

### CHAPTER III

#### FINDING AND DISCUSSION

*Australia* presents a clear story about the Aborigines and the condition of Australia. This movie has a historical background which is quite clear. It show the facts reflected through the medium of imagination by unique characteristics of Australia. There are interesting explanations about the events and the actual historical facts. It can be seen how White people bring Aboriginal children into an island and separate them from their parents.

In this movie, it is shown that there is a place where Aboriginal children from various tribes are taken forcibly from their families. They are brought to church to be treated like the Whites such as living with Western habits. These children become the generation that are stolen. Nullah is one of the children taken by force to Mission Island. He has a grandfather named King George. King George states that White people are evil and must be expelled from the Australian region. Another message delivered from this movie is the resistance against the Whites who try to uproot Aboriginal culture that has long existed.

Australia is almost entirely controlled by White people therefore, the Aborigines are very limited in conducting their activities. For example, Nullah is forbidden to go to theatre because he is an Aborigine and the Whites think that Aboriginal children are different from White people. Also, there is a pub in Darwin which is exclusively only for White people

while the Aborigines are prohibited from entering and could only see from the outside. If there are White people who associate with Aboriginal people, they will be hated, shunned from the group and are considered as “Blacks”.

Therefore, this movie shows how Aborigines fight against colonialism and defend their territory from the Whites. There are many ways that the Aborigines do to maintain their culture shown on the movie, namely wearing Aborigine’s traditional clothes, preserving the Aborigine life wisdom and believing in Aborigine superstitions.

### **3.1 Wearing Aborigine’s Traditional Clothes**

Cultural identity is a concept that has deep roots in social science research (Berry, 1999: 2). As noted by Chatterjee cultural identity is as a way to fight colonial interference (Foulcher and Day, 2002: 253). Based on Stuart Hall, (1993, p. 1-2) he stated that:

Cultural identity is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exist, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have stories. But like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in mere ‘recovery’ of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.

What the writer finds in this movie is the Aborigines still maintain their culture as a heritage of the ancestors. It will be handed down to the next



generation. One way of it is they still wear traditional clothes. There are some characters in the movie, one of which is King George who is the oldest among the Aborigines. He teaches the Aboriginal way of life to his grandson, Nullah. This is in line with the concept of time in Hall's definition.

As Aboriginal child, Nullah is in the power of Lady Ashley who is a white woman. He is taught Western culture to remove his identity as an Aborigine. However, he also realizes that he has Aboriginal blood and eventually he goes back to his grandfather, and lives as an Aborigine. Going back as an Aborigine, he decides to wear Aborigines' traditional clothes. Due to Hall's definition of transformation, Nullah does not wear the similar traditional clothes worn by King George. In this case, Nullah is not dressed fully as an Aborigine but he has a strong willingness to preserve his true identity.

In this movie also, there is description on the issue of stolen generation at the time. Aboriginal children are forcibly taken by government to be treated as Whites and would become servants of the Whites. They are separated from their original cultural identity and apply Whites' way of life.

Aborigines have unique culture. As natives, they live in traditional lifestyle. Meanwhile, White people who are immigrants try to control everything that Aborigines have. They want to abolish the Aboriginal culture that has been passed down through generations and apply the Western culture in Australia. Power does not emanate from some central or hierarchical structure but flows through society: 'Power is everywhere; not because it

embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere', as Foucault (1990, cited in Loomba 2005, p. 93) has demonstrated. In this movie, Whites' domination on Aborigines is seen in their effort to remove Aborigines' identity by making them embrace the Whites' culture. However, there are several characters in this movie who play important roles to fight against White power in Australia. Those actions are done to preserve their culture for the next generation.

### 3.1.1 King George

In this movie, King George guides his grandson namely Nullah. He is the oldest indigenous person who lives in inland Australia. He teaches the Aboriginal way of life to the next generation so that the culture can still be preserved. He is a symbol of cultural preservation because he functions as the only one who still does the Aborigines' rituals. It is becoming an option for Aborigines to be self-conscious to survive as indigenous people, although there is domination on the outside to break the culture slowly.

It is depicted in the movie that everything happens to the Aborigines is always associated with King George, the oldest among the Aborigines. He maintains the way he dresses as an Aborigine, despite the fact that the Whites are trying to uproot their culture. This is one form of the Aborigine's resistance to the Whites whose desire is to eliminate the Aboriginal culture from Australia. As a real Aborigine, King George is not affected by White culture at all. King George wears traditional clothes and it is becoming a tool



to show the identity of the natives (Aborigine). What is done by King George is a defense against the power held by the whites, so that the cultural identity of Aborigines is always maintained.

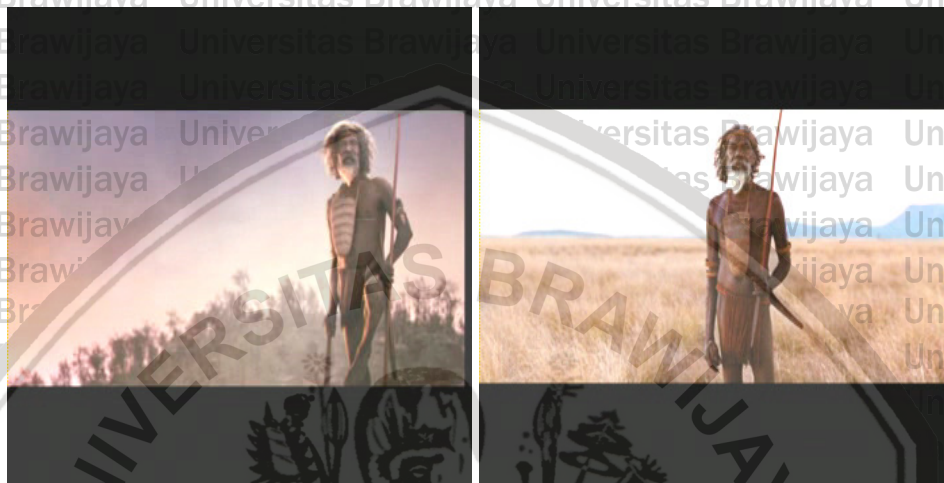


Figure 3.1 – Figure 3.2 King George always wears traditional clothes

The figure illustrates how King George dresses in a way that shows his true identity as an Aborigine. In this scene, King George shows Aborigine traditional clothes specifically. He is a symbol of local wisdom and culture. Traditional clothes has unique characteristic and very detail in its use. King George wears headband, bracelets and armbands. All is made from things found naturally (William, 2012, para. 12). He also wear *rijis* - pubic cover is made of pearl shells, and attach to a belt around the waist by hair strings. Hair strings are made by women. All cut hair is saved, and spun into long threads, which is used as headbands, ropes and belts, or even woven into textiles. Sometimes grasses are combined with hair to make tougher textiles. Typically Spinifex grasses are used in the inland. Bark is also sometimes used for textiles, and more commonly for making baskets (*Aboriginal Clothing*,

n.d, para. 2 ). He wears a belt around the neck in the form of bag which he carries the animals he is caught to be consumed (Saglova, 2009, p. 37). An ethnic minority are involved in the unequal power relationships of a settler society and the visibility politics of clothing is crucial to understand the representation of Aboriginal identities within the wider framework of nation state (Kleinert, 2010, p. 3). Cultural identity is very important for King George. Therefore, White power can be reduced slowly by maintaining their original culture. Besides King George, the figure of Nullah is the most significant role in the process of fighting.

### 3.1.2 Nullah

Nullah is a good listener. In this movie, he is always reminded the Aboriginal life by his grandfather and he never dissent at all. Every word that comes out of his grandfather's mouth always sounds well. King George as his grandfather teaches him how to live as an Aborigine. While Lady Ashley as his employer who is White also teaches him White's lifestyle. Two contradictory sides make Nullah confuse of his identity for the fact that he lives with the Whites but was born as an Aborigine.

Nullah does a lot of efforts compared to those done by King George. It causes many conflicts between the Whites and the Aborigines. When Nullah wears traditional clothes, the Whites try to change it. Instead, when he dresses with Western style, it is also not in accordance with his cultural identity so that both sides are fighting over Nullah to be a part of them. In the



end, Nullah returns as an Aborigine and lives with his grandfather. Nullah does not only become a victim of cultural abolition by the Whites but also as a the stolen generation, he is forcibly taken by the government and separated from their parents to be exiled in an Island. He is educated with other Aborigines children and shall be servants to whites. It is done to remove the existence of Aborigines.

Nullah lives not only with the Aborigines but also with the Whites i.e. Lady Ashley, Drover and Kipling Flynn. In this case, Lady Ashley also plays an important role in the life of Nullah, not just as a boss for the Aborigines. She teaches many Western habits to Nullah and expects him to stay with her someday. Lady Ashley expects to adopt Nullah as an Aborigine but live with White's life style like her because she does not have children and also has infertility disease so that she has strong desire to have Nullah and remove his identity. For Lady Ashley, the Aborigines are considered trivial and backward. From the figure and dialogue, it is seen that Lady Ashley despises the Aborigines which is indicated by tone of voice heard from the movie and the expression on her face when she says "native women" to Drover. It is seen from the figure :



Figure 3.3 Lady Ashley is talking to Drover

- Drover : But now that you mention it I have a lot to require when...  
 meet in the outback
- Lady Ashley : But they're mostly native women
- Drover : Aboriginal women. They are very easy to...get along with.  
 If you try (*Australia*, disc 1, 15:13 minutes).

Nullah's dressing or daily activity is influenced by western style. As a small child who gets input from two sides, King George and Lady Ashley, sometimes he is confused about his identity.

After all thing is passed, Nullah is back to Faraway Downs with Lady Ashley and Drover. They live happily and do their daily activities like other families. Although Nullah is not formally adopted by Lady Ashley, but Lady Ashley treats Nullah like her own child. Nullah lives like the Whites, he wakes Drover every morning to train horses together and accompany other Aborigines who work on the farm with Drover and Dingo, the little friend of Aborigines (the dog).

This movie shows the identity of Nullah as an Aborigine. Because he lives in an environment which is dominated by a lot of Whites, Nullah is



adopted the British family's in way of dressing that uses a shirt, trousers and shoes everyday. Environment affects the lifestyle of Aborigines who are slowly eroded by the power of Whites. In this case, Lady Ashley influences Nullah to live westernized behavior. Although in the end, the Aborigines could live side by side with White, but sometimes they do not feel comfortable because of all things except culture controlled by White rules.



Figure 3.4 Nullah is dressing western clothes

Figure 3.4 shows Nullah's style is influenced by Lady Ashley (White).

This illustrates how Western clothes are worn by Nullah. He uses long-sleeved shirts with slayer at his neck, trousers, leather belt, cowboy hat and boots. All clothing worn by Nullah is always worn by the Whites.

Nullah is educated like the Whites because he is considered a child by Lady Ashley. He is very happy to live with Lady Ashley and Drover, doing all the activities which are always carried by the Whites, even though sometimes he thinks about his grandfather's saying of his identity as an Aborigine. Europeans colonisation is brought Aborigines own understandings of dress as part of the civilizing process of modern society; the adoption of

clothing codes is linked to class, gender and social mores which they proceeded to impose on Aboriginal people (Kleinert, 2010, p. 4). Whites' power is very large culturally hence the clothes become the most important part that are influenced by Western style. The Whites want to apply their habits to the Aborigines in Australia.

Nullah is kidnapped or called as "stolen generation". 40,000 Aboriginal children are removed from their families. The conditions in the missions and institutions where the children placed are poor. There are often insufficient resources for properly shelter, clothes and food for the children. The standard of education is provided in the institutions is very basic, they work as menial labourers such as farm hands and domestic servants. The children are not allowed to speak their aboriginal languages and punished if they do (Cassidy, 2006, p. 148). There are many prohibitions that should not be done by the children as long as they are separated from their parents. Indirectly, their rights as a child is taken and their identity is eliminated.

Missionaries, teachers, government officials believed that the best way to make Black people behave like White people was to get hold of the children who have not yet learned Aboriginal lifeways. The problem of the Aborigines was they could not, or choose not to, live as White people wanted them to do. The children could not return until they were eighteen. Some were taken so young; therefore, they did not remember where they came from or who their parents were. Many of these children did not, and could not, return to their families (Read, 1981, p. 3). During treated in an Island or



region, they could not go anywhere and it took long time for them to be able to meet their parents.

On the way back to Faraway Down, Nullah dresses like the Whites do. Along the way, Nullah, Drover and Lady Ashley take a rest for a moment, then finally Nullah comes back to his place as an Aborigine. While he waves goodbye to Lady Ashley, he always says "I sing you to me" that shows a habit of Aboriginal people to let go of someone to leave. After that, he takes off the White's attributes that are attached to his body, helped by Lady Ashley who extends her hand. By extending hands, it shows that Lady Ashley approves Nullah's decision to come back to his being Aborigine. In this scene, Nullah and Lady Ashley are talking to each other just a little bit. Their gestures signify more than just words. Nullah's rejection to live as a White shows that there is an awareness of being an Aboriginal child who should preserve his culture.

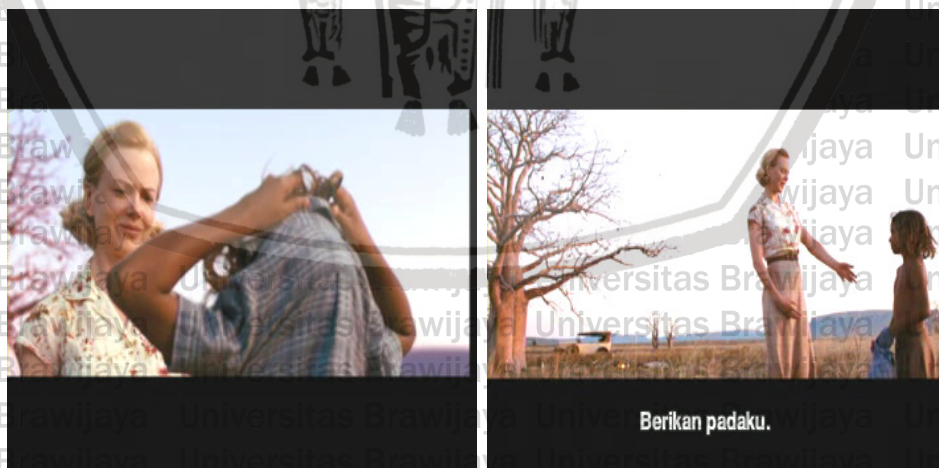


Figure 3.5 – Figure 3.6 Lady Ashley and Nullah bid farewell to each other

Nullah : Mrs. Boss I sing you to me

Lady Ashley : Here (*Australia*, disc 3, 34:08 – 34:10 minutes).

Figure 3.5 – 3.6 represent the closeness between Lady Ashley and Nullah. This shows how Nullah removes all Western attributes attached in his body and well received by Lady Ashley. Lady Ashley realizes that Nullah must return to his identity as an Aborigine. Nullah is very attached to Lady Ashley, but on the other hand he realizes that he is the successor to maintain Aboriginal culture. Hence, he thinks that they can not keep living together in one house. In this case, Nullah's role is as the colonized and Lady Ashley is as the colonizer.

Nullah has a grandfather who always watch and help him from far away. Sometimes King George takes him out to the woods and teaches Aboriginal ways of life. This effort is one way to keep Nullah's identity as an Aborigine. There is such a huge consciousness of King George as the oldest person in the Aborigines community to preserve the culture by educating his grandson traditional lifestyles. Eventually, Nullah's awareness to preserve the culture is increasing. As stolen generation, Nullah is placed on an Island "Mission Island" and westernized like the Whites, but in the end he returns as Aborigine. Nullah's decision as a child in the process of self-discovery culturally is incredible, so that King George as his grandfather immediately takes Nullah to live as Aborigine in order to keep the generation and the culture.

Nullah's action to remove all the attributes of the Whites from his body signifies a rejection. He wants to keep his true identity as an Aborigine. The decision to remove Western clothes attached to him, even though it is



only shirt and shoes become one of his life persistence. In this case, some Whites like Lady Ashley, Drover and Kipling Flynn are very supportive for not changing or taking away what they already have as Aborigines. In the end, she lets Nullah and allows him to live as an Aborigine. Dress emerge as central of culture to an understanding how clothing 'as the private made public' is pivotal to the formation of individual and group identity. Dress has left behind its earlier association with fashion to assume greater complexity in relation to broader global concerns that encompass ethnic and cultural identities (Kleinert, 2010, p. 2). The contrast is apparent in the movie between Lady Ashley and Nullah, but they are shown to stand in an equal position.

### 3.2 Preserving the Aborigine Life Wisdom

The word philosophy literally means love of wisdom. It is derived from two Greek words, 'Phileo' (love) and 'Sophia' (wisdom). Wisdom ultimately is to be derived from sacred traditions and from individuals thought to possess privileged access to a supernatural realm (*Meaning, scope and functions of philosophy of education*, n.d, para. 1-2). Wisdom is not just knowledge, as there are many pieces of knowledge of little general importance. At the deepest level, wisdom involves knowing not only what kinds of things are important to human beings, but also why they are important (*We all need wisdom*, n.d, para. 1). Life without a philosophy is unimaginable. It cannot be separated from philosophy (Krishnananda, 1992, p. 31). Thus life wisdom is the philosophy behind human's actions.

The Aborigines have different way of life hence the Whites are very interested to take away their culture. Many things are done by the Aborigines to maintain everything they have. The cultural values, family relationships, respect for elders, respect for knowledge, ability to be happy even without material comforts and philosophical and religious values of the natives are being replaced by 'foreign' values (Digole, 2012, p. 130-131). White's power is large against Aborigines' space.

Aborigines live on the land and feel the close connection to their traditional cultural activities as central to their cultural identity. They regret to be forced to live away from their home environment because many of them lose touch with their culture. Hunting, fishing, and berry picking as traditional activities are important to them. The Aborigines are very close to nature. Living away from their dwelling in nature makes them lose their traditional skills. At last, they lose everything. They forget what they learn about living off the land (Berry, 1999, p. 23). The Aborigines can not be separated from their activities in the land. On the other hand, they get many difficulties and not confident to defend what they have. Although in the end, all they have come back to them.

In *Australia*, the character who tries to preserve the Aborigine's life wisdom is King George. His resistance to preserve the Aborigines culture starting from handing down the philosophy of walking around the jungle.



### 3.2.1 Handing down the philosophy of walking around the jungle

In the movie, King George is depicted as the protector of the Aborigine culture. He is a good teacher for Nullah. He teaches Nullah the Aborigine life wisdom, for example to walk around the wood in order to make Nullah know more about the daily activities of the Aborigines, especially those done by men. The activities like exploring the wood undertaken by Aborigines is their bond with nature that occur for many years. Nature becomes an important part for Aborigines. King George becomes the first and the only one who still holds the original culture of the Aborigines.

Aboriginal people are very dependent on nature. Walking and hunting activities are always carried out in the woods. Land is fundamental to the well being of Aboriginal people. The land is not just soil or rocks or minerals, but a whole environment that sustains and is sustained by people and culture. This relationship is central to all issues that are important to Indigenous people (*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*, n.d, para. 5). Nature is a supreme being and can not be separated of human life because it is a teacher for the Aborigines.

King George invites Nullah to stay with him, living as Aborigines. They will explore the woods together. Nullah is a small child, initially refuses King George's invitation because he is afraid of Lady Ashley, but in the end he accepts his grandfather's request.



Figure 3.7 – Figure 3.8 King George and Nullah are in the jungle

Nullah: My grandfather King George. He took me walk about. He teach me black fellow life. Grandfather teach me most important lesson of all. Telling story (*Australia*, disc 1, 01:34 – 01:57 minutes).

The movie opens with an introduction of Aboriginal life. It starts with the main character Nullah and King George are walking around the jungle. In this scene, there is a little dialogue and Nullah speaks as the narrator. Although there is only one dialogue, interestingly the scenes function as the opening scenes for the movie. These scene function as the introduction to the life of the Aborigines who are great nature worshippers. In these scenes, it is shown how the Aborigines have strong bond to nature.

King George teaches the way of aboriginal life to the next generation (Nullah). They both are in the woods and then into the Billabong to catch fish. At the same time, there is a murder done by Fletcher to Lady Ashley's husband, when Nullah is hidden by his grandfather because many Whites are around the area.

The figure 3.7 – 3.8 shows the close relationship between grandfather and grandson. King George teaches Aborigine's life to Nullah by exploring



the jungle. This is done hereditary, so that the next generation will maintain the original culture owned by the Aborigines. In this picture, they both seem to blend with nature which is the place of Aborigines.

Land is vested for Aboriginal as a sacred bequest, and thereby provides the foundation for Aboriginal existence. Accordingly, connection with land is an integral part of every person within the Aborigines. The relationship of an Aborigines with land can not be exchanged or lost. It is their homeland (*Aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture*, n.d, para. 1-3).

Jungle or wood is called as land for the Aborigines. Jungle is a residence and center looking for food for the Aborigines. For King George, the jungle is a place he does everything like living in a house. Living closer to nature, including jungle become part of the custom of Aboriginal people. By walking around the jungle, the Aborigines are closer to know more about nature and have a strong bond just like a family or siblings. It can not be separated from Aborigines life. In this scene, Nullah and King George show their closeness to each other. King George invites Nullah to the jungle so that he will know better about the Aborigines' life.



Figure 3.9 King George and Nullah are walking around the jungle

The narrator: the territory was a land of crocodiles, cattle barons and warrior chiefs where adventure and romance was a way of life (*Australia*, disc 1, 01:09 – 01:12 minutes).

The narrative shows that Australia where the Aborigines live is an outback where there are many wild animals and other animals that are rarely found in the city or village. The other thing is the indigenous tribes still maintain their lives there although almost all of their regions are dominated by the Whites. Postcolonial studies show that both the ‘metropolis’ and the ‘colony’ are deeply changed by the colonial process (Loomba, 2005, p. 22). In *Australia*, there is a colonial action to take all of Aborigines belonging such as changing their customs to be Whites’ habit.

### 3.3 Believing in Aborigine Superstitions

The term superstition comes from the Latin word *superstitio*, which means “to stand over,” but with a sense of menace or threat. In practice, it refers to any irrational belief that something (often bad) will happen as a consequence of something else, even though there is no physical or logical connection between the two (*Superstition*, 2012, para. 1). Superstition is said



to arise power naturally from the unavoidable circumstances of human existence. There is a tendency among mankind to believe that every object has its own soul as Hume (1986, cited in Dye, p. 135). This is also one of the Aborigines' beliefs.

For Aborigine, the superstition as well as spirituality is defined as the core of their being and their identity. It gives meaning to all aspects of life including relationships with one another and the environment. All objects are alive and share the same soul and spirit as the Aborigines. There is a kinship with the environment. It can be expressed visually, musically and ceremonially as Grant (2004, cited in Grieves, p. 8-9). In this case, they have strong relationship each other in life.

The indigenous people are excluded from the decision-making and policy frameworks of the nation-states which they live, and because they are subjected to processes of domination and discrimination, their culture includes superstition are viewed as being inferior, primitive, irrelevant, something to be eradicated or transformed (Kipuri, 1993, p.53). This is a pillar of the believe from the Western about how they see the superstition on tribal community as one of parameter that they are primitive.

Western culture often treats the knowledge acquired by indigenous cultures as "primitive superstition," which is characterized as subjective and personal, as opposed that called "rational" perspective of Western scientific knowledge, as Deloria and Martin (1990; 1999, cited in Wildcat and Pierotti

2000, p.64) have demonstrated. A major difference between indigenous and Western worldviews is that in nearly all Western belief system creators tend to be human, or human in form. In contrast, within indigenous belief system, creators are typically non-human (Wildcat and Pierotti, 2000, p.68). They have different perspectives on superstition even though they live together in Australia.

### 3.3.1 The Power of Fire

Aborigines use fire for cooking, boiling water, warmth, light, ceremony (in mortuary and other rituals), cleaning up an area prior to camping, healing, to create warmth and steam using medical plants, to drive away dangerous supernatural figures, to erase the traces of life so that dead people will not want to return, hardening spear points and digging stick points, to anneal stone to make it better for working into tools, communication – signalling peoples' presence in an area and as a system of land management (Rose, 1996, p. 64-65). Fire becomes one of the most important things that has many functions to help the Aborigines. It comes from the natural place where the Aborigines live.

In this movie, King George makes fire to keep Nullah and others warm, and to repel the evil spirits who disturb them during the rest of journey to Darwin. Fletcher and his men try to disturb the cattle which are at rest. The cattle will be brought by Lady Ashley and her friends to be sold to Australian soldiers who will fight against the Japanese. The price offered by Lady



Ashley is lower than the price offered by Carney, Fletcher's boss. All efforts are made by Fletcher to ruin their journey to Darwin, but due to King George all problems can be solved hence they successfully bring the cattle to the harbor.



Figure 3.10 – Figure 3.11 King George is making a fire

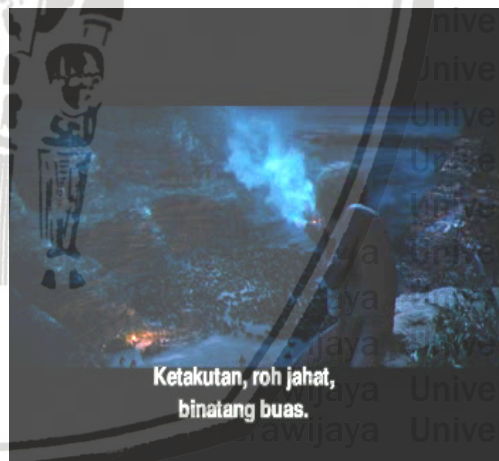


Figure 3.12 – Figure 3.13 King George is watching Nullah and the others from the hill

The figure in 3.10 - 3.13 describe how fire is very important for Aborigines, not only as a light but also as a ritual to drive away evil spirits around them. In this scene, King George makes fire to keep Nullah and the other warm during the rest heading to Darwin. The fire is believed to have

power behind the color that lights up so that it makes the evil spirits are afraid to approach.

### 3.3.2 The Power of Song

Singing has a significant role for Aborigines lives because from the beginning until the end of the movie King George and Nullah are always doing that. Aboriginal habit is singing during leisure time or to get something. They usually sing a song in Aboriginal language with a beautiful rebound. Song has supernatural power to prevent them from bad spirit. The song works for a variety of things, such as when they want to remind someone to beware of bad actions surrounding. They believe the song has its own power to solve any problems they face. Every Aborigine child and adult male is given the ability to be able to sing. They get a gift from earlier ancestors who inherit from generation to the next generation to be preserved, so that the culture does not disappear. The power of singing owned by each person is different. Small children do not master many songs as well as adults (Rose, 1996, p. 71).

Aboriginal ancestors create a song for all things related to human and nature. Each song has different function. Many magic men have the power to do magic by singing magic songs. They can sing and cause someone to become mad. They can also control human mind by singing and thus make them strong. They can sing over a spear wound, singing as they put their mouth right on the wound, thus causing it to heal up quickly. They can sing a



song and thus give themselves the power to travel at great speed (*Aspects of Traditional Aboriginal Australia*, n.d, p. 16). Not all people who live in Australia have the power in singing. Aborigines are very lucky in this case.

The culture that they have so extraordinarily rich and they use it very well without any abuse at all.

### **3.3.2.1 King George**

King George teaches many songs to Nullah as the youngest generation at the time. He becomes an intermediary to teach a variety of things about the Aborigines. Song is one which can not be separated from the Aborigines, because one source of their power comes from the songs that have been created long ago. In this movie, King George masters many songs that connect all the elements of human life such as water, land, and others.

Traditional activity like singing brings the communities together and reinforces the value of their culture. They feel that there are real need to provide opportunities for their activity again in order to reestablish strong cultural identities (Berry, 1999, p. 26). The culture that they have becomes their identity as Aboriginal people so that they pass down through generations in order to maintain their culture.



Figure 3.14 King George teaches Nullah how to catch a fish

Nullah: That day I gone to Billabong. King George he teach me how to catching fish using magic song (*Australia*, disc 1, 01:58 – 02:07 minutes, in this scene Nullah as a narrator).

In addition, to teach the Aboriginal life, including catching fish, King George also teaches Nullah to sing which is a part of the Aborigine's custom. They catch a big fish in the river that is located in the jungle. By singing the song, the fish will be caught easier because when they hear the song, they will only keep silent.

In the beginning of the movie there is description of Aboriginal life. It begins with a song to catch fish and then is continued with a song and a dance by King George from a distance to welcome Lady Ashley's first time stepping on Australia.



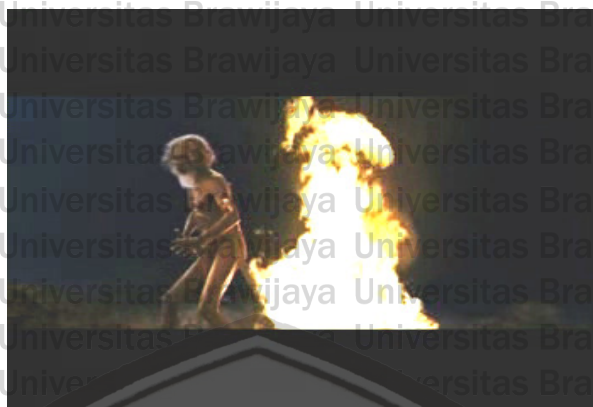


Figure 3.15 King George is singing song in the night of Lady Ashley's arrival

Nullah: That first night, when the sun go to sleep, King George tell me this land to be healed. He tell me that woman, far far white woman, she would be like the rain. I am thinking, I'm gonna sing her too. Make the land sing (*Australia*, disc 1, 22:07 – 22:30 minutes).

To welcome the arrival of Lady Ashley in Australia, King George sings in the night. He believes Lady Ashley will heal his land that is influenced by other whites who are cruel. Those White people bring a negative influence on his inhabited area and other Aborigines.

The figure 3.15 shows King George is singing and dancing around a fire at night. He really appreciates the arrival of Lady Ashley in Australia because his conviction is strong that Lady Ashley indirectly will help Nullah from White's domination. Singing for Aborigines is a prayer, both for safety and health. The song is sung for Lady Ashley who is stepping on Australia for the first time.

King George does not only welcome Lady Ashley's arrival but also always watches her because she is very close to Nullah. Nullah is always involved in everything done by Lady Ashley, so his grandfather always protects both of them. One way is by singing song in the distance.

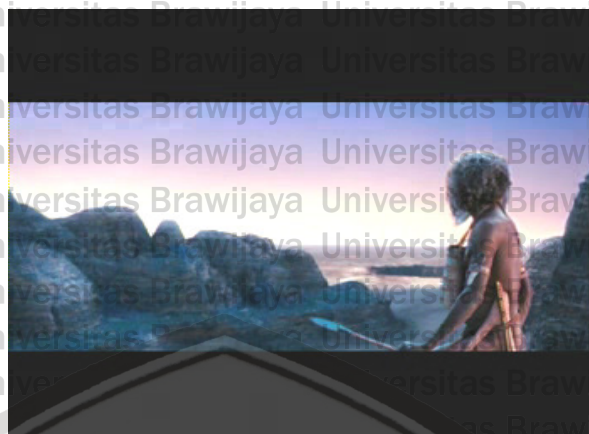


Figure 3.16 King George sing a song for Nullah and the others

There is a time when Nullah, Lady Ashley, Drover, Magari, Kipling Flynn, Bandy, Goolaj and Sing Song walk to Darwin to bring the cattles.

King George always watch them from a distance. When they are sleeping, King George sings a song so that the cattle and all the people are safe from wild animals and other obstacles. The figure 3.16 illustrates how King George keeps away Nullah and the community from dangers. In Aboriginal belief, the power of the song is very strong although it is sung from long distance. By singing songs, a lot of obstacles are overcome especially how to avoid evil spirits that will interfere. Additionally, the oldest person in the Aborigines community in this movie is King George, so that he becomes the spiritual leader who protects Nullah and others from encountering bad spirits.



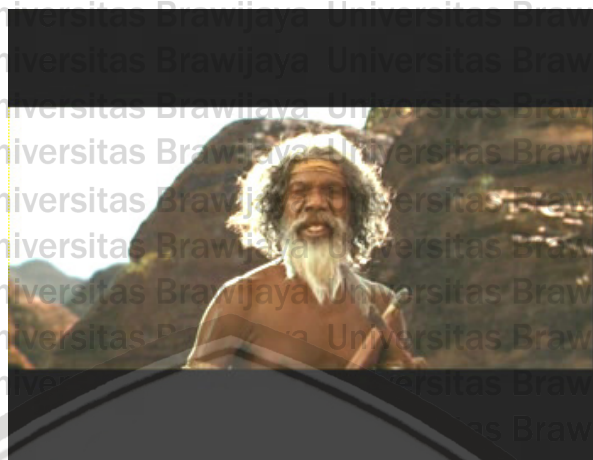


Figure 3.17 King George helps Nullah to make the cattle quiet

When Nullah and the others are sleeping, Fletcher and his crews try to burn the cattle that will be driven to Darwin. The cattle are started wandering toward the gorge. King George watches from a distance and guides Nullah to maintain the cattle. He helps with songs so that the cattle are not running anywhere. He and Nullah sing together while looking into the cattle's eyes because they are afraid of humans stare and easily tamed with songs so that they can be controlled well.

The figure 3.17 describes King George uses a spear and timber as musical instruments which are used to help Nullah in saving the cattle. King George song's makes the cattle instantly silent. The cattle are part of the nature where Aboriginal people live so that they are able to control of them by singing songs. The tradition of singing is awarded from previous ancestors who create the song for everything include the cattle.

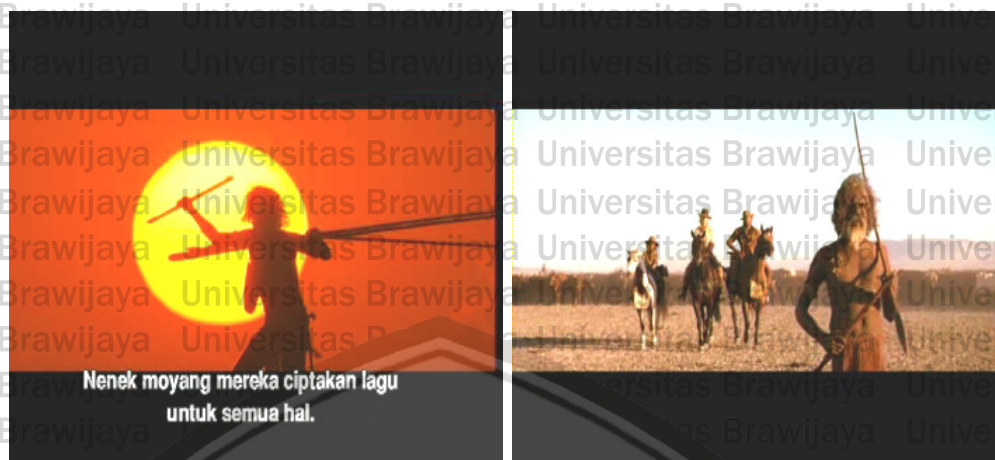


Figure 3.18 – Figure 3.19 King George helps Nullah and others cross Karuman

To get water, Nullah and others must cross Karuman. Karuman is isolated land that is not inhabited. King George is very familiar with all areas in Australia so that he helps them to find the source of water. It makes them easier to go to Darwin on time. Song is a magic for the Aborigines to solve all problems, especially everything relates to the nature.

The figure 3.18 - 3.19 shows that the Aborigines has close relationship with the nature. Nature has important role in Aborigines life. In fact, Aborigines are dependent to nature. A strong relationship between the Aborigines and nature make earlier ancestors create songs to keep their bond.

Every song is almost entirely connected with nature. In this movie, only by a song, King George is able to find the source of life to help Nullah and others.

They all bring the cattle to Darwin to be sold to the Australian army.

Later they go back to Faraway Downs to live together. They live happily until Nullah and King George are caught by a police man named Callahan based on Fletcher's report. Nullah then is brought by priest to be taken care in



Mission island with other Aboriginal children. From a distance, King George try to keep communication with his grandson by singing songs.



Figure 3.20 King George communicates to Nullah heart by heart

On the way to Darwin from Mission Island, Nullah tries to communicate with his grandfather by singing a song although they are separated in the distance. Nullah and Lady Ashley are also separated because Nullah becomes one of the victims of the stolen generation. After Nullah is successfully brought to the Mission island, Lady Ashley tries to compromise with Fletcher so that she can meet Nullah immediately, take him to school, and stay together. In Lady Ashley's waiting to meet Nullah, Darwin is suddenly bombed by Japanese forces so that all citizens should be evacuated to North which is safer. At the same time, Nullah is successfully saved by Drover and his friends and sailed to Darwin. After that, King George is tell Nullah to sing together so that Lady Ashley hears his singing, and they immediately meet to go home together to Faraway Downs.

The figure 3.20 describes how King George uses his power to communicate over long distance with Nullah. The communication is done

through a voice in the heart and then is followed with songs accompanied by harmonica. The relationship between a grandfather and his grandson is very powerful so that they sing a song from long distance to communicate and is also heard by Lady Ashley.

### 3.3.2.2 Nullah

He is an Aborigine small child who lives in the Whites environment. He is aware of his identity so that he tries to preserve the culture he has. One of the efforts he does is the habit of singing in his spare time or when he thinks it is needed. This is an Aborigines ritual because song works for a lot of things. Song is magic that can help the Aborigines to get what they want and solve their problems.

Rituals of well-being involve a variety of procedures, the most complex are ritual performances including song, dance, and body paint, which are carried out over long periods of time. Such knowledge is also coded in and taught through songs. Song, especially sacred songs, constitute a language which the dead can hear. Aborigines say that when they sing the dead listen, and expect after they are dead they will still hear the living singing, and be able to join in communion with the living and with life itself (Rose, 1996, p. 57-71). Aborigines life can not be separated with songs. It is also a medium of communication between their fellow because their life are very traditional so that they are not familiar with communication tools such



as telephone or mobile phone. As an Aboriginal child, Nullah also has the ability to sing. It is taught by his grandfather, King George.

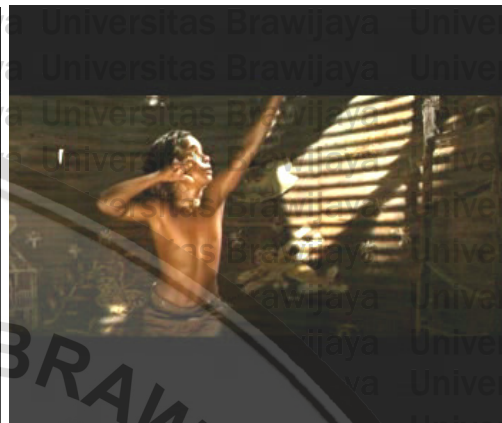
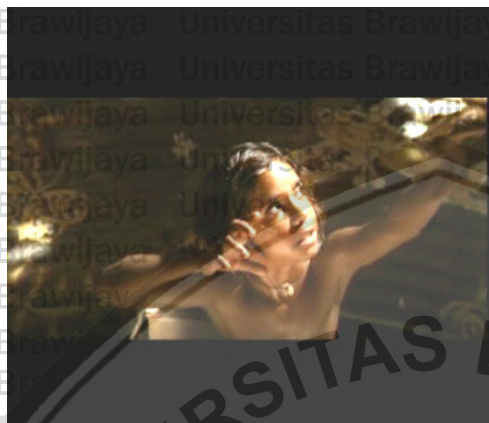


Figure 3.21 – Figure 3.22 Nullah is singing a song in the water tank

Nullah knows Maitland Ashley died because he was murdered by Fletcher by using a spear. On her arrival to Faraway Downs, Lady Ashley is surprised by her husband's death. Nullah thinks the arrival of Lady Ashley, Drover, Kipling Flynn, Magari and Goolaj using the trucks are the copies of those who will catch and bring him to the Mission Island. After that, he enters into the water tank to hide. He is in the water tank not only to hide from the police man (who comes to Faraway Downs as he expect) but also to sing a song for Maitland who is the husband of Lady Ashley. It is the Aborigine's habits if someone dies, they perform a ritual such as sing to the dead body as their last respect and make his spirit calm (Rose, 1996, p. 71-72) although Maitland is White. Maitland is the owner of Faraway Downs where Nullah and others live and work.

The figure 3.21 - 3.22 illustrates Nullah is singing to give respect for Maitland Ashley. The song is sung by Nullah functions as a prayer to calm someone who pass away. It is believed that songs have power to be heard by spirits. Nullah's skill in singing is derived since his birth as Aborigine. Everything good always comes with a song as a sense of gratitude. Nullah is taught a lot of songs by his grandfather and he applies those in his life well. He uses the song at the right time. After Lady Ashley's husband died, in the evening Nullah sings for Lady Ashley in the first time.

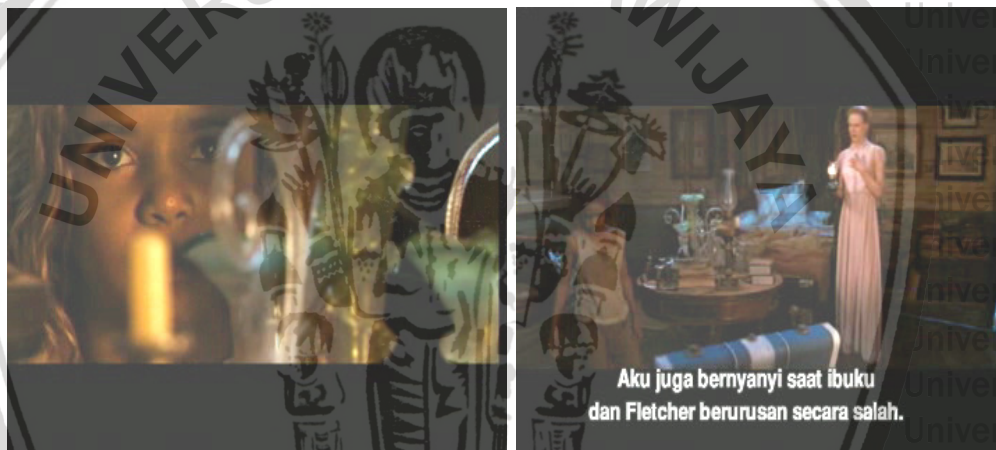


Figure 3.23 – Figure 3.24 Nullah and Lady Ashley are talking about Fletcher

Nullah	: Are u see me now?
Lady Ashley	: Who are you?
Nullah	: I Nullah
Lady Ashley	: How's you get in here?
Nullah	: I make myself invisible with Gulapa magic
Lady Ashley	: What do you want?
Nullah	: That white Fletcher...because this place...but you like rainbow song. You good. You heal this land. So I sing you to me like I singing fish to me. I sing too when mama and Fletcher make wrong side business
Lady Ashley	: Wrong side of business?
Nullah	: You know. Laying down and tickling.
Lady Ashley	: Oh my goodness! That...
Nullah	: Me and you secret
Lady Ashley	: oh my goodness! Mr. Fletcher!
Nullah	: I go to sing to mama to warn her that Lord Boss Ashley is



coming down (*Australia*, disc 1, 23:12 – 24:33 minutes).

When Lady Ashley is sleeping, Nullah sings for her. Nullah suddenly come to Lady Ashley to tell about the song he sings and also tell her about Fletcher who cheats her. They are talking to each other for the first time. The figure 3.23 - 3.24 illustrates how Nullah and Lady Ashley acquaint each other. They are very easy to get close in the conversation. In this scene, Nullah and Lady Ashley like each other. The ritual of singing performed by Nullah is believed to be very effective to protect good person from the evil. Song is used for good things. In this case, after Nullah is getting closer to Lady Ashley, they are always together in every opportunity, including going to Darwin to drive the cattle.



Figure 3.25 – Figure 3.26 Nullah is retaining the bulls with a song

On the way to Darwin, Fletcher and his crew try to burn all the cattle but Nullah is very brave to keep those from the blaze. In the end, he controls all the runaway cattle with a song and stare into the eyes of the cattle to calm. In this tragedy Kipling Flynn died because he is trampled by the cattle. The

figure 3.25 - 3.26 portray how powerful is a song to control the bad situation which almost kills Nullah. Nullah uses a song as the main weapon to conquer the cattle which are in an unstable condition. He is helped by his grandfather to appease the cattle and is eventually successful. The Whites do not think that the power of a song will be able to solve the problems. Tradition of singing is one of Aborigine characteristics that is hard to find in other countries so that it becomes an important identity that they preserve until now even though their territory are almost entirely dominated by the Whites (Berry, 1999, p. 26).

Nullah has similar talent like his grandfather in singing. On the way to Darwin across the ocean, he sings and believes it will show him a miracle which eventually brings him to Lady Ashley.

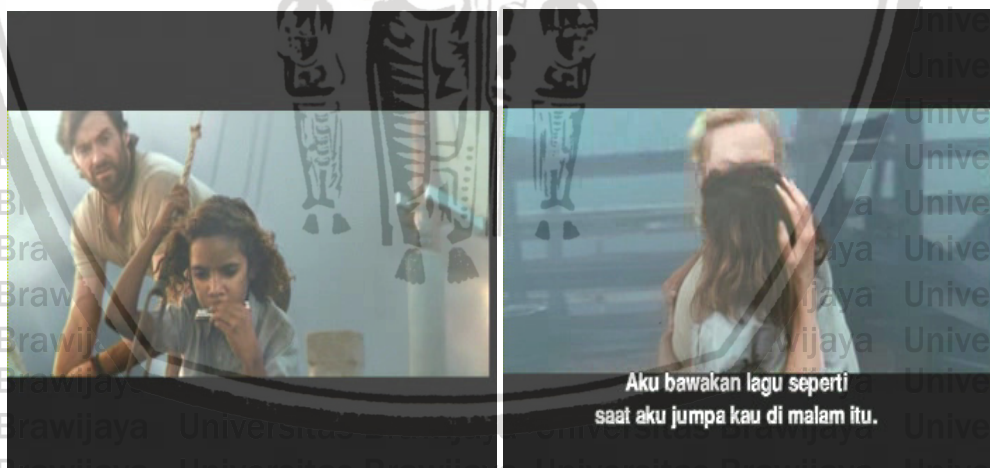


Figure 3.27 – Figure 3.28 Nullah is singing while he remembers Lady Ashley

Nullah : My magic. Not good. All the smoke. But then he speak to me. Grandfather

Lady Ashley : Can you hear that? The music, can you hear it?

Emmet : Sarah please

Lady Ashley : Can't you hear it? It's children singing

Emmet : Sarah! What's going on? Let's give her another minute

Nullah : Mrs. Boss! Mrs. Boss! Mrs. Boss! Mrs. Boss! Mrs.



Boss! Mrs. Boss! Mrs. Boss!

Lady Ashley

: Nullah!

Nullah

: Mrs. Boss! I can say your name! I sing you to me

like the first night I see you (*Australia*, disc 3, 22:59 – 25:41 minutes).

After being rescued by Drover, Nullah and other Aboriginal children board in the ship to Darwin together. Nullah communicates with his grandfather. He begins to play an instrument and other children sing. The music and song are heard by Lady Ashley who will be evacuated to a safer place after Japanese attack continuesly. Finally, the music brings them together after several months apart.

The figure in 3.27 - 3.28 portray that Nullah and Lady Ashley finally see each other. Nullah believes with his grandfather's invitation to sing. It is a good purpose for him. The aim is to bring him to Lady Ashley. Although Lady Ashley is White but she really loves Nullah so that King George trusts her to keep Nullah for a while. In the end he will take Nullah back as an Aborigine to preserve their culture.

### 3.3.2.3 Magari and Goolaj

Usually traditional songs are simple and short, with much repetition of key phrases. The songs are intended to assist the Aborigines in remembering details of the Dreaming stories. The Dreaming stories are connected to specific locations, and sometimes to sacred objects. The idea of dreaming also includes the 'seeing' of eternal things during sleep. The Dreaming is both the ancient time of creation and the present day reality of Dreaming. Songs are often accompanied by clapping sticks and didjeridus: other musical

instruments include hand drums, rattles and gongs (*Aspects of Traditional Aboriginal Australia*, n.d., para. 1-3). Aboriginal people have close relationship with a song. Wherever they are, they always sing.



Figure 3.29 – Figure 3.30 Magari and Goolaj are singing for the cattle

Magari is Nullah's uncle. He always watches his nephew. He is very different from Nullah because he is often associated with the Whites so that his clothes are almost similar to Whites'. However, he still does Aborigines custom like singing. Magari is always accompanied by Goolaj to drive the cattle together. Goolaj is Magari's cousin who is also Nullah's uncle.

On the way to Darwin Magari and others take a rest. They take turns singing for the cattle. The songs are sung as well as a story or a poem is told. They are used to accompany people sleeping, like a small child who is told a tale by his mother. The cattle will be calm at night when they hear their songs.



### 3.3.3 The Existence of Spirit

The Aborigines have supernatural powers derived from their ancestors. They can relate with dead people or those who are still alive in the distance. All things relate to nature become their power because every place is believed to have a spirit or a soul in it. Aborigines' life is very traditional that makes them still believe in things that are hard to see by the naked eyes. Things such as tree or stone are places that Aborigines believe to have souls inside so that they are forbidden to disturb the peace of who inhabits the place. Like the other humans, they believe every place in Australia especially the jungle and its contents want to live peacefully without any disturbance from anywhere (Rose, 1996, p. 35-38).

For many Aboriginal people, everything in the world is alive: animals, trees, rains, sun, moon, some rocks and hills, and people are all conscious. All have a right to exist, all have their own places of belonging, all have their own law and culture. In many parts of Australia Aboriginal people believe that the spirit (or one spirit) that animates a foetal human is a spirit from the land: an ancestral dreaming spirit, or a human spirit (baby spirit) resident in a particular locale. Various known as spirits, dead bodies, the old people, or the ancestors, the people who belong to country in life continue to belong to it in death. Many Aboriginal people in all parts of Australia speak to old people when they go bush. Old people are part of the life of the country; their involvement keeps the country productive, and also assists living people (their descendants) to manage their land. The spirits of dead people are

believed to inhabit the landscape. They guard the country and the people, and when they are angry they become dangerous (Rose, 1996, p. 23-71). For Aboriginal people belief in a spirit is what they uphold in their effort to maintain the culture from Whites power in Australia. One of the efforts is that they still run everything they have even though it is very traditional and sometimes does not make sense for the Whites.

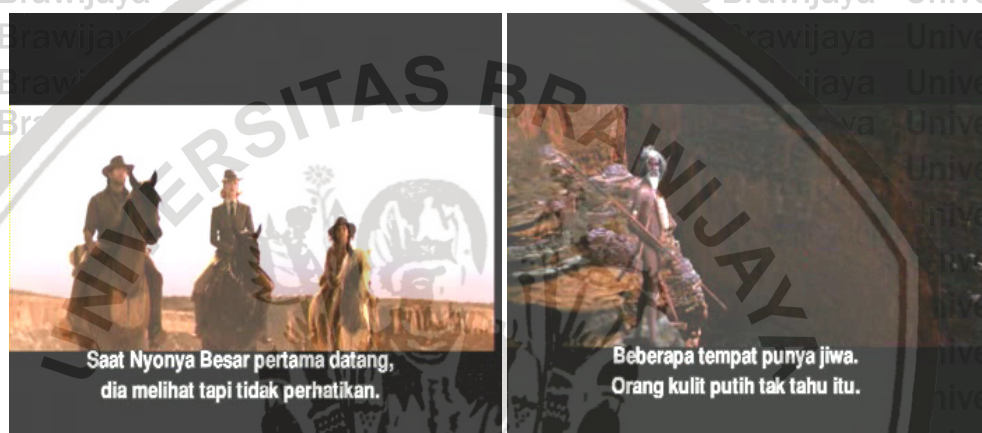


Figure 3.31 – Figure 3.32 They are on the way to Darwin

Nullah: When Mrs. Boss first come to this land. She look but she not see. Now, she got the eyes open for the first time. Some places got spirits, white fellows don't know. Some place is no good to go. (Australia, disc 1, 54:26 – 55.00 minutes, Nullah as a narrator).

On the way to Darwin, Nullah, Lady Ashley, Drover, Magari, Bandy, Goolaj, Kipling Flynn and Sing Song pay attention around them carefully. King George is always watching them from a distance. Lady Ashley is fascinated with the landscape in Australia. Nullah as an Aborigin also believes about the existence of another soul in that place.

The figure 3.31 – 3.32 show how the power that exists in some places in Australia can give a sense of amaze for Lady Ashley because basically



every place has a soul which is believed by the Aborigines. Not only human being lives in a place, but other spirit like the soul of the dead also inhabit the same place. This belief is one form of how close is the Aborigines with nature.



Figure 3.33 They are taking a break for dinner

They all take a break for dinner after some previous incident. Before going to sleep, Lady Ashley and Drover learn to dance behind the tree and at that time Nullah climbs on the tree. For Aboriginal people, the tree has bad spirit at night, therefore Bandy who is Nullah's aunt immediately tell him to go down from the tree because it can be dangerous for his soul later.

Nullah	: Ya, you do wrong side business?
Drover	: No, I'm not. We just dancing
Nullah	: Ceremony of dance?
Lady Ashley	: Yes. It's called the Foxtrot
Nullah	: Fox dance? You gonna teach me that dance?
Drover	: You're a little young for my
Bandy	: Nullah! Get down from that tree now. You get bad spirit up there
Nullah	: You're big trouble
Bandy	: Come on Nullah! You go to bed now. The night better than in up there, right? ( <i>Australia</i> , disc 2, 14:19 – 14:51 minutes).

The figure 3.33 show about the beliefs are adopted by the Aborigines to inanimate around them. They believe all things which are in nature have spirits, such as tree and rock. Big trees have spirits who are not friendly when people are there at night. There is a supernatural power in some places because many evil spirits inhabit the place.

