

Presentation

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The Dresden Missionaries in South Australia 1838-1846 – Tracking their Trails in Archives and Museums in Germany¹

Introduction

When their vessel cast anchor at Port Misery in October 1838, 173 years ago at the time of writing, Adelaide was little more than tents, huts, tracks and bush. A few hundred *whitefellas* already lived along the coastline as sealers and whalers, or workers and administrators of the South Australian Company that had set out in 1836 to colonize what was to become South Australia. Clamor W Schürmann (1815-1893) and Gottlob C Teichelmann (1807-1888), having been sent out by the Lutheran Missionary Society in Dresden, Saxony, to convert the local Aboriginal people to the Lutheran faith, were quite enthusiastic. On their very first trip from the harbour to the settlement, they attempted to befriend the natives they met along the road. They wanted to learn their language as quickly as possible, to preach the Gospel to them. Two years later they were joined by their missionary-brethren H A Eduard Meyer (1813-1862) and Samuel G Klose (1802-1889). Between the four of them, they mastered the languages of the three indigenous communities amongst whom they were working: *Kaurna* spoken in what is now called the Adelaide Plains, *Ramindjeri* at Encounter Bay (a dialect of *Ngarrindjeri*) and *Barngarla* on Eyre Peninsula. By 1840, about 18 months after their arrival at Adelaide, Teichelmann and Schurmann had published their first dictionary and grammar, established a school for the local native children at *Piltawodli* (Lake Torrens, Adelaide City) and began to establish mission work at today's Victor Harbour and Port Lincoln. In the following years they were hired as interpreters for court cases and at public events, and by 1846 they had published studies on all three languages and on the customs of these indigenous peoples.

However, in the same year they also realized their missionary work was to be short-lived for various reasons. These included lack of financial support from overseas, their German fellow-immigrants, and from the colonial administration; the wandering habits of the Aboriginal people, and their plummeting population; being spread out at three mission stations over a vast country; and the unwavering beliefs of the natives that prevented any conversion to Christianity: The four missionaries decided to cease their work for the time being. They became pastors to Lutheran settler communities in Adelaide, the Barossa Valley and Western Victoria; Teichelmann and Klose later turned to farming to support their families.

History writing for both Australian Lutheran Christianity and the Dresden/Leipzig Mission, but also secular historical accounts of South Australia, acknowledge the missionaries' work amongst the Aborigines of infant South Australia. However, as no natives were converted, not only the missionaries considered their efforts to be a failure, from which to learn for future missionary endeavours (for instance, in India where Schürmann's brother worked, or from the 1860s onwards in the Australian Centre). Though their names,

¹ This article is the revised and shortened version of the presentation "Listening to their voices — Tracking paper trails in archives in Germany" to the Friends of the Lutheran Archives on 26 July 2011. — Many thanks to Lois Zweck, Rob Amery, Jürgen Gröschl, Pam Mibus and Maurice Schild for suggestions and revisions.

linguistic and anthropological works were referred to in Australian newspapers and by international linguists for many years to come, these then faded away in archives in Germany, Australia and even in Capetown, South Africa².

What transpired since the mid-1980s appears to be a miracle, and ‘beyond the missionaries’ expectations’. This is how Dr Rob Amery, linguist at the University of Adelaide, describes the reclamation of three Aboriginal languages in South Australia, based on historical sources created by the Lutheran missionaries in the early 1840s. *Kaurna* today is a language well-established in the public domain, being taught at all levels of education. *Ngarrindjeri* is now spoken again amongst its native speakers, and systematic studies of the *Barngarla* language on Eyre Peninsula have generated a renewed awareness of culture and identity amongst its community members.

The following paper provides an overview of historical sources of information held in various archives and museums in Germany, which have been ‘discovered’ in recent years, by being made accessible for further research into this story.

Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionswerk, Leipzig

The missionaries’ sending agency – the Evangelical-Lutheran Mission Society in *Dresden* – was established 175 years ago on 17 August 1836. However, its offices were moved to Leipzig in 1848 because of the academic and public support available through the university there.

Frequent contact has been maintained between the Lutheran Church in Australia (LCA) and the *Leipziger Missionswerk* (LMW)³ ever since, in particular in recent times through their joint commitment of mission work in Papua New Guinea. While researching the story of the four Dresden missionaries in the 1940s, Dr A Brauer, author of the Lutheran Church history *Under the Southern Cross* (1957), received a request from the Adelaide City Council to provide details about them and subsequently the question ‘if he thought it possible to procure from the Dresden Mission Society the letters and reports sent by the missionaries ... insofar as this material pertained to the natives inhabiting the district where Adelaide now stands’. Initial contact with Leipzig Mission broke off due to World War II. It was picked up again by Dr S P Hebart in the early 1970s. Three-party negotiations with Leipzig Mission and the government in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) eventually resulted in the acquisition of ‘valuable material’ being made available on microfilm to the Lutheran Archives and the University of Adelaide, as reported by Dr Grope in 1976.⁴

Besides surviving evidence of the missionaries’ story at the Lutheran Archives itself, this microfilm was the only available reference to the archival holdings of Leipzig Mission for quite some time. The first comprehensive publication about the Dresden missionary story, *I’d rather dig potatoes – Clamor Schurmann and the Aborigines of South Australia, 1838-1853*, by his grandson, Edwin (Ted) A. Schurmann (1987), relied heavily on the transcript and translation of this material and formed the basis for most of the mission-related research for many years.

One of the many miracles in the life of this story happened in Leipzig in the mid-1980s, still during the time of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). While details still have to be ascertained, frequent contact between the LCA and LMW encouraged Jutta Klenke (1939-2008), then assistant to Pastor Joachim Schlegel, LMW director 1982-1994, to transcribe many hundreds of pages of mostly hand-written letters, diaries and reports between the four missionaries and Dresden Mission, according to related

² Expanding the original publication on the Kaurna language of 1840, Gottlob Teichelmann had sent his only handwritten manuscript (1857 and 1858) to Governor Grey, then residing at Capetown, South Africa. It was located there by Prof. R M W Dixon, and a copy is now available at the SA State Library Adelaide.

³ Online <www.lmw-mission.de>

⁴ Report by Dr L.B. Grope, in the “President’s Column”, *The Lutheran*, 9 February 1976, page 5

correspondence with LCA President Dr L Grope between 1984 and 1986. Klenke's enduring efforts had a long lasting effect that would surely have exceeded 'her own expectations'.

These typewritten transcripts have been stored away at the Lutheran Archives for quite some time. Since the 1990s, increasing interest in this topic by researchers has initiated a concerted effort by some of the Lutheran Archives volunteers to translate them into English.

For a long time, and until recently, Leipzig Mission celebrated its anniversaries with hardly any reference to its first four missionaries in Australia; and even less was known about the long-lasting impact for the present-day South Australian Aboriginal people. This has begun to change first with the welcoming of a small delegation of *Kurna* and *Ngarrindjeri* Aborigines representing the language reclamation programs based on the missionaries' works at the 175-year anniversary of the Dresden Missionary Society on 17 August 2011 .

The Franckesche Stiftungen, Halle

In 2006, Leipzig Mission and the Francke Foundations Halle (Saale)⁵ arranged for the hosting of the LMW archives at the better equipped Halle Archives. A genuine relationship between the two agencies has existed since the 19th century, when Leipzig Mission had continued work on some of the earlier mission fields of the Danish-Halle Mission in India. While research at the LMW archive was possible, its files until 1993 are now accessible at the recently renovated and highly professional archival and study facilities of the Francke Foundations, and with the help of qualified personnel.

In 2008, the Francke Foundations also published a '*Findbuch*' (finding aid)⁶ that lists all files of the Dresden/Leipzig Mission Society stored in Halle, including the letters to and from the four Dresden missionaries in South Australia, but in particular, minutes and correspondence of the Dresden Mission board, previously unavailable. The Halle Archives also holds a large part of the old LMW library, which still needs to be evaluated for its relevance to this story.



Following my subsequent visit to Halle in August 2009, with a series of research questions in my baggage, the Francke Foundations and the Lutheran Archives signed a preliminary agreement to establish regular scientific exchange and the sharing of publications relevant to the mission-related history of both institutions. **Since our first contact, regular contact and exchange have been established.**

The Francke Foundations also offered **digitisation of selected files** of the Dresden/Leipzig Mission archives relevant to the work of the Dresden missionaries in South Australia, **at present some 4,500 pages, approximately a quarter of the entire Dresden Mission archive holding.** The release of this material still awaits the endorsement of the Leipzig Mission board as the owner of this archive.

It is envisaged that the final product, a number of DVDs, will be handed over during the 175-year anniversaries of the arrival of Schürmann and Teichelmann, and of the first German Lutherans here in South Australia, possibly in October / November 2013.

However, this offer needs to be put into perspective:

The **selected files of the Dresden Mission archive are a sizeable collection.** For a professional archive, it is a very unusual step to create a copy of its holdings for research at another location. Given the distances to Australia, the relevance of these documents for academic research into the early history of South

⁵ *Franckesche Stiftungen* Halle (Saale), online <www.francke-halle.de>

⁶ Online <http://192.124.243.55/findbuch_lmww.pdf>

Australia and its effects on the indigenous Australian communities, this step has been suggested for the advancement of systematic research.

Yet, almost all documents are handwritten by different authors, mostly with the 19th century script prevalent in Germany until the 1940s, which very few people even in Germany can read today. The Lutheran Archives is fortunately working with highly committed German language volunteer transcribers and translators who can decipher this script, but their number is dwindling.

But being able to read these documents is not the only issue – in many cases they have to be translated into English to be useful for further research, as very few of the current Australian researchers command sufficient knowledge of German. Furthermore, some knowledge of *Kurna* and *Ngarrindjeri* is required to transliterate accurately the smattering of words and texts written in these languages.

And the whole issue raises another problem – how to store electronic data appropriately. As the Lutheran Archives have just started to build up a digital archive, they will face another long-term problem: the future use of digitised archival material, as it is estimated that electronic systems change considerably every ten years.

In other words, dealing with these documents digitised onto DVDs will require some serious considerations, so that they don't end up forgotten in some storage box. —

From Berlin to Dresden

The Dresden Mission Society and their first four missionaries cannot be understood without its historical context. The establishment of what is now Leipzig Mission, 175 years ago, was virtually sealed by the appearance of Clamor Schürmann and Gottlob Teichelmann on the Society's doorstep in Dresden a month earlier. For the Society, it was as if these student missionaries had fallen from the sky.

What was to become the independent Mission Society in August 1836 had been, since 1819, one of the far ranging mission aid associations drawing support right across what we now call Germany and its neighbouring countries. Such associations responded to a religious revival following the Napoleonic wars, which had devastated vast regions of Europe and Western Russia in the early 1800s. There was also a cultural awakening regarding the recent discoveries of new continents and peoples, with all their colonial and scientific challenges.

Until 1836, the Dresden association and its auxiliary network of affiliates mainly supported some of the recently established Mission Societies in Europe. They sent money to the Jänicke Mission School in Berlin, the London Missionary Society, a Dutch mission agency and similar ventures, and sponsored the training of would-be missionaries at the Basel Mission.

Not least because of the bitter religious disputes during the early 1830s between the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III and the Lutherans under his care over the union of churches for political reasons, the Dresden Mission began looking into its own confessional stand. Church leaders of influence such as Johann Gottfried Scheibel – a former Lutheran professor at Breslau University, then in Dresden – called for this approach. Subsequently, several Lutheran Dresden Mission students at Basel protested against what we might now call an ecumenical approach to mission, and rejected the non-denominational communion practised by the Basel Mission Society, thus causing quite some controversy between the various denominational mission agencies.



In Berlin a similar situation occurred in 1835/36, but for quite different reasons. Three of the four Dresden missionaries (Meyer, Schürmann and Teichelmann) undertook their initial missionary training at the so-called "Jänicke School" in Berlin. Johannes Jänicke, born in 1748

was descended from a Bohemian-Czech family. Since 1779, he was the preacher to the Lutheran Bohemians and some of the Moravians in Berlin, with close affiliation to the Herrnhut Moravians. Both the Moravians and the Bohemians had fled their Czech home country in the 17th century. Some settled on the land of Count Zinzendorf to establish themselves in the town of Herrnhut in Southern Saxony – what is now known as the Moravian Church. Others moved on to Berlin, the capital city of Prussia, which was at that time considered to be most tolerant in religious affairs.

Pastor Johannes Jänicke was one of the few upright Lutherans of late 18th century Berlin and, according to 19th century historical accounts, highly revered as the Lutheran preacher and a missionary teacher. His younger brother had been a missionary in India, and his early death prompted Jänicke to establish a missionary school in 1800, with some external funding. The story of this first mission school is quite intriguing, and it was far-sighted. Until the school was closed in 1843, some 80 young men received a four-year training to be sent out by other mission agencies, such as the Church Mission Society and other such agencies in Britain, the Netherlands and, initially, Basel. Amongst those trained were famous missionaries such as Karl Gützlaff in China and Korea, Karl Theodore Rhenius in Southern India and Johann Hinrich Schmelen in South Africa and Namibia.

Prior to his death in 1827, Jänicke was joined in the management of the school by his son-in-law, preacher Johann Wilhelm Rückert. Unfortunately for us today, Jänicke and Rückert rarely went public with their mission work. Thus resulted in only sketchy archival evidence about their school and its curriculum. For a long time the Jänicke School was financially supported by mission agencies such as the London Missionary Society, by mission friends in *Friesland* in the North West of Germany, and small donations from parish members and local supporters. Although in later years they obtained ongoing assistance from the royal treasury in Berlin, they were often barely able to survive.

In the 1820s, an initiative to establish a proper mission society in Berlin was started by people with a higher social status in church and society. They demanded that the Jänicke School merge with them, an idea flatly rejected by Jänicke and later by Rückert. During a time of many struggles, three mission societies in Berlin (the Jänicke School, the Berlin Mission Society and the Gossner Mission) competed with each other for resources and personnel from the 1830s onwards. Rückert finally lost all support and had to give up in the late 1840s.⁷

Researching into the missionaries' training and the story around the Berlin Mission School under Rückert, today, is very difficult indeed. No comprehensive account of the Jänicke / Rückert Mission School seems to exist, and the surviving files are not easy to access. My visits to the Berlin church archives and the church library produced little result, although an extensive file documents Rückert's struggle to keep his mission school alive while facing the more influential initiators of the new Berlin Mission Society and Gossner's mission initiative.

Three of the four Dresden missionaries (Schürmann, Teichelmann and Meyer, while Klose came to the later Dresden mission school directly) went through their initial training at the Jänicke School under Rückert in the early 1830s. Clamor Schürmann himself followed in the footsteps of his older brother Johann Adam, who eventually worked for the Anglican Church Mission Society in Benares, India.

Most likely, Clamor Schürmann had expected to be sent to India or China, but never to Australia. In actual fact, it was only in April 2011 that we looked more closely at a small notebook in the Schürmann collection at the Lutheran Archives, which documents his achievements in the study of – Chinese.⁸ It is

⁷ Rückert's struggle with the emerging Berlin and the subsequent Gossner Mission Society since the 1830s has been summarized by Regine Ganter, Gossner (1836) and the Berlin Mission Societies, as part of the Website *German Missionaries in Queensland — A web-directory of intercultural encounters*, Griffith University <<http://missionaries.griffith.edu.au/missionary-training/gossner-1836-and-berlin-mission-societies>> (viewed 10.10.2011).

⁸ Thanks to James McElvenny in Canberra and his Sino-Dialectologist friend (who studies dialects in Chinese languages) in Paris, France for their first assessment of this document!

not yet clear when and where Schürmann studied this language, but the entry of the years '1835-1836' suggests it may have been while still at the Jänicke School in Berlin.

A similar notebook provides evidence of the Hebrew studies conducted by Schürmann and most likely his fellow missionary Teichelmann.

The few pieces of information about the Jänicke Missionary School under Rückert that have been accessible so far, suggest an exhaustive training of the would-be missionaries. It is remarkable that at least our three friends never left Rückert for the mission school, set up earlier in 1829 by the newly-established Berlin Mission Society – perhaps because of the non-denominational principles of its initiators and some apparent chaos in its early years.

Initial contact has now been established with the church library and the archives of the Evangelical Church in Berlin-Brandenburg to look anew into the history of the Jänicke Mission School. In this context, awareness has also been raised at the Gossner and the Berlin Mission Societies not only of their legacy with the Jänicke School, but also of the first Gossner missionaries at the Queensland coast of Australia, who arrived there in early 1838.

The Birds at the *Mauritianum* Natural History Museum, Altenburg

In October 2010 an amazing event occurred. Rob Amery, the linguist behind the Kurna Language Reclamation Program at Adelaide University (*Kurna Warra Pintyandi*), and I had planned to visit Leipzig Mission together. At the time Rob was a visiting lecturer at the English Language Department of the University of Köln.

Just before leaving, he received an email from an Australian fellow linguist, James McElvenny, then a PhD student at Leipzig University. A couple of weeks earlier, James had visited the local Nature History Museum *Mauritianum* at Altenburg⁹, in the State of Thuringia, some 50 km South of Leipzig. Altenburg was a place familiar to us not least for the ordination of Schürmann and Teichelmann there in 1838.



In a glass cabinet at the museum, James had seen some birds on display with a note indicating that a missionary Teichelmann in South Australia had sent them to Altenburg in 1843. It transpired that in 1842 Teichelmann had indeed received considerable financial support from a 'Share Holding Association' formed by members of the regional *Osterlande* Nature Research Society – *Osterlande* being the historic name for a large region between Thuringia and Saxony.

During our visit there we learned, however, that Teichelmann and Schürmann had shipped at least 336 *birds* to Altenburg. *Why* did they do this and *how* were they able to do so? After all, even in 1841, barely five years after the promulgation of the colony, Adelaide was still only a settlement of tents, shacks and a few houses.

The 'Why' triggered inspecting the published version of the Dresden Mission board's instructions for the two missionaries. We had only received this document in July 2010 from a local family researcher in Osnabrück, West Germany. He found it by chance in a Google book on the Internet and remembered the recent exhibition in nearby Schledehausen, the home of missionary Schürmann.

In comparatively surprising detail, the instructions request the missionaries to support the mission through the collection of natural history specimens from South Australia to aid scientific research in Germany, with as little expense for the Dresden Mission as possible. Until this moment, none of us understood what this was all about, nor were the complaints by the two missionaries in their letters about how to fulfil this request, given the local conditions and the expenses incurred, comprehensible.

⁹ Online <www.mauritianum.de>

A letter by Teichelmann, dated 6 January 1841, to one of the nobles in Altenburg, Hans Conon *von der Gabelentz*¹⁰, also discusses their difficulties in responding to this request. Published as part of a Google book, it was discovered only recently by Lois Zweck. Further research in the museum library and the Thuringia State Archives, also based in Altenburg, revealed that local business people, supported by the Altenburg duke, had collected and provided some 300 Thaler for the ‘Teichelmann expedition’ – a fairly large sum for the early 1840s.

Meanwhile, again by chance, the archive staff have discovered further evidence, including an account of the expenses and donations for the participation of the *Osterlande* Society in Altenburg in the Teichelmann ‘Expedition’ in South Australia.

It appears that this relationship had developed as a response by the Dresden Mission Society to the willingness of the local consistory – the church authority in the independent duchy of Altenburg – to ordain the two missionaries, which had previously been refused by the consistory in Saxony.

The surviving documents describe this collection of birds as one of the largest acquisitions of the *Osterlande* society, and above all, one of the most spectacular. Some time later, the Society also received a large number of insects from Teichelmann, which don’t seem to have survived World War II; possibly also other collections of specimens of birds and indigenous artefacts.

While the scientific value of the bird collection at the *Mauritianum* Museum still has to be established, it certainly forms one of the oldest collections of natural products from infant South Australia that allowing early scientific research in Germany.

In a presentation during the South Australian History Week in May 2011, the Senior Curator of the South Australian Museum, Philip Jones, commented on the ‘How’ of these findings. The National British Museum and the colonial administration had asked their colonies to collect such items and send them ‘home’. This became an important hobby for many early settlers, helping them to come to terms with their new surroundings, and created business opportunities for others. With the financial assistance provided from Altenburg, the two Dresden missionaries possibly secured the support of a professional ornithologist and a German entomologist, who advertised services in infant Adelaide. An early newspaper clipping in the online database *Trove* of the National Library of Australia registers the shipping of one box (or crate), amongst many others, with birds shipped by Teichelmann to Germany in 1841.

Kaurna Artefacts in Saxony

A hint at the Lutheran Archives indicated that Schürmann and Teichelmann had also sent Aboriginal artefacts from South Australia to Dresden around 1840.

As we expected these artefacts to be stored at the Anthropological Museum Herrnhut (now part of the *Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen SES*¹¹, the ‘Ethnographic Collections in Saxony’), I contacted its senior curator, Dr Stephan Augustin, who responded with the full quote and reference of the publication¹². And yes, somewhere in Saxony, but not in Herrnhut, these artefacts could be located. I should get in touch with Dr Augustin’s colleague at the Leipzig *Grassi* Museum, Dr. Birgit Scheps, for further information, while he would try to find the artefacts.

Both Dr Augustin and Dr Scheps spent time showing me their respective Australian collections, and explaining the history surrounding them. Apparently, the artefacts may have been sent by the missionaries in response to a prevailing mood amongst the scientific and nature research community in Europe at the time. As many scientists were not able to travel themselves, they asked professional

¹⁰ For more information see <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_Conon_von_der_Gabelentz>

¹¹ Online <www.ses-sachsen.de/>

¹² Guhr, Günter. Australien. In Günter Guhr and Peter Neumann, *Ethnographisches Mosaik — Aus den Sammlungen des Staatlichen Museums für Völkerkunde Dresden*. VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin 1985.

travellers to collect items, or report observations, for further scientific analysis in Germany. According to the author of our initial reference, Dr Günter Guhr (the Australia collection curator at the Leipzig Ethnographic Museum during the time of the GDR), the Dresden missionaries made history by providing the first-ever collection of Aboriginal artefacts in Germany for scientific research in the early 1840s. The four artefacts are now housed at the Ethnographic Museum in Dresden, but seem to have never been on display.



The *Grassi* Museum at Leipzig holds another collection of artefacts from South Australia, but these are from a later period and the origins of some items have not been ascertained.

Another issue is even more important. Archival evidence links the four artefacts to the Dresden missionaries, and according to a preliminary assessment by Dr Rob Amery, the linguist at Uni Adelaide, they are most likely of Kurna origin. Having lived on the Adelaide Plains, these people lost most of their material heritage, as their countryside is now covered by metropolitan Adelaide. While the SA Museum holds a small collection of wooden and woven Kurna artefacts, and many stone tools, these four pieces are possibly some of the oldest surviving objects linking the present-day Kurna people to their past.

According to Dr Philip Jones of the south Australian Museum, similar objects could possibly be found at other museums in Europe. And, as mentioned earlier, there may be more early South Australian Aboriginal artefacts in Altenburg, if they have survived.

Our findings, furthermore, raise the question of the ownership of these artefacts. This is an issue many other museums in Europe have been facing for some time, and it has become increasingly important for indigenous communities around the world, not only artefacts, but also corpses and skulls, or skeletal remains of deceased Aboriginal persons, have ended up being used for scientific and medical research in Europe. For the Kurna people and other indigenous communities in similar social conditions (i.e. living in highly urbanised areas along the Australian South-Eastern coastline), these artefacts represent the very few worldly remains of their own past and identity. —

Missionaries as Linguists – Altenburg

The four Lutheran missionaries from Dresden were not only renowned for their work with Aboriginal people, but particularly for their linguistic works. But how did they discover, record and describe in linguistic terms sounds and grammatical features alien to our languages – all within less than two years, after which Teichelmann/Schürmann and, later, Meyer had each published their first respective dictionary and grammar?

Obviously, this has also fascinated other language researchers. A Google search, or a search of the *Trove* database, reveals a long list of hits referring to the missionaries – as language experts! James McElvenny, the Australian linguist who found the birds at Altenburg, is particularly interested in the traces of communication between the missionaries and international linguists. The correspondence referred to earlier between Teichelmann and the famous German linguist, Hans Conon von der Gabelentz who was based in Altenburg, is one example that also discusses language-related issues¹³:

‘[Amongst the settlers,] nothing was known of their language, and the Aborigines did not understand any English other than ‘*what the name*’ or ‘*anna watte*’, that is ‘*uganna*’ and the English ‘*What*’. We started our enquiries with just that ... until we were in a position to put our questions in their own language. If we could have spent more time ... on the language ... our work would have turned out better ...’

¹³ Letter by C.G. Teichelmann to Hans Conon von der Gabelentz, Altenburg, dated 6 January 1841, reprinted in *Magazin für die Literatur des Auslands*, Bände 21-22, hrg. von Joseph Lehmann, No. 125, 19.10.1842, p.297 (Google Books); translation by James McElvenny.



Modern linguists, however, evaluate the missionaries' language work as being of a high standard, which also seems to have attracted the interest of contemporary language specialists. By all accounts, the four missionaries appear to be more popular as linguists and ethnographers in the wider scientific community, than as missionaries in their own church and mission community.

Evidence surfacing over the past two years indicates that the four Dresdeners, during their short time as missionaries in South Australia, had established a wider network of contacts into the world of sciences than what has been known so far. It may be interesting to record and systematize the references made to their work and thus give credit to their achievements. The Dresden Mission archives, now held at the Archives of the Francke Foundations at Halle, will most likely offer further clues that have to be evaluated. The achievements of the 'Dresden-Four' appear to be comparable with later ventures by missionaries as famous as Pastor Carl Friedrich Theodor Strehlow (1871-1922) at the Hermannsburg Lutheran Mission (today Finke River Mission).

Conclusion

Unfortunately, the missionaries themselves considered their mission project in infant South Australia a failure, since they converted not one native to the Christian faith. As early as 1846 they returned their commission to their sending agency, as there were no longer any Aboriginal people living on the Adelaide Plains and the colonial administration were apparently not supportive of their cause. Both the Australian Lutheran church and the Leipzig Mission history writings acknowledge the missionaries' work, yet they downplay their achievements, regarding them no more than experience from which to learn for future mission endeavours.

I first opened a Schürmann archive box in 2007. Since then it seems to me as if lifting the lid of these boxes allows the missionaries' voices to come alive again. But then, not only do they tell their own story; they also provide an abundance of information about the lives of the people they were dealing with – the First Australian peoples. The Dresden Missionaries were keen observers and reporters of the Aboriginal people and their lifestyle, and the documents in these boxes transmit their voices. All of the archival evidence in Australia and Germany is, in essence, a testimony to their story.

Leipzig Mission today has acknowledged the survival of the Aboriginal people to whom their predecessors in Dresden had sent their first missionaries. They welcomed the small *Kurna/Ngarrindjeri* Aboriginal delegation to the 175-year anniversary of Leipzig/Dresden Mission, in Dresden on 17 August 2011, and expressed their desire to not lose contact in the future.

Our trips through Germany between 2008 and 2011 have opened doors to archives and institutions for research into an important piece of the history of the Lutheran Church in Australia, as well as that of German and British migrants to this country, and in particular their early contact history with the Aboriginal communities in South Australia. In Germany, there is willingness to engage in joint projects for further research, studies and exchange.

What is needed, however, is a clear 'ownership' of this story. If the Lutheran Archives or the LCA were to assume the initiative for further systematic studies regarding the Dresden Missionaries' story, substantial support may also be forthcoming from Germany. In October 2013, the LCA will commemorate the arrival of the first Dresden missionaries and four weeks later, of the 'Kavel People' (in October/November 1838) – 175 years ago. This occasion would be an ideal opportunity to initiate the desired cooperative effort.

(5,092 Words)

Images (Captions may have to re-phrased!):

- *Halle* – Historical Orphan Asylum at Francke Foundations, after renovations in March 2009. Source: Timo Pilgram, 18. March 2009; http://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Datei:Franckesche_Stiftungen_Waisenhaus_2009.jpg&filetimestamp=20090318174015. Licensed under „*Creative Commons-Lizenz Namensnennung-Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen 3.0 Deutschland*“.
- *Bethlehemskirche*, Berlin-Mitte – Bohemian Church in Central Berlin (1737-1943), preaching place of Johannes Jänicke 1779-1827; copper engraving by Johann Georg Rosenberg, approximately 1776, source: http://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Datei:Rosenberg,_Johann_Georg-Mauerstra%C3%9F_mit_B%C3%B6hmischer_Kirche_%28Bethlehemskirche%29_.jpg&filetimestamp=2008117234701. Licensed under “*Diese Bild- oder Mediendatei ist gemeinfrei, weil ihre urheberrechtliche Schutzfrist abgelaufen ist. Dies gilt für die Europäische Union, die Vereinigten Staaten, Australien und alle weiteren Staaten mit einer gesetzlichen Schutzfrist von 70 Jahren nach dem Tod des Urhebers.*“
- *Birds* – Sample of birds at the Natural History Museum “Muritianum”, Altenburg, collected by Schürmann and Teichelmann in 1841. Source: Rob Amery, January 2011.
- *Grassi Museum Leipzig* – Dr Birgit Scheps (Senior Curator Saxony Ethnographic Collection -SES-), Dr Rob Amery (University of Adelaide), Pastor Hans Georg Tannhäuser (Leipzig Mission) and Eveline Tannhäuser, inspecting South Australian Aboriginal artefacts, October 2010. Source: Gerhard Rüdiger.
- *Altenburg* – Dr Rob Amery, James McElvenny and Dr Joachim Emig, Director of Thuringia State Archives Altenburg, January 2011, examining correspondence between Teichelmann and hans Conon von der Gabelentz. Source: Mary Anne Gale.

Gerhard Rüdiger has studied Christian Education and Theology in Germany and worked in roles comparable to a Deacon (Lutheran Lay Worker), with, amongst others, the North-Elbe Lutheran Church, focusing on international mission, e.g. with the Lutheran Churches in Papua New Guinea and El Salvador, and multicultural social work with refugees and migrants in Germany. Having arrived in South Australia in October 2006, he became interested in the history of the first missionaries to South Australia – Schürmann, Teichelmann, Meyer and Klose – and currently assists the Kurna Language Reclamation Program at the University of Adelaide as a research fellow. In August 2011, he toured a small Aboriginal delegation from the Kurna and Ngarrindjery communities through Germany to participate in the 175-year anniversary of the Dresden (now Leipzig) Mission Society, established 17 August 1836. Their first mission field was South Australia, and three current language reclamation programs are based on historical sources created by the four missionaries.

(154 Words)