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THE HERMANNSBURG MISSION SOCIETY
IN AUSTRALIA 1866-1895
Changing Missionary Attitudes
and their Effects on
the Aboriginal Inhabitants

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by

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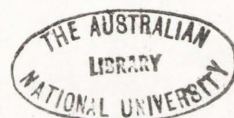


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ABBREVIATIONS

S. A. P. P.	South Australian Parliamentary Papers
S. A. A.	South Australian Archives
H. M. B.	Hermannsburger Missionsblatt
K. M. Z.	Kirchen und Missions-Zeitung
P. A.	Protector of Aborigines
L. K.	Der Lutherische Kirchenbote

PREFACE

Possibly one of the most neglected aspects of Australian History has been the role of the Aborigines. It is only in recent years that any conscious research has been directed towards filling the gap, especially in relation to the Aborigines' attitudes and reactions to the impact of white settlement. Too often the accounts of Australia's early history have focused on the settler, administrator and missionary to the detriment of the other main protagonist in the story - the Aborigine. For over a hundred years the early attitudes about the Aborigines, as formulated by the European intruders have persisted unquestioned and subsequently the role of the Aborigine has been relegated into the insignificant background of history.

It is only of late that the works of people like Elkin, Berndt and more recently Rawlins have attempted to analyse some of the Aborigines' reactions to the European usurpation of their lands. Through the works of these people and a growing number of others a picture is being developed describing the pattern of European - Aboriginal interaction.

It was more by accident than intent that I came to chose the Hermannsburg Mission in Australia as the subject of this work. I had spent some time translating the early records and accounts of the Hermannsburg Mission Societies' activities in South Africa and through this gained an insight into their particular aims and ideals, and the results of their attempted application in South Africa.

On discovering that the society had also made a missionary attempt in Australia I was intrigued by a number of questions.

As a result I have set out to try and discover the answers to some of these in this work. I was particularly concerned with how the missionaries attempted to implement the ideals and aims of the society as expounded by its founder Louis Harms; how they sought to implement their missionary aims under conditions and among people such as they had never envisaged and which were completely outside any previous experiences of the Mission Society; whether their original ideas had to be and were modified in face of the situation, which confronted them; what were the results of their efforts and what was the Aborigines reaction to their presence?

Apart from attempting to find some answers to these questions I have sought to make a limited attempt at examining the role of the Hermannsburg Mission within the framework of European - Aboriginal interaction. What part did the missions play in the pattern of relationships, which was established between the Europeans and the Aborigines?

The missionary efforts of the various denominations have been an important feature of South Australian history and it would be safe to say none have been more prominent in this field than the Lutheran Church. The missionaries were an important aspect in the settlement of some of the frontiers of the Colony and the establishment of missions often introduced a new factor into the relationship, which existed between the white settlers and the Aboriginal inhabitants. In many cases the presence of the mission presented the Aborigines with an additional alternative in their reactions to the European intrusion. This aspect becomes especially relevant when considering the impact of the European economy on the Aborigines' way of life and can be used as an explanation of how the Aborigines came to exploit the missions as one way of combating the pressures on their traditional existence.

Because of the scope of this work I have been unable to delve into these various aspects in any great depth

although there is a wealth of material available and there will be ample opportunity for the future researcher to throw some added light on this subject. I have restricted my dissertation to a period of about thirty years. I have only concerned myself with describing the pioneering missionary attempts of the Lutheran communities in South Australia while they were in conjunction and under the direction of the Hermannsburg Mission Society based in Hermannsburg / Germany.

One of the difficulties facing the researcher in this early period of Lutheran missionary activity in South Australia is that the bulk of the prime sources are in German. As a result of this most of the quotations appearing in the text are my own translations from the originals. I have tried to make the translations resemble the sound of the originals as much as possible while still retaining their sense. This explains why some of the quotes may sound a little strange and are grammatically not good english.

This thesis would not have eventuated had it not been for my supervisor Dr. Norman Etherington and I gratefully acknowledge his help, advice, patience and perseverance. I am also indebt to Miss Robyn Burke for her invaluable help in the completion of this work and I would like to thank Brigitte and Hannelore Elf for their excellent work in typing this thesis.

CHAPTER I

THE FOUNDING AND AIMS OF THE HERMANNSBURG MISSION SOCIETY.

The Hermannsburg Missionary Society was essentially the work of one man. Louis Harn's missionary ambitious first found practical expression in 1844, when he was named assistant pastor to his father in the small Hannoverian village of Hermannsburg.¹

There appears little doubt that Harn's missionary aspirations were decidedly influenced by the nationalistic and evangelical fervour which was sweeping Germany. Harms had shown a fascination for Germany's romantic past at an early age, and Tacitus' Germania became his favourite book. As a student he showed a remarkable ability for languages and he was especially proud of his grasp of Old German. This ability further fed his passion for the past by giving him a first hand knowledge of the heroic legends described in the Nibelungenlied.² Later in his life his yearning for the pagan past was supplanted by a nostalgia for the early Middle Ages.

Harms gained the opportunity to put his romantic medievalism into practice when he succeeded his father as chief pastor at Hermannsburg. His aim was to involve the whole village in the service of missions.

¹Georg Haccius, Hannoversche Missionsgeschichte (3 Vols., Hermannsburg, 1907 - 11), II, p.1

²Theodore Harms, Lebensbeschreibung des Pastor Louis Harms (Hermannsburg, 1868), p.29

The effects of Harm's dramatic preaching brought about a religious "Awakening" in Hermannsburg. During his sermons and at the periodic "Missionsfeste" (Mission festivals) Harms especially emphasised past missionary efforts in the homeland such as the christianization of their pagan forbearers.³ Many of the villagers came to share Harms enthusiasm for continuing this process among the heathen peoples in the new lands across the seas. Attempts to cater for this newly found missionary fervour by sending candidates to existing missionary societies, proved unsuccessful. Harms remained undaunted by this setback and opened his own seminary, which in 1849 became the Hermannsburg Mission Society.

The Society was to be modelled on the medieval christian monasteries. Just as early Saxony had been christianized and cultivated by groups of monks and lay brothers, so the unmarried missionaries from Hermannsburg would establish similar communities in heathen lands. The missionaries would be accompanied by colonists, who would be responsible for the external aspects of the missions and help to make them self-sufficient.⁴

Life at the mission stations was to be communal, and each settlement was to serve as a model christian community for the heathens. The self supporting nature of the stations was seen as an important factor for their success, not only because of the financial aspects but as a means of providing work for the heathens, who in this way would be gradually absorbed into the community.

The missionaries and colonists were to settle together for up to twelve years, during which time they would establish themselves in the heathen land. After this time a small core would remain at the original station, while the remainder moved two to three miles away and began again in the same manner.

³Haccius, II, 74

⁴Haccius, II, 222 - 23

The new recruits from Europe would then find an established community where they could carry out useful work as they learned the language, before moving out to the fringes. In this way Harms hoped the whole land would be enveloped in a net of mission stations and the people subsequently converted.

Harms was also interested to see the spread of missions for more far-reaching reasons. He believed that the sooner the heathens in the world had been converted to Christianity, the sooner man would witness the Second Coming. Missionary activity would be instrumental in hastening this prophecy. This event was to be preceded by a growing decay among the established Churches in Europe.⁵ It was up to the church through the mission to find a haven away from this unfavourable situation. Harms felt that some heathen nation as yet untouched by the effects of European decay and corruption would be ideal as a place to build a bastion of Christianity in preparation for Christ's return to Earth.

Harms saw the spread of European imperialism among the indigenous peoples of the colonies as one of the main obstacles to achieving his missionary aims among the heathens. He was particularly opposed to the merchants and commercial interests, whose apparent disregard for Christian principles in the ruthless exploitation of the colonies and their unfavourable example added to the difficulties of the missionaries. To avoid the ill effects of such European contact he was most anxious to find a nation of people as yet largely untouched by the European empire builders.

This desire for a clear field in which to implement his missionary ideals, helps to explain his life-long obsession with the Galla.

⁵William Wendebourg, Louis Harms als Missionsmann, (Hermannsburg, 1910), pp 42, 43

These were said to have been a light skinned, fiercely independent nation who spoke a common language, and inhabited the interior of East Africa. Not only did Harms see the Galla as a likely nation among which to establish his Christian bastion and resist the onslaught of European imperialism, but their seeming similarity to the old "Germanen" in Saxony made a mission among them even more desirable. Much to Harms disappointment all the early attempts to reach the peoples of central East Africa failed and he had to be content with starting his mission among the Zulus in South Africa.

As the mission became established in South Africa, conflicts arose over some of Harms's fundamental principles, which did not appear suited in the practical situations. Two major aspects that came under attack were communal nature of the stations, and the practice of sending out colonists, and as a result severe modifications were made to the initial ideas envisaged by Harms.

Towards the end of Louis' life the Hermannsburg Mission Society had spread all over South Africa, although the burning ambition to spread the gospel among the Galla had not been realized. The society was beginning to spread to India and to the Lutheran congregations in America. When the call came from the Lutheran communities in South Australia in the 1860's to begin a mission to the Aborigines, Harms was only too willing to accept.

Harms held great hopes for this latest missionary enterprise. He saw the spread of the mission over five continents as a welcome development for the ultimate realization of Christs' Second Coming. He was also eager to establish a mission in Australia as it presented a completely new field in which he could make another attempt to implement his ideas after the set backs of the South African experiences.

The sparsely settled interior of Australia also appeared to hold the added attraction of containing a race of people, not yet tainted by the evils of European colonization.

Perhaps here was the ideal missionary field and maybe in the Aborigines he would find another "Galla" among whom his missionaries could establish that elusive Christian Bastion? It was with these optimistic visions in mind that Harms committed the Hermannsburg Mission Society to its newest field as the last act before his death.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF ABORIGINAL SOCIETY BEFORE WHITE CONTACT.

When Louis Harms optimistically decided to give his missionary ideals a second chance in Australia he had little idea of the problems his missionaries would encounter. The missionaries themselves appeared to have had less idea of the actual nature of the people they planned to christianize.

The most outstanding feature of the North Eastern South Australian and Central Australian Aborigines way of life was their complete adaptation to the harsh environment. Nearly all aspects of their life were in some way linked with the continuous struggle for survival. The arid conditions of their surroundings led them to develop a nomadic existence, causing them to roam incessantly within their tribal boundaries in search of food and water. Only during good seasons, when both these commodities were plentiful, would they stay in one place for any length of time. The absence of a milk producing animal suitable for domestication and lack of fruits and vegetables for cultivation forced them to adopt their nomadic habits.⁶

The Aborigines were divided into different tribes, distinct from each other by a combination of a number of features.

⁶J.B. Cleland, "Ecology of the Aborigine in South and Central Australia", Aboriginal Man in South and Central Australia, ed. B.C. Cotton (Adelaide, 1966), p. 113

Each tribe was distinguished by its occupation of a recognized stretch of country over which they claimed religious and hunting rights by virtue of some supernatural or mythical sanction vested in them.⁷ The tribal boundaries were often defined in some general way by natural features. Apart from the geographic factor the tribe was characterised by sharing a common language, customs and habits.⁸ The tribal concept was a very loose one and each tribe consisted of a number of autonomous units, which could be called local groups.⁹

⁷Roland M. Berndt and Catherine H. Berndt, The World of the First Australians (Sydney, 1965), pp. 34 - 42

⁸Ibid., p.42

⁹There is a confliction of terms in the naming of divisions in the breakdown of the Aborigines Social system. The difficulties of choosing the appropriate term for parts of this social structure are increased by a gap in the information possessed by anthropologists and scholars. Most anthropologists agree to the premise that the tribal unit as such is a very loose one and the most important social unit in the Aborigines pattern of life are the groups of forty to sixty people, who have basic similarities in language, custom, habits and appearance. Anthropologists do not agree, however on what to call these groups, Eysenmann, who was one of the first anthropologists to attempt a detailed study of the Aborigines way of life uses the term hordes. Others such as Spencer and Gillen have used clans, while more recent writers such as Elkin and Berndt favour local groups. All three terms are basically similar in meaning and as yet it has not been conclusively determined which of the three is more accurate. For the purpose of this work I have decided to use the term "local groups" because to me it appears to best convey the concept and nature of this unit, and its function in the Aborigines Social system.

Because of the limitations of the environment in North Eastern South Australia and Central Australia the local groups of the respective tribes in those areas generally numbered between forty to eighty people.¹⁰ The different local groups within the tribe were linked by their tribal characteristics such as language, customs and traditions. Although they acted as independent units they were usually on friendly terms with each other and contact was mainly manifested through marriage exchanges and bartering for certain commodities as well as periodic gatherings for important ceremonies and rites such as initiations.¹¹

These local groups controlled a certain area of tribal territory with known boundaries encompassing a number of significant totemic centres.¹² Most of the local groups consisted of blood relations although these usually belonged to a number of families. The local group did not consist of a number of people with equal rights, privileges or standing, but entailed certain definite social distinctions, mainly through the family organization.

Each family basically consisted of a man, his wife or wives, and their children, all of whom were in closer relationship to each other than to the rest of the local group.¹³ The man as the main hunter and protector headed the family and the women were subordinate to him. Each member of the family not only had specific tasks and duties to perform as part of the family but also as part of the local group - particularly in the ceremonial aspects of the group.

¹⁰ Erhard Eylemann, Die Eingeborenen der Kolonie Süd Australiens (Berlin, 1908), p. 155

¹¹ A.P. Elkin, The Australian Aborigines (Sydney, 1938-68), pp. 61 - 2

¹² Ibid., pp. 76 - 80

¹³ Berndt, The World of the First Australians, p. 45

All members of the tribe were subject to an elaborate exogamous kinship system, which linked each member not only to his own local group but also to the other local groups within the tribe.

Apart from the divisions in social structure already mentioned, the tribe was also divided into a number of totemic groups.¹⁴ These totems often took their names from animals or plants and certain of the qualities of these totems were supposed to be imparted to the people belonging to them. - e.g. the speed of the Emu being imparted to a member of the Emu totem. As a rule members of a particular totem would belong to different local groups. All members of the same totem regarded themselves as relations.

The totemic divisions within the tribe were particularly important in the question of marriage. Marriage mainly took place within the tribe and were bound by a strict set of rules.¹⁵ Marital and extra-marital partners could only come from different totems in the tribe. This often led to marriage exchanges being made between different local groups and served as a means of keeping friendly relations between seperate local groups. The children took on the totems of their mothers and in this way the system was perpetuated.

The Aborigines association with their land was one of the most vital features of their existence. The land was apportioned among food gathering groups on a kinship and spiritual as well as economic basis.¹⁶

¹⁴A.W. Howitt, The Native Tribes of South East Australia (London, 1904), p.36
This gives detailed explanations of the nature of these totemic groups.

¹⁵Roland M. Berndt, From Black to White in South Australia (Melbourne, 1951), p.33

¹⁶Berndt, From Black to White in S.A., p.34

The members of the group did not actually own the land but rather looked after it. It would be more accurate to say that the land owned them, and that they could not stay away from it indefinitely and still live. For the Aboriginal, a man's country was the home of his pre-existence spirit, and no other country was the same to him.¹⁷

This spiritual bond cannot be stressed enough as it was the overriding factor in the Aborigines life and it helps to explain their reluctance in the majority of cases to remain away for very long periods from their own "country"; they desired to revisit it from time to time to be near the home of their spirits as well as to see some of the places in it sanctified by mythological "history"; and finally they liked to die in it so that their spirits would not be lost when they severed their connection with the body.¹⁸

It was this spiritual connection with the land and their lack of recognition for any proprietary rights as was customary among Europeans, which neither the missionary, administrator nor settler could comprehend or acknowledge. This aspect proved to be a continuous source of conflict in the ensuing relations between the two races, and was to be an important reason for the subsequent failure of most attempts at assimilation.

There was no clear separation of social, economic and religious factors in the Aborigines life, and all of these aspects were in turn linked to his relationship with the land. This complex association with the land imposed certain limitations on the tribe and the local groups contained in it. Both these units were restricted within the fixed boundaries of their "country" as they had been handed down according to the narration of their forefathers.

¹⁷Elkin, "Reaction and Interaction", p. 165

¹⁸Elkin, The Australian Aborigines, pp. 79 - 80

No tribe was tolerated on the territory of another, except on specific ceremonial occasions.¹⁹ This feature of Aboriginal life had far reaching implications when the first Europeans settled on their lands, as they thought themselves more entitled to the support of these Europeans living or having settled in their district, than any other native of a distant tribe.²⁰ A result of this tendency was that tribes confronted by European intrusion would rarely seek aid from other tribes, but looked on the newcomers, whom they could not evict, as being responsible for the Aborigines new needs in face of the changing conditions created by their presence.

There is little evidence of any sort of political or military organization, as a European would understand it, within the tribe. The struggle for survival favoured a communal style of life in which almost everything was shared. There were no chiefs or headmen in the social organization of the tribe, although at times exceptional personalities may have wielded a great amount of influence because of their prowess as a warrior, hunter or witch doctor.²¹

¹⁹ During such occasions disputes would often be settled and trade carried on. Another reason for relaxing the strict adherence to tribal boundaries often took place among desert tribes during times of draught, when different tribes might seek sanctuary together to ensure survival. Any transgression of tribal boundaries without a previous invitation or agreement by those concerned inevitably led to conflict.

²⁰ Although this idea has been mentioned in the works of Elkin and Berndt it is interesting to note that one of the first references to this idea was put forward by one of the earliest missionaries in South Australia C.G. Teichelmann in his book, The Aborigines of South Australia (Adelaide, 1841), p. 7

²¹ An example of this occurs in A.W. Howitt, The Aborigines of South Australia, where he refers to such a personality among the Mieri, who was known as the "Frenchmann" among the whites. He appeared to wield a great amount of power through his outstanding appearance and qualities. His word was obeyed as law throughout the tribe.

To a large extent authority was vested with the old men, who had considerable power in tribal affairs because of their positions as guardians of the intricate tribal law, rituals and traditions, which had been invested in them by their forefathers. They in turn passed these on to the next generation through various rituals and ceremonies such as initiations.²² Not all the old men exercised this authority as it did not depend only on age, but also on possession of outstanding skills or qualities. Most major decisions were made by the elders after a communal discussion.

The different ceremonies and rituals which were performed at certain times played an important part in the Aborigines' life. Not only did they serve as a means of passing on the store of knowledge entrusted to the elders, but also as a means of binding members of the tribe to a set of rigid rules and disciplines.²³ Ceremonies such as initiations were also used as a means for the elders to enforce their hold over the tribe, especially over the young warriors. The use of secrecy, threatened punishment (in some cases as severe as death), shock treatment often linked with pain and dramatic presentations as well as psychological indoctrination all played a part in this process.

Aboriginal law was comparatively localized and offences that took place within the tribe or a group of tribes having economic or ceremonial alliances were punished by its members. These laws were sanctioned by tradition and sacred mythology. A common example of the type of punishments meted out were the blood revenge parties. If an individual had been singled out as being guilty for the death of another, then a party of warriors was called together by the elders.

²²R.M. Berndt, From Black to White in S.A., p. 37

²³Elkin, The Australian Aborigines, pp. 188 - 190

This "Pingya" then hunted down the accused and carried out the sentence in a ritualistic manner.²⁴

The Aborigines' religious beliefs were often complex and closely interwoven with his way of life. They basically believed in a good and evil spirit with the latter predominating. It was this evil spirit or devil, which caused much fear among the Aborigines and was the cause attributed to most misfortunes. They did not believe that death resulted from natural causes and thought it to be the work of an evil spirit. As a result they carried out elaborate mourning and burial rites during which the deceased was asked the cause of his death. Should some hapless person be named responsible for the death, then a revenge party gathered and the victims fate was sealed.

The experiences of the early explorers showed that most tribes appeared to have some ideas on a life after death. An example of these beliefs was to be found in the Aborigines initial reactions to the Europeans, who they often looked on as Aborigines returned from the grave as whites. D. Brock, who accompanied Sturt on his Central Australian Expedition, mentions this belief in his diary,

I have no doubt in my mind that they take us to be supernatural beings similar to the idea entertained by the southern tribes that the European is a blackfellow returned from the grave and in consequence of the change has become white.²⁵

Other early writers such as Taplin and Teichelmann also mention similar reactions to the Europeans, and this possibly explains the initial friendly attitudes of the Aborigines towards the whites.

²⁴Berndt, From Black to White in S.A., p. 37

²⁵D. Brock, "Diary on Sturt's Central Australian Expedition", Aug. 1844 - Jan. 1846, S.A.A.

At the time of the European intrusion, the Australian Aborigines appear to have a sophisticated, and in many ways complex culture, based on a highly specialised pattern of life, which had enabled them to survive in an extremely harsh environment. Any sudden changes or pressures, such as presented by the European settlement on this life pattern, would seriously threaten the Aborigines traditional existence and as a result he was left with only four alternatives, to fight, adapt, withdraw or perish.

CHAPTER III

GOVERNMENT POLICY, SETTLER ATTITUDES AND MISSIONARY INVOLVEMENT UP TO 1866.

Any intrusion by white settlers into the lands occupied by the Aborigines was bound to be disruptive, but there was reason to hope, in 1836, that British colonization would be just and humane. The foundation of the colony of South Australia coincided with the full blooming of concern in the British House of Commons and the Colonial office for the welfare of non-European peoples. The same evangelical and humanitarian movements, which had influenced men like Louis Harms to found and develop missionary organizations, also caused men to demand that colonial governments take measures for the protection, evangelization and civilization of the indigenous peoples.

Lord Glenelg, the British Colonial Secretary, was particularly concerned with safe guarding the rights and welfare of the indigenous peoples. Governor Hindmarsh was given specific instructions on how to deal with the Aborigines in South Australia. He was instructed to invest a Protector of Aborigines with necessary powers, by an early enactment of the Legislative Council.²⁶ The Colonial Office set out clearly what was to be the official policy for the new settlement,

²⁶R.M. Gibbs, "Humanitarian Theories and the Aboriginal Inhabitants of South Australia to 1860" (Unpublished Honours Thesis, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide, 1959), p. 40

...And it is our further will and pleasure that you do the utmost in your power to promote Religion and Education among the native inhabitants of our said Province or of the islands thereto adjoining and that you do especially take care to protect them in their persons in the free enjoyment of their possessions: and that you do by all lawful ways and means prevent and restrain all violence and injustice which may in any manner be practiced or attempted against them; and that you take such measures as may appear to you to be necessary for their conversion to the Christian Faith and for their advancement in civilization...²⁷

Although this policy appeared extremely benevolent and humane, its main aim was not so much to benefit the Aborigines, but to comply with the wishes of the colonial office in Britain. It was no more than a token gesture, which was never seriously put into practice. A few aspects of the policy, which the governors tried to implement, soon met with failure due to the nature of the Aborigines and the pattern of white settlement. The resultant clash of interests was in nearly all cases decided in favour of the Europeans to the detriment of the Aborigines.

The Colony's Board of Commissioners, in their first annual report in 1836, stated their attitudes towards the Aborigines. Three broad principles were put forward. The rule of British law was to protect the Aborigines from personal violence; their land rights were to be supervised by the protector, and added to these measures would be subsistence, education, civilization and religion.²⁸ To actually implement these principles, such as the supervision of land rights, would have been unfavourable to the settlers, and thus the Commissioners did not have the slightest intention of enforcing them. Like the Governor's proclamation, the Board of Commissioners' fine sentiments were no more than just that.

²⁷Instructions given to Governor Hindmarsh, 12-7-1836, Hindmarsh Papers, S.A.A., 1105/2.

²⁸Gibbs, p.41

It seemed obvious that the strongest motivating force behind all such official actions was the fear of criticism from the authorities in England. However it soon became apparent that such authorities could be appeased by fine words and sentiments, without ever realizing what was actually happening in a colony over ten thousand miles away.

The basic policy formulated for the Aborigines in those early years was to be one of protection. This term proved to be suitably ambiguous, meaning different things to different groups. To Lord Glenelg, the British Colonial Secretary, protection meant a guardianship by the crown of the Aboriginal persons and properties against depredation by the white settlers - the Aboriginal was to be treated in all respects as a British subject. Although this may have satisfied the Humanitarian element in Britain, such a policy would hardly be possible even under the best conditions because of the nature of white settlement in the colony.

The Colony's Commissioners took a much more liberal view to what protection should entail. They were only anxious to protect the Aborigines' rights and welfare, if it was going to prove beneficial to the settlers.²⁹ Should there have been any conflict of interests, the policy conveniently protected the settlers pursuits from any attacks or reactions by the Aborigines. The Commissioners felt that the appointment of a protector would solve the problem of safeguarding the interests of both Aborigines and settlers - particularly the latter!

It seems that both these attitudes towards the policy of protection were at opposite extremes in their interpretation.

²⁹Fay Gale, "A study in assimilation, Part Aborigines in S.A." (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide), p. 21

There is little doubt that a serious attempt at invoking a policy to protect the Aborigines would have made European settlement in some areas extremely difficult if not impossible. Possibly the best solution would have been a compromise in the major aspects of conflict between the European and Aboriginal way of life. Any feasible policy of protection should have taken into account not only the interests of the settlers, but also made some concessions to the Aborigines' pattern of life, even if this did not always suit the settlers' interests. At the very least, it should have protected the Aborigines from the arbitrary, often totally unwarranted and unjust actions of the white settlers; especially in the frontier areas. Although some well meaning attempts were made to give at least a nominal protection to the Aborigines, the policies and attitudes relating to them proved to be neither just nor humane.

As the settlers spread further into the interior, their economy became increasingly dependent on stockgrazing, this being the only suitable way to make a living from the land. To do this successfully, the herds required vast tracts of the barren land, thus placing an ever increasing demand on the limited supply of permanent water. The natural game now had to compete with the sheep and cattle for the food and water supplies. Unlike the native game, which was soon forced out of the grazing areas, the Aborigines, bound by tribal boundaries, could not follow their natural food supply. It seemed only understandable then, that these new animals should provide the substitute. The settlers in turn, came to regard the Aborigines as pests and vermin, who, like the native game, had to be driven out or exterminated to make room for their stock. Their attitudes and unjust, often brutal actions, were made easy by the fact that the Aborigines were seen only as a higher form of animal, and the settlers tactics aroused little public outcry or government reaction.

It was a widespread opinion among the Europeans that the Aborigines had no idea of proprietorship of the land, and that it meant little to them.³⁰ Even the Government concluded that the Aborigines were without landed property and classed them as nomadic wanderers. Any sign of physical aggression was seen as being more an example of a savage nature and bellicosity than a reaction against the European encroachment on their tribal lands.

In the early settled areas such as Adelaide and its environs, the Aborigines had little chance to resist or even try to modify their way of life to cope with the pressures of the European influx. In Adelaide, the settlers completely swamped the small native population, and within ten years of colonization, the Adelaide Tribe was on the verge of extinction. In the sparser settled areas of the interior, a different pattern evolved.

The Aborigines' original curiosity and the belief in some instances that the whites were their original ancestors returned from the grave, soon changed into more positive action. The Europeans economic system based on stock grazing and the resultant usurpation of tribal hunting grounds, placed serious stresses on the Aborigines' way of life. His survival depended on a fine balance between himself and the environment, and the impact of a conflicting economy, as introduced by the settlers with their herds, faced him with starvation and a complete disruption of his nomadic existence.

The Aborigines' early friendly attitudes soon changed to open hostility and they resorted to force as they saw their land, food and women being taken by the newcomers.³¹

³⁰Gibbs, p. 64

³¹F. Gale, p. 85

The resultant clashes shattered the early confidence of the settlers, and anxiety for their lives and property led to indiscriminate revenge against the Aborigines. As a result, the individual wants of the settlers led them to take the law into their own hands, and their actions were often sanctioned by public sympathy for the settlers, which in turn influenced Government policy. It was soon apparent that the articles of British law would be difficult to apply to the Aborigines, who had no idea of its fine points, and saw themselves as bound to a completely different code of laws. How could one carry out justice, or apply the law to people who killed British subjects in the protection of their lands and heritage?

Governor Gawler was faced with this problem in the 1840's, when he had to deal with a massacre of whites by a tribe on the Coorong. These people were out of touch with settlements along the coast, and knew nothing of the rights and wrongs of "white mans' law".³² Gawler decided to punish the tribe and to prevent other similar occurrences by exacting summary vengeance for the crime. Major O'Halloran was sent with a punitive expedition to make "enquiries" - the result of which led to two Aborigines being hanged before the offending tribe at the scene of the outrage, as an example for others with similar intentions. This was to become the pattern for future white dealings with any resistance - there was not much distinction between the police constable who shot alleged Aboriginal offenders at the slightest excuse, or the settler shooting Aborigines suspected of killing his stock.³³

³²K. Hassell gives a detailed account of the massacre of the survivors from the brig "Maria" in her unpublished thesis, "Relations between Settlers and Aborigines in South Australia, 1836 - 1860".

³³The police reports in the S.A.A. contain ample evidence of such actions in which Aborigines being taken back to the nearest court to stand trial were often dispatched at the slightest reason on the common excuse of attempting an escape.

Both became instrumental in handing out such summary justice, and Gibbs seems justified in calling this stage "the law of war".³⁴ This was a far cry from the proclamation of Governor Hindmarsh, which was supposed to guarantee the Aborigines fair and just protection as British subjects.

The Aborigines soon realized that resistance on a large scale against the white settlers could only end in their own deaths. A few chose to withdraw into areas where the whites had not shown an interest, the majority stayed and were thus faced with either adaptation to the new pressures, or extinction.

The main points of contention between the Aborigines and settlers were concerned with the questions of food and land. As the settlers became faced with increasing annoyances from the Aborigines, they thought that peace could only be purchased at the price of recompensing them for the occupation of the hunting grounds where they had once roamed at will.³⁵ The Government, seeking to protect the settlers interests, stepped in and sought to solve the problem by setting aside a number of reserves. Even a superficial knowledge of the Aboriginal way of life would have been sufficient to realize that such a scheme would be doomed to failure. The Aborigines refused to leave their land with its spiritual associations to settle with different tribes in a particular area to take up farming. By 1860, all but seven of the forty-two reserves had been leased to whites as no Aborigines would settle on them. The other major problem concerned the settlers' stock. As the Aborigines' game had been driven away and his food supply thus endangered, he saw himself justified in spearing the new animals for food. Once again Government policy was invoked and depots were established for the distribution of rations, clothes and other goods.

³⁴Gibbs, p. 10

³⁵Ibid., p. 65

Although there was an element of humanitarianism in founding these depots, their ultimate purpose was always clear; to protect the white settlers in their undisturbed occupation of the soil.³⁶ When the settlers in the northern districts complained of Aborigines taking sheep, the Government dispatched Harry Hinchin with two constables to Mt. Brown to establish regular food depots for the Aborigines. The aim of this was thus stated;

...to induce the wild natives from the hills to live at his station, and by keeping them some time in contact with himself and the police, so far to civilize them as to render them not only harmless but useful to the settlers...³⁷

This handing out of rations had the added advantage of being a useful lever against the Aborigines in troublesome areas, in that they could be with-held for misdemeanours.

As the European settlement spread further into the interior of the colony, and contact with the Aborigines became more frequent, many of the early attitudes towards the indigenous peoples changed noticeably. At first the settlers and Government were extremely optimistic that the assimilation of the Aborigines into the European way of life would be a relatively easy process. In some cases the Aborigines were seen in a favourable light, and their apparent inoffensive curiosity convinced many settlers that assimilation would be a smooth transition from their animal heathenism to the benefits of European civilization. A letter by one of the first settler's wives portrayed the Aborigines as "inoffensive, good natured, black and very straight".³⁸

³⁶Gibbs, p. 73

³⁷Quarterly Report of the P.A., 24.5.1853, (C.S.O. 1253 / 1853), S.A.A.

³⁸Letter from Mrs. W. Ferguson, Adelaide, 15 Feb. 1837, S.A.A.

On the other hand many Aborigines had already gained an unfavourable impression of the Europeans, through the early exploitations of whalers and sealers.³⁹

By the 1840's, attitudes and reports about the Aborigines changed as the settler and Government attempts at assimilation met with little success. Even the early missionaries joined the settlers in describing the Aborigines and their way of life in most unfavourable terms. Teichelmann, one of the early Dresden missionaries stated that the Aborigines had been generally represented as a race of beings differing little from higher animals.⁴⁰

The failure to readily assimilate the Aborigines soon led to feelings of object bitterness on behalf of the Europeans. The Aborigines became characterized as lazy, untrustworthy, scheming treacherous liars. According to the settlers, their greatest skill was thieving, begging and a prodigious capacity for food. For most Europeans they were looked on as no more than a readily available pool of women to satisfy their desires, or perhaps as a source of cheap labour if the missionaries could raise them out of their animal existence. However, even the missionaries soon began to wonder if not for the first time a race had been found for whom there could be no salvation on earth or in heaven.⁴¹

There is little doubt that the changed opinion regarding the Aborigines' way of life was decidedly in the settlers' interests.

³⁹R.G. Kimber, Account For Local and Chronological Variations in the Aboriginal, European settlement in South Australia, (unpublished essay, S.A.A.)

⁴⁰C.G. Teichelmann, The Aborigines of South Australia, (Adelaide, 1841), p. 7

⁴¹H.G. Schneider, Missionsarbeit der Brüdergemeinde IN Australien (Gnadau, 1882), p. 61

The relegation of the Aborigines to the level of animals made the settlers' subsequent actions towards them very much easier on their consciences and provided a ready excuse for the Government to close a blind eye to the earlier fine sentiments and words guaranteeing the Aborigines protection and welfare.

It is probably true that this change in opinion about the Aborigines eventuated partly as a result of conflicts, which were inevitable between two such different societies. This situation was aggravated by European arrogance, which assumed that the Aborigines would welcome change and by ignorance in both camps. In most cases the Europeans arrived with a 'paternal' attitude and obviously regarded themselves as superior in all respects. The Aborigines from the start were expected to change their way of life to suit the Europeans.⁴²

Teichelmann is a prime example of this attitude. Although he had the best intentions towards the Aborigines his entire bias was on Europeanization. He attempted to make them build more substantial homes, work regularly, and his greatest ambition was to Christianize them. To achieve this, he set out to learn their language, not as a means of understanding them, but to teach them of Christ and to destroy their traditional ways.⁴³ His whole aim was to change them - they were to become Europeans with only one difference; black skin.

Probably one of the best examples of the early attitude towards the Aborigine is to be found in a speech made by Governor Gawler at a tea-party in honour of members of the Adelaide Tribe. This speech showed quite definitely how even the best intended whites failed to understand the Aboriginal way of life, and thus saw little need to preserve any aspects of it,

⁴²Ibid, p. 63

⁴³Teichelmann, p. 11

...We wish to make you happy. But you cannot be happy unless you initiate good white men. Build huts, wear clothes, work and be useful. Above all you cannot be happy unless you love God who made heaven and earth and men and all things. Love white man. Love other tribes of black men. Do not quarrel together. Tell other tribes to love white men, and build great huts and wear clothes. Learn to speak English. If any white men injure you, tell the Protector and he will do justice...⁴⁴

Apart from formulating policies on reserves and rations, which were aimed mainly at protecting the settlers' interest, the Government made some attempts at assimilating the Aborigines by means of education. A number of schools were established, but Government effort was half-hearted in this field, and the schools soon closed due to lack of support and failure to produce instant results. Public and Government opinion became increasingly disillusioned with the idea of direct assimilation. By 1849 there had been a change to a policy of segregation before assimilation. This idea was first formulated by Archdeacon Hale. He aimed to segregate the Aborigines from the bad influences of Europeans, and also the wilder elements among themselves. The missionaries increasingly favoured this new scheme, as they saw it presented a chance to isolate the Aborigines from all outside contact, and thus bring them completely under their own influence.⁴⁵

By the 1860's Government attitudes towards the Aboriginal problem and settler enthusiasm for assimilation, reached their lowest ebb. The number of Government officials concerned with Aboriginal welfare had declined from five in 1850 to one in 1860.⁴⁶ The position of Protector of Aborigines had lapsed due to a lack of applicants, and the only official Government help to the Aborigines was a meagre distribution of rations.

⁴⁴Governor Gawler's speech to the Aborigines S.A. GAZETTE & COLONIAL REGISTER, Nov. 3rd 1838, S.A.A.

⁴⁵Gibbs, p. 94

⁴⁶Gale, p. 90

The predominant opinion now was that the Aborigines were on the verge of extinction, and the best that could be done for them was to provide a Christian burial.⁴⁷

This opinion was reiterated in official circles when the select committee on Aborigines in 1860, as one of their conclusions, observed that the race was doomed to extinction and any measures taken would probably be only of temporary use. In their report, they also concluded that all the evidence showed the Aborigines to have lost much and gained little or nothing by their contact with Europeans, and it was a question of what means could be found to compensate them for their injuries. They recommended that the position of Protector should be re-established to watch over their general interests. The gathering of several tribes at one depot for issuing rations should be dispensed with in favour of more wide spread distribution points - possibly settlers, who were well disposed towards the Aborigines. It was their unanimous opinion that it was the duty of the Government to supply the physical necessities of the natives.⁴⁸

The findings of this committee once again placed the responsibilities for the Aboriginal problem on the Government. The upsurge in missionary activities in the 1860's was to provide a welcome opportunity for the Government to pass on most of these responsibilities.

By this time the pattern of interaction between the two widely differing social and economic systems had been well established. The settlers' pattern of expansion based on stock grazing over wide areas in the sparse interior, was having a drastic effect on the Aborigines' nomadic existence.

⁴⁷Gibbs, p. 92

⁴⁸Report of select Committee on Aborigines 1860, S.A.P.P. 1860

The situation was further aggravated by the apparent lack of obvious points of resistance on behalf of the Aborigines. The absence of such features as an organized social political system gave the intruders, whether they were settlers, Government officials or missionaries, the impression that the Aborigines were almost cultureless, and anything the Europeans did, could thus hardly interfere with them.⁴⁹

As the settlers began to spread into the far northern regions of the Colony, the general pattern of interaction between the settlers and Aborigines became more pronounced, and the advent of missionaries into some of these areas provided a new factor in the resultant situations.

***When the Lutheran community, in conjunction with Louis Harms of Hermannsburg, decided to establish a mission among the Aborigines in the Far North of the Colony, it was not the first missionary attempt in South Australia. As early as the founding years of the Colony, various people had shown an interest in Christianizing and civilizing the indigenous peoples. Tentative efforts were made in this field by the Methodists and the London Missionary Society.

However, it was the Lutherans who played one of the most prominent roles in the missionary activity of the Colony. Germany at this time was in the throes of conflict over the question of Church Union, and many religious dissenters were looking for ways to escape its eminent effects. This led August Ludwig Christian Kavel to discuss with George Fife Angas, the possibilities of his congregation migrating to South Australia. Angas was only too willing to support such a venture, as the Colony desperately needed people of a hard working class, and as a result the first group of Lutheran immigrants settled at Klenzig on November the eighteenth, 1838.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Elkin, "Reaction and Interaction", p. 165

⁵⁰B.H. Proeve & H.F.W. Proeve, A Work of Love and Sacrifice, (Adelaide, 1952), p. 13

The initial hardships encountered by the Lutherans while establishing themselves, prevented them from carrying out independent missionary work, but it did not dampen their desire to become active in this field. Before his departure, Kavel made some arrangements towards fulfilling this desire, by seeking the aid of the Dresden Mission Society. Angas had been one of the original instigators in this move, and in 1838 the first two missionaries, C.W. Schürmann and C.A. Teichelmann arrived to start work among the Aborigines.⁵¹

They began their early missionary activities among the Aborigines of Adelaide at Pittawoldi, and their work was followed with keen interest by Governor Gawler. In 1840, another two missionaries, H.A.E. Meyer and S.G. Klose arrived to begin work. A more adventurous programme was now begun, with four separate stations being established. Klose remained at the original site at Pittawoldi and attempted to run the schools, which had been established by the Government. Teichelmann moved to Ebenezer a government reserve about six hours journey from Adelaide. Meyer occupied a site at Encounter Bay, and Schürmann, who was appointed as Deputy Protector of Aborigines established the fourth station at Port Lincoln.⁵²

By 1850 the native schools had closed down and all the other stations had failed. All the missions were abandoned and no organized Lutheran mission remained. The reason for these failures lay in a number of factors; lack of finance, a decline in public and Government support, brought about by a growing disallusionment with the lack of quick results and failure to understand the Aborigines pattern of life, which made direct assimilation under European conditions a virtual impossibility. Later more concerted missionary attempts failed to profit from these early experiences, and some of the mistakes so obviously apparent,

⁵¹E.H. Proeve & H.F.W. Proeve, p. 74

⁵²Haccius, p. 344

even to the existing missionaries, were to become only more pronounced in subsequent attempts.

For a time after 1850, the Australian Lutheran communities supported the work of the Leipzig Mission Society in India. As a result of internal conflicts within the society concerning the caste system in India, the missionaries there divided into two factions. After the question was resolved, two missionaries on the losing side, J. Meischel and E. Appelt, resigned and came to South Australia.⁵³

Meischel published a letter in 1862 advocating the removal of support for the mission in India, and instead to turn to work among the Australian Aborigines.⁵⁴ This, coupled with the reports of exploring expeditions telling of numerous Aboriginal tribes in the interior, led to renewed enthusiasm among the Lutheran community concerning the prospects of mission work.

At this time, the Lutheran community was divided into two separate synods, largely because of a doctrinal dispute concerning the question of Chiliasm. Both synods were eager to begin missionary work and in 1863 the two synods combined in this venture and turned to Pastor Harms to provide missionaries. Although Harms was enthusiastic about extending the mission societies field to Australia, he was not happy with the differences between the two synods, on theological questions.⁵⁵

⁵³DER AUSTRALISCHE CHRISSTENBOTE, 1860, p. 39

⁵⁴The full text of this letter is contained in the Kirchen und Missionsblatt für Deutsch Australische Gemeinden, Vol I, No 1, Jan 1862, p. 38

⁵⁵Haccius, p. 344

In response to his demands, the two synods formed a confessional union, and on the fourth of August, 1865, at Rosenthal, they suggested that the over-all direction of the mission was to be in the hands of Louis Harns. He was to be responsible for equipping, training, payment and the sending of the mission workers. The local church would support this work with all its available resources. A locally elected committee was to carry out the work of a superintendence, whose duty it would be to remain in close communication with all missionary matters with the home organization.⁵⁶

Harns replied on the twenty-eighth of February 1865, agreeing to the conditions and stressing the fact that he must retain final direction of the mission. He also expressed his dissatisfaction with placing the superintendence in the hands of a committee rather than one person. This was a major departure from the usual Hermannsburg organization in the missionary fields, and it was to become a cause of internal discord, which was to seriously hamper the first missionary attempt.

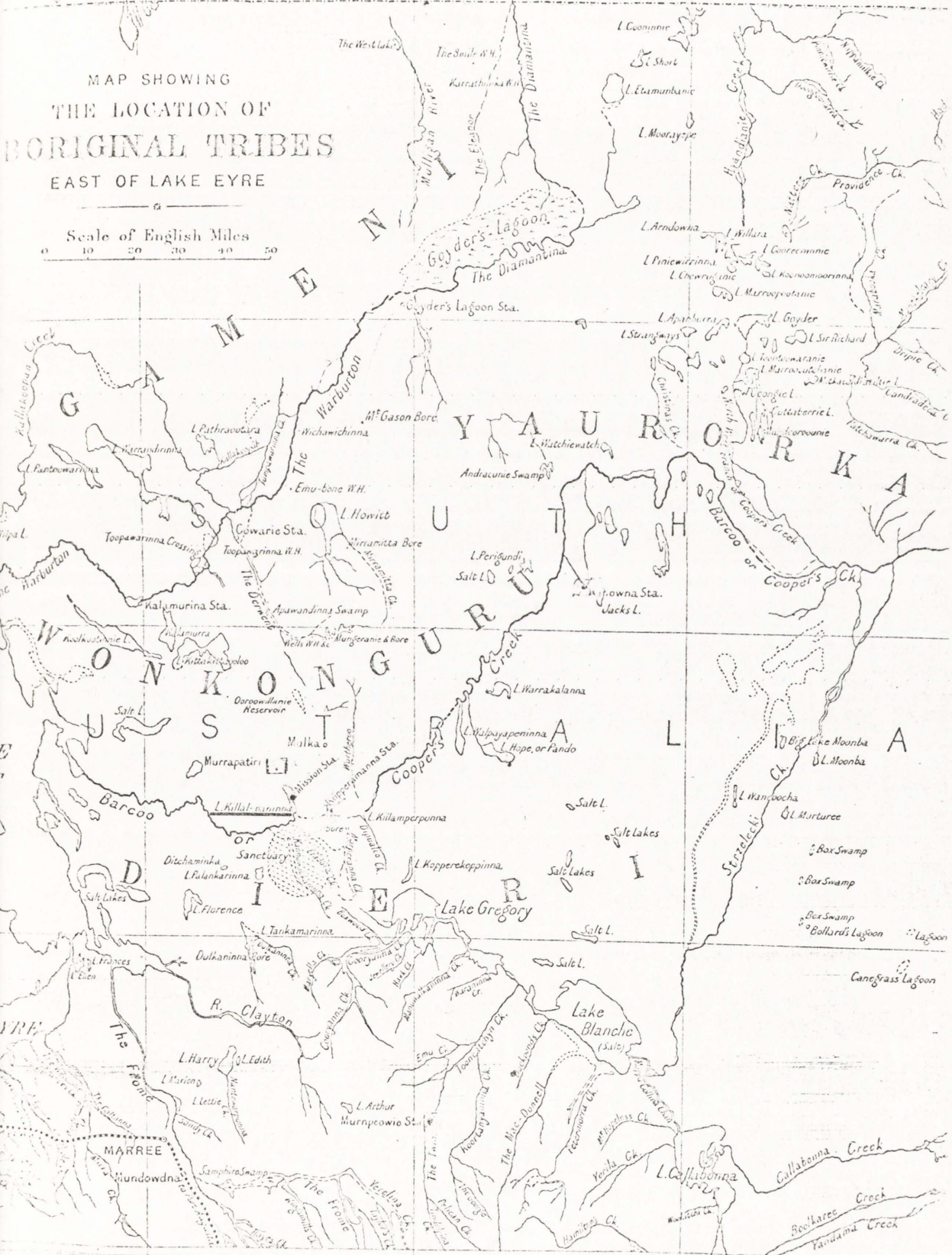
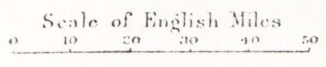
On the twenty-fourth of August, 1866, the two designated missionaries, J.F. Gossling and E. Homman, along with the colonist H. Vogelsang, arrived in Adelaide.⁵⁷ After a short period during which the necessary arrangements were made for the journey into the interior, the missionaries and colonists, (J.E. Jacob of Mt. Torrens had expressed a desire to be a part of this venture) set out on their journey to Lake Hope on the ninth of October, 1866.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 346

⁵⁷H.M.B., Oct. 1866, p. 172

THE TERRITORY QUEENSLAND

MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF ORIGINAL TRIBES EAST OF LAKE EYRE



138° Longitude East of Greenwich 139° 140°

Map showing the site of the first Hermannsburg Mission station at Lake Killalpaninna and the surrounding area.

CHAPTER IV

MISSION AMONG THE DIERI: 1866 - 1875.

'Let a thousand missionaries die, before Australia is abandoned'.

T. HARMS, 1866

After a long and arduous journey, the two Hermannsburg missionaries, fresh from Germany, and their fellow colonists arrived at Lake Hope in the Far North of South Australia in December 1866. Their early hopes and optimism already blunted by the hazardous trip and the inhospitable nature of their missionary field, were to receive a further setback by the situation which confronted them. The aspiration expressed by Louis Harms that Australia might provide a missionary field free from the evils of European colonial expansion, were to be dashed at Lake Hope. The first settlers had already preceded the missionaries by several years and their efforts to establish a pastoral economy soon aroused the anger of the Aboriginal tribes in the area. At the time of the missionaries arrival the pattern of interaction between the two races had already reached the stage of open hostility.

The area around Lake Hope and Cooper's Creek was occupied by the Dieri tribe. These were a fiercely independent people, who had adapted their way of life successfully to surviving in the harsh and unpredictable environment. The Dieri actively resented the white mans' invasion and many of the early squatters had to fight for the possession of their runs.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Farwell, Land of The Mirage (Adelaide, 1950), p. 39

The explorer A.W. Howitt, who visited the area several times in the early 1860's, negotiated with one of the principle headmen of the tribe - Jalina, head of the Kunara totem.⁵⁹ Jalina accompanied by a deputation of tribal elders presented Howitt with a number of requests. They were especially concerned about the increasing number of white men coming to their lands and Jalina asked Howitt to tell them that they should,

sit down on the one side of Pando, and the Kana (men of the tribe) would sit down on the other, so that they would not be likely to quarrel.⁶⁰

It seems that this apparent attempt at Aboriginal diplomacy aimed at seeking a compromise solution to the growing occupation of their lands, was largely ignored by the squatters. Among the first of the colonists to take up land around Lake Hope was Sir Thomas Elder, who was one of the leading figures in the colony. In 1860 two separate runs were established - Lake Hope station managed by H. Dean and Manuwalkaninna, near Lake Gregory, controlled by B. Hack.⁶¹

The Aborigines soon realised that the white mans' presence, with his herds of strange animals, was not only usurping their traditional lands but also threatening their existence. The areas around Lakes Kopperamanna, Killalpaninna and Perigundi were of particular importance to the Aborigines, not only because they generally contained good water, a scarce commodity at the best of times, but also for their ceremonial and traditional significance. As the settlers steadily encroached on these areas conflicts became more frequent.

⁵⁹A.W. Howitt, The Native Tribes of South East Australia, (London, 1904), p. 247

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 299

⁶¹Farwell, p. 97

In 1864 a severe drought affected the area and Dean resolved to save what stock he could by moving up to Lake Perigundi. The Aborigines became incensed at the continual usurpation of their hunting grounds without barter or negotiation. Already alarmed by the way the settler's cattle were consuming the sparse feed on which the native game had to live, the Aborigines now saw Dean's latest move as an attempt to seize their last water as well. As a result of this a large group of angry tribesmen blocked Dean's path to the lake.

Dean did not take this confrontation lightly and without much hesitation resorted to virtual military action.⁶² The Aborigines' spears proved no match for firearms and Dean succeeded in moving his cattle to Lake Perigundi. The Aborigines retaliated by spearing some of the cattle. It was not long before they discovered that these new animals provided a ready substitute for their lost game. Sir Thomas Elders' other manager Hack was in Adelaide at the time of these events and on being informed of the situation he hurriedly returned to support Dean in his campaign against the troublesome and treacherous "blacks". On his departure "he let it be known that he intended to let the natives know he had come back into the neighbourhood".⁶³

There remained little doubt in the eyes of Dean and Hack that the Aborigines' stand was jeopardizing the success of their stations and the obvious solution was to remove the menace; either by forcing them to move elsewhere or by eradication. Dean ordered his men to burn down the Aboriginal camps in the vicinity of Lake Hope and sent out a mounted party to clear the surrounding country.⁶⁴

⁶²Farwell, p. 97

⁶³S.A. Register, Sat. December 30, 1865.

⁶⁴Farwell, p. 98

The Aborigines, still incensed by the earlier affray at Lake Perigundi, ambushed the party, spearing five, one of whom later died.

At this stage the Government became concerned that the situation in the area appeared to be getting out of hand and perhaps it was time to implement some protection; not so much for the rights of the Aborigines, who had just grounds for their actions, but rather for the settlers' interests. Earlier in 1865 a request for more police protection in the Far North had been dismissed as unnecessary by Parliament. The commissioner of police was aware of the fact that settlers at times suffered loss from the Aborigines and he did not think the remedy lay in shooting the plunderers. However he did feel that it was up to the livestock owners to take precautions and he would prefer to see more care on their behalf. If their efforts proved to be insufficient, then he would recommend aid to be given by the Government.⁶⁵

It was not clear whether the Government's subsequent intervention into Mr. Dean's campaign was prompted by the fact that it disagreed with his methods of shooting the so called "plunderers", or whether it felt his precautions and efforts had been insufficient under the circumstances. The Government's actions were perhaps hastened by Sir Thomas Elder's suggested solution to the problem. In a letter to the Chief Secretary, Sir Thomas had earnestly requested the loan of some rifles and revolvers for the use of his overseers at Lake Hope. Although the Government had often closed a blind eye to the treatment of the Aborigines on the frontiers as a concession to the settler's interests, and the sentiments of justice and humanity towards the Aborigines had remained only words on Governor Hindmarsh's proclamation, it could not sanction the supply of arms for a private war.

⁶⁵Request for Police Protection for settlers in the Far North, S.A.P.P., No 134 / 1863.

The Chief Secretary's reply to Sir Thomas was adamant on this point,

The Government considers they would not be justified in supplying arms and ammunition for use against the natives to persons not directly responsible to the Executive. They have however taken prompt measures⁶⁶ for ensuring the safety of the settlers at Lake Hope.

Back in the capital, newspaper editions expressed strong opinions on the "Native Outrages" in the Far North and the sufferings of the brave pioneers at the hands of these treacherous savages. Most vocal on this subject was the Adelaide Express, which strongly supported the actions of Dean and Hack. It was little coincidence that this paper appeared to have been a direct spokesman for the opinions of Sir Thomas Elder. Numerous letters from Sir Thomas and his managers giving graphic accounts of the alleged outrages appeared in the paper. Any suggestions by rival papers that there was some cause to suspect that the blame lay not entirely with the Aborigines but largely with the settlers, were dismissed as misinformed and grossly inaccurate. After all, only the Express could boast it received its information direct from Sir Thomas Elder himself!⁶⁷

In an article on the 29th of December 1865 the Express completely approved Dean and Hacks' actions at Lake Hope and aptly summarized their view of the situation on the frontiers of the colony.

⁶⁶Ingoing and Outgoing Correspondence, C.S.O.
3 Jan., 1866, S.A.A.

⁶⁷ADELAIDE EXPRESS, Fri. Dec., 29th, 1865.

It has become a question of whether the settlers should drive the blacks away or the blacks should drive away the settlers, and under these circumstances Mr. Dean was compelled to defend the property entrusted to his care.⁶⁸

There was little doubt that the majority of public sentiment was in favour of Dean's actions and the supporters of the Aborigines faded into the background as economic interests became paramount.

The Government ordered a police party under Inspector Roe, accompanied by the Protector of Aborigines to the area to investigate the situation and restore order. No time was to be wasted in tracking down the offenders responsible for the most recent affray, which had resulted in the death of one of the station hands. Inspector Roe with eight troopers accompanied by the Protector, Dean and other station hands made up a party of fifteen men to capture the accused, who had been named by the coroner.⁶⁹

The party passed a number of Aboriginal camps, which were all deserted except for one group, who were not implicated. The Protector gave them a severe warning, telling them that,

Severe punishment would certainly be inflicted on all natives guilty of offences against lives and property of settlers.⁷⁰

By the same token the Protector did not forget that in some circles his position was also looked on as guarding the rights and welfare of the Aborigines and he assured them of

⁶⁸Evidence of this controversy is contained in articles and editorials of the ADELAIDE EXPRESS, THE REGISTER and THE ADVERTISER in Dec. 1865 and Jan. & Feb., 1866.

⁶⁹Report by J. WALKER, Protector of Aborigines, S.A. Government Gazette, 1866, p. 720.

⁷⁰S.A. Government Gazette, 1866, p. 720.

"protection in the enjoyment of their rights and liberties so long as they conducted themselves in a peaceable manner"⁷¹

It is not certain what Protector Walker regarded as a "peaceable manner", but if he expected the Aborigines to withdraw in the face of European advancement or perish because of it, he was to be disappointed. The Protector did make some efforts to find out the factors behind the unrest in this area but his enquiries met with little success. Walker had heard rumours of earlier collisions between the Aborigines and the police, which had resulted in the death of several Aborigines. However, all attempts to substantiate this information failed as Inspector Roe refused to divulge any details and there is some evidence that several accounts and reports about these clashes conveniently disappeared.⁷²

The white mans' show of force, led by Inspector Roe and Protector Walker, had the desired effect of curbing the Aborigines' active resistance to the intrusions of the settlers - temporarily at least. Most of the Aborigines had been cleared off the properties owned by Sir Thomas Elder and his managers saw their position as secured from any further threats. It seems that the Aborigines had quickly discovered the futility of matching spears against police and settlers guns. For the time being, the majority of Aborigines in the area had dispersed to avoid the possibilities of a confrontation with the police troopers sent to punish those who had participated in the ambush at Lake Perigundi.

It was into this state of extreme animosity between the Europeans and Aborigines that the Hermannsburg missionaries arrived in the area.

⁷¹S.A. Government Gazette, 1866, p. 720.

⁷²The Government records show the Protector to have made stringent efforts to clarify the situation but received only minimal help from the authorities concerned. Police reports of the incident seemingly disappeared in transit.

Lake Hope did not appear to be at all suitable for the location of a mission station and on the advice of Mr. Buttfield, the sub-protector of Aborigines, the missionaries looked at Lake Kopperamanna as an alternative site.⁷³ This location proved much more suitable because it was a well known Aboriginal meeting place and up to three hundred tribesmen could be found there at certain times. After a brief reconnaissance, the missionaries decided to settle ten miles west of Lake Kopperamanna at Lake Killalpaninna. Kopperamanna became the site of a mission under the auspices of the Morovian Brethren, whose missionaries had arrived in the area three weeks earlier.

Apart from the supposedly large numbers of Aborigines around Lake Killalpaninna the missionaries saw several other distinct advantages in this site for a mission station. Gossling in a letter from Manuwaukaninna had expressed the view that two such different enterprises as a mission and a cattle station needed their own areas if they were not to hamper each other; this made Killalpaninna a good site because it was well removed from the nearest cattle stations.⁷⁴ Even more important to the missionaries was the fact that there were no other Europeans in the immediate vicinity.⁷⁵

The missionaries had not looked kindly on the settlers' actions in the area and it appeared that the Hermannsburg fears about the evils of European colonization among indigenous peoples had been well founded. Gossling was most outspoken on this point and he stated that Christianity already had to make good two misdeeds - one being the fact that the Europeans were destroying this people with their sins and the other that a mission had not been established earlier.⁷⁶

⁷³Letter from E. Homman, Dec. 13 1866 in K.M.Z., Jan. 21, 1867

⁷⁴K.M.Z., Feb. 25, 1867

⁷⁵K.M.Z., Jan. 21, 1867

⁷⁶Letter from Gossling 22Dec., 1866 in H.M.B., March, 1867

It was already too late to remedy the second misdeed but Gössling hoped that at least some of these poor "heathens" could be saved from the evil effects of European settlement by gathering them together at "New Hermannsburg" on Lake Killalpaninna.

For the moment, however, the missionaries first concern was to provide for their own survival. Before long it became obvious that the nature of the country was unsuitable for the establishment of a self-sufficient community based on agriculture. The only alternative for supporting the mission would have to be based on sheep and cattle grazing; agriculture had to be confined to small gardens.⁷⁷ This forced change from an agricultural to a pastoralist basis was to be a major departure from the original Hermannsburg aims. One of the problems presented by this situation was the limited amount of work stock grazing provided. Under these conditions it was going to be extremely difficult, if not impossible to establish a model Christian community, to facilitate the Christianization of the surrounding country and provide work for the expected converts.

Even before their arrival in the area the missionaries had acquired definite ideas about the nature of the Aborigines. The Dieri were reputed to be treacherous cannibals with the most gruesome, undisciplined manners.⁷⁸ Director Harms warned his missionaries that these Aborigines were the most dangerous people on earth.⁷⁹ Homman's and Gössling's first reports tended to confirm Harms' opinion. Gössling wrote that these people must surely be the most miserable and corrupt on earth. However the Aborigines had decreased to such an extent since the beginning of European contact that one could hardly talk of a people.⁸⁰

⁷⁷K.M.Z., Feb. 25, 1867

⁷⁸H.M.B., April 1867

⁷⁹H.M.B., March 1866

⁸⁰Gössling, K.M.B., 18 March, 1867

The missionaries concern as to the future of these people, burdened not only by their own sins but also suffering from the corruption and ills of European contact, were best expressed in Director Harms' report, which stated

...where such deeds of horror, such bestial conditions, where polygamy and polyandry exist, where human beings devour their young, as some degenerated swine do, to which are also added the vices of the white man, it is no wonder that the tribes are rapidly becoming extinct...⁸¹

Gössling concluded that if the mission was unable to help these people then there was little hope for the Aborigines.⁸² To the missionaries it seemed certain that their animal nature and the European influence would doom the Aborigines to extinction unless they could be quickly Christianized. In Hermannsburg itself optimism about Australia faded quickly. After reading the reports from the new missionary field. Theodore Harms held out little hope for achieving any of the original aims:

Should the Australian mission be able to do nothing more than give these poor people a Christian burial it will have achieved much.⁸³

The missionaries at Lake Killalpaninna, however, continued to hope that Europeanization would not only save the Aborigines from the ravages of their animal existence, but would also give them a chance for survival in face of the pressures of settler expansion, by enabling them to adapt to the white economy. As long as the Aborigine attempted to preserve his way of life, he was drawn into conflict with the Europeans. However, if the missionaries could teach them how to live and work as white men, they would give them an opportunity to become a part of the new economy, which was having such a destructive effect.

⁸¹H.M.B., April 1867

⁸²Gössling, K.M.Z., March 18, 1867

⁸³H.M.B., April 1867

The additional gift of the Christian religion would not only ensure their salvation but also help them resist the vices of the Europeans' way of life.

Despite their emphasis on Europeanizing the Aborigines, the missionaries apparently did not intend to lift them to a level of equality with the whites. The Aborigines were to become useful for such tasks as cutting reeds, treading clay, digging ditches, chopping wood or acting as shepherds and stockmen.⁸⁴ It was never supposed that they should rise above such menial tasks and adopt the more refined aspects of the European culture or compete with the settlers on equal terms.

For their part the Aborigines appear to have regarded the first Hermannsburg missionaries with mixed feelings. To Homman it seemed that the missionaries had been accepted as friends, who perhaps sought to share their heathen life with them.⁸⁵ The Aborigines looked on the technology of the missionaries with curiosity and wonder.⁸⁶ On the other hand they showed a marked fear of the missionaries' guns, the effects of which had only recently been demonstrated in this district by the white settlers.

In the first days of the mission, relations between missionaries and Aborigines were complicated by misunderstandings on both sides. The Aborigines soon showed a desire for the white men's food and goods, particularly tobacco. The missionaries did not hesitate to take advantage of this by giving "hands outs" in return for services. This pattern was to become well established as the mission developed. In many cases this system of rewards became the main inducement for Aboriginal co-operation.

⁸⁴Homman, H.M.B., Aug., 1867

⁸⁵Homman, K.M.Z., March, 1867

⁸⁶H.M.B., March, 1867

Homman wrote how four blacks helped in building the station in return for bread, tea and tobacco.⁸⁷ Such "hand outs" could not be given to everyone as the missionaries would soon be inundated with beggars. Any Aborigine who asked for tobacco or other goods had to first bring some fish or carry out other tasks useful to the missionaries. In some cases this method proved to be the only way of inducing the tribesmen to name specific objects so that the missionaries could learn the language.⁸⁸

A more serious misunderstanding arose when, as was customary among the tribes in that region, Aboriginal men offered women to the missionaries as a gesture of friendship.⁸⁹ The missionaries, unlike many settlers, reacted with extraordinary hostility. They looked on the custom as further proof of the Aborigines sinful, animalistic state and drove the hospitable men away with whips.⁹⁰ Gössling reported that this led to much noise in the heathen camp and the tribesmen became very threatening.⁹¹ There is little doubt that this outright affront to the Aborigines traditional ways led to increased feelings of hostility and endangered the missionaries position.

Not long after this incident, an even graver threat to the mission was posed by a huge corroboree at Lake Perigundi attended by Aborigines from all parts of northeast South Australia.

⁸⁷K.M.Z., March, 1867

⁸⁸K.M.Z., March, 1867

⁸⁹The explorers Sturt and Hawitt recount similar experiences in these areas

⁹⁰H.M.B., April, 1867

⁹¹"Gössling, March 9, 1867, K.M.B., April 1867

The missionaries had been informed that one of the main purposes for this corroboree was to organize the death of all the whites in the area, including the missionaries.

Gossling took these events very lightly and wrote.

We have been told that the blacks around here like us but others at Perigundi would lead the massacre. However, threatening and doing are two different things. The blacks are as cowardly as rabbits.⁹²

- he was soon forced to revise his opinion!

Tribes from hundreds of miles away began to congregate at Lakes Perigundi and Kopperamanna to attend the periodic festivals held at these places. On this occasion the gathering of the tribes was to have a more sinister purpose than to just conduct the traditional ceremonies; the Aborigines intended to take measures to drive the Europeans out of their lands. The earlier clashes with the settlers, especially Dean and Hack, had not been forgotten and the adverse pressures of the European economy on the Aborigines' way of life further fed the Aborigines growing resentment towards the white intruders. Led by the Perigundians, the tribesmen decided to renew hostilities with the intention of killing all the whites and those blacks who worked for them.⁹³

The missionaries looked on the activity at Lake perigundi with growing misgivings. However, they still saw the purpose of the corroboree as being no more than a heathen festival at which the most devilish ceremonies would be carried out. They hoped that the Aborigines from around the mission would speak favourably of them at the grand corroboree.

Despite the missionaries hopes of being spared from the Aborigines anger, it was apparent that the mission

⁹²" Gossling, March 9, 1867, K.M.Z., April, 1867

⁹³" Gossling, Monthly Report March, 1867, K.M.Z., May 20, 1867

stations were to be the first objectives of the Aborigines hostility. As yet they could see little difference between the motives of the missionaries from those of the settlers. The fact that the missions occupied places which were important trade and ceremonial centres would have only aggravated the situation.⁹⁴ Another reason for the Aborigines renewed outbreak of hostility being directed primarily against the missions, was the missionaries' reactions to the first hostile probings of the tribesmen. Unlike the settlers the missionaries could not resort to firearms to resist the Aborigines attacks. Their consciences would not allow such action and in any case such action would have ended any hope of successfully carrying out their mission work.

It did not take the Aborigines long to realize that the missionaries would offer little resistance and Gossling writes after an early skirmish, "they now knew we would not fire, which meant we were easy game as they only feared a bullet in their hide".⁹⁵ Gossling realized that the Aborigines animosity was not directed at their missionary aims as they had no idea about the actual purpose of the mission or spiritual matters,

They do not want to kill us because we are Missionaries but whites, who are settled on their old grounds. This they have said.⁹⁶

The crux of the matter was that the nature of the mission stations and the missionaries made them the point of least resistance in the wave of European intruders usurping their lands.

The missionaries position became more tenuous as growing numbers of Aborigines gathered in the area and the the movement of tribesmen between Lakes Perigundi,

⁹⁴Farwell, p. 105

⁹⁵Gossling; Report for May, K.M.Z., July 8, 1867

⁹⁶Gossling, March 21, K.M.Z., April, 1867

Kopperamanna and Kilallpaninna. The infrequent police patrols did little to avert the growing threat to the missionaries and the Aborigines had even informed the police that they would not rest until they had cleared the whites from Kopperamanna and Kilallpaninna.⁹⁷ The Morovian missionaries were the first to wilt under the pressure of Aboriginal hostility and they fled to the Hermannsburg mission station.

The Hermannsburg missionaries, not surprisingly, had lost interest in attempting to save the Aborigines from extermination and they became more concerned with the problem of self - preservation. Many of their previous impressions changed and the paramount question was how to conduct a mission among such people.

Honman wrote that their experiences had dampened most of their early hopes. The Aborigines now appeared in a worse light than ever before. Apart from being cowardly and gruesome, Honman now concluded that the syphilis which plagued their race, could not have been introduced by Europeans but must originated among themselves as a result of their many vices and obscene habits.⁹⁸ As the missionaries hopes of success decreased, their opinion of the Aborigines became proportionally more unfavourable.

Honman decided that under the circumstances the establishment of a mission was not worth being killed and devoured for by these savages. He concluded that very little could be achieved by martyrdom as the Aborigines had not even been made aware of the Gospel and death in such a case would be comparable to being killed by bandits.⁹⁹ By the same token fleeing from these heathens would only show fear and the prospect of returning to preach the Gospel

⁹⁷Honman, March 19, K.M.Z., April 1867

⁹⁸Honman, March 19, K.M.Z., April 1867

⁹⁹Ibid.,

with revolvers did not seem a satisfactory solution to the dilemma.¹⁰⁰

"Gosslings attitude was even more pessimistic and it seemed that his early misgivings at the prospect of a mission among these people had now been confirmed.¹⁰¹ His opinion of the Aborigines by now, was extremely unfavourable and he wrote accordingly,

They centre their whole life on eating, drinking and satisfying their lust which knows no bounds. This is a cause for their terrible diseases, which kill many of them. They are in such a shocking state it is indescribable, yet they feel perfectly happy in their state.¹⁰²

Unlike Homman, Gösling soon changed his attitude towards the use of force and firearms as a means of achieving the missions aims. At first he had found the thought of weapons and killing distasteful, especially since he had looked on the Aborigines as being much better than they now appeared. In his report for March he describes how the recent events had forced him to revise his earlier opinions and he now accepted the fact that these people had to be subdued with firearms. He further stated that if the authorities could not send help, then it was up to the Mission Committee to send up more men for a time to establish order; by force if necessary.¹⁰³

Homman's predicament of finding a way to ensure the continuance of the mission would hardly have been eased by Gosslings new attitudes, which sounded more like those of a settler than a missionary. The missionaries had little time left to contemplate on their position as it became apparent that the Aborigines were determined to drive the whites from Kilallpaninna.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.,

¹⁰¹ "Gossling, March 21, K.M.Z., April 1867

¹⁰² "Gossling, March 21, K.M.Z., April 1867

¹⁰³ Ibid.,

The police in the area could not devote all their time to protecting the missions and the situation was further complicated by the missionaries inability to defend themselves because of Homman's refusal to use firearms. It was obviously impossible to conduct a mission under these circumstances and the missionaries reluctantly abandoned Kilallpaninna to return South where they conferred with the committee about the problems facing the mission.

For the moment at least the Aborigines had succeeded in driving the missionaries away, although the settlers, who had been the original cause for their resentment, remained firmly entrenched. After their initial success against the missionaries, the Aborigines' active hostility towards the whites began to lose momentum as many tribesmen returned to their own territories. It was soon apparent that the expulsion of the missionaries had provided little relief from the pressures posed by the settlers' economy.

The corroboree at Lake Perigundi was to be the last concentrated effort by the Aborigines to repel the European intruders in the regions around Lake Hope. There seems to have been a growing awareness among the Aborigines that resorting to force was futile against the Europeans superior armaments, and they would have to find new ways of resisting the pressures threatening their existence. They came to accept the white man with his flocks and herds as a permanent factor in the environment. The Aborigines did not take long to realize that the settlers were dependent on them for labour and in some cases sexual partners for which they could obtain some of the white man's goods, such as tobacco, sugar, tea, flour and iron. As a result of this adaptation they evolved a policy, which Elkin has termed "Intelligent Parasitism".¹⁰⁴

Despite the missionaries setbacks at Lake Kilallpaninna the Missionary Committee in Adelaide was adamant that the

¹⁰⁴Elkin, The Australian Aborigines, p. 365

mission could not be abandoned. The obvious solution to the problem was to obtain Government aid. The Hermannsburg and Morovian missionaries had already moved in this direction by petitioning the Government for police protection.

Fears that the Government as usual would be slow in acting on this matter proved groundless as rapid steps were taken to comply with the missionaries' requests. Apart from the request for police protection, the petition also sought the granting of a reserve for the Aborigines in the area around Kopperamanna and Kilallpaninna.¹⁰⁵

The Commissioner of Police, George Hamilton was not favourably disposed to the idea of providing protection for the missionaries and in his report he voiced his objections to the whole idea of a mission among the Aborigines, which he regarded as an unnecessary burden on the South Australian Public;

...I gather from this memorial that these gentlemen have gone into the bush beyond the settled districts for the purpose of converting the Aboriginal Natives from their paganism to Christianity in pursuance of this mission they have met with hostile tribes and they fear that unless protected by the Government they will be placed in a position of great peril for they say "that they are keeping always three saddled horses at hand to be enabled to flee since our Commission to them (The Natives) would not well allow us to fire on them"- thus declaring themselves non-combatants and at the same time adhering to the object of their Mission, and dwelling in the midst of ruthless savages who would soon become emboldened by the peaceful attitude of these Missionaries and proceed to rob and murder them without compunction or mercy. The peculiar principles which guide the conduct of the Morovian and Lutheran Missionaries become difficulties in providing Police protection for them because two or three Troopers supported by armed bushmen would be able to repel a large number of natives and overawe them and keep them in order,

¹⁰⁵petition by the Morovian and Lutheran missionaries to the C.S.G., March 18, 1867, S.A.A.

while the same number of troopers could not so well protect white men who scruple to draw a trigger in their own defence, or in support of their defenders and therefore a larger force than is usually sent to outstations would be required, and this would be the more necessary when the Natives became aware that the Missionaries declined fighting for the salvation of their property of their lives.

The very nature of the Mission raises the question as to whether the Public of South Australia are called upon to find especial Police protection to persons who go forth unsolicited into the wilderness to carry out a design of converting the heathen native to the religion of the European..¹⁰⁶

Despite the Commissioners misgivings the Government decided to support the Lutherans' missionary efforts in the North. Although hampered by lack of finance it was decided to resolve the question of police protection by approving the transfer of the police station at Lake Hope to Kopperamanna.¹⁰⁷

The Government further aided the missionaries' by granting both groups one hundred square miles as an Aboriginal reserve. In view of the fact that a ration depot had been granted to the Morovians at Kopperamanna, the Lutherans could not be refused a similar request. The Commissioner of Crown Lands was quick to notice how important such a depot was in the success of mission work and he accepted the need of both mission stations to act as distributors of the Government rations because he claimed they cannot succeed in inducing the blacks to remain with them while the missionaries at the other station can attract them by giving provisions".¹⁰⁸

The distribution of rations by the missions was to prove a decisive factor in the pattern of European-Aborigine

¹⁰⁶Report from the Commissioner of Police, April 6, 1867 (No. 692/67) as an enclosure to C.S.O. 625/67, S.A.A.

¹⁰⁷Minute by H. Ayers, (CHIEF SECRETARY) in 233/67, C.S.O., 625/67, S.A.A.

¹⁰⁸Minute by Commissioner of Crown Lands, March 30, 1868, 91/68, P.A.

interaction. Without this function it seems likely that the missions would have been largely ineffective in attracting Aborigines to their stations. The Protector of Aborigines argued in favour of the Government continuing the supply of stores to the missions and he stated that "The denial of these stores will it is to be feared break up an establishment that promises to be of the greatest advantage to the Aborigines in the Far North".¹⁰⁹

It is not immediately clear what factors prompted the Government in their rapid compliance with the missionaries' requests. Their decision was no doubt influenced by the hope that the missions would become a pacifying influence in the North and their presence would help to allow a smoother and more trouble free expansion of the settler's interests. It also appears that the Government was only too pleased to rid itself of the responsibility for the protection and welfare of the Aborigines to a group like the missionaries. Unfortunately the Aborigines' interests had even less chance of protection from the encroaching settler economy now that the Government had transferred their responsibilities for their welfare to the missions

***After a break of some seven months the Hermannsburg missionaries were once again ready to return to their missionary field. This second attempt was to be better equipped than the first, as a result of the negotiations with the Government. Missionary Gössling had left the mission because of ill health and the burden of the work now rested on Homman. He was accompanied on his journey to Lake Kilallpaninna by his and Vogelsang's fiances. The group was joined by a young man called Koch, who had shown a desire to undertake missionary work.

The large number of Aborigines at the site of the mission station gave the returning missionaries a friendly

¹⁰⁹Minute of March 31, added to minute of Commissioner of Crown Lands to Rechner's letter, March 6, 1868, 9/68 P.A.

welcome and the lack of animosity, which had forced the earlier abandonment of the mission, led Homman to surmise, that perhaps the Aborigines had now become aware that the missionaries had come for their sake not to establish a cattle station.¹¹⁰ The Aborigines probably did not understand the missionaries motives, but they now noticed the difference in attitude of this group of Europeans compared to those of the settlers.

The settlers' herds had driven away much of the native game and this posed the most immediate threat to the Aborigines' existence. The Aborigines found themselves forced to adapt to this situation by either spearing cattle or seeking "hand outs" from the stations to supplement their diminishing food supplies. Neither of these actions were favourably received by the settlers; in many instances the settlers saw the presence of Aborigines on their properties as a hindrance to their efforts of establishing a successful economy. Not only did the cattle-killing deplete the herds but the presence of Aborigines tended to unsettle the cattle and this led to them being scattered over the countryside. As for the "hand outs" only a small number of Aborigines could be given food in return for doing minor work, and the persistent begging of the rest led to them being driven off the station. As this pattern developed the Aborigines found themselves hemmed in by the pressures of the expanding white economy. The Aborigines were becoming dispossessed from their land as the settlers sought to clear them away from the stations. The mission station at Lake Kilallpaninna was to provide a refuge from, and an alternative means of adapting to these pressures.

The Aborigines realized that the missionaries were much more susceptible to exploitation than the settlers.

¹¹⁰ Homman, March 1868, H.M.B., May 1868

The fact that the missionaries did not resent their presence and actually wanted them to come to the mission, greatly enhanced their opportunities for "hand outs". Both parties, the missionaries and the Aborigines, had something that the other wanted. The missionaries hoped to save these people from extinction by converting them to Christianity; the Aborigines needed the white mans' food and goods to survive in the changed environment.

Homan was eager to begin the actual missionary work and he was encouraged by the friendliness and obedience of the Aborigines. Their changed attitude towards the missionaries raised his hopes that the work would soon bear fruit.¹¹¹ He hoped to implement his missionary aims through the school and the church services.

At first the scholars were divided into two groups, the adults (mainly men) and the youths and girls. Instruction was primarily concerned with teaching the Aborigines to read and explaining biblical pictures. From the outset the missionaries attempted as best they could to teach in the Aborigines own language. Initially there were twenty students though Homan was doubtful as to how long this number would attend.¹¹²

The Aborigines did not attend the school or church services out of any desire for Christian salvation, but traded their attendances for food and clothing. Homan could not expect any co-operation from the Aborigines unless he gave them something in return. His report in April 1868 describes the dilemma,

...the Blacks naturally see this instruction as work...we have to give them food for this.

¹¹¹Homan, Aug. 31, 1868, H.M.B. Nov., 1868

¹¹²Homan, March 18, K.M.Z. April 27, 1868

This action is justified as they are unable to gather food during the instruction.

It is natural if they do not receive food then they will leave the school. If we are to satisfy their spiritual needs then we must also satisfy their want for food!¹¹³

To supply the necessary food to keep the school running Homman desperately needed the promised Government rations, which had not yet arrived.

Once the rations arrived, the Aborigines started to adjust their way of life to the availability of rations and the supply of natural food in the area. A pattern was established in which the attendances at Church services and school depended on the Aborigines' needs. During good seasons most of the Aborigines preferred to leave the mission to disperse into the countryside and live according to their old nomadic way.

Despite efforts to prevent these "walkabouts" the missionaries had little success in altering the Aborigines' pattern of life. Whenever good rains fell to rejuvenate the surrounding countryside, the number of Aborigines at the mission dwindled to almost nil. Under these conditions any hopes of Christianizing the Aborigines seemed almost impossible. This was made even more obvious by the fact that all the old ceremonies, which the missionaries had tried to stop, were held during these periodic wandering.

In times of drought, when natural food became scarce, the number of Aborigines at the Mission would increase. There would also be a sudden influx of people as each new shipment of Government rations arrived. Prior to each shipment the attendances at church services and the school would increase. On arrival of the rations in September 1868, Homman reports a dramatic influx of children aged

¹¹³ Homman, March 18, 1868, K.M.Z., April 27, 1868

between eight and thirteen years to the school, raising the number of pupils to an all time high of one hundred and sixteen.¹¹⁴ Although the rations were only distributed to the students and those Aborigines who worked for the missionaries, it did not take long for them to spread throughout the Aborigines' camp because of their communal way of life.

Apart from the continual fluctuations in the number of Aborigines at the Mission, the school provided other problems for the missionaries. It was soon obvious that the adult Aborigines gave little promise of any change to Christian ways and efforts to instruct them were discontinued. The missionaries concentrated their efforts on the children, who they regarded as the most likely to change from their traditional ways.

Homman wrote that he would use the Government rations in a concerted attempt to keep the school children on the mission and stop their periodic wanderings.¹¹⁵ Homman saw this as the only hope in attempting to alter their ways. The missionaries efforts however, were continually frustrated by the attitude of the children, who appeared to show little understanding of Jesus unless the missionaries distributed bread and tea.¹¹⁶ There was a growing disallusionment among the missionaries as they came to believe that the sins of these people were so prevalent that there could be no successful conclusion to their work.

The children learned to read and write without great difficulty, but their acceptance of Christianity remained minimal, leading Homman to write despairingly that, "Beliefs are not things to be grasped by hands and placed in the mouth and this for them is everything."¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴Homman, K.M.Z., Nov. 9, 1868

¹¹⁵Homman, K.M.Z., July 27, 1868

¹¹⁶Ibid.,

¹¹⁷Homman, H.M.B., March, 1869

This typifies the Aborigine's attitude, as he looked on the school as nothing more than a new means for gathering food.

Eventually the missionaries' concentration on converting the youths led to a reaction from the Aborigines in the camps, who became alarmed at the missionaries attempts to establish their influence over the children. The missionaries set out to drive a wedge between the children and the adults in the hope of destroying the influence of the latter, which they regarded as the major obstacle in converting the children to Christianity. As a result a dormitory was built to keep the students away from the Aboriginal camp at night and Homman even took some students into his own house. The rule that no child from the school was allowed into the camp at night was strictly enforced.¹¹⁸

The missionaries were particularly anxious to stop the initiation ceremonies on the youths as they rightly saw these as one of the chief sources of the elder's power and influence within the tribe. As their efforts began to show signs of success so the adults indifference to the school changed and they attempted to entice the scholars away to go on "walkabout" and participate in the tribal ceremonies. Homman reports a growing number of incidents in which the adults were trying to "corrupt the children with their obscene singing and dancing or to spirit students away to undergo their heathen ceremonies".¹¹⁹

The only methods the missionaries could adapt to try and prevent these incidents were to issue stern warnings and extreme watchfulness.

¹¹⁸Homman, K.M.Z., March 28, 1869

¹¹⁹Homman, K.M.Z., March 23, 1870

As dearly as they would have liked to implement their will by force, they had to forgo such action as it would have destroyed the school.¹²⁰ As the Aborigines attempted to reassert their influence over their children, the school began to suffer and Homman described the situation as looking very grim. The number of students running away increased all the time and many of them never returned.¹²¹

Despite these setbacks, the missionaries did achieve success in forcing the tribal elders to make some concessions; especially in the all important matter of initiations. One example of this was that a youth, who had just been initiated was allowed to return to the school almost immediately after the ceremony. This was a significant departure from tribal tradition as a new initiate was supposed to stay out of sight until bearded.¹²² It seems from this that at times the Aborigines were prepared to compromise their traditional beliefs to please the missionaries; this was an aspect often missing from the missionaries approach to the situation.

Because of the environment and the nature of the Aborigines, the Hermannsburg idea of establishing a self sufficient Christian community based on agriculture had little hope of fruition at Lake Kilallpaninna. As a result, the opportunities of providing useful work for the Aborigines were severely limited. It was not enough to segregate and teach the children; if they were to have any hope of success then the children also had to be occupied in their idle hours. Homman described some of their attempts to grapple with this problem,

¹²⁰Ibid.,

¹²¹Homman, H.M.B., Aug., 1870

¹²²Homman, K.M.Z., Nov. 19, 1869

57.

Although the children are taught order and discipline in school hours they are no different to white children in that they misuse their idle hours. This usually destroys all our previous efforts. They must be occupied with work and the only opportunity is to process the plants growing in the sandhills. We are teaching them to make rope out of these plants and at present we are investigating how to make our industry more useful.¹²³

Any ideas of establishing a thriving industry turned out to be shortlived because of the limitations of the work, a growing disinterest among the Aborigines and the lack of support from the Lutheran community in the South in supplying a ready market for the manufactured articles.

The school, despite its fluctuating attendances, possibly had the greatest potential for breaking down the Aborigines' resistance to change their traditional ways. Unfortunately, however, the missionaries were not at the station long enough to see their labours bear any fruits. The adults had largely succeeded in their attempts to reassert their influence over the children and disrupt the school. Towards the end of his stay, Homman reports that only ten students remained of which seven ran away laughing after they had been found lying and stealing.¹²⁴

If the school had shown little promise of success then the weekly church services showed even less. Although many Aborigines attended at first it was mainly out of curiosity and the proceedings had little impact on them. During the services the Aborigines generally remained quiet and attentive, showing little interest in what was said. At the end of the services, however, it was a different matter and Mrs. Homman writes that they "laughed and mocked saying we like fire and that it would be nice in Hell".¹²⁵ Her husband reported similar occurrences and he observed that apart

¹²³ Homman, K.M.Z., Aug., 1870

¹²⁴ Homman, H.M.B., Sept., 1871

¹²⁵ Louise Homman, Diary, "Ein Viel Bewegtes Leben".

from a dislike of hearing the word death, they found everything else they were told laughable. Often they would agree just to please the missionaries or earn a piece of tobacco.¹²⁶ This summed up the Aborigines general attitudes to church services and their attendances tended to fluctuate according to their material needs.

The missionaries' intolerant and dogmatic attitudes in pursuing their religious aims greatly hindered any chances of success. In their determination to completely change the Aborigines' traditional way of life they only succeeded in alienating themselves from the people they were trying to convert. Just because the Aborigines no longer offered forcible resistance to the European intrusion did not mean they had stopped resisting altogether. They realized that missionaries' teachings attacked the fundamentals of their traditional way of life and their presence at the mission was not out of any desire to comply with the missionaries' teachings.

The Aborigines' exploitation of the missionaries became an important aspect of their adaptation to the changed conditions of their environment. They needed the European goods to compensate for effects the white settlement was having on their traditional existence. The mission proved to be one of the best places for procuring the articles which the Aborigines now needed and desired. It would be accurate to say that the Aborigines never actually became incorporated into the mission rather the mission became a part of the Aborigines' way of life. Any concessions they made in their beliefs and traditions for the sake of the missionaries and Christianity were invariably motivated by their material needs.

The missionaries attempts to enlighten the Aborigines with the Christian religion were met with evasion or indifference.

¹²⁶Homman, K.M.Z., 1869

Often they would agree with what the missionaries said to procure a reward of food or tobacco. If the missionaries discontinued this practice and the Aborigines tired of their persistent questionings then they would on occasions become abusive and say "You go home".¹²⁷

The language barrier presented added problems for the missionaries. It was impossible to use that well tried weapon of "instilling the fear of the gospel" into the Aborigines because of the lack of word equivalents for such good Christian terms as sin, satan, salvation, heaven and hell. This meant that the missionaries found it difficult to convince the Aborigines to change their "sinful" ways because of the terrible retribution these habits would bring. Homman illuminates the problem in one of his reports,

The failure to find suitable words for the Christian concepts means that Hell is not hot for them nor Heaven sweet. Hell is only a place with a big fire and Heaven a sweet, fruitful land where there is much to be enjoyed but nothing spiritual.¹²⁸

The missionaries in their efforts to convert and civilize the Aborigines attacked all the fundamental aspects of their way of life, which they only regarded as a state of sinful corruption. As a result, their uncompromising attitudes and fervent preaching directed against the Aboriginal customs, beliefs and ceremonies led to a growing antagonism by the Aborigines. The corroborees and periodic festivals came under particular attack and the missionaries described them as obscene rites, which were the cause of the prevailing sickness and wretchedness among these people. Homman saw these events as "Satans weapon against our mission".¹²⁹

It is apparent that the missionaries had little idea of the importance of these ceremonies in the Aborigines' life.

¹²⁷ Homman, H.M.B., Feb. 1869

¹²⁸ Homman, H.M.B., March, 1869

¹²⁹ Homman, K.M.Z., Aug. 6, 1869

Consequently they failed to realize that their demands for the Aborigines to give up those beliefs and traditions which had arisen out of their struggle for survival was likely to hasten their extinction not prevent it. It is ironical that the missionaries eventual impact was possibly more damaging to the Aborigines' existence than that of the white settlers.

As the mission progressed bloody fights and unruly behaviour became widespread among the Aborigines. All the missionaries' efforts to prevent these occurrences were met with complete disregard by the Aborigines. Both Mrs. Homman and her husband report an increase in the frequency of these incidents, especially after church services.¹³⁰ It seems that these fights marked a growing resentment against the mission and much of the violence was directed at the Aborigines working for the mission. Homman became alarmed at this trend and he writes that to establish peace through good words has not only proved to be in vain but also endangered their lives. The only recourse has been to carry weapons in an attempt to separate the fighting, murderous fellows.¹³¹

At the same time as these disturbances the problem of sheep killing began to increase. Since the white settlement the Aborigines had found that sheep and cattle provided a ready substitute for their lost game. The spearing of the mission, sheep, however, had the added advantage of not invoking the same ruthless punishment as did similar offences against the settlers, as the missionaries proved reluctant to shoot Aborigines.

The problem soon became intolerable and the missionaries were forced to take some action, which by all accounts was not within the law.

¹³⁰L. Homman - "Ein Viel Bewegtes Leben"

¹³¹Homman, Private Letter March 28, 1870

Homan points out that protection from the authorities cannot be expected here and in any case any sort of legal proceedings would be pointless as there are no white witnesses to the crimes and all the Aborigines are liars.¹³² Whatever the measures and punishments adapted by the missionaries they did have the complete sanction of the local representative of the law, Police Constable Gason. It is not surprising that Gason made no mention of how the suspected offenders were dealt with and Homan is unable to communicate the nature the measures taken in a private letter for Gason's sake.¹³³

The missionaries' despair at their lack of success and the deteriorating situation at the mission led to a call for strong action by the missionaries. The committee responded by recommending Homan for the position of Justice of the Peace. It was hoped that this would help to remedy the trouble. Homans' attitude had hardened considerably from his earlier views and he wrote that, "our methods of begging and threatening have only had the effect that this godless people sees it as weakness and cowardice on our behalf".¹³⁴ Homan set out to rectify the matter by resorting to more positive measures:

We were forced to apply unlawful methods to prevent our losing all we had worked for. We gave one particularly stubborn subject a sound thrashing because of sheep killing.¹³⁵

The missionaries' began to suffer from troubled consciences at the increasing need to resort to the whip and revolver. Their position would be eased if such actions could be carried out under the sanctions of the law through the office of a Justice of the Peace.

¹³²Homan, Letter from Kilallpaninna, 1870

¹³³Homan, Letter from Kilallpaninna, 1820

¹³⁴Homan, Letter from Kilallpaninna, March 28, 1870

¹³⁵Ibid.,

Homan saw the establishment of a strong authority over the Aborigines, with the power to instil law and order among them as the only solution to the problem. He regarded the absence of such a strong authority as an important reason for the missions lack of success.¹³⁶ For Homan the problem obviously lay with the Aborigines, not with the missionaries' methods: "The law as a bridle and reigns could be a particular blessing for the mission".¹³⁷ This "bridle and reigns" as Homan aptly named the law would undoubtedly have been much more effective in overcoming the Aborigines' resistance to change their ways than the missionaries persuasions even if they did finally include the revolver and whip.

The Government at first refused the petition seeking to have Homan declared a Justice of the Peace on the grounds that he was not a citizen of the country. By the time these difficulties were overcome and the request granted, it was too late to be of much use as the Hermannsburg missionary attempt at Lake Kilallpaninna was fast drawing to a close.

The missionaries uncomprising pursuit of their aims had resulted in a growing resentment among the Aborigines. The Aborigines initial friendly acceptance of the mission had been progressively undermined by the missionaries demands that they change their traditional way of life. The growing disillusionment of the missionaries was further strengthened by the increasing antagonism directed against them. They no longer sought to civilize the Aborigines, as had been one of their original intentions, only to make them aware of the Gospel and attempt to stamp out their "sinful way of life". As the Aborigines reacted to the missionaries actions, so their measures became more extreme,

¹³⁶Homan, Letter from Kilallpaninna, March 28, 1870

¹³⁷Homan, H.M.B., Sep., 1871

culminating in the use of the revolver and whip in an attempt to invoke their authority, over what they regarded as an undisciplined, godless and sinful people. By 1871 the Aborigines' resentment to the situation on the mission was approaching a peak, which made a hostile clash seem imminent.

Conditions at the mission station became critical after the death of a young Aborigine during one of the frequent fights. At the burial ceremony the missionaries were named as the cause of his death.¹³⁸ The father of the deceased became terribly enraged at the death of his son and swore vengeance against the missionaries. A revenge party was gathered to attack the mission station and the nearby Aborigines' camp. Only the timely arrival of the police troopers prevented a massacre.¹³⁹

Homan took on an extremely pessimistic outlook as to the future prospects of the mission under such unfavourable circumstances. The poor health of his wife and children as well as his own failing strength only added to his waning interest in the mission at Kilallpaninna. In addition to these problems the mission was hampered by the disagreement between the missionaries and colonists over the running of the station.¹⁴⁰ Similar clashes of interest had occurred in the other missionary fields of the Hermannsburg Mission Society and it seems that Australia was to prove no different.

¹³⁸It was customary to attribute all deaths to other people or evil spirits. During the burial ceremony an elder usually performed a ritual, in which the dead victim was asked as to the cause of his death. In this way the blame was often placed on members of other tribes, who would subsequently be killed by a revenge party.

¹³⁹Homan, H.M.B., Sep. 1871

¹⁴⁰L. Homan, "Ein Viel Bewegtes Leben".

It is understandable that Homman had little hesitation in leaving Kilallpannina at the first opportunity. An acute water shortage resulting from a prolonged drought provided Homman with just such an opportunity. The lack of a dependable water supply had been a problem at the station since its inception and at the end of 1871 conditions became so desperate that the mission personnel were forced to withdraw 150 miles southward to Mundawadana.

Homman decided to return South to discuss the matter with the committee. The relationship between the missionaries and the local church committee had not been a harmonious one. Homman had complained bitterly at the committees unrealistic attitude towards the mission and their failure to provide adequate support. He blamed much of the missions failure on the committee's apparent reluctance to supply the mission's needs.¹⁴¹ Many requests for such essential items as saddles, medicines and a wind pump were either ignored or subjected to unnecessary and irritating delays.

Homman's accusations against the lack of co-operation from the committee brought a strong reaction and he came under heavy criticism for deserting his post and failing in his missionary duty. The committee sought to overcome the water problem by having deeper wells sunk or even moving the station to a new site. Homman, however, had little heart left for further missionary attempts and he resigned in 1872 to accept a pastorate in an Adelaide parish. This action provided further ammunition for his enemies, but subsequent enquiries by Hermannsburg led to an acceptance of his reasons for leaving the mission.

As Homman was travelling South his replacement from Hermannsburg, Missionary Schoknecht, reached Mundawadana. At this stage Theodore Harns was not prepared to give up

¹⁴¹ Homman, Letter from Kilallpaninna, July 1, 1871

the station and Schoknecht with the colonists was to hold the station until the issue was decided.

The drought had not broken and Schoknecht was forced to remain at Mundawadana, making only brief visits to Kilallpaniina. The future of mission work among the Diere seemed far from promising under these conditions and Schoknecht was not happy with the uncertain nature of the venture. It did not take him long to see the strength of Homman's argument; he stated there could be no future for a mission in this area unless permanent water was found. It was not sufficient to have just enough water for survival but an assured supply was necessary.¹⁴²

The committee attempted to alleviate the water shortage by sending a well borer to sink a number of deeper wells. All these attempts proved unsuccessful, largely due to the well borer's greater understanding of the bottle than the intricacies of sinking a well. The committee decided on a new plan of building a number of cement tanks to hold surface water. Schoknecht pointed out the impractability of such a scheme because of the climatic conditions. The committee, however, persisted with its resolve to build water tanks.

Schoknecht became more critical of perpetuating a mission in the area, as the possibilities of reoccupying the station decreased. He saw the task of establishing a christian community among these people as hopeless and it was foolish to think of raising the Dieri from their sunken state through God's word alone. What could a mission hope to achieve if the Aborigines had to be clothed and fed from the South like the missionaries.¹⁴³ The feasibility of a mission under such circumstances was put further in doubt by the lack of suitable work for the Aborigines. The difficulty of occupying the Aborigines,

¹⁴²Schoknecht, Letter from Mundawadana, April 11, 1872

¹⁴³Schoknecht, Letter from Mundawadana, April 11, 1872

who settled on the station had never been successfully overcome and Schoknecht wrote that this situation would only be different if the land was suitable for cultivation.¹⁴⁴ He felt that it was impossible to Christianize these people as long as they retained their nomadic habits, and under the present conditions these wanderings were essential to their survival. To try and achieve anything under these conditions in the present location would require too great an amount of money and effort, which could well be put to better use in a more favourable area.¹⁴⁵

The committee decided to examine a number of other sites as a possible alternative. Schoknecht agreed to remain at Mundawadana until a decision on this matter had been reached, although Harms had relieved him of his obligation to continue the mission in the area. No suitable alternatives to the existing site of the mission could be found and the committee resolved that the mission personnel should wait at Bukaltaninna for the expected flood, which would make it possible to reoccupy the old station. As a result Schoknecht informed the committee that there was no further need for his services as no mission work could be carried out at "this puddle" - Bukaltaninna.¹⁴⁶

Schoknecht's desire to leave was possibly enhanced by the antagonism, which existed between himself and the colonists. He was also unhappy at the committee's tightness in relation to financial matters, as well as the apparent lack of communication between himself and the committee. Schoknecht consequently left the mission and followed Homman's example by accepting a parish in Victoria.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴Schoknecht, H.M.B., April, 1872

¹⁴⁵Ibid.,

¹⁴⁶Schoknecht, Letter from Bukaltaninna, March, 1873

¹⁴⁷Mission Committee Minutes, K.M.Z., Jan 28, 1874

The committee was reluctant to abandon the mission as too much had been invested in the venture and negotiations were held with Harms as to its future. In the course of these discussions the connection with Hermannsburg, which had never functioned very smoothly, became extremely strained. The issue was further complicated by the uneasy confessional union between the two synods, which had been necessitated by the joint missionary venture.

Some committee members disliked the link with Hermannsburg and the eventual split between the two synods led to the Immanuel Synod breaking its ties with Hermannsburg and taking over the mission at Kilallpaninna. On hearing that the Immanuel Synod was supposed to have shown unionistic tendencies Harms decided to abandon Kilallpaninna to that synod.¹⁴⁸

Reports of the discovery of a promising new mission field in Central Australia had reached Harms and he decided to start a new mission in conjunction with the South Australian Synod. A resolution was passed in Hahndorf in August, 1873 giving complete control of the new mission to Harms and pledging local church support. Harms named G.A. Heidenreich as superintendent of the new mission and agreed to supply the mission personnel.¹⁴⁹

The Immanuel Synod took over the old mission and went its own way. The two colonists Vogelsang and Jacob remained at Kilallpaninna stating it was against their conscience to leave. The Immanuel Synod persevered with the mission at Kilallpaninna for a number of years and strong criticism was levelled at the first Hermannsburg missionaries for giving in so readily. Although the mission continued for some time it could not overcome the initial problems, which had

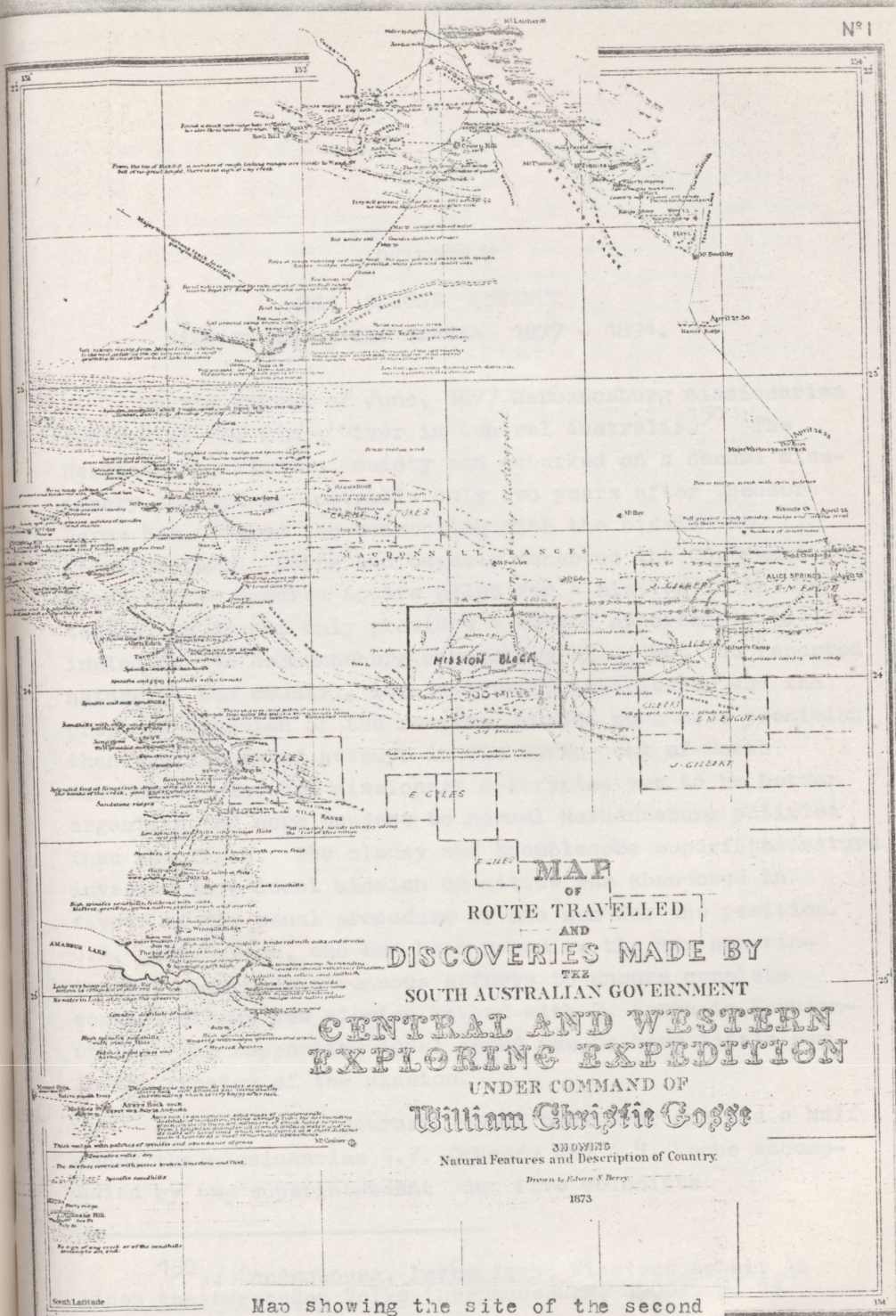
¹⁴⁸Haccius, III p. 353

¹⁴⁹Haccius, III p. 358

confronted the Hermannsburg missionaries. By 1915 the Dieri were almost extinct and the mission was finally abandoned.

This first missionary effort by the Hermannsburg Mission Society in Australia had not proved a very happy or successful one and it seemed a far cry from Louis Harn's optimistic hopes. From its inception conditions at Kilallpaninna had not been favourable for the establishment of a mission. Most of the Aborigines had been forced onto the mission by the pressures of the white settlement and they began to exploit the missionaries as a means of compensating for the forced changes on their traditional way of life. They showed a general resistance and often resentment to the missionaries attempts to introduce Christianity, which they rightly saw as an attack on vital features of their life. Confronted by these problems, as well as being hampered by internal discords, it is not surprising that the Hermannsburg mission at Lake Kilallpaninna failed to achieve any of its original aims and was eventually abandoned to the Immanuel Synod.

Although the first missionary attempt in Australia had failed Theodore Harns reaffirmed his intention that Australia was not going to be abandoned - at least not yet. Despite the discouraging results of the Kilallpaninna venture optimism at Hermannsburg was rekindled as Harn's hopes now centred on a new, more promising location on the Finke River in Central Australia.



MAP
 OF
ROUTE TRAVELLED
 AND
DISCOVERIES MADE BY
 THE
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT
CENTRAL AND WESTERN
EXPLORING EXPEDITION
 UNDER COMMAND OF
William Christie Gosse
 SHOWING
Natural Features and Description of Country.

Drawn by Edwin S. Berry

1873

Map showing the site of the second Hermannsburg Mission station on the Finke River in Central Australia.

U. B. Sweeney

BRIDGE CHANNELS OFFICE ADLIDE. PAPER 2. CONTINUED.

CHAPTER V

THE SECOND ATTEMPT

Mission among the Aranda 1877 - 1894.

On the fourth of June, 1877 Hermannsburg missionaries arrived at the Finke River in Central Australia.¹⁵⁰ The Hermannsburg Mission Society had embarked on a second missionary attempt in Australia only two years after Theodore Harms had severed the connection with the mission at Kilallpaninna. Harms had eagerly accepted the Government grant of two hundred square miles for a mission in the interior, as it not only provided a second opportunity to implement the Hermannsburg missionary aims, but the reported nature of the country, its indigenous inhabitants and the proposed location of the reserve sounded much more promising than the ill-fated attempt in the North West of South Australia. The new missionary enterprise was to be better organized and more subject to normal Hermannsburg policies than the first. The clumsy and troublesome superintendure invested in a local mission committee was abandoned in favour of the usual procedure of one man for the position. G.A. Heidenreich, who had been named as the new superintendent, had made strenuous efforts to ensure complete control of the new mission rested with T. Harms in Hermannsburg. The supporting local synod was to have little say in the running of the mission.

After an epic journey, which took over one and a half years the missionaries W.F. Schwarz and A.H. Kempe accompanied by the superintendent and five colonists

¹⁵⁰ W. Wendenbourg, Lutherische Missions Arbeit An Einem Aussterbenden Volke (Hermannsburg, 1906), p. 13

arrived at their destination on the Finke. Soon after choosing a site for the mission station Heidenreich left to handle the mission affairs in the South. The missionaries ranks were swelled by the arrival of L. Schulze and three more colonists as well as the brides for the other two missionaries.

The missionaries first impressions of the area proved extremely favourable and there was hope for a promising future. The centre at that time was experiencing a very good season and the abundance of feed and water enhanced the prospects of establishing a successful mission station. Heidenreich observed that the area was not only amply endowed with natural attributes but also served a focal point for some of the main tribes on the Finke. It was reported to be a last refuge for the Aborigines, when food and water became scarce in the surrounding country.¹⁵¹

The missionaries found only a few isolated Aborigines in the area and it was to be some time before any frequent contact was established. Heidenreich had been informed that a mission station close to the Aborigines' camps would induce them to leave these camps in favour of the mission.¹⁵² There was to be little evidence of such a tendency in the first few years. At this early stage there had been limited settler penetration into the Centre and only a few cattle stations had been established. As a result the Aborigines had only sparse contact with the Europeans and as yet had not become subjected to the adverse effects of the whites' pastoral economy, as had been the case at Kilallpaninna. This time the missionaries did not have to cope with Aboriginal hostility resulting from previous adverse interaction with white settlers. The most they had to contend with was a friendly and often reserved curiosity.

¹⁵¹ Heidenreich, E.K., April, 1877

¹⁵² Heidenreich, Report Aug 31, 1876, E.K., Oct 6, 1878

The missionaries first impressions of the Aborigines proved much more favourable than those of their predecessors. The Aborigines proved bigger, healthier and stronger than in most other areas and the missionaries were impressed by their stately appearance.¹⁵³ Heidenreich was especially pleased by the large number of young people among them as he saw these as being the main hope for the future. He did not envisage the same prospects for the adults, who he regarded as unsuitable for conversion, because they were dumb, lazy and only interested in eating.¹⁵⁴

Despite his attitude towards the adults he stressed that the missionaries would try their utmost to help them because he felt that if any mission was going to succeed in Australia it was this station on the Finke:

Here the Lord has given us all the natural resources to add to our spiritual strengths, which are necessary if the might of Christianity is to make an impression on the daily life of the heathens. From the beginning it has been the guiding aim of the Hermannsburg Mission to bring culture and social order through the Gospel to the degenerate heathens and this shall be the case here.¹⁵⁵

The mission stations location seemed to have an added advantage in that it was forty five miles from the main road, which it was hoped would spare the station from frequent visits by Europeans. The missionaries preferred to avoid such visits as they felt that the visitors behaviour was often a bad example to the indigenous people.¹⁵⁶

The number of Aborigines visiting the station began to increase as they overcame their initial shyness and were attracted by the missionaries gifts. Only men appeared at first and it was over a year before any women came to the mission.

¹⁵³Heidenreich, E.K. April 11, 1877

¹⁵⁴Heidenreich, E.K. Dec. 1, 1876

¹⁵⁵Ibid.,

¹⁵⁶Heidenreich, E.K. Dec. 1, 1876

The missionaries were occupied with building the station and there was only limited opportunity to start mission work. Before long up to seventy Aborigines gathered at the station at various times and the missionaries hoped they would stop their nomadic wanderings and bring their families to the station.

Some of the Aborigines helped with the work of establishing the station in return for food and other European commodities they desired.¹⁵⁷ The missionaries concluded that the Aborigines generally appeared to be good workers and were far from stupid. Schulze spoke out against the unfavourable views others had expressed about the Aborigines by stating that although these people had sunk to a very low state in their ways and habits many adverse criticisms of them were unfounded.¹⁵⁸

Despite the missionaries early joy at discovering the Aborigines to be much better than some people had claimed their hopes of success were somewhat dampened by the Aborigines nomadic habits. Although the Government had granted rations for distribution among the Aborigines the missionaries soon found that these did not offer a great inducement for the Aborigines to stay at the mission. Kempe observed: "As long as the heathens can find their food outside of the station they prefer this to our rations especially as they do not have to work for the former"¹⁵⁹ This proved a direct contrast to the experiences at Kilallpaniana where the effects of the settler intrusion forced the Aborigines to seek "hand outs" from the mission as a substitute for their disappearing natural foods.

Kempe sought to induce Aborigines to come to the mission by riding out to their camps and asking them to the

¹⁵⁷ Kempe, L.K. Oct. 4, 1878

¹⁵⁸ Schulze, L.K. Feb. 27, 1886

¹⁵⁹ Heidenreich, E.K. Dec. 1, 1878

station, but his efforts proved unsuccessful.¹⁶⁰ Despite these early setbacks the distribution of rations became a more important factor as time passed; not only in inducing Aborigines to the mission but also in implementing the missionaries aims through the church services and school. The availability of European food and goods was increasingly exploited as the pressures of the white settlement began to affect the Aborigines traditional way of life. By 1879 all the land around the mission had been occupied by cattle stations.¹⁶¹

The growing number of settlers near the mission resulted in criticism of the usefulness of such a venture among the Aborigines and the Government support in supplying rations was questioned. As a result of these accusations the Government ordered one of the officers from a nearby telegraph station to carry out an un-announced inspection of the mission. The officer selected sent back a very favourable and optimistic report advocating a continuance of Government rations.¹⁶²

A nearby settler disagreed with Flint's report and voiced his opposition to the mission by stating that the number of Aborigines at the mission did not warrant the expense of carting rations such immense distances. He had seen only "one able bodied nigger", when he visited the mission in June and as far as he knew the only contact the missionaries had with the Aborigines, apart from employing a few to assist with the building, was an occasional passage of arms with sheep killers. According to the settler's complaint the question of police protection was much more important than supplying the Aborigines with rations.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.,

¹⁶²E. Flint, Official Inspection Report - Finke River Station P.A. no 277/ 1879

¹⁶¹Kempe, L.K. May 9, 1879

He felt that neither the expense of police protection or rations was necessary if the law would allow the settlers to protect themselves. In any case the Blacks in the Mac Donell Ranges were a stalwart race of savages with ample supplies of natural food and it would be years before they consented to settle on a mission station. The final argument against sending rations to the Aborigines was their habit of spearing the missionaries sheep, which demonstrated their ability to help themselves and any rations would be wasted until they had devoured the missionaries' flock of sheep.¹⁶³

This attitude typified the feelings of many settlers in the area and accentuated the desire to further their own interests by taking the law into their own hands; this tendency became increasingly apparent in their later interaction with the Aborigines. It was not surprising that the missionaries and settlers were on opposite sides over the treatment of the Aborigines. In one way the growing number of settlers in the area aided the mission by forcing more Aborigines to gather at the mission station in an attempt to escape from and adapt to the resultant pressures. On the other hand the clashes between the missionaries and the settlers seriously affected the success of the mission.

The Aborigines' approaches to the missionaries gradually changed from tentative curiosity to more frequent exploitation of the missionaries ability to supply the commodities they wanted. Even the missionaries' subsequent demands for the Aborigines to carry out small amounts of work or attend the school and church services did not decrease their desire for European goods. Unlike the Dieri, the Aranda did not show any hostility towards the missionaries but rapidly adapted to their presence and the benefits they could gain from this. During the early years of the mission the Aborigines had no need for rations and only accepted them when it suited their needs.

¹⁶³ Settler's Letter to the Protector of Aborigines, June 13, 1879, P.A. No 277 / 1879

The good seasons, which occurred at the time of the missionaries arrival, ensured an ample supply of natural foods for the Aborigines and the smallness of the missionaries flocks prevented any noticeable inroads into the indigenous food and water. During the early period of the mission between 1872 and 1880 the Aborigines reaction to the European settlement in the area appeared to be one of tentative approach. Active resistance to the settler intrusion did not develop until later depletions of indigenous food supplies and rivalry for water holes began to threaten the Aborigines existence.

The missionaries hoped to achieve most of their aims through the establishment of a school and regular church services for the Aborigines. It was hoped that the regular supply of rations would eventually overcome the Aborigines nomadic habits. It was vital that the Aborigines remained on the mission station so that they would be under daily Christian influences and Schwarz hoped that a daily issue of rations would have the desired effect.¹⁶⁴ It became evident that since the distribution of rations to those eligible (the aged, sick, infirm and students under tuition) the numbers of Aborigines in this category at the mission began to increase.¹⁶⁵ A pattern of adaptation to the availability of rations and the conditions in the surrounding countryside started to develop.

A similar pattern of attendance fluctuations, to that at Kilallpaninna, became apparent at the mission. The number of Aborigines at the mission would be small during the good seasons but increase in times of hardship. Some Aborigines seemed prepared to accept the rations on the assumption that the small amount of work demanded of them

¹⁶⁴Schwarz, L.K. Dec. 12, 1879

¹⁶⁵Heidenreich, L.K. April 30, 1880

in return cost less effort than securing a livelihood by traditional means.¹⁶⁶

To some degree the missionaries used the rations to entice Aborigines to attend the school or church services. The Aborigines soon adapted to the system of "hand outs" to such an extent that when a visiting group from another tribe arrived at the station the missionaries asked the local Aborigines how they intended to show their hospitality. The reply was that the missionaries should feed them.¹⁶⁷ Another example of how the Aborigines exploited this aspect of the mission is evident in the numbers, who attended the Christmas celebrations. To the missionaries the large attendances indicated that the Gospel must be making an impression on them, even if they were unaware of it.¹⁶⁸ A more likely explanation for the increased participation was the European custom of distributing presents on this occasion, which probably had a greater effect on the Aborigines.

The missionaries hoped that their school would play a major role in changing the Aborigines' way of life. Unfortunately it was not the desire to learn which attracted the students but the rations. It was the missionaries' usual practice to hold the lessons in the morning before handing out the days rations.¹⁶⁹ This created problems in-so-much the number of scholars was always fluctuating depending on their need for rations. Many parents were quite willing to leave their children in the school when food was scarce only to reclaim them during the good seasons.

¹⁶⁶ Mervyn Hartwig, "The progress of White Settlement in the Alice Springs district and its effect on the Aboriginal Inhabitants. 1860 - 1894" (unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide, 1965)

¹⁶⁷ Schulze - Quarterly Report, Sept., 1883

¹⁶⁸ Wendebourg, p. 16

¹⁶⁹ Schulze, L.K., Feb. 27, 1880

If the missionaries admonished the students for their irregular attendances then the students would often reply, "What for the lessons? Why do we always have to learn to read and write?"¹⁷⁰ Despite these difficulties some noticeable progress was made and a number of children learnt to read and write. The missionaries became convinced that their only hope lay with the youths as the adults were too set in their ways and the girls proved unreliable because of their tendency to run away with older men.

Early attempts by the missionaries to administer corporal punishment to the students caused a great outcry among the parents, who thought their children were being killed. At first it was difficult to try and placate the adults but the idea of punishment was gradually accepted. The missionaries concentration on the youths of the tribe was regarded as an attempt to replace the influence of the elders and caused a growing resentment.

At first the school curriculum sought to provide a reasonable broad general education in keeping with the Hermannsburg aims of providing Christian culture as well as religion. Reading, writing, arithmetic, geography and religious instruction were the main subjects taught. The missionaries, however, became disillusioned with the results of their efforts as they realized that there was very little opportunity for educated Aborigines to apply what they had learnt. This became more apparent later when the mission Aborigine discovered he was not wanted on the cattle stations, where preference was usually given to his uneducated brothers. As a result the missionaries came to believe that it was pointless to provide such a broad education, which proved more frustrating than useful to the Aborigine and their efforts began to centre more on just teaching the Gospel.

¹⁷⁰Schulz, L.K., July 16, 1880

The availability of useful work was a necessary requirement of achieving any missionary success and this proved to be a major problem, as had been the case in the first missionary attempt. The missionaries saw the Aborigines "idle" lives as one of their worst evils. By providing them with work they hoped not only to combat this factor but also to influence them towards Christianity through honest toil. At first the men and youths had to help with general chores around the station and the women worked in the kitchen as well as learning how to sew and knit.¹⁷¹ These activities only provided a temporary solution to the problem and the main hope of supplying enough work for the Aborigines lay in the development of an agricultural community, which proved impossible under the climatic conditions.

The missionaries were able to establish small gardens, which created some work but attempts to expand these failed because of a succession of bad seasons.¹⁷² Schwarz was convinced that a steady occupation would be a vital factor in not only raising the "Blacks" from their miserable way of life and ending their "lazy wandering life", which caused them to create much damage to the settlers' properties often leading to savage and unjust retribution by the settlers.¹⁷³

Although there was a lack of suitable work on the mission those Aborigines who stayed there quickly adapted on the idea of work. Schwarz observed that many Aborigines appeared thankful to get work and they must have realized it was better to earn a living through work rather than stealing.¹⁷⁴ This attitude was no doubt aided by the settlers' willingness to punish thefts with a bullet. Several other attempts were made to find suitable occupations such as spinning wool and weaving blankets but these did not prove satisfactory.

¹⁷¹Heidenreich - Annual Report, L.K., April, 1886

¹⁷²Schwarz, L.K., April, 1885

¹⁷³Schwarz, L.K., April, 1885

¹⁷⁴Ibid.,

The church services were plagued by similar problems. Every heathen on the station was supposed to take part in these services, however, the only ones who usually attended were those receiving food.¹⁷⁵ Those attending showed a definite indifference to the proceedings and the missionaries remarked bitterly that all the Aborigines efforts were directed towards their stomachs.¹⁷⁶ Life after death did not interest them and they knew no difference between Heaven and Hell. In any case these were initiates perfect in Aboriginal law and they had no sense of sin or salvation; they were re-incarnations of dream time heroes, men whose spiritual desires were all fulfilled, men reconciled with death.¹⁷⁷

The missionaries became discouraged by the Aborigines continued indifference to their preachings and it seemed to them that the adults sat in church as if in a dream. If they were asked whether they understood what had been said they would answer "Yes". On further questioning it was found they hardly remembered a word and would answer, "Ask the children". This led to severe admonitions by the missionaries.¹⁷⁸

Prolonged contact with the Aborigines convinced the missionaries that they did have a spiritual life of sorts and they conceded that their ceremonies and festivals held some religious significance.¹⁷⁹ They also came to appreciate the considerable power of the elders and the hold they had over the young particularly through the initiation ceremonies.

¹⁷⁵Schulze, Quarterly Report 1884, L.K., Jan., 1885

¹⁷⁶Ibid.,

¹⁷⁷Hartwig, p. 513

¹⁷⁸Schulze, Quarterly Report, L.K., Oct., 1886

¹⁷⁹Ibid.,

Schulze stated that if they could prevent the youths from being initiated then they would save them from being spoilt.¹⁸⁰

The effectiveness of church services were hampered by language difficulties. It was extremely hard to find equivalents for biblical concepts and the Aborigines' reluctance to think about these things complicated the matter. Added to this was the Aborigines' reluctance to co-operate with missionaries trying to learn the language as they regarded it as being used as a weapon against them.¹⁸¹

The more familiar the missionaries became with the Aborigines' culture the more their earlier optimistic attitudes changed to ones of contempt. This became pronounced as they failed to achieve their aims. It seemed that all three had discovered the Western Aranda as sexually promiscuous, practicing infanticide and cannibalism, cowardly and cunning in dealing with their enemies and in object fear of death and the dead.¹⁸² This convinced them that no compromises could be made with these "Heathens" and all adaptation should be on part of the Aborigines. The missionaries unfavourable experiences eventually shook even their faith in the likelihood of the Aborigines achieving temporal or eternal salvation.

Even the long awaited baptisms of a group of Aborigines did little to restore this faith. In June of 1887 it seemed as if at last the missionaries efforts were to bear fruits when seven Aborigines were baptised. This had come about as a result of two Aborigines having accompanied one of the missionaries on a journey South where they had stayed at the mission at Kilallpaninna. They had come under the influence of some Christianized Aborigines and on their return to the Finke they desired to be baptised.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰Schulze, H.M.B., Feb., 1885

¹⁸¹Ibid.,

¹⁸²Hartwig, p. 511

¹⁸³Kempe, "Lebenslauf"

Five others followed their example and made a similar request.

All of the baptised had grown up on the mission and five of them had been orphans. The average age of the group was about fourteen years and they all adopted Christian names. The nature of this first group of baptisisms shows that the missionaries were not making significant inroads into the initiated members of the tribe.

The missionaries joy soon turned to sorrow as the new Christians succumbed to their old ways. Thomas and Andreas were guilty of breaking the sixth commandment and the missionaries saw this as further proof that "whoring and lust was the Aborigines national sin."¹⁸⁴ The two offenders were admonished for their sins before the Christians and heathens. The missionaries thought of banishing them from the Christian community but this did not seem like adequate punishment. Some retribution had to be made in this matter and according to the missionaries' reports the two offenders desired corporal punishment. This was carried out after some deliberation.¹⁸⁵ The repentance by the two sinners did not last long as they were reported to have had sexual relations with some women, whilst on a cattle muster. Before the missionaries could discover whether they were guilty or not they decided to leave the mission for a nearby cattle station.

In 1888 a second group of seventeen were baptised, again this group consisted mainly of children but there were four married couples. As with the previous group the majority had spent most of their lives on the station. The missionaries were still smarting from their earlier experiences in this field and they were doubtful as to how long these Christians would remain true,

¹⁸⁴ Report for April and June, 1888, H.M.B., Dec. 1888

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.,

especially as they were not only related by blood to the other "heathens" but still involved with their social organization.

Kempe could see no easy solution to these problems particularly as he felt the Aborigines had no interest in seeking salvation as they recognized no sin. It was first necessary to convince them that they are sinners. This would prove difficult as the Aborigines had been taught the opposite from childhood. Further complications were created by the lack of strong authority among the Aborigines. According to Kempe it would be up to the missionaries to take on this unwelcome task. This meant that it would be necessary to administer corporal punishment just as with little children. Experience had shown it was better to have a strong discipline than one which was too lax.¹⁸⁶

After these setbacks the missionaries held little hope of success and their attitudes became hardened and pessimistic. Schulze wrote that although these people appeared happy and carefree on the surface, closer examination showed their miserable state, both physically and spiritually. Syphillis and other diseases were rife among them and the fear of death universal.¹⁸⁷

As the number of cattle stations increased in the surrounding districts the conflicting interest of the settlers, Aborigines and missionaries had serious effects on the progress of the mission. The growing pressure of the pastoral economy led the Aborigines to begin hostile resistance against the whites in the early 1890's. The only tribe who did not go through this stage of resistance was the Western Aranda, who had already had prolonged contact with the missionaries and as a result probably were able to realize the need for adaption in lieu of force.

¹⁸⁶Kempe, L.K., July, 1889

¹⁸⁷Schulze, H.H.B., July, 1882

The missionaries reported that the tribes on and near the mission remained relatively stable in their numbers, whereas tribes near the cattle stations were rapidly decreasing. In some cases only women and girls remained of what were once strong tribes.¹⁸⁸ This had been partly due to the settlers' willingness to take the law into their own hands to rid themselves of the molesters of their herds. The missionaries complained to the Government about the settlers' harsh treatment of the Aborigines and by doing so earned their hatred and opposition.

In 1884 Schwarz wrote a report to the Protector of Aborigines about the ill treatment of the Aborigines. He expressed his disappointment that the whites, who boasted of their civilization did not live up to this by treating the Aborigines justly but instead reacted to any offences by shooting at them indiscriminately with little care of who was guilty or not. There had been no sign of hostility before the settlers arrived and it was apparent that the whites' harsh treatment was responsible for arousing the Aborigines' hostility. Schwarz further wrote that the continual fornication with the Aboriginal women by the settlers was a constant source of trouble. It seemed that the Aborigines only learnt the worst aspects of European civilization. The settlers idea of civilization appeared to consist of making the Aborigines wear clothes, ride horses, smoke a pipe and learn how to curse and swear. It was this attitude and the Aborigine's new knowledge of the white man's ways, which caused most of the trouble. Schwarz concluded by stating that if he had to decide who had suffered most in the encounter then it would have to be the Aborigines and he appealed for just punishments to deal with "native outrages" not indiscriminate shootings.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸Annual Report - Finke River Mission 1885, L.K., Jan., 1886

¹⁸⁹Schwarz, "Report on Ill Treatment of Aborigines by Europeans", P.A. No 360 / 1884

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The Protector voiced his concern at this state of affairs and at the outrages committed on both sides. These actions often required costly Government involvement, which could be avoided if the Aborigines were treated with more forbearance and justice. This would doubtless lead them to live amiably with the settlers in these remote localities. He reminded the Government to take some measures to protect the Aborigines from the oppressions of the settlers.¹⁹⁰ The Government, however, lacked the finance and interest to take any serious action to alleviate the problem.

The antagonism between missionaries and settlers progressively worsened. Ill feeling between the two was increased by the settlers luring young girls and youths away from the mission with generous promises or sometimes outright abduction. The missionaries were incensed by this not only because the girls dressed in mens clothes, drove the settlers' cattle, and indulged in intercourse with the whites but also they were better dressed and fed than was possible in the mission.¹⁹¹ The missionaries regarded this as an attempt to undermine the mission and it was desirable that these tendencies were stopped.

The Government acted on the settlers' request for protection by establishing a Police Station at Alice Springs, which was manned by one trooper and some Aboriginal police boys. The missionaries expressed doubts as to the effectiveness of this measure to keep the Europeans and Aborigines in check. Particularly as there did not seem any adequate controls over the actions of the police troopers. The only difference to the previous situation would be that the Aborigines were now shot down by the police instead of the settlers.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰Schwarz, "Report on Ill Treatment of Aborigines by Europeans" P.A. No 360 / 1884

¹⁹¹Annual Report, E.K., March, 1887

¹⁹²Kempe, Letter to the P.A., April 13, 1885, P.A. No 150 / 1885

This fear appeared justified in a subsequent accident at the mission station. Mounted Constable Wurmbrand had come to the mission seeking suspected cattle killers. Soon after this Wurmbrand arrested three suspects at Glen Helen and on his way back passed through the mission with the captives in chains. After he left the missionaries heard that all three suspects had been shot. On investigating they discovered the three bodies heaped together still in their chains. This made the trooper's excuse that they were attempting an escape seem highly inadequate for the severe action he had taken.¹⁹³

This incident resulted in a loud outcry and the newspapers as well as the Protector of Aborigines made enquiries into the matter. The initial indignation soon died down and no significant action was taken. Schulze concluded that it was not improbable for the police to be no more than an instrument in the hands of the settlers. If the settlers were aware of the real motives behind such actions then they ensured that they remained secret.¹⁹⁴ Kempe felt that if such actions continued then there would not be many 'blacks' left and it was apparent that this would please the settlers.¹⁹⁵

The conflict between the missionaries and settlers came to a head in 1890 after Schwarz had made a bitter attack against the actions of the whites in the Centre during a visit to Adelaide. The newspapers seized on these accusations and powerful interests favouring better treatment for the Aborigines became aroused. The settlers retaliated by protesting their innocence and at the same time showing the mission in a bad light. The missionaries use of corporal punishment and their attempts to prevent young girls from leaving the mission were some aspects

¹⁹³Schwarz, H.M.B., April 1885

¹⁹⁴Schulze, Quarterly Report 1885, E.K., Aug., 1885

¹⁹⁵Kempe, H.M.B., June, 1885

criticised by the settlers. Constable Willshire furthered the accusations against the mission by claiming it to be a haven for the worst cattle killers and vagabonds in the territory.¹⁹⁶

The Minister in charge of the area was no supporter of the mission and he unhesitatingly accepted the statements made by Willshire and the settlers. It seemed that the settlers' economic interests in the area were being threatened by the outcry created by the missionaries and the closing of the mission would remove this thorn in the settlers' sides. Gordon, the Minister for the Northern Territory, decided on a committee of enquiry, conveniently consisting of three civil servants. The missionaries protested against this decision claiming such an investigation would be biased against them. As a result of parliamentary pressure on the Minister the committee was re-constituted to make it more acceptable.

The subsequent enquiry concluded that both sides had been guilty of the respective charges. This was basically a negative finding dampening the whole situation and restoring peace between the factions by refusing to act against either. None of the recommendations were ever implemented apart from a decision to terminate the government subsidy to the mission after another two years. Although the findings of the committee proved unsatisfactory to the missionaries they were pleased that the government threat of closing the mission had been averted.¹⁹⁷ This threat of closure had proved an effective means of silencing the missionaries' criticisms and allowed the settlers to further their interests to the detriment of the Aborigines.

¹⁹⁶Hartwig, p.527

¹⁹⁷Kempe, H.M.B., Jan., 1891

The unsuccessful attempt by the missionaries to combat the adverse influence and pressures of the settler intrusion only added to their growing conviction that it was impossible to carry on a mission successfully. The Aborigines only interest seemed to be in their stomachs and there was no desire to listen to the Gospel. Even the few baptised Aborigines had succumbed to their old ways and run off to neaby stations. Schulze stated that the mission was no more than a hospital for the sick and a source of food in times of drought.¹⁹⁸ This was further aggravated by the settlers and police sending all the sick and infirm natives from their stations to the mission.

The increased white pressures in the area on the Aborigines and their resentment to this led to a number of punitive expeditions by police and settlers, which drove many Aborigines to the mission out of fear from the effects of the European firearms.¹⁹⁹ The missionaries concluded that there was no future of a mission among these people as their numbers were becoming less all the time. The number of births had decreased, sickness such as syphilis increased and apart from killing each other it seemed that the whites intended to ensure their extermination by unnatural means. A mission under these circumstances could do no more than dig the Aborigines' graves.²⁰⁰

Kempe summed up the missionaries feelings and the reasons for the failure of the mission in his report in 1891. According to his statement the situation was a repeat of the experiences of white penetration among indigenous peoples in other lands. Just as the American Indians, Pacific Islanders and Africans were disappearing before white colonization so were the Australian Aborigines.

¹⁹⁸Schulze, L.K., Oct., 1886

¹⁹⁹Kempe, H.M.B., Jan., 1891

²⁰⁰Kempe, H.M.B., Mar., 1890

They had little chance to resist these pressures because of their tribal state, which prevented any large scale resistance. In any case, resistance only helped to hasten their demise and this left them with little choice other than to submit to the intruders.²⁰¹

It was only a question of time before their imminent extinction and as a result a mission could hardly succeed. It could offer no more than a Good Samaritan service for those who remained and only a few made use of such a service. The majority appeared happy with their miserable situation and showed no desire for anything better. This posed a problem as to what the mission would teach those few willing to learn. Kempe decided it could only instruct them in the Gospel as worldly matters were no use to them. What was the use of educating the youths in reading and writing English? If they went to a station they would not be paid a penny more because of it. Educationally the youth may be equal to or above the white but he would have to be satisfied with his keep, clothes and a bit of tobacco.²⁰²

Kempe concluded it was impossible to implement the Hermannsburg ideas of missionizing because of the unavailability of suitable work for the Aborigines. As a result they were being continually kept by the mission and this problem became worse as the number of Christians increased. The missionaries had tried all in their power to overcome these difficulties and the land was suitable only for grazing but even this was not a profitable venture yet.²⁰³

The mission was also hindered by internal conflicts between the missionaries and colonists over the running of the station. The jealousies and discord between the two groups came to a head in 1882, when the communal aspects of mission life, such as the combined meals were discontinued. The situation was further strained when a number of colonists expressed a desire to

201

Kempe - Quarterly Report 1891, L.K., July 1891

202

Kempe - Quarterly Report 1891, L.K., July 1891

203

Ibid.,

further their own interests by running cattle for themselves.²⁰⁴ This was a problem which had plagued the Hermannsburg missionary efforts from their inception and had proved especially troublesome in Africa.

The missionaries' disillusionment was complete by 1890 - 1 as a result of their failure to realize their aims and the effects of draughts and disease, which took a heavy toll of their strength undermining their will to continue in the face of what seemed insurmountable difficulties. One by one they headed South to recover their health and never returned again. Kempe was the last to leave and on his departure the mission was continued for several years by some of the colonists. By this stage conditions on the mission were rapidly deteriorating and the adverse influences of a few European workers on the mission introduced the remaining Aborigines to such white habits as drinking and card playing.²⁰⁵

Hermannsburg in Germany had been incorporated into the State Church and this led the Lutheran communities in South Australia to withdraw their support for the mission on the Finke as they now regarded Hermannsburg as no longer being truly Lutheran.²⁰⁶ The new Director, Egmont Harms, could not support the mission on his own and missionary Warber was sent to Australia to sell the station and then move to India. The mission was offered for sale to a number of other denominations without success and it was eventually bought by a private group headed by Heidenreich. He in turn sold the mission to the Immanuel Synod, which had already acquired the mission at Kildipinna after Hermannsburg had abandoned it in 1875. The first missionaries sent to the Finke by the new owners of the mission found it to have degenerated to a deplorable

²⁰⁴Haccius, III, 376.

²⁰⁵Freiboth - Diary

²⁰⁶Wendebourg, p.20

state and most of the early missionaries work had been undone in the last few years when the colonists had been in charge of the mission.

After fifteen years of missionary effort the Hermannsburg missionaries at the Finke River had achieved little success in their original aims and despite a more promising environment they had failed almost as completely as their predecessors at Lake Kilalpaninna. With the closing of the mission at the Finke the Hermannsburg missionary efforts in Australia came to an end and the work they had pioneered was to be taken up by the Lutheran Churches in Australia.

From the outset the mission in Australia was plagued by administrative and financial problems. Unlike the earlier missions in Africa, which were largely self supporting and had been established without any outside help, the Australian venture required the support of the local Lutheran church. As a result of this situation the Hermannsburg Mission Society was forced to make an initial change in its normal policy by granting some control in the mission to the local church committee. The uncertain relationship which resulted from this dual involvement, wherein the Hermannsburg society provided the missionaries and colonists, while the local synods supplied the finance and equipment led to bitter feelings and conflict between the various groups. The relationship between the missionaries and the church mission committee became especially strained during the first missionary attempt at Kilalpaninna and was to be a contributing factor in the mission's eventual abandonment.

The already uneasy ties between the Hermannsburg Mission Society in Germany and the local synods were further weakened by differences in theological doctrines, such as Calvinism and the question of

CONCLUSION

The failure of the Hermannsburg missionary attempts in the Australian interior can be attributed to the culmination of a number of adverse factors, as well as the often unrealistic attitudes shown by the missionaries and the mission administration in attempting to implement their aims.

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The already uneasy ties between the Hermannsburg Mission Society in Germany and the local synods were further weakened by differences in theological doctrines, such as Chiliasm and the question of

Church Union.²⁰⁷ The matter was also aggravated by similar differences between the two local synods, which had formed a confessional union to provide joint support for the mission. These disputes added to the mistrust between the supporting synods and the Hermannsburg society; this was to provide the final impetus in the abandonment of both mission stations. At Killalpaninna it had been the break in the confessional union between the two local synods, which had forced Hermannsburg to discontinue its association with the mission and seek a new site; at the Finke River Mission the final break was caused by the South Australian Synod's objection to Hermannsburg's absorption into the state church.

The change in the Hermannsburg policy of being solely responsible for the support, establishment and administration of its overseas missions had been enforced in Australia by a lack of finance. In attempting to realize Louis Harm's original aim of spreading the mission to all parts of the globe the Society had overtaxed its resources and capabilities. This was particularly felt in Australia, which was Hermannsburg's most recent venture and to gain the necessary local support the Society had to compromise some of its normal policies. The pressures on the resources of the Mission Society resulting from its expanding missionary fields led to a serious shortage of personnel and aid to the Australian mission. This proved to be a serious handicap in the running of the mission stations and placed added strain on the existing personnel.

It would seem that these problems alone made the success of a mission in Australia very doubtful.

²⁰⁷The unification of the state church in Germany (Hannover) with the independent Lutheran Churches (such as Hermannsburg) created much conflict as it was seen in some circles (Particularly in some Aust. Synods) as destroying the true Lutheran Church.

The odds against success, however, were further augmented by the nature of the land and its indigenous inhabitants. In their attempts to cope with these two sets of difficulties the missionaries departed radically from the original Hermannsburg ideals.

The harsh nature of the land and the unfavourable climatic conditions made agriculture impossible at the mission stations. Yet cultivation of the land had been a vital feature of early Hermannsburg missionary plans. Not only was cultivation expected to make the station self supporting and relieve the financial burdens of its upkeep, but it was also expected to speed the process of Christianization by providing work for the indigenous peoples and keeping them on the mission under the influence of the missionaries. In this way it was hoped to gradually absorb them into a growing Christian community and allow them to provide for themselves.

The missionaries inability to implement this plan made their hopes of success unlikely. To try and become self supporting the missions took up cattle and sheep grazing, but this was never profitable enough to overcome the costs of running the mission. More importantly it failed to provide large scale employment for the Aborigines and most of the missionaries efforts to find suitable work for them failed. The missionaries felt a particular need to solve this problem in order to combat the Aborigines "nomadic nature". The course of the mission convinced them that it was impossible to establish an ideal Lutheran "Dorf", as a basis for spreading Christian culture and religion.

Their failure to establish a stable community and the fluctuations in Aboriginal attendances at the school and church services led the missionaries to alter or abandon other features of their original plan. As the mission progressed the emphasis changes from Christianizing the Aborigines and imparting to them the supposed benefits of European culture and civilization, to simple preaching of the Gospel.

According to the missionaries the Aborigines now had no future in the pattern of white settlement and this as well as their destructive ways convinced them that the Aborigines were rapidly becoming extinct. As a result they thought that they could do no more than provide a Christian burial.

The missionaries growing disillusionment because of these obstacles was increased by the nature and habits of the Aborigines, who they were trying to convert. As a result the missionaries readily convinced themselves that these people must be the most miserable and corrupted on earth and they failed to show any understanding for their traditional way of life. The missionaries subsequent attempts to alter this traditional existence without consideration for the significance of its ceremonies and customs was a totally unrealistic and uncompromising attitude.

This became most apparent in their belief that the Aborigines customs, ceremonies and whole way of life was evil and an example of their animalistic state. This led them to attack the integral features of the Aborigines life. A common example of this was the missionaries' prohibition of all Aboriginal ceremonies at both mission stations. Such attitudes and actions only resulted in bringing about increasing alienation and antagonism. Once the Aborigines realized that the missionaries main interest in their language and customs was to use these as weapons against them, they became progressively more unco-operative. The Aborigines indifference to the missionaries' teachings and sermons was understandable as they had little understanding or interest for the nebulous religious concepts they were supposed to absorb. The more the missionaries attempted to overcome these difficulties the more uncompromising their attitudes became and the greater was their disappointment at the lack of success.

The pattern of white settlement was another important factor in the failure of the missions. The Aborigines would have had little interest in remaining at the mission stations

if it had not been for the pressures of white settlement, which forced them to the missions as a last refuge from the European encroachment as well as supplying an alternative source of food to replace the decreasing natural game. This did solve the missionaries initial problems of attracting the Aborigines to the mission as the offer of Christianity provided little incentive.

At the same time, however, the impact of the growing number of settlers near the missions began to affect the already difficult task of carrying out successful missionary work. Not only did the early hostilities between Aborigines and settlers threaten the existence of the missions, as happened at Kilallpaninna, but the settlers attitudes and influences were seen as undermining the work of the mission. This was particularly apparent in the brutal treatment and indiscriminate killing of the Aborigines by the settlers and the practice of keeping Aboriginal women at their stations for the purpose of sexual intercourse. The missionaries resented the settlers luring away the Aboriginal youths and girls by offering them better food and clothes than the mission, without subjecting them to the pressures of accepting Christian religion.

This led to the missionaries outspoken criticism of the settler's behaviour towards the Aborigines. The resultant antagonism between these two groups was not alleviated by the Governments apparent greater concern for the economic interests of the settlers, rather than the welfare of the Aborigines and the success of the mission. In the few instances where the missionaries accusations against the settlers looked like arousing a public outcry, which might threaten their interests and hamper their efforts at expansion the Government exerted pressures on the mission to discontinue such actions. The prime example of this was the clash between the missionaries and settlers in the Centre in the 1890's. The committee of enquiry convened to investigate the matter returned and extremely negative finding,

which preserved the status quo and did nothing to relieve the injustices suffered by the Aborigines. The missionaries, were forced to accept these unsatisfactory findings and stop their accusations against the settlers, because of a threat to close the mission.

The Hermannsburg missionary attempts made little impression on the spiritual and social organization of the Aborigines they encountered. The preaching of the Gospel had little effect on changing any of the Aborigines customs and traditions. The only noticeable changes in their way of life occurred in relation to material aspects such as the procuring of European food and goods. The power of the elders remained firmly established and despite the missionaries attacks the traditional ceremonies and rituals were still carried out, even if they were transferred away from the mission. This created a false impression among the missionaries, who believed Christianity was having some success. Even the few baptised Aborigines still retained close links with their old ways and quickly succumbed to their previous un-christian habits. The Aborigines primarily looked on the missionaries as an exploitable factor in their efforts to survive under the new conditions created by the European pastoral settlement.

The majority of Aborigines came to realize that their main hope of avoiding extinction was to adapt to the pressures of European intrusion. A significant feature of this adaptation was the Aborigine's policy of exploiting the Europeans to compensate for the changes in their environment, which had been necessary for their survival. At the same time they sought to preserve their traditional way of life as much as possible under the new conditions created by the white settlement.

The missions by their very nature and through their need to have large numbers of Aborigines on the station to carry out their Christianizing aims became prime targets

for the parasitic exploitation which followed. This situation became progressively worse as the settlers forced the Aborigines from their stations; this applied particularly to the aged, sick and infirm. The missions became havens for the various groups of Aborigines, who had been forced to gather there as a result of the settler's pastoral expansion. All of these refugees had certain characteristics in common; a need for European food and goods resulting from the changes in their environment caused by the settler economy, and a strong resistance towards making any changes to their traditional way of life unless it was essential for their continued survival. It was the later reason which was mainly responsible for the Aborigines' disinterest and resentment towards the missionaries attempts to convert them to Christianity.

Despite the missions eventual failure they did play an important role in the pattern of European-Aboriginal interaction. The presence of the Hermannsburg missions provided opportunity for the Aborigines to adapt to the Europeans presence; not by capitulating to the missionaries attempts to Christianize them and alter their traditional ways for those of the Europeans, but rather by their exploitation of the missions as a means of preserving as much of their old ways as possible in face of the pressures created by the settler's expansion. It was this attitude by the Aborigines, who adapted the mission to suit their needs, which made the realization of the missionaries aims a hopeless one.

Under these circumstances the Hermannsburg missionary attempts were bound to fail in achieving any of the aims first envisaged by Louis Harms. It is difficult to imagine how any mission could have succeeded under such conditions. Although the Hermannsburg missionaries were forced to change and modify their original aims they could not overcome the obstacles presented by the land and its people; the basic Hermannsburg concept of establishing an agriculturally oriented,

Christian community as the basis of a successful mission proved to^{be} an elusive dream in the Australian interior.

Later missionary efforts in these areas were to be plagued by many of the same problems, which had beset the Hermannsburg ventures, and they proved just as unsuccessful in finding satisfactory solutions to the situation. As long as settler interests remained paramount and the Governments lethargy tended to ignore the Aborigines' position in face of the European expansion, let alone prevent the gross injustices they suffered as a result, then the missions with their limited resources had little hope of successfully assimilating the Aborigines to the European way of life let alone Christianizing them.

In the final analysis it appears that the settlers would have been quite happy to see the complete extinction of the Aborigines and it is somewhat ironical that the missionaries good intentions of averting this mainly took the form of attempting to destroy the Aborigines' traditional way of life, which was just as damaging in its long term effects as the settlers herds and bullets.

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