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**Theme: 'Margins, Mission and Diversity'****Looking into a Mirror —  
Aboriginal people in Kurna Country and Missionary Teichelmann 1838-1840**

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**Abstract**

The story of the four Lutheran Dresden missionaries in South Australia has been told so far either from its background in Germany, the Australian colonial or mission history, or from a linguistic perspective. Few accounts have given a voice to the people most affected, the various Aboriginal communities whose plight is being documented in the missionaries' diaries, letters and reports.

This paper examines, as a first experiment, the writings by missionary Teichelmann, one of the most vocal and critical of the "Dresden-Four". His papers reflect a three-party discourse between his colleagues, the Dresden Mission Society and the colonial administration in South Australia, and the Kurna people.

Embedded in his writings are numerous dialogues between himself and the Kurna people, indicating a mutual respect and recognition, and a self-agency of interaction by the Kurna.

This paper also briefly summarises for the first time the mission education of Teichelmann in Berlin.

[149 words]

**Biographical Information**

Born 1952 in Frankfurt/M, Germany, I graduated as a Christian Community Educator at the Protestant University of Applied Sciences in Darmstadt and studied Theology in Wuppertal, Bochum and Heidelberg. In Germany, I worked in Ecumenical and inter-cultural community education, with refugees and migrants from Africa and Asia, and for mission agencies with partners from around the world. I came to Australia in 2006, and after developing an interest in the history of the Kurna Language reclamation and revival, now support *Kurna Warra Pintyanhti* (KWP) part-time in administration, liaising and research.

I am grateful for comments by Rob Amery, Christine Lockwood, Peter Mühlhäusler and Ghil'ad Zuckermann, and to the Kurna Community for accepting me as a staff worker in their language team.

[122 words]

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## Looking into a Mirror —

### Aboriginal people in Kurna Country and Missionary Teichelmann 1838-1840

#### Introduction

The story of the first missionaries in South Australia between 1838 and 1858 has already been told at this conference in more detail. This paper focuses on some aspects of the training of the Dresden missionaries and their immediate interaction with the Aboriginal people.

The four young missionaries produced a considerable collection of diaries and letters which they sent to the Dresden Mission Society. They also published grammars, dictionaries and ethnographic descriptions for three Aboriginal language communities: *Kurna* (Adelaide Plains), *Ramindjeri* (Encounter Bay), and *Barngarla* (Eyre Peninsula).

On first sight, there seems to be little in the missionaries' writings detailing their principles for recording and systematising these languages, and their interaction with the Aborigines around them. Unsurprisingly, most of their writings deal with their struggle of survival in a two-year old colony at the time of their arrival.

This is reflected in many church and mission histories. However, the missionaries' "failure" to baptise any of the Aboriginal people into the Christian faith made their work little more than a footnote in SA mission history. Even more marginal are the two key elements which determined the entire existence of the missionaries amongst Aboriginal peoples: their language learning and their "mission dialogues".

Learning a language in order to interact as a Christian missionary with an alien people is not as simple as, say, being an explorer. Yet, mission histories describe the learning of the Aboriginal languages as almost a solitary act by these young missionaries: It was *they* who acquired a knowledge of the languages ... full stop!

As well as describing their day-to-day struggles, the four Dresden missionaries document a strong commitment to learning the language, and the desire to speak it fluently, in order to preach to their mission subjects – which is what they had trained for and was part of their instructions<sup>1</sup>. Their papers paint a picture of lively interaction with the Aboriginal peoples, not only describing the communication between the missionaries and the natives, but also the Aborigines' responses.

For the purpose of this paper I examined the diary and letters by missionary Teichelmann, focusing on his "mission dialogues" with the Aboriginal people and in particular *their action*. Intertwined with these accounts are references to the missionaries' command of the Kurna Language. However, my research is in an early stage, and more material needs to be evaluated.

The role of such documents in inter-colonial discourse and their limitation in reflecting reality has been widely discussed.<sup>2</sup> Teichelmann's papers are not different. As part of an ongoing debate with the mission society they attempt to justify his policies, actions, and thoughts — often voicing his frustrations. They don't paint a rosy picture of a successful mission — probably to the frustration of his mission director!

Teichelmann was very much a German and missionary — honest, outspoken and direct, which did not endear him to his peers, mission society and colonial representatives. However, Teichelmann's notes reflect a deep commitment to the Aborigines. Indeed, he quotes many debates with them, particularly in response to his missionizing.

Teichelmann's writings are like a mirror: In justifying his own activities, he also described the agency of the Kurna around him. Even more significant is their discourse with him about theology, culture and life in the process of colonisation. His proselytizing — unsuccessful as it was — indicates Teichelmann's increasing perception of their language and culture, and conversely a reluctant respect and acceptance by the Kurna people.

Teichelmann's papers thus document a three-party discourse: with his colleagues, with the representatives of the sending agency and the colonial authorities, and with the Aboriginal community as the focal point of all interaction. In essence, their core is the story of the people who lived in this country before the invasion and had to face their society's extermination. These stories therefore belong to them.

### **Christian Gottlob Teichelmann's educational background**

Born in 1807 into the family of a cloth maker in the small town of Dahme, 100 km south of Berlin, Teichelmann learned the trade of a carpenter. As was popular at the time, he took to the road as a young tradesman through Prussia where he met a group of Christians. Through them he learned about the London Missionary Society, motivating him to convert to Christianity and to become a "messenger of peace" to the heathen.<sup>3</sup>

While undertaking vocational studies in Berlin in 1829, he became friendly with students of the then only existing mission training institute in Germany, established by the Bohemian-Lutheran pastor Johannes Jänicke in 1800 and supported by the royal court. His first attempt to be accepted as a mission student failed, but after more training Teichelmann was admitted in 1831.

For reasons related to the competition by the newly established Berlin Mission Society for money and royal support, no detailed studies exist about the achievements of the older "Jänicke Mission Institute". Jänicke had already passed away in 1827 and the school was managed by his son-in-law, Czech-speaking preacher and teacher Johann Wilhelm Rückert. During its existence of about 45 years, the school trained at least 120 missionaries, most of whom were sent out by mission societies in London, Rotterdam and Basle. Jänicke and Rückert followed the principles of the first mission training centre in Germany, initiated in 1698 by August Hermann Francke in Halle, Saale and focused on language as a key tool for the mission field.<sup>4</sup>

Without systematic studies of the Jänicke Mission School, some of its training principles can be gleaned from comments by Jänicke and his students.

In 1820 Jänicke, who rarely presented his school in public, wrote about the need to

prepare these young men, who were no scholars, first scientifically ... in exact sciences and in English, ... Latin and the original languages of the Bible [Koine Greek and Hebrew]; ... Biblical Dogmatics ... drafting sermons ... music ... painting. By frequent interaction with English people, ... attending the [British] Embassy sermons, ... instructions by a skilful teacher ... spontaneous speeches in English ... they made significant progress in the English language.<sup>5</sup>

One of the first students — the later missionary to the Jews, Joseph S Frey — stated that by not knowing where they would be sent

very great difficulty arose; ... it was impossible to determine what language we ought to learn. Mr. Jaenicke ... resolved that we should be taught the rudiments of several languages ... Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Dutch, French, Arabic, and Syriac. Besides this, we had to attend ... several other lectures, such as theology, geography, music, medicine, etc.<sup>6</sup>

Johann Adam Schürmann, the older brother of Teichelmann's fellow student and missionary in SA, Clamor Wilhelm Schürmann, had enrolled at the Jänicke Mission Institute in July 1828. In January 1831 he was considered qualified for studies at the Berlin University, first in Theology, and after receiving an offer from the London Missionary Society for a post in China, he studied Chinese under a Dr Scott.<sup>7</sup>

While most of his personal documents have been lost, two of Schürmann's language study notebooks – Biblical Hebrew and Mandarin/Classical Chinese<sup>8</sup> – survive at the Lutheran Archives Adelaide. Not surprisingly, Schürmann and his fellow students had studied the Chinese language and expected to go there: In early 1832, Rückert had received from missionary Karl Gützlaff in China a rare collection of "excellent publications in the Chinese language together with the request to send an assistant whom he [Gützlaff] would support [financially]."<sup>9</sup>

Whether Teichelmann also studied some Chinese or any other but Biblical languages is not clear, though possible.

There are three other significant factors: the background of the Jänicke Mission Institute as a mission outreach project of the local Bohemian Lutheran refugee community, the wider multi-cultural context of the city of Berlin, and Martin Luther's Open Letter on Translation.

Jänicke's Mission Institute was mainly sponsored by small donors from the Bohemian refugee congregation with the Lutheran pastors Jänicke and Rückert. Their history runs parallel to the emigration of religious refugees from the province of Morava in the Czech Republic during the rule of the Roman-Catholic Austrian Empire in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The first Protestant reform movement in Europe, under Jan Hus in Prague (1369-1415), had spurred a crusade by the Roman-Catholic church, most devastating during the 30-Year War in Central Europe (1618–1648).<sup>10</sup> Most of the Protestant Moravians fled their country and, since 1722, settled at Herrnhut near Dresden, while the Bohemian Brethren from the neighbouring province moved to Prussia.

For political reasons invited by King Friedrich Wilhelm I, they established from 1737, in *Rixdorf*, a "village" which still exists today in the middle of Berlin-Neukölln, and also settled in the *Friedrichstadt*. By the mid-1800s, some 1,500 Bohemian refugees lived in both parts of the city, with royal consent and support. Considering themselves amongst the successors of the Bohemian Brethren, they practised their cultural and religious traditions, and used the Bohemian-Czech language, until the early 1900s.<sup>11</sup> It was in this environment that Teichelmann received his missionary formation.

Even more significant may have been the influence on the Bohemian Brethren in education, culture and Theology by their last bishop, John Amos Comenius (*Jan Amos Komensky*, 1592-1670). To this day he is renowned in Europe for his educational reforms, particularly his emphasis on vernacular language learning which was applied for a long time in Bohemian Rixdorf.<sup>12</sup> In a summary by Daniel Murphey:

Comenius ... saw the attainment of literacy [in the vernacular language of the child] as the key to the realisation of the goal of universal education. ... he equated literacy with educability ... It occupied a prominent place in his educational writings and guided his various initiatives on educational reform from the outset. He published numerous volumes on the subject, including some of the most innovative and imaginative school texts ... for the teaching of both vernacular and non-vernacular languages.

His approaches to language education marked a radical departure ... from those that had been followed in the mediaeval schools. ... he recognised the absurdity of focussing teaching on the acquisition of a second language (usually Latin) from the earliest stages of schooling and emphasised the crucial importance of vernacular proficiency, both as a foundation for all learning and specifically for the acquisition of other languages. Additionally, he recognised the need for a radical shift in language pedagogy from the mechanistic and sterile approaches of the mediaevalists to the learner centred methods he believed would ensure that language acquisition was both an efficient and enjoyable process.<sup>13</sup>

How many of Comenius' principles were applied at the Jänicke Mission School has yet to be determined. However, traces can be seen in the first-ever Aboriginal language school at Pirltawardli, amongst the Kurna people.

The Mission Institute was situated near the political heart of Berlin, in the manse of the Bohemian *Bethlehmskirche*<sup>14</sup>. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Berlin (as the "Mother of all Refugees"<sup>15</sup>) was a place of enlightenment and liberty, with "international" refugees from around Europe, e.g. France (the Huguenots), Austria (Lutheran Protestants) or the Bohemians and Moravians. French had become a culturally important language, and the Jänicke Mission Institute would not have been unaffected by this inter-cultural exposure.

Lastly, as Lutherans, the Jänicke Mission Institute and many of its students would have been guided by Martin Luther's teachings on the use of the German vernacular for reading the Bible, here his Open Letter on Translation (1530):

We do not have to ask the literal Latin how ... to speak German ... Rather we must ask the mother in the home, the children on the street, the common man in the marketplace. We must be guided by their language ... then they will understand ... But the mother in the home and the common man say this: "*Wes das hertz vol ist, des gehet der mund über*" [What fills the heart overflows the mouth]. That is speaking good German ... The literal Latin is a great obstacle to speaking good German. ... "<sup>16</sup>

In 1836, Schürmann and Teichelmann refused the offer of a mission in India because of the condition to convert to the Anglican faith. Since the Jänicke Mission Institute did not send out missionaries, they sought help from Lutheran churches. Their plea came to the notice of the Lutheran Mission Society in Dresden and in 1836, still an auxiliary association in support of other missions, they perceived it as God's will to establish an independent Lutheran mission society. Schürmann and Teichelmann were amongst their first students and were commissioned for South Australia in 1838. Their instructions included

[to learn] the language of the original inhabitants ... [and] make yourselves familiar with a means on which your effectiveness among the heathen essentially depends. We are convinced that you will take the trouble to learn that dialect ..., ... employ a teacher and study the grammar [and go] among the people in order to grasp the oral expression from life. As soon as you have some command of the language ... you will turn to the heathen, preach ... to them, ... form a congregation with the baptised ... and give thought to establishing an elementary school."<sup>17</sup>

On their voyage Schürmann and Teichelmann travelled with the second governor for SA, George Gawler. Amongst other books, he gave them the first-ever publication on Australian Languages by the LMS missionary Lancelot Threlkeld (1834)<sup>18</sup>, which they copied for future reference<sup>19</sup>, and the 1837 Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines in British settlements<sup>20</sup>.

These documents spurred discussions about the legitimacy of the establishment of the SA colony, the consequences for the indigenous peoples and with what language to educate them in the Western trades. In particular Schürmann was adamant that colonization was unjust, and both missionaries insisted on teaching in the vernacular.<sup>21</sup>

### Face to Face

Schürmann and Teichelmann reached SA on 14 October 1838. Teichelmann's response to the harsh realities of this country possibly symbolises best his personal attitude to his new role. Arriving at Port Misery, about 10km south of Adelaide, all passengers had to be carried on the shoulders of sailors from ship to shore,

so that we do so with dry feet. When I stood with my carriers on dry land and wanted to get down, I fell down on the ground in my hastiness into a sitting position, but I jumped up again quite quickly.

My colleague said: "That is not a good sign."

I responded: "Actually it is a good sign because in this way I will possess this land with the Gospel."<sup>22</sup>

Looking back in July 1839, Teichelmann's diary entry on their first contact with the "New Hollanders" is more significant:

In our wandering through the town, we soon met the people to whom we had been sent ...

They asked us [in a jargon or Pidgin English<sup>23</sup>]: "What name?"

and we answered them in English.

Others met us and the process was repeated.

We went to their camp site and asked in the same way about the names of parts of body and other obvious things. In that way we acquired on that day already a quite significant number of words from their language.

We considered the English question: *what name*, as the first and sole teacher in their language.

I could not get any information from the Europeans, who should have understood something [of the language]. Since a vocabulary [was] already prepared, which we might have had, through sharing its contents, was fruitless. Still our Lord has already given us more of the language than they [the other Europeans] ever will be able to acquire. Indeed, we need to know much more than these people.<sup>24</sup>

Teichelmann records their first contrast with reality just a fortnight later, when Governor Gawler offered a midday meal to the Aborigines:

Our place of abode was filled up with them. Many of them were dressed up like dolls so that it seemed to displease them. After eating they had some target practice with their spears.<sup>25</sup>

The newspaper quoted Gawler's address to the Aborigines, translated into Pidgin Kurna by the first Protector of Aborigines, William Wyatt:

"Black men —

We wish to make you happy. But you cannot be happy unless you imitate good white men.

Build huts, wear clothes, work and be useful.

Above all things you cannot be happy unless you love God who made heaven and earth and men and all things.

Love white men.

Love other tribes of black men. Do not quarrel together.

Tell other tribes to love white men, and to build good huts and wear clothes. Learn to speak English.

If any white man injure[s] you, tell the Protector and he will do you justice.”

A circle was now formed, and the natives being seated, dinner was served. ...

Sunk as these poor people are in the scale of human existence, there is a strongly-marked sense of gratitude and a lively recollection of past kindnesses.<sup>26</sup>

In December, Teichelmann identifies more than 200 Kaurna people around Adelaide. No support can be expected from them, yet a younger man by the name KONUITJA [*Kudnuitja*<sup>27</sup>] and with some schooling offered help in learning the language. But: “The problem is that he has two wives and 4 children. Where will we get the money for this?”<sup>28</sup> However, this young man was the first to engage in a Theological debate:

He appears also to be receptive to higher truths. ... last Saturday evening ... we spoke with him [when] the aborigines had a UNJAWAJETE [a corroboree]<sup>29</sup>.

At that time we said to him that the One, who had made heaven and earth, had also created us, and that He did not like this ...

He responded that the whites were quite happy to watch it.

However we said that the whites who liked this and the blacks who acted like this, were very evil.

He was deeply impressed by this truth and said to us that he wanted to go and tell them this [the other aborigines]. He did that. Then once or twice they repeated this [dance ...] and then gave it up. It was 9:30pm. At the same time they would otherwise have spent at least half the night or even more in sinful activities.

We were very pleased with that.

Nevertheless I am not building too much on this man. Still he is proof that if the Holy Spirit once opens his heart — as they do have a heart, and even though they still are very much entrenched — the truth is still accessible to them.<sup>30</sup>

After another visit by KONUITJA, Teichelmann notes:

We had the midday meal together ... worked ... on my dictionary and conversed ... on important subjects.

In this discussion we came to their [cultural] practices and concepts.

He then related to me some of ... their traditions and ... juggleries ... on the condition that I did not reveal anything of this to the young boys or the female sex ...

Their traditions and other things are in poetic form.<sup>31</sup>

Already in December 1838, Teichelmann felt that he had to correct his perception of Aborigines:

The heathen are included in the promise to Abraham. No matter how far down the scale they stand in [their] external appearance, they are still human beings created in the image of God and therefore have the same talents and abilities ... They are not, as I remember reading in Germany on a par with orang utangs [but] beautifully and strongly built people ...

Of course there is no rule without an exception. However in every way this report which I read in Germany was a thoroughly untrue statement.<sup>32</sup>

In a report to the governor, he adds:

Frequently [the Aborigines] demonstrate an understanding and ingenuity which is astonishing and can be observed only by those who are always around them ...

One day we had an Aborigine with us for the purpose of learning something of the language. Since they have no written language and no actual pretence of a grammar or dictionary ..., it [is not] a trifling thing [to make] us aware of something happening outside, without our asking, that we should add it to our collection.

They make an appropriate distinction between persons and situations, and women whom we meet do the same ... This plainly shows that they understand our plans with their language and getting to know the language itself (at least better than thousands of Europeans understand theirs).<sup>33</sup>

In January 1839, Teichelmann hears the shocking news of the mass murder of Aborigines by 11 white men at Myall Creek<sup>34</sup>, some of whom were convicted as a rare case in early Australian history<sup>35</sup>.

A few days later he describes an interesting dialogue:

In the evening ... I went to their *wurlies* [huts made of branches].

All were friendly.

At this same place one of our patients was lying and I took the opportunity of warning them that they should not eat so many of wandering sheep and cattle because they became sick ... and would die. They feared death like any unbeliever.

I used that as an opportunity to ask where we go to when we die.

Some said that we will live above the stars.

Others said that we go to a far away land.

I responded that this was certainly true enough that the spirit ascends into the height. However the body rises again and will be united with the soul.

They were all attentive and it seemed that the teaching of the resurrection of the body had stirred up some surprise amongst them.<sup>36</sup>

In mid-1839, Pirltawardli<sup>37</sup> was established as a native location, overseen by the Protector of Aborigines. The missionaries were stationed there and the place was prepared for the Kaurna. Teichelmann reflects that as this is not truly mission land the mission at home may complain, "... they are under a different jurisdiction." But

I still have the hope that ... it will still become the property of the Aborigines.

I propose on this issue, if I live long enough that the land will be given back to the Aborigines. If the Aborigines are converted, our Lord will speak his yes and Amen to that ...

Apart from the 3 houses — two for us and one for the school teacher — already 3 more houses have been built for the Aborigines on this settlement. One Aboriginal family is already living in one, and the



others are anxiously concerned about when they can take possession of their [houses] as soon as they are completed. Five others are already prepared to help with the building of their houses ... to be built by the Aborigines themselves.<sup>38</sup>

In his first ethnographic description, Teichelmann notes an important observation:

The Aborigines are formed here into clans, without a chief. Each clan has its land, and in this land every family has a specific place in which to search for their sustenance. After they have camped at a particular place, they go on further. In the meantime the whole group is divided into individual families and scatter, but after some time they come together again. In winter they live in one place because they build more secure huts and vermin do not force them out as is the case in summer.<sup>39</sup>

Ten days later he notes that the "Aborigines are not left even a hand breadth of land for their maintenance".<sup>40</sup>

Teichelmann then summarised his relationship with the Aboriginal people in a lengthy statement about culture and language, including grammar:

The first thing that we had to do was to seek to be proficient in their language.

Already on the first day we collected a number of words at their camp sites. We kept doing that until we lived in the timber houses where we became better known to them, and they to us.

They frequently came to us, not for the purpose of teaching us the language but to have food and drink. We had to be resourceful also in this in order to experience a little more of the language.

...

What we now have of grammar and a collection of words can be attributed alone to the Lord ... I must comment that the Aborigines were more open with the language before the execution of their two brothers than they now are. It is extremely difficult to get out from them a complete phrase since they want to keep the Europeans in ignorance of their language and speak in broken English to the Europeans just as the Europeans speak brokenly in their language [Pidgin English and Pidgin Kurna<sup>41</sup>].

... I bear no thoughts of insisting that we possess more of the language (and the dialects) of these people, at least what we have catalogued, than anyone else in the colony even ...

[follows a first introduction to Kurna words and grammar]

[The Kurna] might meet us ... and then they call me by the name that they have given me:

*Kartammeru! Maii wa? Wa birkiti?* And similar. '*Kartammeru! Where is food? Where biscuits!*'<sup>42</sup>

In August 1839, Teichelmann followed an Aboriginal funeral procession and was introduced into secret rites. Subsequently, they all went on searching for a special treat of food.

... they dug out with great energy the chrysalis of insects. ... The grubs ... taste ... like sweet almond ...

This food belongs to their tit-bits ...

One of them asked me out of special friendship to draw out some of these creatures.

I did it and as I pulled it out this produced a shout of joy among all of them.<sup>43</sup>

One day, Schürmann and Teichelmann accompanied a group of Aborigines into the forest. On the trail

We took the opportunity of getting the names of the entrails from the animal's carcass so that we could compare it with what we had found out earlier.

When we came to [main group] they were exceptionally overjoyed.

They asked us where we were going and where we would sleep.

We replied: "To you and we want to sleep with you."

That seemed to please them.<sup>44</sup>

Later in September,

I went ... into the bush to the Aborigines. ... Finally I met up ... with three families of the Aborigines ...

When the first two ... recognized me, they called out with happy voices the name of KARTAMMU, 'the first born' ...

They were all very happy ... However they seemed to be particularly reticent through a general mistrust of Europeans which especially first had to be broken down.

They were unsure about what my appearance might mean.

I could hear them discussing amongst themselves: They would not leave [me] alone outside [in the bush].

I put my packages down, took out a few things to make myself comfortable ... while they asked me about the contents of each bundle.

Now they saw that I was well enough provisioned and ... that this was for me alone and not for them, and that I would stay with them as long as the food lasted.

The old confidence returned and the most respected one among them said that I should not eat my food at once but eat with them so that I could stay a longer time with them. I should sleep in his shelter and be his house guest.

This entire escapade really had no visible benefits but it was important for the language and the knowledge of customs.<sup>45</sup>

Within twelve months, Teichelmann had gained a reputation for asking questions and confronting the indigenous customs and traditions:

I went to the Aborigines today without any plan of what I would speak about to them.

Usually they ask: "Why have you come to us"? That means in German: what have you brought? That was so also today.

I: "To see you."

One of them said: "Sit down over here with us and tell us about Jehovah."

"Where shall I sit?"

Then they indicated a place.

I sat down and began to relate to them within the limitations I had in their language about the Creation ... and whatever else I was able to.

In talking about the resurrection, one of them asked me whether God would stitch body and soul together again. It is their delusion that TARROTARRO<sup>46</sup> had stitched together the penis and ... that [he] did a shoddy job of it with women.

I responded to a few questions from them. ...

That they understood everything ... was demonstrated when they corrected me if I said something incorrectly ...<sup>47</sup>

One typical conversation happened in early January 1840 after an Aborigine supported the language recording:

When we stopped I turned the conversation to higher subjects.

He said that he had told the others what we had earlier told him about Jehovah ..., but they had laughed [...], ridiculed him and did not want to believe it.

I asked him whether he, indeed, believed it.

He answered "Yes", since he had recently been seriously ill, had received medicine and had been partially cared for by us.

So I asked him whether their sorcery or medicine had made him well, to which he responded: the medicine; the sorceries were lies.

Openly many of them say and really inwardly believe that their witchcraft is effective."<sup>48</sup>

In August 1840, Teichelmann reports the publication of the grammar and wordlist, but is quite self-critical.

Although it is a[n] ... incomplete and ... immature task, it has been personally beneficial ... since in this way the present material has been worked through ...<sup>49</sup>

In explanation I add the following:

- 1) If you ... consider the sum of the abstract and more noble and deep concepts, you will certainly find that we still have very little material for a language in which we can preach ...
- 2) Until now they have no concept to describe the essence and being of God because ... they are incapable of coming to our help.
- 3) We are still insufficiently acquainted with their ... They are too secretive with these and we have therefore not yet had sufficient opportunity of discovering this part of their language.<sup>50</sup>

In this December 1840 letter, Teichelmann also notes the regular Sunday worship services for the Kurna people in their language which Schürmann initiated. For some weeks, many came but then the number dwindled except for the school children who received food after attending. After Schürmann's departure for Port Lincoln, Teichelmann continued, initially with little success.<sup>51</sup>

However, he records some 80 Sunday addresses to Kurna people between 1841 and 1846, with an average of about 60 adults and 12-30 children. In this context, Teichelmann documents various interesting Theological dialogues which space does not permit me to address here.

## Conclusion

Teichelmann's mission training in multi-cultural Berlin, with its various refugee communities, created a solid base for unbiased contact with the initially totally alien Aboriginal peoples. However, the critical question can safely be asked: how much the Aborigines and the missionaries really understood about each other in those first years.

For us today, many of the dialogues may appear ritualistic and superficial, particularly the first face-to-face encounter. The Kurna people asking for the missionaries' names could be considered a "phatic" communication, an exchange of words with little meaning but acting as an ice-breaker between strangers.<sup>52</sup>

For the missionaries, on the other hand, the natives' request for their names would surely have evoked the memory of God's promise to the people of Israel in Isaiah 43,1b: "Do not be afraid, because I've redeemed you. I've called you by name; you are mine."<sup>53</sup> It would have instantly established the sense of a "phatic communion", i.e. a personal relationship beyond the limitations of their initial language restrictions. Teichelmann clearly corroborates this perception by his repeated reference to these first encounters. By giving Teichelmann the name KARTAMMERU 'the first born', the Kurna people also bestowed on him a level of respect and made him part of their community. Their willingness to embrace him and his colleagues in a reluctant but open dialogue confirms this communion of understanding.

Other aspects show that the Kurna confronted the missionaries with their own interpretation of what they heard and saw, and in their own approach:

- Wandering Kurna groups accepted and welcomed the missionaries in sharing their life.
- While the Kurna were probably unaware of the political philosophies underpinning the colonial invasion in South Australia (e.g. *Terra Nullius*), the inter-cultural exchange and debate concerning the injustice of widespread settlement alerted the missionaries of the Aboriginal people's impending fate.
- Individual Aborigines maintained contact with the missionaries in many ways — building houses, supporting the language work, sharing resources, and pursuing a discourse on many topics.
- Teichelmann records frequent discussions with the Kurna about Christian and Aboriginal Theology. The Kurna people engaging in these debates share as much of their own tradition as they reflect about what they hear and see.
- Political circumstances of European mass-settlement, colonial politics, and inter-tribal pressure from other Aboriginal communities in the East and North, did not allow any further development of a sustainable relationship between the Kurna people and the missionaries.<sup>54</sup> But by all accounts, there was certainly more than a one-sided approach of interaction.
- Naturally, the diaries and letters were written from the author's perspective, but also describe, as in a mirror, the self-governed active/passive agency of the Aboriginal people.
- While Teichelmann assumed that the Kurna people prevented whitefellas from acquiring a full command of their language, at the same time they introduced him to social, religious and language-related aspects of their culture. This is what the missionaries expected from their training. But there also seems to have been a deliberate effort by Kurna people to transmit this information, to be unlocked today for the survivors of this cultural and language genocide (Linguicide)<sup>55</sup>.

**Questions for my future research:**

- Where in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century mission history were mission stations in sociologically comparable settings in Adelaide where the missionaries belonged to the mainstream settler society, rather than the colonial power elite?
- For the same period, have there been assessments of such “mission dialogues” between natives and “alien” missionaries, and if so, to what effect in relation to mission?
- Teichelmann’s writings are three-dimensional: they reflect his personal thoughts, echo his discourse with the Aboriginal peoples, and respond to challenges “from home”. Where has mission writing been analysed in these dimensions?
- For any mission approach since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, command of the target language is paramount. Why do respective mission histories acknowledge these achievements as minor results?
- Early 19<sup>th</sup> century German Lutheran missionaries in Australia established the tradition of acquiring the target language, so why not British missionaries? (Lancelot Threlkeld being an exception).

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> *Instructions for the two missionaries of the evangelical-Lutheran Mission Society at Dresden, Chr. G. Teichelmann from Dahme (ducal Saxony) and Clamor W. Schürmann from Schleddehausen (via Osnabrueck) 1837*, in RHEINWALD, George Friedrich Heinrich [ed.], *Acta Historica-Ecclesiastica Seculi XIX* (Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1840), pp676-682. Translated by G. Lockwood.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance the discussion of the Dresden missionary material by SCRIMGEOUR, Anne, *Colonizers as Civilizers* [manuscript]: *Aboriginal Schools and the Mission to "Civilize" in South Australia, 1839-1845*. PhD Thesis (Charles Darwin University, 2007), pp7-8.

<sup>3</sup> *Lebenslauf des Missionszöglings* [Curriculum vitae of the mission student] Christian Gottlob Teichelmann 12.9.1836 (TB 26-30, here TB 27). – Teichelmann quotes are in the translation by Martin Krieg for the diary (TA) and by ret. Pastor Geoff Noller, Arrarat, VIC for the letters (TB). "TA ##" or "TB ##" relate to the page numbering by the Lutheran Archives Adelaide of the German transcripts by Jutta Klenke, staff worker at Leipzig Mission, for the Lutheran Church of Australia in the mid-1980s. The original manuscripts are part of the Leipzig Mission archives, held by the Archives of the Francke Foundations in Halle, Saxony, Germany (ALMW II.36.2.2.). Neither the transcripts nor the translations have yet been verified against the originals.

<sup>4</sup> Some of the most important early German missionary-linguists – e.g. Ziegenbalg (Tamil India), Gützlaff (China), Rhenius (India) and Schmelen (South Africa) – graduated from these schools.

<sup>5</sup> JÄNICKE, Johann, *Die evangelische Missionsschule in Berlin*. Drucksache (No place, 1820), pp3-4.

<sup>6</sup> FREY, Joseph Samuel Christian Frederick, *Narrative of the Rev. Joseph Samuel C.F. Frey*. 9th ed. (New York: Author, 1832), p43.

<sup>7</sup> John Adam Shurman [Johann Adam Schürmann], *Autobiography*, field 1/10/1856, LMS Archives; partially transcribed and summarized from the original by Rex Schurmann (Melbourne) in the 1970s. – Due to unforeseen circumstances Shurman was sent to Benares, India (today: Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India), where he became a missionary-linguist in his own right by editing and translating Biblical and religious texts in the Urdu language (see <<http://grweb.org/PiltaWodli/schurmann-ja-profile/#Publications>>).

<sup>8</sup> Lutheran Archives Adelaide, File Schurmann (5), No3. – The Hebrew study notebook covers language exercises on the Psalms 23-33. – For the Chinese language notebook, I am indebted to James McElvenny, linguist at Sydney University, for identifying its significance and asking a friend in Paris for a preliminary analysis (p/c June 2011). The 27 pages – dated 1835 and 1836 – include writing exercises, grammatical notes, quotes from a Chinese Orthodox/Catholic catechism and other classical texts, partially in a 'standard' Mandarin dialect from outside Beijing, and everyday expressions in modern Chinese.

<sup>9</sup> In *Allgemeine Kirchenzeitung*, No 83, 1832, Column 680.

<sup>10</sup> For an overview see <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hussite\\_Wars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hussite_Wars)> and related articles.

<sup>11</sup> For an overview of the Bohemian settlement in Berlin and the Bohemian Brethren, see MOTEL, Manfred, *Das Böhmisches Dorf in Berlin*, in *Studia Comeniana et Historica* Vol 38, 2008. pp635-656, here p646.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*, p649.

<sup>13</sup> MURPHEY, Daniel, *Comenius – A Critical Reassessment of his Life and Work* (Dublin, 1995). Murphey is the Education lecturer at Trinity College Dublin.

<sup>14</sup> Today there is only a city square with indications of the foundations of the Bethlehem Church at the Mauerstrasse, Berlin-Mitte, presently with a multi-dimensional, illuminated steel installation outlining the church by the Spanish artist Juan Garaizabal. The manse was in the Wilhelmstrasse 29.

<sup>15</sup> Headstone inscription for the Berlin teacher Franz Dickel (1666-1741), himself a religious refugee from Heidelberg, quoted by FADEN, Eberhard, *Berlinertum – eine Europa-Mischung*, in *Jahrbuch für Brandenburgische Landesgeschichte* Vol 13, 1962, pp7-21. – See also the Tolerance Edict of Potsdam proclaimed by Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg and Duke of Prussia, in Potsdam on October 29, 1685, encouraging Huguenots to migrate to Prussia as a refuge from religious persecution in France: <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict\\_of\\_Potsdam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict_of_Potsdam)>.

<sup>16</sup> Translated from "Ein sendbrief D. M. Luthers. Von Dolmetzschen und Fürbit der heiligenn", in *Dr. Martin Luthers Werke*, (Weimar: Hermann Boehlaus Nachfolger, 1909), Vol 30, Part II, pp632-646. Revised and annotated by Michael D. Marlowe, June 2003. Quoted from <<http://www.bible-researcher.com/luther01.html>>.

<sup>17</sup> Instructions ..., p681. – Their British sponsor, the merchant and promoter of the new colony in South Australia, George Fife Angas had a similar advice: "... it seems to me that your first step will be to acquaint yourselves with the language, habits & dispositions of the Aborigines in and around Adelaide. Gather from them the history and notions and disposition of their tribes, & gather from them the materials for the compilation of a vocabulary of their language ..." (Letter from George Fife Angas to Schürmann and Teichelmann in Plymouth, 28.5.1838, transcript by Teichelmann, included in Teichelmann's report about the voyage, 5.1.1839. TB 73-76).

<sup>18</sup> THRELKELD, L. E., and British Library, *An Australian Grammar Comprehending the Principles and Natural Rules of the Language as Spoken by the Aborigines in the Vicinity of Hunter's River, Lake MacQuarie, &c. New South Wales*, (Sydney, Stephens and Stokes, 1834).

<sup>19</sup> Schürmann to DMS, 10.12.1838 (here: diary entry for 15.6.1838). Transcript and translation by Geoff Noller, Ararat/VIC for the Lutheran Archives Adelaide (File: Schuermann (1), No 3 to No 9).

<sup>20</sup> *Report of the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements)*, House of Commons. Parliamentary Papers, no. 425, 1837.

<sup>21</sup> Clamor W Schürmann, Diary for 11 and 19 June 1838, page 12.

<sup>22</sup> Teichelmann to his parents, 12.12.1838 (TB 58-60).

<sup>23</sup> SIMPSON, Jane, *Early language contact varieties in South Australia*, in *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, Vol 16:2, 1996, 169-207. – FOSTER, Robert and Peter Mühlhäusler, *Native Tongue, Captive Voice: The Representation of the Aboriginal 'Voice' in Colonial South Australia*, in *Language & Communication*, Vol 16, No 1, 1996, pp1-16.

<sup>24</sup> Dairy entry for 14.10.1838, letter to DMS 4.7.1839 (TB 92). – It is estimated that by the same time some 5,000 European settlers had arrived in the colony.

<sup>25</sup> Letter to DMS 4.7.1839 (TB 94).

<sup>26</sup> *The Natives* (1838, November 3), *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* (Adelaide, SA, 1836-1839), p4 <<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article31750215>>. The Kurna translation of this address was also published as one of the first complete Kurna texts.

<sup>27</sup> Kurna birth-order name: Third-borne male. – I am indebted to Rob Amery for the Kurna words in the Revised Spelling of the Kurna Language (2010). Quotes are in the original.

<sup>28</sup> Letter to DMS, 8.12.1838 (TB 54, translation revised).

- <sup>29</sup> In the Revised Spelling: *Ngunyawayiti* ‘corroboree’.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> Letter to DMS 13.11.1838 (TB 127-128, translation revised).
- <sup>32</sup> Letter to DMS, 8.12.1838 (TB 52). — An Internet search will produce many results with this perception about Australian Aborigines, eg LINDNER, Friedrich Ludwig, **Der Fünfte Welttheil Oder Australien Ein Geographisches Hand- Und Lesebuch Zur Belehrung Und Unterhaltung; Nach Den Berichten Der Glaubwürdigsten Reisenden Entworfen** (Weimar: Verl. des Geographischen Inst., 1814), chapter 5.
- <sup>33</sup> Letter to DMS, 4.7.1839 (TB 100).
- <sup>34</sup> Letter to DMS, 30.1.1839 (TB 86-87).
- <sup>35</sup> For an introduction see <www.myallcreek.info> or <www.myallcreekmassacre.com>.
- <sup>36</sup> Letter to DMS 28.2.1839 (TB 95).
- <sup>37</sup> In historical documents as “Piltawodli”, Possum House, now located at the northern bank of the Torrens Lake, between Adelaide City and North Adelaide.
- <sup>38</sup> Letter to DMS 4.7.1839 (TB 90).
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid. (TB 98). — This comment is important because it contradicts the widespread ideology of “*Terra Nullius*”, the uninhabited and unused land of Australia. It has been corroborated in the Teichelmann & Schürmann (1840) dictionary: “*Pangkarra*, s. a district or tract of country belonging to an individual, which he inherits from his father. *Ngarraitya pari aityo pangkarrila*, ‘there is abundance of game in my country’. As each *pankarra* has its peculiar name, many of the owners take that as their proper name, with the addition of the term *burka*; for instance, *Mulleakiburka* ...” TEICHELMANN, C. G., and C. W. Schürmann, **Outlines of a grammar, vocabulary, and phraseology, of the aboriginal language of South Australia, spoken by the natives in and for some distance around Adelaide**, (Adelaide: Pub. by the authors, at the Native location, 1840), p36.
- <sup>40</sup> Letter to DMS 15.7.1839 (TB 109).
- <sup>41</sup> Foster/Mühlhäusler, Native Tongue.
- <sup>42</sup> Letter to DMS 4.7.1839 (TB96-98). — In Revised Spelling: *Kartamiru* ‘the first-born son’. Teichelmann was eight years older than Schürmann, and certainly appeared more senior.
- <sup>43</sup> Letter to DMS 13.11.1839 (TB 124).
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid (TB 125).
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid (TB 128, 131) (26.9.1839).
- <sup>46</sup> TEICHELMANN & Schürmann, Outlines, p45: *Tarrotarro*, s. a species of lizard; a fabulous person said to have made male and female, or divided the two sexes.
- <sup>47</sup> Letter to DMS 13.11.1839 (TB 132-133).
- <sup>48</sup> Diary 10.-11.1.1840 (TA 7-8).
- <sup>49</sup> Letter/Report No 7 to DMS 30.8.1840 (TB 151).
- <sup>50</sup> Letter to DMS 1.12.1840 (TB 164).
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid (TB 163).
- <sup>52</sup> The concept of the “phatic communion” (‘phatic’ from Greek *phatos*, ‘spoken’) as a “bonding function of language ... like establishing and maintaining a friendly and harmonious atmosphere in



interpersonal relations, especially during the opening and closing stages of social – verbal – encounters” is attributed to linguist Bronislaw Malinowski (1920). SENFT, Gunter, *Phatic communion*, in *Culture and Language Use*, Gunter Senft, Jan-Ola Östman and Jef Verschueren [eds.], *Handbook of Pragmatics Highlights*, Vol 2, 2009, p226-233, here p226 & 228. – I am indebted to Peter Mühlhäusler to direct me to this concept.

<sup>53</sup> See also **New Jerusalem Bible** note for Isaiah 41,25k: “The formula means the selection of someone for a particular mission [and] a particular relationship [with ] Yahweh.”

<sup>54</sup> While most of Teichelmann’s predecessor and fellow students at the Jänicke Mission Institute became part of the colonial elite at their place of mission – as a social minority amongst the majority of “natives” –, in South Australia the sociological setting was reverse right from the start: When the Dresden missionaries arrived 14 October 1838, some 5,000 British people already lived in the infant colony; by the time the Dresden missionaries returned their calling in 1846, there were some 45,000 European settlers. While according to the missionary George Taplin at Point MacLeay (Raukkan), who probably knew the Dresden missionaries personally, the Protector of Aborigines recorded some 220 Kurna people in 1851, by the mid-1870s Taplin could not point at any remnants of the Kurna people who had vanished without trace. (TAPLIN, George [ed], *The Folklore, Manners, Customs, and Languages of the South Australian Aborigines: Gathered from Inquiries Made by Authority of South Australian Government*, First Series, (Adelaide: E. Spiller, 1879), pp2 & VII). None of the relevant church and mission histories I have consulted so far has taken notice of this basic fact.

<sup>55</sup> ZUCKERMANN, Ghil’ad, Shiori Shakuto-Neoh and Giovanni Matteo Quer. *Native Tongue Title: compensation for the loss of Aboriginal languages*, in *Australian Aboriginal Studies* Vol 11, 2014, pp55-71. – For a definition and interpretation of linguicide also see SKUTNABB-KANGAS, Tove and Robert Phillipson, *Linguicide and linguicism*, in Hans Goebel, Peter H Nelde, Zdenek Sary, and Wolfgang Wolck, [eds.], *Kontaktlinguistik/Contact Linguistics/Linguistique de Contact: Ein Internationales Handbuch Zeitgenoessischer Forschung/An International Handbook of Contemporary Research/Manuel International Des Recherches Contemporaines*. (Berlin, DEU: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996), pp667-675: “Linguicide is the extermination of languages, an analogous concept to (physical) genocide ... seen as pertaining to languages, not their speakers” p667 (emphasis original). From a Canadian First Nation perspective: NICHOLAS, Andrea Bear, “Linguicide – Submersion education and the killing of languages in Canada”, *Briarpatch Magazine*, March 1, 2011. <<http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/linguicide>>.