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## Engaging with missionaries

The success of missions in grafting on to local societies crucially depended on individuals seeking an engagement. Not only for language acquisition and translation work did the missionaries need local intermediaries, it was also important to have cultural mediators who had a degree of interest in the missionaries beyond the push-and-pull factors of frontier conditions that drove Indigenous people towards the missions. Such persons interpreted Indigenous society for the missionaries and conveyed the missionary intentions to other members of the Indigenous community. A few of these men (and even fewer women) became active evangelists, and Albrecht's father pioneered the delegation of missionary roles to Indigenous evangelists in Central Australia in the 1920s. Their position was tenuous because they were completely dependent on the missionaries for their social standing within the mission community, while their status in traditional society was undermined by having to abstain from traditional obligations, such as ceremonies and polygamous relationships.

The types of people acting as intermediaries who assisted the missions in taking root differed greatly in different contexts and were driven by a range of motivations. In many cases, such intermediaries came from regions with longstanding contact experience, such as from the Pacific Rim, or from the south to the north of the continent, and were familiar with Christian teaching since childhood. Some Indigenous workers who helped to set up a new mission were delegated by mission-friendly settlers, who themselves often influenced the placement of a mission station near their own farms. Such workers spoke English and were used to dealing with white people, and their proximity to the missionaries elevated their

social standing. In some cases, it is impossible to tell the ethnic origins of such intermediaries because the missionaries reported through the lens of religion and distinguished only between Christians and non-Christians.

The degree of external pressure weighing on Indigenous people also manifested in their dealings with missionaries. Under frontier conditions of strong competition for land and resources, and with minimal police presence, many missionaries were threatened, and some were actually attacked. This chapter attempts to tease out from the mission sources the ways in which missionaries and their intermediaries engaged on the ground.

The major source of anecdotes about such interactions are the documents produced by missionaries, and they often trivialise Indigenous people who challenged their authority. Still, occasionally it is possible to glimpse through them the Indigenous humour that gave cheek, or the phenomenon described by Aileen Moreton-Robinson as talkin' up, and expressions of distrust and critical engagement.<sup>1</sup> Disciplining children was usually a sore point, and one where Aboriginal people could become very assertive.

The attempt to convey cultural interpretations across a language barrier certainly left much room for distrust, trivialisation and misunderstanding on both sides, and missionary distrust about Indigenous ceremonies created great tensions. Pastor Carl Strehlow said about the Aranda that 'they are compulsive liars and often give a Christian tint to their stories'.<sup>2</sup> Paul Albrecht observes that Pastors Carl Strehlow and F.W. Albrecht at Hermannsburg had such a fear of syncretism and the danger of worshipping false gods that they themselves never attended any Indigenous ceremonies and disallowed any ceremonies in the mission environment. Meanwhile, initiation and traditional healing were still secretly practised just off the mission. The same clandestine cultural maintenance was reported from Cape York (see **Mapoon**), the Kimberley (see **Lombadina**) and elsewhere (see **La Grange**). Paul Albrecht points out that this kind of schizophrenia hindered the growth of the church.<sup>3</sup>

1 Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Aboriginal Women and Feminism*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2000.

2 Moritz von Leonhardi, 'Über einige religiöse und totemistische Vorstellungen der Aranda und Loritja in Zentralaustralien', *Globus* 91 (1907): 285–90.

3 Paul Albrecht, *From Mission to Church, 1877–2002: Finke River Mission*, Finke River Mission, Hermannsburg, 2002, pp. 73–74.

To examine the importance of local intermediaries and cultural interpreters, and to explore their motivations as far as is possible through mission records, this chapter examines the foundation periods of the German-speaking missions in roughly chronological order.

## Quandamooka warriors

In the 1840s, the Moreton Bay missionaries were still indisputably in Indigenous country. The Passionists faced death threats after some children had been taken away from **Stradbroke Island** and a group of islanders demanded that the children be returned on the next steamer.<sup>4</sup> These were ‘an orphan boy’ and the son and daughter of a leading Stradbroke Island man who brought the children to the missionaries in June 1843, presumably expecting that they would be schooled and fed like the children at **Zion Hill**. However, Archbishop **Polding** had no confidence in his Austrian brethren and no resources to start a school on the island and instead took these children to Sydney. According to Polding, the children were returned after about five weeks.<sup>5</sup> The Quandamooka also drew on their experience with Zion Hill in their negotiations about working for the missionaries and stipulated that if they worked a garden then they would claim the proceeds as theirs. The Passionists did not attempt a garden, nor a school, nor did they give away food, nor learn a local language. The Quandamooka quickly lost interest in them and moved elsewhere. When asked about praying to God, their diplomatic response was: ‘We have not yet spoken to Him, for He has not yet spoken to us; but we expect to see and speak to Him after death’.<sup>6</sup>

Fr Vaccari’s intransigence left him deserted by his three brethren and he then struggled on alone for another year, apparently supported by a caretaker. When he was without food or money, a man called ‘Canary’

4 R. Windeyer (Chair), Parliamentary Committee on the Condition of the Aborigines, 1845, Q. 572.9 P.A. 1, Mitchell Library.

5 Windeyer, Parliamentary Committee, 1845. In September 1845, Polding had two Stradbroke Island boys by the name of Smith living in the residence – presumably John and Albert, the sons of Dick Smith and ‘Neli’, who underwent the first recorded Catholic baptisms in Queensland. Victor Gray, *Catholicism in Queensland: Fifty Years of Progress*, Roberts and Russell, Brisbane, 1910, p. 52.

6 Vaccari at Dunwich to Polding, 19 December 1843, in Osmund Thorpe, *First Catholic Mission to the Australian Aborigines*, Pellegrini & Co., Sydney, 1950, p. 213.

threatened him.<sup>7</sup> Vaccari, evidently beside himself, wrote to Captain Wickham to request police protection. Had not the Irish priest in Brisbane who had arrived in Australia together with Vaccari suppressed that letter, the most likely police response would have been a contingent of Native Police, which would have meant a violent response. In July 1847, Vaccari bolted from Stradbroke Island under mysterious circumstances, and reappeared under a false identity in a Franciscan monastery in Lima. (For signs of mental strain on Vaccari, see **Stradbroke Island** mission.) The Passionist missionaries on Stradbroke Island did not establish good relationships and were threatened with violence at least twice. They either lacked cultural intermediaries to build bridges to the Stradbroke Island Indigenous groups, or did not take them seriously enough to write about them.

## The Zion Hill Brothers

The records of Zion Hill mission suggest a very different story. There the missionaries were taken around by self-appointed guides who were their adopted brothers, like Pastor **Eipper**'s brother Dunkley (possibly a Turrbal man) and Brother Wagner's brother Anbaybury from the Bunya Mountains. Being brothers meant that the wives of these men were responsible for providing food. In early August 1841, Eipper and Wagner were taken to an initiation ceremony in Deception Bay. They travelled north along 'roads and paths' and their guides showed the two missionaries where to camp, where to bury provisions and how much food to distribute at each camp. At Bribie Island, they were accommodated in 'the largest huts we ever have seen, twenty feet in length'.<sup>8</sup> The missionaries felt there was some degree of competition between people from the Bunya Mountains, from Toorbul and from Bribie Island about the location of a future mission station.

7 'Local Intelligence', *The Moreton Bay Courier*, 24 April 1847, p. 2, National Library of Australia, Trove (henceforth Trove); and **Classified Advertising**, *The Moreton Bay Courier* (Brisbane), 1 May 1847, p. 1, Trove.

8 Ray Evans has also commented on the large buildings and well-built roads that early white visitors found in the Moreton Bay region. C. Eipper, 'Observations made on a journey to the natives at Toorbal, August 2nd 1841 by the Rev. Christopher Eipper, of the Moreton Bay German Mission – Journal of the Reverend Christopher Eipper, Missionary to the Aborigines at Moreton Bay 1841', published in the *Colonial Observer*, (henceforth **Eipper journal**, 1841); Raymond Evans, 'The mogwi take mi-an-jin: Race relations and the Moreton Bay penal settlement 1824–42', in Evans, *Fighting Words: Writing about Race*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1992.

The ceremony also served as a forum for diplomatic talks and disputes. During a fight, which the two missionaries felt called on to calm, an old woman threw a spear at Eipper. Presumably, Indigenous people did not expect the missionaries to get involved in personal affairs about which they knew nothing. They wanted the missionaries to come to their country to set out gardens so they could eat, and bring firearms so they could defend themselves. Being shown where to 'sit down' was no licence to become involved in community affairs.

On this same journey, a total eclipse of the moon occurred that lasted for two hours during the night. Eipper and Wunkermany began to vie for command of the situation through rituals for which both demanded the silence of the other. Eipper wrote:

We had our evening worship during this eclipse, and told them to be silent while we spoke to God, which was much better than to scold the Devil, who had no power over those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>9</sup>

According to these cosmological battle-lines, one either belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ or one belonged to the devil. The missionaries were told to be silent while Wunkermany spoke to the spirit who was taking hold of the moon. Wunkermany appropriated the spirit(s) and called out the name of every male in his group three times. The key terms of the explanation were lost in translation, so that the place to which 'souls' depart after death became 'England', and the ancestral spirits that needed to be appeased became the 'devil'. The missionaries felt amused by the Aboriginal rites: 'we could not keep our gravity'. Pastor Eipper's attempt to convey an alternative ontology was equally unsuccessful: 'This was, they said, what the white man believed, but it was not for the black man'.<sup>10</sup> The next evening the men made jokes about the whole affair, perhaps to cope with the fear they had experienced, which could only have been amplified by the unconvincing missionary interventions and doubts, or as pay back for the ridicule. The missionaries did not take Indigenous cosmology seriously and, conversely, they themselves were not treated as knowledgeable males to be taken seriously – during the initiation ceremony they were placed with the women and children. Afterwards, the women insisted on staying on for a while but the missionaries were impatient to leave and travelled home in two separate groups. Brother Wagner, after a

9 Eipper journal, 1841.

10 Eipper journal, 1841.

detour to the Bunya mountains, was so keen to get back to the mission that he covered 'upwards of fifty miles' in one day. Pastor Eipper with sore feet and Wunkermany with a cut on his ankle, as if in sympathy pain, dragged on behind. Wunkermany, who had shown himself as a ritual leader during the lunar eclipse, attached himself to the ritual leader among the missionaries and evinced a particular interest in the power of the written word. His companions did not quite share Wunkermany's respect for the missionaries and made both him and the missionaries the butt of jokes. For example, Eipper's companions, downcast and hungry because on the homeward journey the group was without women to provide for them, cheered themselves with up a practical joke:

All at once they desired Mr. E[ipper] to look into his book, and to find out if Mr. W[agner] with the other party had killed a kangaroo; and when Mr. E[ipper] knowing what they meant, told them hat he had no book with him, one of them untied Mr. E[ipper]'s bundle and taking out his New Testament, opened it, saying, "Mr. Wagner large kangaroo", after which he shut and replaced it.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile at Toorbul, Wagner was getting berated by his brother Anbaybury about the way in which the missionary presumed that he should always be in the dominant position:

He said one day to Mr. W[agner] that when he [Anbaybury] was at Zion's Hill, he did everything for Mr. W[agner] – fetch wood and water, bark, prepare clay, chop wood, work the ground with the hoe, etc. Now, as Mr. W[agner] had come to his abode, he ought to do the same for him [Anbaybury]. Mr. W[agner] told him it was quite right that he had done so, for he had paid him well; but he ought to consider that he (Mr. W.) was a missionary and Anbaybury a black fellow. Now, as he had come to him to Toorbal to visit him, it was a shame that he, as his brother, had never come to fetch wood or water for him, nor had he built a hut to live in it. When he heard this, he changed his tone, and said, he would have done all for Mr. W[agner] if he had come to the place where his tribe had their camp.<sup>12</sup>

Though spoken as seemingly lighthearted banter, the missionary's assumption of superiority was questioned.

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11 Eipper journal, 1841.

12 Eipper journal, 1841.

A year later, in 1842, Eipper and the colonist Hartenstein again ventured north with Wunkermamy and his two wives, who complained bitterly about all the luggage they were supposed to carry as provisions to last for a journey to Humpy Bong (old camp). At the Pine River camp, a group from Durundur (already a pastoral station) joined them, and Eipper took the opportunity to hold school with up to 21 children for a few days. A school for children was perhaps not what Indigenous people most needed just then. Around this time, the Aboriginal camp at Yorke's Hollow was destroyed by two soldiers who were refused access to Aboriginal women.<sup>13</sup> In 1844, Hartenstein and Hausmann were attacked at Burpengary in the attempt to set up a mission, from which Hausmann sustained a lifelong injury. The Yorke's Hollow people were finally displaced with the arrival in January 1849 of the 550 pious Protestant dissenters recruited by J.D. Lang who camped in 'Fortitude Valley' 'armed to the teeth'.<sup>14</sup> What happened to Wunkermamy, Anbaybury and Dunkley, the men who had taken Lang's missionaries under their wing, is uncertain. The seeds of this early contact germinated much later, in what appeared like a chance encounter.

## The sons at Bethesda

Twenty-five years later, in January 1866, several grown and bearded men who were visiting Beenleigh for a ceremony came up to Pastor Hausmann at **Bethesda** and introduced themselves as his former pupils from Zion Hill: 'Father, don't you know us?' This meeting revitalised Hausmann's mission project, now inspired by the success reported from **Ebenezer** in Victoria. Hausmann (now with anglicised spelling, either Hausman or Hausmann) had the support of recently arrived younger **Gossner** candidates, including his own son. He attempted to turn his sugarcane property into an industrial mission, combining two purposes and ministering without public funding. One of his former Zion Hill pupils, Kingkame (or Kingkema) brought his family for daily devotions and paid work to Bethesda. At the prayer meetings, Yugambeh listeners encouraged Hausmann with questions and promises to reform themselves.<sup>15</sup> On

13 November 1842, Eipper and Hartenstein, John Dunmore Lang Papers, 1837–67, A2240 Vol. 20, item 82, Mitchell Library.

14 Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland*, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2007, p. 62.

15 Hausmann, *Australischer Christenbote*, February 1867, in M. Lohe, 'Pastor Hausmann and Mission Work from 1866', unpublished MS, 1964, Lutheran Archives Australia (LAA).

Sundays, they received clean clothes to attend Hausmann's two-hour service held in German and sat 'quite still and with great devotion' and afterwards praised him: 'Father, you have preached mightily'.<sup>16</sup> Kingkame expressed the wish to become a Christian and mediated the establishment of an outrigger industrial mission at **Nerang Creek** in 1869. By now, the whole Moreton Bay region was awash with new settlers protected by Native Police.

An Aboriginal called Jack addressed Hausmann as 'Papo'.<sup>17</sup> He attended reading and writing instructions from October to December 1867 and held out promise as Hausmann's first fruit. In January, Jack left with a catechism, promising to evangelise among his own people, but there is no further mention of him.<sup>18</sup> This may be the same man as **Bilinba**,<sup>19</sup> also called Bilin Bilin, Jackey Jackey, Kawae Kawae and John Logan, whose 1875 breastplate identified him as 'King of the Logan and Pimpama'.<sup>20</sup> Steele describes him as a highly respected Yugambah man who insisted on payment for Aboriginal labour, and who tried to resist the displacement from Aboriginal land. He also assisted early explorers and settlers in the Logan district. Aboriginal history has it that 'Bilinba charged Lutheran Missionary Hausman [sic] ... 5/- per week to sit and discuss religion with the tribe. The tribe cleared 10 acres of land at the rate of 1 pound per acre'.<sup>21</sup> This seems like a local diplomat who strategically inserted himself in the cultural encounter. The catechism he took with him, either under a cloud of misunderstanding or under false pretences (like so much ethnographic collecting),<sup>22</sup> may have been useful for such a cultural interpreter, though perhaps not in the way intended by Hausmann. Bilinba eventually moved to Deebing Creek mission, where he died in 1901.

16 Hausmann, *Australischer Christenbote*, July 1869, in Lohe, 'Pastor Hausmann and Mission Work from 1866'.

17 It is tempting to read 'Papo' as a typing error for the German 'Papa'. However, the Aranda at Hermannsburg called Carl Strehlow 'Pepa', which means both 'paper' and 'law' and refers to his evangelical position of power. Anna Kenny, *The Aranda's Pepa: An Introduction to Carl Strehlow's Masterpiece Die Aranda-und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien (1907–1920)*, ANU Press, Canberra, 2013.

18 Hausmann reported only in the Victorian Lutheran newsletter *Australischer Christenbote*.

19 Karen Laughton, '**Frontier Relations in the Logan District**', n.d., German Missionaries in Australia, Griffith University.

20 Robyn Buchanan, *Logan: Rich in History, Young in Spirit. A Comprehensive History*, Logan City Council, Logan, 1999, pp. 12, 65; J.G. Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways in Southeast Queensland and the Richmond River*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1983, p. 81.

21 Steele, *Aboriginal Pathways*, p. 81.

22 Susan Cochrane and Max Quanchi (eds), *Hunting the Collectors: Pacific Collections in Australian Museums, Art Galleries and Archives*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014.

The hopes of such Indigenous diplomats that a mission on their land could secure their survival were largely frustrated, because the missions were usually disbanded when settlement overtook them, and those that survived the 1890s began to be used by governments as repositories for removed children from elsewhere. Nor would missionaries help a local tribe to assert themselves over neighbouring Indigenous people. Such a misunderstanding about the role of missions ended the Jesuit mission in Darwin.

## Showdown at Rapid Creek

When the Austrian Jesuits commenced a mission at Rapid Creek (Darwin) in 1882, the Larrakia and Woolner people were already used to white people. They paid lip-service to the expectations of the missionaries, who wanted everyone to stay on the mission year-round and to keep the children at school. They informed the missionaries if they were planning to leave ('obtained permission') and left the children behind, and the children absconded a few days later to join their parents. Upon their return to the mission, the children would be taken back into the school and the parents would be excluded from the mission for a week. 'They accept the penalty without complaining.'<sup>23</sup> The missionaries felt they were in charge, while the Larrakia felt that by permitting the use of their land they had a legitimate claim on the supplies and stores of the missionaries.

This perception was ruptured in May 1887 when some visiting Alligator River people, who camped on the Rapid Creek, had run out of food and the missionaries gave them a bag of flour. This caused a dispute between the Alligator River people and the Larrakia and Woolner. The argument became increasingly heated and was finally battled out on the beach. Five were injured and one of the Alligator River men died later from his wounds. When the locals returned to the mission ground, the Elder in charge was ordered off the mission.

He thought the order was a joke, but when he realized that it was meant seriously he went. He soon returned, though, leading a great crowd of natives painted for war and armed with stone-pointed spears.<sup>24</sup>

23 Strelé 1887 in Anton Strelé, *Annual Letters from the Jesuit Mission in North Australia 1886–1889*, translated by F. Dennett SJ, Archives of the Society of Jesus, Hawthorn.

24 Strelé 1887, *Annual Letters*.

The fighting group retreated when they were 'ordered off'. The report does not specify how just one Father and one Brother persuaded the armed and angry warriors to retreat. Years later, there was a passing mention of Brother Scharmer's reputation with the shotgun, a reputation that may well have been established at this moment. It was a pyrrhic victory for the Jesuits. After this incident, none of the locals dared to stay the night at the mission for fear of a renewed attack and gradually the Jesuits realised that Rapid Creek mission never recovered from this blow.<sup>25</sup> The Jesuits trivialised the whole affair as a tribal fight, without realising that they had not only offended the dignity of the leading men, but also completely shattered the expectations of the locals.

## Daly River interventions

When the Jesuits came to the Daly River in 1886, the local Woolwonga, Woolner, Malak-Malak, Maranunngu, Djerait, Ponga-Ponga and Dilk people were under extreme pressure from settler violence, dispossession and degradation of their land. They were interested in the material and security advantages of the mission, and several groups invited the missionaries to form a station on their country. When two mission stations were abandoned to be amalgamated at the third site of New Uniya, the abandoned mission property at Serpentine Lagoon was demolished by people from Komorkye, who 'were discontented because they did not get flour which, they said, had been promised them, and so they had inflicted various kinds of damage on the Station of the Sacred Heart, and had threatened more to come'.<sup>26</sup> The Komorkye people clearly felt betrayed. A mission on the other side of the river, outside of their country, was no good to them.

Several adult men tried to impart Indigenous ethics to the missionaries, much like Bilinba at Beenleigh, but to little avail. Charlie Yingi once led a group of children off the mission in protest against punishment. On the question of physical punishment for adults, the Jesuits and the people of the Daly were often in agreement. Adulterous women were punished by their husbands and vice versa. But Aboriginal people did not tolerate the physical punishment of children. If young adults felt unjustly punished,

25 Paddy J. Dalton, 'History of the Jesuits in South Australia 1848-1948', unpublished MS, 1948, p. 6, Archives of the Society of Jesus, Hawthorn.

26 Daly River Mission Diary (DRM), 27 January 1893, Archives of the Society of Jesus, Hawthorn.

they generally left the mission in protest for a period, often in company with several others showing solidarity (see also Chapter 7, 'Discipline and punishment').

Charlie Yingi also tried to teach the missionaries that if he expended energy on their behalf then they owed him some sustenance:

Charlie and the other Leo got back from their journey quite worn out; why they were so worn out we do not know – what they said was that they had contracted this weakness in our service, and they demanded food in compensation. We did not agree.<sup>27</sup>

This man, referred to in the press as 'long-legged Charlie', had some years before been accused of the Coppermine murder – another issue around Indigenous ethics – but not convicted. He was assisted at court by a Chinese interpreter. The strong Chinese presence on the Daly River formed another layer of cultural interaction, but little of this penetrated into the mission environment, so that non-Indigenous cultural intermediaries did not play a strong role on these Jesuit missions. The Catholic Filipino Engracio family joined the mission community for 10 months in 1897 and 1898, working for board and lodging, and Chinese work gangs from the Coppermine performed some major irrigation work that made it possible to tend large gardens. Chinese interaction with Aboriginal people was considered highly controversial. In order to diffuse the animosities, the Coppermine Chinese hosted the missionaries for a dinner, and the Chinese boat captain supplying the mission introduced himself as being very familiar with Jesuit missionaries in China. Still, all diplomatic approaches failed under the strain of disputes over women (see **Daly River – Daly River Stories**).

Another Elder who tried to influence the missionaries was old deaf and mute Nabba, who was closely connected with the mission. In one instance, he was enraged because some Woolwonga men had stolen his fish. Nabba demanded that Fr **Kristen** 'shoot the thieves'. Again, the missionary sense of justice did not measure up to local expectations. The Woolwonga were themselves in great distress and targeted by settler violence, and as a reprimand one of the Woolwonga men was 'summoned to the cross' and given a public admonition:

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<sup>27</sup> DRM, 2 January 1893.

It seemed a good occasion to point out to them what they would come to if they did not have the refuge we gave them at the foot of the Cross of Christ. If they did not listen to us, we would go away, and their destruction would follow. He understood, and perhaps the boys standing by did also; indeed it was a strong and stringent argument for their conversion to protect themselves from the anger of God who sent among them bad white men.<sup>28</sup>

It is unlikely that this public reprimand made much sense to the ‘boys’ standing by. How could all of them now be in trouble when the thieves were Woolwonga men? Fr Kirsten’s threat sounds like another curse that eventually came true. Both W.E.H. Stanner and D.B. Rose describe the desolate state on the Daly River after the mission period.<sup>29</sup>

Even among the Elders who sought an entente with the missionaries, there was considerable resistance to the Christian teachings. Fr **Conrath** recorded the response from an Elder after a long instruction on the need for baptism for the salvation of the soul: ‘Very good. Now I am saved. For a long time I was not sure of my salvation. When I am at the point of death you will give me baptism’. This diplomatic compromise, holding on to culture in this life and planning for salvation for the next life, was not what the Jesuits intended. Another Elder announced that he had now taken a third wife, recorded as Oshinni, and Conrath reproached him ‘You already have one too many, why do you take a third?’ to which the man countered, ‘One of them might die. What name will you give my new wife?’ The man invoked the death-and-dying discourse so characteristic of Jesuit philosophy, and in effect confronted Conrath with the new family arrangements, demanding their recognition with a name for the new wife. Conrath ignored this request and instead told the man, ‘Probably you will die first, and then, by and by Oshinni will die’. Some time later, that same man asked for some clothes and Conrath promised to give him some ‘by and by’, to which the man replied, ‘That is not good. Give it today. By and by I die and then I need no more clothing’.<sup>30</sup> The old man used Conrath’s own words to contradict him, just like in other instances Christian rules of marriage were invoked to oppose wrong marriages.

28 DRM, 26 March 1888.

29 Deborah Bird Rose, ‘Signs of life on a barbarous frontier: Intercultural encounters in North Australia’, *Humanities Research* 2 (1998): 17–36.

30 Dalton, ‘History of the Jesuits’, p. 42.

Some of the younger boys on the Daly seemed particularly promising. Johnny was the son of the first adult Christian at the mission and prayed with his father Zachary Pambari in his dying hours. Johnny told the missionaries ‘how Zachary at the end made the sign of the Cross and said “Banunga Kandolan” i.e. I am going to heaven’.<sup>31</sup> This was considered a breakthrough and Johnny was asked to repeat this story many times. He was selected to accompany Fr McKillop on a southern fundraising tour. When Johnny heard of this plan he ran away, but eventually he did accompany Fr McKillop. It appears that, altogether, three boys from the mission attended a Jesuit school. Johnny returned two years later to a triumphal welcome home.<sup>32</sup> However, neither of these boys fulfilled the hopes that the missionaries vested in them.

The insistence on monogamous couples and severance from Indigenous obligations created many tensions. The missionary’s punishment for adultery was either eviction or demotion from ‘colonist’ to resident, with the result that, as far as can be ascertained from the diaries, nobody actually had the use of a private garden long enough to enjoy its fruits and to experience for themselves the benefits of settled agriculture, which the missionaries found clearly superior to hunting and gathering (see **Daly River Stories**). After 20 years of Jesuit mission work, in 1899 only five families, consisting of 29 Christians, lived at the mission.

During the mission period, the Daly River people were under tremendous pressure from settlement and became very protective of their land boundaries. The mission stations, however, were relocated several times with little practical regard for such tribal differences. Possibly because of this misalignment, no Indigenous person appears in the Jesuit diaries as rising to influence on the Daly River missions. Though the ritualised spiritualism of the Jesuits had many resonances with Indigenous cultural practices, a sustainable middle ground was not created. Half a century after the Jesuits’ departure, a former mission resident summed up the promise of Christianisation as a chimera. He felt that Jesus was always on the team of the white people and, after all the effort invested on every side, ‘only the Aborigines had nothing. ... That is the dreaming for all you lot’.<sup>33</sup>

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31 DRM, 4 July 1892, 9 July 1892.

32 DRM, 24 November 1894.

33 Rose, ‘Signs of Life on a barbarous frontier’, p. 36, note 32.

## The Ebenezer catechists

Displacement and frontier conflict also seemed to play a role in the case of Ebenezer, the Moravian mission in the Wimmera (Victoria), which recorded an early spectacular conversion success that became a beacon of hope for other mission efforts in Australia. The question must be asked why some of the Indigenous men were so helpful in establishing this mission, as Felicity Jenz points out.<sup>34</sup> The Indigenous men who were most engaged in establishing Ebenezer were Daniel Boney, Corny, Timothy Talliho and three males who referred to each other as brothers and began to construct bark huts at the mission: **Nathanael Pepper**, ‘a lively lad about 17 years of age’;<sup>35</sup> the older Charley (later Phillip Pepper), who spoke English well; and Tommy Light.

Daniel Boney, who was the first to appear at the mission for instruction, and Tommy Light, who died at the mission in 1862, are both also mentioned as helpers at the **Lake Boga** Moravian mission in 1855 near Ganawarra station,<sup>36</sup> owned by the mission friend Archibald Macarthur Campbell. By the time Ebenezer mission was established, Campbell had moved to the Wimmera, and again a location close to his sheep station was recommended to the missionaries. (Perhaps because Rev. Alexander James Campbell was a member of the Presbyterian mission committee.) It seems that these Aboriginal men came with Campbell from Lake Boga to the Wimmera, and that they had their own baggage of a difficult history – the missionaries knew that one of them, Tommy Light, had killed a man.<sup>37</sup> Reverend Hagenauer was moreover aware that, in retaliation for the murder of white men, police had killed two innocent Aboriginal men near Ganawarra in February 1854, to which he publicly expressed his outrage.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps Hagenauer knew who the real perpetrators were.

34 Felicity Jenz, *Moravian Missionaries in the British Colony of Victoria, Australia, 1848–1908: Influential Strangers*, Brill, Leiden, 2010, p. 119.

35 J.F.W. Spieseke, 6 February 1860, 14 February 1860, Mission Station, Wimmera – Extracts from *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren*, compiled by C.W. Schooling ca 1975, MS 9896, State Library of Victoria (henceforth Mission Station, Wimmera, *Periodical Accounts*).

36 Robert Kenny refers to Ganawarra; however, the newspapers of the day and Jenz spell the property as Gannawarra.

37 Spieseke, April 1862, Mission Station, Wimmera, *Periodical Accounts*.

38 *Missionsblatt*, August 1854, in Jenz, *German Moravian Missionaries in the British Colony of Victoria*, 2010, p. 85.

Hagenauer did offer a safe haven for men who could expect traditional revenge. For example, he took in a man who had been expelled from his people further south-west, to which the locals objected so strongly that they prepared for an attack in late 1859.<sup>39</sup> On that occasion, Hagenauer sheltered in his cabin to pray until the nearby station owner Ellerman appeared on the scene with Nathanael Pepper and some other young men. According to Hagenauer, they also prayed, with the result that ‘the “extraordinary ferment” on the mission subsided’.<sup>40</sup> It is possible that these rescuers prayed, but it is very unlikely that farmer Ellerman came unarmed, so that Hagenauer’s account perhaps overestimates the role of prayer in this event. This missionary cosmology, in which words, even unspoken words, could be so powerful, quickly became interesting to Nathanael Pepper. His baptism elevated this young man to a special position at the mission. He began to conduct services in the vernacular and drew large crowds by preaching and psalm singing. One of the hymns, translated by Pastor J.F.W. Spieseke, was:

Winya wallo neango mamamorek!	How near is my great Father!
Kakum bangung yereru.	His Spirit came in me
Wurruwin parrin!	Make plain the way!
Kaledia!	Great thy glory! <sup>41</sup>

Pastor Spieseke understood this as a Christian hymn, although it had a ‘very monotonous melody’.<sup>42</sup> Actually, it follows a decidedly traditional rhythm, and invokes the supreme being ‘Mahmamorack’, the all-father described by Spieseke as pre-existing in Aboriginal mythology.<sup>43</sup> It seems that Nathanael had an amazing ability to blend local and imported rituals and traditions as if they belonged together. His celebrated conversion experience was a reflection on Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Pepper

39 Spieseke, 14 February 1860, Mission Station, Wimmera, *Periodical Accounts*.

40 Spieseke, 14 February 1860, Mission Station, Wimmera, *Periodical Accounts*.

41 Extract from the Australian Christian Messenger for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia (*Australischer Christenbote für die Evangelisch Lutherische Kirche in Australien*), published by Matthias Goethe, Lutheran Minister in Melbourne, May 1861 in Queensland. Legislative Assembly, *Report from the Select Committee on the Native Police Force and the Condition of the Aborigines Generally*, Fairfax and Belbridge, Brisbane, 1861, Appendix, p. 79, [aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/catalogue\\_resources/92123.pdf](http://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/catalogue_resources/92123.pdf) (accessed 10 July 2017).

42 Victorian Association in Aid of Moravian Missions to the Aborigines of Australia, *Further Facts relating to the Moravian Missions in Australia. Sixth Paper*, Fergusson & Moore, Melbourne, 1867, pp. 7–17, MS, State Library of Victoria, [handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/173013](http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/173013) (accessed 12 January 2018).

43 Victorian Association in Aid of Moravian Missions to the Aborigines of Australia, *Further Facts*, p. 15.

verbalised how the narrative of the sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of all mankind had direct personal relevance 'for me'. The local relevance of these gospel narratives was precisely what mattered. Soon afterwards, Corny, Talliho and Mark claimed the Willie Wimmera story as a local narrative, making the same bridge between a story from far away and the local. This, too, was rewarded with much missionary attention and amazement. These two anecdotes are the bedrock of the Ebenezer mission founding narrative.

Others soon requested baptism. Tommy Light was refused (because he was known to have killed a man), but Daniel (Boney), Phillip Pepper (Charley), Timothy (Talliho) and Matthew were baptised. Nathanael Pepper again became the centre of attention with the first Christian wedding on the mission, and was taken to meetings including one with the Governor in June 1862 to help advance the case for an inland mission. In 1865, Nathanael and Phillip, who had also been allocated a wife, became paid missionary assistants, so the rewards of engagement with the missionary cosmology were very visible. Of this group of early converts, Daniel Boney left Ebenezer in 1866 to help the Moravians form a mission at Cooper's Creek, but died along the way. Nathanael Pepper became an instrumental catechist at Ramahyuck. Only Phillip Pepper stayed at Ebenezer, where he became a central figure.

If Tommy Light and Daniel Boney came from Lake Boga with their white employer, and Tommy, Nathanael and Phillip called themselves 'brothers', then it is by no means clear that these were all local people from the Wimmera. Corny and Nathanael Pepper have been described as local Wotjoballuk boys, but there is no reference to the parents of the others who appeared as helpers in the establishment of Ebenezer mission. From Hagenauer's comments, it appears that Tommy Light had killed a white man at Lake Boga and an innocent Aboriginal man was killed in his place, so that it made much sense for him to shelter at the mission, and for his 'brothers' to help construct an alternative future.

## Brother Pingilina

The loss of Daniel Boney meant that the Moravian missionaries appeared without an Indigenous helper at Lake Kopperamanna in 1866, where they received a hostile reception just like their Lutheran brethren at Lake

**Killalpaninna.** These two Cooper's Creek missions, too, were located near a mission-friendly pastoral station in a region undergoing rapid development.

The Birdsville track from the Channel country to the railhead for Port Augusta was getting developed with the help of government bores to water the cattle, such as the one at Kopperamanna. To cross the flood-prone Cooper's Creek at Kopperamanna, drovers and travellers often required ferry assistance, which the Lutheran missionaries were to provide as a source of income. To service the infrastructure requirements of remote stations, camels and Afghan cameleers were getting imported, and a postal network began to stretch across the inland stations. Victoria, meanwhile, was coping with up to 17,000 illicit Chinese goldminers flooding in via the South Australian port of Robe to avoid the Victorian poll tax. All across South Australia, Indigenous people were coming under extreme pressure. The Dieri at first drove both mission parties away, and it took 13 years for the 'first fruit' to come forward at Cooper's Creek in 1879.

One of Pastor C.A. Meyer's 12 'first fruit' was Johannes **Pingilina**, a top shearer, who was particularly valued for his linguistic ability and became an important assistant for Pastor Meyer. In 1878, he and his wife Clara lived in the colony next door to Pastor Johann Flierl. Their daughter Maria was born in 1880 and Emma in 1884. Baby Emma died when an influenza epidemic swept over the mission in 1885.<sup>44</sup> In June 1886, Pingilina accompanied Pastor **Meyer** to **Cape Bedford** (Hopevale) and began to learn Guugu-Yimidhirr. In May 1887, he accompanied the Meyers to their new position at **Bloomfield** mission with yet another language, Kuku Yalanji. Here he began to court a Bama woman who worked in the mission kitchen. When she refused him, he found it intolerable to continue working in the same household. Within a few months, Pingilina returned to Cape Bedford mission, where he apparently collaborated with Pastor Schwarz in a translation of the Lord's Prayer into Guugu-Yimidhirr.<sup>45</sup> He also met up with Pastor Johann Flierl visiting from Simbang in late 1887, and met Rosie, a Cooktown woman, with whom he began to plan for a second marriage. Meanwhile, Meyer felt that he could not progress his

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44 Of the first 12 baptised Flierl mentioned ten by name: Gottfried and Sarah Yildimirina, Benjamin and Luise Dalkilina, Joseph Diltjilina and wife, Elias and Beate Palkilina, the young bachelor Diwana, the lame Henry Tipilina. Susanne Froehlich (ed.), *Als Pioniermissionar in das ferne Neu Guinea: Johann Flierls Lebenserinnerungen*. 2 vols, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2015, Vol. 1, p. 222.

45 John Haviland and Leslie Haviland, 'How much food will there be in heaven? Lutherans and Aborigines around Cooktown to 1900', *Aboriginal History* 4.2 (1980), p. 133.

mission work at Bloomfield without Pingilina, and under pressure from the mission committee Pingilina returned to Bloomfield in early 1888, on the condition that he would receive wages, like the other mission assistants. Pingilina wrote to the committee affirming his commitment to the faith, describing the responsibilities he shouldered in the engagement with the local people who were dismissive of the gospel, and asked about his wages, since he was about to get married. Meyer proposed £5 per year 'held in trust'.

Nine months after his wedding with Rosie, Pingilina wanted to take his wife to Simbang to join **Flierl**. This proposal caused a storm of protest from the Queensland Government in mid-1889. Pingilina was constantly confronted with the impossibility of being a black evangelist: his wages, if any, would be 'held in trust', he could not travel freely, let alone leave the country with his Aboriginal wife. Meyer began to find Pingilina difficult: 'full of pride' and 'wanting to be respected by all whites'.<sup>46</sup> Pingilina had not been allocated an official role in the mission. He was neither an assistant missionary nor a lay helper, neither part of the Indigenous community on the Bloomfield nor white like the other missionary staff, and he was struggling with this indeterminate identity: 'I don't know what I am. I am just me'.<sup>47</sup>

By February 1891, Rosie had left Pingilina, and he now wanted to go home and see his daughter Maria at Killalpaninna whom he had not seen for four years. Perhaps he had also received word of Maria's illness. In August 1891, Pingilina asked about a divorce and Meyer obtained legal advice. Pingilina's marriage had been the first Aboriginal marriage for the Anglican pastor in Cooktown, and the local lawyer was also astounded and gave a dismissive response, remarking that it was unlikely that Pingilina's wife would 'legally pursue him' if he removed himself to South Australia. Again Pingilina was not taken seriously. When the Meyers left Bloomfield to return to South Australia in 1892, Pingilina was not permitted to accompany them, since Pastor **Hörlein** now required his help. (We will return to Hörlein at Bloomfield below.)

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46 Meyer to Rechner, 7 August 1891, Immanuel Synod, Bloomfield Mission Correspondence (henceforth Bloomfield correspondence), LAA.

47 Johannes Pingilina at Bloomfield to Rechner in South Australia, via Hergott Springs, 29 April 1890, Bloomfield correspondence, LAA.

After six years in north Queensland, Pingilina arrived back in Adelaide in February 1893, his box and spears arriving three months later. His 15-year-old daughter Maria died in the home of Pastor Georg **Reuther** in 1895. Pingilina remained a faithful supporter of the missionaries. During his time at Killalpaninna, he became Reuther's main ethnographic informant. In October 1901, the mission committee delegated him and Moses Tjalkabota to the Blazes Well outstation of Hermannsburg mission and, in November 1901, Pingilina married Katherina from the Finke River (Hermannsburg) in a group wedding at Killalpaninna. Like the European missionaries themselves, Pingilina was willing to give up home and family for the mission work, and to observe their marriage rules and arrangements. In his letters in Dieri, he addressed Pastor Rechner as 'older brother' and signed off as 'younger brother'. But to gain recognition as a missionary Brother, he lacked the one basic qualification that was always unspoken.

## Moses of Hermannsburg

At Hermannsburg, too, the Lutheran missionaries enjoyed the support of a few key individuals. Around the turn of the century, the missionaries still attempted to include adults in their school classes, and it is easy to imagine such a classroom becoming a contest of authority and face-saving. For example, Pastor Nikolaus **Wettengel**, who was at Hermannsburg from 1901 to 1906, found that whenever he corrected the answers of one old man in his class, this man always turned the tables and blamed Wettengel for the wrong answer. Another young man, who wished to raise a question, insisted that the missionary should look at him straight in the face or else the 'question wouldn't come out'. Evidently, the requirement to 'look me in the eyes' to give an honest answer was being turned back on the missionary. The question was whether Mary and Joseph had enough blankets when they escaped from Jerusalem.<sup>48</sup> This question effectively undermines the Christian message of the Christmas story (no room at the inn) and turns attention to the material conditions of the Indigenous mission community. Such anecdotes hint at the struggle for dignity of the adults under instruction.

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48 Leske, Everard, *For Faith and Freedom: The Story of Lutherans and Lutheranism in Australia 1838–1996*, Open Book publishers, Adelaide, 1996, p. 27.

Very gradually, Indigenous catechists were able to bridge such tension. Timotheus Maltilina and Moses **Tjalkabota** were already trusted drovers in the 1890s, taking cattle to market and working with lay helper J. Rüdiger in the transfer of cattle to Killalpaninna.<sup>49</sup> Timotheus, who was of mixed descent, moved with his family to Blazes Well in 1901.<sup>50</sup> Moses Tjalkabota married an Aranda woman in 1903 and his droving career ended in 1905, when he became blind. During a dispute between the two pastors at Hermannsburg in 1903, Wettengel highly praised Moses as an example of successful conversion, whereas Carl **Strehlow** remarked that Moses was surely not 'the only shining light of Christian example' and could even be called a 'whorer'.<sup>51</sup> Strehlow's spiteful comments, only months before Moses' Christian marriage, were meant to injure Wettengel rather than Moses. When Strehlow began to translate the New Testament into Aranda in 1913, he relied greatly on Moses Tjalkabota, Nathaniel Rauwirarka and Jacobus. Eventually Moses became a trusted evangelist at the mission. Pastor Oskar **Liebler** (at Hermannsburg 1910–13) thought that during baptismal classes the candidates were learning more from Moses than from himself. 'Blind Moses was the mouth of God for them, amplified by my presence and interventions.' Liebler hastened to add that in Australia it was impossible to have independent native evangelists like in India, because there was far too much family pressure so that an 'Australian Black' could never exert enough authority.<sup>52</sup>

But Moses proved him wrong. After Strehlow's death in September 1922, the mission was without pastor for three years and, during this time, Moses continued to hold Sunday services and baptismal instruction.<sup>53</sup> Pastor F.W. Albrecht, who arrived in 1926, found Moses 'very handy'.

49 Immanuel Synod, Mission Committee Minute Book, 1895–1901 (translated), 27 November 1895, 13 April 1897, LAA.

50 At Blazes Well, two of Maltilina's sons were run over by a dray and one of them died. Immanuel Synod, Mission Committee Minute Book, 1895–1901 (translated), December 1901, LAA. Timotheus chose his baptismal name and Flierl composed the surname from 'malti', 'meaning calm or soft, with the ending '-lina' for grown up men. Timotheus married a Wonkanguru (Salt Creek) girl who had accompanied Flierl on his first mission journey and whom Flierl baptised in the name of Anna. These two later moved to Lowbank where Timotheus worked as a horse breaker. Froehlich, *Als Pioniermissionar*, Vol. 1, p. 272.

51 Correspondence in relation to a letter Wettengel to Kaibel 16 July 1903, Immanuel Synod, FRM Box 5, Correspondence Wettengel (transcriptions and translations), LAA.

52 'Daß ein schwarzer Christ hier selbständig den Gehilfen, etwa in dem Sinne der indischen eingebornen Gehilfen, machen könnte ist deshalb leider ausgeschlossen, weil gegen Verwandte zu viel Nachsicht geübt würde und leider der Schwarze sich höchst selten, was nötig ist, aufzutreten traut.' Report from O. Liebler in *Kirchen- und Missionszeitung* 47.22 (May 1911): 173.

53 Leske, *For Faith and Freedom*.

Moses was still holding the confirmation classes with 10 children, of whom three could read. Moses, who could recite long passages from the Bible by memory, 'patiently reads out to them'.<sup>54</sup> Moses sometimes delivered the Sunday sermon and taught Albrecht Aranda.

Moses also taught Albrecht much more besides. Albrecht's mission diary relates a dramatic incident at Hermannsburg in 1927. Some boys had run away, were retrieved and locked up at the mission dormitory. One of them, Reinhardt, yelled for half an hour in protest until Pastors Albrecht and Schaber 'both went there and I gave him a good hiding' after which Reinhardt fell silent. But now 'the whole camp erupted in a wild death howling, they said I'd killed him'. The adults rushed to the dormitory, demanded the key and approached Albrecht 'with threatening fists, I was never to touch their children again'. The evangelist Jacobus was allowed entry to the dormitory to examine Reinhardt. Moses tried to calm the situation by asking Albrecht to promise never to deal out more than three strikes to a child, 'but I refused'. Albrecht tried to disperse the adults, telling them to come back the next day, but they stood their ground. 'They threatened and scolded me as I left, but I didn't give in.'<sup>55</sup>

Such different attitudes about the appropriate treatment of children created a vast gulf between missionaries and Indigenous people, a gulf that could be bridged by local intermediaries like Moses. The Lutheran missions in New Guinea were already relying on native evangelists (and began to train indigenous pastors in 1939). Albrecht at Hermannsburg was the first to adopt this model in Australia.<sup>56</sup> In July 1926, Albrecht sent Moses and Thomas to evangelise in Henbury.<sup>57</sup> After that, with Albrecht's encouragement, four Indigenous evangelists (presumably Moses, Martin, Thomas and Timotheus, who was paid double the mission stock-workers' rate at 10 shillings a week) began to travel to contact people outside the mission's reach.<sup>58</sup> Moses walked, rode and hitchhiked to Horseshoe Bend, Jay Creek, Alice Springs, Arltunga and many other places.<sup>59</sup> After Pastor E. **Kramer** withdrew from Alice Springs in 1934, Moses and Martin held

54 F.W. Albrecht, 24 April 1926, 'My Mission Diary at Hermannsburg 1926–1927', LAA.

55 Albrecht mission diary, 28 March 1927.

56 Barbara Henson, *A Straight-out Man – F.W. Albrecht and Central Australian Aborigines*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic., 1992, p. 67.

57 Albrecht mission diary, 27 April, 13 July, 23 August 1926.

58 Leske, *For Faith and Freedom*, 1996.

59 Paul Albrecht, 'Tjalkabota, Moses (1869–1954)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, The Australian National University (henceforth *ADB*), published first in hardcopy 2005.

services on the banks of the Todd River. Moses subsequently transferred to Jay Creek between Alice Springs and Hermannsburg, where he still conducted Christian outreach in the early 1950s.<sup>60</sup> When Albrecht himself moved to Alice Springs in 1952 and began to visit the outlying stations, he was able to build on the prior work of Moses and Martin.<sup>61</sup>

Like Pepper at Ebenezer, Moses, who was born at Ntaria (later the name of the Hermannsburg mission), invoked traditional references to render the gospel decipherable, and he met much the same dismissal from traditionalists as Pingilina encountered at Bloomfield. Moses reported a dialogue with a man called Njetjaka, who argued:

I [Njetjaka] am the tjurunga called Ilbangura and I have the songs and decorations. Look, at the uncreated home of the kangaroo at Krenka, we have many more tjurunga, and more powerful ceremonies. I [Moses] said, 'You men are unbelievers'. They said, 'We have another one that we believe in. You at Ntaria believe in one God, but we have another one'.<sup>62</sup>

Under Albrecht's direction, outstations with cash stores such as Haasts Bluff were established under the supervision of such evangelists as Alexander, Titus, Epaphras and Eugen. Eventually, a few women were also given this role, like Daphne Puntjina at Areyonga who worked alongside Leo Tjukintja who was later ordained. When the Haasts Bluff station was transferred to Papunya in 1958, it was supervised by Obed Raggett (ordained in 1979), who married a Papunya woman and quickly became a fluent speaker.<sup>63</sup> This was the beginning of an Indigenous church, the ultimate goal of mission.

## Cape York stories

Returning now to the north Queensland missions of the 1890s in which Pingilina assisted the Lutherans, a few anecdotes of interactions survive from there that shed light on the mutual misunderstandings and other teething problems of newly arrived missionaries.

60 Paul Albrecht, *From Mission to Church*, p. 19.

61 Paul Albrecht, *From Mission to Church*, p. 31.

62 Albrecht, 'Tjalkabota, Moses (1869–1954)', *ADB*.

63 Paul Albrecht, *From Mission to Church*, p. 30.

Georg **Pfalzer** arrived at Cape Bedford in 1886 from Neuendettelsau still unordained at age 20. He shared with Pingilina the task of instructing 30 school children while Pingilina helped Pfalzer learn Guugu-Yimidhirr. Once the Meyers and Pingilina left for Bloomfield to administer that mission on behalf of the Immanuel Synod, Pfalzer was left in charge at Cape Bedford on behalf of the Neuendettelsau Mission Society, assisted by the Jamaican skipper Christopher Wallace and South Australian lay helper Johann Biar. With self-deprecation, Pfalzer complained about the affairs at the mission: ‘One of us can’t sing at all [Pfalzer]. The other cannot sing in German [Wallace]. And the third can only sing if someone leads [Biar]!’<sup>64</sup> The unassuming Pfalzer was keenly aware of his lack of singing talent and claimed that he was usually asked to ring the bell or hold the torch while the others were singing.<sup>65</sup>

Pfalzer also had a keen sense of the ironies inherent in his interactions with Aboriginal people. On his way to a public meeting in Cooktown, where he intended to deliver a prepared speech in favour of a total day-and-night curfew on Aborigines in the town, his canoe inexplicably tipped over landing all his papers and himself in the water. Pfalzer suspected that his Guugu-Yimidhirr boatmen engineered this accident to prevent him from attending the meeting because they disagreed with his position. He also mentioned that it was not unusual for someone to interrupt his sermons if these went on for too long, with the suggestion ‘do you want us to chop some wood, or dig the garden?’ or more bluntly, ‘are we getting something to eat now?’<sup>66</sup>

Cape Bedford was not the only place where Indigenous people understood their attendance at religious service and instruction as a service rendered deserving of remuneration. John Haviland discussed the question raised by Aboriginal people about ‘How much food will there be in heaven?’ as the decisive issue concerning the benefit of becoming Christian.<sup>67</sup> Sermons that went on for too long, or were too repetitive, might also be cut short, as Pastor Hausmann found at Bethesda with a reminder that he had already told them all this before, and they did remember – in other words, no need to repeat all the old stories.

64 *Kirchliche Mitteilungen*, 7 (1887), p. 55.

65 Froehlich, *Pioniermissionar*, Vol. 1, p. 117.

66 Howard J. Pohlner, *Ganguuru*, Lutheran Church of Australia, Adelaide, 1986, p. 40.

67 Haviland and Haviland, ‘How much food will there be in heaven?’, p. 133.

Pastor Georg Heinrich Schwarz arrived at Cape Bedford (Hopevale) in September 1887 from Bavaria and had already heard all about cannibal natives. The Guugu-Yimidhirr 'looked fierce' and made little attempt to settle his nerves; on the contrary, one commented that since Schwarz was 'so good', he must also be good to eat, and another traced the sections of human flesh that were good to eat on Schwarz's back, running shivers through Schwarz's spine.<sup>68</sup> Presumably this man was showing Schwarz where the kidney fat was located. Apart from the sensationalising function that such narratives played in missionary reporting, it must be presumed that they have some truth value, and also played a function in the self-representation of Guugu-Yimidhirr: that they were far from harmless, a people to be taken seriously and respected.

As the sixth of nine children on a Hessian farm, Schwarz was used to hard work and masculinist assertion. He arrived barely 20 years old but already with a facial growth that earned him respect.<sup>69</sup> Schwarz tried to teach the Guugu-Yimidhirr his proper name, 'but all that comes out is wux'.<sup>70</sup> Therefore his surname, meaning 'black', was translated as 'Muni' and became his badge. With the advantage of this name, and a fully grown beard, Muni appeared as a man to be taken seriously. In June 1900, he organised a theatrical foot-march of 25 men from Cape Bedford to Cooktown to lobby for funding while the newly appointed Northern Protector of Aborigines, Dr Walter **Roth**, visited Cooktown. It would surely have been easier to travel by boat, but the foot-march did not fail to make an impression and achieved funding for a government teacher. Schwarz ended up marrying the teacher and, during his 55 years at Hopevale, Muni became a celebrated father of the Guugu-Yimidhirr. He had the beard of an Elder and was 'black' by name, but this mission also had the help of a Jamacian skipper, a Dieri evangelist, and eventually local men appointed as the supervisors of outstations.

At nearby Bloomfield, Johann Sebastian **Hörlein** had a much harder time. He also arrived at age 20, in July 1891, also straight from Neuendettelsau, but compared to Schwarz his was a clean-shaven baby face, and Hörlein arrived with a strong sense for German correctness. In Cooktown, he was advised to wait a few days before proceeding to Bloomfield because

68 Pohlner, *Gangurru*, p. 43; Gordon Rose, 'The Heart of a Man: A biography of missionary G.H. Schwarz', *Yearbook of the Lutheran Church of Australia*, 1978, p. 48.

69 John Haviland with Roger Hart, *Old Man Fog and the Last Aborigines of Barrow Point*, Crawford House Publishing, Bathurst, 1998, p. 89.

70 Georg Schwarz, *Kirchliche Mitteilungen* 12 (1887): 92.

floods had just washed away bridges, but instead of wasting any precious time Hörlein decided to pay a visit to Pastor Schwarz at Cape Bedford. He engaged two Indigenous guides and his narrative of that journey is inadvertently droll because Hörlein's sense of cultural superiority kept getting challenged. Riding ahead out of Cooktown, Hörlein and an unnamed companion were annoyed because their Aboriginal guides, who were following on foot, made no effort to catch up to the horse riders:

We had taken along two blacks as guides. But after only 12 miles we had lost the way. The blacks, who knew the way, had let us ride ahead and strolled behind at their own pace. We made a rest stop and waited for them. When they came up to us we asked them 'is this the right way?' and they replied, "depends which way you want to go". 'Well, we want to go the right way, of course, you're supposed to show it to us, we don't know it.' 'Well, the right way was six miles back.'<sup>71</sup>

The neophyte Hörlein, with more confidence in his own bush skills than in those of his local guides, kept riding ahead of them in semicircles so they had to track him, and the day's ride became a two-day trek during which Hörlein became totally dependent on his guides to gather drinking water in palm leaves. Eventually he noticed that his guides followed pathways marked by incisions in trees and were much more skilled than he was to survive in the bush.

At his own mission on the Bloomfield River, Pastor Hörlein thought it below his dignity to teach little children to read ('das ABC beizubringen'). A lay teacher had to be engaged, but Hörlein's iron-fisted rule drove the lay assistants away. After Pingilina's departure, no other Indigenous intermediary stepped forward and the mission was closed in 1901 under a cloud of scandal (see **Bloomfield River** mission) whereas at Hopevale outstations were formed under Indigenous leadership.

The Lutherans at Bloomfield and Cape Bedford had the initial assistance of Pingilina from the south, where missions had been established a generation earlier. In the other northern missions, workers were imported from the Pacific for the maritime industries, and Indigenous people participating in that industry with a longer exposure to white employers played a similar facilitating role.

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71 Hörlein to friends of the mission, 10 August 1891, Bloomfield correspondence, LAA.

## Big men at Mapoon

Mapoon was selected as a mission site because it had become a recruiting harbour for the trepang industry. It was already a place of intercultural encounter and presumably mixed family formation, and it took only five years to claim the first adult converts in 1896. South Sea Islander Harry Price (possibly from Tahiti) became Pastor Hey's paid assistant from around 1897 until his death in 1901. Price had a colourful past, including visits to Sydney, London and the United States on an American whaling boat; pearling in Western Australia and at Thursday Island; and finally as overseer at Frank **Jardine's** Bertiehaugh station at the tip of Cape York, where Jardine had allocated him a wife, who accompanied Price to Mapoon. Harry Price was not fluent in the local language but led a prayer group for young men.

At around the same time as Harry Price, Jimmy Deinditschy from the Pennefather River (near Weipa) took on a leading role at Mapoon. Jimmy and his wife Sarah, like the Peppers at Ebenezer, became trusted evangelist helpers. At their baptism in 1896, Jimmy delivered an engaging speech before a large crowd including 400 children, where one 'could have heard a needle drop'. An older man, Oki, followed up with another speech, and also wanted to be admitted for baptism, but was refused because he had two wives.<sup>72</sup>

Jimmy led the Sunday prayer service and oversaw a married couples' outstation at a distance from the mission consisting of six houses for 12 adults. He also helped to set up Weipa mission on the Embley River in 1898. He spent his winters at his home on the Pennefather River (near where Weipa mission was formed in 1898), and a number of young men from that area married Mapoon mission girls, forming a strong attachment between the two sites. After 1897, Mapoon became a repository for mixed-descent girls removed from their families by police under Queensland's *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*.

Not much is recorded about Jimmy or Sarah's background. Sarah was literate and Jimmy was a boat skipper. Either or both of them could have been of mixed descent and fighting for a new way of imagining Aboriginality, or a way of engaging with the new age that was descending

72 N. Hey, 30 October 1896, North Australia, North Queensland, microfilm, MF 186, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (AIATSIS).

over Cape York with the massive engulfment of pearling and its Asian workforce.<sup>73</sup> In 1900, Jimmy came under pressure to accept a second wife resulting from the death of a relative. Sarah disagreed with this plan and informed missionary Hey, who subjected Jimmy to a public shaming and gathered the congregation to 'pray the devil out of Mapoon'.<sup>74</sup> After this, Jimmy avoided his Pennefather River people, and fades out of the mission record. Presumably he lost face with both sides. Still, Jimmy certainly leavened the grounds for a new mission at Weipa.

Another assistant at Mapoon, who was Hey's 'right-hand man' for nearly 30 years, was referred to as 'Mamoos'. (Mamus was a form of address for a local leader in Torres Strait.) He may have had some mixed Torres Strait and Pacific Islander lineage and was married to a baptised woman of mixed descent, Lena (or Lina), book-keeper for the outstation. Mamoos was appointed as assistant in 1906 with a public ceremony, and in 1907 became skipper of the fourth sailing boat on the mission to organise fishing, turtle hunting and trepang collecting, which was now an important income source for the mission. He became a key figure on the mission, preaching in the local language, and he also wrote sermons in English and collaborated with Hey on language work. He was always 'bright and happy' and Hey was full of praise for him.

Other Pacific Islanders also assisted Hey around the same time as Mamoos. Dick Kemp from the New Hebrides oversaw another outstation, where he conducted daily blessings, and this group built their own church in 1910. Batavia River outstation was supervised by a Samoan from 1911 to about 1921, and Jack Charger oversaw the trepang fishery and lived on his own farm at an outstation with his wife from Mapoon, who helped him to prepare sermons.

It was much the same at Aurukun and Weipa. Richter's first assistant, another Jimmy, died of dengue fever within the first year and was replaced by Tom Solomon, who captained the mission boat. For a period in 1905, Solomon was in charge of the mission assisted by James, also a South Sea Islander. At Weipa, Peter Bee assisted, and the mission received its first white assistant after 10 years, about which Pastor Brown commented:

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73 Ganter, *Pearl-Shellers*.

74 Hey, Annual Report for Mapoon for 1900, MF 186, AIATSIS.

an event which marks an epoch in the history of our station, viz, the passing of the Kanaka assistant by the advent of a duly recognised white assistant, who can be an assistant indeed, and not a mere overseer requiring himself constant supervision.<sup>75</sup>

This is a remarkable misjudgement of the important role of such cultural intermediaries. The context of this dismissive comment were the upheavals caused by Peter Bee's sexual transgressions (see Chapter 7), but the Cape York missions were crucially dependent on South Sea Island assistants. Though much is made of the Indigenous first fruit at Mapoon, Hey and his colleagues relied to a very great extent on imported men, already exposed to Christian teaching in the Pacific, and they were aided by the already cosmopolitan nature of the trepang recruiting port.

## Mixed relations of Beagle Bay

In 1896, when the first baptisms took place at Mapoon, the Trappists at **Beagle Bay**, too, celebrated their first baptism, only four years after their arrival. They had the advantage of a man described only as 'Knife' who had assisted Fr Duncan McNab at Goodenough Bay, where McNab had enjoyed the help of a group of Filipinos. 'Knife' now lived at Boolgin homestead and kept up a positive image of missionaries as friends and providers.

Another key intermediary was Felix Gnodonbor, who helped Fr Alphonse to learn Nyul-Nyul and translated key concepts. Very soon Father Alphonse was able to preach in Nyul-Nyul to an attentive congregation at Sunday mass, but if he went so far as to denounce some Indigenous custom, an Elder might stand up and begin to argue vigorously.<sup>76</sup> The fact that Gnodonbor spoke Nyul-Nyul rather than Bardi suggests that he may have come from the Disaster Bay area on the east coast of Dampierland, like 'Knife'. The Trappists valued Gnodonbor's knowledge, and he in turn became instrumental in the acceptance of the Christian missionaries at Beagle Bay. He remained at Beagle Bay mission with his wife Madeleine until 1931.<sup>77</sup> Two of Felix Gnodonbor's nieces, Leonie Widgie and Fidelis Elizabeth Victor, became early converts, and one of

75 Brown, Annual Report for Weipa for 1909, MF 186, AIATSIS.

76 'The Trappist Mission At Beagle Bay', *The West Australian*, 3 November 1896, p. 2.

77 Brigida Nailon, *Nothing is Wasted in the Household of God: Vincent Pallotti's Vision in Australia 1901–2001*, Spectrum, Richmond, 2001, p. 153.

Felix's granddaughters, Magdalene Williams, later helped to found Balgo and LaGrange missions.<sup>78</sup> His nephew Remi was among the first to be baptised in August 1896, a ceremony witnessed by a visiting journalist who described the evening rosary, the daily school for children and the instructions for adults, and the Aboriginal altar boys dressed in red serving at the daily morning mass.<sup>79</sup>

Gnodonbor himself was baptised the following year, 1897, in the name of Felix like the prior at Sept Fons, whose two brothers were in the Kimberley. This baptismal name therefore connected Gnodonbor to the highest Trappist authority in Sept Fons (Fr Felix Janny), to the superior of the Kimberley mission (Fr Ambrose Janny) and to the supervisor of Disaster Bay (Fr Jean-Marie Janny).

The godfather at the baptism of Felix Gnodonbor was 28-year-old Thomas **Puertollano**, another key cultural intermediary for the Trappists. This Catholic Filipino had arrived in Australia as a protégé of the Filipino–Spanish nationalist Filomeno Rodriguez in 1891, and became skipper of the mission's *Jessie* when the Trappists acquired the Lombadina lease in 1892. Puertollano helped to build the Broome church for Fr Emo and helped the Trappists to establish a grange at Disaster Bay in March 1897. In February 1898, Puertollano married Aboriginal–Irish woman Agnes Guilwil O'Bryan from Beagle Bay and the couple became instrumental in the Disaster Bay outstation. In 1901, after Fr Jean Marie Janny returned to Disaster Bay, Agnes and Thomas Puertollano were providing food three times a day for 35 Indigenous people.

Some time between 1902 and 1904, the Disaster Bay station was moved to the former Hadley and Hunter pearling station at Lombadina, where the Puertollanos now took over part of the lease and provided for Fr Jean-Marie Janny. Once Janny, the last Trappist in the Kimberley, left, the government objected to an Asian being in charge of a mission settlement and declared Lombadina a government 'feeding station' under the supervision of Hadley and Hunter, who were running a 'private mission' at Sunday Island. In 1911, as a result of Hunter's conviction for 'cohabiting with native women', Fr Emo was placed in charge of Lombadina, and the Puertollanos gave up their house to him. In 1913, they were pushed out of Lombadina under the threat of legal action for employing Aborigines.

78 Brigida Nailon, *Emo and San Salvador*, 2 vols, Brigidine Sisters, Echuca, 2005, Vol. 1, p. 273.

79 'The Trappist mission at Beagle Bay', *The West Australian*, p. 2.

Despite Fr Emo's active support, Puertollano had still not been able to achieve naturalisation, and therefore could not register a lugger in his name. Puertollano's new house became the mission convent and he sold his substantial cattle herd and opened a bakery in Broome.

The Puertollano story shows how at odds the racialised policy of the state government was with the Catholic Church, with the two institutions looking through the very different lenses of religion and race. An Aboriginal–Filipino Catholic family was just what the church needed to extend its mission, and about the last thing the state government wanted to support.

## Nicholas Emo and the Kimberley Filipinos

Fr Nicholas **Emo** (1849–1915) was not steeped in the Trappist tradition like his fellow monks. He had many years of mission experience in South America and only joined the Trappist order so that he could come to Australia to missionise among the 'wild blacks'. As the only Spanish speaker among the Trappists arriving in the Kimberley, Emo was stationed in Broome in 1895 to minister to the Catholic community there and off the missions, consisting almost exclusively of Filipinos engaged in pearling. Being stationed in the township of Broome instead of at the remote Beagle Bay mission must have seemed like a setback, but eventually a stint at Drysdale River fulfilled his romantic ambition of encountering 'wild blacks'.

Emo's attitude to race relations was inspired by the Spanish conquistadores' policy of intermarriage – the opposite of the British insistence on maintaining racial boundaries. In Broome he very quickly engaged a Filipino catechist and his mixed-descent Aboriginal wife to set up a school, and he worked closely with the Catholic Filipinos of the entire Kimberley area.<sup>80</sup> Several Aboriginal/Latino families had settled along the tidal creeks and coves of Dampier Peninsula including John Andriasin from Manado (Kupang), Severo Acosta (or Seveiro da Costa), the Filipino Damasco

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<sup>80</sup> 'The Trappist mission at Beagle Bay', *The West Australian*, p. 2.

Maagina (or Don Damaso Maagna Trinidad) and Joseph Marcelina from Chile.<sup>81</sup> The latter (Joe Marsalino) with his wife Margarita, offered shelter to Br August **Sixt** who was expelled from Beagle Bay mission in 1909.<sup>82</sup>

Not feeling bound by any particular Order, Fr Emo performed a diplomatic tightrope walk in his collaboration with the Trappists, the Pallottines, the Benedictines, the Irish Bishop Gibney in Perth and Bishop Kelly in Geraldton. He was unafraid to burn bridges to pursue his own policy and he championed the cause of mixed marriages even against the increasing resistance of the Pallottines and the government after the turn of the century. The Catholic Filipino and mixed Aboriginal community in Broome embraced him. In the wake of the revolution against the Spanish in 1897, the Broome Filipino community grew rapidly and included both Catholics and Muslims. This political turmoil affected Emo's work in Broome when his church was burnt down, and political refugees, who needed to forge new identities, joined the community. In a stocktake of his congregation at Broome in 1896, Emo mysteriously described one of his parishioners: 'This is Leandro Loreda, husband of Matilda (Aboriginal) living at the Point but nobody knows (but me) the true name'.<sup>83</sup>

Emo had two protégés of Filipino descent, Martin Sibosado and Sebastian Damaso, who became core members of the mission community. They accompanied Emo on his peregrinations from 'The Point' in Broome to Cygnet Bay, Drysdale River and Lombadina. Damaso became a Cistercian novice, but the sudden withdrawal of the Trappists ended his aspirations of joining the Order; however, he remained a faithful mission supporter. A poignant line from the Beagle Bay mission diary in 1916 records that while preparing a new patch of land for a garden, Damaso found an old human bone at Namogon and 'sang the Miserere softly to himself' while reburying it.<sup>84</sup>

Emo acquired the *San Salvador* with the help of his Filipino congregation and staffed it with Filipinos and members of the mixed Filipino–Aboriginal community. The people who reappear in Emo's references are Catalino

81 Mary Durack, *The Rock and the Sand*, Corgi, London, 1971, p. 190.

82 V. Kopf PSM Provinzial und Visitat, 2. 3. 1909, in Sixt, August (Br – Ex), P1 Nr 28, Zentralarchiv der Pallottinerprovinz (ZAPP).

83 Entry No. 157 in Emo, Broome Census Book of 1896, in Nailon, *Emo and San Salvador*, Vol. 2, p. 175. Elsewhere, Nailon refers to Matilde as Timorese, and to Leandro as coming from Luzon. Their 12-month-old baby Alexander Maria Loreda died 7 November 1906 and their adopted daughter was from Broome. The couple 'served Emo' for eight years at the Point. Nailon, *Emo*, Vol. 2, pp. 28, 88.

84 **Droste diary**, 10 December 1916, ZAPP.

Torres and (part Aboriginal) Lorenza, Leandro Loredo and (Timorese/Aboriginal) Matilde, the Puertollanos and Sebastian. In the period of absence of missionaries, such as at Beagle Bay from the departure of the Trappists to the arrival of the Pallottines, or at Lombadina between the departure of Janny and the arrival of Emo, it was these Filipinos who carried on the work.<sup>85</sup> As much as the Moravians at Mapoon and the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Torres Strait relied on Pacific Islanders, the Catholic missionaries in the Kimberley and Thursday Island leaned on Filipino helpers. The missions at Cygnet Bay, Drysdale River, Disaster Bay and Lombadina were grafted onto the close bond between Emo and his Catholic Filipino supporters.

## Bathurst Island melting pot

The same may be said about the establishment of the Missionnaires du Sacré Coeur (MSC) in the Northern Territory. Most accounts of Fr Gsell's arrival at Bathurst Island in 1911 read as if he came north all by himself. But Gsell was very aware of the importance of Filipino lay helpers in grafting on to an Indigenous society. He had just spent six years at Yule Island mission that was set up with the assistance of 14 Filipino catechists.<sup>86</sup> Gsell expressed regret that government policy did not permit him to import Filipino assistants. However, at Thursday Island, Filipinos were already getting trained as catechists for the Papuan mission, and it seems that Gsell recruited some of these to Darwin, perhaps during his visit to the MSC Sisters at Thursday Island in June 1907.<sup>87</sup> The evidence for this assumption is that in 1908 Gsell mentioned that a Filipino family was looking after his laundry in Darwin and that one of his assistants in Darwin and at Bathurst Island was Alfonso Aboliro. Aboliro, a sailor, was born in Laiti in 1874, arrived in Australia in 1897 and married Mary Elisabeth, who was born on Thursday Island, in 1869.<sup>88</sup>

85 Emo to Sept Fons, 6 January 1901, in Nailon, *Emo and San Salvador*, Vol. 2, p. 212.

86 James Griffin, 'Verjus, Henri Stanislas (1860–1892)', *ADB*, published first in hardcopy 1976; and **Fabila Family at Yule Island**.

87 Gsell foreshadows this visit in his letter to the MSC Provincial at Kensington of 12 November 1906, Chevalier Resource Centre, Kensington (MSC Archives).

88 Both were resident at Bathurst Island when they registered as aliens in 1916. Alien Registration of Alfonso Aboliro, 24 October 1916, MT269/1, barcode 6561190, National Archives of Australia (NAA); Alien Registration of Mary Aboliro, 26 October 1916, MT269/1, barcode 6561191, NAA. Thanks to Julia Martinez for this information.

Gsell arrived on Bathurst Island in 1911 with four Filipino men on a Jolly Company pearling lugger. An arrival narrative in French by Fr Frank Flynn MSC suggests that they constructed a ‘hut from branches’,<sup>89</sup> but Gsell mentions that they brought with them a prefabricated house from Darwin. It was erected by Br Lambert and two men described only as ‘one-eyed Boolak and hunchback Tokoopa’.<sup>90</sup> These names sound a little like bullock and cooper and perhaps these men, both incapacitated, had previously been working at Joe Cooper’s bullock camp on Melville Island, and may have been Tiwi or Iwadja or of mixed descent. The (unnamed) Filipinos remained on the island and ‘helped Fr. Gsell build the mission’.<sup>91</sup> Alfonso Aboliro captained the mission boat and remained a lay helper at the mission until about 1950, residing with his family in a separate house.

Gsell was certainly not alone among natives. The French assistant missionary Fr Regis Courbon arrived, if not with Gsell, then within days to be present for the completion of the first residence. By the time Fr Henschke arrived in 1915, the **Bathurst Island** mission had a church and ‘a couple of other houses for the Manila men’.<sup>92</sup>

Tiwi Islanders had much exposure to Asians in the Macassan trepang fleets and the pearling boats operating from Darwin offered alternative sources of barter, food and entertainment. The Tiwi avoided the mission, so the Northern Territory administration ensured the mission’s successful launch by removing mixed-descent children from the Daly River to Bathurst Island, according to an observation by the visiting Russian Queenslander Leandro Illin.<sup>93</sup> In other words, Catholic Filipinos and the mixed-descent children from a former Catholic mission region provided the fertile soil for a successful mission on Bathurst Island.

After the introduction of the White Australia Policy in 1901, the presence of Asian men on missions became increasingly problematised. Sometimes the role of Filipino assistants was simply not apprehended, as in the case of

89 F. Flynn, ‘40 ans chez les Aborigènes Australiens – l’évêque aux 150 épouses’, *Annales de Notre-Dame du Sacré-Coeur*, December 1960, pp. 266–69.

90 F.X. Gsell, *The Bishop with 150 Wives: Fifty Years as a Missionary*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1956, pp. 46–50.

91 Anthony Caruana, ‘Reflections on hundred years of MSC mission work in the Northern Territory 1904–2004’, unpublished MS, 2004, p. 14, MSC Archives.

92 Caruana, ‘Reflections’, p. 14.

93 Illin toured the Northern Territory in 1911 as an expert advisor to the federal government with a view to turning the Daly River into a Russian expatriate community. His 92-page report refers to these removals in passing. Elena Govor, *My Dark Brother: The Story of the Illins, a Russian–Aboriginal Family*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 2000, p. 126ff.

Daisy Bates who accompanied Bishop Gibney to the Kimberley missions in 1900 and helped to work the gardens along with what she considered 'native women'.<sup>94</sup> In fact, she mentions by name Catholic women of mixed descent with Filipino husbands, like Agnes, Matilde and Lorenza, who were themselves products and beacons of a new age (see **Emo**). It is ironic that Bates later claimed to know so much about racial mixing.<sup>95</sup>

The role of Filipino lay helpers in facilitating Catholic missions in the Torres Strait, in the Northern Territory and in the Kimberley cannot be underestimated and deserves acknowledgement. With their marriage bonds and mixed families, they formed an intermediate social stratum between the foreign missionaries and the local population.

## Postwar syncretic approaches

The Lutheran missions did not have these strong intermediate cultural layers of imported workers. They took much longer to achieve baptisms and to find 'native evangelists', but, when they did, such men became outstanding beacons of strength and intercultural communication.

Pastor Paul Albrecht, with over 40 years of experience at Hermannsburg, acknowledges the importance of these cultural mediators: 'Understandably ... effective Christian instruction leading to baptism could only take place when evangelists could be found to live and work on these [mission] stations'.<sup>96</sup> Indigenous congregations were formed after World War II, under the leadership of evangelists like the Pitjantjatara man Pastor Peter Bulla at Aileron, congregations led at Ti Tree, Aningie and Napperby by Josef Kentiltja and Gustav Malbungka, Pastor Davey Ingkamala at Utopia, Alcoota and Amaroo, and Pastor Paulus Wiljuka. Two evangelists were ordained at Hermannsburg in November 1964, Conrad Raberaba and Peter Bulla, followed by Cyril Motna in May 1969 and Paulus Wiljuka and Colin Malbungka in November 1971. Tensions arose over the remuneration of such pastors, since Lutheran pastors are usually remunerated by their own congregations, and over the standing of these

94 Elizabeth Salter, *Daisy Bates*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1971, p. 81.

95 Since Bob Reece's biography of her, Bates has been much remembered for her dictum 'the only good half-caste is a dead one', published in '**Aboriginal reserves and women patrols**', *Sunday Times* (Perth, WA), 2 October 1921, p. 18, Trove; Bob Reece, *Daisy Bates: Grand Dame of the Desert*. Vol. 3, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2007, p. 90.

96 Albrecht, *From Mission to Church*, p. 32.

pastors in the Lutheran Church. The general synod of the Lutheran Church Australia (LCA) resolved in 1972 that the aim of mission to establish an Indigenous church had already been achieved, and preparations should be made to hand over the 'major portion of the work' to Aboriginal people by the centennial year of 1977.<sup>97</sup>

The outstation policy at Hopevale also paid off with strong Indigenous leadership. Wayarego outstation near the McIvor River only had a missionary from 1928 to 1932, and was disbanded in 1936 due to soil exhaustion. It housed the families of Fred Deeral, Pearson, Baru, Gibson, McLean, King and others, and such people instigated the return to Hopevale from Woorabinda after the war and continued to visit and support Pastor Schwarz in retirement at Cooktown. One of the Wayarego residents, Simon King, who had been removed by police as a 12-year-old from the goldmining town of Maytown in 1922, became an active evangelist and revived the old Bloomfield mission in December 1957 as Wujal-Wujal, working under the direction of Hopevale Pastor Bernard Frederick Hartwig. At Bloomfield, King preached in Kuku Yalanji (Gugyalanji) and 'went off every morning with lunch and bag of books to bring the message of God to the older folk'. Pastor Prenzler also records that King 'cured a crippled woman through prayer'. King attended the dedication of the Kuku Yalanji New Testament at Pentecost in 1985 and was buried at Hopevale in December 1986.<sup>98</sup>

As mentioned above, the Lutheran missions in New Guinea gave a much greater role much earlier to native evangelists. Neuendettelsau graduates opened a training seminary to prepare nationals for ordination in 1939. From that college the first New Guinean ordained priest in Australia, Nawoh Mellombo, came to minister at Hopevale and Wujal-Wujal in March 1979.<sup>99</sup> The Christian energies are now flowing the other way round, with priests from the Pacific Rim, Africa, China and other former mission fields holding Australian pulpits.

The Pallottine training centre in Rossmoyne (Perth) was also assimilationist, and it, too, produced notable identities (see **Lümmen**). One of its buildings is named after Edith Little, a staunch supporter of Fr Lümmen. Her funeral on 8 December 1975 was attended by 450 people, including

97 Albrecht, *From Mission to Church*, pp. 33ff.

98 Description by Pastor Martin Prenzler, in Johann Flierl II file at LAA.

99 Traugott Farnbacher and Christian Weber (eds), *Ein Zentrum für Weltmission – Neuendettelsau – Einführung, Zeittafeln, Dokumente, Namen, 1842–2002*, Missionswerk der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Bayern, Neuendettelsau, 2004, p. 35.

Mum Shirl from Redfern, Department of Native Welfare officers and representatives of the Catholic Church in Perth. Lümmer considered Little 'the co-founder, inspirator, soul and backbone of the Pallottine Centre ... let us work and pray that Edith Little may become the first canonised Aboriginal saint in heaven'.<sup>100</sup> High hopes indeed, but the Catholics still stopped short of ordaining Indigenous priests.

The Kimberley Pallottines embraced the concept of inculturation under pressure first from the state government and then from the federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA). This approach was pioneered by Fr Werner Kriener and Fr Peter Willis (who later left the Pallottines). The Australian Bishops Conference of 1978 agreed to a five-year period of enculturation of the liturgy, which meant that mass could be held in a local language or a mixture of languages. Inculturation built on a shared commitment to metaphysics, where Elders and missionaries were able to harness each others' ontologies, rituals and symbols to make room for the growth of an Indigenous church.

Fr Werner Kriener encouraged the merging of cultural symbolism. He witnessed and documented initiation ceremonies, and invited Indigenous creative participation in Christian rituals. The uptake from artists, performers and faithful was resounding. The Halls Creek artist Mangmang produced a carved sculpture of the pregnant Madonna drawing on the style of the *wandjina* figures typical for the Kimberley region. For Pentecostal celebrations in 1984, about 200 people travelled 250 km from Balgo to meet up with people from the Kimberley at Rockhole near Halls Creek. In a rocky cave, an area was cleared of grass and bushes to prepare a sandy ground for the performances. The men gathered early in the morning, around 6 am, to get painted and prepare for mass and then seated themselves on the prepared ceremonial ground. They had painted crosses and symbols of the Holy Spirit onto their bodies. The Balgo dancers wore their traditional pointed headgear, but with a cross painted on it, which they used for the dance during the holy mass, when transubstantiation transforms the altar wine into the blood of Christ. Parts of their body and headgear decorations were made from flower petals traditionally affixed with human blood. These symbolic affinities involving blood were like a closing of the loop of earlier mutual suspicion.

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100 John Luemmen and Brigida Nailon, *Led by the Spirit: Autobiography of Father John Luemmen SAC*, Imprint Potest Provincial of the Pallottines in Australia, Rossmoyne, WA, 1999, pp. 63, 64.

Dance groups accompanied the various priests to the altar, which consisted of an ordinary table decorated with paintings. The background was decorated with religious images painted especially for this occasion using chalk, ochre and red sandstone, with doves representing the Holy Spirit entering the community. One painting showed an Indigenous man with spear, peace doves, the Holy Spirit and the cross of Christ. Another represented the landscape and its hills, with a symbolic Mother and Child at the centre, captioned as ‘Yadanilu bilirgu’ (Spirit, come here) and subtitled ‘Welcome’.

Finally, there was also room for a bit of lampooning. Two young dancers, also adorned with crosses, were given the stage and impersonated an old Father with a walking stick. Looking through his albums in Limburg, the late Father Kriener, already hard of hearing to the point of deafness and unable to respond to questions, explained ‘Such dances serve to tell stories and to remember and commemorate. Important new developments are woven into the dances and thus recorded for the community’. Kriener treasured the mail he received from his former flock, even if it was just a quick ‘Happy Birthday, Father!’ from Mary Minga.

In the Kimberley, Kriener performed baptisms in the open air, sitting on the ground. For the baptism of 13 adults and 19 youths at Halls Creek in 1987, Kriener brought a large shell for holy water from the church. Other times, the baptismal font might be a nicely decorated plastic bucket, such as at Ringers Soak, where he baptised ‘the whole tribe’ with the candidates wearing a white headband. The white headband perhaps stood in for the everlasting flower tiara worn by German baptismal girls along with a white dress outfit including gloves, handbag, candle, candle font, shoes and stockings. As in Germany, the ceremony was followed with a good feed for everyone.

The Easter Passion Play at Turkey Creek was preceded by eight days of fasting, as there is always a fast when a close relation dies, and the resurrection of Christ was accompanied by a cleansing smoke ritual, as in a traditional funeral. The symbolic body of Jesus was dug out from the ground and laid onto a tree as in a traditional tree burial. Queenie McKenzie, the Warmun Elder leading the women’s dance troupe, played a leading role in the dance representation of the Stations of the Cross. The whole ceremony had to commence in the early hours of the morning because the Halls Creek Easter horseraces started at 10 am – another allowance made for the sake of cultural accommodation.

No doubt the high point in Fr Kriener's Kimberley experience was the Papal visit to Alice Springs in November 1986. Kriener and his congregation from Red Hill, Ringers Soak and Warmun, including Queenie MacKenzie and her by now famous dance troupe, were accommodated in the Catholic school at Alice Springs, decorated with the Australian Aboriginal flag, where they intoned Yawuru hymns. When the Pope finally arrived, Bishop Jobst had managed to occupy a prominent position with good view while Fr Kriener was hidden in the throng with the Kimberley people. However, John Paul II slowly wound his way through the thick crowd and personally greeted Fr Kriener, asking how the Pallottines in the Kimberley were faring, whereas the bishop watching from on high missed out on a close encounter.<sup>101</sup>

## Conclusions

Examining the motivations and roles of local intermediaries in the earliest mission period in each region, by carefully focusing the lens of mission records, we find some functionalist attitudes as well as genuine curiosity among Aboriginal people who stepped forward to the missionaries, and begin to sense the fundamental importance of cultural mediation.

A number of the anecdotes show Aboriginal men struggling for dignity next to missionaries assuming cultural superiority. Resistance strategies ranged from gentle humour, to contradicting the missionary, to sabotage and instilling fear, and many missionaries were faced with violence (to which we return in Chapter 6).

To recapitulate, the Zion Hill missionaries were of interest to Indigenous people primarily because of their supplies, including firearms, in the hope of such a station on one's own land. Later, Hausmann at Bethesda still misinterpreted the attention shown as interest in religion and conversion, whereas the Rapid Creek setting shows the rift in mutual expectations when some of the supplies were given to outsiders.

The case of Ebenezer and its early band of young male sympathisers suggests that Indigenous diplomats may also have had personal reasons for seeking the shelter of a completely new social order if they were in difficulties with their own people or with police. Moreover, preaching

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101 Interviews with Fr Werner Kriener at the Limburg monastery, 2011–13.

became a new source of prestige, and young Nathanael Pepper was allocated a wife and a cash wage, both of which also increased his standing at Ebenezer. The expectation that a wife would be allocated brought many younger Aboriginal men into missions. Pingilina, too, expected the missionaries to make sure that he had a wife and he also spread the news of such opportunities to other Aboriginal men. Getting supplies, a house, a spouse, an education and, perhaps, a wage were the surreptitious employer provisions in an unstipulated career progression for Indigenous people willing to engage with missionaries.

Another cluster of interest was the power of knowledge that the missionaries were displaying through books, reading and writing, as the anecdotes preserved from Ebenezer and Zion Hill suggest very strongly. In hindsight, it seems that the Zion Hill Lutherans trivialised precisely the man who showed the most interest in their spiritual powers when they described Wunkermany as speaking to the devil and as harbouring a superstition about books. What emerges is that in the early mission phase an earnest effort to embrace the missionary teaching could bring Aboriginal men into a situation where they were neither taken seriously by the missionaries nor by their Indigenous compatriots, and Pingilina's letters illustrate the identity loss that might result. Pastor Albrecht in Central Australia, too, was initially dismissive of the cultural counsel that people like Moses could offer, but eventually delegated evangelising responsibilities and so fostered the growth of an Indigenous church.

Where reliance on cultural mediators is concerned, social geography rather than denominational differences explain the different strategies of missionaries. In the centre and south of the Australian continent, the Muslim cameleers and Chinese pastoral and mining workers could not play this role for the Christian missionaries, so they relied more on Indigenous evangelists and took longer for first conversions, but in the polyethnic far north Catholics, Moravians and Lutherans resorted to an intermediate layer of imported workers to facilitate the growth of missions. Men from the marine industry assisted at Mapoon, at Cape Bedford, in the Kimberley missions and at Bathurst Island. Due to the geopolitics of empires, Filipinos played this facilitating role for the Catholic missions whereas Pacific Islanders were involved in Protestant missions.

However, the Pacific Island evangelists of the LMS, who forged the growth of an Indigenous church through intermarriage in the Torres Strait, became targets of government intervention as early as the 1870s, and later

the far-reaching impact of the White Australia policy made it increasingly difficult for such cultural intermediaries, like Puertellano, to conduct self-directed work. Eventually, the missionaries had to either adapt to local expectations, interpretations and rituals to involve locals, or quit.

The cultural rifts were too large to be bridged in the first generation of contact – with a few extraordinary exceptions such as the Peppers at Ebenezer, Pingilina at Cooper's Creek and Moses at Hermannsburg – but, generally, cultural interpreters with a longer personal history of exposure to whites were required to prepare the ground for a mission. Indigenous churches and congregations did not really take off until after World War II, when Indigenous evangelists raised on missions were placed in charge of outreach and outstations, and missionaries were ready to embrace local adaptations of their rituals, liturgies, interpretations and allusions. Yet the Catholic accommodation with polygamy, subincision, circumcision and magic remained uneasy. Missionaries reported battling against child marriage, forced marriage and infanticide,<sup>102</sup> and these are still the humanitarian issues that organisations like World Vision, CARE and others successfully flag to promote development aid.

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102 Margaret Zucker, *From Patrons to Partners: A History of the Catholic Church in the Kimberley 1884–1984*, University of Notre Dame Press, Broome, 1994, p. 178.

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