

Abstract The Mission of Angelo Confalonieri

Angelo Confalonieri was born on June 13, 1813 in Riva del Garda, in what was then the southern part of Austrian Tyrol, and had gone to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Cobourg peninsula, in the remote north western cape of Western Australia, from 1846 to 1848, when he died. His missionary activities, aimed at establishing a relationship with the natives grounded on integration, on the knowledge of their language and on the study of their religious beliefs, are a paradigmatic example of active mutual acculturation and show how many pattern of these activities have been appropriated creatively by the Indigenous as part of Indigenous identity and practice. We have extraordinary documents which attest that: his letters, preserved in the Propaganda Fide Archives in the Vatican City, and two drafts of a bilingual themed phrasebook in a local indigenous language and English. We propose a linguistic and anthropological analysis of these documents and of the informations they give about the changes which occurs concerning the material culture and the way of life of the Indigenous, who adapted creatively many of the habits proposed by the missionary. Moreover, the parallel analysis of the language and of the ways of life of the Indigenous people in the Cobourg peninsula in our times shows how the experience of Confalonieri as reflected in the phrasebooks and letters resonates strongly with present-day cross-cultural experiences.