

Editorial

The overall theme in this issue, the first of 1997, is *reconciliation*. Dr John May's paper was written as an overview for a European audience. At the same time, it does underline for us Australians the need for us to recall the story of our interaction with Aboriginal people from the very beginning.

This is literally what Keren, the *Nelen Yubu* secretary, does in her usual column from her secretary's desk. She recalls the fact that Cook's very first landing was opposed and that the first interaction was marked by gunfire. I must say, this came as quite a shock to me. Somehow I had absorbed the myth that the first meeting was quite gentle, full of charming incongruities like the sailors' bewilderment at the cry of the kookaburra and the Aboriginal people's perplexity as to what to do with presents of clothes...

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Editor

ABORIGINAL RELIGION AND AUSTRALIAN CULTURE

John D 'Arcy May

There can be little doubt that the arrival of Europeans in Australia initiated 'the most severe culture clash in history' (Stockton, 1995:18). The tragedy that resulted was exacerbated by a fundamental misunderstanding: the utter inability of the colonists to grasp that the culture they were encountering, the way of life that had allowed the continent's original inhabitants to survive and thrive there for tens of thousands of years, had any human worth or integrity. Another way of saying the same thing, which will form the focus of the following reflections, is that the Europeans were incapable of recognising that Aboriginal culture could in any sense be termed 'religious'. We need have no illusions about the colonists' own attitudes to the Christian religion they brought with them, whether in its Anglican, Dissenting or Catholic versions, but even if it was honoured more in the breach than the observance, when their thoughts did turn to higher things this was the religious framework most of them shared. For these 19th century Christians, religion meant theism, the belief in the existence of a supreme being; or, for the more philosophical among them, its rationalistic 18th century derivative, deism. Either way, religion was at a comfortable abstract remove from the physical realities and the moral challenges of their unprecedented situation. Recoiling from what they saw on making first contact with the Aborigines, many doubted whether the dark shapes flitting through the bush were human at all; they were certainly devoid of anything resembling morality (there is ample documentary evidence for these views in Reynolds, 1989, and Harris, 1990). The resulting failure really to come to terms with the brute fact of Aboriginal existence suggests that 'first contact', in any lasting sense, is only now beginning to take place.

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The present century, in contrast, has been marked by an inability to agree on any definition of religion which would give scientific satisfaction to anthropologists or be of practical interest to a growing number of Australians (preliminary analysis of the 1991 census returns showed an increase in the number of those stating 'no religion', cf. Black, 1992). The implicit consensus about the irrelevance of all religion entails the implicit disqualification of *Aboriginal* religion from playing any part in the construction of a distinctively Australian culture and raises the question of whether Aboriginal culture can make any meaningful contribution to Australian life. The belated recognition that there is indeed such a thing as Aboriginal religion, which might have been liberating in the 19th century, turns out to be a liability in the 20th.

In consequence, we need to sort out the misunderstandings and ambiguities surrounding the use of the term 'religion' in Australian discourse about the Aborigines and in the wider but vaguer framework of the new multiculturalism (I) before we can proceed to show that Aboriginal religion is a surprisingly resilient reality which has an important gift to offer us 'new Australians', but at the price of posing a significant challenge to nascent Australian culture (II).

Our inherited problems in talking at all about Aboriginal 'religion' are complicated. In the eyes of many Australians — by no means only nor by any means all Aborigines — Christianity was morally discredited by the missionary destruction of Aboriginal culture.

At least indirectly, Christians sanctioned the physical destruction of individuals and tribes through disease and reprisals by invoking divine providence and resigning themselves to 'smoothing the dying pillow' of a doomed race. Neither of these matters is straightforward, however. The argument can just as well be made that the annihilation of cultures would have been even more complete if missionaries had not stood in the way of rapacious landowners and heartless bureaucrats and if they had not, often unwittingly, allowed Aboriginal people to preserve many of their ceremonies intact (many of the studies collected by Swain and Rose,

1988, illuminate different sides of the argument). There is much evidence of agonised and acrimonious debate, in which Christians were prominent, about the rights and wrongs of what the settlers and the police were doing in remote parts of the colonies and about the morality of Europeans' taking possession of the continent at all (documented by Reynolds, 1989). But a religion that could find reasons for acquiescing even partially in the tragedy of Australia's original inhabitants faces questions of credibility analogous to those posed by the Nazi Holocaust or *Shoah*. My surmise is that the 'drawing of the veil' over this chapter of our colonial history, what Stanner called 'the great Australian silence' about what really happened to the Aborigines, is at the subconscious root of Australian unease with the whole topic of religion. Religion meant Christian theism, and Christian theism failed both the moral and the intellectual test of encountering an alien culture.

If missionaries, by and large — even the 'mavericks' whose exceptional commitment to Aboriginal people stood out (cf. Stockton, 1988) — instinctively rejected Aboriginal culture at precisely the point where it could have been recognised as religious, anthropologists refused such recognition on different but not unrelated grounds. For the pioneers of the discipline such as Tylor and Frazer, the religion of 'primitive' peoples remained fixated at the childish stage of evolution and was more properly categorised as 'magic', the pseudoscience of which an infantile understanding of nature and its laws was alone capable. Durkheim, utilising the earliest first-hand reports of Aboriginal customs and ceremonies by Spencer and Gillen as raw material on which to test his theories of the origin of society, utterly failed to grasp that it was not society, but — in some non-derivative sense of the word — religion that was at the centre of Aboriginal culture. Though Durkheim's was 'the first attempt to take Aboriginal religion seriously', his insistence on the distinction between the spheres of 'sacred' and 'profane' led him to present Aboriginal religion as a function of Aboriginal society, thereby postponing for many years the fundamental insight that virtually the opposite is the case: 'one might almost say that society exists for the sake of religion rather than religion for the sake of society' (Charlesworth, 1984: 2-4). Malinowski's

functionalism, in the modified form of the structural-functionalism proposed by Australia's first professor of anthropology, Radcliffe-Brown, set the pattern for the scientific investigation of Aboriginal cultures in the first half of this century. This approach had the virtue of recognising that the myths of primal religion are not so much ontological statements as guides for action, enunciations of morality in the medium of story. It allows us to understand ritual as the mapping of social relations onto the cosmos, thereby giving a social determination to the laws of nature. The anthropologists' struggles to understand what they misleadingly termed 'totemism' and 'magic' eventually resulted in clarifications such as these. Whether or not this cognitive universe may be regarded as 'logical' or 'scientific' in European terms — and even this remains disputed — the language of myth, once located in the context of ritual, discloses worlds of intrinsic meaning which, in the words of the Berndts, provide 'charters for action' (cf. Swain, 1985:106-123). Or, to put it more plainly, Aboriginal culture 'worked': it enabled survival and unsuspected human richness where whites would perish uncomprehendingly in a matter of days.

Religiously sensitive anthropologists such as Strehlow, Elkin and Stanner were eventually able to transcend the Durkheimian premises of functionalism and to discern a non-theistic religion which, while vividly aware of transcendence and couched in terms of spirit beings, is primarily centred on Life, Land and Community as its pre-eminent *religious* values (Deakin, 1982:99, speaks of 'incipient transcendence' and describes the profound shamanistic experiences of Aboriginal 'men of high degree'). Elkin was prepared to speak of Aboriginal 'philosophy' and even 'theology', Stanner to use the word 'sacrament' of the Aboriginal relationship to the land and to decry the 'immemorial misdirection' of so much previous study. This epoch-making paradigm shift opened the way towards the realisation that Aboriginal religion flows through the physical landscape as the symbolic-sacramental point of contact with the deeds of ancestral beings whose emergence from what Stanner called the 'everywhen' of the Dreaming established the timeless Law and brought into being the present order of things. For their part, Australian Christian theologians are proposing that Christian faith can legitimately be

expressed in the media of Aboriginal culture and that Christian theology can be transposed with integrity into its categories. For both anthropologists and theologians there is of course a danger of unconsciously imposing Western religious concepts and predilections on an always incompletely understood Aboriginal culture. But after two centuries of fundamental misunderstandings and false starts, the conversation between Aboriginal religion and Australia's residually Christian culture, however hesitatingly, is getting under way in a secular context which is just beginning to have second thoughts about the comprehensiveness and definitiveness of its modernity. This just could be one of those rare points of historical transition at which the clash of cultures turns into dialogue.

II

That these are not just the inconsequential musings of anthropologists and theologians is shown by the decisive role both have played in moving the issue of Aboriginal land rights to the centre of political and legislative attention in recent years. On 3 June 1992, 'the day the Australian legal system came of age' (Brennan, 1993:22), a 'legal revolution' (Reynolds, 1992:185) took place when Eddie Mabo and others won their case in the High Court for title to their ancestral land in the Torres Strait Islands. This entailed legal recognition that they could substantiate their land's religious significance for them by citing 'Mabo's Law' (the story of the ancestral being in terms of which they expressed their claim, cf. Sharp, 1994). Thanks to the promptings of scholars such as Henry Reynolds (1992:179-183) and Frank Brennan (1991:128-147), the realisation is dawning that Australia lags far behind comparable New World democracies such as the United States, New Zealand and Canada in granting its native peoples a treaty formally recognising the relationship between coloniser and colonised and providing the basis for at least partial compensation of past injustices and title to at least some of their ancestral lands. The road to the legal watershed of Mabo has been long and hard, but it could not have been travelled at all unless Australian jurisprudence had gradually found ways to accept that the Aboriginal view of land has its own integrity, which

is essentially religious. The bizarre sideshow of Hugh Morgan's pseudo-theological defence of unrestricted mining rights only serves to underline the growing appreciation that there is no way around the religious dimension of Aboriginal culture, even for those who are prepared to misuse Christianity once again to legitimise the economic interests of white Australians (cf. Honner, 1986).

But there is more, much more at stake than this. For the rising curve of Aboriginal reinvigoration and resilience and the declining curve of Australian secular self-confidence are about to intersect. The 'lucky country', which had come to think of itself as the 'clever country', is recognising its need to become a 'wise country' (cf. Stockton, 1995: 169). In order to do this it is going to have to retrieve repressed memories and bring about 'first contact' at a psychological and an even deeper spiritual level. There was Aboriginal resistance to settlement, which showed how tenaciously the Aborigines were prepared to defend the land that was their life and the story of which is only now beginning to be told. Another forgotten story tells of the indispensable help, offered freely or under constraint by Aborigines, which allowed the first settlers and explorers to survive (both have been documented by Reynolds, 1982, 1990). There is much scope here for what the Anglican bishop Mark Santer, referring to the centuries-old British oppression of the Irish, called 'the reconciliation of memories'.

At a still deeper level, Aboriginal religion offers all Australians a spirituality, a special kind of self-transcendence achieved, not by renunciation and withdrawal, but through a relationship to the land itself. In order to appreciate this, Europeans have to move beyond the deeply ingrained Gnostic dualism that pits 'spirit' against 'matter', 'body' against 'soul'. We have to learn what might be characterised as a transcendence-through-immanence which does not shun but arises out of the exchange relationships which knit society together, and which maintains an intense preoccupation with the earth and its part in the rhythms of the group's daily life. It requires a considerable act of faith for Westerners to stake their existence on the principle that 'if the aesthetics are right, the economics will also be right' (Wendell Berry, quoted by Lilburne, 1989: 120). Australians

can have some inkling of this spirituality through Aboriginal art, whose aesthetic qualities have made it much sought after but which conceals levels of meaning known only to initiates. Having been largely excluded from formal education and often only able to communicate with whites in Kriol, Aboriginal communities throughout the Centre and the Top End have found traditional body, bark and rock painting, transposed to modern media such as acrylic and screen printing, the best language they have in which to express what the land really means to them (see Crumlin, 1991). 'Aborigines appear more adept at expressing themselves in painting rather than in words, when it comes to deeply felt convictions' (Stockton, 1995:95). Here again, of course, there is the danger that Aboriginal art, like the icons of the Eastern Church and the sacred art of medieval Europe before it, will be reduced by Western utilitarianism to mere decor, a suitable adornment for university administration blocks and the head offices of banks.

One of the most sensitive Aboriginal artists, Miriam Rose Ungunmerr (reprinted in Stockton, 1995:179-184) calls this spirituality *dadirri*, the ability to commune with the stillness of the bush and listen to the 'speaking land'. She describes a dimension of Aboriginal life which very few whites could have suspected, but which many now sense they need in order to find a foothold in our civilisation's frenetic rush of production and consumption. If this spirituality could be successfully appropriated, it would be the one distinctively indigenous element in an emerging Australian identity.

If such a gift could be given and received, it would mean that European and Asian Australians were entering into a dialogue worthy of the name with Aboriginal religion, thereby acknowledging at last its autonomy and antiquity. In doing so, we would simultaneously be in dialogue with the deepest layers of our own humanity. The 'metacosmic' or world-transcending soteriologies of the 'great' world religions can only survive in a sort of symbiosis with the 'cosmic' religion of the 'little' traditions from which most human beings draw spiritual nourishment and moral guidance in their real-life situations. Though the former may impose themselves on the latter with force or persuasion, they never entirely

eradicate them — or they do so at their own peril. Primal traditions such as those of the Australian Aborigines and the Native Americans are drawing ever more confidently on their ancient spiritual resources to offer resistance to the final dissolution of their core values. To the extent that they succeed, they are also offering us recent immigrants to their continents alternative ways of healing and wholeness.

For our part, we Westerners are only now, when it is almost too late, beginning to realise how crucial to our own survival is our relationship with the 'archaic other' (Mircea Eliade, cf. Tracy, 1991:52-59) of Aboriginal religion. The journey of discovery opened up by the encounter with primal traditions is in fact a rediscovery of the human self in all its dimensions, especially our interrelatedness with the other animals, the earth and the entire cosmos. We listen to the Aborigines' origin stories, which we had been inclined to dismiss as mere aetiological fairy tales, with a new understanding of their cosmic inclusiveness and uncanny wisdom. For too long, philosophy and theology approached primal traditions in search of 'beliefs', 'doctrines' and 'thoughts' worthy of intellectual comparison and, failing to find them, assumed that these traditions were merely exotic, of interest only to folklorists and museum curators. Now that the dangerous one-sidedness of scientific rationality as a comprehensive account of reality is being exposed by its effects — the rape of nature, the elimination of ethics from economics, the *anomie* of societies devoid of values — it is beginning to dawn on us, just at the point where primal cultures are in danger of being destroyed with other endangered species, that in despising and neglecting them we have been contributing to our own destruction.

But even this way of raising the problem is still couched in the language of Eurocentric cultural superiority, asking how *we* can make *use* of the resources put at *our* disposal by primal cultures. Aloysius Pieris of Sri Lanka has called this 'spiritual vandalism'. Having plundered the material and manpower resources of most of the rest of the world, Westerners are increasingly turning to primal cultures to fill the spiritual void at the heart of their own particular 'cargo cult', plundering them all over again for mythic symbols and

efficacious rituals which might restore our lost wholeness. The New Age movement has become a clearing house for quasi-religious practices ranging from neo-paganism to satanism as supposedly emancipated individuals coalesce into bewildering new patterns of association.

Cultures, however, like natural species, cannot be made to order, nor are they compatible with the calculus of economic rationality. Once destroyed, they are gone forever; once indigenous peoples are uprooted from their traditional environments, memory fades with terrifying rapidity. Within a decade or two of white settlement in parts of eastern Australia, Aboriginal people ceased to reproduce, and in Tasmania they were virtually exterminated. Perhaps the cruellest blow that could have been dealt to Aboriginal people was the forcible removal of children from their parents and of people from their tribal lands, because it deprived them of ritual contact with their Dreaming. On the other hand, the mobility and materialism of Western lifestyles has inspired a new freedom to experiment with traditional sources of meaning, supported by the largely urban ideology of 'Aboriginality' (Stockton, 1995:30 ff.). 'For it seems Aborigines today increasingly define Aboriginality in terms of *how* they relate to the land rather than *to which* lands they are related. Theirs is a *sense* of place rather than a *knowledge* of their specific site' (Swain, 1992:130).

Each culture, no matter how 'backward' or 'insignificant' it may appear in the eyes of Western-educated technocrats and 'developers', has an inalienable autonomy and integrity whose preservation poses a moral question, one that strikes at the heart of Western civilisation. But on its side Aboriginal culture has revealed an astonishing ability to adapt creatively to the trauma of contact, and we are now better able to understand that this is its *traditional* characteristic, not just an emergency measure to deal with modernity. Primal traditions, in fact, are almost infinitely adaptable, modifying and exchanging their myths and rituals to cater for new circumstances. Far from being a weakness, it is this capacity for change that has ensured their survival beneath the onslaught of evangelisation and industrialisation. Change is historically inevitable

and, if properly managed, beneficial, but each people has a right to undertake it on their own terms and at their own pace. Here, just as in natural selection among species, a principle of redundancy applies: culture, like nature, supplies a wealth of possibilities which far exceeds a rational assessment of needs at any given time, so that all conceivable contingencies of adaptation and innovation can eventually be met. But this takes time, more time than economic rationalists with their cost-benefit analyses and profit margins are normally willing to allow. It follows that the most precious thing we stole from the Aborigines was time, the time needed for first contact and developing dialogue, and in doing so we not only failed to appreciate but almost destroyed their unique sense of the time-beyond-time called the Dreaming, the 'everywhen' whence come all Life, the Land and the Law. Now, the time for addressing these morally and intellectually demanding questions is running out at an alarming rate.

But the change cannot afford to be one-sided. The appropriation by Westerners of the primal Other made manifest to them in Aboriginal culture can only take place in a genuine dialogue in which both partners recognise in each other forgotten and unsuspected evidence of their own possibilities. The Other is the other side of me, the side I repress and prefer to forget because facing it would be too painful a challenge: for Aborigines, adapting to the work ethic, industrial production and bureaucratic organisation; for Westerners, realising the closeness of our dependence on and affinity with 'nature' and rediscovering our relationship to Land and Life in the depths of our own psyche. Once brought into balance, this dynamic of reciprocal change could be a formula for Australia's future.

Borrowing the famous image of the Gentile olive branch grafted on to the Jewish tree from chapters 9-11 of St Paul's *Letter to the Romans*, Eugene Stockton says that 'each newcomer to Australia is grafted like a branch on to a living mature stock', the native gum tree of Aboriginal culture.

For the individual, grafting implies not only participating in the social, political and economic life of the nation, but also a deliberate effort,

a sort of spiritual conversion — what I have elsewhere described as ‘coming home to this land’. (Stockton, 1995:4)

‘The land itself’, he adds, ‘is the great unifier of all this human diversity,’ and he envisages ‘a time when a people will also be a race’, when all the ethnic stocks and cultural identities flow together to make something new in the world yet rooted in this particular land’s ancient traditions. In the words of Denis Edwards, we are all ‘in apprenticeship to the Aboriginal view of the land’ (Stockton, 1995:113). If this opportunity is lost, however, if what the whites call reconciliation and the Aborigines prefer to call ‘national healing’ is not accomplished, the impoverishment will be incalculable and there will be no basis for a *makarrata* or treaty. This would perpetuate the crime on which many suspect the nation was founded and which an earlier generation of historians tried to expunge from the national memory. Having lived in both Germany and Ireland, countries with traumatic memories of injustices both practised and suffered, I can confidently assert that it is ultimately impossible to erase such memories. A country’s culture *is* its memory, and if that country is to have a coherent identity the memory must be shared, which means that incompatible memories must be reconciled. Far from being an irrelevance or an optional extra, accepting the gift of Aboriginal religion will be the test of whether there is to be any such thing as a distinctively Australian culture.

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INSIDER-OUTSIDER OR IN-BETWEEN: REVIEWING OLD CATEGORIES

Gerard M Goldman

1. INTRODUCTION

Much has been written about the 'insider-outsider' (emic-etic) distinction that confronts all missionaries. The challenge of crossing culture and maintaining identity in difficult and changing circumstances is often the stuff of folklore and tall tales — just look at the modern Disney myth, Pocahontas! The globalisation and mobilisation of the world community in recent years continues to be phenomenal. Perhaps at no other stage in our history has the world community, including the churches, had to confront the issue of (multi-) cultural difference on a daily and ongoing basis. It is timely that we revisit these insider-outsider distinctions. Historically there appears to have been polarised views of insider-outsider: some saw the difference in cultures as unbridgeable — others claimed that it is possible to totally embrace a new culture. I believe that some (like those intimately involved in cross-cultural processes such as constructing local theologies) experience a more fluid and complex process than either of these positions. They experience *at times* a blurring of boundaries — what I call the '*in-between zone*'. This in-between state has been referred to as the interstitial zone where people try to explain their world to each other — they live on each other's threshold. There is a need to acknowledge and support those who are involved in this delicate and risky undertaking. Their work as 'theological midwives' and 'community builders' can help break down the walls of difference and indifference that often separate cultures and individuals from one another.

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This paper does not claim that the insider-outsider distinctions are no longer relevant to missionaries. In many ways the distinctions serve as sober reminders of the enormous tasks that confront the churches and larger community. We must acknowledge the fact that others are different from ourselves and that it is difficult to get to know another person's world view. However, this should not prevent people from trying to seek authentic relationship with those different from themselves. A contemporary missiological discourse on insider-outsider must address this tension of human difference and universal similarity. The development in recent years of 'cultural psychology' as well as the turn to the intersubjectivity of field-work in contemporary ethnography provides clues as to how missiology may be able to account for and respect human difference as well as recognise the human person as *self-in-relation*. A feminist theological anthropology serves to provide a healthy relational understanding of the human person. This relational understanding does not attempt to obliterate difference, it highlights the need for humans to develop an *empathic mutuality*: a quality that recognises both difference and the foundational connection that humans have with one another and creation. This is a much needed corrective to the modernist rationalist objective view of the human person. I believe that the modernist tendency for a detached rational objective view of the person has contributed to a possible dualistic understanding of insider-outsider. It may also reflect a gender bias in males to think in more exclusivistic categories, as against the feminists' relational, inclusive understanding of the person.

I believe the discussion on insider-outsider falls within the broader agenda of what Robert Schreiter (1996: 84-92) names, 'The Search for a Truly Universal Discourse'. I believe the movement towards universalism is unquenchable and fundamentally good; it is one of the grounds for the possibility of community with persons who are not 'just like us'. However, historically this movement has been used to 'mask the exercise of hegemonic power', it has 'suppressed discordant voices' and marginalised them, 'consigning them to the periphery of insignificance' (p.85). This danger of failing to attend to the reality of all peoples' lives, particularly those most marginalised

and powerless in our society, is inherent in any universalising theory. Schreier warns us that in order for a missiological universal discourse to steer clear of colonialism and imperialism it needs to develop a 'non-hegemonic construal of the other' (p.87). As such, missiology needs to assess how it accounts for difference — the need to articulate an anthropo-theological understanding of the human person becomes a matter of crucial importance (p. 89).

I will ground my position on insider-outsider by reflecting on two separate experiences I have had in the field of cross-cultural dialogue with indigenous peoples. The first will be a recent encounter I had with the Lakota peoples of South Dakota where I was present at a sacred *lowampí* ceremony. The insider-outsider distinction was appreciably 'bent' by what I and others experienced during that ceremony. Despite these experiences, it emerged how difficult it is to loosen the grip of modernists' objective rationalism — it is not easy to reshape the way we perceive the world. The second experience will refer to my fieldwork amongst the Murrinhpatha, an Aboriginal tribe in Northern Territory, Australia. This reflection intends to illustrate the relevance of this discussion to grassroots efforts at constructing local theology. In 1994 I completed a thesis on 'emerging models of inculturation' amongst some of the Murrinhpatha. I discovered that serious theologising was occurring without the knowledge of the expatriate church — it was a grassroots reflection that was longing for wider support and interest.¹

2. The Postmodern 'Turn to the Subject'

This brings us to the heart of our insider-outsider distinctions. We need to turn to the post-positivists (post-Enlightenment, postmodern) understanding of the subjectivity of the human person. This is despite some male postmodern theorists announcing the 'demise of the subject'. Feminists like Mary Ann Zimmer note with wry humour that these announcements are occurring 'just as the voices of women and peoples who have long been denied public voice have finally become speakers in the international conversation

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meaning but also as manifestations of my conscious life. I know that the same goes for you... In the community of space and time our experiences of each other are not only coordinated but also reciprocally determined by continuous cross-reference. I experience myself through you, and you experience yourself through me. (p.30)

This emphasis on *experience* is not meant to deny the need for and value of *observation*: it simply recognises the limitations of only using an observation approach. Schutz (p.34) refers to the underlying weakness in this approach when he states: 'As long as he (sic) remains a mere observer, he is not in a position to verify his interpretation of the Other's experiences by checking them against the Other's own subjective interpretations'. Sherk (1996:36) underscores this when in his essay on mission theory he states: 'Every analytical action is the interplay between the historian's mind and the historical situation being studied'.

David Daniels in his reply to James Okoye's, 'Annual Mission Lecture' at Catholic Theological Union, 10 February 1996, indicated one striking limitation of etic knowledge. He stated that it can be understood as only an 'approximation'; that is, etic knowledge can never fully capture the reality of the Other's subjective experience. I believe the closest we can enter into the Other's world view is through accepting invitations from the Other to participate (read: learn, listen, inter-act) with them in activities that are meaningful to them. Through being aware of our horizon throughout these encounters we begin to recognise both the biases that we bring to understanding the Other as well as an appreciation of the challenge that the Other's world view offers us. When both parties are attentive to their horizons then the possibility of authentic communication can occur. When joint participation in the life of each Other occurs, Schutz calls this the '*We-relation*', all persons are changed — the horizons of both parties are broadened — each gains a larger perspective of themselves and the Other. Schutz stresses this when he states:

My own experiences too, undergo a certain modification in the *We-relation*. And the same holds true for my partner [the Other]. Neither he nor I attend to our respective experiences without awareness of

the Other. I realise that my experiences interlock with his and necessarily refer to them. (p. 32)

Note that we rarely change our horizon completely, but that we are expected to change is implicit. The horizons of both parties becomes broader, resulting in an increased respect and insight into the reality of each other's world. (Cf. Schreiter 1985: 19)

3. The Personal Need to Account for Boundary Crossing Phenomenon: Lowampi Ceremony

I would like to refer to a recent experience I had at a Lakota *lowampi* ceremony, in which my preconceived understanding of spirit life became challenged and broadened. I believe this supports the subtle shifts that can occur when we participate in the life of the Other. It also describes some of the fluidity and porous nature of the insider-outsider distinctions.

During a recent field experience in South Dakota I was invited to a *lowampi* ceremony. This ceremony is performed by a medicine man and assistant. The aim of the ceremony is to restore healing to those in particular need. It can be for anyone in need of physical, emotional or spiritual healing. Usually, as was the case with this ceremony, there is someone in particular whom the ceremony mostly focuses on.

3.1 Description of the ceremony

Prior to the ceremony, most people had participated in a 'sweat lodge' earlier that afternoon as spiritual preparation. The sweat lodge is a purifying ritual, whereby people give of themselves in both prayer and pain, for the help of others. Whilst the sweat lodge ceremonies were being completed, the house that the *lowampi* ceremony was to be held at was undergoing considerable change. All areas that were allowing light into the house (like windows) were being systematically covered up. Items like televisions, video-recorders, microwave ovens, were all unplugged from their electrical sockets. Most furniture was removed outside of the house. Any objects that could move in the air were taken down. All shiny objects

were either covered up or placed in a closet. People had to remove watches, shiny belts, jewellery, etc.

It was well after dark when the medicine man and his assistant arrived unannounced. Not a word passed from their lips during the ceremony and post-ceremonial feast. They erected a small altar with tobacco ties and other religious Lakota objects. With the signal from the host, all lights were turned off. It was completely dark, I could not see my hand in front of my eyes.

The following description is based on what I *heard* and saw in the completely darkened room. I heard the sound of drums and rattles (which I had seen before the lights were turned off). I felt the floor thud at times, which I assume was the medicine man and assistant dancing. Then after what felt like a short time (maybe a few minutes), I saw flashes of red lights. I saw these four to five times over the duration of the ceremony. Later on in the ceremony, I saw flashes of white lights which were higher off the floor. I did not feel anything touch me.

3.2 What was happening to me during the ceremony?

When I first saw the red lights, I thought that somehow the medicine man or assistant was lighting matches or perhaps rubbing flint so as to create the light. After a while I began to doubt whether they would have the time to be able to do this — so many other things seem to be occurring at the same moments that I was seeing the lights — the sound of feet continually moving, the shaking of rattles, for instance. I was wondering whether others were seeing the lights — I felt both excited and perplexed at what I was seeing. The perplexion came from what I perceived as the unsatisfactory categories of my western reductionistic beliefs to explain what I was seeing.

It was only after the ceremony when listening to the non-Lakota participants talk about their experience of the ceremony that I began to realise the significance of my own experience. As I listened to others talk about the intensity of the prayer they had offered for the particular person in need, I found myself waiting to hear others mention the lights. After about ten people had spoken, I told the group that I had seen 'red lights', and was wondering whether anyone

else had seen them. I asked the Lakota host to explain what I had seen. Some women said they had also seen lights, these women were sitting in different locations to myself, and had seen these lights in different places to where I had seen them. They added that these lights were mostly white. The Lakota host said that the lights were 'healing spirits'. She was not surprised that I and others saw the lights.

A few others in the room said that they had felt the 'touch' of a presence like feathers during the ceremony. The Lakota again were not surprised — they named this as 'doctoring'. The person for whom the ceremony was held said she felt the 'touch of feathers' a number of times. Those others who felt the presence stated that they felt distinct touches across both sides of their face. They felt it could not have been accidental, as the touches did not awkwardly go across their eyes, nose or, mouth. All who felt the touch were women. They were sitting in different places in the room. No men claimed any experience similar to myself or the women. Two weeks later, I also heard from another woman, who had not spoken earlier. She told me that she also experienced a healing touch (across her thigh), of which only now was she realising the significance. What is the significance of only one male (myself) claiming any unusual experience during the ceremony? Can it mean that women have a greater receptivity for the extra-ordinary (non-rational) than men? Does this support the claim that there may be a gender bias of males in favour of strict insider-outsider categories?

3.3 The need to recognise our own bias

This experience directly impacts my understanding of the insider-outsider categories. My participation and subsequent experience in the *lowampi* has contributed to my having a more intimate appreciation of what this ceremony means for the Lakota. It also challenges the detached observer role that I implicitly have endorsed in the past. How does the rational observer role make sense of the account that some felt/experienced/saw something and others in the same time and place did not experience or see anything? This question is taken up in a marvellous manner by Edith Turner in her account of her experience as a 'doctor' in the paper, 'A Visible

Spirit Form in Zambia' (found in Young & Goulet, pp.71-95). I will quote at length her description of what she saw and felt in the *ihamba* healing ceremony of the Ndembu people of Zambia:

Suddenly Meru [the afflicted person] raised her arm, stretched it in liberation, and I saw with my own eyes a giant thing emerging out of the flesh of her back. It was a large grey blob about six inches across, opaque and something between solid and smoke.

I was amazed, delighted. I still laugh with glee at the realisation of having seen it, the *ihamba*, and so big! The grey thing was actually out there, visible, and you could see Singleton's [the main 'doctor'] hands working and scrabbling on the back. And then it was there no more. Singleton had whatever it was in his pouch, pressing it in with his other hand. The receiving can was ready; he transferred whatever it was into it and capped the castor oil leaf and bark lid over it. It was done.

But there was one more thing. Everybody knew that they had to go through one last formality, diving the afterbirth. 'If *ihamba* has not come out, shake. If it has come out, don't shake', said Singleton. Meru was quiet. At once there was a huge flash of lightning and a clap of thunder that exploded overhead. Meru sat up panting... [Singleton] held up his hands to us. 'See, I have nothing in them', he said. He squatted down and dredged for a long time in the bloody mixture [parts of Meru's back had been cut by Singleton]. At length he drew out an old tooth, a molar, of natural size with a dark root and one side sheared off as if by an axe. It was the *ihamba* — a tooth of the old dead hunter, Kashinakaji. (pp.83-4)

What is not captured in the above description by Turner is her earlier account of having to choose to enter fully into the ceremony in an emotional manner. Apparently it is vital that all those participating in the *ihamba* state the things they are still holding grudges about. The crowd was sensing that Turner was holding back something in herself. From her own account:

I gazed across the crowd at my translator. 'They want my words,' I thought. 'I want to participate so much. But how can I?' I was forced to accept the impossible and in accepting it, tears came into my eyes. My eyes stabbed with pain, and the tears came out.

Just then, through my tears. I could see Meru sway deeply, and everyone leaned forward. I realised along with them that the barriers

were breaking... It was a tangible feeling of breakthrough encompassing the entire group.

And then Meru fell! (p.83)

Turner's account challenges anthropologists and I believe all persons who are involved in cross-cultural endeavours, to acknowledge their own biases and prejudices. She believes that *honesty* becomes the critical factor when being subjected to experiences such as the one she described. She does not hide the fact that this can be distressing when it appears to repudiate her own christian horizon. In her paper she includes a paragraph from her field notes that captures this dilemma:

Writing this last passage is like wading through glue. Something is trying to stop me. The devil disguised as Christianity is furious that I have found him out. 'We are not ready for your universalisms,' he says. 'It is not time. Quick! Back to your old beliefs. You never saw a spirit.' (p.93)

What I am trying to present with the stories of my experience in South Dakota and Edith Turner's experience in Zambia is that there are significant moments when the emic-etic distinction becomes blurred. In the case of Turner, her holding onto grudges was making the situation for Meru critically dangerous (p.82). She had to fully enter into the ceremony. It was only when she began to participate as an 'insider' that the ceremony was able to continue. Likewise, my experience of the 'lights' during the *lowampi*, challenges my outsider categories of belief. I can choose to reduce these lights to some physics formula (this still does not account for the fact that others saw the lights, whilst most did not, and that the Lakota expect to see the lights) or I can accept that I experienced what the Lakota call the 'healing spirits'. If I trust and accept my experience (and the experience of others who saw them), then I believe I experienced what the Lakota have claimed for millennia. It is no longer then acceptable for me to continue to talk as a complete 'outsider' of Lakota culture and spiritual beliefs.

from the Territory Government. The missionaries have remained continuously ever since. The Murrinhpatha are one of the more fortunate Aboriginal tribes in Australia as they have never been removed from their land, and their claim to their traditional land is secure. The main source of hurt with the missionaries has been over the dormitory style accommodation and education that was imposed from the late '40s to mid '70s, as well as the condemnation of some of their initiation ceremonies and dances. All interviewed identified themselves as belonging to the Catholic church; included in the group of interviewees were church leaders.

4.2 Two components within Murrinhpatha contemporary theology

I would like to highlight two components that I found in the contemporary traditional theology of the Murrinhpatha. The most startling is the unique pre-contact visionary experience of a Murrinhpatha man, *Mulinthin*. The other feature is the evolving reflection on the spirit-being, *Nugemanh*. It was evident that the significance of these was being reclaimed and reworked. They were a genuine source of spiritual and cultural enlivenment. In every interview encounter, *Nugemanh* or *Mulinthin* was referred to. The Murrinhpatha discussion on these was often in the christian context of explaining their perception of God's active presence in their culture; as such *Mulinthin's* vision and *Nugemanh* were viewed as an affirmation of their culture and people. I will briefly outline *Mulinthin's* vision and what is understood by the spirit-being, *Nugemanh*.

4.2.1 *Mulinthin's* vision

The following is a brief description of *Mulinthin's* vision:³

Mulinthin was very sick. He was lying down alone at Kudantiga while family members were out hunting and gathering foods. A brown hawk descended and cried out. At that point *Mulinthin* went into a trance. He then had a vision and everything went misty. The hawk and *Mulinthin* ascended. He came to a beautiful place where he saw a woman. The woman had a dark complexion but did not have Aboriginal features. She was treading on a snake. The woman was

called 'mother' and 'boss lady'. He was given new songs which were called *Malgarrin*. With the new songs he returned to where he lay. At that point the trance was over. It is claimed that Mulinthin's face and hair were shining, 'he was radiant all over'. As people returned from hunting they could not recognise him at first. He called the people together and sang them the new songs.

Previous to this experience Mulinthin was a murderer, he was a *'kidney-fat man'*. The kidney-fat operation was the most feared in the area. Unsuspecting persons (usually enemies) would be 'operated on', that is their kidneys would be taken out (unknown to the victims) and they would die 'mysteriously' a few days later. The fat was believed to have great power and magical qualities. After the vision experience, Mulinthin completely changed his life. He never murdered again and is remembered as a very caring person. He encouraged members of his tribe to cease murdering and adopt his new way of living; he advised them 'something good will happen'. Word of the story went throughout the Murrinhpatha. Referring to the impact of Mulinthin's vision on the tribe Wurrngit notes:

Old Murrinhpatha people had a big change from being violent to other people — stealing wives and all that — when old Mulinthin had that vision... From that generation ... they are really caring people.

The vision story reaches its climax when the first missionary priest arrives some time after the vision. He presents a print or statue of Mary to a gathering of the Murrinhpatha. Mulinthin was amongst the crowd and exclaims that this was the woman of his vision, From that moment, Mulinthin's vision appears to have been ingrained in the christian spiritual identity of the Murrinhpatha. Since then there are numerous stories of healing and unexplainable phenomena that have been associated with the site at Kudantiga. It has become part of the Murrinhpatha's religious belief.

4.2.2 *Nugemanh: pre-eminent spirit-being*

The pre-contact visionary experience of Mulinthin and the subsequent interpretation and meaning applied to it finds a correlative in the traditional spirit-being, Nugemanh. Nugemanh is described by the renowned anthropologist, W E H Stanner (1966:161) as: 'The most eminent of the pure spirits'.⁴ Stanner

thought Nugemanh was 'comparatively unimportant' as he could find no myth or association with any religious ritual. He did note however, that Nugemanh was often petitioned to provide food, and was claimed to be responsible for sending down good children (p. 162). Among all the spirit-beings, Nugemanh alone was supposed to be 'true man', that is, distinct from the beings of *The Dreaming* who were somehow unified with the animal world (p. 162).

The above description of Nugemanh has remained largely unaltered — it generally parallels those given to me in 1993. Those interviewed identified Nugemanh as the equivalent of the missionaries' 'God the Father'. They were insistent that they had always had this concept of a caring, beneficent being. This is concordant with Stanner who said that the old people to whom he spoke (in 1963) grew 'impatient with any suggestion that they had been influenced by the example of christian prayer'. (p.162) I found a similar response on my field-trip.

One prominent woman remembers her grandfather declaring that when the missionaries spoke of God the Father they were: 'Talking about the same God that I worshipped for many years in this country. This is the same God that we worship. No different.' She added: 'I was a little girl then. I never forget this.' She later recalls her grandfather talking to Nugemanh: "I know he's there." He came back with lots of food. Always used to pray — talk to Nugemanh.' It appears that when the first missionary priest (Fr Docherty msc) spoke on the power of Jesus the people thought he was talking about Nugemanh. The same woman speaks directly on this matter:

He [Fr Docherty] might have talked about that, but they didn't see it that way. You get me? They thought he was talking about Nugemanh — the same person. Nugemanh had all the Jesus power.

When I questioned another person, Chula, about the power of his sacred sites (dreaming sites), he quickly pointed out: 'Country — dreaming site has power. We didn't make the dreaming sites — only power from Nugemanh.'

4.3 Early missionaries and the exercise of cultural and theological hegemonic power

The cultural and religious imperialism that both past and present missionaries have towards the Murrinhpatha is evident from the lack of attention they have given to the Murrinhpatha vision and belief in Nugemanh. Most of the missionaries were unable to accept the invitation from the Murrinhpatha to listen and learn from them about *their christian religious beliefs* and other cultural beliefs. The missionaries were the product of a racist and colonial society — unable to shed the cultural and religious superiority they felt towards the Murrinhpatha. They saw no blurring of boundaries between insider and outsider! Anthony Gittins (1989) writing from the context of cross-cultural mission refers to the categories of insider-outsider as that of 'host' and 'stranger' respectively. For him, the proper role of the missionary is to assume the role of the stranger-outsider (cf. Gittins 1994, p.167). This is a radical reversal to the policy we are examining where the missionary despite being out of his/her own place would still assume the role of host. Those who belonged to that place and culture would be viewed as the stranger! Whilst I am presenting that there is a need for some to go beyond the 'stranger-host' categories, Gittins' analysis is a worthwhile correction to the cultural hegemony that some missionaries have historically operated from. His categories are evident in the missionary policies of indoctrination and assimilation that were thrust upon the Murrinhpatha and Aborigines throughout Australia.

4.3.1 *The impact of cultural and theological hegemony on an emerging local theology*

The missionaries dealt harshly with beliefs and rituals they felt were against church teaching. Some believed the missionaries thought the Murrinhpatha cultural beliefs and traditions were evil and had to be destroyed. Stanner (1966: 149) indicates that there was 'persistent pressure by the missionaries to put an end to all pagan ceremonies'. Referring to the severity of this pressure to extinguish the men's ceremonial life, Stanner observed:

The pressure to bend before a new, single authority against which there was no appeal, were too insistent to be resisted except by a common front for which the men had no genius. (p.149)

The tirade against Murrinhpatha belief and ritual has significantly contributed to the Mulinthin story becoming a private, secret possession of the Murrinhpatha for close to half a century. It is a similar plight regarding 'Nugemanh'. The missionaries have succeeded in the title 'Nugemanh' not being used in church. The people now use the missionaries preferred title, 'Yile Neki', which literally translates as 'Our Father'. However this has not hindered the essence of Nugemanh being passed down to the younger generations. The Murrinhpatha now tell their children they knew about 'Yile Neki' long before the missionaries came!

It is perhaps their unusual pre-contact religious experiences that has prevented them from giving up completely on the church. In an unusual way, the church, as outsiders, has helped the Murrinhpatha make sense of their insider story, Mulinthin's vision, and perhaps even Nugemanh. Sadly, the missionaries have mostly been oblivious to the theological movement within the insider-outsider domains. They have so far failed to recognise the profound opportunity for conversion and relationship that Mulinthin's vision offers everyone. This failure to attend to the Murrinhpatha's experience threatens to maintain an irrelevant and increasingly alienating theology. It results in the insider-outsider distinctions becoming polarised categories — both become truly strangers to each other.

4.3.2 The personal costs of birthing a local theology

Those interviewed were happy to be given an opportunity to talk. It was as if they longed to be in conversation and relationship with someone outside of their culture who could affirm and support them in their theologising. This willingness to talk about their spiritual beliefs with me may be akin to David Daniels' observation that the educated person (like the theological midwife) is often seen as very powerful and as such can have a significant role. Whilst at the time of my interviews I had no role in the Murrinhpatha parish, I had previously taught in the church's local school and worked in their church's alcohol recovery program. Daniels observed that by

participating in the Other's life the educated person (powerful) empowers people to talk about their own experiences — when relationships are authentic they challenge both parties to understand each other on each person's own terms. When this occurs we are no longer completely stranger to one another — we have moved temporarily into the in-between zone.

The in-between zone is dangerous territory for both parties. Whilst each may experience the pressures differently there is considerable common ground⁵. Both can no longer rely only on their normal categories of thought and world view to explain their reality. Each needs to learn new language and concepts in order to understand a little more about each other's horizon. The risk of misunderstanding and abuse of trust are potential costs of this endeavour. Other costs include the loneliness of the journey into the in-between zone, and the knowledge that one's culture never can fully capture the full reality of life — there is always something new being discovered in the process of the in-between.

5. Conclusion

This paper has endeavoured to throw the spotlight back onto the cosy distinction of insider-outsider. Whilst never proposing that we cast these terms aside — we have seen the need for missiological discourse to recognise some of the limits that emanate from a motionless understanding of these roles. We need to recognise the person as self-in-relation. If we accept that we are fundamentally relational persons then it is necessary that we both accept and give invitations to participate in each other's life: it is only through sharing common experiences that we truly begin to learn about each other. It is impossible continually to live on the threshold of each other's experience: we need significant moments of 'time-out'. Whilst these moments of breaking through are necessarily brief, they are often tiring and destabilising for those who undergo them. As such, those involved in this require significant periods of time and space to enable a mature reflection on what was experienced.

The need to recognise the in-between zone has particular relevance for those involved in leadership positions in the churches. All over the world we are increasingly living in cross-cultural and

multicultural environments. Reflection and meditation on the complexity and fluidity of insider-outsider has the potential to be a powerful resource for community building projects like constructing local theologies. We can no longer allow a universalising discourse to ignore the voices of those who are powerless and marginalised. The insider-outsider conversation requires the gifts of mutual empathy, receptivity, openness and trust — it takes both time and grace for these to come about. Mistakes and hurts are likely to occur. We need to be reminded again that we are venturing into sacred territory when we dare to move beneath the reality of difference. Whilst most will not participate in this process — all will be impacted — our churches and communities will be enriched.

Endnotes

¹This field-trip occurred in October, 1993. I had earlier worked amongst the Murinhpatha from 1984-86 and 1988-90 as well as visiting again in 1992.

²This field-trip was an integral component of a thesis I was writing at the time on possible models of inculturation. The title of the thesis became, 'A Theology of Personal Integration: The Interrelationship of Three Contemporary Traditions in the Daly River Area, Northern Territory, Australia: Traditional Aboriginal, Christian, and the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous'.

³This is a condensed version of one given to Eugene Stockton in 1985 and those given to me in October 1993. Cf. Eugene D Stockton, 'Mulinthin's Dream', *Nelen Yubu*, 22, 1985, 3-5.

⁴Cf. W E H Stanner, *On Aboriginal Religion*, p. 161. Stanner notes that 'pure spirits' were quite distinct from culture heroes: these heroes were identified as 'persons with fathers' and were called 'clan spirits'. The 'pure spirits' were 'persons without fathers', they existed by their own power.

⁵Even the labels used against both parties from those belonging to each cultural group look alike. Aborigines that are interested in working with non-Aborigines are frequently called 'coconuts' by fellow Aborigines — meaning black on the outside, but white on

the inside. Non-Aborigines who take a deep interest in Aborigines are often called 'black happy' or 'gone native' by fellow expatriates.

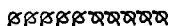
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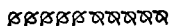
BULLETIN BOARD

We feature the three following items sent to us by *Nelen Yubu* subscribers:

■ From **Bishop Tony Nichols** came a report, received a little late, on the funeral of the Revd Aringari Wurrarama who died in 1996 on Groote Eylandt. He was the rector of Angurugu and a former student of Nungalingya College, Darwin. Tony was invited, together with Bishops Richard Appleby, Clyde Wood and Arthur Malcolm to attend the funeral. His report was a comprehensive and soulful description of the passing of this much loved Anglican pastor, and we quote in part: 'Gumbuli Wurrarama, the older brother and senior minister in Arnhem Land, was the *first Aboriginal to be ordained priest in Australia* (in 1973). He spoke to us all that night with great dignity and authority, reminding the Groote people of the gospel of the Lord that his younger brother had served. He also gave direction for the funeral — at what point cultural practices would operate, at what point they could wail, and how (after the coffin was in church) he wanted peace and joy to prevail as we heard Jesus' promises concerning the resurrection.' Aringari's wife, Gayangwa, had been a quiet and devoted partner in her husband's work.

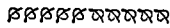


■ Word from **Fr Peter Carrucan**, parish priest of the Holy Eucharist Parish at St Albans South, Victoria, is that his parish is employing an SCC (Small Christian Communities) Co-ordinator along the *Lumko* lines. The parish is to be congratulated on this progressive step. Peter took part in the 1990 Lumko course at Kincumber, NSW.



■ We thank the **Revd David Thompson** for a copy of the Newsheet of Wontulp-Bi-Buya, the Queensland branch of Nungalingya College.

His impressive editorial on Reconciliation points out, 'There are great riches in the diversity of people and cultures on this planet. There is unity too — anthropologically speaking, it is incorrect to talk about 'races', for all the people on this earth belong to one race, the human race.' David also states that 'Both-ways' education draws on both the wisdom of indigenous knowledge and experience, and the innovations of western knowledge and experience.



■ The Australian MSC Province is planning to hold a **Provincial Missions Conference** in April this year, 14th–20th. Every MSC working in a 'missions' context has been invited to attend the week-long meeting, plus some other members of the congregation whose work or background relates to 'missions' activity.

As people will be coming from Japan, Papua New Guinea and the Central Pacific, it was decided that the best central location would be in the Cairns area. The conference site will be a place called Genazzano, an hour's drive from Cairns on the Atherton Tableland. It is expected that the participants will number between 60 and 80.

The overall themes will be inculturation and missiology in the post-Vatican II and post-modern world. One would hope for a good mixture of theoetical and practical discussion.

Please note that in *Nelen Yubu* No.64 (1996/3) we mistakenly attributed the opening article 'To Serve the Church: episcopal ordination at Broome' to Fr Noel McMaster CSsR (who *does* write for us from time to time), and not to its real author, namely, Fr Matt Digges, parish priest of Bidyadanga, formerly known as La Grange.

We offer apologies to all concerned.

— Editor

From the Secretary's Desk. . .

When a very small child my mother took our family of four on an educational ferry trip from Brighton-le-Sands beach near Rockdale, to Kurnell across Botany Bay. It was an exciting day for us children, and we were all seasick on the way back!

Early in 1997 I returned to Kurnell, for only my second visit to the birthplace of Australia, no less exciting and still full of history and timeworn cliffs and crags between which the plucky little *Endeavour* had swept through the heads, now known as Capes Banks and Solander — only 227 years ago. Despite carefully mown lawns and nurtured trees, the National Park has managed to retain its ancient atmosphere; as I knelt to caress a bright green plant barely an inch high, I felt the thrill that botanist Dr Banks must have had when he found hitherto unknown species of shrubs, grasses, and extraordinary animals and birds in this strange new land.

It's a sobering experience in these days to roam across the headland in a southerly buster, to 'feel' the little vessel

awkwardly nudging the entrance to an unknown 'harbour.' Anxious eyes were watching from the very spot where I now stood, dark men full of fear, spears held tensely while the ship edged its way round to the beach and anchored in the lee of a small hill. Captain Cook didn't know how lucky he was not to have run aground. The bay was not the magnificent harbour he had envisaged, but a silted waterway full of sandbanks with only a shallow channel leading towards the spot where he had anchored.

The first step taken on the shore is quaintly recorded on a weathered rock in the bay, approachable at low tide, the inscription partly indecipherable:

"According to Tradition in the Cook Family Midshipman Isaac Smith (cousin of the wife of James Cook RN) afterwards Admiral of the British Fleet was the first Englishman to land on this rock and on the shore of New South Wales, April 29th 1770."

Close by that landfall, on a bronze plaque, is an account of their reception:

The following brief extracts relating to the Landing of Captain Cook and his party on the rock opposite this tablet are taken from the original MS Journal of Sir Joseph Banks in the

Mitchell Library, Sydney: The journal records that:

"The natives resolutely disputed the landing, although they were but two, and we thirty or forty at least."

Parlying with these two continued for about a quarter of an hour. *"They remained resolute so a musket was fired over them, the effect of which was that the youngest of the two dropped the bundle of lances on the rock . . ."*

He however snatched them up again and both renewed their threats and opposition. A musket loaded with small shot was now fired at the eldest of the two who was about 40 yards from the boat. It struck him on the legs but he minded it very little, so another was immediately fired at him, on this he ran up to the house and soon returned with a shield. In the meantime we had landed on the rock."

Several "lances" were immediately thrown and fell among the party. This caused two further discharges of small shot, when, after throwing another lance, the natives fled. [I recount it exactly as it is written. KC]

What a sad beginning to our association with the original inhabitants of this beautiful south land! A sorry story that even yet has not been rectified.

An important feature at Kurnell is the location of the first creek of fresh water, now apparently dry but with tall

green reeds growing from its bed. An engraving on a rock beside the stream explains:

From this Small Stream Captain Cook took water for His Ship 'Endeavour' which entered the Heads 28th April 1770.

And again, on the front of the obelisk we read:

Extract from Captain Cook's Journal. Saturday 28th April, A.D. 1770. At day break we discovered a Bay, and anchored under the south shore, about two miles within the entrance, in six fathoms water, the south point bearing S.E, and the north point East. Latitude 34°S. Longitude 208°W.

And another, a sad reminder, was to be found by the shore, facing where the city of Sydney now stands, a dignified monument beside a flagpole, bearing the tribute:

Forby Sutherland a Seaman on the Endeavour under Captain Cook, the first British Subject to die in Australia was buried here.

1st May (Log date)

2nd May calendar date. 1770.

R. A. H. S.

The suburb of Sutherland on the Illawarra Line was named for him.

One thing that struck me was the abundance of untouched oysters on the rocks along the shore, until I discovered that

there is a \$500 fine for taking them, or any other shellfish or marine life.

On our way home, regretfully leaving this place dedicated to all Australians, we saw groups of happy children going home from school: some Islanders, some Aborigines, all laughing and playing happily together in this very young country that we all share. It was heartening to see

their carefree enjoyment in one another's company. It was also deeply touching, as we rounded a bend in the road, to come across a group of their companions, little white Australians running to greet and mingle with them in unaffected friendship, all without a care in the world; no barriers.

If only . . .

Secretary Keren

STOP PRESS

Soon after our visit to Kurnell we noticed that the Korowal people of La Perouse are lodging a claim for quite a few hectares of land on the northern headland of Botany Bay. The claim covers the beaches and foreshore up to Malabar, and includes the present golf course. They plan to preserve the flora and fauna, and actively preserve the memory of the Dreamtime.

In much the same area a separate group has been working for some ten years towards an 'Aboriginal Theme Park'.

about human life, its meaning, and politics' (in O'Hara Graft, pp. 15-6). We need to heed the warning that Schutz gave us in 1962:

The safeguarding of the subjective point of view is the only (but) sufficient guarantee that the world of social reality will not be replaced by a fictional non-existing world constructed by the scientific observer. (p.8)

2.1 Intersubjectivity — shared common experiences

Recent discussions within anthropology about the intersubjectivity of ethnography serves to highlight the need to recognise our horizon. Contemporary challenges to ethnographic work recognises that ethnographic data is 'produced or created in the context of social, dialogical interactions between ethnographer and informant'. For Schutz, 'The very assumption of the existence of the Other...introduces the dimension of intersubjectivity' (p. 20). At another place he notes:

It is not my environment nor your environment nor even the two added; it is an intersubjective world within reach of our common experience. In this common experience the intersubjective character of the world in general both originates and is continuously confirmed. (p.31)

As such the ethnographer cannot be understood as a 'dehumanised machine' that simply records data (Goulet, p.19). This is why Victor Turner late in his work 'called for a new processual anthropology based not on structuralism but on experience. He argued that ethnography is founded on participation in *shared common experiences*.' (Goulet & Young, p.319. Cf. Schutz, p.33)

This has implications for the missionary or any persons who find themselves in insider-outsider tension. The most effective way that we come to enter the Other's world view is through *participation* in the life of the Other. When we experience the Other in a common sector of time and space a 'genuine simultaneity of our two streams of consciousness' occurs (Schutz, p.23). This is expanded on by Schutz in the following reflection.

As I look at you [the Other] in the community of space and time I have direct evidence that you are oriented to me, that is, that you experience what I say and do, not only in an objective context of

4. The Missiological Need to Account for Difference: A Case Study on Constructing Local Theology

The above experience of the Lakota *lowampi* ceremony as well as Edith Turner's description of her experience in the Ndembu *ihamba* serve as signposts of what some are called to enter into: this is the in-between zone where a rational objective understanding of what confronts us no longer satisfies our hearts and mind (cf. Turner, p.92). What is the significance of this for those who are involved in working with communities who are attempting to construct their local theology? I believe that the same process of receptivity to the unknown (Other) that is evident in the above descriptions is also required of those who attempt to be 'midwives' for communities who are developing local theologies. To illustrate this I will refer to a field-trip I had amongst the Murrinhpatha tribe, in the Northern Territory of Australia in October 1993.²

4.1 Murrinhpatha field-trip

The field-trip centred on interviewing Aborigines about their religious beliefs. I had known all those interviewed from my previous time in the area (1984-86, 1988-90). Each interview was with one individual and lasted between one and three hours. All interviews were recorded (except for two separate occasions where I was asked to briefly turn the tape-recorder off) and transcribed. Interviews were in English.

I was not expecting the responses of the Murrinhpatha. I was told things that I had not previously heard during my time there. A number mentioned that they were happy to be given the chance to talk about these matters which they are very rarely asked about. All were most cooperative and helpful. This case study helps to identify clearly how churches can fail to listen adequately and respond to the other's reality. This discomfort with difference, based on an imperialistic and colonialistic view of the other, is the cornerstone of a rigid adaptation of insider-outsider categories.

The history of 'contact' with the Murrinhpatha is relatively very recent. It began in 1935 when Roman Catholic missionaries arrived at Wadeye, the land of the Murrinhpatha, at the invitation