials, including SDA pastors and school teachers, are no longer permitted to bring children with them. Neither is diaspora Pitcairners, unless special permission is granted by the Governor who controls immigration applications involving children on a 'case by case' basis. Consequently, the islanders feel that, after several years of compliance with these measures, the UK need to "lighten up" stating, "No other OT's have such constraints imposed upon them", and that Pitcairn's reputation and any move toward "progress and prosperity" are hindered by such actions. Questions raised around current policy include "what say did the Pitcairners have in this decision?" Indeed, such a policy does not align with White Paper rhetoric in devolving more autonomy to the OTs. Residents on the

island believe there is a "red light" policy, preventing families from settling on the island. In 2009, there was criticism over the Child Safety Review conducted from "a desk in London". The islanders voiced some challenging questions about how the review had been undertaken without visitation to the island, or direct participation with community members. In the broader context of self-determination, these ongoing reviews impose an atmosphere of suspicion and surveillance which is excessive. Any move to 'normalization' and rhetoric of "moving forward" is impeded by the continual knowledge, and some would argue, manipulation (by the UK) of such reviews, amounting to disguised intent (read disassembly).

A commonly heard phrase from Pitkerners is that HMG (Her Majesty's Government) want to "close it down" and reflects growing discontent over the UK's social, political and economic manoeuvrings with the island. In a recent radio interview (ABC News, 2012), the Governor was asked about the potentiality of "closing it down" because of the high cost of administering this "tiny dot in the ocean". She was quick to dispel any such myth stating, "The fact that we (UK) have published a White Paper should dispel any questions that the British government is looking at any alternative other than to support the island towards a sustainable future". In theory, the accelerated effort taken by the UK in 2012/13 to implement objectives of Pitcairn's Strategic Development Plan supports the latter. These objectives are targeted to areas of public health, social welfare, environmental management, and tourism development. Juxtaposed with Pitcairn's new immigration policy is a DFID-led initiative to survey the Pitcairn diaspora and encourage return and re-engagement with the island through philanthropic services and/or investment opportunities. Furthermore, DFID is also seeking to undertake a "desk-based" economic survey to inform PIC and HMG of the current condition of the Pitcairn economy, the potential for economic development, and future scope for reducing dependency on UK budgetary aid. The latter, however, could also help to justify the large amount per capita the UK spends on Pitcairn (Drummond, 2013) yet, could also be construed as a strategy that supports the idea to "close it down".

Thoughts on centre/periphery relations

And yet, problems of oversight and engagement continue to occur between the UK and OTs, especially in relation to the high turnover of civil servants charged with administering policy. Continuity of personnel both at ministerial and civil service levels, coupled with "lack of territory-specific knowledge" (Clegg & Gold, 2011, p. 123) raises concerns for remote island stakeholders like Pitcairn. White Paper rhetoric may be well intentioned: but, as one former FCO official has suggested, HMG still treats the OTs "as being mostly of peripheral interest" (Foreign Affairs Committee 2008, p. 131). One of the commonly heard comments from Pitkerners encountered during fieldwork was that "London had no idea what it was like on Pitcairn" and many wondered whether civil servants charged with Pitcairn's care even knew where the island was. What is apparent when one spends extended time on Pitcairn Island today is any 'lack' of British identity in contrast to the strong attachment documented by visitors between the nineteenth and twentieth century. Author Ian Ball, who visited Pitcairn in 1972, commented that almost every Pitcairn home had framed photographs or pictures of the Queen or the Royal Family. This British 'attachment', albeit temporally removed, was manifest in a kind of photographic tokenism that reflected their British heritage. Today, such attachment is minimal. Aside from the latter displayed on the walls of the Pitcairn Public Hall, I saw no such artefacts in islanders' homes or any evident 'loyalist' tendencies during my sojourn on the island. In one rather humorous example, the conflict between some islanders

and HMG was evident in the social setting of a dinner invitation. The guest, an off-island professional, brought a dessert called 'queen pudding' as a contribution to the hostess's menu. However, she was confronted with the comment, "we're not eating that f…ing pudding!" The hostess took offence to the 'royal' connotation of the offering.

Conclusion

> We ignore Pitcairn Islanders, and they drift away on each passing cargo boat, until by the end of the century there are expected to be no Pitcairners left at all, and the colony will, as the Foreign Office would anyway prefer, fade from existence altogether (Winchester, 1985, p. 345).

Winchester's comment echoes the very notion of erasure as the act of neglect, looking past, ignoring or rendering invisible an *other*. In 1790, Pitcairn was in traditional international law terms *terra nullius* and open to the first taker (Lewis, 2009, p. 55). Ironically, these first takers - *Bounty* mutineers - were those who had actively resisted and rebelled against colonial authority. Their progeny have, however re-engaged with the "colonizer", albeit in a more sporadic, compliant, complacent and complicit fashion. Whilst historical literature supports evidence of Pitcairn being nurtured as a British settlement for the past two centuries, the UK has been accused of neglecting its smallest colony (Angelo & Townend, 2003; Farran, 2007; Guest, 2009). Edmond and Smith (2003, p. 201) remark,

> Positively or negatively, islands have always been 'othered' by continents; the disjuncture of size, populace, economic and political scale only serves to create distinct boundaries between the centre or metropole and periphery.

Much like the Pacific island of Tokelau, formal administrative colonialism was in every way tenuous, belated, and superficial and conducted from afar (Connell, 2009). It was a style of colonial administration that one former Governor, Sir Robin Byatt, called "ineffective long-range benevolence" (Marks, 2008, p. 231). Arguably, Pitcairn has not had a history of extensive intervention by the administering power in its economic, social, or political affairs. In part, Pitcairn's remote locale and tiny size have perpetuated acts of erasure – both wittingly and unwittingly. But size, scale and locale are not sufficient reasons for the unequal treatment of Pitcairn. Thus, I argue that Pitcairn, as a SNIJ, has historically been subject to administrative erasure; and contemporarily, to acts of political disassembly. Understanding the importance of historical experience is thus critical to support any argument of erasure and disassembly: notions, this paper argues, that have tended to slip the net of both postcolonial and island studies theorizing.

Geographical erasure is evident in descriptors of (colonized) islands as 'tiny', 'remote', and 'unique'. In fact, the latter word was used by the UK codename, "Operation Unique" for Pitcairn's pre-trial investigation: a point "in tune with descriptions of the island's exceptional geography, history and culture" and "a reflection of the disproportionate scale between Britain and its last remaining colony in the Pacific" (Fletcher, 2008, pp. 59-60). Pitcairn is both distanced and differentiated by a discourse that continually feeds back to its inhabitants a particular image and identity that reinforces the dichotomy of centre/periphery, both

geographically and psychologically. In his anthropological study of Pitcairn identity, Frazer (1970, pp. 61, 64) states,

> Their isolation is one of the core facets of their identity [and that] the fact of being a Pitcairner is a fundamental conceptual distinction recognized by all Pitcairners and those in contact with them. [The result has led to a certain] self-consciousness and humility on the part of many Pitcairners … many times the island's morals, values and manners have come under critical attack, being considered inferior and wanting in improvement.

This research reveals Pitcairn has suffered degrees of erasure as a consequence of the history and politics of colonization. Contemporarily, erasure blurs any clear "pathway to prosperity" and "sustainability" advocated by the UK. Pitcairn must now proceed, as a non-self-governing territory, to approach any question of decolonization by considering its relationship with the metropolitan state and in ways in which this relationship would provide the necessary conditions for a viable community. Pitcairn's need to remain within the colonial cocoon wholly derives from its microscopicality. Its small size and isolation will require (certainly in the short term) a reliance on external aid if any measure of self-determination is to be achieved. Autonomy without sovereignty does not hinder the development of economic opportunities such as tourism: but opportunity relies on a transparent and honest willingness from the metropole to achieve such aims. The need to foster harmony and co-operation in order to survive will remain an important, and some may say a pre-requisite, for the island's survival. But there remains considerable frustration over protracted delays and decision-making around projects of electricity and building a breakwater and immigration. In reality, rhetoric of promoting immigration through diaspora engagement and economic analyses may support the inevitability of "shutting it down". Indeed, this may be the objective of conducting such surveys. Many islanders acknowledge the cost to the British government of such projects but there is a very strong desire to maintain life on Pitcairn and find ways to make this self-supporting.

In discussing the rights and duties on Pitcairn Island in regard to the trials, Letsas (2009, p. 182) concludes "the Pitcairn case will mark the beginning of a new political relationship between the UK and Pitcairn, one closer to the ideal of equal respect and concern". The trials have taken their toll on this small island community. Compensation has been paid to victims and a new Constitution now includes human rights. Offenders have been publicly shamed; they have been punished with jail sentences, albeit lightly. The community has survived; the British government has been shamed for its neglect of the community (Oliver, 2009). The UK has put in place "future protection" measures, "encouraged" immigration, implemented a new and more "autonomous" government structure, taken steps toward infrastructure "development" and prompted the economic necessity for tourism growth as a sustainable option. But, according to Oliver (2009, p. 37), "it has been bit by bit and reluctantly, in a typical British, *ad hoc*, incremental way". Rhetoric has often not matched reality. Strict child policies and the continual stigma of the trials constrain any feeling of "moving forward". UK administration in the twenty-first century is a reflection of that in the nineteenth century when, "in practice, the British government continued to claim sovereignty over Pitcairn whilst largely ignoring its immediate needs" (Lewis, 2009, p. 55).

Common bloodlines and collective memory bind Pitkerners together, although there remain deep divisions within the community as a result of the trials. Identity is fractured, "outsiders" have married Pitkerners, and attitudes toward the UK range from overt distrust and dislike to varying levels of acceptance and support: the queen pudding being an extreme example. Any "loyalist" attachment toward British identity that existed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has dissipated since the trials. The link between periphery and metropole is financially driven in Pitcairn's need for budgetary aid rather than motivated by any sense of common identity or allegiance to the UK. Returning to the concept of *jurisdiction* defined as both an area of authority and administration, Letsas (2009, p. 182) states, "A kind of injustice towards the defendants was committed in the legal processes taken by the UK, an injustice which may be outweighed, but will not be extinguished by future beneficial consequences for the island". To date, beneficial consequences are slow to materialize. It appears that a practice of "managed decline" is underway in DFID's immediate need for socio-economic surveys by which Pitcairn's future will be determined.

The future looks bleak for Pitcairn: time for these *Bounty* descendants may be running out. Disassembly: the act of taking apart will then occur. The risk of forced evacuation is very real: erasure, in this case, will be one of negotiation and compensation. Yet isolation for Pitcairn need not be viewed negatively: in island environments, it can foster strengths that counter vulnerability, develop resilience and the cultivation of inner resources. People thrown back on their own resources can come up with interesting and creative solutions.

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