Preface

Accent-afflicted continental missionary patriarchs have left strong impressions in Aboriginal memories, and the collective Indigenous memory of mission evokes discipline, punishment, authority, confinement and loss. Indeed, missionaries from the Continent, but especially from Germany, have played an amazingly large role in the Australian mission effort. How strong their presence was, and why they were in Australia, is not widely understood.

Germany had a strong Pietist movement but no external empire until 1885, so German Protestant evangelists had to collaborate with Dutch and British organisations for mission placements. Because the former penal colonies were a relatively unattractive destination next to India, Africa or China, the British mission societies themselves strongly relied on German recruits for their first Australian missions, so that until the 1850s half of all mission efforts in Australia were staffed with German speakers. This strong participation continued up until World War I when it succumbed to strong anti-German agitations. But, remarkably in Western Australia, the German mission effort redoubled between the wars with the Catholic Pallottines maintaining a German-speaking presence in the Kimberley until 2000, and it is in regard to these that the Australian Research Council (ARC) Future Fellowship project (FT100100364) that underpins this book contributes the largest part of its original research.

What to expect of this book

This book is a short companion to the much more voluminous and detailed digital publication '**German Missionaries in Australia – A web-directory of intercultural encounters**'.[1] But, unlike the web-directory

---

1   Throughout this book you will find hyperlinks to that website styled **like this**.

and practically all single-authored work on missions, this book reads laterally across the different missions. It is not about particular figures or places or language groups but about deciphering patterns and dynamics. This lateral reading generates a completely different type of knowledge about missions. We begin to see whether a practice was widespread or extraordinary, and we can begin to quantify, even if imperfectly. We see that missions were never the brainchild of individual innovators but part of a connected web of ideas and projects, with tides of baptisms, and veritable mission rushes in the attempt to build competing confessional empires on Australian territory.

This book is about the connections, confluences and patterns that cannot emerge from histories of particular places, people or institutions. For its quantitative approach, the book draws on data from all Australian missions of all denominations, but its detailed discussion is confined to the less well-researched Continental missionaries who left records in languages other than English. They were mostly either German speakers or closely collaborating with German speakers, so this book opens up its scope from the German speakers covered in the companion website to the broader rubric of Continental missionaries: besides German Lutherans, Moravians and Pallottines, it ranges across French, Dutch and Spanish Trappists, Italian Salesians, Austrian Jesuits, a French/German team of Missionnaires du Sacré Coeur (MSC) in the Northern Territory, an Italian/Swiss Passionist team at Stradbroke Island, the English/German teams of Wellington Valley, an Italian/German team at Guildford, and also the multinational Benedictines of New Norcia and Drysdale River.

Until now, only John Harris of the Evangelical History Society has attempted a comprehensive overview of Australian missions. His large and much-cited book *One Blood* covers an even wider spectrum of missions – not just the Continental ones – organised in a broad geographical and chronological framework. It already showed that new insights are generated by placing different mission histories alongside each other. The present book differs from *One Blood* in that it draws chiefly on primary sources, and it does not give condensed histories of particular missions – that is the task of the web-directory that accompanies this book.

Readers who seek to know more about particular missionaries, missions or mission societies are referred to the web-directory by means of live links, as well as links to some other authoritative websites like the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* or Trove. The web-directory contains entries on the persons, places and institutions involved with German-speaking

missionaries in Australia. It drills down to detail on the 35 missions staffed by about 180 German-speaking missionaries, and includes illustrations and translated excerpts from letters and reports. It is built to a very large extent on primary material not previously accessed, mostly in German. This focus on German speakers seeks to capture a particular cultural and intellectual formation explicated in Chapter 7. The web-directory also hosts a time-dynamic **Map of Mission Locations**, which shows the entire Australian landscape of Christian missions as well as secular reserves from 1814 to 1967. The map shows the preponderance of German speakers among Australian missionaries, and how they gradually lost ground against non-German speakers, and against secular reserves. It also shows how quickly missions sprang up and disappeared across the Australian continent.

This book explores the agendas of mission societies, of missionaries on the ground and of the Indigenous people who most closely engaged with them, and enters into the subject position of all of them with both empathy and analytical rigour. Contradictory claims about missions are in current circulation – that they sought to civilise and assimilate, that they imprisoned Indigenous people, that they ensured the survival of Indigenous people, that they facilitated the survival of Indigenous languages. Under detailed historical investigation, all of these claims are true *to some extent*. In the process of this research, I have gained respect as well as empathy for the missionaries themselves, who were trained in theology to be thrown into force-fields of political manoeuvring; who came to look after souls and were left with the care of bodies.

An important and much neglected question is about the motivation of the Indigenous diplomats who facilitated the implantation of missions on Indigenous soils. Two unrelated namesake authors, Anna Kenny and Robert Kenny, addressed this intriguing question with regard to Hermannsburg and Ebenezer, both 'German-speaking missions' in my definition (see definitions below), and turned up interesting insights.[2] This book examines what we can reconstruct about Indigenous motivations from mission records. It also draws attention to the Pacific Islanders, Filipinos and other ethnic intermediaries who facilitated the emergence

---

2   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; Robert Kenny, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming: Nathanael Pepper and the Ruptured World*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 2007.

of missions, continuing the argument of my previous book, that ethnic relations in Australian history were triangulated, and cannot be properly understood across a black/white axis.[3]

At a glance

The detailed historical work in the companion website permits some quantitative judgements that have never before been available. When German missionaries in Australia are mentioned, South Australia generally springs to mind; but expressed as a proportion of the entire mission effort in each state, the German-speaking contribution to mission was greatest in the Northern Territory, followed by Victoria, South Australia and Queensland.

Until the turn of the nineteenth century, most new missions in the Australian colonies were located at the frontiers of settlement so that the missionaries entered sites of intense conflict. It was not unusual for them to arrive with police protection or soon request it, and several of the earliest missions were in or near government barracks and gaols, setting inauspicious signposts to Indigenous people.[4] When they were overtaken by colonial settlement, the missions were shifted away or closed down altogether, so that townships could be declared or the land otherwise divided. Throughout the mission period there were few years in which the Australian mission landscape remained unchanged, so that Aboriginal people as a whole needed to be highly adaptive and could not rely on any particular mission to reconstruct their lifestyle. The average lifespan of all Australian missions was 14 years – hardly enough to create a permanent shelter for an alternative future.

Regarding the number of people protected by missions from settler violence, we must be content with broad estimates. In most cases, the mission populations were layered into a small core of permanent residents,

---

3   Regina Ganter with Julia Martinez and Gary Lee, *Mixed Relations: Asian-Aboriginal Contact in North Australia*, University of Western Australia Publishing, Crawley, 2006; Regina Ganter, 'Turning the map upside down', *History Compass* 4.1 (2006): 26–35.
4   This was the case for **Ebenezer** mission, which was preceded by a spate of conflict in the Wimmera, on the **Daly River** after the Coppermine killings, for the Kimberley missions during the Kimberley land rush (see **Beagle Bay**), for **Hermannsburg** where, according to Pastor Schwarz, the government and settlers had 'attempted genocide', and the Coniston massacre renewed mission efforts in the Northern Territory (see **Gsell**).

surrounded by more or less seasonal camps, and a much larger population occasionally visiting. An outside estimate of 200 for such gatherings often occurs in the mission records. Assuming a generous average of 200 persons per mission, and mapping this estimate against the population estimates accepted as reasonably reliable by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), it appears that in 1888 about 5.5 per cent of the Aboriginal population was in reach of a mission, rising to 5.8 per cent in 1901. According to the ABS, the nadir in the Aboriginal population probably occurred in the first two decades of the twentieth century, reflected in the 1921 census as a dip to 72,000 persons. In that year, 28 missions encompassed perhaps 7.7 per cent of the Aboriginal population. The greatest number of missions operated from 1947 to 1954, when 53 missions might have reached around 14 per cent of the Aboriginal population. This means that in Australia the 'century of missions' was not the nineteenth, but the twentieth century – that is, after the frontier wars were over, and missions had shifted their character from places of refuge to places of confinement because they had become part of government policy and mostly catered for children of mixed descent removed from their families. It also means that the claim that missions prevented the annihilation of Indigenous populations is tenuous.

To flesh in the 'amazingly large role' of German-speaking missionaries in Australia with some data, they were almost equally divided between Catholics and Protestants,[5] and the average lifespan of the 35 missions staffed by German speakers is 14 years, which is also the average lifespan of all Australian missions to 1915.

By *mission*, I mean denominational missions supervised by religious, not the secular government reserves generally called 'mission' in New South Wales. I have excluded town orphanages and any mission attempts that lasted for less than one year (these are, however, included in the Australian

---

5   Of the 95 Protestants captured by this study, 44 were ordained priests, 14 were lay helpers from Germany, and 37 lay helpers were first-generation migrants from the southern Australian communities. The Catholics sent altogether 34 German-speaking Fathers, about 49 Brothers and two medical professionals (one female). This count excludes the accompanying spouses and the Catholic Sisters, and it also excludes the Australian-born children of German migrant parents, such as John Haussman, Paul Albrecht, Ted Strehlow and the Stolz/Reuther sons. But it includes the travelling missionaries Waldeck, Kramer and Doblies, and the Moravian Rev. Adolf **Hartmann**, about whose place of birth and education I am unsure. It also includes persons associated with other German religious, who came from what had been German-speaking territories (Jesnowski, Ratjaski, Tanzky, Contemprée, Sboril, Hulka, Longa, Girschnik, Claussen, Norup, Kierkegaard, Larson), including F.W. Albrecht from Poland and Fr F.X. Gsell from Alsace.

Government's website on the history of child welfare institutions, **Find & Connect**). By *missionaries*, I mean Brothers, Fathers, Pastors and lay helpers, which in many cases were the wives of Protestant pastors. The Catholic Sisters dropped out of my quantitative approaches because German-speaking Sisters only entered the Kimberley in the 1950s, at the outer end of the timeframe of my investigation, and were administered by separate organisations. '*German-speaking*' means that their first language was a form of German, not that they necessarily interacted in German. In trying to ascertain the number of *German-speaking missionaries*, I exclude the Australian-born staff (although some of them may also have been speaking German) and the non-employed wives and children of missionaries. *German-speaking missions* is a shorthand reference to the missions on which German-speakers were present. It does not necessarily mean that German was spoken on these missions, or that the missions were conducted by German organisations. It is meant to capture the encounter between Indigenous people and German speakers.

The strength of the German-speaking presence might be expressed by the number of missions on which they were present, or by the proportion of such missions in a given state or territory. However, the Australian mission landscape changed from year to year, and a short-lived mission had much less impact than a longlasting one. To arrive at a more meaningful quantification, I devised the concept of '*mission-years*', where a calendar year during which four missions were active counts as four mission-years.

In the Northern Territory until 1915, such German-speaking missionaries staffed six of the eight missions and made up 87 per cent of a total of 75 mission-years. In Victoria, German-speakers made up 67 per cent of its 212 mission-years, on four of nine missions to 1915. In South Australia, German-speakers made up 46 per cent of its 270 mission-years to 1915, on nine out of 13 missions. In Queensland, German-speakers staffed 45 per cent of mission-years on 10 out of 26 missions to 1915. In Western Australia, German-speakers made up 17 per cent of mission-years to 1915, but here they became more dominant after World War I. Reckoning up to 1950, German-speakers made up 26 per cent of mission years in Western Australia in seven out of a total of 25 mission locations. New South Wales as the oldest state underwent many changes in territorial boundaries. The mission period in NSW ended in 1849, with many stops and starts and a low average mission lifespan of 11 years. In the current geographical territory of NSW, German-speakers only contributed 10 per cent of mission years in only one of 10 locations to 1915. But, in the

territories actually administered by the colony of NSW,[6] German-staffed missions made up 16 per cent of mission years in three of 16 locations until 1915 with an average lifespan of just eight years. Tasmania never had Christian missions in the sense understood here.

Christianising versus civilising

It has generally been taken for granted that Christianising and civilising were two sides of the same coin. However, recent work by Christine Lockwood engages in particular with the men from the Dresden Mission Society to distinguish between the aims of secular governments, whose support was essential, and of the churches who sought to save souls and seed Indigenous churches. These goals were not naturally aligned. The Christianising/civilising complex arose from strategic alliances between church and state, and these alliances were always brittle.

Secular forces targeted a civilising function: pacifying the frontiers of white settlement to abate violence, gathering Indigenous people on reserves to free land for settlement, instilling the habits of industry and the sanitary behaviour required for a sedentary lifestyle, providing basic education and training to provide a labour force. On this register, the indicators of success were neatly dressed children, orderly song performances, the ability to read, write and speak English, engagement in housewifery, and the productive activities and income-earning capacities that promised independence from welfare.

The missionaries themselves were generally more focused on Christianising. Their register of success revolved around baptism and any expression of interest in the gospel and its associated objects, rituals and stories. Questions about the cross (strikingly similar to an Indigenous pictogram), about afterlife and heaven, about Jesus or Mary were joyfully reported and recorded as signs of interest, steps towards conversion and therefore salvation in the afterlife. The distinction between Christianising and civilising is blurred because not all missionaries adopted the same standards. A German Moravian pastor at **Yorke Peninsula**, for example, insisted that '[a]ll must properly comb and brush themselves, or they get

---

6   Historically, NSW included Zion Hill, Stradbroke Island, Port Essington, the Yarra mission, Buntingdale and some of the period of Lake Boga mission.

no breakfast'.[7] The Dresden missionaries in Adelaide, on the other hand, did not care whether the children attending their school were dressed. Needless to say, the latter had much less public support than the former.

The sacred and secular objectives left much room for strategic alliance between church and state. The missionaries mostly agreed that, in order to be taught, Aboriginal people had to adopt sedentary lifestyles and rescind much of their tradition. This created its own set of pressing problems as seasonal adaptations could no longer be observed and growing sedentary communities were quickly eating themselves out of their ecological niches.[8] For sedentary communities, food and accommodation had to be supplied, so that much of the missionary effort became quickly directed towards material conditions.

This holistic attitude to change magnified the funding problem. Colonial and Westminster governments might have been disposed towards facilitating a humanitarian reform agenda, but they were not prepared to carry its cost. They might provide some seed-funding, pay for a government schoolteacher to implement a government-approved curriculum, make some land available on revocable leases, deliver blankets and rations, or even pay a per capita allowance. In a number of instances where the available records allow a calculation, the government subsidy averaged to three pennies a day for each mission resident, a penny a meal. But even these piteous government subsidies were not reliable and could be withdrawn at short notice if expectations were not met: if English was not used as the language of instruction, if an ordained priest was not resident, if the missionary in charge was not married.

Because the missions had to engage in income-earning activities, many of them transformed into farms and cattle stations. Only the Aborigines Inland Mission departed from the model of missions as providers, by placing unsupported missionaries in Aboriginal communities who were themselves dependent on Aboriginal support. Elsewhere, income earning and productive engagement meant that the Fathers and pastors had to rely on Brothers and lay helpers who had practical skills but little theological training. It also meant that mission residents learned a host of skills in the farms, gardens, orchards, stations, woolsheds, smithies, workshops,

---

7   T.S. Archibald, *Yorke's Peninsula Aboriginal Mission: A Brief Record of its History and Operations*, Hussey and Gillingham, Adelaide, 1915.
8   Deborah Bird Rose, 'Signs of life on a barbarous frontier: Intercultural encounters in north Australia', *Humanities Research* 2 (1998): 17–36.

kilns, bakeries, butcheries, kitchens and sewing rooms – skills that might be useful for the different futures awaiting them, and that could equip them for self-reliance. Despite all this exertion, the missions were never actually self-supporting and therefore relied to a great degree on public subscriptions, and finally ended in welfare dependence.

The churches and the states agreed on the need for a sedentary lifestyle, but the question of land became the greatest impediment to a secure future for Indigenous communities. While missionaries often expressed the sentiment that they were, after all, on Indigenous land, which involved certain responsibilities, the state considered the whole territory as crown land.[9] Missionaries wanted to have secure access to land in order to engage in productive, self-supporting activities, and many of them had the idea of parcelling out small allotments to Indigenous Christian couples, starting with outstations, but aiming for secure tenure (see **Mapoon**, **Daly River**, **Rapid Creek**, **Cape Bedford**, **Weipa**, **Point Pearce**). However, the Constitution Acts of the Australian colonies made no provision for a secure land tenure except by purchase, which was far too expensive for the mission societies (see **Wellington Valley**, **Flierl**). Had secure tenure been granted to the Christian couples on the missions, the future of many Indigenous people in Australia would have looked very different.[10]

Insecure tenure meant that many missions were shifted from one location to another. This involved the loss of some people from the mission population and the dislocation of those who moved (for example, from Broome to **Cygnet Bay** and Drysdale River, from **Lake Condah** to Lake Tyers, from **Mari Yamba** to Hopevale, from **Bloomfield** to Yarrabah, and the various shifts of Little Flower mission). Such forced removals expedited the fragmentation of organic communities capable of exercising their own methods of governance. In the twentieth century, Chief Protectors signed off on massive numbers of forced removals, and often missions became the receptacles of such removed persons. This rendered it compulsory to remain on a mission – anyone brought in

---

9   'The Aborigines considered us as intruders in their country and considered our sheep their property. I had to learn a great deal and it was difficult for me to understand and work with Aborigines … The land was their property and they wanted us to give them food and supplies in return for using it.' Fr Alphonse Bleischwitz, founding Balgo mission in 1939, cited in Brigida Nailon, *Nothing is Wasted in the Household of God: Vincent Pallotti's Vision in Australia 1901–2001*, Spectrum, Richmond, 2001, p. 127.

10   Helen MacFarlane and John Foley, Kimberley Mission Review – Analysis and Evaluation of Church and Government involvement in the Catholic Missions of the Kimberley (n.d., ca 1981), State Records of Western Australia.

by police could not leave without permission. It also made it difficult to adhere to a local language for teaching and preaching. Only very few punitive removals of adults were initiated by missionaries (e.g. Weipa), but, ironically, an unsympathetic Chief Protector could object and intervene when missionaries asked some of their trusted Aboriginal staff to accompany them for tasks off the mission, such as helping to establish new sites (see, for example, Chief Protector Neville's objections to workers from Beagle Bay at **Rockhole**).

Tensions between protectors and missionaries became frequent as governments increasingly developed their own policies for the management of Indigenous populations, which were often in conflict with those of the missions. In general, German-speaking missionaries preferred to prevent outside employment and the mixing of different language groups, whereas governments aimed for the opposite, long before they formulated the policy of Assimilation. An apt expression of the anti-denominational intent of government bureaucracies is the way in which officials insisted on calling the missions by their geographical name instead of the name used by the mission societies: Moreton Bay instead of **Zion Hill**, Lake Hindmarsh instead of Ebenezer, Cape Bedford instead of Hope Valley, Daly River instead of St Joseph's, Cooper's Creek instead of Bethesda (later **Killalpaninna** named after the lake), Finke River instead of **Hermannsburg**.

Missionaries were quite aware of the loss of independence associated with government handouts and favours. The German-speaking bishops in charge of northern missions (**Gsell** and **Raible**) were very wary of accepting government appointments as local protectors and of accepting government grants tied to certain expectations. Pastor **Schwarz** at Hopevale also refused a subsidy as long as possible, and Rev. **Hey** preferred to raise money through the Presbyterian Women's Mission Union of Victoria for a teacher at Mapoon: 'I don't think we should beg everything we can get from the government because it might make us too dependent which could have dire consequences'.[11]

Most missionaries realised that their project would not be achieved within a generation. They felt that the hope of Christianising lay at best in the second generation, and therefore focused their efforts on children.

---

11   Hey to La Trobe, 28 March 1898, The Moravian Mission in Australia Papers, MF 186, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (AIATSIS).

This might mean removing children entirely from their parents and country (**Stradbroke Island**, Wellington Valley, Mari Yamba and, after World War II, **Beagle Bay** and the Kimberley missions), or it might involve dormitories at the core of the mission, still within reach of the parents on the perimeters. A few missions actually commenced with children whom the missionaries themselves removed (**Drysdale River** see Nicholas **Emo**) or who were removed by police (**Bathurst Island**, **Wandering Brook**, **Garden Point**). In the long run, the missionaries were not in a position to fend off the demands of governments and had to accept removed adults and children together with pro rata funding. At Mapoon, the number of children in the dormitories tripled within a year once removals of children began. Two years after the first removed children arrived, their entire access area including gardens, play areas and dormitories were wire-fenced, and the doors were controlled through wires from the mission house. Rev. Hey wrote with regret: 'We are now a penitentiary'.[12]

The missions were in a pincer of expectations, and missionaries could come under fire from criticism from all sides – interfering government officers, jealous settler neighbours, inquisitive journalists, resentful Indigenous people and, most difficult to cope with, their own ranks.

Chapter preview

This book is organised thematically, and therefore does not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of any of the missions, missionary figures or mission societies, all of which is provided in the accompanying web-directory. The first three chapters address the geopolitics of mission and the circumstances that led to competitive mission 'rushes' in Australia, looking through the lens of the organisations that oversaw and managed the mission effort. The first chapter focuses on the tension between Protestants and Catholics and the emerging jealousies within the early Catholic Church in Australia. Chapter 2 explores the remarkable factionalism of Australian Lutherans and explains the different intellectual formation provided in various mission colleges. Chapter 3 traces the competitive northward extension of mission where the shape of colonial empires provided the framework for confessional empire building, so that the rise and decline of missions is mapped onto geopolitical circumstances.

---

12   Walter Roth, Annual Report of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, *Queensland Votes and Proceedings*, 1903, Vol. 2, p. 470.

The second half of the book explores the intentions, or agendas, of two other stakeholders: the missionaries on the ground and Indigenous people who engaged with them, again proceeding inductively from the mission records. Chapter 4 examines the ontological dynamics from which meaning was created in early mission contact settings where the Christian focus on the supernatural became interesting and decipherable to Indigenous Australians. Chapter 5 explores the local diplomats and imported workers from the Pacific Rim who inserted themselves as intermediaries into the culture clash between foreign missionaries and local populations. This resists the portrayal often encountered in mission narratives of a lonely missionary encountering 'wild natives' and gives due credit to the mission pioneers from a range of ethnic backgrounds who were not formally members of staff. Chapter 6 looks at mission life from the point of view of staff, including the motivations they claimed for mission work. The Lutheran Church tends to claim a characteristic engagement with Indigenous languages, and therefore vernacular language maintenance. The Indigenous language revival in South Australia is entirely underpinned by German missionary sources, but can we make these claims across the board of German-speaking missionaries? These hard questions about the 'German difference' are addressed in Chapter 7.

What the chapters all have in common is that they delve into the major sources of tension: between Catholics and Protestants, between German and British missionaries, between the Church and the State, and between Indigenous and White expectations, all located in complex force fields of diverse opinions, factions and alliances, so that the monolithic force-field of 'missionaries' or 'colonisers' crumbles in the face of diverse concrete realities. When one takes into consideration the rifts between English and German approaches, between religious and scientific approaches, between the pragmatic and egalitarian Moravians and the mysticism and hierarchy-devoted Catholics, there is not much left of a monolithic Western knowledge system encountering the Indigene. This in itself should be empowering for the postcolonial project.

The uses of mission historiography

Indigenous historiography has not been particularly interested in differentiating between colonisers. For Eve Fesl, the 'Dresden missionaries incarcerated Nungga in what could be described as concentration

camps'.[13] According to Christine Lockwood, the Dresden missionaries were the least likely of all missionaries to concern themselves with material conditions, discipline and surveillance. Fesl, at this early stage of Indigenous-authored historiography in 1993, was more interested in theorising broad antagonisms than in detailed examination. Broad sketches of contradictory interests (like workers/capitalists, men/women, Orient/Occident, Black/White, Muslim/Christian) can mobilise populations into political action and bring about change. But they can also be disempowering and misleading.

Because missions became so drawn into government policies, histories of Aboriginal policy have not clearly distinguished between Christian missions and secular government reserves. In the 1970s, Charles Rowley applied Irving Goffman's then fashionable concept of the total institution to reserves and missions. Later Foucauldian ideas, such as governmentality, were used to probe to the underlying power relations.[14] According to Michel Foucault's history of prisons, the total institutions that became so expert at reshaping and re-forming individual selves were driven by the impulse of humanitarian reform. These reforms introduced new regimes of disciplining the body so that torture was replaced by the chain gang, and the chain gang gave way to the panoptical prison affording constant surveillance.[15] In analogy, we might say that the Australian colonial regimes shifted from open warfare to retributive policing to incarceration on reserves for constant surveillance. These were not strictly speaking regimes of punishment for doing something, they were regimes for being something, for being a member of a group 'most likely' to cause objection or obstruction. Foucault's deconstructions are persuasive, but they are not empowering. Even the humanising discourse of psychiatry (and, by analogy, the humanist discourse of mission and conversion) appears as a ploy of oppression. Such a defeatist analysis fixates the underlying power relations as remaining essentially the same, without ever acceding that a prisoner may indeed prefer surveillance to torture – if liberty is not an option on the table. Foucault doesn't just switch on light bulbs, he stuns the reader with floodlight: power relations do not

---

13   Eve Fesl, *Conned! Eve Mumewa D. Fesl Speaks Out on Language and the Conspiracy of Silence: A Koorie Perspective*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1993, p. 210.

14   Charles Rowley, *Aboriginal Policy and Practice: The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*. Vol. 1, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1970; Rosalind Kidd, *The Way We Civilise: Aboriginal Affairs, the Untold Story*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1997.

15   Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Vintage, New York, 1977.

shift, oppression becomes inexorable, any 'exit' signs are obscured and we remain caught in a straight-jacket of self-perpetuating power relations. For the disempowered, this means a loss of hope, and must give rise to anger. A historically differentiated account of individuals and groups of people with often conflicting agendas and interests is better suited to Reconciliation – if revolution is not an option on the table. This book attempts to look at the Continental missionaries from the 'other side of the altar' – in approbation of Henry Reynolds who demonstrated how much Australian historiography can gain by examining the different sides of a contest. Here, the 'other side of the altar' means the space occupied by the few at the front, the missionaries themselves.

Missionary writings are among the earliest records of contact, and missionaries also made a significant contribution to anthropology and ethnography in Australia. They collected legends and myths, and acquired, and taught in, local Indigenous languages. They could not foresee how – in today's native title environment where historical connection to land needs to be demonstrated – such mission practices may assume far-reaching significance when it is through such stories that Indigenous claims to land might be substantiated.[16]

Chris Anderson observed 20 years ago that with the development of anthropological training in Australian universities, and increasing opportunities for fieldwork, missionary sources fell out of favour and were for a long time 'all but left out' of a scholarship in which 'the battle lines have been too sharply drawn'.[17] On one side of the 'battle lines' were the missionary voices captured in their own records and those historians – mainly of the cloth – who argued that they sheltered Aboriginal people from extinction, extermination and abuse. On the other side were secular historians and anthropologists focusing on the dysfunctions on missions – excessive punishments, sexual transgressions and the erosion of traditional social structures – and Indigenous people who primarily referred to the confinement and paternalism on mission reserves and the prohibitions on traditional practices.

---

16   R.M.W. Dixon, *The Languages of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980; Luise Hercus and Kim McCaul, 'Otto Siebert: The missionary-ethnographer', in Walter Veit (ed.), *The Struggle for Souls and Science: Constructing the Fifth Continent: German Missionaries and Scientists in Australia*, Occasional Paper No. 3, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs, 2004, pp. 36–50.
17   Christopher Anderson (ed.), *Politics of the Secret*, Oceania Monograph 45, University of Sydney, Sydney, 1995, p. 1.

Tony Swain and Deborah Rose tried to shift that perspective around the time of the Australian Bicentennial when interest in missions was at a low ebb.[18] Since then, under the impact of native title research, mission records have been mined for information on claims to land, family connections and cultural maintenance, for language reclamation and the study of linguistic shifts. Indeed, more than one PhD per year on average has been produced since the 1950s on Aborigines and missions in Australia generally. Much of this work was not primarily interested in the missions themselves, but rather in what their records reveal about Indigenous people, culture and history.

Mission history proper has come into academic focus in the framework of transnational history that looks for connections and cross-influences in empires and colonies. The Catholic Church is the transnational institution *par excellence*, and Rebekka Habermas notes that missionaries with their international networks were among the best-connected professions.[19] New questions have been asked of the material, such as about the role of women on missions, the importance of Indigenous evangelists and the role of missions in pacifying the frontiers of expanding empires. In Western Australia, Jacqueline van Gent investigated gender issues of mission history for her postdoctoral work, and Peggy Brock, Gareth Griffiths and Norman Etherington contributed to collections of more comparative work.[20] In Melbourne, Pat Grimshaw, Andrew Brown-May, Amanda Barry and others began to collaborate on an ARC discovery grant in 2006 to produce two edited collections on missions in the British Empire.[21] The history of English-speaking missions in Australia, and their positioning in the British Empire, is now well researched.

18   Tony Swain and Deborah Bird Rose (eds), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies*, Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Bedford Park, SA, 1988.
19   Rebekka Habermas, 'Mission im 19. Jahrhundert – Globale Netze des Religiösen', *Historische Zeitschrift* 287 (2008): 641; Wayne Hudson, 'Religious citizenship', *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 49.3 (2003): 425–29.
20   Peggy Brock (ed.), *Indigenous Peoples, Christianity and Religious Change*, Brill, Leiden, 2005; Norman Etherington (ed.), *Missions and Empire*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2005.
21   Pat Grimshaw and Andrew May (eds), *Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Exchange*, Sussex Academic Press, Eastbourne, 2010; Amanda Barry, Joanna Cruickshank and Andrew Brown-May (eds), *Evangelists of Empire? Missionaries in Colonial History*, Melbourne University Conference series Vol. 18, eScholarship Research Centre in collaboration with the School of Historical Studies and with the assistance of Melbourne University Bookshop, Melbourne, 2008.

A substantial literature also engages with the German-speaking missions in central and southern Australia, although few were able to access the German materials.[22] Interest in Lutheran histories has been primarily directed towards their South Australian involvements rather than their missions in Queensland and Victoria. Linguists associated with the University of South Australia such as Rob Amery, Mary-Anne Gale and Peter Mühlhäusler, as well as Luise Hercus in Canberra, have done much to appraise the language records of Lutheran missionaries, and continue to inspire detailed postgraduate work on Indigenous languages such as by Clara Stockigt and Heidi Kneebone. Also, the South Australian Museum holds extensive collections of material culture and manuscripts from Lutheran missionaries. Its anthropologists, particularly Peter Sutton and Philip Jones, have created interest in some of the Lutheran missionaries.[23] Interest in this material was also spawned by Christine Steven's popular history of the Lutheran missions in South Australia, *White Man's Dreaming* (1994), which relied on translated materials and secondary sources, and more recently by the higher degree research of

22   W.H. (Bill) Edwards, *Moravian Aboriginal Missions in Australia 1850–1919*, Uniting Church Historical Society (SA), Adelaide, 1999; Kay Saunders (Kay Evans), 'Missionary Effort Towards the Cape York Aborigines, 1886–1910, a Study of Culture Contact', Honours thesis, University of Queensland, 1969; Joc Schmiechen, 'The Hermannsburg Missionary Society in Australia 1866–1894, a Study in Aboriginal and European Interaction During First Contacts', Honours thesis, University of Adelaide, 1971; Noel Pearson, 'Ngamu-ngaadyarr, Muuri-bunggaga and Midha Mini in Guugu Yimidhirr history: Dingoes, Sheep and Mr Muni in Guugu Yimidhirr History: Hope Vale Lutheran Mission 1900–1950', Honours thesis, University of Sydney, 1986; Christine Choo, *Mission Girls: Aboriginal Women on Catholic Missions in the Kimberley, Western Australia, 1900–1950*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth, 2001; Robert Kenny, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming*. German materials were accessed by Anna Kenny, *The Aranda's Pepa*; and Felicity Jensz, *Moravian Missionaries in the British Colony of Victoria, Australia, 1848–1908: Influential Strangers,* Brill, Leiden, 2010.

23   Rob Amery, *Warrabarna Kaurna! Reclaiming an Australian Language*, Swets & Zeitlinger, Lisse, Netherlands, 2000, pp. 105–06; Rob Amery, 'Beyond their expectations: Teichelmann and Schürmann's efforts to preserve the Kaurna language continue to bear fruit', in Walter Veit (ed.), *The Struggle for Souls and Science: Constructing the Fifth Continent: German Missionaries and Scientists in Australia*, Occasional Paper No. 3, Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs, 2004, pp. 9–28; Mary-Anne Gale, *Dhanum Djorra'wuy Dhäwu: A History of Writing in Aboriginal Languages*, Aboriginal Research Institute, University of South Australia, Underdale, 1997; Peter Mühlhäusler, 'Exploring the missionary position', *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 14.2 (1999): 339–46; Peter Mühlhäusler, *Linguistic Ecology: Language Change and Linguistic Imperialism in the Pacific Region*, Routledge, London, 2002; Stephen A. Wurm, Peter Mühlhäusler and Darrell T. Tryon (eds), *Atlas of Languages of Intercultural Communication in the Pacific, Asia, and the Americas*. Vol. 3, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, 1996; Clara Stockigt, 'Early descriptions of Pama-Nyungan ergativity', *Historiographia Linguistica* 42.2–3 (2015): 335–77; Clara Stockigt, 'Pama-Nyungan Morphosyntax: Lineages of Early Description', PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 2016; Philip Jones, Peter Sutton and Kaye Clark, *Art and Land: Aboriginal Sculptures of the Lake Eyre Region*, South Australian Museum, Adelaide, 1986; Philip G. Jones, '"A Box of Native Things": Ethnographic Collectors and the South Australian Museum, 1830s–1930s', PhD thesis, Department of History, University of Adelaide, 1997.

Heidi Kneebone on Lutheran missionaries from Hermannsburg, and of Christine Lockwood on Lutheran missionaries from Dresden, both strongly grounded in primary research at the Lutheran Archives Australia (LAA). The most recent works on particular Lutheran missionaries are by Anna Kenny, who tackles the intellectual formation of Carl Strehlow, and by Susanne Froehlich, who released the unabridged diary of her ancestor Johann Flierl in the original German with extensive annotations. Johann Flierl's life spans the South Australian Lutheran missions, the Lutheran foray into north Queensland and the missionary colonisation of Papua New Guinea. The latter became a much more important field for German missionaries than Australia, so that in Germany the mission historians tend to focus their attention on mission history in Papua New Guinea, Africa or India, rather than Australia, with very few exceptions.[24]

The northern histories of German engagement on missions are comparatively neglected. Research on the north Queensland Lutheran missions was propelled mainly by anthropological inquiry and without much access to German materials.[25] The German speakers in the Northern Territory and Western Australia are even less well researched by academics. Deborah Rose accessed the English translation of the Daly River Diary for the Malak Malak land claim.[26] Christine Choo was more concerned to tell the Indigenous side of the Kimberley mission experience and used oral history as her primary research tool. Attention has sometimes turned to notable figures in mission history, particularly scholars who have produced ethnographic or linguistic work. The linguist William McGregor has

---

24   Theo Ahrens, 'Concepts of power in a Melanesian and biblical perspective', *Missiology: An International Review* 5.2 (1977): 141–73; Theo Ahrens, 'On grace and reciprocity: A fresh approach to contextualization with reference to Christianity in Melanesia', *International Review of Mission* 89.355 (2000): 515–28; Wilfried Wagner (ed.), *Kolonien und Missionen: Referate des 3. internationalen kolonialgeschichtlichen Symposiums 1993 in Bremen.* Vol. 12, Lit, Münster, 1994; Heinz Schütte, 'Lokale Reaktionen auf evangelische Missionsbemühungen im kolonialen Neuguinea 1887-1914', in Wilfried Wagner (ed.), *Rassendiskriminierung, Kolonialpolitik und ethnisch-nationale Identität*, Bremer Asien-Pazifik Studien Vol. 2, Lit, Münster/Hamburg, 1992, pp. 497–509; Christine Winter, *Looking After One's Own: The Rise of Nationalism and the Politics of the Neuendettelsauer Mission in Australia, New Guinea and Germany (1921–1933)*, Peter Lang Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2012. Britta Duelke, *'Same but Different' Vom Umgang mit Vergangenheit: Tradition und Geschichte im Alltag einer nordaustralischen Aborigines-Kommune*, Studien zur Kulturkunde 108, Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, Köln, 1998 is a notable exception.

25   Anthropologist Chris Anderson described the Kuku Yalanji in his 1985 PhD thesis, Bruce Rigsby engaged with the languages of Cape York Peninsula, and Peter Sutton collaborated with Rigsby on several publications. Sutton requested translations for the Wik Native Title case. Peter Sutton and Bruce Rigsby. 'People with "politicks": Management of land and personnel on Australia's Cape York Peninsula', *Resource managers: North American and Australian hunter-gatherers* (1982): 155–71.

26   Rose, 'Signs of life on a barbarous frontier'.

engaged with the work of Fr Ernst Worms and Fr Hermann Nekes in the Kimberley. McGregor edited their massive manuscript on *Australian Languages* and published several commentaries on their work.

The history of the Kimberley, Daly River and MSC missions has been largely left in the hands of the churches. Margaret Zucker produced a history of the Kimberley missions commissioned by the late Bishop John Jobst and was therefore able to access the diocesan archives in Broome closed to other researchers. Other publications focused on individuals or were geared towards the commemoration of beginnings, and carry a strong flavour of progress narrative.[27] However, in 2005, Sister Brigida Nailon published the correspondence of the redoubtable Fr Nicholas Emo, which allows access in English for the first time to the turbulent Trappist history of Beagle Bay to 1899. Because Nailon's book is of much interest for the people of the Kimberley, but is difficult to locate, I have drawn on it extensively for the web-entries on **Beagle Bay** and **Emo**.

With regards to the Kimberley missions, these were strongly dominated by the Pallottine Society based in Limburg. Their history in Australia does not conform to the worldwide pattern of implosion during World War I, on the contrary, the loss of the German external empire only reinvigorated their Australian presence. The major focus of my research on the Pallottines was on the first 15 years to World War I, but I have also attempted to cover their subsequent activities in Australia as far as possible, mindful that several of the Pallottine staff were still alive during my research.

Spelling and naming conventions

Wherever known, the religious affiliation of authors and the linguistic affiliation of Aboriginal people is specified. However, it is fallacious to assume that an Aboriginal person is, say, Bardi merely because they are at Beagle Bay. The Indigenous diplomats who helped to establish missions were not necessarily locals, and the people who settled on missions were not necessarily traditional owners. Many mission sites were strategically located at the meeting sites of several different groups. It is therefore

---

27   Francis Byrne, *A Hard Road: Brother Frank Nissl 1888–1980: A Life of Service to the Aborigines of the Kimberleys*, Tara House, Nedlands, 1989; Margaret Zucker, *From Patrons to Partners: A History of the Catholic Church in the Kimberley 1884–1984*, University of Notre Dame Press, Broome, 1994.

not advisable to be more specific than the sources themselves. I use non-specific collective terms like 'locals', 'Aboriginal people' or 'mission residents', unless their linguistic affiliation has been determined in reliable sources.

Where language groups are specified, it is nigh impossible to be orthographically correct, since each orthography is an approximation based on the writer's linguistic background and that of the intended readership, such as Strehlow's Aranda and Spencer's Arrernte. The AIATSIS language database does not settle such differences, and some of the ethnic descriptors used by missionary sources cannot be matched to that database. Working from very diverse sources and across vast regional differences, I have not attempted to impose a consistent orthographic standard (preferred by English or German speakers) across the spelling of language names. I indicate alternative spelling in brackets at least once to facilitate keyword searches.

Mission archives

There is little awareness in the communities of the type of material held in mission archives, including rich mines of photographs, and few academic historians have used mission records extensively because they are so difficult to access. Most of the German handwritten manuscripts are in Sütterlin and related forms of old German lettering that is very difficult to decipher for modern German speakers, so that some mission archives now offer training in Sütterlin to help their users access the materials. A sample of this handwriting style appears on the **Introduction** to the web-directory.

Mission archives differ greatly from each other. The archival holdings for the Pallottine missions in the Kimberley are dispersed between the Archives of the Pallottine Community in Rossmoyne (Perth), the Zentralarchiv der Pallottinerprovinz (ZAPP) in Limburg (Germany), unarchived diocesan records in Broome not accessible to research, records of the Irish St John of God Sisters held in Broome, the Trappist archives in Sept Fons (France) and in the mother houses of the Trappists and Pallottines in Rome. Of these, I only accessed the Rossmoyne and Limburg archives, and could have spent several more fruitful years of research there. A meticulously researched institutional history of the German Province of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate by Antonia Leugers, written as the history of an

enterprise that sidestepped questions of faith, proved to be an excellent orientation aid.[28] The Pallottine archives in Limburg hold records of the ordained Fathers as well as the Brothers, and these often give insightful counter-narratives of events on the missions. The material is mostly in German, mostly handwritten and includes stenographic annotations, many abbreviations and easily four languages in a single sentence, like this entry in the diary of Beagle Bay mission:

> Cape l'Ev. mail per Salv. geschickt. Sr. Fl. malade – 28 Sept.[29]

Mission diaries are full of such humdrum and yield very little to a superficial reading, but they offer a marvellous amount of detail to sustained investigation. In the case of Daly River, it was possible to reconstruct insightful biographies of several mission residents. Much of the Daly River records are held by Society of Jesus archive in Melbourne. Other Catholic archives with material relevant to Australian missions are the MSC archives in Sydney and Issoudun, and the Benedictine archives of New Norcia. Except for the latter, these archives are not equipped for public access. They have no schedule of fees and charges for archive use, are not publicly funded and have no onus to release institutional records to the public. Responding to the requests of visitors merely adds to the workloads of part-time and, in some cases, honorary archivists.

The Protestant archives are in general more habituated to public access. The LAA in Adelaide have a circle of 'friends of the archives', including a band of volunteers who have for many years been transcribing and translating the German records. This renders them easily accessible and the LAA records have been used extensively by linguists, anthropologists and regional and family historians. The staff and friends of the LAA are very used to the presence of researchers who are 'not our people'.[30] An extremely valuable scaffold for research is the LAA's 'Weiss index' of all German Lutheran (and Moravian) pastors in Australia. Digitised transcripts of a growing number of records as well as images can be ordered electronically.

---

28   Antonia Leugers, *Eine geistliche Unternehmensgeschichte: Die Limburger Pallottiner-Provinz 1892–1932*, EOS Verlag, St Ottilien, 2004.

29   It means: 'Forwarded mail on to Cape Leveque on the San Salvador, Sister Flight sick until 28 September'. Diary of Wilhelm Droste, (Pater), P1 Nr 17, Zentralarchiv der Pallottinerprovinz (ZAPP).

30   Comment by Dr Lois Zweck, then president of the Friends of the Lutheran Archives, Adelaide, 2007.

The Neuendettelsau archives (now Mission EineWelt) have long been difficult to access and were recently moved to the state church archives in Nürnberg (Landeskirchliches Archiv). Similarly, the few surviving records of the Gossner Mission and Berliner Missionsgesellschaft (Berlin Mission Society) are administered by the Kirchliches Archivzentrum in Berlin. The records of the Hermannsburg Mission Society and of the Basel Mission Society (now Mission 21) are still held by the respective societies and are accessible to researchers, and Mission 21 has a comprehensive website for ordering images.

As far as Moravian missions in Australia are concerned, much of their material is in English. It has been used by Bill Edwards, Hilary Carey, Robert Kenny, Jane Lydon and Felicity Jensz.[31] Little use has been made of the microfilms held by AIATSIS of material from the Moravian archives in Herrnhut (Archiv der Brüderunität). I translated some of these for the Wik Native Title case in 1995 and since found that it is far easier to navigate through this correspondence in the original in Herrnhut than on the microfilms at AIATSIS.[32]

Acknowledgements

In several archives not designed for public admittance, I was humbled by the generous access I was granted, including the use of photocopiers, scanners and desk space, informative conversations and often invitations to partake in the meals.

In the archives of the Limburg monastery, I was the first Australian 'not of the cloth'. The personal files I requested had never been inspected, and Br Georg Adams SAC, who patiently piled them up for me, acquisitioned them as I was requesting them, which is why they are numbered from P1 for Personal File 1. They contained anything from an Iron Cross, to a Vatican Passport, to files on court cases and correspondence with descendants, and were clearly only meant as an internal repository.

---

31   Edwards, *Moravian Aboriginal Missions*, 1999; Kenny, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming*; Jensz, *Moravian Missionaries*; Jane Lydon, *Fantastic Dreaming: The Archaeology of an Aboriginal Mission*, Rowman Altamira Press, Lanham, MD, 2009; Hilary M. Carey, 'Companions in the wilderness? Missionary wives in colonial Australia, 1788–1900', *Journal of Religious History* 19.2 (1995): 227–48.
32   Regina Ganter, 'Letters from Mapoon: Colonising aboriginal gender', *Australian Historical Studies* 29.113 (1999): 267–85.

I thank Br Adams and the Provinzial for the trust vested in me, and for the hospitality during several periods in the monastery – a remarkable experience.

At the Pallottine Archives in Rossmoyne (Perth), also not equipped for public access, Australian Pallottine Regional Fr Eugene San kindly granted admission. Its part-time archivist, Dr Roberta Cowan, became a staunch source of valuable information, pointing me to published and unpublished materials, and patiently proofread and corrected my web-entries on the Pallottines with a great investment of time. Fr John Winson SAC and the retired Brothers in Kew (Melbourne) also received me with kindness and hospitality, and granted undisturbed access to the library of Fr Ernst Worms, who spent his last years there.

At the MSC archives in Issoudun, reserved for members of the cloth, Fr Pierre Bailly MSC prepared for me all published sources regarding F.X. Gsell and gifted me Gsell's autobiography in French. At the Chevalier Centre in Kensington (Sydney), Br Anthony Caruana MSC guided me to valuable resources, including the enormous photo collection from the MSC missions in the Northern Territory in the process of getting digitised, Fr Gsell's card index of mission residents and Caruana's own almost complete book manuscript of a history of the Australian MSC missions.

In the archives of the Society of Jesus in Hawthorn (Melbourne), I was able to access the Catalog of the Austrian Mission and the Daly River mission diaries and correspondence translated from Latin by Paddy Dalton SJ and F.J. Dennett SJ. The archivist, Br Michael Head SJ, gifted me a copy of the very useful *Australian Dictionary of Jesuit Biography 1848–1998*.

The staff and 'friends of the archives' at the LAA in Adelaide, Lyall Kupke, Rachel Kuchel and Dr Louis Zweck made it a welcoming and generous research site that I visited and contacted often. In the archives of Mission 21 (Basel), director Dr Guy Thomas and archivist Claudia Wirthlin offered assistance and provided access; in the Hermannsburg Missionsgesellschaft, Dr Hartwig Harms welcomed me; and in Herrnhut, archivist Rüdiger Kröger provided access and guidance. The directorate of Mission EineWelt in Neuendettelsau provided access to files while the archives were closed in the absence of the archivist Frau Hagelauer. Director of the Kirchliches Archivzentrum in Berlin Dr Wolfgang Krogel made every effort to guide me to the patchy holdings of the former mission societies in Berlin that were in the process of getting digitised.