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## **German Missionaries and Australian Anthropology**

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**Abstract:** In their primary task of converting Indigenous Australians to Christianity, German missions active in various parts of Australia through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century recorded relatively few successes. On the other hand, their endeavours in observing and recording Aboriginal languages and cultures have left a rich – and yet frequently overlooked – anthropological legacy. A common element in that legacy is their work in the area of linguistics, which they understood to be a necessary foundation for their evangelical work. Nonetheless, caution must be exercised in evaluating the German missionary contribution to Australian anthropology according to either national or religious paradigms. German anthropology, as practised within the community of missionaries and outside, evinces a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches. Moreover German anthropologists, including missionaries, were by the late nineteenth century connected into international knowledge networks.

**Keywords:** German anthropology; missionaries; Indigenous Australians; linguistics

## **Introduction**

After the Anglo-Irish colonists, Germans constitute the largest group of immigrants to Australia in the nineteenth century. By the time of Federation they and their descendants were particularly well represented in South Australia, where close to ten percent of the population could claim German birth or heritage (Harmstorf 1988, 478). Among those Germans who, for a multitude of reasons, made their way to Australia through the nineteenth century were a significant number of missionaries. Collectively these missionaries of German origin were responsible for a disproportionately large share of missionary activity in Australia through to the First World War. They were also over-represented in the group of colonists and sojourners engaged in the activity of assembling anthropological knowledge about the Indigenous populations, among whom they worked, with the aim of disseminating the Gospel.

German missionary activity was by no means limited to Australia. Often missed is the sheer scale of the German missionary presence in those parts of the world subjected to or falling under European influence during the nineteenth century. Throughout that period there were no fewer than 26 Lutheran missionary training centres established in the German states. There were also 670 mission stations and out-stations, where altogether some 1065 ordained missionaries worked alongside 19 mission medical practitioners, 223 lay helpers, 194 mission sisters and 6377 ‘native helpers’ or mission workers. Added to these numbers were of course the Catholic and non-Lutheran Protestant denominations, who had their own global missionary networks (Tampke 2006, 58).

A snapshot of the mission presence in Australia in 1840, just a couple of years after the first migration of German communities fleeing religious persecution in Prussia, shows German-speaking missionaries operating in Adelaide, Port Lincoln, Encounter Bay (all in South Australia), Wellington Valley (New South Wales) and Zion Hill (Queensland). By the turn of the century sixty years later, that number had grown to ten: Killalpaninna (South Australia), Hermannsburg (Northern Territory), Ebenezer, Lake Condah, Ramahyuck (all Victoria), and Mari Yamba, Bloomfield River, Cape Bedford, Weipa and Mapoon (all in Queensland). Just a year later German-speaking missionaries also achieved a presence in Western Australia, when German Pallotines took over the French Trappist mission at Beagle Bay. As Regina Ganter has pointed out, until the outbreak of the First World War – and with it a major

rupture in the history of German-Australian relations – ‘practically half of the missions in Australia were staffed with German speakers’ (Ganter 2016).

What is striking about these two lists of German missions in Australia separated by six decades is that no location endured long enough to feature on both. While the numbers of missions grew, abandonment was a common outcome. A range of circumstances, among them the harshness of the Australian environments in which they chose to work, the lack of support from the Church authorities which sent them to remote Australia, and the ambivalence – even hostility – displayed towards them by secular Australian authorities and settler populations, rendered the mission project hugely challenging and in most cases ultimately unviable.

In their own terms the success or failure of the missionaries’ work was measured above all by their ability to convert Indigenous people to Christianity. Even taking into account the unevenness of outcomes across space and time, conversion proved to be more challenging in Australia than elsewhere. Nowhere, though, was the record as dismal as in the case of Eduard Meyer, who was sent to South Australia by the Dresden Missionary Society in 1840 and who, after eight years of toiling among the people of the Encounter Bay area south of Adelaide, could claim not a single case of conversion (Lockwood 2013, 16, 31). As Jürgen Tampke has observed, from the time the first German mission was established in Australia in 1831, it was apparent that ‘the task of converting Aboriginal people to Christianity would be a difficult one – meeting with far fewer “successes” than in Africa, India or parts of the Pacific Islands. All initial attempts – of which none managed to last longer than a decade – failed’ (Tampke 2006, 58).

Yet at the heart of this apparent failure there lies a paradox. While in the terms they had set themselves their record of success was paltry, in another sense the German missionaries left a legacy in the form of a corpus of research which continues to inform present understandings of both Indigenous modes of living and understanding, as well as the history of the effects of settler colonialism on Indigenous Australians. As they strove to develop a strong foundational understanding of the people they sought to convert, missionaries collected a large body of knowledge about them. Although intended as a means to an end, this knowledge ultimately long outlived the missionaries and their failed proselytising endeavours. It is this secondary

anthropological legacy, a by-product of activities conceived with quite different outcomes in mind, which this special issue seeks to investigate.

### **Historical Assessments**

Despite the fact that other more radical agents of settler colonialism such as pastoralists viewed missionaries as positively ‘pro-native’, the historical role of missionaries (like that of anthropologists) in the destructive processes of settler colonialism is an ambivalent one at best. This mixed record of German missionaries during the age of imperialism, as well as the record of countervailing Indigenous agency, is well established and requires no detailed rehearsal here.

Suffice it to say that those historians who have interrogated the links between this expanding missionary activity through the nineteenth century and the simultaneous expansion of European empires, have offered differing assessments. As the late Bill Edwards argued, assessments of missionary achievements – German and other – ‘tended to be polarised between romantic accounts of the noble and sacrificial achievements of missionaries and those describing missions as essentially interfering and destructive’ (Edwards 2007, 10). While some argue forthrightly that missionaries acted as emissaries and facilitators of empire, others, while conceding that missionary activity was deeply entangled in the imperial project, nonetheless point to examples of missionaries acting as imperialism’s most trenchant critics (Jensz 2010, Carey 2008; Gascoigne 2006; Porter 2004; Stanley 1990; Coplan 2006). What complicates this debate as it applies to German missionaries is that the larger part of German missionary activity in the period to 1914 unfolded not only outside the context of a formal, state-controlled German empire, which came into existence only in the 1880s, but also in territories formally controlled by other European powers. As such, in most cases, including Australia, it is difficult to posit a simple link between German missionaries and the political processes which would lead to the creation and maintenance of formal German colonies. On the other hand, even outside the realm of the formal German empire, it can be argued at the very least that German missionaries were central to the epistemic violence of the broader European ‘civilizing mission’, which either intentionally sought or unwittingly brought about the destruction of Indigenous cultures and communities, both in Australia and elsewhere. The more positive assessments of missionary activity point to a missionary record of treating Indigenous Australians humanely, of rejecting the notion that they were doomed to

extinction, and of seeking to facilitate their adaptation to the new British colonial order. Keith Cole, for example, contends that the deleterious effects of the arrival of Europeans preceded the arrival of the missionaries. In his words, ‘Even before the missions started, white frontier settlement had already devastated Aboriginal culture in some areas. The missions did not destroy the culture that remained, as some often allege’ (Cole, cited in Edwards 2007, 23-24). The impulse to act humanely toward Indigenous people was firmly grounded in Christian teachings which transcended national and sectarian distinctions; regardless of circumstances in the present, all humankind was viewed as ‘fallen’ and thus in need of guidance back to its origin.

As the German missionaries were themselves outsiders in a British colony, some have argued that they had a greater capacity to empathise with Indigenous Australians, since they themselves were subjected to the dictates of a British colonial regime. In this line of interpretation, the German missionaries’ empathy motivated them to protect Aboriginal communities from the most egregious features of British settler colonialism through an era marked by widespread frontier violence. They acted, it is claimed, as a kind of buffer against the worst excesses of rapacious pastoral expansion, even in circumstances where their actions incurred the disapproval of British authorities and settlers. In the contact zone of the Australian frontier, German mission stations could act as havens, perhaps even as incubators of an Indigenous population being educated and equipped to survive the imposition of a hostile new order.

In one version of this positive reading of the German missionary presence in colonial Australia, the missionary intention did not extend so far as to seek to change traditional Aboriginal culture, even as efforts at conversion were pursued (Scrimgeour 2006). According to Christine Lockwood, for example, Lutherans held to the notion that to spread the faith did not entail an insistence on ‘civilising’ Indigenous people:

Their emphasis on salvation as God’s gift, received through faith, meant bringing Aborigines to faith, not promoting civilisation or a particular life-style, though they expected that the Christian faith would transform moral aspects of Aboriginal culture.’ (Lockwood 2013, 38)

Similarly, she continues, in the theological foundations of German Lutheran missionising, the spread of the gospel and the efforts to convert Indigenous populations to Christianity did not necessarily entail dispossession, enslavement or even the imposition of European culture. In this interpretation the German missionaries

Opposed the dispersal and assimilation of Aborigines as servants. They believed God had created them a separate, recognised indigenous land ownership and advocated reserves where Aboriginal communities could maintain their identity, language and aspects of their culture, where Aboriginal Lutheran congregations could be established, and where the impact of dispossession and European culture could be cushioned. (Lockwood 2013, 38)

Other assessments, however, have fallen much more harshly, in line with the observation that the expansion of Christianity ‘coincided with the spread of European economic and political hegemony’ and was essentially ‘a reflex of imperialism’ (Etherington 2005, 1). Australia in this regard was no different to other colonial sites, since the establishment of Christian missions, German and other, took place as the continent was being claimed by European settlers at the cost of its Indigenous inhabitants. In this environment, finer theological, intellectual or cultural distinctions between German and non-German missionaries amounted to little. However benignly they might have conceived their evangelising intentions, and however sincerely they undertook to preserve traditional cultures even as they spread Christianity, the net effect of the efforts of missionaries of all denominations and nationalities did much to destroy traditional Aboriginal culture. Any attempt to separate off the insistence on religious conversion from the wide-ranging impacts in other spheres of Indigenous lives is, according to this reading, at best naïve. As Harries (2005, 247) argues, ‘The point is that missionary anthropologists were unable to observe aboriginal life without suggesting ways it could be improved.’ Far from providing a buffer from European settler colonialism, it was precisely the far reaching and intimate intrusion into the minds and mentalities of Indigenous people that rendered missionaries the most destructive of influences. As Henry Reynolds (1982, 191) has put it, ‘the missionaries mounted an intellectual challenge to Aboriginal society and culture far more deliberate, and consistent, than any other group of Europeans in colonial Australia.’

Other assessments seeking a synthesis of these two polar positions are characterised by a level of ambivalence, identifying a record of German missionary achievement marked neither

by uniform success nor persistent failure. While the German missionaries were commonly perceived as marginal, even eccentric figures in a British colonial context, their Christian evangelising was nonetheless an integral component of the imposition of western values and complemented the efforts of British and other missionaries. They identified primarily as men of faith, yet at times they also took on roles in the service of state authorities – such as protectors and interpreters – and thereby positioned themselves as intermediaries not only between Indigenous peoples and European authorities, but also between secular and spiritual realms. They may have helped to secure the physical survival of indigenous communities, but at the cost of radical disruption to Indigenous patterns of life. In the words of Charles Rowley's seminal study, 'the missions must certainly be credited with the survival of Aboriginal populations. The cost was institutional living, under paternal management, comparable with that on government-controlled reserves in the settled areas of the States' (Rowley 1970, 308).

### **Missionary Anthropology**

In nineteenth century Germany, anthropology was in its nascent phase, devoid of firm institutional footings. Broadly it had developed in two directions. *Anthropologie* equated to physical anthropology, and its practitioners came overwhelmingly from the natural sciences, in particular from medicine, zoology and biology. Their activities were directed primarily toward the empirical investigation and measurement of human bodies. What in English was commonly referred to as social anthropology on the other hand was labelled *Völkerkunde*, *Ethnologie* or *Ethnographie*. Its practitioners were drawn broadly from the humanities, and their interest was directed primarily to the social and cultural manifestations of human behaviour.

Though they came from different disciplinary backgrounds and pursued contrasting interests, what nineteenth century German anthropologists had in common was that they were essentially amateurs. In civil society there was a strong interest in anthropology, manifest above all in the many German museums of *Völkerkunde* established in the second half of the century and housing collections of artefacts gathered from all corners of the globe. However, anthropology was slow to establish itself in the university system. There was no formal Chair in anthropology at a German university until 1905 (Veit 2015, 82), even if there was

widespread interest from neighbouring disciplines and from the broader public in preceding decades.

Missionary anthropologists thus were not alone in their lack of a formal education in the study of the peoples among whom they were to live. As Walter Veit (2015, 73) has shown, German missionaries active in Australia ‘had no ethnological education to speak of’. One can speculate that in advance of their arrival in Australia they consulted available sources about Indigenous Australians, but specialist studies of Aboriginal Australia were not present in the curricula of the German mission seminaries. At most, the missionaries might have absorbed some elements of anthropology through their studies of subjects as history and geography, while the study of languages, too, figured prominently in seminary curricula (Veit 2015, 74). After their arrival in Australia it is apparent that, with considerable variations in commitment and aptitude, the missionaries sought to acquire what knowledge they could of the people in whose midst they commenced their missionary endeavours. While missionaries followed the injunction ‘that the researcher be familiar with his flock and walk among the natives as a human being among other human beings who had souls, religion and language’ (Veit: 1991, 110), their efforts in this regard were not always fully appreciated or supported by the mission authorities who had dispatched them. When the missionary Johannes Reuther, for example, sent a collection of Aboriginal myths from his mission at Killalpaninna in the Lake Eyre basin to the President of the Lutheran Synod in Adelaide, he received the following terse response:

If, instead of the thick wads of ‘liar legends’ and fables that you have concocted – and which are of no use to anybody – who is going to put money into getting them printed? – if you were to let us have brief monthly reports, then you would be fulfilling your duty, satisfying us, and doing something useful. (Kaibel 1904, 36)

In a similar vein, after Carl Strehlow of the Hermannsburg mission in central Australia sent the first volume of his study of the Aranda people to the mission authorities in Adelaide, his efforts were greeted with the words:

My heartfelt thanks for sending me your work on the Aranda. It is a wonderful document of German diligence. However, the material which you have put into written form is the most worthless imaginable. Almost everything is chaff, with hardly a grain of moral value here and there. In truth, it must have cost not a little self-



denial on your part to write down these insipid legends which can be of interest only to an ethnographer. I do not doubt the historical value of your collection as the sole monument of a tribe which will vanish from this earth. (Veit 2005, 38)

Not surprisingly, men like Reuther and Strehlow sought to share the fruits of their anthropological labours with more grateful recipients, typically outside the bounds of the Church. In Germany and elsewhere there was a great thirst for knowledge about peoples from all over the globe and for those open to – indeed in many cases dependent on – knowledge collected by amateur anthropologists in distant lands, missionaries proved an invaluable source. The recognised worth of the knowledge they gathered and transmitted (to the extent that it was recognised) was that it was sourced from observers who had prolonged and immediate contact with Indigenous communities. As Reinhard Wendt observes generally of missionary activity in its global dimensions, ‘Only a few Europeans lived and worked in such proximity and over such long periods as the missionaries in places where western and non-western worlds touched’ (Wendt 2001, 7). Australia was one such site of enduring contact, even if in so many cases the missions did not endure nearly as long as their founders had hoped.

German missionaries thus became indispensable members of knowledge networks which extended far beyond the missionary societies which sent them into the field; they facilitated the transfer of knowledge both across geographical space and across academic disciplines. Their activities expanded into the area of collecting artefacts along with less tangible forms of knowledge. Just as ‘armchair anthropologists’ in the cities of Australia and Europe gathered and absorbed the information sent to them by missionaries and others in the field, so too did the artefacts that men such as Reuther and Strehlow collected find their way to museums in Germany and other parts of Europe. Fully cognisant of the nexus between the pursuit of such colonial knowledge and the forms of colonial power that ultimately led to the dispossession and deculturalisation of Australia’s Indigenous peoples, historians of anthropology, have been justly wary about describing such amateur anthropology in terms of ‘success’ (Stocking 1991).

## Missionary Linguistics

Nowhere were the advantages of the German missionaries' sustained contact with Indigenous populations more evident than in the realm of language acquisition. The missionaries' accumulation of linguistic proficiency was clearly a product of the extended period of their frontier contact, combined with their firm commitment to learning Indigenous languages so as to employ them for religious purposes. Without doubt, their high degree of competency in this area saw them leave behind some of the most detailed records of colonial-era Indigenous languages, and this contribution to linguistic knowledge stands out as one of the abiding legacies of missionaries to anthropological work in Australia.

The devotion to linguistics was of course not confined to German missionaries, and the missionary engagement with Indigenous languages was exhibited in Australia first by the Englishman Lancelot Threlkeld, who in the course of his work in the early nineteenth century, initially in the service of the London Mission Society, made great efforts to learn Indigenous languages. He believed that 'the gospel had to be first expressed to these people in their own language and so it was language-learning and Bible translation to which he gave most of his energies'. (Harris, 1990, 53-54) Similarly, some half a century later it was the Congregationalist minister George Taplin who made language study central to his missionary activity among the Ngarrindjeri people in South Australia, translating some parts of the Bible as well as a number of hymns and prayers (Harris 1990, 369; Taplin 1874).

Nonetheless the emphasis on linguistics in German missionary anthropology is striking, and especially so among Lutherans. It is evident in widespread efforts to learn languages, to develop comprehensive grammars and dictionaries, and to translate the Bible and other religious texts. So common had this activity become globally that the German mission theorist Gustav Warneck claimed that by 1890, 309 missionary translations of the Bible had been completed (Warneck 1897, 288).<sup>1</sup> German missionaries in Australia undertook their share of that larger project.

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<sup>1</sup> Warneck conceded that not in all cases was the entire Bible translated. Of the 309, 146 had been done in Asia, 78 in Africa, 42 in Oceania and 43 in America. In his terminology, the translations were of the languages of both *Kulturvölker* and *Naturvölker*. (Warneck 1897, 288). According to Harriet Völker the Lutheran missionaries Reuther, Strehlow and Siebert were all influenced by Warneck's views on language, religion and a belief in a common humanity. (Völker, 2001, 179)

Unsurprisingly, these Lutheran translators looked back to the seminal work performed by none other than Martin Luther himself, who had translated the Bible into German. His thinking in the early sixteenth century was that the vernacular was the appropriate vehicle by which to bring the word of God directly to the people. In the missionary context of the late nineteenth century, the fundamental principle driving the missionary interest in and dedication to learning languages was no different. By that time the underlying logic was well articulated by Warneck:

The human thinks in his mother tongue; it is the mirror which gives him his soul. And as it is with individuals, so it is also with peoples: in the languages of the people the people's soul finds expression. A people which lost its language would incur damage to its soul. The innermost life of a people, its religious life, pulses in the mother tongue. [...] Christianity is now coming to the peoples as a foreign religion, and this foreign religion can only find a place inside them if it is presented to them in the language into which they were born, and if they have absorbed it into their mother tongue. (Warneck 1897, 17)

This theoretical foundation found its practical expression in the missionaries' preparation for overseas work. Typically their training included the learning of languages, even if those languages were chosen primarily for their importance to Biblical scholarship (Veit 2015, 74). Their training also emphasised the need for further language acquisition and translation once in the field. The instructions given to missionaries of the Dresden Mission Society before their departure for South Australia provide an indication of the central place that language was to occupy in their endeavours. Missionaries were instructed to:

Occupy yourselves with learning the language of the original inhabitants, and so from the beginning 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 in the most thorough and efficient way, that you, where possible, both employ a teacher and study the grammar, as well as going among the people in order to grasp the oral expression from life. As soon as you have some command of the language, or think it appropriate to use an interpreter, you will turn to the heathen, preach Christ crucified to them, baptise them when they are ready for it, and form a congregation with the baptised. With the preaching of the Word you will also combine the instruction of the minors and give thought to establishing an elementary school. In order to impress better upon the hearers the Word of God proclaimed in church and school, it will be appropriate if the Small Catechism of Luther first of all, and later the complete Holy Scriptures, are translated into the

language of the indigenous people, and you will undertake this work also as far as you are able. (DMS Instructions, 1837, 264-65)

In practice then the missionaries' anthropological work was an expression of their devotion to the task of proselytising in Indigenous languages. It was through a study of language, and ultimately through something approaching a mastery of it, that the missionaries believed that they could gain access to the mental world of Indigenous people, understand their customs and culture, and grasp their existing religious beliefs. Such insights would enable them in turn to prepare an accurate translation of the Bible, laying an essential foundation for modifying their belief system in line with the beliefs of the missionaries and European colonists more broadly. The ultimate success in inculcating Christian beliefs might have been negligible, however the corpus of linguistic knowledge generated incidentally in the belief that it would bring about the Christianisation of Indigenous Australians was in many cases the difference between some degree of cultural preservation and irretrievable cultural loss. As Etherington has asked, 'Had there been no missions in the [British] Empire, who knows how many languages might have become extinct?' (Etherington 2005, 10)

### **Aim and scope**

The question of the distinctive nature of the German missionary contribution to Australian anthropology, the integration of anthropological study into missionary practice, the roles of German missionaries in national and international knowledge transfers, and their contributions in the particular realm of linguistics, are all themes explored in the essays in this collection.

Felicity Jenz's contribution reminds us that even within the tradition of missionary anthropology a range of intellectual and theological traditions were at play. Focusing on the example of Friedrich Hagenauer, Jenz makes clear the extent to which Moravian missionaries too operated as conduits for knowledge not only within a global network of missionaries, which straddled the English and German-speaking worlds and another of anthropological scholarship, but also within antipodean networks of colonial administration. As a collector of objects on behalf of important European ethnographic museums, Hagenauer provided the raw material for Europe-based anthropologists, as well as the first draft descriptions and assessments of the Indigenous cultural milieu that had produced them.

Beyond that, however, Hagenauer also worked as an expert for colonial government officials, who were seeking to formalise the state of knowledge about the lives and languages of the Indigenous peoples that lived in their area of jurisdiction. Significantly, having compiled an exhaustive record of the linguistic heritage of his Aboriginal charges, Hagenauer abandoned the use of their language in his own missionary work, in favour of the dominant colonial language of English, thereby playing his own role in the relegation of Indigenous languages to objects of study rather than living forms of communication.

A comparison of theoretical foundations and anthropological methodologies lies at the heart also of Peggy Brock's analysis of the work of Carl Strehlow and the Irish-born Presbyterian missionary J. R. B. Love. Strehlow's linguistic skills were first displayed at Bethesda and then confirmed during the much longer period he spent at the Hermannsburg mission. As for so many missionaries, Strehlow viewed the learning of languages as intimately linked with evangelist endeavour. In his case it also led to wide-ranging anthropological studies of cultures and belief systems. Although their origins lay in missionary work, these 'scientific' studies in Strehlow's mind were quite separate from his missionary activity, did not inform his efforts to effect conversions, and were not in the least appreciated by missionary authorities. This division between anthropological and missionary activity was, as Brock points out, by no means universal, even among the Lutheran missionary fraternity. In particular, Otto Siebert's and Nicolaus Wettengel's efforts to understand Indigenous people deeply informed their work as missionaries, and saw them tailor their message according to the culture and the beliefs of those they sought to convert.

Like Strehlow, Love had no formal training in anthropology, and like Strehlow he was a talented linguist. Though it occurred many years after Strehlow's departure, a crucial experience for Love was an extended tour through the outback, visiting both Bethesda station on Lake Killalpaninna and Hermannsburg. There is little doubt that this tour influenced his own approach to missionary work in the Kimberley, beginning with his translation of the Bible and his devotion to anthropological research. Yet, as Brock shows, there was a fundamental difference in the scientific approaches of Love and Strehlow. Where the latter never participated in Indigenous cultural practices and did not acknowledge their deeper social functions, Love observed them at first hand and sought to relate them to their wider contexts rather than dismiss them as mere cultural diversions. Shared anthropological interests, in short, did not equate to shared methodologies or assumptions.

Finally, Peter Monteath's contribution revisits the topic of the differences between missionary anthropologists and those working in a secular, empirical tradition. Just as the work of Hermann Koeler contrasted with that of the German missionaries in and around Adelaide in the earliest days of European settlement in South Australia, so too the case of Erhard Eylmann offers a striking contrast with the German missionaries at the turn of the century. Having relied heavily on the hospitality and practical assistance of missionaries during his travels in Australia around the turn of the century, Eylmann wrote a damning critique of them in his major publication on Australian anthropology. The sharpness of Eylmann's condemnation is indicative of the extent to which earlier divisions had by the early twentieth century developed into open antagonism.

It is tempting to interpret Eylmann as the harbinger of a new kind of anthropology, indicative of what Andrew Zimmerman has labelled an 'anti-humanist' turn (Zimmerman 2001). Drawing on his training in medicine and the natural sciences, Eylmann insisted on the importance of strict objectivity and empiricism; correspondingly he showed little sympathy for the missionaries' hermeneutic project of seeking cultural understanding via language and intersubjective engagement.

At the same time, the case of Eylmann is a reminder that German anthropologists, regardless of the theoretical or methodological underpinnings of their work, were participating in scientific endeavours that crossed boundaries. When Eylmann's undertook his major expedition in Australia just before the turn of the century, the pre-eminent figures in Australian anthropology were Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen. Eylmann's admiration for their work, along with his contempt for his countryman Carl Strehlow, underlines the extent to which by the early twentieth century the development of the discipline in the context of a shared commitment to European colonialism had erased national differences.

## **Conclusion**

German anthropological interest in Australia reached its apogee in the first years of the twentieth century. Carl Strehlow's multi-volume study of the Aranda and Loritja people was published in Germany from 1907, while that of his nemesis, Eylmann, dates from 1908. With the outbreak of the First World War, however, the anthropological landscape in Australia changed, since scientific activity was not immune from the wider world of politics. That

neither Strehlow's nor Eylmann's work was published in English is an indicator of the impact of the First World War on Australian anthropology. German missionary activity in Australia, too, was severely curtailed by the war, as a deep-rooted suspicion of German Australians came to the fore.

Nonetheless missionary anthropology survived both the war and, for a time at least, it resisted the growing and irreversible trend toward the institutionalisation and professionalisation of the discipline. Missionaries remained important elements in the anthropological knowledge networks that survived into the post-war period. As late as 1924 one of their number, the South African Methodist Edwin Smith, was able to claim with some justification, 'Social anthropology might almost be claimed as a missionary science, first, on account of its great utility to missionaries, and second, because the material upon which it is built has so largely been gathered by them' (Harries 2005, 238). Furthermore, a case can be made that in the twentieth century professional anthropologists who stood outside the missionary tradition were nonetheless influenced in their professional practices by the missionaries who had pioneered the fieldwork practices of the discipline. Foremost among them was Bronislaw Malinowski, who identified the shortcomings of 'armchair anthropology' and adopted a methodology based on fieldwork performed over extended periods and in direct contact with the people he sought to understand.

In Germany, however, the prospects for the discipline and for the missionaries who were drawn to it were much bleaker. While the discipline survived both the war and the consequent loss of Germany's colonial empire and cemented a place in the universities, the theoretical and methodological variety which had distinguished German anthropology in the pre-war period declined. Through the years of the Weimar Republic and then the Third Reich, the 'anti-humanist' alternative heralded by Eylmann and the physical anthropologists evolved into one of the pillars of Nazi racial science. The impulses which had guided missionary anthropology were rendered obsolete, as the missionaries' contributions to the discipline were ignored in Germany just as studiously as on the other side of the world.

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