

### European Missions in Contact Zones: Transformation through Interaction in a (Post-)Colonial World

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Judith Becker (ed.)

# European Missions in Contact Zones

Transformation through Interaction in a  
(Post-)Colonial World



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(Post-)Colonial World

Edited by  
Judith Becker

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of Education  
and Research

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# Table of Contents

Judith Becker	
Introduction: European Missions in Contact Zones.	
Transformation Through Interaction in a (Post-)Colonial World .....	7

## I. GENERAL

Jeffrey Cox	
Global Christianity in the Contact Zone .....	27

## II. CONTACT ZONES IN TIME AND SPACE

Mrinalini Sebastian	
Localised Cosmopolitanism and Globalised Faith: Echoes of »Native« Voices in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Missionary Documents .....	47

Judith Becker	
Liberated by Christ: Evangelical Missionaries and Slavery in Nineteenth-Century South India .....	65

Andreas Nehring	
Politics and Meditation: Christian Missions and Theravada Buddhist Reform in Nineteenth-Century Burma .....	87

Katharina Stornig	
Cultural Conceptions of Purity and Pollution: Childbirth and Midwifery in a New Guinean Catholic Mission, 1896–c. 1930 .....	107

Felicity Jenz	
Reporting from the Religious Contact Zone: Missionaries and Anthropologists in Nineteenth-Century Australia .....	125

Stefan Rinke	
A State Within a State? The »Jesuit State in Paraguay« and Eurocentric Constructions of Space .....	143

### III. IMAGINED CONTACT ZONES

Sabine Hübner

To Sigh before God: Prayer in the Eighteenth-Century Lutheran Mission in Tamil Nadu .....	157
--	-----

Peter James Yoder

»Temples in the Hearts of Heathens«: Post-Contact Developments in August Hermann Francke's Theological Language .....	179
--	-----

Michael Sievernich

Comparing Ancient and Native Customs: Joseph-François Lafitau and the »sauvages américains« .....	195
--	-----

### IV. »PERSONALISED« CONTACT ZONES

Thoralf Klein

How to be a Contact Zone: The Missionary Karl Gützlaff between Nationalism, Transnationalism and Transculturalism, 1827–1851 .....	219
---	-----

Rosemary Seton

Close Encounters, Racial Tensions: The Church of Scotland Mission in Calcutta [Kolkata], India .....	239
---	-----

Andreas Köller

One's Own Concept Challenged: Renegotiations of the Concept of the »Missionary« in the Age of Decolonisation and Ecumenism .....	251
---	-----

Heather J. Sharkey

The Case of Henry Athanassian, an Armenian in the Suez Canal Zone: Questioning Assumptions about Missions and Missionaries .....	267
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Brian Stanley

Afterword: Conversations with Contact Zones .....	287
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List of Contributors .....	291
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Judith Becker

## Introduction

### European Missions in Contact Zones. Transformation Through Interaction in a (Post-)Colonial World

What happens when people of different cultural, religious, political, and social backgrounds live in close contact with each other? This question has been at the centre of postcolonial studies for some years. While earlier approaches focused on the gap between colonisers and colonised and on the impact of hierarchies, newer studies underline the meaning of close cohabitation and cooperation for both sides in the contact, without leaving aside the hierarchical difference, which was indeed an important factor in the encounter. This volume discusses what living in a contact zone meant and how concepts and practices were changed due to life in this contact zone.

This change could consist of an intensification of former convictions and attitudes, a modification of the »hierarchy of values«,<sup>1</sup> an abandonment of certain concepts or practices or the adoption of new ones. Furthermore, it could also mean the emergence of new concepts or practices when missionary and indigenous approaches were merged.<sup>2</sup> This for instance has been shown in new songs that unite indigenous and Western traditions.<sup>3</sup> Another example would be the Christmas *seni*, the traditional cooking of pigs on hot stones underground (earthen oven) in West Papua. Traditionally, the *seni* was practiced at important transition festivals, particularly at festivals of

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- 1 Cf. e.g. Helmut THOME, Wertewandel in Europa aus der Sicht der empirischen Sozialforschung, in: Hans JOAS/Klaus WIEGANDT (ed.), *Die kulturellen Werte Europas*, Frankfurt <sup>5</sup>2010, pp. 386–443; Hans JOAS, *Die Entstehung der Werte*, Frankfurt am Main 1999; Kerstin ARMBORST-WEIHS/Judith BECKER, Wertewandel und Geschichtsbewusstsein – Überlegungen zur historischen Untersuchung einer Wechselbeziehung, in: *Jahrbuch für Europäische Geschichte* 12 (2011), pp. 153–178; Karl-Heinz HILLMANN, Zur Wertewandelforschung: Einführung, Übersicht und Ausblick, in: Georg W. OESTERDIEKHOF/Norbert JEGELKA (ed.), *Werte und Wertewandel in westlichen Gesellschaften. Resultate und Perspektiven der Sozialwissenschaften*, Opladen 2001, pp. 15–39; Karl-Heinz HILLMANN, Wertewandel. Ursachen, Tendenzen, Folgen, Würzburg 2003; Helmut KLAGES/Hans-Jürgen HIPPLER/Willi HERBERT (ed.), *Werte und Wandel. Ergebnisse und Methoden einer Forschungstradition*, Frankfurt a.M./New York 1992; Hans JOAS/Klaus WIEGANDT (ed.), *Die kulturellen Werte Europas*, Frankfurt <sup>5</sup>2010.
  - 2 On this approach see Judith BECKER, *Conversio* im Wandel. Basler Missionare zwischen Europa und Südindien und die Ausbildung einer Kontaktreligiosität, 1834–1860, Göttingen 2015, pp. 22–33 and 663–682.
  - 3 See e.g. Jeffrey COX, Sing Unto the Lord a New Song. Transcending the Western/Indigenous Binary in Punjabi Christian Hymnody, in: Judith BECKER/Brian STANLEY (ed.), *Europe as the Other. External Perspectives on European Christianity*, Göttingen 2014, pp. 149–163.

friendship between communities. When the first missionary came to the region in the early 1960s, he initially celebrated Christmas alone. After some years, the missionary's wife baked Christmas cookies. Two years later, before a significant amount of conversions had yet taken place, the missionaries pondered how to celebrate Christmas adequately with their Papua friends. They decided to give a *seni*. They bought some pigs. On Christmas morning, to their great surprise, they saw people from all neighbouring villages bring pigs to their place and prepare earthen ovens. They celebrated Christmas 1968 with 500 people and 40 pigs.<sup>4</sup> It was not only the missionaries inventing a new Christmas tradition but also the Papua adopting and appropriating it to their culture, from a family celebration to a community party, from cookies to *seni*. By and by, the traditional festivals of friendship such as the *seni*'s »setting in life« were transferred to the Christian Christmas season.

The Christmas celebration with *seni* is now an integral part of Christianity in this region. The *seni* has not been transferred back to Germany, not least because of German laws, although some missionaries did celebrate *seni* with German congregations, too, albeit not at Christmas. They thus aimed to make the community between Papua and German Christians visible and enjoyable in a way perceptible to the senses.

Several concepts have been developed that describe processes and results of intercultural encounters. Homi K. Bhabha speaks of a »third space« and an *au-delà*, Mary Louise Pratt of »contact zones«.<sup>5</sup> Others, like Richard Price, have described the phenomenon without framing their concepts in theoretical terms.<sup>6</sup> They all agree that the times of a simple polarity that constituted the basis of Edward Said's *Orientalism* are over.<sup>7</sup> Even though those studies made an important political and academic impact, it is now necessary to show the interrelatedness of all parties in cultural encounters, the entanglement and also the outcomes that shaped both sides.

This has also become an issue in many approaches to a *New Imperial History*.<sup>8</sup> The impact of the empire on the metropole has come to the fore of research as have similarities, parallels and mutual influences. Richard Price, for instance, describes experiences missionaries had with the Xhosa in South Africa and their impact on developments of religiosity and humanitarianism

4 Siegfried ZÖLLNER, *Vergessene Welt. Erste Begegnungen mit den Yali im Bergland von West-Papua*, [Düsseldorf] 2013, pp. 248–251.

5 Homi K. BHABHA, *The Location of Culture*, London/New York 1994; Mary Louise PRATT, *Imperial Eyes. Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London/New York 2008.

6 Richard PRICE, *Making Empire. Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa*, Cambridge/New York 2008.

7 Edward W. SAID, *Orientalism*, London 1978. Cf. also Frantz FANON, *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York 1967; id., *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York 1963.

8 See e.g. the overview in Stephen HOWE, Introduction. *New Imperial Histories*, in: Id. (ed.), *The New Imperial Histories Reader*, London 2010, pp. 1–20.

in England.<sup>9</sup> Gauri Viswanathan relates attitudes towards conversion in Victorian England and India and illuminates similar structures and developments and discussions about the definition of »Englishness« that were based on experiences in India as well as in England.<sup>10</sup>

Dipesh Chakrabarty has called to »provincialise Europe«.<sup>11</sup> European values, attitudes and concepts should no longer form the basis of research. Different concepts of time, of religion, of politics should be presented side by side. In many respects, this postulate is even more difficult to fulfil than the attempt to illuminate interrelationships. This may be one of the reasons why few studies have so far heeded Chakrabarty's call. Still, it is an important voice in the discourse on historical studies in postcolonial times. Even more influential was his observation that many colonisers (and missionaries) said (and maybe believed) that they wanted the »Others« to become equal but that they were »not yet« ready for full equality or responsibility.

Homi K. Bhabha offers a model of interpretation that combines life experiences in different countries. In many respects, it is based on his experience as a literary scholar from an Indian minority who has spent most of his professional life in Europe and North America.<sup>12</sup> In his approach, the cultural encounter mainly takes place within a person or a group of persons that migrate or are colonised. It is a concept centred on political experiences and the arts, on imagination and personal digestion of intercultural experiences. He describes the creative relation of cultures and experiences as taking place in a »third space«.<sup>13</sup> In many of his examples, the »third space« really is an *au-delà* – another of his principal terms –, is not of this world. With regard to colonial encounters, Bhabha asserts that they often produced hybridity and mimicry. In this way, he, like Pratt, focuses on the results of the encounter. Hybridity and mimicry are, however, mostly found on the part of the colonised or missionised people. These concepts are more difficult to apply to missionaries and colonisers.

Mary Louise Pratt's concept of »contact zones« uses a different approach. It seems particularly helpful for research on the impact of intercultural cohabitation in two respects: A first aspect is that it stresses the significance of actual cohabitation, of its terms, place and time, the political and cultural

9 PRICE, *Making Empire*. See Stephen HOWE (ed.), *The New Imperial Histories Reader*, London 2010.

10 Gauri VISWANATHAN, *Outside the fold. Conversion, Modernity, and Belief*, Princeton, NJ 1998.

11 Dipesh CHAKRABARTY, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial thought and historical difference*, Princeton, NJ 2000; Dipesh CHAKRABARTY, *Provincializing Europe: Postcoloniality and the Critique of History*, in: Stephen HOWE (ed.), *The New Imperial Histories Reader*, London/New York 2010, pp. 55–71.

12 See also Wolfgang REINHARD, *Postkoloniale Intellektuellendiaspora*, in: Peter BURSHEL (ed.), *Intellektuelle im Exil*, Göttingen 2011, pp. 89–112.

13 BHABHA, *The Location of Culture*.

situation. The contact does not only or mainly take place in an *au-delà* but in real, historical situations. It is not so much about what happens when people live *between* different cultures and try to integrate them in their life as what happens when people of different cultures *meet* and begin to interact.

However, we feel that the concept has to be broadened in two directions in order to comprehend the different kinds of contact and of contact zones that were relevant to the historical protagonists.<sup>14</sup> Besides the actual contact between people living together in a particular place, a second contact zone was important to most missionary communities: the contact zone between Christians living in Europe and those living abroad. This was mainly an imagined contact zone but it was maintained by people travelling between the countries, by letters and reports, by gifts such as books but also in the form of material goods deemed necessary, and by mutual intercession and the belief in an invisible community of saints in which all believers were united. The last point was of vital interest to the missionaries and their supporters in Europe, as Sabine Hübner tells us in this volume. It was this believed unity of the Church and all believers that made them leave their countries and begin to evangelise. And it was this believed unity that they invoked in their letters to and from Europe. When the unity was central to their faith and their life, even those who remained in Europe became open to integrating new ideas and practices they learnt in the contact zones, as Peter James Yoder demonstrates by the example of August Hermann Francke.

The third aspect of the contact zone was a »personalised contact zone«. Several contributions to this volume demonstrate how one person became a kind of contact zone in him- or herself by integrating aspects of different cultures in their life. They sometimes represented one culture to one group and another to the other – or were assumed to do so. These were cultural brokers who facilitated the contact but that often had to pay personally for their interaction, especially when they were not considered to be European, such as Henry Athanasian, whose case Heather J. Sharkey presents in this volume and Mary Pigot from Calcutta, whose story is told by Rosemary Seton. The third cultural broker in this volume, Karl Gützlaff, of whom Thoralf Klein tells us, was indisputably European by birth. He was much less attacked than the other two, although in each of the former cases the attacks only arose when Athanasian and Pigot came into conflict with comparatively recently-arrived Europeans, that is, with people who had not yet adapted to the contact zone and perhaps had no desire to do so. They decried those who formed links between cultures and people.

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14 The term »contact zone« is placed in quotation marks when it refers to the theoretical concept and left without quotation marks when used to describe places (in a broad sense) where people of different backgrounds met.

The volume is arranged in three sections according to the different kinds of contact zones. In some cases, the allocation of the chapters to the sections could be questioned because the articles deal with different kinds of contact zones at once. They appear here under the heading that seems most pertinent to their overall argument. Most contributions to this volume deal with the first, the Prattian, kind of contact zone, where interaction occurred in a specific space and at a specific time. This is partly due to the scope defined by the invitation to the conference but it also mirrors the aspect that is not only most important to Pratt but also the case for which the concept is most important and can bring most new results.

Some chapters point to limits of Pratt's concept, above all Thoralf Klein's on Karl Gützlauff who was entangled in so many contact zones and crossed so many borders that »transculturalism« seems a term more appropriate to his person than the reference to contact zones. The chapter by Andreas Köller on concepts of mission and missionary in the early postcolonial period also suggests limits to the use of the concept of contact zones. When treating the clash of different theoretical concepts (even when they are founded in the practice of individuals), other concepts may be more helpful, for instance Homi K. Bhabha's »third space«, which relies more on imagination and mental accommodation to different cultures.

A second important point of the concept of »contact zones« is that it focuses on developments in the contact zones as well as the results of the encounter. With its assumption of the emergence of new ideas, concepts, and practices, it allows for the transgression of the boundaries between European and non-European, coloniser and colonised. Most interesting for our topic are the conclusions Pratt draws from her concept. She bases it on the linguistic discourse about »contact languages«, new creole languages that emerge where people of different languages interact. The contact perspective can show »how subjects get constituted in and by their relations to each other«.<sup>15</sup> It is this perspective on interrelations that makes Pratt's concept valuable to historical studies. They can illustrate the variety of interactions and connections that took place in one contact zone, and with the perspective on hierarchical differences, they can show how definitions of hierarchy changed according to different perspectives. The same person or group of persons could, at the same time, be higher-ranking and subordinate, depending on the actual interaction and the other persons he or she was in contact with. Still, above all, the concept, as we understand it, focuses on the results of the encounter in contact zones,

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15 PRATT, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 8.

on individuals and groups of people, because it presupposes that all actors changed in the contact. These modifications and the newly emerging concepts, actions or attitudes are at the centre of this volume.

As we define it in this volume, the term »contact zone« does not necessarily imply the concept of (geographically or otherwise) defined cultures that are clearly delimited and can be distinguished from each other. Rather, cases like that of West Papua mentioned above, where European missionaries met people who had never seen a white person before, were very rare. And even there, the missionaries found that some of the villages had already heard about Christianity. On the other side, too, the missionaries did not come from a monolithic, clearly delimited culture, but their culture and religion had developed and was continually developing in contact with other cultures and religions. Culture itself – just like religion – is a fluid concept and must not be falsely essentialised as an entity.

Thirdly, Mary Louise Pratt developed her concept of »contact zones« with a thorough postcolonial (and present political) critique in mind. She defines them as »social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination«.<sup>16</sup> In her book, she is most interested in hierarchical relationships between Europeans and non-Europeans in colonial situations.

When this volume studies European missions in contact zones, hierarchy necessarily is one of the parameters. Several chapters ask how indigenous voices can be found in missionaries' writings and thus refer to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's question: *Can the subaltern speak?*<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the book focuses on the relationship between missionaries, indigenous people and other Europeans. It therefore discusses the idea that living in a contact zone changes both (or: all) parties involved and that something new can emerge from the encounter. By looking at contact zones from different angles, at different times and in different parts of the world, this volume examines the informative value of the concept. The unifying point of comparison is the focus on European missions in non-European countries.

Missionaries were among those Western people who lived in closest contact with indigenous people, sometimes under the same roof. In most instances these missionaries were trying to do what they perceived as best for their »neighbours«. How the indigenous people reacted to this, and if they appreciated the missionaries' paternalism, is a different question. Contacts between the two, in any case, were manifold and multifaceted, and they included more or less hierarchical relationships between missionaries and

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16 PRATT, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 7.

17 Gayatri Chakravorty SPIVAK, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, in: Rosalind C. MORRIS (ed.), *Reflections on the History of an Idea. Can the Subaltern Speak?*, New York 2010, pp. 21–78.

(future) converts, servants, indigenous language teachers, non-Christian assistants, and schoolteachers. But they also included – albeit less often – non-hierarchical relationships with indigenous clergy. Moreover, the missionaries came into close contact with missionaries and church members from other Western proveniences and, as a matter of course, with those serving at different levels of political authority. In the course of these encounters, conceptions and attitudes of missionaries and those considered the missionised changed and new ideas and practices evolved.

Two main angles of approach have to be included: the perspective of the Europeans, and that of the non-Europeans. It would not be proper to assume that, for instance, the missionaries were responsible for »giving« and indigenous individuals or groups were simply passively »receiving«. The volume presupposes that both sides gave and received. Yet changes can best be studied against the background of particular views and opinions people had before the encounter. This is still true for those missionaries who left Europe in the twentieth century when missionary organisations had already been well established and for those missionaries involved in the developing theology of missions in the 1960s and 1970s. These more recent individuals also held forms of »orientalist« or romanticist views, which they had to modify once they encountered the »Other«. Therefore, most articles focus on one side or the other.

Furthermore, due to both political and social as well as theological and religious modifications, the kinds of contact altered over the time. The interplay between politics and missionary encounters as well as religious attitudes and theological convictions have to be included in the analysis. Missions in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries differed considerably from those during the age of high imperialism, and these differed even more in contrast to evangelisation after independence, when mission often came in the guise of social and developmental work. Just as important as the external situation, however, were the personalities and attitudes of the individuals involved.

Therefore, this volume asks the following questions: How did concepts, attitudes and practices change when European missionaries lived in contact zones with non-Europeans? What emerged from these encounters that was new? What and how did missionaries report back to Europe, thus maybe creating an imagined contact zone and modifying European perceptions as well? And how did hierarchies play out in the contact zones, thus enabling or preventing people from living a contact life? The integration of new approaches and the active use of new ideas (of both sides) are central to this question.

Jeffrey Cox begins with some general reflections on the concept and mission historiography. He gives an overview of the history of mission historiography



as it relates to postcolonial studies and discusses different approaches, their advantages and their drawbacks with regard to the question how and to what extent they illuminate the agency of the different parties involved in the contact, above all missionaries and missionised. At the same time, Cox tests several of the terms introduced by Pratt as to their applicability to mission studies. While many studies of the colonial era focussed on the missionaries, postcolonial studies of mission history can be divided into different categories: Some concentrate on »indigenous« Christianity, meaning Christian practices and theology as they were appropriated by indigenous people. The role of the missionaries is eclipsed in these studies. A subgroup coming from a different angle are those studies that concentrate entirely on indigenous agency. Others try to vindicate the missionaries by »narratives of anti-conquest«, focussing on the positive intentions and those parts of the outcome of the encounter that were positive to the indigenous people. Even authors who explicitly try to overcome binaries, such as the Comaroffs or Catherine Hall, tend to reinforce binarism, thus Cox. He thus demonstrates the complexity of mission situations and the resulting challenges to mission studies. Cox finds several of Pratt's terms helpful for the study of mission history, besides the »contact zones« and »narratives of anti-conquest« above all »transculturation«.

The first section deals with contact zones as places where people of different cultures and different social backgrounds met. They all focus on the interaction that happened when people lived or worked together and analyse the outcome of the encounter for one or more sides. They demonstrate how concepts, attitudes and practices changed in the encounter and how new ideas emerged.

Mrinalini Sebastian focusses on indigenous agency in the missionary encounter. She describes missionaries and Indians alike as mediators and as those who were transformed in the contact. Sebastian gives three examples: She draws our attention to botanical knowledge about India that was spread in Europe not only in academic works but also in school textbooks and the information of which relied on a cooperation between European missionary amateur botanists and Indian doctors and Brahmins. She then analyses conversations between Halle missionaries and Indians as reported in the *Hallesche Berichte* as examples of negotiations about religion and religiosity, particularly conversion and the underlying theological and anthropological conceptions and social backgrounds. Sebastian underlines that in the published conversations readers can also find the voices of marginalised people. She sees the conversations as a product of the contact zone where both sides could add to the discourse: The Indians introduced a sense that religious



claims do not necessarily imply the denegation of other beliefs while the missionaries offered a worldview that implied equality even to marginalised persons. Sebastian's third example shows how a Dalit woman who had converted to Christianity tried to improve her social status. With these examples, the chapter illuminates the mutual transformation that took place in Indian contact zones.

The chapter written by Judith Becker shows the transformations Basel missionaries underwent in the first half of the nineteenth century in India. Becker asks how arguments that were used in the antislavery discourse and based on experiences in Africa and the Caribbean were transferred to the Indian context. She underlines that, to the Basel missionaries, slavery was both a religious and a humanitarian problem. They tied it directly to spiritual slavery. With respect to India, Becker describes the interpretation as developing in four steps: In the beginning, the missionaries interpreted what they saw in India in terms of their European awakened concepts: Indians lived in the bondage of sin and Satan. Then, they reported primarily about their teachings of liberation and their hope for the Indians. Freedom and equality were at the centre of their teaching at the time. The third phase was marked by a return to the notion of bondage, this time, however, with regard to particular Indian practices, social conditions and Hindu doctrines. Freedom then meant, according to the missionaries, freedom of choice and behaviour, commitment. In the fourth period, belief in the agency of the Devil and his binding power became more and more important to the missionaries because they believed that they encountered the Devil in certain Hindu practices. In this process, they developed a »contact religiosity«. In two case studies, Becker narrates how the missionaries Hermann Gundert and Herrmann Mögling changed their views on physical slavery due to their encounter with Indian slaves, with Gundert becoming more and more disenchanted by the former slaves whom he had at first held in very high esteem as model Christians and Mögling becoming interested in slaves only late in life and thinking more highly of them after getting to know them better. Becker demonstrates how life in the contact zone fleshed out the missionaries' conceptions of bondage, liberation and freedom and how their system of values and their religious notions changed due to the contact experiences.

Andreas Nehring investigates the impact of Christian Mission on Buddhist meditation concepts and practices. He finds transculturation processes in Theravada Buddhist meditation practice and philosophy due to the encounter with Western mission and illuminates how the concept of mindfulness that is very popular today was developed as a response to Christian missions. According to Nehring, the focus on the agency of Buddhists in the encounter can help to overcome the binaries that influenced Said's and other concepts of colonialism. In an overview over the political history of

Burma in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the interaction between Europeans and Burmese, Nehring illustrates the appropriation and transculturation of European concepts and techniques by Burmese, notably in the case of King Mindon. At the same time, religious reforms took place in Burmese Buddhism, and meditation was one of their centres. It was an old tradition that had been fallen into neglect by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Nehring discusses the connection between the introduction of Christian concepts of the future, particularly eschatology, and Buddhist eschatology. In the Buddhist view, secular decline hastens the coming of the next Buddha and is therefore not necessarily negative. The interpretation of Western influences as accelerating the decline was therefore at the centre of many discourses. Meditation became a central practice of dealing with contingency. Nehring thus illuminates an indirect but nevertheless strongly felt influence of European missionaries rather than a direct one.

Catholic missionary nuns in New Guinea and the reactions of New Guinean women are at the centre of Katharina Stornig's contribution. She demonstrates how conceptions of purity and pollution changed due to their interaction in the contact zone. In New Guinea, childbirth was considered to be polluting, which is why indigenous men and women were not allowed to assist women in labour. For Catholic nuns up to 1936, assistance was prohibited, too, because they were meant to stay pure. In both cases, conceptions of purity and pollution, though they were very differently founded, impeded help. In 1930, nuns petitioned the mission's headquarters to be allowed to assist at least in difficult cases. Stornig asks why conservative Catholic nuns tried to change a doctrine that was central to female Catholic orders. She answers by describing experiences in New Guinea and changing conceptions in Germany. Stornig explains that, because of the taboo, other women kept a distance from mothers in New Guinea. Even for some time after the birth, the social and spatial isolation of mother and child continued. The practice resulted in relatively high death rates among newborn children. When the first Catholic priests arrived in this area in 1896, they furthered the deployment of female missionaries who would be able to approach mothers and children. At the same time, in Germany, obstetrics and maternal and child health care became increasingly professionalised. In some mission areas, the training of nuns as midwives began. For the indigenous women, visits by nuns changed the practice and experience of childbirth. The nuns also soon became involved in childcare, a practice that had previously also been forbidden, due to Catholic ideas of purity. Stornig demonstrates the impact of life in the contact zones on the modifications in concepts around childbirth.

Felicity Jensz contrasts anthropologists' and missionaries' reports about and attitudes towards Indigenous Australians in the nineteenth century.

Jensz investigates how life in Australian contact zones shaped the concepts of religion of missionaries and anthropologists. European missionaries used descriptions of Australian religions to prove the »degradation« of indigenous people and to emphasise their duty to »raise« them. Many anthropologists, in contrast, concentrated on a supposedly religious »essence« of the indigenous. They were not interested in changing the Australians, their view of whom was static. They were often highly critical of missionaries, not only because they suspected the latter of spoiling the indigenous culture but also because they accused them of projecting their own notion of God onto indigenous religion and therefore not to be reliable. Today, these early anthropologists are being criticised by their successors for projecting their own concepts onto the Australians, too. Jensz demonstrates how indigenous Australians adapted Christian teaching to their own views, gave »autoethnographic« descriptions and explained their own religion to missionaries. Missionaries and indigenous people came to know each other and their respective religious teachings better and began to discuss them, and the missionaries also reported the indigenous Australians discussing Christianity with each other, but without being impressed. Rather, they gave the missionaries dismissive responses when the latter tried to evangelise. Jensz interprets mission reports as offering »glimpses into the religious contact zones« while underlining the tactical goals of the publications.

The focus of Stefan Rinke's contribution is on early modern Jesuit missions in Paraguay and political implications of life in the contact zone. It is one of two articles dealing with the experiences of early European Catholic missions in their encounters with American societies. Rinke draws the attention to the processes of translation and transculturation and asks if and how concepts of social and religious life changed in the encounter. He shows how Jesuits and indigenous Americans formed a community against Spanish settlers and how the Jesuits resettled several thousand people in new »missions«. The Jesuits aimed at Christianising and »civilising« the Guaraní among whom they worked. Therefore, they founded reductions. A strict hierarchy between missionaries and Guaraní was observed with the missionaries controlling the converts' lives and having an entirely negative opinion of the indigenous people. Still, they cherished the ideal of mutual love and trust between missionary and missionised. They did adapt certain Guaraní interests, above all in music and visual arts, and learnt local languages in order to translate the catechism. In this respect, they were progressive. And the Guaraní were inventive in appropriating European objects and customs, as Rinke shows. In the end, the »Jesuit State« was dissolved after the Jesuits had been expelled from the Spanish colonies. Rinke relates this to the success of the interactions in the Jesuit contact zones in Latin America that had »produced new forms of

social life«. <sup>18</sup> The Jesuits seemed, to outside observers, to be building a state of their own. It seems that life in the contact zone had become so successful that it was perceived as dangerous to the Catholic Church and the Spanish Empire.

The second section focusses on »imagined contact zones« as those perceived by missionaries, supporters and converts and maintained in the exchange of information and goods. This does not mean that the whole world became one contact zone (which would make the term useless) but that in the minds of a certain group of Christians, the actually existing contact zone was broadened to encompass an imagined community which included people of the same faith in the mission area and in Europe.

Sabine Hübner examines changing concepts of prayer in the eighteenth-century Tamil Nadu mission. Prayer was an important aspect of Christian (and Hindu) religiosity and therefore central to mission endeavours and, accordingly, in mission reports. Through intercession, Christians in Europe and in India felt united and built one community, one imagined contact zone. In the contact zone in India, missionaries and Indians negotiated the right kind of prayer, in the contact zone between India and Europe, they explained this to their European audience. Hübner distinguishes between an »intensive« contact zone in India and an »extensive« one that included other parts of the world. <sup>19</sup> August Hermann Francke, the central founding figure of the Tamil Nadu mission, taught that it was central to prayer that it came from the heart. Public prayer became also a mission method. The missionaries thought they could detect the state of conversion of Indians in their prayers. Heartfelt prayers were meant to go along with strong emotions, often with tears. Hübner demonstrates how a new form of Christian prayer evolved in the contact zone when European Christian and Indian Hindu concepts met. The missionaries expected detailed »heartfelt« prayers, the Hindus did not want to use many words or open their hearts in public. They rather used formulaic, repetitive prayers, which stood in direct opposition to the Pietist missionaries' expectations. The solution was, and here European and Indian expectations converged, to introduce sighs as proper form of prayer in the Christian contact zone. These sighs were short, formulaic prayers that united elements of certain Christian (though not Pietist) and Hindu traditions,

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18 Stefan RINKE, A State Within a State? The »Jesuit State in Paraguay« and Eurocentric Constructions of Space, in this volume, p. 152.

19 Sabine HÜBNER, To Sigh before God. Prayer in the Eighteenth-Century Lutheran Mission in Tamil Nadu, in this volume, p. 158.

especially the *bhakti* movement. The missionaries themselves began to pray in this way. In prayer, a spiritual contact zone was established.

Peter James Yoder, too, focuses on the Danish-English-Halle Mission, but with his perspective on the German side, its founder August Hermann Francke and the impact the mission and the imagined contact zone had on him. He analyses the effects the mission reports as means of the imagined contact zone had on Francke's theology, particularly on the meaning of the terms »heathenism« and »atheism«. Francke first used the terms to criticise the Lutheran Church and its members as not being truly Christian. He called himself an atheist during his conversion experience, when he experienced intense doubt. He also called those who advanced »worldly« knowledge and learning in the Church »heathens«. Also, Francke referred to non-Jewish people who did not worship the right God by the term »heathen« in sermons on the Old Testament. The same was true of opponents of the early Church. What they had in common with his contemporaries was that they all led people away from true faith. Furthermore, he applied the term to the morality of individuals. After he had become involved with mission and received reports from India, Francke modified his notion of »heathenism«. »Heathens« were now those who had no knowledge about God as Father, the first person of the Trinity, or those who lived in ignorance of Christian rebirth, i.e. were not yet converted.<sup>20</sup> Contrary to his view of his European Christian contemporaries, he cherished hopes that Indian »heathens« would eventually convert. Therefore, the term received a positive meaning with regard to them. The chapter shows how Francke's interpretation of »heathenism« was broadened due to the indirect encounter, the imagined contact.

The last chapter in this section, Michael Sievernich's analysis of Joseph-François Lafitau's *Mœurs des sauvages américains* from 1724, an ethnographic description, demonstrates the impact a relatively short stay in the contact zone of Jesuit missions had on the author and on how he sought to impart his insights to a European audience. Lafitau lived from 1712 to 1717 in Jesuit missions among the Mohawk in Canada. He had been educated in the humanist tradition and came into conflict with leading figures like Voltaire, Diderot and d'Alembert about the question of whether people like indigenous Canadians could have a »religion«. While the Enlightenment scholars denied this, Lafitau, from his experience of living with Indians, claimed they did indeed have a religion. With his *Mœurs des sauvages américains* he intended to inform the European audience about Indian customs, religion and politics and to demonstrate that there were no nations without either. In comparing different Native American peoples and adding Greek and Roman authors to the comparison, he became a founder of comparative ethnology. Lafitau

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20 This recalls Chakrabarty's »not yet« but with a very different, eschatological perspective.

established different categories (such as origin, religion, leisure) along which he compared peoples and attitudes. He saw these as anthropological constants and »developed a kind of global cultural semiotics«.<sup>21</sup> The result was a depiction of humanity as being one. Lafitau included many illustrations in his publication and Sievernich depicts the frontispiece as hermeneutical key to the whole book. There, different cultures are united in one picture both on the level of symbols and on the interpretative level and woven together by a certain interpretation of time. Sievernich concludes that Lafitau was only able to write his comparative ethnographic work because of his experiences in several American contact zones but that the most important outcome of his work was not to be found in American missions but with his European audience who was, by this book, included in the contact.

The last section concentrates on »personalised contact zones«, that is on individuals who lived in contact zones for such a long time that they themselves became a kind of »contact zone«.<sup>22</sup> They embodied different cultures and were able to translate and to mediate. They often tried to bring together ideas or people (or both) of different cultures and to open spaces for interaction.

Thoralf Klein develops this idea in his article on Karl Gützlaff, who was German by origin but worked in such close contact with British people, married English women and published more works in English than in German, that he became a person of contact between different European nations and cultures. His life in different Asian contact zones intensified his transculturalism. Klein points to the significance of comprehensive (i.e. not only linguistic) translation processes for transcultural interactions. He calls cultural brokers like Gützlaff »a ›contact zone‹ in their own right«<sup>23</sup> because they embody several cultures, but emphasises that this implies neither an equality of the cultures within this person or in his or her actions, nor a neutral or disinterested representation of the cultures towards others. Klein underlines that Gützlaff was a cultural broker both in his activities and in his writings and that both furthered transcultural mediation. Klein finds transnational, national and transcultural aspects in Gützlaff's life which can be roughly attributed to different periods. From 1820 to 1842, he had a »transnational career«. He was trained in Germany and the Netherlands and first sent to today's Indonesia by the Netherlands Mission Society. From there, he moved

21 Michael SIEVERNICH, Comparing Ancient and Native Customs. Joseph-François Lafitau and the »sauvages américains«, in this volume, p. 201.

22 This idea, though not the term, was first introduced at the conference by Thoralf Klein in his presentation on Karl Gützlaff under the title »How to be a contact zone«.

23 Thoralf KLEIN, How to be a Contact Zone. The Missionary Karl Gützlaff between Nationalism, Transnationalism and Transculturalism, 1827–1851, in this volume, p. 220.

to Bangkok and then to Macau, where he dissolved his contract with the Society. He organised a transnational network supporting his mission. This network included individuals and institutions from most Protestant European countries as well as North America and was based on Gützlaff's transcultural abilities. In the period from 1842 to 1850, Klein sees Gützlaff as flirting with, though not embracing, nationalism. This was at least partly due to political and social changes. Still, he insisted on the transnational and interdenominational character of his China mission. He acted as a cultural broker all the time and mediated, in both directions, between the West and Asia. Gützlaff found his greatest impact in China and Japan by his translations. Klein demonstrates how new words Gützlaff invented entered everyday Chinese. Concluding, he describes Gützlaff as a »transcultural persona«<sup>24</sup> that was shaped by life in contact zones and his perspective on the global world.

Rosemary Seton places Mary Pigot, who was of French and maybe Eurasian descent and born and raised in India, at the centre of her contribution. Miss Pigot was the Lady Superintendent of the Church of Scotland's Female Mission in Calcutta in the second half of the nineteenth century. She hosted mission meetings in which Indians and Europeans participated and which attracted several hundred people. In the course of these meetings, Indian and European customs were mixed and people sang songs in English and several Indian languages. Consequently, Miss Pigot was extremely successful. But she was accused of misconduct and impropriety by the recently arrived Principal of the General Assembly's Institution in Calcutta, William Hastie. After 13 years in her position, Miss Pigot was dismissed in spring 1883, but defended herself by suing Hastie for defamation of character, a case she ultimately won. Seton describes Miss Pigot's Mission House as contact zone. Mary Pigot was fluent in Bengali and acquainted with upper-caste Bengali families and leading figures of the Brahmo Samaj. In 1877, she moved with the mission house into the heart of the »native city«, and maintained a house that was always open. She accommodated wives of Indian gentlemen who wanted their families to become more »European« as parlour guests, because she wanted to »civilise« as well as Christianise. The accusations against her seem to have arisen from a plot of newcomers who contested her standing in the mission society. Her supposedly being Eurasian was one of the charges against her. Most important, however, was her ability to »effortlessly criss-crossing racial boundaries in India and in Britain«.<sup>25</sup> After she was dismissed, the close encounter between Europeans and Indians in the Mission House ceased. It had relied on this person who embodied the contact zone.

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24 Ibid., p. 236.

25 Rosemary SETON, *Close Encounters, Racial Tensions. The Church of Scotland Mission in Calcutta [Kolkata], India*, in this volume, p. 250.



Andreas Köller analyses changes in the concept of what it meant to be a missionary in times of decolonisation by the example of Basel and Church Missionary Society missionaries in South India. He underlines that the concept of the missionary has always been unstable and contested and points to the developments of the concept in mission contact zones. By the end of World War II, images of the missionary changed due both to political transformations and to modifications in mission theory and ecclesiology on a global stage such as the World Mission Conferences. People with different concepts of the missionary met in the contact zone. Yet, the different concepts could not be attributed to distinct national groups but found supporters among European missionaries and Indian Christians alike. Evangelical Indians who were interested in keeping the focus on mission sided with European missionaries with the same aim, albeit for different reasons. Köller discusses the definitions of mission that were prevalent after 1945: mission as development aid, and the integration of mission as part of the newly founded Church of South India (CSI). He claims that in the meeting of the different concepts of the missionary, a new concept emerged. Köller investigates how individual missionaries coped with the competing concepts and how they themselves became a kind of contact zone. Missionaries who now worked mostly in the social sector (as many of their predecessors had) interpreted this explicitly as a kind of mission work. According to Basel missionary Jacques Rossel, what counted was the »inner conviction«. His colleague Emanuel Kellerhals stated that working in the church was mission work because of the »spirit of pioneering«. Köller asserts that these missionaries developed »a fluid self-understanding drawing on different missionary concepts«<sup>26</sup> and calls them »third space people«, thereby referring to Homi K. Bhabha's concept which he finds better suited to his case than Pratt's term »contact zones«.

The last contribution to this volume is by Heather J. Sharkey and deals with another person who embodied the contact zone: Henry Athanassian, an Armenian who worked in Egypt for the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in the mid-twentieth century. He was dismissed, like Mary Pigot, and turned out of an apartment in »the Bible House« of which he claimed to be the rightful tenant. Again, a newly arrived British official was behind these procedures. Sharkey aims to demonstrate the dichotomy in the BFBS between British xenophobia and Christian universalism and to illuminate the ambiguities in the definitions of »European« and »missionary«. Athanassian worked for the BFBS from 1909 to 1953 and had occupied an influential position as its *de facto* (if not *de jure*) agent for several years. He had originally come from Constantinople and as a child fled to Bulgaria and from there to

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26 Andreas KÖLLER, One's Own Concept Challenged. Renegotiations of the Concept of the »Missionary« in the Age of Decolonisation and Ecumenism, in this volume, p. 264.



Egypt. Port Said, where Athanassian lived and worked, was itself a vast contact zone and an important hub for the BFBS. When World War II had ended, the BFBS sent out a young Canadian minister, Leonard Geary, as its British agent but appointed him to work on the same level of authority as Athanassian, who had in fact if not in name filled the vacant position of secretary during the war. However, because they considered Geary to be »English« they granted him a higher salary than Athanassian. Obviously, Geary did not fulfil his position wisely (or even correctly). The society, however, did not bring proceedings against, as they later would against Athanassian. When they discussed the affair of Athanassian's apartment and salary, they made racist comments obviously based on orientalist views. Although Athanassian had worked for the society for many decades, he was not recognised as European or British. Athanassian died in 1978 after living in England for 22 years, eventually becoming a British citizen. Sharkey concludes that Athanassian could not be simply placed on one side but was rather »a kind of one-man ›contact zone‹«. <sup>27</sup>

The volume concludes with an Afterword by Brian Stanley that contextualises it within postcolonial mission historiography and intercultural theology. The volume demonstrates the richness of the concept of »contact zones« and also some of its limits. The concept has proved to be very helpful for the research of entanglements and, at least to a certain extent, for overcoming simple binaries. At the same time, several chapters have shown that those individuals who tried to overcome binaries entirely, like Mary Pigot, were in danger of being expelled from the contact zone. This indicates that the contact zone was often constituted in oppositions, not only in theory but also in practice and in the imagination of the people involved. The main outcome of the research on »contact zones«, however, is the illustration of changing concepts, conceptions and practices on all sides of the encounter.

This volume is based on the concluding conference of the junior research group »Transfer and Transformation of Missionaries' Images of Europe in Contact with the Other, 1700–1970«, which was held in Mainz in April 2014. The group consisted of the group leader, Judith Becker, two doctoral students, Andreas Köller and Sabine Hübner, and three post-doctoral fellows-in-residence who each spent a year in Mainz, Katharina Stornig, Peter James Yoder and Mrinalini Sebastian. They all contributed to the conference and the volume, which accounts for its focus on South India. At the conference,

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27 Heather J. SHARKEY, *The Case of Henry Athanassian, an Armenian in the Suez Canal Zone. Questioning Assumptions about Missions and Missionaries*, in this volume, pp. 284f.

all world regions were discussed, but unfortunately papers given on Africa, Australia and North America (some of which focused on Catholic missions) could not be included in this book.

The junior research group as well as the conference were generously supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Leibniz Institute of European History (IEG), and I would like to thank both institutions and particularly the Institute's directors, Professor Irene Dingel and Professor Johannes Paulmann, and Dr Claudia Hauser of the PT-DLR, the project management agency acting on behalf of the BMBF, for their support. I would also like to thank Ute Latz for her help with the redaction of the book, as well as the editors Joe Paul Kroll and Vanessa Brabsche. Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues in the junior research group for providing an enjoyable working atmosphere throughout the years. It has been a pleasure to do research on mission histories with you all.

# I. GENERAL



Jeffrey Cox

## Global Christianity in the Contact Zone

The study of the missionary enterprise has flourished as never before since the 1970s, following a parallel trajectory in some ways with postcolonial studies. If one were to choose an emblematic text for post-colonial studies it would be Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). For mission studies it would be Lamin Sanneh's *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (1989). Neither work was strictly speaking a work of history, but both have had a broad influence on the history of empire and missions as historians in a post-colonial age struggled to move beyond Eurocentric traditions of scholarship. Gallagher and Robinson's *Africa and the Victorians* (1961), for instance, dealt with the topic of the title entirely from the point of view of British administrators in London. Kenneth Scott Latourette's *History of the Expansion of Christianity* (1937–1945) and Stephen Neil's *A History of Christian Missions* (1964) treated Christianity as a Western phenomenon expanding into the non-Western world.<sup>1</sup>

Post-colonial studies and late twentieth-century mission studies dealt with issues of culture rather than imperial administration and mission society history. Both fields have been dominated by a set of binary distinctions that historians have struggled against, but also used for their own rhetorical purposes. The binaries of the old imperial history, such as British and Foreign, have been replaced by the binaries of post-colonial studies, such as the West and »the Other« or the Coloniser and the Colonised. The mission studies binary of Missionary and Convert has been replaced by the binary of the Western and the »Indigenous«, as historians began to draw a sharp distinction between mission Christianity on the one hand and indigenous (i.e. non-Western) Christianity on the other.

Post-colonial studies draw on a rhetoric of »unmasking«, evident in Said's persuasive demonstration that those most knowledgeable about the non-Western world, and in some cases most sympathetic to non-Western cultures, were also those most effective in establishing a hierarchy of cultural prestige

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1 Edward W. SAID, *Orientalism*, New York 1978; Lamin O. SANNEH, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Maryknoll, NY 2009; Ronald E. ROBINSON/John GALLAGHER, *Africa and the Victorians*, or *The Official Mind of Imperialism*, London <sup>2</sup>1981; Kenneth S. LATOURETTE, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, vol. 1–7, New York/London 1937–1945; Stephen NEILL, *Christian Missions*, *The Pelican History of the Church*, vol. 6, Harmondsworth 1964.

in which the West invariably ended up at the top. Post-colonial scholars who turned their attention to missionaries have employed the same rhetoric of unmasking. In mission studies historians have pursued an admirable project of ending the mission-centred focus in the global expansion of Christianity with a new focus on the other side of the binary, the indigenous in world Christianity. With Western missionary Christianity on one side of the binary and non-Western indigenous Christianity on the other, mission studies is characterised by a rhetoric of celebration. Especially in parts of the world where Christianity is growing rapidly, notably Africa, Latin America and some parts of Asia, another binary is deployed: secular Europe and the religious »Third World«. If Christianity is dying in its Western homeland, it is thriving where it has escaped its Western roots and been naturalised as the indigenous.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the word »indigenous« in mission studies. It is found 27 times in a recent festschrift honouring Lamin Sanneh.<sup>3</sup> Sanneh introduced the term himself in *Translating the Message*, stressing the importance in mission studies of focusing on »indigenous culture«.<sup>4</sup> Indigenous, meaning »native to the place«, is a word that has a long history in English as a descriptor, not only of flora and fauna, but of non-Western languages and schools in areas of imperial domination. When Henry Venn and others formulated the »three self« formula in the nineteenth century, it is likely that they would have recognised the word in relationship to language and perhaps music, although the word »native« was preferred in reference to a non-Western church that was, at least potentially, self-supporting, self-governing, and self-extending.<sup>5</sup>

Venn was a sophisticated analyst of the importance of power in informal cultural relationships. Anticipating Said in some ways, he recognised the relationship between knowledge and power, the superior knowledge and professional expertise of missionaries that appeared to be, in some places, an immovable impediment to the development of an independent non-Western church. In other words, it was the missionary presence that sustained a chasm

2 Philip JENKINS, *The Next Christendom. The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford/New York 2002.

3 Andrew F. WALLS, foreword, in: Akintunde E. AKINADE (ed.), *A New Day: Essays on World Christianity in Honor of Lamin Sanneh*, New York 2010.

4 SANNEH, *Translating the Message*, pp. 94–95.

5 Venn used variations of this phrase repeatedly. For an example see Henry VENN, *To Apply the Gospel. Selections from the Writing of Henry Venn*, ed. Max Warren, Grand Rapids, Mich. 1971, p. 74: 1867 Minutes from the Parent Committee to the Madras Corresponding Committee, »On steps toward helping a native church to become self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending«. The idea of a self-supporting church, and the famous phrase itself, may be found in other Protestant missionary nary documents. See Wilbert R. SHENK, »Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn: A Special Relationship?« *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (1981), pp. 168–172.

between the West and the »Other« within the new non-Western Christian churches. The late twentieth-century missiological use of the word indigenous emphasises the importance of culture rather than institutions, and in particular, in the case of Sanneh, the importance of biblical translation. Indigenous in mission studies means not »native to the place«, but »naturalised«. Once the Christian Bible is available in independent churches in the indigenous language of a place, then it is possible to use the word indigenous to describe the form of Christianity in that place, even if its churches use a prayer book and have a bishop, neither of which is obviously indigenous to the place in the normal meaning of the word.

The focus on the indigenous rather than the Western in mission studies does not reflect a rigid or dogmatic focus on one side of the binary rather than the other. It is instead a question of emphasis. In his influential books on mission history, Andrew Walls always gives missionaries their due place in the »transmission« of Christianity to other cultures. Nonetheless he always emphasises non-Western agency, talking about »the indigenizing principle« when referring to the emergence of African churches that were independent of mission Christianity despite being deeply marked by the forms of Christianity transmitted from Europe and America.<sup>6</sup> The replacement of white leaders in the Episcopal churches of Nigeria and Uganda, in ecclesiastical structures which could hardly be more Western or foreign, is referred to as the »indigenization of the episcopate«.<sup>7</sup>

The use of the binary of foreign and indigenous, with a historical focus on the growth of the indigenous, also served political purposes in a post-colonial world dedicated to the »religion« of human rights. In the course of decolonisation and the ascendancy of human rights, the word missionary has become stigmatised. Although the right to practise one's religion is regarded as a human right, any organised attempt to persuade someone to change their religion has come to be regarded as a violation of the principles of the free exercise of one's religion, especially when it occurs in a colonial or former-colonial context.<sup>8</sup> It has even been made illegal in some former colonies. Liberal Christian groups that were engaged in what appeared to be missionary work in the late twentieth century denied outright that they were missionaries, even when their work bore a striking resemblance to that

6 Andrew F. WALLS, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History. Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Edinburgh 1996, p. 7.

7 Id., *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith*, Maryknoll, NY 2002, pp. 162ff.

8 On the issue of conversion in colonial India see the arguments between Charles F. Andrews and Gandhi in David M. GRACIE (ed. and comp.), *Gandhi and Charlie. The Story of a Friendship*, Cambridge, MA 1989. The issue of religion in communist and former communist countries raises important issues not addressed in this article.

of early twentieth century missionaries.<sup>9</sup> Even evangelical groups scrambled to find new names, the most striking being the transformation of the Bible Churchman's Missionary Society into Crosslinks.

In many parts of the world, non-Western Christian churches had an even stronger incentive to distance themselves from the imperialist image of the missionary enterprise. This was especially true in India, where Indian Christian leaders such as Bishop Azariah opposed the national movement in the early twentieth century on the reasonable grounds that Indian Christians would not benefit from being a small minority in an overwhelmingly Hindu state.<sup>10</sup> Azariah's fears were not realised immediately after independence in 1947, but with the rise of Hindu nationalist politics in the late twentieth century, Indian Christians came under severe political pressure combined with, in some places, acts of violence. Indian Christians in independent India had a strong incentive to emphasise the indigenous aspects of their history and distance themselves from missionary associations. If Indian Christians were indigenous, they could not be foreign.

If the history of missions is the history of the indigenous, where does that leave missionaries? As early as 1983, Norman Etherington complained that missionaries were being left out of the history of African Christianity.<sup>11</sup> Their role was treated as ephemeral; they were »detonators« or »translators« whose major role, in Sanneh's many books, was the translation of scripture into indigenous languages. The indigenous church was defined by the indigenous language. After translation, the time had come for Henry Venn's »euthanasia of the mission«. Robert Frykenberg's history of Christianity in India does not ignore missionaries entirely, but does argue that half a millennium of Western missionary work in India was largely inconsequential in the growth and development of modern Indian Christianity.<sup>12</sup> One recent study of mission work in India actually writes missionaries out of the story altogether, relentlessly searching through the Christian faith and institutions of one

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9 On the invisibility of liberal Christianity in late twentieth century NGOs, see Jeffrey Cox, *From the Empire of Christ to the Third World. Religion and the Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, in: Andrew THOMPSON (ed.), *The British Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford History of the British Empire, Oxford 2012, pp. 76–121.

10 See Susan B. HARPER, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop V.S. Azariah and the Travails of Christianity in British India*, Grand Rapids, MI et al. 2000. Important also is the history of Christianity in independent Pakistan, usually ignored by historians of Christianity in India. See Jeffrey Cox, *Sing Unto the Lord a New Song. Transcending the Western/Indigenous Binary in Punjabi Christian Hymnody*, in: Judith BECKER/Brian STANLEY (eds.), *Europe as the Other. External Perspectives on European Christianity*, Göttingen 2014, pp. 149–164.

11 Norman ETHERINGTON, *Missionaries and the Intellectual History of Africa: A Historical Survey*, in: *Itinerario* 7 (1983), pp. 116–143.

12 Robert E. FRYKENBERG, *A History of Christianity in India. From Beginnings to the Present*, Oxford 2008.



convert community to find only its indigenous elements.<sup>13</sup> The missionary role in church growth has been de-emphasised, or neutralised politically, or eliminated altogether.

Building on Vennite aspirations for the future of Christianity, Sanneh and many other mission historians invoke a master narrative in which the missionary connection with imperialism is downplayed, either by de-emphasising the historical importance of missionaries, or stressing their role as mere »detonators« of an indigenous church. In Sanneh's words, by promoting the indigenous churches, missionaries were »unwitting allies« of the indigenous, and therefore »reluctant opponents of colonial domination«.<sup>14</sup> The stigma of imperialism associated with the word »missionary« in a post-colonial age was challenged with what Mary Louise Pratt refers to as a »narrative of anti-conquest«, by which Western people in non-Western lands deny their complicity with imperial conquest by reference to an alternative story of global universalism.

The focus on the indigenous has been both enormously productive and fully justified in the context of re-writing Christian history in a (formally) post-colonial age. Anyone who examines the history of Christian growth in the twentieth century will recognise that non-Western Christians did not merely adopt wholesale Western forms of Christianity and take them up unchanged, either in terms of culture or institutions. Christianity was remade in the missionary encounter, and beyond the missionary encounter, and deserves to have many stories told without resort to the male, clerical hierarchies of missionary heroism that dominated mission history in the modern imperial age, and remain tenacious even today. I still find audiences surprised at the assertion that the missionary enterprise was predominately female, not merely after the influx of independent women missionaries in the late nineteenth century, but long before. Narratives of male heroism persist in the treatment of David Livingstone as the emblematic missionary of the imperial age, despite the fact that it is difficult to imagine a less representative figure.<sup>15</sup>

Just as the celebratory stories in the Latourette tradition of Christian truth spreading from the West are capable of telling only part of the story, the celebration of the indigenous in recent mission studies can lead to a one-sided story. Metropolitan missionary administrators and non-Western Christians alike provided periodic scathing critiques of the ways that missionaries held on to their power in mission institutions at the expense of non-Western

13 Chad M. BAUMAN, *Christian Identity and Dalit Religion in Hindu India, 1868–1947*, Grand Rapids, MI 2008.

14 SANNEH, *Translating the Message*, pp. 94–95.

15 See Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise Since 1700*, London/New York 2008, pp. 145ff.

Christians, and these debates have been incorporated into the history of missions.<sup>16</sup> The relationships between missionaries and non-Western peoples, Christian and non-Christian, with whom they lived and worked simply cannot be encompassed within the conceptual framework of the binary of foreign and indigenous, in which missionaries were paternalist (or maternalist) cultural imperialists, or external facilitators of a process of »indigenization«. Missionaries in their relationship to non-Western Christians were far more than detonators and translators. They were long term collaborators with non-Western Christians, and in some cases with non-Christians, living often in relationships of hierarchy and conflict and sometimes outright domination, but also of spiritual intimacy, friendship, love for their adopted land, and sometimes inter-marriage. Most of them had a genuine commitment to building up a self-governing Christian church in collaboration with non-Western Christians. In the meantime, they regarded themselves as irreplaceable doctors, nurses, teachers and administrators. With a few exceptions, missionaries were institution builders, not roaming evangelists in pith helmets preaching the gospel under a palm tree on the Livingstonian model. Even the »faith missions« of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as the China Inland Mission and the Africa Inland Mission, which claimed to have liberated themselves from the constraints of institution-building, inevitably built institutions, beginning with the missionary home and extending then to schools for non-Western Christian children and training schools for catechists and Bible women.<sup>17</sup> The kinds of institutions that missionaries built varied with their theology and local conditions, and the faith missions refrained from investing in higher education, hospitals, and medical training, but they were required to build institutions in order to function at all. In the 1930s, which was the peak of the British Protestant missionary enterprise, the (estimated ) 8,500 missionaries working abroad (60% female) constituted less than 12% of the overall overseas missionary workforce (an estimated 75,000).<sup>18</sup>

Missionaries did not always inhabit the »foreign« side of the foreign/indigenous binary, but lived in what Mary Louise Pratt calls a »contact zone«, where the tensions generated by the very nature of the missionary enterprise produced on-going dialectical struggle to build something new. Christian churches and other Christian institutions were not merely indigenous, but the product of a conflict between the foreign and the indigenous. The goal for

16 C. Peter WILLIAMS, *The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church: A Study in Victorian Missionary Strategy*, Leiden/New York 1990.

17 On faith mission institution building by women of the China Inland Mission, see Rhonda Anne SEMPLE, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism, and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission*, Woodbridge/Rochester, NY 2003.

18 COX, *British Missionary Enterprise*, p. 270.

missionaries and non-Western Christians alike was ultimately the crafting of what the post-colonial anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff sneer at as »the multi-racial Christian commonwealth of missionary fantasy«. The Comaroffs represent another facet of the study of missionaries, one from within post-colonial studies rather than mission studies, and demonstrate the ways in which the binarism of foreign and indigenous constricts the interpretation of mission history not only on the part of mission studies scholars, but post-colonial scholars as well. The Comaroff's famous two-volume study of missions, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (1991, 1997) is perhaps the most widely cited work on missions among historians, including imperial historians, historians of Africa, and post-colonial historians.<sup>19</sup> It is cited in part because it is rare for post-colonial scholars to pay close attention to missionaries, who often appear on the stage briefly, their presence taken for granted and their status as agents of imperialism simply assumed. For the most part, post-colonial scholars share the view that we live in a secular age. In the West, at least, and ultimately everywhere, we have reached the end of history when it comes to religion.<sup>20</sup> The religious problem has been solved by the hidden hand of secularisation, a teleological master narrative of history which leads to an age in which religion, if it exists, is either marginal, or a throwback to a past age. (How often are the Taliban described as »medieval«?) One of the results of this assumption is that post-colonial scholars are not interested in Western religion in the non-Western world and pay little attention to the large and important body of scholarship in mission studies. The other side of the coin is that it is very difficult to persuade mission studies scholars to take a serious interest in the ideas of Edward Said and other post-colonial scholars, despite their potential relevance to the study of missions.

Perhaps the second most widely cited post-colonial study of missions, this one by a historian, is Catherine Hall's *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867* (2002).<sup>21</sup> These two justly celebrated masterpieces of scholarly inquiry share the rhetoric of unmasking that characterises post-colonial studies, i.e. Wesleyan Methodist missionaries in South Africa and Baptist missionaries in Jamaica both represent, not religion, but a set of imperial and patriarchal values brought from the metropolitan culture to non-Western people. Although they do not share the rhetoric of mission studies, which is predominantly if not exclusively celebratory rather

19 Jean and John COMAROFF, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, 2 vol., Chicago 1991, 1997.

20 The most recent influential invocation of the idea of »a secular age«, based on his Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh in 1999, is Charles TAYLOR, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, MA 2007.

21 Catherine HALL, *Civilising Subjects. Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830–1867*, Chicago 2002.

than »unmasking«, they do share its binarism, i.e. its focus, often relentless focus, on the distinction between the foreign and the indigenous, the coloniser and the colonised.

Both the Comaroffs and Hall are aware of the dangers of a simplistic binarism in their analysis. They disavow it before deploying it, becoming in the course of their lengthy books binarists in denial. »We reiterate«, the Comaroffs write, »as we rejoin our larger story, that colonization was never a monolithic movement through which an expansive Europe imposed itself, systematically and inexorably, on peripheral populations. It may have been a world-wide historical process. But it played itself out in multiple registers and in disconcertingly ambiguous ways«.<sup>22</sup> Yet for 1,000 pages spread over two volumes, the Comaroffs present the relationship between British Wesleyan Methodist missionaries and the Tswana people in a particular »contact zone« in precisely that way. Theirs is a narrative of imperial domination, in which missionaries are systematically and inexorably treated as the »vanguards of a sustained British presence in the South African interior and self-styled standard bearers of a cultural revolution«, representatives of the »captains of industry, colonial merchants, and charitable churchgoers among the bourgeoisies of London and Liverpool«, agents of »industrial capitalism in its modern bourgeois form«, who in all their dealings with African Christians championed »possessive individualism, commercial production, wage work, contractual relations«.<sup>23</sup> In response to the criticisms of Elizabeth Elbourne and others that their theory of missions was too rigid, and that more historical sensibility would have produced a different story, they simply assert that more research and a multi-faceted approach »would merely have complicated our narrative, not discounted its claims«, and would have »confirmed yet further the conceptual arguments laid out at the beginning of this work and elaborated in each of the chapters along the way«.<sup>24</sup>

In *Civilising Subjects*, Hall warns of the dangers of binarism, citing similar warnings to be found in the work of Gayatri Spivak, Anne McClintock, and Homi Bhabha.<sup>25</sup> As a historian, her work is multifaceted. One binary thoroughly undermined in *Civilising Subjects* is that of metropole and colony, as Hall demonstrates that Baptist missionaries in Jamaica lived in a trans-imperial world of dissenting humanitarianism, a community extending from

22 COMAROFF, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 2, p. 403.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 408–409.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 411; Elbourne's critique was then unpublished, but was subsequently expanded in Elizabeth ELBOURNE, *Blood Ground. Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853*, Toronto 2002.

25 An early article by Bhabha engages with Christian transculturation in colonial India, but with no follow-up in his later work. Homi K. BHABHA, *Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817*, in: *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Autumn 1985), pp. 144–165.

Birmingham to Jamaica, one which incorporated black Baptists under the rhetoric of Christian universalism and the brotherhood of man. Brought up in a Baptist family, Hall provides the best brief summary anywhere of what it meant to be a Baptist and a Nonconformist in nineteenth-century England. Unlike the Comaroffs, she takes religion seriously, rather than relentlessly instrumentalising it and treating it as »something else« rather than religion. She understands something of the gender dynamics of the missionary family, the fundamental institution of almost all missions. When dealing with the relationship of white missionaries and black Baptists, though, she reverts to a thoroughgoing and systematic binarism in which missionaries are unmasked as the paternalistic carriers of Western family values which they imposed on the freed slaves of Jamaica. They figure as the passive recipients of imposed Western values of respectability and separate spheres. In *Civilising Subjects*, black Jamaicans have no agency at all, unlike the African people in the Comaroffs' book who at least manage to pick and choose among (secular) elements of Western bourgeois individualist culture in order to use them for their own indigenous purposes.

In many non-Western churches, missionaries are to this day treated as heroes, perhaps nowhere more so than among Jamaican Baptists. White Baptist missionary families (in strong contrast to the pro-slavery Anglican clergy in Jamaica) risked their lives to oppose slavery, and after abolition were vocal advocates for the black franchise, the early ordination of black pastors, the payment of proper wages to freed slaves, and protectionism in the sugar industry to protect standards of living. They vigorously opposed racism, condemning the open outbursts of vicious racism by Thomas Carlyle and Richard Burton in the middle of the century. They disciplined those guilty of »negrophobia« in their own community, and embraced racial intermarriage. In more than one missionary family, white sons and daughters married into the black community of Jamaica.

Hall realises that the heroic status of missionaries poses a problem for dealing with their relationship with black Jamaicans as a binary coloniser-colonised relationship. Her response is to systematically unmask missionaries as liberal racists, a task that is not too difficult. Although tempered by their Christian universalism, missionaries – like virtually all white Europeans in the nineteenth century – believed in a historically determined hierarchy of civilisations in which Africans and freed African slaves were at an »earlier« stage. In that sense, in the words of Edward Said, in the nineteenth century »every European [...] was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric«. <sup>26</sup> Not all forms of white privilege are alike, though, and the large majority of missionaries in the mid- and late nineteenth century

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26 SAID, *Orientalism*, p. 204.

are distinctive in their dogged resistance to the spread of scientific racism, a feature of mission studies that most historians have missed, as well as their ongoing commitment to the building of a multi-racial Christian commonwealth in the form of an independent, self-governing church.

At the heart of Hall's unmasking of Jamaican Baptist missionaries are two mid-century developments. The first is the creation of »model communities« for freed blacks under missionary supervision. The missionaries' role was a paternalist one, in which they had some degree of power over black families that lived in model communities, and lesser power but nonetheless real influence in the black church. They promoted a model of family which resembles the Victorian stereotype, i.e. missionaries preferred monogamy to sexual license, sobriety to alcohol abuse, and extolled the value of hard work to support one's family on the part of males. What is missing in her analysis is the sense in which black Jamaicans were willing collaborators in this, not passive victims of a colonising ideology. The point of view of black women is entirely missing from *Civilising Subjects*, but it is impossible to imagine a situation in which their cooperation in building up a Victorian family model was not essential to its success, insofar as it was a success. It is difficult to believe that such a model of family life would not have had many attractions for, and tangible benefits to, Jamaican Baptist women. But their collaborative role in the contact zone of missions is replaced by one of pure passivity.

The other example of the failure of anti-racism cited by Hall is the tangible and documented sense of disappointment among missionaries in the character of Christian converts by the middle of the century. Throughout mission history there are examples of missionary success, defined as the emergence of a non-Western church with a significant number of members, generating a sense of disappointment. Whenever a church grows, it includes many nominal Christians, not to mention backsliding committed Christians. In that sense the non-Western church is no different from the church in the metropolis, where priests, clergy, ministers, and pastors spend a great deal of time lamenting the lack of true Christian piety among their respective flocks.

What makes the mission experience of disappointment different is, first, the fact that missionaries are a species of virtuoso Christian, who from their own point of view made sacrifices not required of Christian ministers and other (mostly female) leaders at home. This heightens their disappointment with nominal Christianity. The other exacerbating factor is the imbalance in power between missionaries and Christian converts, including the non-Western Christian clergy and other church officials, one that was widely recognised by the time, especially by non-Western Christians. What Hall sees as evidence of failure is better understood as one of the »problems of success« in mission history, and what would be interesting about the Jamaican case is

an investigation of how missionaries and Jamaican Baptists negotiated this problem. Hall treats it purely in the binary terms of a failure of the Comaroffs' »multi-racial Christian commonwealth of missionary fantasy«.

The most glaring omission in *Civilising Subjects*, one shared with the Comaroffs', is the complete lack of attention to the non-Western churches. Hall's interest in religion as an autonomous force in history stops when she crosses the binary divide between coloniser and colonised. The hero-worship that Jamaican Baptists extended to Baptist missionaries is in effect dismissed as a form of false consciousness, one in which black Baptists were unable to unmask the colonising project of their supposed benefactors. The gap between coloniser and colonised in Jamaica was apparently an impermeable one, as missionaries were »unable to recognise the complex people whom they were encountering«.<sup>27</sup> This is where Mary Louise Pratt's idea of a »contact zone«, where mutual interaction, mutual recognition and mutual re-constitution of the Western take place, rather than a one-way street of domination on the one hand or indigenous appropriation on the other, opens the door for a more nuanced account than mission studies and post-colonial studies alike provide.

The recent publication of a revised 25th anniversary edition of *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (2008) reflects new attention paid in post-colonial studies to a book that has stood for too long in the shadows of Said's *Orientalism* as foundational books in the study of imperialism.<sup>28</sup> Neither book chooses religion as a topic, which is all the more interesting in that both Pratt and Said, in autobiographical comments, testify to the importance of missionary religion of the imperial age in their upbringing. Pratt grew up in Listowel, a town in Ontario where the druggist, Dr Livingstone, was David Livingstone's grand-nephew, making him something of a local celebrity whose story was taught to her in Sunday school by a former missionary. The connections to the global world of missions were the means by which »empire makes the world meaningful to its subjects, how it weaves itself into the everyday [...] Sunday school missionary stories built the color line into our imaginations. That was part of the job, to create us as subjects of empire, give us our place in the order«.<sup>29</sup> In his *Out of Place. A Memoir* (1999), Said returns repeatedly to the centrality of Egyptian Anglicanism in his upbringing, the twice-on-Sunday trip to the Anglican cathedral in Cairo, for Sunday school and church, and the divide in his family between his mother's family (Palestinian Baptists) and the socially superior Anglicans of his father's family.<sup>30</sup>

27 HALL, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 322.

28 Mary Louise PRATT, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London/New York 2008.

29 Ibid., p. 3.

30 Edward W. SAID, *Out of Place. A Memoir*, New York 1999.



The Sunday schools of Listowel and Cairo represent two examples of a failure of religious socialisation, for neither Pratt nor Said pay any attention to Western Christianity in their scholarly works. There is one fleeting exception. In the introduction to *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said recounts a visit from a relative, a Palestinian Christian pastor who is in New York on ecclesiastical business. The Arab Protestant churches were not purely independent, indigenised institutions, but part of a transnational network linked to global denominations rooted in mission history. His relative was in New York to negotiate issues of ecumenical merger and denominational autonomy. For Said, »One should note that this touching story concerns an experience of imperialism that is essentially one of sympathy and congruence, not of antagonism, resentment, or resistance. The appeal by one of the parties was to the value of a mutual experience. True, there had once been a principal and a subordinate, but there had also been dialogue and communication«.<sup>31</sup> Said is referring to an experience in a space defined by Pratt as a »contact zone«, a space characterised by inequality and domination, but also, in Pratt's definition, one that treats »the relations among colonizers and colonized, [...] not in terms of separateness, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understanding and practices, and often within radically asymmetrical relations of power«.<sup>32</sup>

The secular assumptions of the modern academy lead to a presumption of marginality in the treatment of religion, or to a rhetoric of unmasking in post-colonial studies, but Pratt's work provides a vocabulary that opens new possibilities for the study of mission history. »Contact zone« is the most immediately useful term, but others in *Imperial Eyes* include the »narrative of anti-conquest« (already mentioned), »planetary consciousness«, »imperial meaning-making«, »seeing-man«, »autoethnography« and »transculturation«. Pratt's treatment of travel writing focuses on science, which like Christianity is global and universalistic. She begins with Linnaeus's garden, still to be seen in Uppsala, Sweden, with the plants arranged in Linnaean order. It seems small, even modest, as a garden, to have had such an important impact on the world. Pratt is right to see it as the nursery of the rapid growth of scientific planetary consciousness. As naturalists set out on global expeditions, with the goal of naming everything living on the planet, they never self-critically thought of themselves as imperialists, despite the obvious (to us) imperial uses of scientific knowledge. The »all-seeing« naturalists had a planetary consciousness, and were engaged in constructing narratives of anti-conquest.

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31 Id., *Culture and Imperialism*, New York 1993, p. 40.

32 PRATT, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, p. 8.



But where is the contact zone of natural science? And where is the process of »transculturation« that occurs in the contact zone? Pratt provides one example of a Western naturalist in Brazil who thought that scientists should document alternative names taken from indigenous people, but his suggestion went nowhere and was soon forgotten. Some of Pratt's categories are far more applicable to the missionary enterprise than to the scientific enterprise. Compare Linnaeus's planetary consciousness with that of William Carey, the English Baptist shoemaker who was far from being the first theorist of foreign missions, but became one of the most influential with the publication of his pamphlet *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians* in 1792.<sup>33</sup> Carey is an »all-seeing man« with a strong sense of planetary consciousness, dividing the world into religious spheres of influence with a strong conviction that those in the non-Christian parts of the world were going to Hell when they die. Disagreeing with the majority of his fellow Christians who thought about this problem and believed that God had divided the world into religious spheres of influence for His own good reasons which should not be challenged, Carey regarded the obligations of Christians as self-evident and acted on them, sailing unofficially to Bengal, not as a bearer of imperialist culture, but as a Christian. The role of empire was purely providential, opening doors for Christian activity, much as the Roman Empire paved the way (literally) for Christianity by building roads around the Mediterranean.

In Bengal, Carey was plunged into a contact zone full of contradictions that had to be negotiated, dilemmas of far greater complexity than those faced by naturalists with their insect nets and guns for specimen collection. Having no idea how to be a missionary in practice, Carey first tried preaching in public, through an interpreter, with roughly the same results as David Livingstone achieved later. He then plunged into the inevitable and universal missionary task of institution building, which brought with it debates that swirled through the missionary world throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> What is the relationship between Christianity and civilisation? Between Christianity and empire? What are we to think about, and say about (not always the same thing), non-Christian religions? What kind of institutions are we to build to spread the gospel? What is the status of Christian converts? What is the relationship between missionaries and the new Christian churches in Bengal?

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33 William CAREY, *An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens in Which the Religious State of the Different Nations of the World, the Success of Former Undertakings, and the Practicability of Further Undertakings, Are Considered*, Leicester 1792.

34 For a thorough, insightful account of Carey's work see Brian STANLEY, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1992*, Edinburgh 1992.

Many of these issues were never resolved in the imperial age, and some have yet to be resolved in a post-colonial world where Western influence remains very strong in global Christianity. But in the course of working through these conflicts in a contact zone, missionaries and non-Western Christians managed to work out some imperfect version of a multi-racial Christian commonwealth that was far from being a fantasy. In the course of this process of collaboration, a gap developed in missionary rhetoric between the strongly defamatory treatment of foreign cultures that was used to justify the missionary enterprise at home, especially in the early nineteenth century, and the collaborative practical approach used in evangelism in the process of institution-building. Carey's colleague in Bengal, William Ward, produced a highly defamatory and widely influential series of wholesale attacks on Hinduism, while Carey himself generated, for Bengali consumption, a kind of Protestant populist anti-Brahmin rhetoric targeting the Hindu elite.<sup>35</sup>

In the course of collaborating in the building of Christian institutions, forms of worship, translations, and Christian literature, Christians engaged in some cases in a process that resembles the »transculturation« that Pratt identifies as characteristic of the contact zone. This is a term originally used to describe »creole« literature in the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking culture of the Americas. Pratt defines transculturation as the way in which »subjugated peoples« take elements of the dominant culture and »determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, how they use it, and what they make it mean«.<sup>36</sup> Although Pratt stresses the dominant/subjugated binary in her definition of transculturation, it is clear that she is referring to a process that is dialectical, synthetic, and hybrid rather than one limited to appropriation and indigenisation. Pratt only provides one thorough analysis of transculturation: a text dated 1615 and written in Peru by an Amerindian, Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, in a mixture of Quechua and ungrammatical Spanish. It was a rewriting of the history of the indigenous peoples of America that incorporated the history of Christendom, a European genre incorporating a critical history of European conquest. She refers to it as an example of »autoethnography«, i.e. writing that incorporates Western forms, rather than »authentic« or »autochthonous forms of self-representation«, which would presumably represent purely »indigenous« forms of representation by colonised peoples.<sup>37</sup>

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35 William WARD, *Account of the Writings, Religion, and Manners, of the Hindoos: Including Translations from Their Principal Works*, in Four Volumes, Serampore 1811, and successive increasingly harsh editions. For a concise depiction of contrasting missionary approaches to indigenous culture, see the depictions of Mr. Brown and Mr. Smith in Chinua ACHEBE, *Things Fall Apart*, London 1958.

36 PRATT, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, p. 7.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6, 9.

It is, in short, not purely indigenous, but »transcultural«. The relevance of this concept to mission studies should be obvious. It is far more relevant to the missionary enterprise than to the science-oriented travel writing that is at the core of Pratt's work, which is perhaps why she engages in a sustained analysis of »transculturation« in reference to only one text. Unlike the global Linnaean project of classifying every living thing in the world, the missionary enterprise involved from the beginning a self-awareness of the need to collaborate with non-Western peoples, to promote leadership roles for non-Western people, and to develop ways to distinguish Christian universalism from the historically contingent European imperial project, one which, like the Roman Empire, would fall eventually as certainly as it rose. This self-awareness did not prevent missionaries from being pro-empire, usually on providentialist grounds but sometimes on utilitarian grounds, according to which empire was a force for good for the subject peoples. It did not prevent missionaries from exploiting their imperialist connections, or lulling themselves into the belief that as a practical matter the end of empire lay so far into the future as to be irrelevant to day-to-day missionary practice. It did require them to devote some thought to the historically ephemeral nature of their presence in the imperial world. Long before Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson developed the »three-self« theory that would lead to a hypothetical »euthanasia of the mission«, and even before Carey published his *Enquiry*, an annual report of the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel for 1791 commented on a sermon given by a »native priest« in India: »How long the fluctuations in the affairs of this world will afford duration to the Mission itself, is beyond our calculation; but if we wish to establish the Gospel in India, we ought to look beyond the casualties of war, or the revolutions of empires; we ought in time to give the native a Church of their own, independent of our support.«<sup>38</sup>

The missionary enterprise and the scientific enterprise shared a planetary consciousness on the part of all-seeing men who were constructing narratives of anti-conquest, but contact zones and the practice of transculturation hardly existed in the world of science. Think of a committee of notables, perhaps in Berlin, given the task of providing support for a Humboldtian scientific expedition. Now imagine them publishing a pamphlet entitled »On steps toward helping a native community of natural historians become self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending«. Even more unimaginable, imagine a late nineteenth-century session of the British Association for the Advancement of Science dedicated to »the euthanasia of the scientific enterprise«.

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38 Cited in Hans C. NATTINGIUS, *Bishops and Societies. A Study of Anglican Colonial and Missionary Expansion 1698–1850*, London 1952, p. 52.

The history of missions provides a large field for examining collaboration and cooperation in the contact zone, and for a study of a process of transculturation in the adaptation of Christianity to new settings. Many studies, especially by historians, have in practice concentrated on just that process of transculturation without using the precise vocabulary suggested by Pratt. At the risk of ignoring many fine works of scholarship I will choose one that is particularly successful, John Peel's *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (2000).<sup>39</sup> Peel is an anthropologist writing as a historian. What is more important is his willingness, in strong contrast to the Comaroffs', to take religious belief and religious institutions seriously with regard to missionaries and Africans alike. He has done many years of field work among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, but he also makes extensive use of the manuscript records of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), which include the manuscript reports of African Christians employed in the contact zone by the CMS. The CMS was run by obsessive bureaucrats who required their agents to document their daily activities. Peel understands that power and authority did not constitute a one-way street in the contact zone. Yoruba Christians working for white European missionaries as catechists were, like missionaries in their relationship to the CMS in London, agents in their own right with a considerable degree of practical autonomy. Of course in their written reports they had to conform to CMS missionary expectations, but Peel succeeds in reading between the lines of these reports in ways that destabilise the binary distinction between indigenous and foreign.

Peel uses the term »inculturation« for the process by which Christianity was embedded in a local culture. This is not the same as »indigenization« as it involves a process of collaboration, cooperation and synthesis. »It can only happen through ordinary Yoruba becoming Christians, not as an exercise performed by missionaries from outside the culture; and it has to start happening as soon as they do, not requiring the admonitions of African theologians to tell them that it is needed. It always entails, too, a complementary process by which Christianity exerts an influence on the culture that receives it«.<sup>40</sup> It is different from Pratt's »transculturation« in that it involves a history of personal relationships rather than the creation of a text.

Peel also analyses in some detail a text that fits very well with Pratt's definition of »transculturation«, Yoruba clergyman Samuel Johnson's 684 page *The History of The Yorubas*, completed in 1901 and published in 1921.<sup>41</sup> According to Peel, Johnson created with his narrative a modern sense of

39 John D. Y. PEEL / American Council of Learned Societies, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, Bloomington, IN 2003.

40 Ibid., p. 278.

41 Samuel JOHNSON, *The History of the Yorubas: From the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, London 1921.

Yoruba nationhood. Johnson was only one of a number of important CMS Christians who were engaged in a process of »inculturation« that generated texts like the *History of the Yorubas* that reflected a dialectical synthesis of varieties of indigenous Yoruba religion and the missionary context in which they worked. Their project of cultural nationalism, far from being purely »indigenous«, was inseparable from the Western Christian incursion into the country. Yoruba cultural nationalists were harsh dogmatic evangelical Christians even while they were locked into sustained conflict with white missionaries over issues of race and power.

Peel's neglect of women, who were a majority of missionaries and a majority of the missionary workforce, is a major flaw in his book, but one that is widely shared with other historians in a field that has yet fully to come to terms with the gendered character of the missionary enterprise despite the abundance of source material.<sup>42</sup> His focus on dialogue, interaction, and collaboration nonetheless provides a model for writing about missionaries in the »contact zone«. When V. S. Azariah gave his well-known speech to the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, he anticipated E. M. Foster's far more famous treatment of whether or not friendship was possible across the imperial divide. In *A Passage to India* (1924), the answer to the question »can we be friends?« is »no, not yet«. In the secular humanist imperial world that Forster depicted in India, there were »contact zones« where Britons and Indians cooperated and interacted on common projects. There was, however, no secular analogy to the large contact zone of Christian institutions in an imperial setting, one which Forster ignored, in which the creation of a »multi-racial Christian commonwealth« was a central, and immediate, task. Forster concluded that friendship would only be possible after the end of the British Empire. For Azariah, friendship in the Christian contact zone was a task to be achieved now rather than later. According to an observer on the scene in Edinburgh in 1910, Azariah, »[s]peaking with a subdued intensity that underlay the whole speech [...] the rolled foreign r's making the words ›friends‹, ›friendship‹ vibrate through the hall«, answered Forster's question with a Christian answer: »This will be possible only from spiritual friendships between the two races«.<sup>43</sup>

42 Books that bring gender into focus in the contact zone include, among others, Elizabeth PREVOST, *The Communion of Women. Missions and Gender in Colonial Africa and the British Metropole*, Oxford 2010; Eliza F. KENT, *Converting Women. Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India*, New York 2004; Rhonda A. SEMPLE, *Missionary Women: Gender, Professionalism, and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission*, Woodbridge 2003; Jeffrey COX, *Imperial Fault Lines. Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818–1940*, Stanford, CA 2002.

43 William H. T. GAIRDNER, »Edinburgh 1910«. *An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh/London 1910*, pp. 109–110.



## II. CONTACT ZONES IN TIME AND SPACE





Mrinalini Sebastian

## Localised Cosmopolitanism and Globalised Faith

### Echoes of »Native« Voices in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Missionary Documents

Every epoch, social group or specific context produces its own sense of what is self-evidently right or wrong, what goes without saying. This all-important fact – that commonsense is not the same in all times and places, or for all people – provides a wedge with which we can prise open its closed circuits of meaning. We can study the effects of commonsense by switching perspectives: by looking at the world from the viewpoint of differently placed persons or groups, or even by imagining a world different from the one we inhabit, much as writers and artists do. It is thus possible to analyse one kind of commonsense by consciously locating oneself within another kind, using the contrast to trace the outlines of what would otherwise be very difficult to see. But this is not easy and it certainly does not come naturally – it demands constant, disciplined effort [...].

Satish Deshpande, *Contemporary India. A Sociological View*<sup>1</sup>

Among the digitised visual records of the Basel Mission/mission 21, there is a collection of about 300 illustrations of plants native to South India. These illustrations bear a stunning resemblance to the colours and shapes of the leaves and flowers of the real plants. This almost photographic accuracy of the prints could be accomplished because of the use of a special technique called »Nature's Self-Printing«.<sup>2</sup> The creator of this collection, Jakob Hunziker (1831–1923), who was the printer at the Basel Mission Press in Mangalore, called them »Botanautography«, because he used real plants to cast and print the images of the plants. Hunziker was a mission worker whose primary obligation was to serve the purpose of evangelisation but who, nevertheless, did things that went beyond the call of duty. Strictly speaking, as someone who worked in the printing press of the Basel Mission station in Mangalore, Jakob Hunziker could not be termed a missionary. Nor was he a botanist. It

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1 Satish DESHPANDE, *Contemporary India. A Sociological View*, New Delhi 2003, p. 8.

2 Jakob HUNZIKER, *Nature's Self-Printing. A Series of Useful and Ornamental Plants of the South Indian Flora*. Taken from *Fresh Specimens in Facsimile Colour*, Mangalore 1862 [online version]; URL: <http://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/100210175> (access date: 14 October 2014).

was »an intuitive enthusiasm for the exotic flora« that perhaps led this professional printer to a unique way of representing the plants of South India.<sup>3</sup> These prints are of a great aesthetic appeal but they are perhaps of a greater historical value today in the fields of print-making and botany. The example of Jakob Hunziker demonstrates that long-term and close interactions of the European missionary organisations in the contact zones of new geographical, religious and cultural contexts invariably gave rise to some unanticipated outcomes. Hunziker's primary task in Mangalore was to print Bibles, school books and maps. However, in his engagement with an unfamiliar landscape he received new ideas.<sup>4</sup> His book of »Botanautography« brought to Europe one of the best visual depictions of the plants of South India. In a way, Hunziker's work exemplifies the close interactions between Europeans and the local communities in the contact zone of nineteenth-century South India.<sup>5</sup> Hunziker's illustrations of the plants of South India suggest that the close, day-to-day engagement between European missionaries and the local people was mutually transformative even when they occupied asymmetrical positions of power. Hunziker responded to his natural surroundings by producing a unique book about the plants that grew in this region. However, in order to create this book, he needed to employ an unusual technique of printing that had been developed in Europe. The book that he thus prepared did not remain in India but travelled to Europe carrying with it stunning illustrations of plant-life in the Mangalore region. As the printer and compiler of this book, Hunziker was an important link in the transfer of information about South Indian biodiversity. The missionaries, and by extension, the local people with whom they engaged, were connected through a global network of communication and institutions. The negotiations that took place at the level of the global networks and in the local contact zones resulted in wide-ranging transformations both in Europe and in South India. The mutually transformative contact between the globally connected missionaries and the

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3 »Es ist also vielmehr eine intuitive Begeisterung für die exotische Flora, die den Drucker, der sonst mit der Herstellung von Bibeln, Schulbüchern, Landkarten und Akzidenzien betraut ist, hier experimentieren lässt«, Barbara FREY NÄF et al., *Die Pflanzenwelt Südindiens*. Johann Jakob Hunzikers Naturselbstdrucke aus dem Jahr 1862, in: *Bauhinia* 24 (2013), pp. 1–14, at p. 1, URL: <http://botges.unibas.ch/bauhinia/24.2013.01-14.pdf> (access date: 10 July 2013).

4 FREY NÄF et al., *Die Pflanzenwelt Südindiens*, p. 14: »Die missionarische Tätigkeit weitab vom Zentrum bot einerseits einen Freiraum, um in der Auseinandersetzung mit fremden Kulturen neue Ideen zu entwickeln, und schuf andererseits die Notwendigkeit, sich Fachgebiete wie Kartografie oder Sprachforschung zu erschliessen«.

5 The idea of the »contact zones« was first developed by Mary Louise PRATT, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London 1992, p. 1. See also Id., »Arts of the Contact Zone«, in: *Profession* (1991), pp. 33–40, at p. 40, where she suggests a return to the contact zone in order »to figure out how to make the cross roads the best site for learning that can be«.

locally situated communities will be explored in this paper on three levels of interaction: (i.) intellectual engagements, (ii.) religious negotiations and (iii.) social transformations.

### The Contact Zone as the Meeting Ground between Different Kinds of Common Sense

When the European missionaries started evangelising in South India, they were spreading a very specific form of Christian worldview among people who held different perspectives on life and metaphysical questions. The epigraph to this essay evokes the complexity of issues involved when groups that subscribe to radically different versions of common sense come in contact with one another. Satish Deshpande's understanding of the common sense as that which enables an »epoch, social group or specific context« to consider something as »self-evidently right or wrong« can be of immense help in contextualizing, globally and locally, the various exchanges between the European Protestant missionaries and the different communities of people in the South Indian context.<sup>6</sup> It is also useful to remember that »common sense is not the same in all times and places, or for all people«.<sup>7</sup> The missionaries and their various local conversation partners did not view the same things as »self-evidently right or wrong« in their intellectual, religious and social negotiations. Yet in the interaction offered by their close contact with one another, they would have transformed each other in perceptible and imperceptible ways.

The two sets of documents that will be analysed in this chapter confirm this transformative impact of contact between different communities. It goes without saying that the »circuits of meaning« that are self-evident to one group may be »closed« to another group. In the contact zone, when the closed circuits of meaning interact with one another, it is useful to look at human transactions »from the viewpoint of differently placed persons or groups«.<sup>8</sup> By »consciously locating oneself within another kind [of common sense]«, we can »trace the outlines of what would otherwise be very difficult to see«.<sup>9</sup> This article will try to construct the viewpoint of groups from the other side of the encounter between Europe and South India by analysing the common sense deployed by the indigenous communities in different situations of contact. The intense engagement with the »Other« in the contact zones brings

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6 DESHPANDE, *Contemporary India: A Sociological View*, p. 8.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

out not only the conflicting grounds on which one kind of common sense sees another as »wrong«, but also the possible spaces of collaboration, where a boundary-crossing, inter-group sense of the »common« is established.

A return to the contact zones, whether in the literal or the metaphorical sense, can generate a different angle to view the interaction between the local people and the European missionaries. It questions common presumptions regarding the missionaries and the missionised. Popular perceptions about the work of the European missionaries are usually judgmental in a simplistic way: one group (often Christian) argues that the European missionaries transformed the indigenous cultures for good (civilisational mission); another (usually non-Christian), that the missionaries destroyed local cultures (foreign and alien mission). By employing the idea of the global connectedness of the »contact zone« for an analysis of the interactions between the local people and the missionaries, it will be possible to examine the web of contacts and connections that linked the European missionaries to local contexts and global institutions. The long-term impact of these networks and these contacts can be observed better from the vantage point of the present. Jakob Hunziker's »Botanautography« demonstrates that contact between the »native« and the »outside« worlds could give rise to unanticipated exchanges of ideas and skills; this unanticipated exchange of ideas and skills has implications for the making of a global knowledge network, rather than for the specific context within which the actual contact takes place.

### Intellectual Engagements: Knowledge in and Beyond the Contact Zone

Jakob Hunziker was not the only employee of a Protestant Mission who was interested in capturing the biodiversity of South India. There exists a long line of Europeans, including some Catholic and Protestant missionaries as well as a few administrators of the European East India Companies, who served as important conduits for the circulation of knowledge about Indian plants in other parts of the world, especially in Europe. The journals, reports, illustrations and books written by these (often amateur) botanists were important sources of information for scientists during the early stages of development of modern botanical studies.<sup>10</sup> This retrospective perspective

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10 Dhruv RAINA, French Jesuit Scientists in India: Historical Astronomy in the Discourse on India, 1670–1770, in: *Economic and Political Weekly* 34 (1999), pp. 30–38; Steven J. HARRIS, Jesuit Scientific Activity in the Overseas Missions, 1540–1773, in: *Isis* 96 (March 2005), pp. 71–79; Gerhard WAGENITZ, The »Plantae Malabaricae« of the Herbarium at Göttingen Collected near Tranquebar, in: *Taxon* 27.5/6 (1978), pp. 493f.; Karsten HOMMEL, Physico-Theology as Mission Strategy: Missionary Christoph Samuel John's (1746–1813) Understanding of Nature,

on the unexpected consequences of the Christian missions<sup>11</sup> demonstrates to us that when the European missionaries came in contact with people of the non-European spaces, there was a multi-directional flow of ideas and influence. European missionaries were significant players in the connected histories of Europe and Asia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, many of the scholar-missionaries belonging to the Protestant mission societies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were members of professional academic societies in Europe; a few of them had been awarded honorary doctorates by prominent universities of their time.<sup>13</sup> In most cases, the subjects of their inquiry did not belong to Indological studies of the Sanskritist kind but the more specific knowledge forms that were regionally relevant. Jakob Hunziker was one of those Europeans who responded to the difference in his contact zone by creating a unique book of illustrations about tropical flora. The other European residents of South India who responded to the biodiversity of this region by recording, illustrating, classifying and writing about its plants and trees included Hendrik Adrian van Reede (1636–1691), a high-ranking officer of the Dutch East India Company, Christoph Theodosius Walther (1699–1741) and Johann Peter Rottler (1749–1836) of the Danish-English-Halle Mission in Tranquebar. Among the Basel missionaries, Immanuel Pfeleiderer (1872–1949) translated this fascination for local plants and trees into another genre of writing, a school textbook about them.<sup>14</sup> Van Reede's twelve volumes on the »Garden of Malabar« did not just introduce the plants and trees of South India to European botanists, but it was one of the first attempts at a systematic study of diverse plants. It was published

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in: Andreas GROSS/Vincent KUMARADOSS/Heike LIEBAU (eds.), *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India*, vol. III: *Communication between India and Europe*, Halle 2006, pp. 1115–1133; Heike LIEBAU, »Alle Dinge, die zu wissen nöthig sind«. Religiös-soziale Übersetzungsprozesse im kolonialen Indien, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 38, Übersetzungen (2012), pp. 243–271; Johannes HENIGER, *Hendrik Adriaan van Reede tot Drakenstein (1636–1691) and Hortus Malabaricus: A Contribution to the History of Dutch Colonial Botany*, Rotterdam 1986; Immanuel PFELEIDERER, *Glimpses into the Life of Indian Plants*, Mangalore <sup>2</sup>1912.

- 11 Even though the primary purpose of the missionary societies of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century was evangelisation, their work in the mission fields has had several unexpected consequences. This idea of unexpected consequences has been explored in Heather J. SHARKEY, *Cultural Conversions. Unexpected Consequences of Christian Missionary Encounters in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia*, Syracuse, NY 2013.
- 12 The idea of »connected histories« was first used by the historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam to describe the way Europe, Asia and Africa were connected through travel and trade links during the early modern period. See Sanjay SUBRAHMANYAM, *Explorations in Connected History. From the Tagus to the Ganges*, New Delhi 2005.
- 13 Johann Peter Rottler of the Danish-English-Halle Mission was given an honorary doctorate by the University of Erlangen in 1795; Herrmann Mögling of the Basel Mission by the Tübingen University in 1858; Ferdinand Kittel of the Basel Mission by the Tübingen University in 1896.
- 14 Immanuel PFELEIDERER, *Glimpses into the Life of Indian Plants. An Elementary Indian Botany*, Mangalore <sup>3</sup>1916.

well before the proper foundation of botanical studies, as understood now, was established.<sup>15</sup> The first volume of Van Reede's work explicitly mentions a Malabarian doctor of the Izhava caste, Itty Achudem, and three Brahmin pandits as his primary source of information for the description of the medicinal uses of the plants. In one sense, the genealogy of Hunziker's work is formed by these local plant experts and the European plant enthusiasts. The return of botanical knowledge via the textbooks of the Basel Mission during the nineteenth century brings this knowledge back in another form, this time in the form of educational resources. The loose network of local custodians and practitioners of plant-based knowledge and the resident European plant-enthusiasts and international botanists, stretching from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, enabled a more systematic study of the biodiversity of South India. In the realm of botanical knowledge, the intense engagement of the Europeans with local systems of knowledge resulted in a form of collaboration which, in the long term, contributed to a deeper understanding of global biodiversity. How did the close interactions between the European missionaries and the local communities impact their respective religious and social values? In the following sections, the nature of religious and social negotiations induced by the presence of the European missionaries in the contact zone will be examined with the help of two sets of documents.

### Negotiating Religious Difference in the Contact Zones: From Local Cosmopolitanism to Global Inclusivism

The notion of »difference« is quite central to negotiations in the »contact zones«. Difference could indicate a range of things: from different food habits to different philosophical and religious worldviews. The people of Tranquebar and Mangalore were not unfamiliar to negotiating cultural difference. In the case of Tranquebar, a century before Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg arrived there in 1706, the Danish East India Trading Company had appropriated this port town as one of its important trading posts. Similarly Mangalore, the headquarters of the Basel Mission in India, was an important port for merchants from the Middle East and, as the historian-novelist Amitav Ghosh shows us, was already the site of brisk commerce in the twelfth century.<sup>16</sup> In these port towns, long exposure to outside cultures was matched by an internal differentiation into different religious or caste groups. This was true

15 Hendrik VAN REEDE TOT DRACKENSTEIN, *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus*, vols. 1–12, Amsterdam 1678–1703, URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5962/bhl.title.707> (access date: 14 October 2014). Also see, K. S. MANILAL, *Hortus Malabaricus and the Socio-cultural Heritage of India*, Calicut 2012.

16 Amitav GHOSH, *The Slave of Ms. H. 6*, in: Id., *The Imam and the Indian: Prose Pieces*, Delhi 2002, pp. 169–242.

of the Tranquebar society of the early eighteenth century, when Ziegenbalg started his work there as a missionary; it was also true of Mangalore in the 1830s when the first group of missionaries from Basel started preaching the Gospel there. I use the term »localised cosmopolitanism« to indicate the heterogeneity that characterised these locations. But this description should not be taken as an indication of the absence of hierarchy or boundaries in these contexts. Irreducible difference between the groups, however, was not always an obstacle for the coexistence of these different communities of people.

In this context of »localised cosmopolitanism«, the missionaries appeared as messengers of a faith that they believed to be of global relevance. The Pietism-inspired Protestant missionaries of the Danish-English-Halle Mission as well as the Basel Mission brought with them a specific understanding of life and salvation. Both groups of missionaries believed that without spiritual rebirth, no one, not even a Christian, could be considered a true child of God. They asserted that only when one renounced the life of sin and experienced rebirth by accepting the forgiveness of Christ, could one truly become a Christian. Within the context of difference and diversity, the Protestant missionaries proclaimed that those who renounced the world and turned to Christ would become members of an *exclusive* community of God's people. Paradoxically, this exclusive claim also had an *inclusive* reach: all lives, without any distinction of caste or creed, race or gender, were worthy of grace and salvation. In the localised cosmopolitanism of the port towns of South India, many forms of community life could coexist, but their inhabitants could not cross the well-established boundaries of normative behaviour and hierarchical practices that they had inherited from their forebears. In such a context, the Protestant missionaries' proclamation about the universal availability of grace was received differently by the different levels of the social hierarchy. Hence the »Others« who conversed with the European missionaries in the contact zones were not just different; they were radically different because of their non-negotiable commitments (for example, in their belief that they could not change their inherited worldview) and hierarchically different because of a caste-based social hierarchy (for example, in their belief that they were who and what they were because of their birth in a specific caste or religious community).

In a context where social status was determined by the birth of an individual into a specific caste or religious community, the proclamation of the missionaries about the universal availability of grace was received differently by different groups of people. The conversations between the people of the Tranquebar region and the missionaries from Halle reveal the divergence in the approach to metaphysical questions between the two groups. The following analysis of the conversations recorded by the missionaries from Halle helps us understand how the two groups negotiated their religious differences.



## On Difficult Conversations

The texts chosen for analysis in this section of the article are recollections of the conversations that the Danish-Halle missionaries had with the local people in Tranquebar and its surrounding areas during the early years of their work in the eighteenth century. An account of these 54 conversations is given in the different continuations of the *Hallesche Berichte*.<sup>17</sup> A range of recent publications that draw on the archival resources of the Franckesche Stiftungen have virtually left no document untouched.<sup>18</sup> However, it is important for a thorough research to revisit this moment of the first contact between the Protestant missionaries and the local people from the perspective of the notion of »cultural difference« that I invoked earlier. These conversations reported by the missionaries offer us »the viewpoint of differently placed persons or groups«<sup>19</sup> that engaged in conversation with the Christian missionaries.

I first came across these conversations in Jenkin Thomas Philipps' translation in *Thirty Four Conferences*.<sup>20</sup> I am aware of the dangers of taking these conversations at face value. These conversations were published years

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17 I am indebted to Daniel Jeyaraj for bringing these records to my notice. The conversations are spread over the following continuations of the *Hallesche Berichte*: 8. Cont., pp. 505–605; 9. Cont., pp. 662–808; 15. Cont., pp. 11–72; 16. Cont., pp. 73–151; 17. Cont., pp. 153–224.

18 Daniel JEYARAJ, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, the Father of Modern Protestant Mission: An Indian Assessment, Delhi et al. 2006; Daniel JEYARAJ (transl.), Tamil Language for Europeans. Ziegenbalg's Grammatica Damulica (1716), Wiesbaden 2010; Daniel JEYARAJ/Richard FOX YOUNG, Hindu-Christian Epistolary Self-disclosures. »Malabarian Correspondence« between German Pietist Missionaries and South Indian Hindus (1712–1714), Wiesbaden 2013; Heike LIEBAU et al. (eds.), Mission und Forschung. Translokale Wissensproduktion zwischen Indien und Europa im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert, Halle 2011; Andreas NEHRING, Orientalismus und Mission. Die Repräsentation der tamilischen Gesellschaft und Religion durch Leipziger Missionare 1840–1940, Wiesbaden 2003; Michael BERGUNDER, Missionsberichte aus Indien im 18. Jahrhundert. Ihre Bedeutung für die europäische Geistesgeschichte und ihr wissenschaftlicher Quellenwert für die Indienkunde, Halle 1999.

19 DESHPANDE, Contemporary India. A Sociological View, p. 8.

20 Bartholomäus ZIEGENBALG, Thirty Four Conferences between the Danish Missionaries and the Malabarian Bramans: (or Heathen Priests) in the East Indies, Concerning the Truth of the Christian Religion: Together with Some Letters Written by the Heathens to the Said Missionaries. Translated Out of High Dutch by Mr. Philipps. London 1719. In their introduction to the new translation of the »Malabarian Correspondence«, Daniel Jeyaraj and Richard Fox Young warn us that Philipps paraphrased texts rather than actually translate them. See Jeyaraj/Fox YOUNG, Hindu-Christian Epistolary Self-Disclosures, p. 5. I tend to believe that the English translation of Jenkin Thomas Philipps had its own significance as an independent text that was circulated among the English-speaking public almost immediately after the death of Ziegenbalg in 1718. However, in this presentation I use the German version of the protocols as they appear in the *Hallesche Berichte*. See also Hugald GRAFE, Hindu Apologetics at the Beginning of the Protestant Era in India, in: Michael BERGUNDER, Missionsberichte aus Indien im 18. Jahrhundert. Ihre Bedeutung für die europäische Geistesgeschichte und ihr wissenschaftlicher Quellenwert für die Indienkunde, Halle 2004, pp. 61–93.



after they were supposed to have taken place; hence we wonder what specific reasons prompted their publication at a later stage. Their publication in the Continuations of the *Hallesche Berichte* meant that they had a »wide circulation«.<sup>21</sup> Ziegenbalg was a missionary who was part of a well-established system of communication that was centralised in Halle, from where it reached out to other parts of the world, including England and the colonies of North America. These protocols would have been reviewed at different levels, and the missionaries themselves would have given thought to what was sent in writing to Halle.<sup>22</sup> And yet, there is an astonishing level of forthrightness in these texts when they reproduce the response of the »Others« to the claims they made on behalf of Christianity. From the standpoint of a missionary, the inclusion of this response makes the records vulnerable as texts because they do not exactly serve the purpose of evangelisation. And yet, they are the tenuous threads that give us an idea about the nature of the conversations that took place in the early days of the Protestant mission in the Indian sub-continent. But perhaps it is precisely their vulnerability as »Christian texts« that turns them into important resources for anyone who is interested in understanding how communities with radically different world-views and faith perspectives respond to each other.

The 54 conversations are fascinating and illuminating because of their ability to give us a peek into Tamil society in the early eighteenth century. Most of the conversation partners are from the group that the missionaries recognise as the learned people of that society: the prominent members from the Brahmin and the Muslim communities, often their priests. At the beginning and the end of the conversations, there is usually a narrative that describes a little bit of the context within which these conversations took place. For example, in the fifth conference, in Continuation 8, Ziegenbalg describes that he welcomed his guests by offering them betel nut.<sup>23</sup> This indicates that within a year after his arrival, Ziegenbalg had adopted a custom that showed honour and respect to the guest. The initial conversations reveal that the learned members of the community seek him out in order to talk to him. Their consistent reaction, at least as recorded in these conversations, is one of civility and politeness. They respond respectfully to Ziegenbalg's words, even when they do not understand why the missionary's claim about the true God should come to the puzzling conclusion that all others were somehow false.<sup>24</sup> Already in the first conversation, a learned man among the

21 GRAFE, *Hindu Apologetics at the Beginning of the Protestant Era in India*, p. 75.

22 For more on Francke's editorial role, cf. JEYARAJ/FOX YOUNG, *Hindu-Christian Epistolary Self-Disclosures*, pp. 53–54.

23 Das fünfte Gespräch, in: *Hallesche Berichte*, 8. Conti., pp. 527–531, at p. 527.

24 Compare this with Hugald Grafe's comments on the »Malabarian Correspondence«: »This encounter shows that the Hindus seriously examined the challenge to their religion that came

local people who come to Ziegenbalg concludes: »We are just human beings, and we live in one world. We were also created by one God; why don't we want to listen to one another? After all, everyone has the freedom to believe the way he would like to.«<sup>25</sup> He then goes on to say:

God has revealed himself in your land among white Christians, in the manner that you explained to me just now; on the other hand, however, in our land, and among us black Malabarians, in another manner: You believe in what has been revealed to you; and we believe in what has been revealed to us. Christ became human among you in Europe just as Vishnu became human among us. You believe that you would be blessed through Christ; we believe that we would be blessed through Vishnu. All this is God's play: that he reveals himself in this land in this manner, and in yet another context, in another manner.<sup>26</sup>

Basically this philosophically and theologically nuanced insistence on difference – perhaps we could even say an insistence on their radical difference, the evidence for which, they claim, is demonstrated by the »Alterthum« of their religion – is something that we see repeated in most of the 54 conversations. The religious reasoning – the religious common sense – that they employed was quite different from the one employed by Ziegenbalg. Problems arose, however, when the conversation partner strongly committed to one worldview chose to use evaluative terms to talk about the worldview of the »Others«.

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from Christianity. They were drawn into a dialogue of asking and replying, of accusing and excusing, and of trying to understand the other side. Accordingly their apologetics ranged from harsh countercharges over intelligence defence, to sympathetic and bridgebuilding explanation. However, although some subjects treated show considerable depth in grasping religious problems and in spiritual quest, on the whole one cannot escape the impression that politeness and cautiousness exerted some restraint and the whole exchange was regarded as a sort of vanguard battle at which not all ammunition available was to be used up.« GRAFE, *Hindu Apologetics at the Beginning of the Protestant Mission Era in India*, p. 93.

25 Das Erste Gespräch, in: Hallesche Berichte, 8th Continuation, pp. 505–514, at p. 510: »Er sprach: Wir sind ja Menschen, und wohnen in einer Welt, es hat uns auch nur ein Gott geschaffen; warum wolten wir einander nicht gerne hören? Hat doch nachmals ohne dem ein jeder Freyheit zu glauben was er will.«

26 Ibid., at p. 512: »Gott hat sich in eurem Lande und unter euch weissen Christen, auf jetzetz erzählete Art offenbahret: in unserm Lande aber, und unter uns Schwartzen Malabaren, wiederum auf andere Art: Wie sich nun Gott bey euch offenbahret hat, so gläubet ihrs; und wie er sich bey uns offenbahret hat, so gläuben wirs. Bey euch in Europa ist Christus Mensch worden; und bei uns in Ost-Indien ist Wischtnu Mensch worden: ihr gläubet durch Christum selig zu werden; und wir gläuben durch Wischtnu selig zu werden. Es ist also Gottes sein Spiel-Werck, daß er sich in diesem Lande auf diese, und in jenem Lande wieder auf eine andere Weise offenbare.«

### On the Sameness of all Births

The missionaries were often asked if Christians themselves lived exemplary lives, and it is in response to these questions that we learn about the very specific kind of spiritual rebirth that the first generation of Protestant missionaries were talking about. Being baptised as a Christian, or going to Church regularly, was not what the missionaries understood as conversion.<sup>27</sup> This point seems to have been understood by their Brahmin counterparts, but it was not considered to be sufficient reason for them to leave what was thought of as a good way of living by their ancestors for several thousand years. But as people who held on to their views and respectfully conversed with the missionaries whom they considered »learned« like themselves, the Brahmins engaged in inter-religious politeness and respect, rather than in religious aggressiveness.

But the learned Hindus and Muslims were not the only ones who spoke to Ziegenbalg, even though the conversations recorded here were mostly held with these prominent men. We also see people from different strata of society being drawn into conversations: traders, pilgrims, ascetics, women, fisher folk, children and very old sages. Even though the primary objective of the conversation was to talk and hear about the Christian religion, the conversations touched upon poverty, caste, women, kings, tax, medical knowledge, books and education. In one of the conversations<sup>28</sup> between the missionaries and two prominent members of the Hindu and Muslim communities, we learn that the work of the Tranquebar missionaries focused specifically on the poor and the lowly. In one instance, we follow Ziegenbalg through three fishing villages, where the fishermen complain about their present condition and criticise the social structure that led to it but are unwilling to do anything about it because they leave it all to their »Oberste« or superiors.<sup>29</sup> It is in this conversation that we get a clue as to the »universal« applicability of Ziegenbalg's idea of salvation. He says:

My birth was as sinful as yours; my natural reasoning skills as dark and blind as yours; but through a spiritual rebirth I became a child of God and was received through grace; and through the observance of the word of God I received spiritual illumination, so that I can now speak to you about such mysteries, and show you where you can find such spiritual rebirth and share in godly enlightenment.<sup>30</sup>

27 For an elaborate discussion on this, see Judith BECKER, *Conversio im Wandel: Basler Missionare zwischen Europa und Südindien*, Göttingen 2015.

28 Das fünfte Gespräch, in: *Hallesche Berichte*, 8. Cont., pp. 527–531.

29 Das sechzehende Gespräch, in: *Hallesche Berichte*, 8. Cont., pp. 595–605.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 603: »Denn meine Geburth ist eben so sündhaftig gewesen, als eure; und mein natürlicher Verstand ist eben so finster und blind gewesen, als euer Verstand ist: aber durch eine

A little later he adds: »You shouldn't think that God makes a difference between the White and the Black, and hence will not offer as much grace to one group as to the other.«<sup>31</sup>

### Cultural Difference and Human Dignity: The Use of the »Pharmakon«

In the above conversations, it is clear that Ziegenbalg and his dialogue partners employed completely different understandings of God, sin, salvation and social hierarchy. It could be argued that the religious common sense of the missionary is quite different from the religious common sense of the local people. At the same time, it is clear that within the hierarchy of the caste system, birth or rebirth into specific caste groups operates within a different logic from that of the Pietist worldview where all are sinners and in need of salvation. These dialogues soon turn into conversations about cultural difference and social hierarchy. This is where it is important to refer to an argument from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's much-quoted essay, »Can the Subaltern Speak?«<sup>32</sup> In this essay she speaks of the »elusive« figure of the subaltern woman, whose history is not quite captured by the subalternist historiographical efforts. In fact, she argues that the subaltern and marginalised women are elusive figures even in the historical documents, making it hard for the historians to »recover« their voices. As stated earlier, in the texts that reproduce Ziegenbalg's conversations with the local people, on several occasions, women do make an appearance. They ask questions that demand precise answers from the missionary. We hear, at least on two or three occasions, the voice of the poor, as they explain to the missionary that their hard life was pre-determined and hence there was nothing much that they could do about it. We have conversations that mention the »Barriers« or the Pariahs who were the most marginalised people of that society; they are the most elusive figures of these recorded conversations. It is to them and to the women, the poor, and the socially marginalised fisher folk that historians have to listen to because most converts to Protestant Christianity came from the non-elite communities of society. If one were to use Spivak's description

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geistliche Widergeburt bin ich von Gott zu einem Kinde aus Gnaden angenommen worden, und durch Betrachtung göttliches Wortes habe ich in meinem Verstande eine geistliche Erleuchtung bekommen, daß ich also mit euch von solchen Geheimnissen nunmehr reden, und euch gleichfalls denjenigen Weg zeigen kan, darinnen ihr solcher geistlichen Wiedergeburt und der göttlichen Erleuchtung könt theilhaftig werden.«

31 Ibid., p. 604: »Dahero ihr nicht gedencken dörrft, daß er unter Blancken und Schwarzen einen Unterscheid mache, und diesen nicht so viel Gnade mittheilen wolle, als jenen.«

32 Gayatri Chakravorty SPIVAK, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, in: Rosalind C. MORRIS (ed.), *Reflections on the History of an Idea. Can the Subaltern Speak?*, New York 2010, pp. 21–78, at p. 22.

of the subaltern subject, the poor converts from the marginalised sections of the society are the »participants/resisters/victims«<sup>33</sup> of this system of social hierarchy. They are participants, though not of their own choice, in a social system that also makes them its victims.

According to Spivak, the subaltern subject is the one who is excluded from all networks of institutions and communication, and that is why it is difficult to hear the voice of the subaltern in historical documents. In a modern democracy, it is only when the subaltern people are networked into the very institutions and communication systems that exclude them that they cease to be marginalised; it is only then that they cease to be muted by these very systems. It is to describe this paradox that Spivak, following Derrida, uses the Greek term »pharmakon«, that which is both a medicine and a poison.<sup>34</sup>

Taking a cue from Spivak's discussion of the subaltern, this concept of the »pharmakon« can be used to illustrate the paradox of »cultural difference« in the cosmopolitan and multi-religious but hierarchical contact zone where the missionaries and the local people negotiated with one another. The »pharmakon« of respect for cultural difference which is so essential in a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society also demands that we know how to strike a fine balance between that which is medicinal and healing on the one hand and that which is poisonous and destructive on the other. From Ziegenbalg's discussion with the elite custodians of knowledge systems among the »Others«, we learn ways of respecting radical difference; from the marginalised among them, we also learn about the desire of all human beings to have a better chance in this life, here and now. From the much-respected elders who came politely to talk about their faith with Ziegenbalg we learn that difference can be an indicator of parallel, equally good ways of life; from the marginalised among the same »Others« we learn about the universality of the human desire for a life of dignity. If the remedy of respect for cultural difference is not handled well, it might turn into a poison for those who struggle for a life of dignity.

In this sense, this initial moment of encounter warns us about the problems in negotiating other forms of religious and social common sense, especially when people who are strongly committed to one set of values treat everything else as non-negotiable, or worse still, as false. The conversations, when viewed from the other side, tell us that the assertion of truth by one group does not have to be accompanied by a vehement denunciation of every other way of life. On the other hand, the missionaries, in arguing that everyone

33 Ibid., p. 21.

34 Ibid., p. 21. See also Gayatri Chakravorty SPIVAK, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Calcutta 1999, p. 54 n. 67 and p. 83. Spivak's own discussion is inspired by an Derridean account of the use of *pharmakon* by Plato: see Jacques DERRIDA, *Dissemination*, Chicago 1981, especially pp. 97–117.

was eligible for grace, offered a new theological worldview for a segment of society that otherwise would have accepted social marginalisation, poverty and socially accepted hierarchy as given. In doing so, they created a new space, albeit restricted, for negotiation for groups that were otherwise denied agency and subjectivity. To deny this articulation of agency is a step that takes us more in the direction of denying the human dignity of those few who ultimately became Christians. It is a step that pushes the argument regarding respect for »cultural difference« in the direction of poison.

I am not saying that all those who became Christians ultimately managed to wriggle out of their class and caste restrictions.<sup>35</sup> The work of John C. B. Webster<sup>36</sup> on the social history of Christianity in North-west India shows that conversion to Christianity did not make much of a difference to the social status of Christians there. In Tranquebar itself, higher-caste converts eventually demanded the maintenance of caste practices within the Church. This chapter, however, has had a more modest objective in analysing these historical documents from the perspective of the »Others«. It is to indicate the very different effect that the message of equality of all (as sinners, and as those who were worthy of salvation) had on different levels of the cosmopolitan society of Tranquebar. The conversations reproduced in the *Hallesche Berichte* remind us of a difficult heritage of the Christian mission in terms of its inter-religious engagement; they also show us the potential challenge posed by the language of the universal availability of grace to existing caste hierarchies. More importantly, these conversations remind us that this very moment of difficult dialogues opened up a space for negotiation by some groups of people, especially those located among the margins of society, as they could claim equality before God and demand equal treatment by their fellow human beings. The second text analysed here demonstrates the articulation of a desire for equal treatment by a family at another time and in another context.

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35 Within 20 years of the beginning of the Protestant mission, the missionaries in Tranquebar gave in to the demands made by the dominant caste groups for the maintenance of caste distinctions within the Church. See Heike Liebau for details of the re-introduction of caste among the Tamil Christians: Heike LIEBAU, *Die indischen Mitarbeiter der Tranquebarmission (1706–1845). Katecheten, Schulmeister, Übersetzer*, Tübingen 2008, pp. 173–188, especially p. 183.

36 John C. B. WEBSTER, *A Social History of Christianity: North-west India Since 1800*, New Delhi 2007.

## Challenging Social Common Sense: The Risk of Response

More than a century separates the time of Ziegenbalg from 1834, when the first missionaries of the Basel Mission arrived in Mangalore. As a policy, the Basel Mission refused to entertain caste practices among its congregations. One of its first converts from the »respected class« in Mangalore was a young man called Anandrao Kaundinya (1825–1893). The 1843 conversion of this young man from a prominent Brahmin family was widely noted in Mangalore and in the mission circles. Hermann Anandrao Kaundinya, as he became known after his conversion, travelled to Basel for training and was ordained in Leonberg in 1851. He then returned to India as the first Indian missionary of the Basel Mission in Mangalore. After the death of his first wife, he even married a young German woman called Marie Reinhardt, who spent nearly forty years of her life in South India.<sup>37</sup>

Anandrao Kaundinya, a man who had not too much difficulty accepting the Indological view that Germans and Brahmins were different branches of the same »Stamm« (meaning both tribe and trunk) at the beginning of his career, spent much of his later life in the midst of one of the most marginalised groups among the Dalit communities. It is in this segment of his life, and in response to his belief in the offer of grace to all, that we see transformations that are of significance to the lives of the marginalised.

A »rough note book« belonging to Anandrao Kaundinya contains a »Statement of Facts«<sup>38</sup> about the case of a Dalit family that had decided to move to the new settlement of the converted Christians in Anandapur, a place named after Anandrao Kaundinya because this parcel of land was bought with his money.<sup>39</sup> The note and the drafts of the two accompanying letters tell us the story of a poor woman called Pua, who was born into a family which was under hereditary bondage to the King of Coorg. Pua was »freed« in 1834, when the British took possession of the region. The freed Pua had, however, married a man who worked for a local landholding family. According to traditional land tenure practices, this land was called *Jamma* property, indicating that it had been given to the family by the Coorg kings

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37 Mrinalini SEBASTIAN, The Scholar-Missionaries of Basel Mission in Southwestern India. Language, Identity, and Knowledge in Flux, in: Heather Sharkey (ed.), *Cultural Conversions. Unexpected Consequences of Christian Missionary Encounters in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia*, Syracuse, NY 2013, pp. 176–202.

38 Anandrao KAUNDINYA, *Berichte von H. Kaundinya im Entwurf, 1870–74*, Basel Mission/mision 21, C-10.33b,1, Nachlass Kaundinya, BV 316.

39 For details, cf. Albrecht FRENZ, *Freiheit hat Gesicht: Anandapur – Eine Begegnung zwischen Kodagu und Baden-Württemberg*, Stuttgart 2003, pp. 48f.



as hereditary property.<sup>40</sup> Pua's husband was a *Jammadaalu*, a labourer born in a family that was tied in perpetuity to the land and its owners. William Adam, the British Baptist missionary turned Unitarian minister who took part in the British anti-slavery movement, called this form of bondage »pre-dial slavery«.<sup>41</sup> More recently, the historian Muzzafar Assadi has interpreted this as »perpetual bonded labour in the plantation economy«.<sup>42</sup> These bonded labourers were used exclusively for agricultural labour; their landlords had proprietary rights over them.

We learn from Anandrao Kaundinya's note that Pua was a »free« woman who was not the *Jammadalu* of the landlord. But the events recorded here involve other members of her family, especially her sons and her son-in-law to be, who seem to be in the *Jammadalu* system. They had decided to put an end to this tradition of being perpetual labourers on someone else's land and moved to Anandapur. The »Statement of Facts« reports that the landlord came to demand their return but Pua's two sons and her future son-in-law »resolutely refused to do any thing [sic] of the sort, and said that they had quite enough of the ill treatment that they had received at [the landlord's] hands«. Frustrated, the landlord brought a lawsuit accusing the family, even Pua's two daughters who were just 11 and 12, of »breach of trust«.

Culturally and socially, in one sense, this incident could be termed a »breach of trust« in that the way the Coorg dynasty handled land was different from the way the British understood ownership of land. *Jamma* land was owned jointly by a family and hence did not belong to any one owner. The history of a trading company taking over the kingdom of Coorg and banishing one of its heirs to Varanasi, ending up at the court of Queen Victoria, and where his daughter was baptized as Victoria Gowramma, is yet another facet of this story.<sup>43</sup> The freeing of the bonded labourers belonging to the king's court by Mark Cubbon in 1834, a year after the British abolition of slavery in 1833 is yet another strand in this connected history. The history of the Coorg Mission, which functioned in its initial years as an independent mission, and later on as a wing of the Basel Mission, is entangled in this complex and fascinating moment in Indian history.

What is important for this analysis is not the text itself but the sequence of events narrated by Kaundinya. The story belongs *only* to Pua and her family. It is here that we see the echoes of a story that can anchor us firmly in this

40 T. P. VIJAYA, Honor in Chains. The Problem of Hitti-Bitti-Chakri in Jamma Tenure in Coorg 1800–1930, in: Indian Economic and Social History Review 32 (1995), pp. 135–153.

41 WILLIAM ADAM, The Law and Custom of Slavery in British India: In a Series of Letters to Thomas Fowell Buxton, Esq., Boston 1840, see especially letter VIII, pp. 163–194.

42 MUZZAFAR ASSADI, Separatist Movement in Coorg, in: Economic and Political Weekly 32 (1997), pp. 3114–3116.

43 C. P. BELLIAPPA, Victoria Gowramma. The Lost Princess of Coorg, New Delhi 2010.



complex historical moment. Pua's story is not about cultural difference or political dominance. These Dalit labourers, whose lives were apparently of less value than cattle's, had decided that they wanted no more of the life of bondage. What matters for this discussion is that Anandrao Kaundinya, the Basel Mission missionaries and the tenants of Anandapur had created the opportunity for Pua and her family to »resolutely refuse« to return to a life of bondage. The words »resolutely refused« are indicative of Pua and her relatives' desire for freedom. However tentative it may have been, the inspiration for such a move came from the nascent discourse of equality and dignity of all human beings. Neither Pua nor her family members would have used the language of equality, but their desire to be free of bondage encouraged them to take shelter among the newly converted Christians of Anandapur.

### Conclusion

This article has tried to look at the nineteenth-century contact zones where missionaries and the local communities interacted with one another on a daily basis. This interaction gave rise to unexpected contacts and deliberate networking. The scholarly missionaries responded to the knowledge systems of the contact zones by transmitting this knowledge to Europe. The example of Jakob Hunziker tells us of the unanticipated ways by which missionaries became important links in the transmission of knowledge from local to the global networks and vice versa. Within the contact zone, European engagement with difference, especially difference in terms of the pharmaceutical use of plants, resulted in the publication of books on the classification and nomenclature of the plants of the world, and eventually in the establishment of the science of botany. The missionaries and their local collaborators often provided the crucial local knowledge that went into the making of new fields of inquiry. These fields of inquiry continue to have global relevance today.

Hunziker's colourful illustrations offer concrete examples of plant diversity in the contact zone of South India. His work also points to a long genealogy of scholars and missionaries who transmitted knowledge from the contact zone to the Europe. Hunziker's contribution to botanical knowledge is an unintended consequence of his work for the Basel Mission. This unanticipated outcome of the contact between a worker of Basel Mission and local flora is an example of the mutually transformative experiences of the people in the contact zone. The example of Hunziker demonstrated that it is important to understand the various levels of interaction between the European missionaries and the local people. In order to explore this further, two sets of texts were chosen: one records a series of conversations between the Protestant missionaries and local leaders of religious communities, and the other an

expression of the desire for freedom by a Dalit family. An analysis of these texts reveals the interplay between the discourse of cultural difference and that of the equality and dignity of all human beings. In a society that claims long traditions of knowledge and culture, the custodians and practitioners of knowledge demand respect for their radical differences. However, in the same society, where caste boundaries mark social hierarchy, new claimants for equality demand respect as human beings, and not simply as members of a culturally different community. When the common sense of the Pietistic discourse engaged the common sense of caste society, the interactions among various communities seem to have opened up a small space for an unanticipated demand for equal treatment by one of the most marginalized groups inhabiting this contact zone. The two sets of texts have demonstrated the special appeal that the message of equality had to a people who were supposedly predestined to a life of perpetual bondage.

Judith Becker

## Liberated by Christ

### Evangelical Missionaries and Slavery in Nineteenth-Century South India

In 1830, the Basel *Evangelischer Heidenbote* and the *Church Missionary Record* reported the same case of atrocious behaviour by a slaveholder, told by the Basel missionaries Jakob Friedrich Sessing and Georg Adam Kissling who worked in Monrovia, Liberia from 1828.<sup>1</sup> The slaveholder had built a fortified house in order to fight against armed colonists who attacked him, covertly sent by the governor. He had given himself the name Don Magill, »Lord of the Sun, Moon, Stars, and 10,000 Dollars«. Sessing wrote in the *Church Missionary Record*: »I believe, a more tyrannical man was never seen on this coast. In order to awe his slaves, he cut some almost to pieces; one he tied to the mouth of a gun and had it fired, three others he had hanged up in a wooden country-house, and set it on fire [...]. These are facts that would not be believed, perhaps, in England, or Europe, or America, at present; but they are true.«<sup>2</sup> Kissling, who was on a mission tour, accidentally used the same boat as the aforementioned colonists and thus witnessed their shooting of the slaveholder. The *Heidenbote* quoted Kissling with the exclamation: »I wonder what the Lord has decided about West Africa in his inscrutable counsel: Why does he allow these poor creatures to be mistreated in such an abominable way? [...] No human heart can imagine the satanic way in which European slave-traders who call themselves Christians comport themselves on the downtrodden shores of unfortunate Africa.«<sup>3</sup> Kissling described scenes he had witnessed in the slave quarters of Don Magill that were capable of making the readers sick. The editor commented on Kissling's report:

When the servants of vice in view of death do their utmost in order to satisfy their infamous avarice with the blood of the poor negroes, what can the friends of Christ do in order to end, with the almighty help of their God and saviour, this atrocity of destruction by the Gospel of peace? This is the highly important question that is before our souls more earnestly and loudly with every day.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Wilhelm SCHLATTER, *Die Geschichte der Basler Mission in Afrika* (Geschichte der Basler Mission 1815–1915. Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der ungedruckten Quellen 3), Basel 1916, pp. 9–16.

2 *Church Missionary Record* 1830, p. 153.

3 *Heidenbote* 1830, p. 65.

4 *Heidenbote* 1830, p. 67.

The engagement of many missionary societies in the abolitionist movement is well known. Again and again, the missionary periodicals published reports on scenes like this; even more often, they agitated against slavery in general and the slave trade in Africa in particular. Indeed, a predominant argument for their missions in Africa was the history of European – or Christian – slave trading. Therefore, the rhetoric of slavery, liberation and freedom played an important role in their publications. This was even more important because of the societies' emphasis on their Protestant character. They connected physical to spiritual slavery and physical to spiritual liberation when emphasising the doctrine of justification. In this theological context as well as in the political context they used the vocabulary of bondage, liberation and freedom.<sup>5</sup>

This article asks how the discourse on slavery, bondage and freedom and the practice against slavery were transferred to the Indian context and which influence this context – life in the Indian contact zone – had on the attitudes of the missionaries when they encountered a very different kind of bondage and slavery to the one they knew from reports on Africa and the Caribbean and with a very different kind of religiosity than they had experienced before. It investigates how their notions of slavery changed due to their contact with Indians. The article demonstrates the significance of religious and political conceptions of bondage for the missions' interpretation of their experiences in India and with Indian tradition and culture. The analysis of manuscript sources shows the missionaries' attitudes towards slavery in India and modifications therein that were due to their experiences in the contact zone.

The paper is based on an analysis of the periodical *Der evangelische Heidenbote* from its beginning in 1828 through the end of the 1850s, when the first generation of missionaries returned to Europe from India and when political and intellectual attitudes towards mission and colonialism changed considerably, in Europe as well as in India.<sup>6</sup> In addition, it examines the manuscript letters and reports from some Basel missionaries to the inspector

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5 On the religious argumentation cf. e.g. Roger ANSTEY, Religion and British Slave Emancipation, in: David ELTIS/James WALVIN (eds.), *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa, and the Americas*, Madison 1981, pp. 37–61; Adolf LOTZ, Sklaverei, Staatskirche und Freikirche. Die englischen Bekenntnisse im Kampf um die Aufhebung von Sklavenhandel (Kölner anglistische Arbeiten), Leipzig 1929; Christopher Leslie BROWN, *Moral Capital. Foundations of British Abolitionism*, Chapel Hill, NC 2006, pp. 333–450; Boyd HILTON, *The Age of Atonement. The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785–1865*, Oxford 1988, esp. pp. 203–211; Jean R. SODERLUND, *Quakers and Slavery. A Divided Spirit*, Princeton, NJ 1985; David Brion DAVIS, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, Oxford 1966, pp. 291–390. On the SPG cf. Travis GLASSON, *Mastering Christianity. Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic world*, New York/Oxford 2012. The SPG, however, did not represent all (missionary) Anglicanism. Cf. with regard to the perspectives of Africans: Douglas AMBROSE, Religion and Slavery, in: Robert L. PAQUETTE/Mark M. SMITH (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*, Oxford 2010, pp. 378–398.

6 In India this was particularly due to the rebellion of 1857, cf. Kim A. WAGNER, *The Great Fear of*

and the leading committee. The Basel missionaries are central to our question because they actually worked with slave castes and among enslaved workers in India. The *Church Missionary Record* is consulted at certain points because of the close interaction between the two societies. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) as well as the Basel Mission – societies that belonged to the evangelical and awakening movement – maintained several stations in southern India. They cooperated in Europe as well as in India and West Africa: Some missionaries transferred from one society to the other (mostly Basel to CMS); other Basel missionaries were unofficially supported by local CMS committees. The example of Sessing's and Kissling's report on the slaveholder demonstrates the interaction of the societies in their publications.

This article analyses evangelical missionaries' religious discourses and their practices. Political or economic motives of abolitionism that have been analysed over the last decades are only casually touched upon.<sup>7</sup> Following the missionaries' understanding and in view of the Indian situation, the article defines slavery in a broad way. The category includes both people who were owned by others and were bonded labourers as well as members of those castes that were considered invisible, polluting and who had, because of their birth and social connections, to do degrading and »polluting« work such as handling dead bodies.<sup>8</sup> By using the same word for both kinds of slavery, the missionaries linked them, and what was demanded for one could be applied to the other.

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1857. Rumours, Conspiracies and the Making of the Indian Uprising, Oxford 2010; Biswamoy PATI, *The 1857 Rebellion*, Delhi/Oxford 2007.

- 7 For an overview cf. Seymour DRESCHER, Trends in der Historiographie des Abolitionismus, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 16 (1990), pp. 187–211; Herbert S. KLEIN, Neuere Interpretationen des atlantischen Sklavenhandels, in: *Ibid.*, pp. 141–160; Howard TEMPERLEY, The Ideology of Antislavery, in: David ELTIS/James WALVIN (eds.), *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa, and the Americas*, Madison 1981, pp. 21–35; Derek R. PETERSON (ed.), *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa, and the Atlantic* (Cambridge Centre of African Studies Series), Athens, OH 2010, pp. 129–149; John STAUFFER, Abolition and Antislavery, in: Robert L. PAQUETTE/Mark M. SMITH (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Slavery in the Americas*, Oxford 2010, pp. 556–577. For an overview over the most important sources cf. e.g. John OLDFIELD (ed.), *The British Transatlantic Slave Trade*, vol. 3: *The Abolitionist Struggle: Opponents of the Slave Trade*, London 2003. Cf. also Stanley L. ENGERMAN, Some Implications of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, in: David ELTIS/James WALVIN (eds.), *The Abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Origins and Effects in Europe, Africa, and the Americas*, Madison 1981, pp. 3–18; Seymour DRESCHER, *Abolition. A History of Slavery and Antislavery*, Cambridge 2009; id., *Econocide. British Slavery in the Era of Abolition*, Chapel Hill 2010.
- 8 Cf. for a discussion of this definition Michael ZEUSKE, *Handbuch Geschichte der Sklaverei. Eine Globalgeschichte von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (De Gruyter-Handbuch), Berlin et al. 2013, esp. pp. 99–108; David ELTIS/St Stanley L. ENGERMAN, Dependence, Servility, and Coerced Labor in Time and Space, in: Id. (eds.), *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. 3: *ad 1420–ad 1804*, Cambridge 2011, pp. 1–21; Kerry WARD, Slavery in Southeast Asia, 1420–1804, in: *Ibid.*, pp. 163–185; Gwyn CAMPBELL, Slavery in the Indian Ocean World, in: Gad HEUMAN/Trevor BURNARD (eds.), *The Routledge History of Slavery*, New York 2012, pp. 52–63.

This article first delineates the Basel and CMS attitudes towards slavery and their religious discourse on bondage and liberation, as published in their periodicals. The focus of this section will be on Africa and the Caribbean. The second part analyses the religious concepts of bondage, liberation and freedom with regard to Indian tradition and culture. The third part deals with Basel missionaries' attitudes and practice regarding slavery in India. The second and third parts will demonstrate the impact of life in the contact zone on the missions' concepts of slavery and their behaviour towards slaves.

## 1. Basel and Church Missionary Society on Slavery

The evangelical Church Missionary Society was founded in 1799 as the »Society for Missions to Africa and the East«. An obligation to make good for the »wrongs« of slavery that Christians had inflicted on Africans was one of the stated motives for its foundation.<sup>9</sup> In 1804, it sent its first missionaries to West Africa. In 1813, the first CMS missionaries went to India. In both instances, Germans were the first to be sent out by the CMS, due to a lack of English candidates. Many of its leaders were central to the abolitionist movement, too, foremost among them William Wilberforce.

In 1815, the Basel Mission founded a seminary that was meant to educate missionaries who were to be sent out by other European mission societies. It turned out that needs of the CMS and supply from the Basel Mission complemented each other, and several decades of fruitful cooperation (several disagreements notwithstanding) ensued. In the 1820s, Basel changed its policy and sent missionaries abroad, first to the Caucasus and then to West Africa. In 1833, the new charter of the East India Company allowed foreign mission societies to work in India, and in the spring of 1834, Basel sent the first missionaries there, with the (at first reluctant) help of CMS officials and the (reportedly never reluctant) help of the CMS missionaries in India. Following consultations with their colleagues from other missionary societies, they founded a first mission station in Mangalore. Contrary to the English Evangelicals, the German and Swiss awakened Christians mostly did not involve themselves in political actions at this time.

Two principal assumptions guided the CMS and even more so the Basel Mission in their approach to the world: In accordance with many evangelical and awakened Christians of the early nineteenth century, they interpreted

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Michael MANN, *Sahibs, Sklaven und Soldaten. Geschichte des Menschenhandels rund um den Indischen Ozean*, Darmstadt 2012, p. 10, votes for a narrower definition but also refers to slave castes. The boundaries between the two forms of slavery were fluid.

9 Church Missionary Record 1830 (1st vol.), p. 1; Heidenbote 1828 (1st vol.), p. 2.

everything from a religious perspective, and they held a fundamentally dualistic worldview. Because of the latter, they contrasted the atrocities of slavery with stories about the equality of all human beings.<sup>10</sup>

In the mission periodicals, there were more instances when the trade in and the ownership of slaves were repudiated in general terms than there were actual reports like the one quoted above.<sup>11</sup> This was at least partly due to the aims the missions pursued in their publications: Their main objective was not to demonstrate the atrocities of slavery but to emphasise the duties of »true« Christians and to underline the unity of humankind. Reports that describe the abilities of (former) slaves as being equal or even superior to those of Europeans were more numerous than those on the cruelty of slaveholders. Moreover, the missionaries worked mostly among former slaves and only seldom with those who were still enslaved – mainly because they simply had no access to slaves. And those slaveholders who allowed them to teach the slaves Christianity they were usually not those who mistreated their slaves and therefore they did not provide an example for cruelty.

Physical slavery was often paralleled with spiritual slavery: »Many English missionaries [...] show the abandoned slaves [...] the means to get from slavery of sin to the freedom of the children of God.«<sup>12</sup> The Basel and CMS missionaries wanted to free the slaves from both. They would not accept mere physical freedom as »real« freedom, and they held that spiritual freedom should also find expression in life in the world. That is why, for the most part, they opposed slavery.

The Basel mission candidates were trained to view slavery both as a religious problem in light of the doctrine of justification and as a humanitarian problem. In his class on mission in the Basel seminary, Joseph Josenhans, director of the Basel mission from 1849 to 1879, counted slavery among the practices that had formerly been accommodated by missions but were then refuted.<sup>13</sup> Christian Gottlieb Blumhardt, the first Basel mission director, in his class on dogmatics from 1835–37 elaborated on bondage by sin.

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10 Cf. e.g. Church Missionary Record 1830, p. 14 (on West Africa): »I shall always be glad to collect such facts, from information and observation, respecting the inhabitants of Africa, as will prove the best refutation of the great errors of many Philosophers in Europe, who disdain the idea of acknowledging the black Africans as brethren belonging to the same family of which they are members. [...] there is more fear of God, and less vices to be met with, among this people, than – it is awful to say – the majority of well-instructed Europeans exhibit in their conduct at home and abroad. It is remarkable, that the Africans of the interior extremely despised and abhor white people, on account of the truly-abominable slave trade. This is an unquestionable evidence, that such Africans have higher and more just feelings than the advocates of slavery.« Cf. also Heidenbote 1840, p. 89.

11 Heidenbote 1828, p. 17.

12 Heidenbote 1830, p. 3.

13 Joseph JOSENHANS, Praktische Missionswissenschaft, QS-21,1, Basel Mission Archive, 1874, p. 16v. Cf. on the accommodation e.g. GLASSON, Mastering Christianity.



Nearly all of the Basel Indian missionaries during the first decades studied with Blumhardt. Blumhardt, on several occasions, stressed the equality of all human beings before God. He also stated that God wanted all people to be helped.<sup>14</sup> All humans, according to Blumhardt, had the same origin and the same goal, the *imago Dei*.<sup>15</sup> Although they thought of themselves as strict Lutherans, these awakened Christians of the early nineteenth century modified Lutheran theology in one important point: They held the opinion that people could decide whether they wanted to serve God or the Devil. Blumhardt said that evil spirits could only get hold of those who »served sin voluntarily and by their own choice«. <sup>16</sup> He thus taught bondage by sin and free will simultaneously.<sup>17</sup> There was a threefold goal to the life and death of Christ, according to Blumhardt: redemption, liberation and salvation.<sup>18</sup> All people were, according to this theology, bound by a »tyranny of evil lusts and passions«, and Blumhardt called this »the works of the Devil«. <sup>19</sup> Christ was seen as the saviour and liberator. Blessedness was offered to all people because Christ had died for all.<sup>20</sup> The freedom of will was defined by Christ himself, Blumhardt said, who had gone to death voluntarily and submitted to the wishes of the Father without considering his own will.<sup>21</sup> Everybody, according to Blumhardt, was free to respond to the offer of salvation. This was, aside from the emphasis on personal choice, pretty much traditional Lutheran theology with its emphasis on liberation and justification.

This theology was transferred and adapted to mission situations by the societies and their missionaries.<sup>22</sup> Slavery was seen as an evil because it prevented the slaves from getting to know Christianity and from learning about the way to spiritual freedom. This argument reflected the experience of the missions in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Yet slavery also was seen as evil because of a more spiritual argument: If all men are equal and God's will for all is freedom, then they must not oppress each other.

Still, the missionaries faced a dilemma: on the one hand, they opposed slavery on principle; on the other hand, they sought to obey New Testament commandments that every person should accept his or her place in the world.<sup>23</sup>

14 Christian Gottlieb BLUMHARDT, *Dogmatik M.S.*, QS-22,1, Basel Mission Archive, 1835/37, vol. I, § 136.

15 *Id.*, *Dogmatik II*, §§ 11–20.

16 *Id.*, *Dogmatik I*, § 150: »die freiwillig und aus eigener Wahl der Sünde dienen«.

17 *Id.*, *Dogmatik II*, §§ 66, 69.

18 *Ibid.*, § 141: »Errettung, Befreiung, Seligmachung (σώζω)«.

19 *Ibid.*, § 146: »Tyrannei böser Lüste und Leidenschaften [...] Werke des Teufels«.

20 *Ibid.*, §§ 184, 179.

21 *Ibid.*, § 151.

22 Those Basel missionaries' wives who worked in the mission and whose letters and reports are extant expressed the same views.

23 This twofold concept of slavery by evangelical missionaries was noted in several studies, depending on the point of view of the author with more emphasis on one side or on the other



Therefore, as well as for political and strategic reasons, they simultaneously aimed at abolition and preached against social uproar. When slaveholders cared for their slaves, looked after their spiritual and physical well-being and allowed Christian instruction, Basel and CMS missionaries did not oppose them personally. With reference to the New Testament epistle to Philemon and other passages from the Bible, they did not condemn slavery. In the rare cases of »good« slaveholders, they thought that spiritual freedom could also be experienced in a situation when the body was bound. Indeed, they preferred this to a life of, as they called it, depravity among liberated slaves who had no work and no-one to look after and care for them. Clearly, spiritual freedom was more important to the missionaries than physical freedom. However, the ideal was the unity of both.

After some years of work with slaves and former slaves and in light of their experiences in these contact zones, the opinion of the mission societies and that of some of the missionaries working in Africa, the Caribbean or the Mediterranean area began to change. They clearly grew disappointed, and while they still favoured abolitionism and argued for the liberation of the slave, the enthusiasm of their former statements on the equality of all humans or even, as they had said in the early years, of the superiority of Africans over Europeans – or »blacks« over »whites« – decreased.<sup>24</sup> The black Africans and former slaves had not converted to Christianity as quickly or as wholeheartedly as expected. They did not all want to embrace the supposed spiritual freedom in addition to their physical freedom. They did not become the model Christians many of the missionaries had expected them to be. In the missions' dualistic framework, the opposite of slavery was no longer necessarily equality. Instead, the idea of vice came to the fore again. And vice could be committed, as they had learnt, by free Europeans as well as by African or American or Indian slaves. Thus, the traditional opposition between bondage by vice and freedom by Christ that Blumhardt had taught again became the dominant scheme of interpretation.

The strong connection between physical and spiritual freedom was less often made and the call for abolitionism became increasingly based on other arguments. In the 1830s, this process was particularly apparent with individual missionaries.<sup>25</sup> In 1832, Georg Adam Kissling related how Africans sold

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– or with the interpretation of duplicity, cf. e.g. GLASSON, *Mastering Christianity*; ANSTEY, *Religion and Slave Emancipation*; RODNEY STARK, *For the Glory of God. How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-hunts, and the End of Slavery*, Princeton, NJ 2003. On official attitudes towards slavery in India cf. e.g. MANN, *Sahibs*, pp. 161–203.

24 Cf. with reference to Africa, RICHARD PRICE, *Making Empire. Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa*, Cambridge/New York 2008.

25 We would also have to differentiate between missionaries and slaves in the different countries. The argumentation in this section relies mainly on statements on Africa and the Caribbean. The disillusionment began earlier with regard to the Mediterranean area where expectations were

their own children into slavery and deplored »how deep Africa has sunk, how it is spiritually entirely destroyed«. <sup>26</sup> The negative opinion was less widespread among the missionary societies who at this time still maintained their conviction not only of the need for liberation but also of the equality of all human beings. The changes in the officials' opinions came later than those of the missionaries in the field.

Yet the mission societies and even most of the disappointed missionaries maintained their view of the connectedness between spiritual and physical freedom and the insistence on liberation from all kinds of bondage (except, of course, voluntary submission to God's will and thus bondage to God). One argument did not supplant the other but was added to it and gradually became more prominent.

## 2. The Religious Discourse on Bondage and Freedom in India

The discourse of bondage and freedom was also applied to India, its culture, traditions and the life of Indians. In India, about twenty percent of the population lived as bonded labourers and were considered slaves. <sup>27</sup> The missionaries spoke of them as the »slave caste« and did not differentiate between European, Hindu and Muslim slavery. The members of the slave castes were deemed »invisible«; they counted among them those who would today be called »Dalits«. Still, most of the Basel converts had not been slaves but were from the toddy drawer and fisher castes, and these were the missionaries' main addressees. Again, the missionaries interpreted all they saw and experienced in a religious framework. The adaptation to the Indian contact zone and the formation of a contact religiosity took place in several steps.

The first reports from India echoed Blumhardt's argumentation. The missionaries found a »people that«, in their eyes, »lies in the bondage of raw idolatry and a tyrannical priesthood and that seems to languish under the curse of sin«. <sup>28</sup> They interpreted their first impressions of India as they had learnt to do in Europe. A point that certainly strengthened their shock at and rejection of Indian culture was the fact that at least some of the first three Basel missionaries had not wanted to go to India but were sent there against

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on the one hand higher because the missions thought they could fall back on a common history of Christianity and they were lower, on the other hand, because they saw more »depravity« and had fewer explanations such as the (previous) enslavement of large parts of the population.

26 Heidenbote 1832, p. 62.

27 Robert Eric FRYKENBERG, *Christianity in India. From Beginnings to the Present*, Oxford 2008 (OHCC), p. 47f.

28 Heidenbote 1835, p. 28.

their will.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, they had studied with Blumhardt during the last years and were now undergoing their first work experience as missionaries. They discovered bondage by sin and »idolatry« everywhere and found »the strongholds of Satan« to be particularly powerful in India.<sup>30</sup> They interpreted the highly developed system of caste, of religion, of social ties and of long-standing and sophisticated traditions in light of their own religious concepts as illustrative of how far the Indians had gone in the wrong direction. And as their dualistic view knew only of God and the Devil, much of India could only be ruled by the Devil.

When they had learnt the first languages, met the people and started preaching – the supposed core of mission work – they began to make different kinds of statements. A second period began. At first, they expressed hope. They described conversations with Indians and the contents of their sermons, they depicted how they tried to translate the doctrine of justification to the Indians. In their conversations, they encountered a certain openness to their teaching that reminded them of the doctrine of natural theology, according to which God had written his law and his Gospel into the heart of everyone and hence everyone could recognise God if he or she wanted to. They found traces of this natural law in their interlocutors and hoped for their eventual conversion.<sup>31</sup> At this stage, the reports became more sanguine and at the same time more centred on the missionaries' message than on the Indians.<sup>32</sup>

The missionaries recounted their teaching on freedom and liberation and on the unity of all human beings and reminded their European audience of their historical duty to bring freedom to this people and of the freedom they enjoyed themselves.<sup>33</sup> Freedom was, according to their reports, mainly preached in a traditional Protestant way as freedom from sin, but also as freedom from supposedly powerless »idols« and from traditions and social ties that were perceived as wrong. The idea of the unity of all human beings that had inspired the abolitionist cause (in terms of equality between blacks and whites) acquired a specific significance in India as equality between

29 Basel Mission Archive, C-1.2 Mangalore 1841, No. 7, S. Hebich, 31 December 1834.

30 Heidenbote 1835, p. 92.

31 Cf. e.g. Heidenbote 1838, p. 8.

32 This was partly due to the recipients of the reports: Both the mission committee and the readers of the *Heidenbote* were probably assumed to prefer this kind of report over ethnographic descriptions. Yet some of the missionaries, mostly those who had studied at universities, wrote ethnographic studies, too, (e.g. Hermann MÖGLING, *Coorg Memoirs; an Account of Coorg, and of the Coorg Mission, Bangalore 1855*), created dictionaries and grammars (e.g. Ferdinand KITTEL, *A grammar of the Kannada language in English. Comprising the 3 dialects of the language [ancient, mediaeval, and modern]. Reprint of the ed. 1903, Osnabrück 1985*) and compiled traditional songs, myths and histories (Hermann Friedrich MÖGLING, *Bibliotheca Carnatica, Mangalore et al. 1848–1852*). This, however, seldom entered their correspondence with Basel and hardly ever periodicals like the *Heidenbote*.

33 Heidenbote 1838, pp. 25–27 (Mögling to an English audience).

members of different castes. Indian society was hierarchically structured along castes or communities which could not be left without the risk of social death. When Georg Friedrich Sutter was asked if he belonged to the Christian caste, he responded that all people belonged »to the caste of humans« and then elaborated that »there are two castes among humans – the good and the bad [...]. But it was true that by nature we all belong to the caste of the bad.«<sup>34</sup> The struggle against the observance of caste distinctions in churches also entered the missionary discourse on justification. Moreover, it transferred their argumentation against slavery to the Indian context when members of »slave castes« and Brahmins were meant to form a single community.

The hope for more conversions was not quickly fulfilled. Instead, the missionaries learnt more about Indian culture and customs the longer they lived in this contact zone. This brought them back to the notion of bondage – the third period –, but this time it was not a purely religious interpretation from an outsiders' perspective but resulted from long experience in the contact zone and from interviews with Indian converts and those who wanted or did not want to become Christians. The missionaries found that strong social ties held back possible converts. They experienced what it meant for Indians to leave their families and their whole communities and to be considered »dead« as a result.<sup>35</sup> When they now spoke of »ties«, they did so mostly from experience and less burdened with religious interpretation. Indeed, the religious part of the story could now be the praise of God and the new convert: that they had converted in spite of the ties binding them to their community.

In addition, they learnt more about Indian religiosity. And here again, they perceived bondage. This time, their notion of bondage in India was very concrete. It was founded in certain customs, objects and practices. One of the things that seemed to the missionaries to be most powerful in binding the Hindus was the lock of hair on top of the head. Hermann Gundert was quoted twice in the *Heidenbote* with long explanations about a Brahmin convert, Paul, who had made him realise the meaning of the lock of hair in terms of bondage (or had made him conscious in a way that Gundert couched his perception and sent the report to Basel). He related how he had waited for Paul to cut off his lock of hair of his own accord after his baptism, that Paul did not and Gundert therefore asked him to do so. Paul said, according to Gundert, that »it is something grand about this piece of hair, because of this wretched thing country and people become strangers to him; yet, it is only now that he is entirely free.«<sup>36</sup>

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34 Heidenbote 1841, p. 29.

35 Cf. e.g. Heidenbote 1840, p. 92.

36 Heidenbote 1845, p. 38; cf. also Heidenbote 1846, p. 26.

The social analysis was certainly true. Although in most strands of Hinduism there was no concept of conversion that was comparable to the Christian concept and although, from a Hindu perspective, one could worship the Christian god in addition to Hindu gods, Indian society in the nineteenth century had a very clear notion of what practices meant that a person had left the community. As a result, the individuals concerned were excluded from the community. There was usually no way back. In this respect, the cutting of the hair had indeed meant that Paul was now considered a stranger by his native community. It was the last and final step, not in becoming a Christian, but in leaving Hinduism. The notion of freedom must be understood in this context. Paul no longer had any responsibilities, neither to his family and friends nor to Hindu gods and the practice of religion in general.

But there was more to it. Drawing conclusions from their experiences with conversions from Hinduism, the missionaries ascribed to the lock of hair a certain vitality, as they did with many other objects or practices in Hinduism. Gundert continued his report with:

The locks of hair, particularly of the boys, are a really nice decoration; but only after some years staying here did I notice how much life there is in this decoration, it is as if the whole Hinduism hides in them.<sup>37</sup>

When cutting the lock of hair, the former Hindu also cut off all connections to Hinduism that he would otherwise have continued to carry on his body. Gundert believed (or he believed that the Hindus believed) that this lock of hair could actually influence the convert and tie him to his past and to the Hindu gods. That is why cutting the lock of hair was so important to him, and why he spoke of freedom, of becoming »truly free« by this practice.

After the missionaries had lived in India for some years, and after the first conversions had taken place and the Europeans had become more thoroughly acquainted with the country, its customs and its people, they interpreted bondage and freedom in a new way. The religious interpretation persisted, as did the perception of everything Hindu as binding, but the binding objects had changed; they had become more concrete. Furthermore, and this may be even more important, the description had become more nuanced and differentiated. The lock of hair could be at the same time a pretty decoration and a Hindu object binding the individual. The religious interpretation was reformulated and related to India as the missionaries had experienced it.

The principle that spiritual freedom should also have a physical dimension was applied to India, too. However, because of the dominance of converts from lower (but not from »slave«) castes in the Basel Mission, liberation from

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<sup>37</sup> Heidenbote 1845, p. 38.

bonded the labour was not the foremost concern of most Basel missionaries. They used concept of freedom mainly in two other respects: 1) in the freedom of choice and the free commitment to Christianity and 2) in a »free« behaviour and »free outlook«.<sup>38</sup> The freedoms of choice and commitment were not as banal as it might seem. In many instances, Indians willing to convert were reported to suffer persecution by their family and friends and subjected to psychological or physical pressure. In this context, the decision for conversion was not self-evident. The missionaries underlined the personal decision by qualifying it as »free«.<sup>39</sup> The free behaviour and free outlook pointed to a similar direction. Furthermore, the expressions underlined the inner freedom the converts had supposedly gained with their conversion. As Christians they were meant to be and feel free and therefore, their outlook and behaviour had to be free, too.

The freedom of the new Christians was precisely defined. It was meant as freedom from hell, from the influence of the Devil. It was not meant as freedom with regard to the way of life. Indeed, the behaviour that was expected of the converts was closely defined. They had to learn Christian teachings, they had to observe religious rites, to behave in a certain manner that was perceived as orderly and decorous. Still, this life was seen as free because it was seen as free from sin and the Devil. The missionaries repeatedly referred to the »freedom of the children of God«.<sup>40</sup> This was the highest kind of freedom one could, in their view, attain.

We do not have many testimonies by Indian converts of the time. What we have, however, adds a new dimension to the discussion. The wealthy Brahmin convert Hermann Anandrao Kaundinya, one of the first converts in Mangalore, who later was trained in Basel as a missionary and afterwards worked in India as one of the regular Basel missionaries, shortly after his conversion wrote a letter to Basel in which he praised God,

who had torn apart the golden chain of heathenism with which Satan had bound me. Yet, I am not free, I have been bought with the precious blood of Christ, my saviour, and am now a captive of him, who led captivity captive. I am glad to be one of the prisoners of Christ.<sup>41</sup>

The Brahmin who had lost his wife, his family and – at least for several years – his property because of his conversion still said that he had been freed by Christ. Although he lost many of the things that ensured his liberty in India he

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38 Cf. e.g. Heidenbote 1852, p. 13: »freier Blick«.

39 Cf. e.g. Heidenbote 1845, p. 90; 1854, p. 99.

40 Cf. e.g. Heidenbote 1850, p. 55.

41 Heidenbote 1844, p. 90; cf. Eph 4,8; Philemon 1,9.

called himself free. At the same time, Kaundinya insisted on not being free, on being, spiritually and in his way of life, a prisoner. With this emphasis, he not only repeated traditional (European) Protestant dogmas but heightened them.<sup>42</sup> The evangelical and awakened missionaries, too, wavered between accentuating the concept of free will and that of dedication and abandoning the own will. But the repeated use of the lexical field »prisoner« enhanced the notion of bondage. To Kaundinya, bondage – understood as bondage by Christ – was a positive concept. Being a Brahmin, he interpreted it solely in a religious way. References to slavery and to his fellow Indian Christians were not (yet) on his mind.<sup>43</sup>

From the beginning of the 1850s, a significant new (fourth) period began. The Devil was mentioned with greater frequency in reports about freedom and liberation. As mentioned before, he had played an important part as adversary of God and as being the one who binds people if they are not »children of God« from the beginning of the mission. However, he assumed an even more important role after the Basel Mission had been in India for more than ten years. Statistically, the devil was mentioned more frequently. Moreover, he was mentioned more frequently in the same sentence in which bondage, liberation and freedom were also referred to. What had changed was the notion of the reality of the devil and of his agency in India. While this had been assumed from the beginning, it was at the time also a very general notion. By contrast, it was now perceived in specific practices.

One of the main reasons for this development was the experience with adherents of Bhūtas.<sup>44</sup> Some of the principal communities among which the Basel Mission found their converts worshiped Bhūtas. The German and also the English-speaking missions usually referred to them as »demons« but they were rather spirits, good or bad, that could be called upon. Some individuals were seen as mediums who, at festivals, brought themselves into trance, whereupon the Bhūta spoke through them.<sup>45</sup> The missionaries called this »possession«. They were convinced that it was the Devil who acted here.

42 Cf. e.g. Martin LUTHER, Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen, in: Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, vol. 7, Weimar 1897, pp. 12–38.

43 Kaundinya later committed himself and his fortune to working with deprived people and former slaves in Coorg, cf. Katrin BINDER, Herrmann Anandrao Kaundinya, in: Albrecht FRENZ/Stefan FRENZ (eds.), Zukunft im Gedenken. Future in Remembrance, Norderstedt 2007, pp. 419–424; Albrecht FRENZ, Freiheit hat Gesicht. Anandapur – eine Begegnung zwischen Kodagu und Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart 2003, pp. 41–56.

44 Cf. e.g. Heidenbote 1857, pp. 54, 56.

45 Masataka SUZUKI, *Bhūta* and *Daiva*. Changing Cosmology of Rituals and Narratives in Karnataka, in: Senri Ethnological Studies 71 (2008), pp. 51–85; Heidrun BRÜCKNER, Bhūta-Worship in Coastal Karnāṭaka: An oral Tulu myth and festival ritual of Jumādi, in: Id./Dieter GEORGE/Claus VOGEL/Albrecht WEZLER (eds.), Festschrift. Wilhelm Rau zur Vollendung des 65. Lebensjahres dargebracht von Schülern, Freunden und Kollegen, Reinbek 1987 (StII 13/14), pp. 17–34.



The more they understood the system of Bhūta-worship, the more important belief in the Devil became to them and the more powerful they found him. Therefore, their belief in bondage by the Devil and the necessity of liberation became even deeper, and they placed even more emphasis on liberation and freedom from the devil.

The ultimate reason for the relevance of freedom and for the strong belief in its possibility was the conviction that freedom was one of the properties of God. In the end, it was only God who was entirely free, according to this concept, and human freedom could only echo his freedom.

The adaptation of the missionaries' concepts and practices of bondage and freedom to the Indian contact zone and the development of a contact religiosity happened in several steps. The better they knew India the more concretely they made their conceptions conform to Indian religion and culture. This also meant that their conceptions underwent a transformation. Some aspects of their religiosity became more important than they had been before, for example their understanding of the Devil. Others that had been firm religious convictions, but of a more theoretical kind, now became very practical, such as the notion of bondage and the understanding that conversion meant struggle with the community. The connection of these notions to slavery as experienced in Africa and the Atlantic became weaker and weaker.

### 3. Basel Missionaries in India and Slavery

However, there was »real« slavery in India, too. The Basel missionaries in India encountered it in two instances: in their work with those who belonged to a »slave caste«, and in their endeavours to build a prosperous church in the plantation Anjerkandy, where a European planter owned slaves. Both forms of slavery occurred in the Basel mission area.

The British government was reluctant in prohibiting slavery because it feared it would cause uproar among the leading castes. From many sides, missions were seen as dangerous to social peace. And indeed, when slavery was officially abolished in 1843, the missions were made to feel the consequences.<sup>46</sup> They were considered to be the main agents in this respect, and maybe they were. Still, their comparative silence on slavery in India is conspicuous. Even the Basel Mission seldom referred to it and hardly ever repudiated it openly. In 1845, Hermann Gundert described country and

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46 Cf. e.g. Heidenbote 1844, p. 61. Cf. also Stephen NEILL, *A History of Christianity in India. 1707–1858*, Cambridge 1985, p. 162. The importation of slaves had already been forbidden in 1811. Unofficially, slavery continued much longer, MANN, *Sahibs*, pp. 199–202.



people in Manantoddy near Tellicherry and mentioned slaves as one of three castes there: »the Panier, their slaves, are a very deeply oppressed class of people«.<sup>47</sup>

This was very typical of the missionaries' dealing with slave castes in India. They did not oppose slavery aggressively. This may partly have been due to their political situation. They were dependent on the British government and on its goodwill, and the attitude of the British government in India differed considerably from what British governments demanded in Africa and the Caribbean.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the social situation of members of the slave caste in India, in most cases, differed significantly from that of slaves who were traded across the Atlantic. According to the evangelical and awakened missions, slavery was not to be tolerated because of the unity and equality of all humans, but at the same time all Christians were required to keep their stations in life, even slaves. The missionaries could find support in biblical passages such as the Epistle to Philemon for their comparative silence. That they did not actively favour this situation is clear from many scattered remarks. But it is just as clear that they did not usually intervene.

When slaves (those of »slave castes« and those who were owned) converted to Christianity they were often depicted as model Christians, as in Africa or the Caribbean. Their present situation and behaviour was contrasted with their former state of slavery and thus became, in the view of the missions, even more admirable.<sup>49</sup> Only seldom were deficiencies mentioned, and usually ascribed to the people's (former) servitude.<sup>50</sup>

A place where the Basel missionaries worked almost exclusively with slaves was the plantation Anjerkandy near Tellicherry. It had been founded around 1890 as a pepper plantation by the Scot Murdock Brown who bought Indians from the slave caste as workers.<sup>51</sup> His son Francis Brown came to own the plantation by the beginning of the 1830s. He wanted his slaves to become Christians because he expected their »improvement« from this move. Therefore, he contacted Carl Rhenius, one of the most important (German) CMS missionaries in Tamil Nadu. The Tirunelveli catechist Michael offered to go to Anjerkandy and was stationed there from the spring of 1835. The slaves received Christian names, and Michael founded a school. In contrast to the expectations of Brown, he not only cared for the »civilization« of the slaves, but also worked for evangelical, »real« conversions. This implied that he introduced the evangelical concept of sin to this congregation. Those who

47 Heidenbote 1845, p. 8.

48 Cf. e.g. MANN, *Sahibs*.

49 Cf. e.g. Heidenbote 1852, p. 67.

50 Cf. e.g. Heidenbote 1841, p. 14.

51 Johannes HESSE, *Aus Dr. Hermann Gundert's Leben*, Calw/Stuttgart 1894 (Calwer Familienbibliothek 34), p. 145; MANN, *Sahibs*, pp. 92f.

adopted this message found sin not only in their own life, but also in that of the planters. Brown had three sons by three different women, two Indian and one French. The latter son was called the »European« and took over the plantation when Francis Brown returned to England. The sons led a life of idleness and dissipation. The newly converted slaves not only denounced this life, but also refused to act as sex partners to the planters. As a result, the time the planters had allocated for schooling became more and more reduced and the workload was increased. After Brown's return to England in 1837, the »devil of fornication«, as the missionaries called it, dominated life in Anjerkandy, and after Rhenius' death in 1838, the catechist lost all protection. He only remained in Anjerkandy because he saw himself called there by God and feared his wrath if he left. The Christian slaves were forbidden to visit the church in Kannur and Europeans were forbidden to visit Anjerkandy.

In this situation, the Basel missionary Hermann Gundert planned a first visit to Anjerkandy in 1839. He went on a mission tour to Tellicherry, close to Anjerkandy, and sent the brothers Brown a message that he would visit Anjerkandy and that, since he was accustomed to travel and to inconveniences, he would come unannounced and did not need the treatment of a guest. Yet he was told that he would not be allowed to visit Anjerkandy alone. John Brown, the eldest brother and one of the Anglo-Indian children, would accompany Gundert. In Anjerkandy, Gundert met the second Anglo-Indian Brown, George, and was greeted by some one hundred slaves.

The planters, the missionary, the catechist and maybe even the slaves had differing goals and agendas. The most important wish of the planters seems to have been to be left alone and to have no one interfere with their slaves. It seems that Gundert was not allowed to speak to the slaves in private. In any case, he was not allowed to do so with the catechist and repeatedly sought situations in which he could talk to him without being overheard. When the planters tried to occupy all his time he went for a walk with them and posed some children a number of questions with the purpose of testing their knowledge of the Christian faith while walking. He was very pleased with what he heard and said that those children »knew more about scriptural truths than some older Christians who had had an English education«.<sup>52</sup> This was directly aimed at the Browns.

Gundert hence tried to find out more about the situation in Anjerkandy and to strengthen the catechist's position while at the same time trying to evangelise planters and slaves alike. His second day in Anjerkandy was a Sunday and he first preached to an Indian congregation. This is one of the rare cases in which he recounted the contents of his sermon in his manuscript

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52 Basel Mission Archive, C-1.7 Talatscheri 1839–40, No. 1, H. Gundert, 24 January–10 February 1839, p. 2r.

report to Basel and it is highly interesting: He used a well-known story about an Indian king who wanted to be reborn as a Brahmin and therefore slipped into a golden cow by its mouth. When he came out of its backside, however, the Brahmins would still not recognise the king as one of them. The cow had not been able to help. Jesus, however, said Gundert, would really convert the audience when they believed in him and he would also eat and keep company with them. Being slaves, they were called to become members of the kings' and priests' caste in communion with Jesus.<sup>53</sup>

This was a very radical message for members of a caste who always had to keep forty feet away from those of higher castes and whose very shadow was supposed to pollute other Indians. It is no wonder that neither those of higher castes nor the planters wished for Gundert to preach in this manner. Yet Gundert's message remained spiritual. He did not call for social upheaval. Still, he insisted, like the other Basel missionaries, that caste distinctions be abandoned as soon as a person converted to Christianity.

Gundert's report on Michael, the catechist, was extremely favourable. Not only did he praise the results of Michael's teaching and preaching but also his commitment. Whenever he sought Michael out, he found him missionising. The Browns continued trying to prevent his meeting Michael and the slaves. On the second day, they made their negative feelings so clear that Gundert had to leave.<sup>54</sup>

During the same year 1839, Gundert and his wife opened a new mission station in Tellicherry close to Anjerkandy, and from then on the plantation was regularly visited by Gundert and, after Hebich's relocation to Kannur in 1841, occasionally by Samuel Hebich. The relationship with the planters remained difficult although the »European« brother, Frank, appeared more open towards the mission.

Sometimes, as with African and Caribbean Christians, the congregation of slaves at Anjerkandy served as a model of exemplary Christianity or as living proof of the changes conversion to Christianity could bring. On occasion, individual Anjerkandy Christians were described, mostly (at least at first) as exemplary Christians. The predominant tone of reports on Anjerkandy, however, as familiarity with circumstances there increased, became one of grievance. In spring 1840, Gundert reported on »lapses« on the part of Michael for the first time. In January 1841, Michael resigned because of an argument about his salary (which was paid by the planters).

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53 This refers to the threefold office of Christ as king, priest and prophet as much as to the caste system. For the Hindu ritual cf. Susan BAYLY, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, Cambridge 1999, p. 77.

54 Basel Mission Archive, C-1.7 Talatscheri 1839–40, No. 1, H. Gundert, 24 January–10 February 1839, p. 2v.

At least partly due to his ecclesiology, Gundert, like other Basel missionaries, increasingly involved the congregation in the decision-making process. In 1841, he had baptised a man, Timotheus, who had remained singularly steadfast in the face of numerous quarrels within the congregation. Gundert felt that baptism was an appropriate response to this steadfastness. Shortly thereafter, however, Timotheus tried to commit adultery as a way of punishing another man. As a result of this, Brown gave him a beating. Gundert asked the congregation for their opinion. They complained about Timotheus, and Gundert found him, in fact, to be unrepentant. He therefore excluded him from the Lord's Supper. Some weeks later, he readmitted him, giving as reasons Timotheus' repeated appeals and the changed opinion of the congregation. This is one of the examples that indicate how the Basel missionaries included the congregation in their decisions. It shows that their ecclesiology was focused on the community and was not entirely top-down (European missionary–Indian convert), not even during the first years of the mission. The case also demonstrates that Gundert held the congregation of slaves in just as great esteem as any other congregation. He doubted their value neither in terms of Christian equality nor in terms of equality of abilities.

However, neither in India nor later in Europe did he embrace the abolitionist position entirely.<sup>55</sup> In 1842, shortly before slavery was officially forbidden in India and the »slave castes« were no longer considered slaves – at least officially –, Gundert commented »carefully« on the notion that slavery was entirely a question of caste and that there was not much the government could do about it politically as long as they forbade that escaped slaves be returned.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, when the government abolished the slave castes and the English authorities in the district to which Anjerkandy belonged insisted on equality in practice and thus on the officials accompanying former slaves into town, the officials followed this order to the last possible person. When the officials entered town with the former slaves, uproar ensued.<sup>57</sup>

Gundert's relationship to Anjerkandy shows the variety of Basel missionaries' approaches to slavery as well as the ways in which Gundert changed because of his experience with the slaves there. His first description was very positive; he depicted devoted Christians, progress and development, intelligence and knowledge, orderliness and commitment. These Christians could serve as models for Indians and Europeans. It may be that Gundert was influenced in his perception by what he had heard and read about former slaves in

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55 Hermann GUNDELT, Aus Dr. Hermann Gundert's Briefnachlaß. Als Manuskript gedruckt, Stuttgart 1900, 63.

56 Basel Mission Archive, C-1.7 Talatscheri 1842, No. 7, H. Gundert, 18 September 1842, p. 1v.

57 HESSE, Gundert, p. 188.

Africa and the Caribbean. In any case, his report resembled the reports of his colleagues from those areas. When he got to know the congregation better, disenchantment set in. He was still on the side of the slaves and he still found exemplary Christians among them, but they were not any longer held up as an example in their entirety.

In addition, Gundert had arrived at a differentiated view of slavery as a caste phenomenon. He did not think that it could (or maybe even should) be solved by means of laws. Rather, he voted for a cultural solution. If one day Christian values were upheld in India, then the barriers between castes would break down. In Christian churches, however, they had to be dissolved immediately. This was the most important Basel approach to slavery in India and elsewhere: Within the Christian community all had to be regarded as equally contributing to the community. This is how Gundert and his colleagues transferred their religious convictions, what Blumhardt among others had taught, to the Indian context and interpreted them in their contact zone. Distinctions on the basis of social status were not allowed. As Gundert had said in his sermon: even slaves were called to become kings and priests.

A contrasting story to Hermann Gundert's can be told by the example of Herrmann Mögling, his colleague and friend. Soon after his arrival in India in 1836, Mögling became responsible for the mission school in Mangalore. In 1847, he opened a seminary for catechists. He had always addressed educated and mostly upper-caste Indians. Without any doubt, his most important experience was the conversion of the Brahmin Anandrao Kaundinya in 1843, his first convert, who later became his closest friend. Slaves had never been on his agenda, probably partly because of his personality, partly because of his work tasks.

In 1853, Mögling quit the Basel Mission and opened a new mission in Coorg. In the beginning, he again turned to the leading castes and ignored the slaves who amounted to a considerable percentage of the population. But he then discovered that it was mainly peasants and slaves who listened to him.<sup>58</sup> Gradually, he turned to them. Slavery had by then already been officially abolished for ten years. But this had not really changed the social and cultural landscape in Coorg.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, Mögling like other missionaries still spoke of the Selavas or Holeyas/Pulayars as slaves. In 1857, he accepted a larger group of them as catechumens.<sup>60</sup> From then on, he reported on their developments, their progress in knowledge of Christianity and towards conversion, and on their moral conduct, which increasingly converged with what an

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58 FRENZ, *Freiheit hat Gesicht*, p. 209.

59 Basel Mission Archive, C-1.23b, Alamanda u. Mercara, No. 2, H. Mögling, 5 January 1857, p. 6v.

60 Ibid.

awakened Christian would expect. Like Gundert, he reported involving the whole congregation in decision-making, including the decision who should become an elder and who should be baptised first.

There were, therefore, many commonalities between Mögling's and Gundert's approach. The respective ecclesiologies of the two missionaries were very similar. Nonetheless, there was a great difference between them: While Gundert started from a very high estimation of converted slaves and then become disenchanted, Mögling went through the opposite process. He had not demonstrated interest in slaves until he had more or less been forced to. He then valued them highly. Only then did they become equals for him, not only theoretically but also practically. Life in a contact zone that was populated by slaves had changed – maybe not his opinion – but his perspective and his practice towards a truly inclusive vision.

## Conclusion

The religious conception of justification, bondage, liberation and freedom, and the political argumentation on antislavery played an important role in the Basel and Church Missionary Societies from the beginning. Because of their import, these conceptions were transferred to new contexts like India where the notion of bondage and slavery was broadened. By way of this transfer and because of the experiences the missionaries underwent in the Indian contact zone, the conceptions were modified. One example of this was the adaptation of the concept of bondage and liberation. In India, certain practices and social conditions came to be seen as central for binding Indians. This could both refer to an item like the Hindu lock of hair and to family relations or traditional concepts. There was no direct social or political link of these customs to slavery but it was made by the missionaries in the way they spoke about them.

In the adaptation process, the missionaries' conceptions changed in two important ways: They became more concrete with regard to India and the hierarchies of values and conceptions within their concepts were modified. The Devil and demons became more and more important to them because they were convinced of having encountered them in specific instances and they also encountered people who, in their opinion, worshipped him. The Devil was seen as the binding power.

There were parallels in the development of the missionaries' conceptions of slavery and liberation and of the hierarchy of peoples with regard to Africa, the Caribbean and India on one side and Europe or the West on the other: In Africa, they began with the assumption that liberated slaves were equal or even superior to Europeans. In India, they developed a similar opinion very

early with regard to Indians in general and Indian slaves in particular. When the people did not convert as quickly and adopt European customs as unreservedly as expected, they grew disenchanted and gradually abandoned the notion of non-European superiority. This also meant that their perspective had changed. At first, it had (implicitly) been on the »non-Christian« Europeans to whom the missionaries wanted to hold up a mirror by emphasising their expectations of the Indians. Later, the Indians themselves were in the focus.

Still, the missions insisted on the – at least religious – equality of all humans and therefore continued to oppose slavery and to work to build communities. Most importantly to them, they did not tolerate differentiation between members of different castes in India. With this practice they aimed to overcome every notion of physical slavery in the church. What remained was religious bondage with regard to God. With regard to the political, cultural and social structures in India, however, both missions worked silently, not aggressively against slavery and aimed at forming model communities of equality.





Andreas Nehring

## Politics and Meditation

Christian Missions and Theravada Buddhist  
Reform in Nineteenth-Century Burma

In his voluminous history of *The World*, Felipe Fernandez-Armesto argues that:

in the global story of human interactions, which is the cultural theme, we return constantly to the ways people make contact with each another – migration, trade, war, imperialism, pilgrimage, gift exchange, diplomacy, travel – and to their social frameworks: the economic and political arenas, the human groups and groupings, the states and civilizations, the sexes and generations, the classes and clusters of identity.<sup>1</sup>

These »ways people make contact« took place in realms for which, in the 1990s, the literary historian Mary Louise Pratt coined the term »contact zones«. Her intention was to overcome shortcomings in a critique of Orientalism which, following Edward Said, had adopted a predominantly linear perspective on Western encounters with the East related to European expansionist domination over political, social, cultural and even religious developments under colonial rule. Pratt's introduction of the concept of a »contact zone« was intended to introduce a more holistic approach to the study of the spatial, temporal, material, geographic, economic, political and religious interactions that emerge between people of different cultural backgrounds in the process of hegemonic encounters.<sup>2</sup>

This contribution deals with the encounter of Theravada Buddhists with the West and specifically with Christian missionaries under colonial domination in Myanmar (Burma) during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. The traditional historical paradigm for studying Christian Missions focused primarily on the authoritative voice of Western material, publications of missionaries, their letters and reports to the governing board at home, articles in mission magazines and even on publications of ethnographical, linguistic and comparative religious studies the missionaries undertook while working abroad. Pratt argues that the focus

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1 Felipe FERNANDEZ-ARMESTO, *The World – A History*, Princeton, NJ 2011, pp. XXXIIIff.

2 Mary Louise PRATT, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London/New York 1992, pp. 2–6.

on these texts and on »autoethnographic expressions« of indigenous writers which they »construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations«<sup>3</sup> has directed historical research to a representational imbalance of ethnographic cultures by depicting subjugated people as lacking in agency in historically significant events, unable to represent themselves and relying on methodologies and technologies of the dominant Europeans. By widening the perspective and directing the focus to Buddhist experiences in the contact zones of colonial Burma and critically re-examining interactions between indigenous peoples and dominant European colonial structures as well as missionary endeavours, my aim is to analyse the impact of Western influences and the processes of transculturation experienced by the Burmese under colonial domination.

More than at any time in history, Buddhism and Buddhist-inspired practices are widespread in the West today. Today, different versions of Buddhist practice, which traditionally have remained separated by national borders, come together in the global community and in this encounter new forms of Buddhism emerge. In view of this process of transfer and adoption it is increasingly important to understand Buddhism's earlier interactions with the Western world. The Buddhist concept of mindfulness as a *philosophical concept* as well as a *meditation practice* has been known in the West since the early twentieth century and this concept, as well as the praxis, are now prominent far beyond their original religious context in the fields of medicine, psychotherapy, neuroscience, education and even management studies as well as, finally, in popular culture. It is not an exaggeration to say that mindfulness at present is the most popular keyword in discussions of the training of the mind or technologies of the self.<sup>4</sup> What is hardly known is that this practice is rooted in Myanmar and there it has become prominent under colonial conditions.

The interactions of Theravada Buddhists with the West have traditionally been traced to a small number of Westerners who travelled to Asia and some educated indigenous who adopted Western values and integrated them into their religious worldview. Much of the research that attempts to analyse the encounter between Asians and European missionaries, orientalist and colonial administrations during the nineteenth century faces the same problem of the need to clarify the role of Western authority, agency and privilege. What exactly was the role of missionaries, of colonial administrators and orientalist

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3 PRATT, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 7.

4 ANDREAS NEHRING/CHRISTOPH ERNST, Populäre Achtsamkeit. Kulturelle Aspekte einer Meditationspraxis zwischen Präsenzerfahrung und implizitem Wissen, in: Christoph ERNST et al. (eds.), *Präsenz und Implizites Wissen. Zur Interdependenz zweier Schlüsselbegriffe der Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften*, Bielefeld 2013, pp. 373–404.

representation of the »Other«? And what was the role of indigenous agency? Is it only political correctness that causes recent studies to emphasise the latter or are we able to reassess the historical evidence?

For the history of the Buddhist revival in Theravada countries in South and Southeast Asia, studies on early orientalist like Thomas Rhys Davids,<sup>5</sup> his wife Caroline and Mabel Bode,<sup>6</sup> but also Colonel H. S. Olcott, the founder of the Theosophical Society, and other key Theosophists, particularly Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant, have been able to demonstrate that these Western admirers of the East served to reinforce Western colonial authority whilst claiming a specific and deep spiritual connection to Asia in general and Buddhism in particular. Postcolonial theory has shown that in most cases the religious movements of this time never overcame the colonial differences between West and East but served to reproduce, reinvent or invert the division by emphasising the spiritual traditions of the East over the material technologies of the West.

Asian historians like Partha Chatterjee and Dipesh Chakrabarty have argued that, even though nationalist independence movements had successfully reversed the priorities and power dynamics of the colonial state, they still contributed to the continuation of traditional power structures, albeit sometimes in inverted form.<sup>7</sup>

The beginning of the Meditation-movement nevertheless can serve as an example that might put these postcolonial informed generalisations into question. The role of Western missionaries, Western Buddhists and orientalist in the emergence of the mindfulness meditation movement, which began in Burma at the end of the nineteenth century and spread all over the world in the subsequent decades, has to be put into perspective.

Alicia Turner has recently argued that the first Burmese response to British colonialism to mobilise the support of the masses and especially the laity was made by a number of Buddhist movements that emerged as Burma gradually came under British domination. These movements, interestingly enough, interpreted colonialism not in the first instance as a threat to territory, political sovereignty and national identity, but as a threat to religion.<sup>8</sup> But it was a

5 Elisabeth HARRIS, *Theravada Buddhism and the British Encounter*, London/New York 2006, pp. 125–138.

6 Alice COLLETT, *Buddhism and Gender: Reframing and Refocusing the Debate*, in: *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, vol. 22, No. 2, Fall 2006, pp. 55–84; Judith SNODGRASS, *Defining Modern Buddhism: Mr. and Mrs. Rhys Davids and the Pali Text Society*, in: *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 27, No. 1, 2007, pp. 180–202.

7 Dipesh CHAKRABARTY, *Provincializing Europe. Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, NJ 2000; Partha CHATTERJEE, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. A Derivative Discourse?*, New York 1986.

8 Alicia Marie TURNER, *Buddhism, Colonialism and the Boundaries of Religion. Theravada Buddhism in Burma 1885–1920* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Chicago 2009).

response that drew predominantly from Buddhist sources, while being only marginally influenced by Western orientalist or missionary representations of Theravada Buddhist Religion. Compared to the long and ongoing colonial experience in India, the encounter of the Burmese with colonial power was relatively short.<sup>9</sup> Missionary impact on the Burmese mainland had been marginal, while territories that were less strongly influenced by Buddhist culture accepted and adopted Christianity more readily.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the colonial experience and the growing influx of Christian missionaries were considered a cosmological threat to the Buddha-Sāsana by the people of the Buddhist heartland.

During the nineteenth century, the political elites in Burma, the social institutions of Christian missions and the scholarly societies of the European metropole had at least an indirect influence on developments in Burma. But if the perspective is only focused on Western elites, as it was the case with Edward Said's critique of European orientalism, without examining how orientalist images and representations were received, applied and even translated into action by those who were represented or influenced by Western ideas and institutions, there is a tendency to overestimate what Said called a »positional superiority« which puts Westerners »in a whole series of relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand«.<sup>11</sup> But colonial superiority was never able to be transformed into absolute discursive authority. European actors in Burma, like the missionaries, may have enjoyed a dominant position in defining religion, culture, civilisation and progress, but the role of the Burmese in appropriating Western concepts and, conversely, influencing Western views on religion and culture should not be underestimated. As Peter van der Veer has shown, the imperial encounters between India and Britain have to be seen as dialogic processes in which a globalised culture has emerged that shaped both Westerners and Asians.<sup>12</sup> Even if ideas such as »civilisation«, »enlightenment«, »freedom«, »modernity«, »nation« and even the Western concept of »religion« became hegemonic in the Gramscian sense by gaining universal validity »in an increasingly

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9 AUNG SAN SUU KYI, *India and Burma. Some Aspects of Intellectual Life under Colonialism*, Shimla 1990.

10 Sangermano remarks that by the last quarter of the eighteenth century, only 2000 Christians were »scattered up and down the empire«, and states that the Burmese government tolerated other religions like Islam and Christianity due to the limited number of their adherents. VINCENZO SANGERMANO, *The Burmese Empire a Hundred Years ago as described by Father Sangermano*, Westminster 1893, p. 111.

11 EDWARD SAID, *Orientalism*, New York 1978, p. 7.

12 PETER VAN DER VEER, *Imperial Encounters. Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*, Princeton, NJ 2001.

global discourse of political legitimacy and social progress«,<sup>13</sup> as »empty signifiers«<sup>14</sup> they nevertheless remained ambiguous concepts, insofar as their content could never be fixed finally by any of the actors involved.<sup>15</sup>

A significant expression of nationalist protest against the colonial government in Burma was U Ottama's combination of the Buddhist concept of Nirvana with national freedom. U Ottama was a leading monk during the 1920s in Rangoon, coming from the Province of Arakan (Rakaine), whose speeches aroused a nationalist and an anti-colonial spirit in the city. U Ottama became the first popular nationalist hero and martyr. He had lived in India for some time, had served as the president of the Hindu Mahasabha, and was intimately acquainted with Gandhian ideology and Indian National Congress politics.<sup>16</sup> In a speech delivered in 1921 in Rangoon, he argued:

When Lord Buddha was alive, people had a predilection for Nirvana. There is nothing left now. The reason why this is so is because the government is English. Pongyis pray for Nirvana but slaves can never obtain it, therefore they must pray for release from slavery in this life.<sup>17</sup>

Reformed Buddhism, Buddhist Renaissance, Protestant Buddhism (Obeysekere), Buddhist Modernism: these are only some terms or definitions used to describe the meditation-movements that developed in South and Southeast Asia in the nineteenth century, but they give rise to further questions: Is the renaissance of the meditation-movement a revival of age-old practices from the Buddhist tradition or is it something genuinely new? Is »Protestant Buddhism« an extension and transfer of practices traditionally reserved for monks to laypeople? And finally: does this term suggest that Western impact was necessary to initiate this reform, or are there indigenous traditions which Buddhism in South-East Asia could invoke? How problematic these questions are becomes clear if one takes a first look at literature on Meditation. In the introduction to his 1956 book *Buddhist Meditation*, Edward Conze writes: »Meditational practices constitute the very core of the Buddhist approach to life. An intensely practical religion, Buddhism is by contrast inclined to treat doctrinal definition and historical facts with some degree of

13 Thomas DuBois, Introduction: The Transformation of Religion in East and Southeast Asia. Paradigmatic Change in Regional Perspective, in: Id. (ed.), *Casting Faiths. Imperialism and the Transformation of Religion in East and Southeast Asia*, New York 2009, p. 5.

14 Ernesto Laclau, Was haben leere Signifikanten mit Politik zu tun?, in: *Mesotes* 4, Wien 1994, pp. 157–165.

15 Andreas Nehring, Zwischen Monismus und Monotheismus – »Hinduismus« und indische Aneignungen des Religionsbegriffes. Ein poststrukturalistischer Versuch, in: Christoph Schwöbel (ed.), *Gott – Götter – Götzen*, Leipzig 2013, pp. 792–821.

16 John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*, Ithaca, NY 1958, p. 231f.

17 Quoted in Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, Princeton, NJ 1965, p. 96.

unconcern. As prayer in Christianity, so meditation is here the very heartbeat of the religion.«<sup>18</sup> 50 years later Charles Allen, in his study *The Buddha and the Sahibs*, in which he describes Western Buddhological studies, states that, in the nineteenth century, the practice of meditation in Theravada Buddhist countries had completely died out, with only the initiative of the Theosophical Society and the Ceylonese reform Buddhist Anagarika Dharmapala reviving it as lay meditation. »Traditionally confined to monks, passed down from master to pupil by personal and private initiation, the practice had died out entirely in Ceylon, Burma and Siam.«<sup>19</sup> These contradictory statements give reason to ask whether mindfulness meditation is something new, or if it is traditional and the basis of all Buddhist philosophy and religion as Conze suggests. Robert Sharf, one of the strongest poststructuralist critics of modern Buddhist meditation movements, has interpreted the fairly recent emergence of lay-meditation centres as a Western induced result of a secularisation process in South-East Asia: »The rationalization of meditation, coupled with the Westernized values of the middle class patrons of urban meditation centers, led naturally to a deemphasis on the traditional soteriological goal – bringing an end to rebirth.«<sup>20</sup>

Gustaav Houtman on the other hand has criticised Sharf for overemphasising European influence on the development of meditation-movements in Asia,<sup>21</sup> and he has focused on the beginnings of the meditation movement in Burma, arguing that the modernisation of Buddhism in Burma, unlike perhaps in Sri Lanka, was not a product of Western orientalism in the sense of a mimetic appropriation of Western representations of Buddhism. Rather, he has highlighted the role of Burmese Buddhists and their creative reaction to concrete historical conditions.<sup>22</sup> This can be seen in an independent appropriation of apocalyptic traditions that were previously unknown to Western orientalists.<sup>23</sup> The label »Protestant Buddhism«, at least for the early phase of this movement, is thus inappropriate. In the case of Sri Lanka, anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere has used this term to refer to modernist developments in Singhalese Buddhism that have relied on or referred to structures, rites and concepts of Protestant Christian missions and at the same time opposed

18 Edward CONZE, *Buddhist Meditation*, London 1956, p. 11.

19 Charles ALLEN, *The Buddha and the Sahibs. The Men who Discovered India's Lost Religion*, London 2002, p. 255.

20 Robert H. SHARF, *Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience*, in: *Numen* 42, no. 3 (Oct. 1995), pp. 228–283, at p. 258.

21 Gustaaf HOUTMAN, *Vipassana in Burma*, URL: [https://www.academia.edu/5663548/Vipassana\\_in\\_Burma\\_Self-government\\_and\\_the\\_Ledi\\_anapana\\_tradition](https://www.academia.edu/5663548/Vipassana_in_Burma_Self-government_and_the_Ledi_anapana_tradition) (access date: 25 June 2014).

22 Gustaaf HOUTMAN, *Traditions of Buddhist practice in Burma* (unpublished PhD Thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, London University 1990).

23 This argument was recently made strongly by TURNER, *Buddhism, Colonialism*.

Western domination.<sup>24</sup> In comparing Buddhist reforms in Sri Lanka and Burma, we should probably speak of »multiple modernities«<sup>25</sup> even within Southeast Asia. In his influential contribution to the debates on modernisation, Eisenstadt has argued that the dominant view on modernity, taking the Western experience as a paradigm, is not applicable to all modernising societies. The concept of modernisation has to be seen in a context of multiplicity. He argues that modernising societies contribute their own socio-cultural categories that structure the modernisation process. While the Western experience may serve as a reference point in the respective developments, the modernisation process should be understood as a negotiation between multiple societal agents about what makes a society modern. Modernisation therefore cannot be interpreted as a linear historical development or as a uniform development in various societies. Furthermore, Buddhist modernisation in Burma with the introduction of lay meditation is not to be interpreted as rationalisation, disenchantment or secularisation in the sense of limiting the role of religion and the influence of the monastic order, the Sangha, on society, but as a collective expression of a new awareness of contingency. Following Niklas Luhmann, I would like to see it as a shift from an awareness of danger to one of risk.<sup>26</sup> Luhmann characterises the relationship of modern societies (in contrast to pre-modern societies) to future harm as a transformation from danger to risk. We can only speak about risk when a decision can be observed to which the occurrence of damage can be attributed. If unknown harm is perceived as danger it is in a way externalised from society; if on the other hand it is categorised as risk, then it is the result of decisions and must be accounted for accordingly. Risk has to be interpreted and analysed in such a way that it is not an expression of fate, accident, coincidence, divine intervention and the like, but as belonging to the realm of human causality. To calculate a risk means to be in command of time and to determine the future. Any stabilisation of security expands the horizon of possibilities for human action, and therefore also the power of institutions that promise security. Since risk is always based on the difference between reality and possibility, it implies both future harm and the possibility of avoiding it.<sup>27</sup>

I would argue that a growing awareness of British colonialism as risk to the preservation of the Buddha-Sāsana led to a new interpretation of traditional perceptions of two aspects of cultural development: decline and progress. Progress, as Reinhart Koselleck has shown for Western conceptual history,

24 Gananath OBEYESEKERE/Richard GOMBRICH, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka*, Princeton, NJ 1988.

25 Shmuel EISENSTADT (ed.), *Multiple Modernities*, London 2000.

26 Niklas LUHMANN, *Soziologie des Risikos*, Berlin 1991.

27 Francois EWALD, *Die Versicherungsgesellschaft*, in: Ulrich BECK (ed.), *Politik in der Risikogesellschaft*, Frankfurt a.M. 1991, pp. 288–301, at p. 291.



stands »in opposition to decline, a modern category, a category that was not experienced or even expected before the eighteenth century«.<sup>28</sup> A topological re-ordering of concepts of decline and their transformation into meditational practices can be observed in Colonial Burma during the second part of the nineteenth century.

Between 1826 and 1948 British colonial dominance in Burma was established in three phases. Three successive wars led first, between 1824 and 1826, to the annexation of the provinces of Arakan and Tanasserim in the South, then in 1852 to the conquest of Pegu and finally, in 1885, with the conquest of Mandalay, the royal capital of Burma came under British rule and the kingdom became a province of British India. In 1885 the last Burmese king of the Konbaung dynasty, Thibaw Min was dethroned and exiled to India.

Although the 1826 annexation of Arakan and Tenasserim was not immediately interpreted as a challenge to Buddhism by the monks or laypeople living in those areas, it marked the beginning of Burmese perceptions of the British as a threat to the Buddha-Sāsana and as the beginning of the decline of Buddhism as a religion in their country. From the 1830s on and especially after 1852, colonialism became associated with a particular threat to the Buddha-Sāsana and discussions of decline became more focused and concrete. According to Jan Becka:

Initially, the antipathy towards the British administration stemmed from the fact that it was a non-Buddhist authority and this argument was even more important than foreign domination. [...] The British government departed from the cosmic prototypes with which the traditional Burmese government, the king and the court, had linked the social order and the state.<sup>29</sup>

Increased missionary activity and the arrival of mission printing presses in the 1830s caused monks, in particular, to see Christianity as a challenge to Buddhist orthodoxy, one that had to be countered in order to secure a strong future for Buddhism. With the loss of territory in the Second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852 the problem became more acute. Large numbers of monks and

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28 »Die vormodernen Begriffe des Niedergangs oder Verfalls ändern in der Neuzeit ihre topologische Zuordnung. Es darf als unbestritten vorausgesetzt werden, dass »Fortschritt« ein Begriff ist, der spezifisch darauf geeicht ist, moderne Erfahrungen zu bewältigen, dass nämlich die überkommenen Erfahrungen in erstaunlicher Geschwindigkeit von neuen überholt werden.« Reinhart KOSELLECK, »Fortschritt« und »Niedergang«, Nachtrag zur Geschichte zweier Begriffe, in: Id., Begriffsgeschichten. Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache, Frankfurt a.M. 2006, pp. 159–181, at p. 160f.

29 Jan BECKA, *Buddhist Revival in Post-Independence Burma: A Study of Interaction of Religion and Politics*, in: Stanislava VAVROUSKOVA (ed.), *Religion and Society in India and Burma*, Prague 1991, pp. 10f.



laypeople fled to Burmese territory in the North. In 1853 King Minon was crowned and he moved the royal capital to Mandalay. There was a perception that the arrival of new ideas and practices brought by colonialism was a danger the Sāsana would not be able to withstand. Traditional Buddhist concepts of decline now seemed to be fulfilled. When Christian missionaries arrived in Burma, they brought along not only their beliefs, but also new organisational structures in the areas of church and education, new forms of mission, new concepts of history and progress. Even the practice of religion was reshaped by Western concepts. Alexey Kirichenko who has shown how the modern conceptualisation of »Religion« as a category *sui generis*, separated from political power, was effective in transforming the influence of Buddhism on Burmese society.<sup>30</sup> It was probably through missionary influence that new terms for »religion« found their way into the Burmese language. Kirichenko followed the findings of Gustaaf Houtman, who attributed the coinage of new terms denoting »religion« that later entered into common Burmese usage to the Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson. Judson, who in his Burmese-English Dictionary presented these terms for the first time,<sup>31</sup> has argued that Theravada self-consciousness was changed during the colonial period by being confronted with these new conceptions.

The German historian Ernst Benz, in his 1963 book *Buddhas Wiederkehr und die Zukunft Asiens*,<sup>32</sup> has argued that it is highly debatable whether one can speak of a Buddhist eschatology before the arrival of Western ideas in Burma. He acknowledges that the idea of a coming Buddha Maitreya as a genuine Buddhist concept must be taken seriously as an independent concept of the future and is aware of canonical Pāli texts that predict the decline of the Buddha-Sāsana, but argues that millenarian movements and revolutionary ideas in Burma could only take hold as a result of the influence of Western, Christian concepts of time, future and progress, since Buddhist notions of time are predominantly cyclical.<sup>33</sup> He maintains that a cyclical concept of time, as it is inherent in the idea of a coming Buddha, does not have the power of linear concepts to influence future developments. Emanuel Sarkisyanz has questioned this influence of Western ideas on Burmese religious and political

30 Alexey KIRICHENKO, From Thathanadaw to Theravāda Buddhism. Constructions of Religion and Religious Identity in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Myanmar, in: Thomas David DuBois (ed.), *Casting Faiths. Imperialism and the Transformation of Religion in East- and Southeast Asia*, New York 2009, pp. 23–45.

31 Gustaaf HOUTMAN, How a Foreigner Invented Buddendism in Burmese: From Tha-tha-na to Bok-da'ba-tha, in: *Journal of the Anthropological Society at Oxford*, 21 February 1990, pp. 9–25; cf. also HOUTMAN, *Traditions of Buddhist Practice*, pp. 55–75.

32 Ernst BENZ, *Buddhas Wiederkehr und die Zukunft Asiens*, München 1963, pp. 130–136.

33 For the various conceptualisations of time in Buddhist thought, cf. Jan NATTIER, *Once Upon a Future Time. Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline*, Berkeley 1991.

concepts during the colonial Period. He argues that during the early phase of British colonial rule, the first references to messianic ideas evolved that cannot be attributed to the influence of Christian missions:

It was in the reign of Bōdawpaya's successor, Bagyidaw (1819–1837), when Burma's territorial and economic losses, resulting from her defeat by the British East India Company, put heavy burdens upon her people, but *before* Christian eschatology could exercise any influence in Burma that there appear references to the messianic idea of Setkya-Min [...].<sup>34</sup>

While Sarkisyanz criticises Benz for not taking Buddhist eschatological concepts and their early appropriation during the colonial time into account, Buddhologist Heinz Bechert denies Benz's assumption outright.<sup>35</sup> I would argue that a total neglect of Western, colonial, missionary and in general Christian influence on the developments in Buddhism in nineteenth-century Burma tends to underestimate the impact »colonial knowledge«<sup>36</sup> might have had on colonial subjects, while an overestimation of Western influence tends to neglect traditional Buddhist concepts of decline, development and dealing with the future that emerged or were activated during the second half of the nineteenth century. A brief look at some of the missionary accounts as well as Burmese appropriations of Buddhist canonical texts of decline might shed new light on the »contact zone« from which one important strand of the modern meditation-movement emerged. Christian eschatological ideas did not come to Burma in an isolated form. Not only did concepts of development and modernity make an impact on Burmese society, but they also arrived alongside new technologies. Like new forms of trade, military technologies and technologies of statecraft, the techniques of mission were adopted by indigenous actors because they proved to be effective. Christian missionaries not only introduced the printing press and the possibility of communicating in new media formats – the spread of printed books, mission journals and even the possibility of printing Buddhist texts. They also introduced financial support institutions, community structures like church gatherings and new teaching devices, like public sermons and schools that not only taught religious classes taught but also science and history. In adopting these techniques, the Burmese also adopted the logic inherent to them, especially the ideas of conviction and conversion and, as their corollary, the concept of an

34 Emanuel SARKISYANZ, *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution*, The Hague 1965, p. 154.

35 Heinz BECHERT, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravāda-Buddhismus (Birma, Kambodscha, Laos, Thailand)*, vol. II, Wiesbaden 1967, p. 58, Fn. 1634.

36 Bernhard S. COHN, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge. The British in India*, Princeton, NJ 1996.

autonomous self. The techniques of mission had an implicit ideology that left an imprint on the indigenous, even if Christianity as a religion barely took root among the Burmese.

Perhaps the most striking contribution of mission Christianity to Asia, [was] the concept of individual conversion, with its emphasis on irreversible personal transformation and religious exclusivity [...]. Broadly speaking, many of the patterns of religious affiliation seen in much of precolonial East and Southeast Asia were based more on community than creed, with regimens of practice structured around village temples, sacred sites or clan propriety. In contrast, the notion of conversion associated with nineteenth-century Christian mission presented a new array of idioms – strictly defined sectarian membership, rituals of initiation, a clear concept of the saved and a policy of distancing converts from native tradition [...].<sup>37</sup>

Missionary technologies, ideas and especially teaching strategies were influential on the transformation of traditional Buddhist structures. Christian missions, and in particular Catholic Missions were active in Burma since the end of the seventeenth century when, in 1692, the first representatives of the Society of Foreign Missions in Paris arrived at Pegu. Probably the most interesting among the missionaries was Father Sangermano, who arrived in Burma in 1783 and returned to Italy in 1808. His description of the Burmese Empire, which he wrote in Italy shortly before his death in 1819, but which was not published until 1853, has long been considered a valuable record of Burmese life in the eighteenth century,<sup>38</sup> but it hardly had any deeper influence on Burmese cosmological conceptualisations, since Sangermano relied heavily on Burmese Buddhist manuscripts, which he translated with indigenous help.

The Burmese cosmography has been extracted almost entirely from a book expressly composed for the elder brother of the reigning monarch, by a Zarado or master of the Emperor, wherein he succinctly describes the system of the world, as taught by Godama, according to the expositions and opinions of the most celebrated Burmese Doctors.<sup>39</sup>

Sangermano was the superintendent of a college for missionaries at Rangoon, at which fifty students

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37 DuBois, *Transformation of Religion*, p. 8.

38 Albert FYTCHE, *Burma Past and Present, with Personal Reminiscences of the Country*, vol. I, London 1878, p. 197.

39 Nicholas Patrick WISEMAN, *Preface to the first edition, The Burmese Empire a Hundred Years Ago as Described by Father Sangermano, with an Introduction and Notes by John Jardine*, Westminster 1893, p. 38.

were instructed in several branches of learning and science; so that besides some ecclesiastics, it has produced skilful engineers, physicians, and even pilots. There is at present [around 1820, A.N.] a young Burmese practising as a surgeon in Rome who received his education in this institution.<sup>40</sup>

While the 1833 English translation of Father Sangermano's account of the »Burmese Empire« proved an important document for the later study of Burma and provided valuable information about the cosmology, religion, royal history, laws and demographic data, and although »the wife of the Burmese viceroy used to come to church to hold discussions with him on religion«,<sup>41</sup> little is known about the actual influence of the early Catholic mission on Burmese society during the years before the British occupation.<sup>42</sup> In 1813 the first American Baptists took up their mission work in Burma and Adoniram Judson was the missionary who contributed immensely to language studies by translating the Bible, publishing a Burmese-English dictionary and a grammar. During the First Anglo-Burmese War he was imprisoned but later acted as an interpreter between the British and the royal court.

Like other American missionaries and their European counterparts whose writings appeared in American magazines, Judson devoted more attention to Burmese language, Burmese culture and Buddhism than most of the liberals. Although there were differences in perspective on other religions among missionaries, most accounts of Buddhism presented in Western mission magazines before 1858 tended to present the dominant Burmese religion as one more instance of heathenism and its misguided worship of false deities. Few praised the tradition, and few interpretations seemed to challenge fundamental assumptions. Judson was of the opinion that Burmese Buddhism contributed to or was even constitutive for a false perspective on reality and that Christian mission had to be instrumental in introducing science into traditional Burmese learning.

In Judson's memoirs we find claims that the progress of natural sciences in Burma would prove the superiority of Christianity over Buddhism:

We must establish schools, by our superior knowledge gain influence over the young, and with their daily lessons instil into their minds a knowledge of Christianity. And more than this: as the religious systems of the heathen are indissolubly

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40 WISEMAN, Preface, p. 37.

41 W.C.B. PURSER, *Christian Missions in Burma*, Westminster 1911, p. 89.

42 Helen G. TRAGER, *Missionary Views of the Burmese in the Nineteenth Century*, Bombay 1966, p. 10f.

associated with false views of astronomy, geography, and physical science generally, if we can correct these errors, the religion resting upon them must by necessity be swept away.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless Judson was critical of limiting Christian mission to civilisational education:

As these views have been carried into practice, a change has naturally come over missionary stations. Ministers of the gospel to the heathen have become schoolmasters. Instead of proclaiming the great salvation, they have occupied themselves in teaching reading, spelling, geography, arithmetic, and astronomy. While some are thus engaged as teachers, others are employed as book makers for the schools [...]. Hence, while schools diffuse knowledge, improve the intellect, hasten the progress of civilization, and are, therefore, benevolent and philanthropic, they are not, as it seems to me, the missionary work which Christ committed to his disciples. That they have done good who can doubt? But, as a means for converting men, that they have fallen very far below the simple preaching of the gospel, is, I think, beyond a question.<sup>44</sup>

In 1822, Judson had several encounters with members of the royal court in which he discussed matters of science and religion with the princes:

October 28. Spent the forenoon with Prince M. He obtained, for the first time, (though I have explained it to him many times,) some view of the nature of the atonement, and cried out, ›Good! good!‹ He then proposed a number of objections, which I removed to his apparent satisfaction. Our subsequent conversation turned, as usual, on points of geography and astronomy. He candidly acknowledged that he could not resist my arguments in favor of the Copernican System, and that, if he admitted them, he must admit that the Boodhist system was overthrown. In the afternoon I visited prince T. A hopeless case.<sup>45</sup>

I have quoted these statements at length because they give evidence of how Christian mission in Burma went hand in hand with the implementation of Western science and forms of knowledge. In 1827, Judson published a Burmese-language textbook on geography, which was used not only in Missionary schools, but was distributed widely to spread Western geographical knowledge throughout the country.<sup>46</sup>

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43 Francis WAYLAND, *The Memoir of the Life and Labor of Rev. Adoniram Judson*, vol. I (Boston 1853), p. 208.

44 WAYLAND, *Memoir*, vol. I, p. 209.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 310.

46 Michael W. CHARNEY, *Powerful Learning. Buddhist Literati and the Throne in Burma's Last Dynasty, 1752–1885*, Ann Arbor 2006, p. 175.

In 1856 another important figure of the Catholic mission came to Burma, Paul Ambrose Bigandet, who was consecrated as a bishop and became one of the early authorities on the language and religion of Burma. The content of his book *Life and Legend of Gautama Buddha* published in 1852 was entirely taken from a manuscript of 1792 written by the chief-monk, the *thathana-baing* of King Bodawpaya. Nevertheless, his influence on King Mindon Min has to be taken into consideration as well as the king's support of the mission-work.

Probably one of the most influential missionaries in the contact zone was Dr John Ebenezer Marks, whom the S.P.G. in 1863 sent to Rangoon as a schoolmaster. Marks, like Bigandet, had several conversations with King Mindon regarding religion, missionary work, the construction of missionary schools, education and administration. In these conversations, Mindon Min also expressed his interest in Western knowledge and technology. As Marks reports in his autobiography:

The King asked me if I could procure him machinery and other merchandise. I told him distinctly that I had nothing to do with politics or commerce – being simply a religious teacher, and as such earnestly desirous to serve the King and his people. My answer seemed to please him at the time, but the proposal was afterwards again and again made to me [...]. His Majesty at once assented and entered into a long and pleasant conversation about English schools, books, etc. He wished to have the ›Encyclopaedia Britannica‹ translated into Burmese, and he asked me to bring up about fifty of my Rangoon schoolboys for that purpose.<sup>47</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the need to modernise led King Mindon to acquire more technology, like weaponry, steamships, telegraphs, hospitals, and to renew the administrative structures. Traditional monastic education was considered to be of limited effectiveness in modernising the country. Mindon had to find alternatives to provide a better general education.<sup>48</sup>

From 1859 onwards, Mindon sent several students abroad, mainly to India, but also to France and England, for a Western secular education which would involve training in science. Mindon also financed Christian schools, allowed and even encouraged Christian mission work and openly supported religious pluralism in his country. The first schools for laypeople not run by the Sangha, where Western secular subjects would be taught, were set

47 John Ebenezer MARKS, *Forty Years in Burma*, New York 1917, pp. 172, 178.

48 Khammai DHAMMASAMI, *Idealism and Pragmatism. A dilemma in the current monastic education systems of Burma and Thailand*, in: Ian HARRIS (ed.), *Buddhism, Power and Political Order*, New York 2007, pp. 10–25, at p. 12.

up by the Rev Dr John Marks and Bishop Bigandet in Mandalay. Mindon sent his sons, including Prince Thibaw, who succeeded him in 1878, to these missionary schools.

But at the same time, King Mindon's response to the defeat of lower Burma in 1852 was to reassert the king's role as patron of the *Sāsana*. He carried out numerous Buddhist projects, from founding a new capital in Mandalay to be a home for the Dhamma to convening the Fifth Buddhist Council in 1871, to reciting the Tipitaka, supporting monks meditating in the forests and practising meditation personally, which together sought to project an image of the king as protector of the *Sāsana* in Burmese territory against the threats from non-Buddhists in the South.<sup>49</sup>

He expanded royal patronage for scholar-monks and encouraged monks to return to Lower Burma to ensure that the Dhamma would continue to be taught there. Mindon's focus on Buddhist projects as a response to British influence is a further indicator of how Colonialism was felt not only as a political confrontation but also a cosmological threat.

As Michael Mendelson,<sup>50</sup> Donald Eugene Smith,<sup>51</sup> Heinz Bechert,<sup>52</sup> Michael Charney,<sup>53</sup> Juliane Schober<sup>54</sup> and others<sup>55</sup> have emphasised, in Burma the interpretation of colonialism as a danger for the Buddha-*Sāsana* coincided with several aspects of innovation: Besides some resistance movements we can identify several reforms of the *Sāsana*. Central to these was the re-reading of canonical and non-canonical texts about decline of Buddhism, secondly the introduction of Pāli-classes and exams for the laity and finally the growth of meditation.<sup>56</sup> How are these three aspects connected?

Understanding colonialism as hastening the decline of the *Sāsana*, Buddhist laypeople in the second half of the nineteenth century intervened with projects that would continue royal efforts to preserve Buddhism. Coming together in this way, Burmese Buddhists came to understand themselves as members of a community with a specific cosmological purpose.<sup>57</sup>

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49 Juliane SCHÖBER, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar. Cultural Narratives, Colonial legacies, and Civil Society*, Honolulu, HI 2011, pp. 29–33.

50 Michael E. MENDELSON, *Sangha and State in Burma. A Study of Monastic Sectarianism and Leadership*, Ithaca, NY 1975.

51 Donald Eugene SMITH, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, Princeton, NJ 1965.

52 BECHERT, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft*, pp. 54–73.

53 CHARNEY, *Powerful Learning*, pp. 89–107.

54 SCHÖBER, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures*, pp. 46–59.

55 CADY, *History*; Winston L. KING, *A Thousand Lives Away. Buddhism in Contemporary Burma*, Berkeley 1964; Emmanuel SARKISYANZ, *Buddhist Backgrounds of the Burmese Revolution*, The Hague 1965.

56 HOUTMAN, *Traditions of Buddhist Practice*, pp. 26–54.

57 TURNER, *Buddhism, Colonialism*, pp. 55–59.



The term *Sāsana* may be translated literally as »teaching« or »doctrine«, but traditionally, it was never understood merely as scriptural knowledge. *Sāsana* involves quotidian practices in observing the teachings and their application and even extension, of which meditation is one aspect. In Theravada Buddhism, *pariyatti* is the learning of the theory of Buddha-Dhamma as contained within the *suttas* of the Pali canon. It is contrasted with *patipatti*, which means to put the theory into practice, and *pavedha*, which means penetrating it or rather experientially realising the truth of it.<sup>58</sup> Theravada Buddhism in Burma has accordingly not been a religion confined to virtuoso renouncers of the world. To the contrary, it is a practice involving interchangeable relations between monks and laity. It is just this dynamic relation in which all, laity and Sangha, can participate. From my observations in Myanmar, collective rituals like mass meditation are nowadays almost as important as other rituals, based on family and on observances of holidays.<sup>59</sup>

The preservation of the *Sāsana* had been the central rationale for religious reform throughout Burmese history. Based on the model of Aśoka from the *Mahāvamsa*, kings undertook campaigns to reform the Sangha and promote their idea of orthodoxy with the explicit purpose of ensuring conditions under which the *Sāsana* would flourish.<sup>60</sup>

Buddhist concepts of time are broken into *kalpas* (p. *kappa*) or eons, which include the appearance of a number of different Buddhas (or no Buddhas at all). Time is further divided into the era of each Buddha's enlightenment and the duration of his teachings, his *Sāsana*.<sup>61</sup> Enlightenment and realisation are most easily achieved when a Buddha is present on earth. From the moment of the Buddha's entry into Parinibbana, the *Sāsana* begins a process of slow but inevitable decline in which the teachings are forgotten and the practices abandoned. The length of this decline is a matter of dispute among different Pāli sources, but all agree that the *Sāsana* will eventually disappear completely when all knowledge of the texts and practices is lost, yet this process is also a preparation for the arrival of the next Buddha.<sup>62</sup> The interpretation of colonial influence as hastening the decline of the *Sāsana* was paralleled

58 URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pariyatti> (access date: 12 June 2014); this is elaborated by HOUTMAN, *Traditions of Buddhist Practice*, pp. 13–18.

59 Ingrid JORDT, *Burma Mass Lay Meditations Movement*, Athens, OH 2007.

60 In the Kalyani Inscriptions from 1476 it is announced that the king »purified the sasana so that it would endure five thousand years«, a trope found in dedicatory inscriptions from the ninth-century pagan period up to the nineteenth century. The inscriptions of King Dhammaceti near Pegu at the Kalyani River have been published and translated into English: The Kalyāni Inscriptions. Erected by King Dhammaceti at Pegu in 1476 AD. Text and Translation, Rangoon 1892.

61 For Buddhist concepts of time and decline cf. NATTIER, *Future Time*.

62 Saya U Chit TIN, *The Coming Buddha*. Ariya Metteyya, Kandy 1992; John Clifford HOLT (ed.), *The Anāgata-vamsa Desanā. The Sermon of the Chronicle-To-Be*, Delhi 1993.



in the nineteenth century by an increase in writings about the stages of the Sāsana's future decline.<sup>63</sup> The nineteenth century also saw a shift from abstract concern about the decline of Sāsana to a more concrete discussion. Pāli sources on Sāsana decline were well-known by the end of the nineteenth century,<sup>64</sup> and offered detailed narratives that could be used both to explain the problems of Colonialism and to offer modes of response. A very influential narrative of decline in Burma has been the *Anāgata Vaṃsa*.<sup>65</sup> This text lists the five stages of decline: *adhigama*, *patipatti*, *pariyatti*, *linga* and *dhatu*. The text is meant to be read as a set of predictions made by the Buddha to his disciple Sāriputta. It includes a prediction of the arrival of the future Buddha Metteyya, but most of the text is devoted to explain the decline of the Sāsana. By the end of the nineteenth century, tens of thousands of copies had been circulated in Burma,<sup>66</sup> and even today Buddhist meditation centres in Myanmar republish this text.

The *Anāgata Vaṃsa* offers a very detailed account of how the decline will happen and it seems to have been the central text distributed, interpreted and applied to the concrete situation in early Buddhist associations in Burma. It therefore seems appropriate to say that it mirrors Burmese concerns of the time. The first disappearance, or *antaradhana*, described is the loss of attainments (*adhigama*): the end of monks' ability to achieve the four final stages on the path to nibbana that meant the end of the presence of enlightened *arhats*. This signalled the end of the period that began following the Buddha's enlightenment, when it was easiest to become enlightened. The next stage is the loss of *patipatti*, conduct or practice, in which monks progressively become unable to practice meditation and observe the rules of conduct until ultimately the last monk breaks all of the rules. The loss of learning, *pariyatti*, the third stage, narrates the eventual loss of all the books of the Tipitaka.

63 I can refer to recent research by Gustaaf Houtman, Juliane Schober, Alicia Turner and others on Burmese chronicles and inscriptions that make frequent reference to the Sāsana lasting five thousand years with a vague reference to a future decline.

64 The most detailed account is in *Buddhaghosa's Manoratha purani* commentary on the *Anguttara Nikaya* that describes a five-stages (*antaradhanas*) sequence through which the Sāsana will disappear. The Manoratha purani's account of the five or stages of decline became the basis for further elaborations like the *Anāgata Vaṃsa*.

65 A manuscript copy was obtained by Ivan MINAYEFF (an Indologist from St Petersburg) during his visit to Burma in 1886. It was published in the Journal of the Pali Text Society, London 1886, pp. 33–53. Edward CONZE in his classic anthology »Buddhist texts through the ages«, New York 1954, published a translation by Isaline Blew Horner, an English Indologist, a leading scholar of Pali literature and late president of the Pali Text Society (1959–1981). Minayeff acquired this manuscript from the library of Maung Hpo Mhyin, an influential figure among Buddhists in the Rangoon who later became the Honorary Secretary of the Rangoon branch of the Maha Bodhi Society. He was the society's representative for Burma at Calcutta and in 1893 a participant at the Chicago World's Parliament of Religions.

66 TURNER, Buddhism, Colonialism, pp. 60–70.

The fourth stage, the loss of the outward appearances (*linga*), is concerned with the manners of the monks, their dress, their livelihood and decline in morals. It describes the decline by describing married monks who work and have forgotten even the basics of monastic behaviour. The final stage, the disappearance of the relics (*dhatu*), is imagined as a supernatural cosmic event in which all of the Buddha's relics, set in place by the gods, magically disappear, reunite at Bodh Gaya, the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, and are finally consumed by flames.

Alicia Turner has systematically elaborated how these images of decline parallel a number of Burmese Buddhist concerns in the nineteenth century. The concern for the declining morality of the monks coincides with late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century monastic reform movements (e.g. the robe conflict). The image of the relics ultimately reuniting at Bodh Gaya must have had a lasting impression on those Buddhists who tried to save that site from the control of non-Buddhists, namely on those engaged in or related to the Maha Bodhi Society. The loss of *pariyatti*, learning, corresponded directly with the concern that the loss of royal patronage would mean a decline of the Sāsana. King Mindon emphasised the introduction of Pāli learning and exams for the laity, organised by the state. The decline of *patipatti* led to the need to instruct the laity in forms of meditation.<sup>67</sup> One significant aspect of this attempt is that the king himself began to engage in meditation. Probably the introduction of Vipassanā meditation for the laity and its introduction into wider circles of the Burmese society was among the most significant reactions to the crisis experienced under colonialism. Whereas before 1860, barely any hints to Vipassanā meditation can be found in Burmese texts, Gustaaf Houtman has noted a tremendous increase after 1860. Interestingly, even missionary reports by Sangermano, Bigandet and others never mention the term Vipassanā, and a 1918 entry in a revised edition of the Burmese-English dictionary defines Vipassanā as »a kind of wisdom which enables the possessor to make extraordinary discoveries«.<sup>68</sup>

The processes in Burma that I have sketched here may be considered an expression of a modern movement insofar as they allow us to observe how, under colonial conditions, the space of experience (*Erfahrungsraum*) and

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67 Ibid., pp. 54–59. The discourse on the condition of the Buddha-Sāsana nevertheless was controversial during the nineteenth century and underwent significant changes. This can be seen in a notice in the Sāsanavamsa, one of the important monastic chronicles, from the year 1861, which King Mindon commissioned and in which it is asserted that there are monks in the Sangha who are arhats. Even today, this chronicle, which was edited and commented in 1897 by Mabel Bode for the Pali Text Society, is an important source for the reconstruction of the history of Buddhism in Burma. But his chronicle at the same time is a telling example for an attempt on the part of King Mindon to establish a Buddhist orthodoxy under circumstances that might endanger his kingdom.

68 HOUTMAN, Traditions of Buddhist Practice, p. 41.

the horizon of expectation (*Erwartungshorizont*)<sup>69</sup> drifted apart – a central aspect of the temporal structure of modernity. In the colonial »state of exception« (*Ausnahmezustand* – Benjamin/Agamben) »progress« is experienced as »catastrophe« but also as a »risk«, which is a challenge to the future of the Buddha-Sāsana. The survival of the Buddha-Sāsana is only possible at the price of its transformation by transforming what was traditionally a royal duty to an individual obligation.<sup>70</sup> Experiences can no longer be directly projected onto the future and the future thus becomes uncertain or, to be more precise, contingent. Meditation is now adopted as a technique of dealing with contingency (*Kontingenzbewältigung*) and thus a technique of developing a new Buddhist identity.

With these changes, the Buddha-Sāsana developed into something we would call »Buddhism« in the Western sense of a »religion«. Adoniram Juddon's dictionary introduced a new term – »Botdabada« (Buddha-Religion) – which was absorbed into the modern Burmese language.<sup>71</sup> The influence of missionaries in this process was rather marginal and at most indirect. Monks like Ledi Sayadaw (1846–1923)<sup>72</sup> and later Mahasi Sayadaw (1904–1982) became the new experts on meditation and founded Meditation-Centres outside the traditional monasteries.

The first prime minister of independent Burma, U Nu, not only made Buddhism the state religion but he also meditated in the mindfulness tradition of Mahasi Sayadaw:

On the personal request of the Honorable U Nu, Prime Minister, and Thado Thiri Thudhamma Sir U Thwin, President of the Buddha Sasananuggaha Association, the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw, Bhaddanta Sobhana Mahathera, came down from Shwebo to Rangoon on 10th November 1949. The Meditation Centre at the Thathana Yeiktha, Hermitage Road, Rangoon, was formally opened on 4th December 1949, when the Mahasi Sayadaw began to give to fifteen devotees a methodical training in the right system of Satipatthana Vipassana.<sup>73</sup>

Mahasi was instrumental in spreading Vipassanā meditation to other countries in South and Southeast Asia and to the West.

69 Reinhard KOSELLECK, »Erfahrungsraum« und »Erwartungshorizont« – zwei historische Kategorien, in: Id., *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik historischer Zeiten*, Frankfurt a.M. 1979, pp. 349–375.

70 TURNER, *Buddhism, Colonialism*, pp. 54–59.

71 KIRICHENKO, *From Thathanadaw*, pp. 23–45; HOUTMAN, *Traditions of Buddhist Practice*, pp. 55–75.

72 ERIC BRAUN, *The Birth of Insight. Meditation, Modern Buddhism, and the Burmese Monk Ledi Sayadaw*, Chicago 2013.

73 U Pe Thin, *Forword to: Mahasi Sayadaw, Satipatthana-Vipassana*, 1995, URL: <http://enlight.lib.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-AN/an141166.pdf> (access date: 12 June 2014).

From time immemorial, Buddhas, Arahats and Ariyas have realized Nibbana by this method of Vipassanā. It is the highway leading to Nibbana. [...] Impermanence, suffering and non-self will be realized through direct personal experience, and with the full development of these knowledges, Nibbana will be realized. It will not take long to achieve the objective, possibly one month, or twenty days, or fifteen days, or, on rare occasions, even in seven days for those select few with extraordinary parami.<sup>74</sup>

The contact zone in which the Burmese meditation movements emerged has expanded rapidly during the past decades. It has gained global momentum. Any metahistorical perception of meditation as a universal and transhistorical practice can be countered by taking note of the genealogy of today's fashion for meditation.<sup>75</sup>

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74 MAHASI Sayadaw, *The Satipatthana-Vipassana meditation. A Basic Buddhist Mindfulness Exercise*, Rangoon 1979.

75 Michel FOUCAULT, *Nietzsche, die Genalogie, die Historie* [1971], in: Id., *Dits et Ecrits. Schriften*, vol. 2, Frankfurt a.M. 2002, pp. 166–191.

Katharina Stornig

## Cultural Conceptions of Purity and Pollution

Childbirth and Midwifery in a New Guinean  
Catholic Mission, 1896–c. 1930

### 1. Introduction

In February 1930, a group of five Western missionary nuns from Alexishafen, the headquarters of the Catholic mission in the Vicariate Apostolic of East New Guinea,<sup>1</sup> posted a petition to the leading committee of their congregation, the Servants of the Holy Spirit, in Steyl.<sup>2</sup> Founded in 1889, the Holy Spirit Congregation was an originally German congregation of missionary nuns, which had been affiliated to the Society of the Divine Word (1875), a Catholic mission-sending society for priests and monks.<sup>3</sup> Since 1896 and 1899, respectively, priests, monks and nuns from both congregations acted in what was then a part of the German colony of New Guinea.<sup>4</sup> With the petition of 1930, the signatories, all of whom occupied high ranks in the regional hierarchy of the Servants of the Holy Spirit,<sup>5</sup> asked that, to quote from the text, »in extraordinary cases of childbirth [–] in which one or two human lives are at risk [–] a sister should be present who could offer help«.<sup>6</sup> To put

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1 Rome set up the vicariate apostolic East New Guinea in 1922 on the territory of the former prefecture apostolic that had been called, according to German colonial nomenclature, Kaiser-Wilhelms-Land. Since its foundation in 1896, the prefecture apostolic of Kaiser-Wilhelms-Land had been assigned to the Society of the Divine Word (SVD), an originally German missionary order of priest and monks. In 1899, the New Guinea-based SVD missionaries received support from the Servants of the Holy Spirit, an affiliated congregation of missionary nuns.

2 Like many other German Catholic congregations founded at the time, due to the *Kulturkampf* and its aftermath, the Servants of the Holy Spirit congregation was established in the small Dutch town of Steyl, situated close to the German border.

3 For a first overview on the history of the congregation, cf. Salesiana SOETE, *Geschichte der Missionsgenossenschaft der Dienerinnen des Heiligen Geistes*, Diss. phil. University of Vienna 1953.

4 On the beginnings of Steylean mission history in New Guinea, cf. Nancy LUTKEHAUS, Introduction, in: Karl BÖHM, *The Life of some Island People of New Guinea. A Missionary Observation of the Volcanic Islands of Manam, Boesa, Biem, and Urub*, Berlin 1983, pp. 13–69; Paul STEFFEN, *Die Anfänge der Rheinischen, Neuendettelsauer und Steyler Missionsarbeit in Neuguinea* (Excerpta ex dissertatione ad Doctoratum in Facultate Missiologiae Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae), Rome 1993.

5 More specifically, the petition was signed by the group of sisters which, led by superior provincial Sister Imelda Müller, constituted the leading committee of the province.

6 »[...] dass in außergewöhnlichen Fällen von Geburten wo ein oder zwei Menschenleben in Gefahr sind, eine Schwester da sei, die helfen könnte«, AG SSpS PNG 6201 Korrespondenz 1911–1975, Briefe von Sr. Imelda Müller, 12 February 1930.

it in other words, the petitioners requested official admission to the field of childbirth and obstetrics. In the opening passage of the text, they explained their request and motivations as follows:

Here in this country, more than a few women die in labour and many a child is denied baptismal grace, because in the moment of greatest need aid is lacking. Superstition, indigenous customs, fear of men [i.e. other people], lack of charity and many other causes prevent [indigenous women] from performing this service of love. Under the current conditions, the missionary sister is the only [person] who could help and who would like to help.<sup>7</sup>

As we can deduce from the passage quoted and what the petitioners perceived as a range of shortcomings in New Guinean society and culture causing high maternal and infant mortality, the field of childbirth had become of crucial concern to them. In New Guinea a set of pollution taboos prevented indigenous men and women from assisting women in labour. Certainly, given the absence of a developed system of healthcare, infant and maternal mortality was high in the areas in which the Catholic mission operated. According to the petitioners, no other persons or agencies were present in these parts of the diocese that would be willing to care for the mothers during and after childbirth. In other words, they claimed that due to the specific social circumstances in the Vicariate of East New Guinea and cultural attitudes of its native inhabitants, the (medical) improvement of childbirth was up to Western Catholic nuns.

Interestingly, presenting their request, the petitioners argued on two levels: On the one hand, in view of the high obstetrical death rates, they referred to the need to provide the sacrament of emergency baptism and thus to perform what Catholic doctrine held to be a vital spiritual service to non-Christian persons dying.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, however, they argued on a more secular level that related to the (medical) end of saving human bodies (rather than souls). After all, the petitioners not only demanded that the New Guinea-based nuns should assist indigenous women in labour, but also represented their presence at childbirth as a means towards combatting obstetric death in the region. Stating that their past activities in this context, which mostly

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7 »Es sterben hier zu Lande nicht wenig Frauen bei der Geburt und gar manchem Kind bleibt die Taufgnade versagt, weil in der Stunde höchster Not die Hilfe fehlt. Aberglaube, Landessitte, Menschenfurcht, Mangel an Nächstenliebe und noch manch andere Ursachen halten von der Ausübung des erwähnten Liebesdienstes ab. Wer helfen könnte und helfen wollte, ist in den jetzigen Verhältnissen, einzig die Missionsschwester«. Ibid.

8 According to Catholic doctrine, in case of imminent death, any person is allowed to administer the sacrament of baptism. Cf. William FANNING, Baptism, in: *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (1907), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02258b.htm> (access date: 1 September 2014).

focused on the theoretical instruction of pregnant women by trained missionary nurses, had turned out to be inefficient, they urged their superiors in Europe to take further measures. Since qualified help was deeply needed, the petitioners reaffirmed their sense of obligation to present their superiors »the trustful and most humble request, to send our mission some sisters in the years ahead, who are qualified to assist the women in cases of childbirth when lives are in danger«.<sup>9</sup> Thus, apart from baptising the dying, it was the stated goal to effectively lower maternal and infant mortality in New Guinea through the extension and professionalization of the medical missionary personnel.<sup>10</sup>

However, by 1930, the number of qualified missionary midwives available in the Servants of the Holy Spirit's European motherhouse was very limited; actually, a marginal note on the petition suggests that there was only one nun present who »has acquired knowledge in this regard«.<sup>11</sup> This is hardly surprising given the fact that, at that time, despite the long-standing tradition of the engagement of women religious in nursing, the image of a nun as a midwife was still very rare and involved a range of contradictions.

For many centuries, according to Vatican regulations, Catholic nuns, as women under vows, were not allowed to venture into the areas of pregnancy, obstetrics, childbed, and infant care.<sup>12</sup> This was due to Catholic sexual mores and gendered politics of the body and sexuality, which held that ecclesiastical superiors, priests and nuns were to consider any confrontation with the field of sexuality as dangerous and harmful to chastity.<sup>13</sup> The banning of nuns from the field of maternal and infant health care, moreover, corresponded to the broader view of the Vatican authorities, according to which the intimacy of medical work in general and certain activities, such as those involving blood and the sex organs in particular, were prohibited to the members of religious orders.<sup>14</sup> In fact, it was only in 1936 that the Vatican Congregation

9 »[...] fühlen wir uns verpflichtet, Ihnen, ehrw. Obern, die vertrauensvollste und ergebenste Bitte vorzulegen, unserer Mission in den nächsten Jahren einige Schwestern zu senden, die befähigt sind in Fällen der Gefahr für das Leben Frauen bei der Geburt zu helfen«, AG SSsP PNG 6201 Korrespondenz 1911–1975, Briefe von Sr. Imelda Müller, 12 February 1930.

10 For an extended discussion of missionary nursing in colonial New Guinea, cf. Katharina STORNI, *Sisters Crossing Boundaries. German Missionary Nuns in Togo and New Guinea, 1897–1960*, Göttingen 2013, pp. 244–271.

11 »[...] die sich Kenntnisse nach dieser Richtung hier erworben hat [...]«, AG SSsP PNG 6201 Korrespondenz 1911–1975, Briefe von Sr. Imelda Müller, 12 February 1930.

12 Jo Ann Kay McNAMARA, *Sisters in Arms. Catholic Nuns Through Two Millennia*, Cambridge, MA 1996, pp. 626f.

13 For a discussion of Catholic concepts of chastity in the context of gender, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 1–6.

14 However, while Vatican regulations concerning medical work targeted priests and nuns, it must be added that gendered constructions of the body as well as gender roles in the Church constituted important grounds for these rationales in the early twentieth century: While the barring of priests from medical work was first and foremost to emphasise their role as healers of the soul

of the Affairs of Religious, in cooperation with the Holy Office, legalised the admission of nuns to the field of obstetrics under certain conditions.<sup>15</sup> Yet the nuns in New Guinea, although no doubt aware of the ecclesiastical status quo, had already demanded concrete action in 1930. More surprisingly still, they met with success. According to a note, the leading committee in Steyl immediately responded to the petition by sending a nun with midwifery skills to New Guinea.<sup>16</sup> In the long run, this trend continued: Whereas, in 1930, the New Guinea-based nuns still stressed the fact that the assistance of women missionaries at childbirth should be limited to extraordinary and high-risk cases,<sup>17</sup> by the late 1950s, the job of the missionary midwife was well established.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the question emerges how this beginning of Catholic midwifery in New Guinea came about. Why did the Servants of the Holy Spirit who, well into the twentieth century, could hardly be qualified as a progressive congregation, take such decisive action in this regard?

This chapter sets out to answer this question.<sup>19</sup> Based on the analysis of missionary sources and ethnographic literature, I argue that the history of the petition witnesses to significant changes in the thought and perceptions of Western nuns in New Guinea, which, in one way or another, resulted from their experiences in the contact zones. Mary Louise Pratt has defined contact zones as »social spaces, where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today«.<sup>20</sup> This essay makes use of this idea of the contact zone in a twofold way. On the one hand, it uses it to analyse the social space of childbirth in colonial New Guinea. In doing so, the chapter relies heavily

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(in contrast to the role as healers of the body), the prohibitions for nuns always referred to the potential harm to their moral and religious integrity. For a Vatican statement concerning the medical work of priests in the missions, cf. APF, N.S. 874, 501.

15 Bernita WALTER, Von Gottes Treue getragen. Die Missions-Benediktinerinnen von Tutzing, vol. 2, Gottes Treue verkünden. Wegbereitung für die Kirche in Ostafrika, St. Ottilien 1992, p. 316.

16 AG SSps PNG 6201 Korrespondenz 1911–1975, Briefe von Sr. Imelda Müller, 12 February 1930.

17 AG SSps PNG 6201 Korrespondenz 1911–1975, Briefe von Sr. Imelda Müller, 18 September 1930.

18 AG SSps 100 General Chapter 5 1960, Durchführung, Sr. Nazaria Albers, Neuguinea: Region zu Ehren der heiligen Engel, p. 5.

19 This chapter is largely based on archival research performed in the Servants of the Holy Spirit's historical archives in Rome and Steyl between 2007 and 2011. I particularly thank the archivists of the congregation for their cooperation and hospitality throughout the years. Besides, I thank the organiser as well as all participants of the workshop *European Missions in Contact Zones* for their perceptive comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.

20 Marie Louise PRATT, *Arts of the Contact Zone*, in: *Profession* (1991), pp. 33–40, at p. 34.



on the first term in Pratt's definition and thus on the idea that it is first and foremost a social situation, an encounter – often highly intimate – between women, that I am studying here.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, however, the article also investigates the broader implications of the various local missionary encounters in terms of changing Catholic religious and cultural attitudes to childbirth more generally. It thus inquires into the ways in which locally changing perceptions potentially also fuelled changes within the transnational congregation in particular and the Church more generally. In this context, accounting for the emphasis that the literary scholar Pratt places on language and text,<sup>22</sup> it employs the concept of the contact zone as a tool for analysing the transnational space of communication created (and to a considerable extent also controlled) by European missionaries and missionary nuns in the era of the German Empire and thereafter.

## 2. Childbirth in Northern New Guinea

As in many areas of the world, in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century New Guinea, assisting in childbirth was the domain of women.<sup>23</sup> As we learn from the ethnographic literature, usually, mothers retreated to designated sites outside the villages, where they gave birth either open-air or in what anthropologists have referred to as birthing houses, small huts made from local resources which were often set up by maternal kin or husbands.<sup>24</sup> According to the accounts of anthropologists and missionaries, in any case, birthing sites were spaces prohibited to men, including male kin and the child's father. This was due to a set of rather complex pollution taboos that surrounded the act of birthing as well as all physical and social bodies involved. During and after delivery, the mothers had to stay at these places and were not received into their home villages before pollution was ritually removed. According to the German missionary and ethnographer Karl Böhm, fathers were obliged

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21 This point has also been recently emphasised by the famous historian of the body, Barbara Duden, who reminds us that childbirth with a midwife was always a physical *and* a social event, and involved a range of interactions between women before as well as after birth. Cf. Barbara DUDEN, *Von der Tauglichkeit der Geschichte für Hebammen*, in Daniel SCHÄFER (ed.), *Rheinische Hebammengeschichte im Kontext*, Kassel 2010, pp. 197–210.

22 Mary Louise PRATT, *Imperial Eyes. Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation*, New York / London 2008.

23 For a general introduction to the cultural history of childbirth, cf. Eva LABOUVIE, *Andere Umstände. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Geburt*, Köln et al. 2000.

24 Karl BÖHM, *The Life of some Island People of New Guinea*, p. 73; Camilla WEDGWOOD, *Manam Kinship*, in: *Oceania* 29 (1958/59), pp. 240–256, at pp. 250f.

to stay in their home villages during the first days after the birth and, moreover, had to observe a range of special rules until all cleansing rituals had been completed on mothers and children.<sup>25</sup>

Besides, in most New Guinean settings, the presence of other women at birthing sites was also subject to a set of social norms and limitations. Since a woman in labour was generally considered impure, other women would tend to keep distance from her. This related to extended ideas of pollution and imaginations of contagion. According to Böhm, anyone who touched a woman in labour was consequently considered impure as well, and had to go through a complicated ritual of purification themselves. Furthermore, he stated that, even though a woman in labour was never left alone by her female kin, she did not get any assistance during labour either, because, at least in the interpretation of the missionary anthropologist, »everybody feared her«.<sup>26</sup> Böhm, who cited a nun as his informant on the matter, wrote that due to these fears of contagion, the women present at birth would »tell the mother from a distance what she has to do«.<sup>27</sup>

However, the spatial and social isolation of mothers and newborns continued after birth. While men were still prohibited from entering the birthing site or seeing mothers and infants, female kin would visit frequently, supplying the mother with cooked food and talking to her.<sup>28</sup> However, the mother still had to observe a range of taboos, such as avoiding all men and the village and observing some restrictions with regard to eating and smoking.<sup>29</sup> According to Böhm, during this state of pollution, the only person allowed to touch the infant without suffering adverse effects was the mother.<sup>30</sup> This had, of course, far-reaching consequences in the case that mothers died in childbirth. According to the British social anthropologist Camilla Wedgwood, who conducted one year of fieldwork on Manam Island in 1933, in cases of maternal death, traditionally, no attempts were made to save the life of the infant.<sup>31</sup> However, ritual cleansing of mothers and infants started right after birth with the first meal and furthermore included washings and shavings and ended with a ceremony under the participation of maternal kin. This state of pollution of mothers and newborns lasted, depending on the setting,

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25 BÖHM, *The Life of some Island People of New Guinea*, pp. 73f.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

27 *Ibid.*

28 WEDGWOOD, *Manam Kinship*, pp. 250f.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 251.

30 BÖHM, *The Life of some Island People of New Guinea*, pp. 76f.

31 Camilla WEDGWOOD, *The Life of Children in Manam*, in: *Oceania* 9 (1938), pp. 1–29, at p. 18; Nancy LUTKEHAUS, *Missionary Maternalism: Gendered Images of the Holy Spirit Sisters in Colonial New Guinea*, in: Mary Taylor HUBER et al. (eds.), *Gendered Missions. Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, Ann Arbor 1999, pp. 207–235, at p. 222.

between a few days and up to one month. Only then and when all rituals were completed were mother and child considered pure again and fully received into their community.<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly, this period of isolation of mothers and children became of interest to the first Catholic priests to arrive in what was then German New Guinea in 1896.<sup>33</sup> Having established the first missionary station in Tumleo, an island to the north of the mainland, they worried about the population development in the small island, which counted only a few hundred inhabitants.<sup>34</sup> Observing high death rates among the newborns, the priests attempted to check on the health of the babies as soon as possible.<sup>35</sup> Besides, suspecting the mothers of actively practising infanticide, they felt the need to access birthing sites.<sup>36</sup> This was due to the priests' fear that newborn babies would pass away before baptism.

This drive to ensure the baptism of newborn infants to some extent shaped the development of early Catholic missionary practice in the region. Since, at the beginning, the Catholic missionary presence in New Guinea was largely limited to a number of small islands along the north coast of the mainland, the first missionaries attempted the baptism of most newborns within these areas.<sup>37</sup> They legitimised this strategy by referring to high infant mortality and interpreting parental consent to baptism as consent to the subsequent religious education of the children by the missionaries; a plan that, needless to say, did not work quite as simply as intended.<sup>38</sup> However, since neither indigenous nor ecclesiastical gender arrangements allowed the priests to access women in confinement, the first male missionaries in Tumleo appreciated the appointment of female co-workers, who were to be sent by the

32 WEDGWOOD, *The Life of Children in Manam*, p. 18; LUTKEHAUS, *Missionary Maternalism*, p. 232.

33 For an introduction to the correspondence between the first missionaries in New Guinea and Steyl, cf. Joseph ALT (ed.), *Arnold Janssen – Letters to New Guinea and Australia*, Nettetal 2001.

34 Matthias Joseph ERDWEG, *Die Bewohner der Insel Tumleo, Berlinhafen, Deutsch-Neu-Guinea*, in: *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 32 (1902), pp. 274–399, at p. 278. On the considerable fear on the part of missionaries and colonial administrators of a population decline in German New Guinea more generally, cf. Wolfgang U. ECKART, *Medizin und Kolonialimperialismus. Deutschland 1884–1945*, Paderborn 1997, pp. 417f.

35 This is particularly emphasised in the historical accounts presented by nuns. Cf. Perboyre NEUSS, *Die Steyler Missionsschwestern »Dienerinnen des Heiligen Geistes«*. Ein schlichter Kranz zu ihrem silbernen Jubelfest, Steyl 1914, pp. 189f.; SOETE, *Geschichte der Missionsgenossenschaft*, p. 187.

36 For instance, cf. Eberhard LIMBROCK, *Fortschritt unserer Mission in Deutsch-Neuguinea*, in: *Steyler Missionsbote* (1912), pp. 71–74, at p. 71.

37 NEUSS, *Die Steyler Missionsschwestern*, pp. 189f.; AG SSps 6201 *Korrespondenz 1899–1910*, Sr. Friedolina Vökt, 22 November 1908.

38 STORNIC, *Sisters Crossing Boundaries*, pp. 296–299 and 323–328.

joint headquarters of the priests and nuns in Steyl. However, when the priests assigned the pioneer nuns in New Guinea the task of visiting the birthing sites on Tumleo Island in order to access the local women and infants after delivery,<sup>39</sup> they paid only limited attention to the moral issues that were at stake from the point of view of the nuns. As indicated earlier, even though the nineteenth century witnessed the great expansion of Catholic women's congregations (many of which, moreover, primarily engaged in nursing)<sup>40</sup> in the German lands, these congregations largely distanced themselves from maternal and child health care on grounds of Catholic sexual mores and the dominant body politics of the Church.<sup>41</sup>

### 3. Catholic Nuns, Sexual Morality and Midwifery in Wilhemine Germany

By the turn of the century, maternal and child health care was an issue of concern to many people and different groups in Germany. Seeing healthy infants increasingly as an important resource for the nation state, social reformers attempted to ensure a positive demographic development, which was also to be reached through the professionalization in the field of medicine.<sup>42</sup> In particular, maternal and health care and midwifery were increasingly subjected to professionalization, leading, in Germany, to fears of a lack of midwives.<sup>43</sup> In this general atmosphere, Catholic nuns were explicitly invited to engage in the field. As Ralf Forsbach has recently shown, by the turn of the century, the employment of Catholic nuns in infant care and obstetrics

39 AG SSpS 6201 Korrespondenz 1899–1910, Sr. Valeria Diezen, 7 January 1900.

40 For instance, cf. Relinde MEIWES, »Arbeiterinnen des Herrn«. Katholische Frauenkongregationen im 19. Jahrhundert, Frankfurt a.M./New York 2000; id., Von Ostpreußen in die Welt. Die Geschichte der ermländischen Katharinenschwestern (1772–1914), Paderborn 2011; id., Katholische Frauenkongregationen und die Krankenpflege im 19. Jahrhundert, in: L'Homme. Europäische Zeitschrift für Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft 19 (2008), pp. 39–60. For a basic introduction to the European dimension of this phenomenon, cf. Michela DE GIORGIO, Die Gläubige, in: Ute FREVERT et al. (eds.), Der Mensch des 19. Jahrhunderts, Frankfurt am Main 1999, pp. 120–147.

41 Ralf FORSBACH, Hebammentätigkeit von katholischen Pflegeorden im Kaiserreich (1871–1918), in: SCHÄFER (ed.), Rheinische Hebammengeschichte, pp. 197–210.

42 Silke FEHLMANN, Armutsrisiko Mutterschaft: Mütter- und Säuglingsfürsorge im rheinisch-westfälischen Industriegebiet 1890–1924, Essen 2009; Ulrike LINDNER, The Transfer of European Social Policy Concepts to Tropical Africa, 1900–1950: The Example of Maternal and Child Welfare, in: Journal of Global History 9 (2014), pp. 208–231.

43 FORSBACH, Hebammentätigkeit, pp. 200f. For a general overview on the situation in Western countries, cf. Hilary MARLAND et al., Introduction. Midwives, Society and Childbirth: Debates and Controversies, in: Hilary MARLAND et al. (eds.), Midwives, Society and Childbirth: Debates and Controversies in the Modern Period, London/New York 1997, pp. 1–13, at pp. 3f.

constituted a contested subject in Wilhelmine society.<sup>44</sup> While, by then, many Catholic doctors, civil associations and secular agencies repeatedly invited women's congregations to »modernise« and to act as midwives, the members of the hierarchy (i.e. the bishops) as well as most of the women's congregations themselves largely stopped such efforts. For many Catholic actors, any (physical and social) contact between women under vows and the field of sexuality in the widest sense was to be strictly avoided. Frequently, it was the nuns themselves who refused not only to engage in midwifery but also in any type of nursing that related to pregnancy, confinement or childbirth.<sup>45</sup>

However, once we turn the focus from the debates in the German public and ecclesiastical circles to that within some of the Catholic missionary congregations acting on the territories of the German Empire, we face a slightly different picture. For instance, as historian of colonial medicine Walter Bruchhausen has pointed out, Ildefons Schober, superior general of the Missionary Benedictines in St. Ottilien (Bavaria), who were in charge of the mission in what was then German East-Africa since 1887, had arranged the training of two Catholic nuns in midwifery as early as 1898.<sup>46</sup> Due to the strong advocacy of bishop Thomas Spreiter, himself a member of the Ottilien Congregation and since 1906 Vicar Apostolic in Dar-es-Salaam, this trend grew during the next decade. This is indeed significant, given that, between 1890 and 1920, German East Africa not only saw a high infant mortality rate but also a considerable population decline.<sup>47</sup> Despite the fact that some nuns in Bavaria were, in the words of order historian Sister Bernita Walter, »unpleasantly touched« by the prospect that members of the congregation acted in this field, before the Great War six more Missionary Benedictines received ten months of specialised training in obstetrics, this time at an exceptional French diocesan congregation of religious midwives in Metz.<sup>48</sup> For our context, it is important to keep in mind that this decisive step on the part of the congregation seems to have been directly motivated by the immediate experience of the situation in East Africa on the part of individual (and, as in the case of bishop Spreiter, powerful) members of the missionary

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44 FORSBACH, *Hebammentätigkeit*, pp. 197f. Besides, it must be mentioned that the medical activities of Catholic men and women religious between canonical regulations and practical demands still constitutes a largely under-researched subject.

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 198–202.

46 WALTER BRUCHHAUSEN, *Medizin zwischen den Welten. Geschichte und Gegenwart des medizinischen Pluralismus im südöstlichen Tansania*, Göttingen 2006, p. 449.

47 ECKART, *Medizin und Kolonialimperialismus*, p. 368; LINDNER, *The Transfer of European Social Policy Concepts*, pp. 215–217.

48 WALTER, *Von Gottes Treue getragen*, pp. 307–309; FORSBACH, *Hebammentätigkeit*, p. 203.

establishment. In other words, in this case the »modernisation« or »aggiornamento« of a Catholic institution was initiated in the East African colonial context.<sup>49</sup>

The example of the Missionary Benedictines in Bavaria shows that at least some members of German missionary congregations, despite existing ecclesiastical prohibitions and far-reaching sexual taboos in the Church, gave the field of midwifery not only considerable thought but also took action in this regard. To some degree, this was also the case with the Servants of the Holy Spirit. As the correspondence between individual missionary nuns and the leading committee of the congregation in Europe demonstrates, missionary life confronted individual nuns with medical issues related to childbirth. Even though they clearly avoided terms like »childbirth« or »midwifery« in their letters, some Servants of the Holy Spirit apparently occupied themselves – at least theoretically – with the field of maternal and infant health care. For instance, we learn from the historical records that, in 1900, the nun in charge of the nurses' training in the Steylean motherhouse possessed some knowledge of midwifery that she had acquired in Cologne.<sup>50</sup> And, with the mission activity of the congregation expanding into Africa and Oceania,<sup>51</sup> it turned out that this (»forbidden«) knowledge was actually in demand.

In 1901, a nun based in the town of Aného, German Togo, where the Servants of the Holy Spirit were active since 1897, enquired in writing after medical advice: Stating that the local prefect apostolic had assigned her the care for women in childbed, Sister Didaka Micheel asked for medical instructions concerning the treatment of mothers and infants.<sup>52</sup> Yet her letter also bears witness to the fact that discussion of these issues was well beyond the ordinary. She was obviously not very comfortable tackling the subject, for Sister Didaka added the following words to the request she had addressed to the mother superior: »I would be very grateful if Sister Augustina would be allowed to tell me something about it [the medical treatment of mothers in childbed]. But if you allow the Sister to write me, I beg you not to let a third sister know«. <sup>53</sup> Hence, while the writer was clearly willing to perform this

49 Significantly, similar findings also come from other institutional and geographic contexts. In her recent book, Livia Loosen cites a complaint by the missionary bishop Louis Couppé in Vunapope, New Britain, who stated that the local nuns acted as midwives as early as 1913. Cf. LIVIA LOOSEN, *Deutsche Frauen in den Südsee-Kolonien des Kaiserreichs. Alltag und Beziehungen zur indigenen Bevölkerung 1884–1919*, Bielefeld 2014, p. 346.

50 AG SSsP 6201 Korrespondenz 1899–1910, Sr. Fridolina Vökt, 24 June 1900.

51 While the Servants of the Holy Spirit's first overseas field of missionary work was Argentina (1896), within only a few years, the congregation also established branches in, to name but a few examples, Togo (1897), New Guinea (1899), USA (1901), Brazil (1902) and China (1905).

52 AG SSsP 034 Tg 02 Briefe der Schwestern 1900–1907, Sr. Didaka Micheel, 4 August 1901.

53 Ibid.

medical service, she was also aware that it was not an appropriate (social) field for women religious. However, the Togo-based nuns were not the only Servants of the Holy Spirit to be confronted with these issues.

#### 4. Intimate Encounters in New Guinea

Alike their sisters in Togo, also the first nuns who arrived in Tumleo Island, German New Guinea, in April 1899 were soon confronted with the social field of childbirth. As indicated earlier, the local priests had already awaited their female co-workers eagerly. Significantly, one of the first tasks that they assigned to the nuns in July 1899 was to regularly visit the birthing sites in the island and to actively search for mothers in childbed in order to detect newborn children.<sup>54</sup> According to the contemporary missionary logics, these visits had the primary function to ensure that, in view of the high infant mortality rate, none of the children died without baptism. In this sense, the assignment given to the nuns also related to a religious key task that, in rural Catholic societies, was performed by midwives.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, in New Guinea, the physical presence of the nuns at the birthing sites were probably also supposed to prove the falseness of what the missionaries called superstition.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, the nuns were to introduce novel attitudes to childbirth and, through their own example, deconstruct indigenous cultural imaginations of bodily pollution and contagion.

With this in mind, we may well assume that, for the religious and social identities of the nuns as women under vows, this must have been a real challenge. The sources suggest, however, that their missionary zeal obviously empowered them to disregard all doubts. Significantly, when reporting these visits, the nuns usually described their contacts with women in childbed through a narrative of baptism, which apparently provided them with a morally safe and legitimate ground for getting involved with childbirth. For instance, in January 1900, after having been in New Guinea for a period of about six months, Sister Ursula Sensen reported from Tumleo Island:

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54 AG SSpS 6201 Korrespondenz 1899–1910, Sr. Valeria Diezen, 7 January 1900.

55 Eva LABOUIE, *Beistand in Kindsnöten. Hebammen und weibliche Kultur auf dem Land (1550–1910)*, Frankfurt am Main et al. 1999, p. 67.

56 During the early years of the missionary presence, the nuns also visited places prohibited to women, for instance during indigenous religious ceremonies, with the goal of demonstrating that nothing adverse happened to them in consequence. Such endeavours, however, often also failed, because indigenous women would then avoid the nuns. For instance, cf. AG SSpS PNG 601 Korrespondenz 1899–1917, Sr. Friedolina Vökt, 27 May 1899.



Our Rev. Sister Superior has, I think, already baptised 4 little children and Rev. Sister Valeria 3. Now these two sisters must visit all new-born children on the Island. In every village there is a special place close to sea in the open air; that is where the women go when a child is born, there they stay for a couple of days; men and children are not allowed to go to these places, [...] we are however allowed to go to the women, as soon as we hear about a new-born child, Sister Superior and Sister Valeria go there to baptize it; they [the mothers] like it being baptised as it would be given a little dress, Rev. Sister Valeria always sees to it that she has a christening robe ready.<sup>57</sup>

Similar accounts are frequently found in the correspondence from the early twentieth century. Newly arrived nuns would comment on their baptismal experience, as well as describe later attempts to convince women in childbed to agree on the solemn baptism of their babies at the local church.<sup>58</sup> For the context of this article it suffices to say that, due to these efforts, the nuns came into close contact with the social field of childbirth and interacted with newborn infants as well as women in childbed, sharing intimate moments and perhaps also the mother's joy about healthy babies. The sources show that, in cases where the nuns succeeded in convincing the mothers to have their babies baptised by a priest in church, it often was one of them who carried the baby there; a job that in many Christian contexts was performed by the midwife.<sup>59</sup> To be sure, this is not to assume that all mothers welcomed the nuns after the delivery. In fact, the opposite was often the case. Usually it was missionary pupils who informed the nuns about women giving birth, and at times, the villagers tried to hide events of childbirth from the missionaries.<sup>60</sup> Sometimes, the nuns also baptised moribund children in secret.<sup>61</sup> In any case,

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57 »Unsere ehrw. Schwester Vorsteherin hat, ich glaube, schon 4 Kindchen getauft und ehrw. Schw. Valeria 3. Diese beiden Schwestern müssen jetzt alle neugeborenen Kinder der Insel besuchen. In jedem Dorfe ist ein bestimmter Ort, nahe der See unter freiem Himmel, dorthin begeben sich die Frauen, wenn ein Kind zu Welt kommt, dort bleiben sie dann einige Tage liegen, es dürfen an diesen Ort keine Mannespersonen kommen und auch keine Kinder, [...] wir aber dürfen zu den Frauen gehen, sobald wir erfahren, das[s] irgendwo ein Kind zur Welt gekommen, gehen Schw. Vorsteherin und Schw. Valeria hin und taufen es; die Frauen haben gern dass es getauft wird, es bekommt dann auch ein Kleidchen, ehrw. Schw. Valeria sorgt immer, dass sie ein Taufkleidchen fertig hat«. AG SSpS 6201 Korrespondenz 1899–1910, Sr. Ursula Sensen, 7 January 1900.

58 Significantly, this type of baptism taking place at designated birthing sites went on for several years. According to the record, it was not until 1904 that the nuns succeeded for the first time in convincing a mother to agree to the baptism of her baby in the local church. AG SSpS PNG 601 Korrespondenz 1899–1917, Sr. Valeria Diezen, 25 January 1904.

59 LABOUVIE, *Beistand in Kindsnöten*, p. 66. This has, moreover, been interpreted as a sign for the collaboration of mothers and midwives during labour. Cf. DUDEN, *Von der Tauglichkeit der Geschichte*, p. 273.

60 AG SSpS PNG *Chroniken*, H-P.101.h-12 Manam, p. 62 and 6201 Korrespondenz 1899–1910, Sr. Fridolina Vökt, 22 November 1908.

61 STORNIG, *Sisters Crossing Boundaries*, p. 254.



however, for our context it is important to note that trips to birthing sites became a regular feature of female missionary life and of contemporary missionary practice. From the point of view of the indigenous mothers, this must have changed the social field of childbirth, which now involved involuntary contact with a group of women whose behaviour must have seemed strange and who disregarded pollution taboos.<sup>62</sup>

During the first decade of female missionary work in New Guinea, the missionaries' concern with childbirth clearly related first and foremost to baptism.<sup>63</sup> In that sense, the nuns approached women in labour and newborn babies primarily as potential Catholics, and not as human beings in need of medical assistance. In the nuns' letters from these years, medical issues were largely subordinated to baptismal concerns and brought up only very rarely. Yet the health of mother and child as well as the question what the nuns could (and *would*) do about it was too obvious a topic to be ignored. In June 1900, about a year after the beginning of female missionary activity in the region, a New Guinea-based nun informed her superiors in Europe that »what Sister Augustina had learned in Cologne« was not required of the nuns in New Guinea. That the writer shies from using the term »midwifery« is striking, as is her assurance that missionary activity in New Guinea would not involve the nuns' physical presence during labour: In New Guinea, she wrote, the nuns would only »be informed when the child has already arrived«. She continued: »Usually it is already 1 or 2 days old when we arrive, and so far mother and child have always been in good health«. <sup>64</sup>

Of course, this assessment from June 1900 could not remain valid forever. The nuns in New Guinea also had to confront cases in which childbirth involved complications or death. While the sources remain totally silent with regard to potential activities concerning the medical care for mothers, they bear witness to the fact that the nuns seemed eager to adopt the task of infant care. In fact, the upbringing of children whose mothers had passed away in labour developed into an important field of work for the women missionaries, who at first took in infants at the convents and later established orphanages of a kind.<sup>65</sup> Even though the babies' chances of survival at the convents were

62 However, working on the basis of missionary sources, the important question remains largely open, how indigenous women located the celibate nuns in a social setting, in which initiations and rituals (e.g. the birth of a woman's first child) impacted on the social and cultural conception of a person. For an overview, cf. Nancy LUTKEHAUS et al. (eds.), *Gender Rituals. Female Initiation in Melanesia*, New York/London 1995.

63 Ibid., pp. 227–275.

64 »Wir werden nie etwas davon gewahr bis das Kind schon da ist. Meistens ist es schon 1 bis 2 Tage alt bis wir hinkommen, und dann ist [sic] Mutter und Kind bis jetzt noch jedes Mal gut gesund gewesen«, AG SSsP 6201 Korrespondenz 1899–1910, Sr. Fridolina Vökt, 24 June 1900.

65 The start of this type of work was made at the latest in spring 1901, when the nuns took in a five-day-old baby whose mother had died in childbed. Significantly, the nuns nursed the

at first very low, the nuns nevertheless regarded infant care as a worthwhile field. Apart from the desire to access and to save these new souls, their activities were fuelled by the hope that once the surviving children had grown up, they would provide a dependable foundation for a Catholic society. And they became increasingly eager to lower death rates. With the arrival of a better-trained missionary nurse from Germany in 1908, new efforts were made in this regard. During the following years, the nuns step by step started to build an increasingly institutionalised setting for infant care in the newly erected regional headquarters of the Servants of the Holy Spirit in Alexishafen.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, they would try to move all infants from the various convents in New Guinea to the headquarters, where a medically trained nun was in charge of their care.

From that point on, Sister Barnaba Zirkel resided with the orphaned infants of the diocese in a separate building that was affiliated with the women's convent in Alexishafen. According to the missionary record, in the first decades of the twentieth century, some indigenous people indeed made use of the possibility to hand infants whose mothers had died in childbirth over to the nuns.<sup>67</sup> This is confirmed by social anthropologist Camilla Wedgwood in Manam Island, who reported in 1933 that »to-day such an infant is generally taken and reared by the Reverend Sisters at the mission station«.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the chronicler of the local convent recorded individual cases in which dying mothers had pleaded with the nuns to take care of their newborn babies.<sup>69</sup> Paradoxically, the nuns, who had chosen a life beyond marriage and motherhood and whose gendered religious identities were constructed on chastity and the rejection of maternity, became surrogate mothers to many children in New Guinea. However it is hardly surprising that they did not represent their involvement in infant care in terms of social motherhood. Rather, well into the 1920s, baptising efforts continued to constitute the nuns' main narrative. Besides, they gradually resorted to a language of medical professionalization. This trend gained momentum with the arrival of a growing number of better-trained missionary nurses from Europe during the late 1920s.

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little Emma for about the next seven months until she, much to the regret of her surrogate mothers religious, passed away. Their engagement with Emma was also the first time when they mentioned the idea to establish a children's home. Cf. AG SSsP PNG 601 Korrespondenz 1899–1917, Sr. Martha Sieverding, 2 June 1901 and 6201 Korrespondenz 1899–1910, Sr. Ursula Sensen, 18 August 1901.

66 STORNIG, *Sisters Crossing Boundaries*, pp. 245–250.

67 BÖHM, *The Life of some Island People of New Guinea*, p. 77.

68 WEDGWOOD, *The Life of Children in Manam*, p. 18.

69 PNG Chroniken, H-P.101.h-12 Manam, pp. 5 and 60.

## 5. Conclusion: Products of the Contact Zone(s)

Seen from this angle, the petition quoted at the beginning of this chapter appears simply as a logical step in the historical development described. The text of the petition explicitly refers to the failure of earlier initiatives concerning the reduction of obstetric mortality, which largely concentrated on the attempt of the missionary nurses to instruct expecting women theoretically.<sup>70</sup> However, this chapter has suggested that the petition is best understood as a product of the contact zone. Its genesis and submission can indeed be seen as acts that bear witness to important changes that had occurred in the local nuns' conception of both their religious state and their role as women missionaries. This, moreover, found expression in cultural representations, for by the turn of the century, the image of a nun with a newborn baby gradually started to lose the contradictory character it had once had.<sup>71</sup> Finally, it must be emphasised that the petition acknowledged the medical saving of human life as a superior goal worth challenging ecclesiastical prohibitions for. Stating with authority that action was needed in order to effectively lower death rates, the petitioners paved the way for the opening of a new chapter in the Servants of the Holy Spirit's medical work, in which maternal and infant health care was to take a central role. However, the immediate success of the petition also points to the extended contact zone of communication that had been created by the missionaries and nuns between New Guinea, Togo and Steyl as well as other geographic areas of the Servants of the Holy Spirit's (as well as other missionary congregations') activity.<sup>72</sup> By the time of the Servants of the Holy Spirit's fourth general chapter, held in 1948, the congregation's leading committee in Europe considered maternal and infant health care an important and appropriate sphere of activity for missionary nuns that demanded specialised training.<sup>73</sup> This changing attitude on the transnational level of the congregation is not sufficiently explained with

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70 AG SSsP PNG 6201 Korrespondenz 1911–1975, Briefe von Sr. Imelda Müller, 12 February 1930.

71 The collection of photographs filed in the Servants of the Holy Spirit's archive in Steyl demonstrates this clearly. In particular, nuns like Sister Barnaba Zirkel, who were involved with infant and child (health) care throughout their missionary career, were repeatedly pictured with young children. Cf. Archive SSsP Steyl, Fotos, New Guinea, album and various folders.

72 While the sources show that the heads of the different missionary congregations discussed specific aspects of religious life in the various missionary contexts, the petition contained an explicit reference to the Catholic nuns in Rabaul, New Britain who appear to have had several certificated midwives among them. Besides, the petitioners added that also the Protestant deaconesses on location were »trained accordingly, in order to provide this service of love«, AG SSsP PNG 6201 Korrespondenz 1911–1975, Briefe von Sr. Imelda Müller, 12 February 1930.

73 AG SSsP 100 General Chapter 4 1948, Durchführung, Mutter Columba Caspers, Bericht nach Art. 402 von 1934–1948, p. 4.

reference to changing sexual mores in European societies at large. Rather, to an important extent it resulted from shifting notions of sexuality and sexual purity which, emerging due to close interaction and particular needs in the New Guinean missionary context, began to circulate within the transnational space of communication created.

Unfortunately, given that this transnational communicative space was largely controlled by Western missionaries, the voices and changing views of indigenous people remain often unheard. Communications from the missionary nuns tend to carry an undertone representing indigenous women as somewhat trapped in local cultural paradigms. However, a brief glimpse at the dynamic development of Catholic maternal and child healthcare in mid-twentieth-century New Guinea suffices to disprove any such assumption of cultural (or racial) essentialism that sporadically emerges from both the text of the petition as well as much of the missionary writing well into the twentieth century.

Whereas during the 1930s missionary health work was still marked by the coexistence of several concepts, midwifery became a stable point on the agenda. In 1948, when mission work was taken up again after the interruption forced on it by the Second World War, the provincial superior mentioned maternal and child health care as the main prospect for the nuns' contribution to health work. By then, the fight against maternal and infant mortality had become the stated goal, and action in this regard was taken.<sup>74</sup> During the 1950s, several missionary midwives acted in different areas of the vicariate. According to a report from 1960, obstetric mortality had declined in these areas and all local priests called for the deployment of a midwife at every missionary station.<sup>75</sup> The author of the report claimed that the presence of a midwife had a considerable impact on local maternal and infant death rates.<sup>76</sup> According to Sister Salesiana Soete, the nuns' engagement in maternal and infant health care was also appreciated by the Australian colonial government.<sup>77</sup> By 1960, the Servants of the Holy Spirit had established four institutions they called »mother homes« in New Guinea, which actually constituted a type of maternal clinics. Significantly, according to the missionary record, the offer of a hospital birth was accepted by a considerable number of indigenous women who also applied in advance to get a clinic bed for delivery.<sup>78</sup>

74 AG SSsP 100 General Chapter 4 1948, Durchführung, Sr. Lorraine Becker, Bericht der Region zu den heiligen Engeln, Neuguinea, p. 3.

75 AG SSsP 100 General Chapter 5 1960, Durchführung, Sr. Nazaria Albers, Neuguinea: Region zu Ehren der heiligen Engel, p. 5.

76 Ibid., p. 5.

77 SOETE, Geschichte der Missionsgenossenschaft, p. 196.

78 AG SSsP 100 General Chapter 5 1960, Durchführung, Sr. Nazaria Albers, Neuguinea: Region zu Ehren der heiligen Engel, p. 5.

Besides, it also became clear that indigenous women not only appreciated the medical services provided by Western nuns, but also conceived of these clinics as spaces for training and employment. In the late 1950s a school was affiliated to one maternal clinic, where local women were trained as midwives. Given the fact that, in practice, one nun simultaneously functioned as the local midwife and head of the school and clinic, we can well imagine that, in these clinics, creative forms of cooperation and support had to be developed.

To conclude, it must therefore be stated that, contrary to earlier generations of both nuns and indigenous women, for whom the prospect of such a maternal clinic must have provided quite a threatening image of a closed site of pollution and a real threat to sexual purity, later generations obviously came to value these institutions for a range of reasons. It would thus be misleading to conceive of the development of Catholic maternal and infant health care in New Guinea simply as the transfer of Western ideas and practices to Oceania. Rather, it was decades of close (and partly intimate) interaction that enabled the emergence of these particular contact zones.



Felicity Jensz

## Reporting from the Religious Contact Zone

Missionaries and Anthropologists in  
Nineteenth-Century Australia

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the sociologist Emile Durkheim drew upon the work of the anthropologists Walter Spencer and Francis Gillen in their study of the Warramunga and also the Aranda in Central Australia to support his theory of religion. Durkheim postulated that the Warramunga had two distinct phases. One phase was characterised by small family groups spread across larger geographical spaces, each group independently going about its own way, and spending much of its time in either hunting or gathering for its daily food needs. This phase, occupying most of the group's time, was juxtaposed with one in which groups of people came together for either days or weeks at one particular place and during which time religious ceremonies were celebrated. During these religious celebrations, and also ones which included non-religious aspects such as corroborees, people lost themselves completely to the moment. Or, in Durkheim's words: »Since the emotional and passional faculties of the primitive are only imperfectly placed under the control of his reason and will, he easily loses control of himself.«<sup>1</sup> These religious ceremonies became, in Durkheim's concept, orgies in which sexual mores no longer applied and the senses dominated over rational thought. These feasts occurred in the darkness of night with singing voices being strengthened by musical instruments, such as the clashing of two boomerangs, or the whirling of bull-roarers. Durkheim presents an image, based upon the anthropological writings of Spencer and Gillen, of wild, sexually deviant people who are slaves to their emotions, and are in no way able to control themselves in the emotional hysteria of the masses. Based on this material, Durkheim suggests that amongst the Warramunga there was a sharp divide between the profane and the religious and that, taking this as a basis, »primitives« were not capable of integrating religion into their daily lives, and that this chasm was accentuated in »primitives« as opposed to »civilized« peoples, being pronounced only amongst the former.<sup>2</sup> For Durkheim the difference between the two realms was essential for the

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1 Emile DURKHEIM, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated from the French by Joseph Ward Swain, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd 1915, p. 215.

2 DURKHEIM, *Religious Life*, p. 219.

preservation of social order, with social integration being for him the fundamental question of sociology.<sup>3</sup> In order to expand his theory he examined other peoples' writings on Australian Aborigines, whom he saw as engaging in one of the earliest forms of religion, and thus concluded that individual elements of their religion would be found in more »advanced« religions.<sup>4</sup> Yet as an »armchair« theorist he obtained his information not through fieldwork, but rather from the observations of others, particularly those of Spencer and Gillen, and other anthropologists working in Australia. In taking up the common theme of this volume, the present chapter extends Mary Louise Pratt's notion of »contact zones« to the field of religion, examining how in the contact zone of colonial Australia religion was conceptualised and utilised by various European groups, particularly missionaries and anthropologists, and also how Indigenous peoples interpreted aspects of Christian religion. As such, this article does not intend to interrogate Durkheim's theory, but rather uses his work as a point of departure for examining the religious contact zone within colonial Australia.

This chapter will examine some examples of interactions between missionaries and Indigenous peoples within the contact zone in order to describe moments of engagement within various concepts of religion, and thus focuses upon the »religious contact zone«. This essay is not interested in religious change per se, particularly as religious change is often described as religious conversion. The article will thus not engage with debates of the authenticity of conversion, nor is conversion even the focus of this paper. It is directed instead at the descriptions that stem from the religious contact zone, particularly those that describe how Indigenous peoples integrated concepts of European religion into their own religious world-view. Following Mary Louise Pratt, these products of the religious contact zone were played out in the »social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination«.<sup>5</sup> Given that multiple concepts of religion were in play, religion should here be understood as referring to adherence to a particular culturally shaped understanding of the transcendental. In order to understand how missionary descriptions of Indigenous religions were themselves shaped, it is important to have an understanding of the aims behind the various descriptions of Australian Indigenous religions in the early colonial period, and it is to this topic that we now turn.

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3 Hans-Richard REUTER, *Gott als symbolischer Ausdruck der Gesellschaft. Émile Durkheims Theorie der sozialintegrativen Funktion von Religion*, in: *Religion und Gesellschaft* (2004), pp. 51–53, at p. 52.

4 REUTER, *Gott als symbolischer Ausdruck der Gesellschaft*, p. 52.

5 Mary Louise PRATT, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, New York/London 2008, p. 7.



## Varying Aims of European Descriptions of Indigenous Religions

From the time of the first voyages of Europeans in the late eighteenth century to the great southern land into the twentieth-century, European descriptions of Indigenous religions have been utilised to underscore European hierarchies and categories. Missionaries of various denominations described Indigenous Australians as being »degraded« and on the »lowest in the scale of the human race.«<sup>6</sup> Missionary intervention was seen by both Christian groups as well as officers of the colonial government as a means to »raise« Indigenous peoples in terms of their religious, social, and economic standing. As will be expanded upon below, although missionaries initially described Indigenous peoples as lacking on various levels, the missionary project relied upon a transformation and progression of Indigenous peoples from »primitive« to more »civilised« states. Thus, dynamism within the religious contact zone was desired and indeed essential for the success of the missionary project. In contrast, within many anthropological descriptions of Aborigines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the focus of many a white European has been to fix the primitive »essence« of Indigenous Australians in order to »undergird the project of the modern«.<sup>7</sup> The list of perpetrators includes primarily men who supposedly used »Aboriginal knowledges of social and religious organisation in their work« such as G. W. F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Marcel Mauss, Friedrich Engels, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Talcott Parsons, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz, amongst others.<sup>8</sup> Although the theories varied, a commonality of these theorists was to create a static notion of Indigenous culture prior to European contact as a contrast to a »civilized« and dynamic European modernity. Indeed, nineteenth-century anthropological writings, on which many of these theorists based their works, were intent on describing the »authentic« Indigenous state. That is, a state of being preceding interaction with European populations and knowledge as if the contact zone in which »disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination« did not exist. This was in contrast to many missionary writings, particularly within monographs on missionary history, in which a pre-European description of Indigenous religion was presented, however, this was seen as the base state

6 John HARRIS, *One Blood. 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity. A Story of Hope*, Sutherland 1990, p. 30.

7 Philip BATTY, *Saluting the dot-spangled banner. Aboriginal Culture, National Identity and the Australian Republic*, in: *Australian Humanities Review*, URL: <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-September-1998/batty.html> (access date: 26.02.2014).

8 BATTY, *Saluting the dot-spangled banner*.

from which Indigenous peoples were to be »raised« to a »higher« Christian level through interaction in the religious contact zone, and not an end in and within itself.<sup>9</sup>

Returning briefly to Durkheim, he used the one group of Indigenous Australians, the Warramunga, as a synecdoche not only for the experiences and concepts of over 600 other language groups within Australia each with its own unique cultural and religious practices and understandings, but for all »primitive« peoples. Moreover, he placed the Warramunga in a historical moment that was devoid of dynamism, describing Indigenous Australians as belonging to a time in which there was no interaction with other cultures. This reflected the late nineteenth-century notion that Indigenous Australians themselves were not of this time, and thus had no history, and consequently no future within the settler societies emerging around them.<sup>10</sup> The nature of anthropological writing itself indicates the falsity of the concept of a static moment, for as such, anthropological descriptions of Indigenous peoples were made by Europeans themselves in a contact zone and thus a dynamic interaction between cultures was extant. Yet for some aspects of European society, both in the colonies and in Europe itself, the static description of Indigenous peoples was a reflection of nineteenth-century desires to capture the pure, unadulterated, unpolluted Indigenous experience.

Anthropologists have often dismissed missionaries as »agents of cultural change« and thus to be regarded as the »enemy«.<sup>11</sup> This strained relationship is not unique to Australia, but rather has been comprehensively described in various times and places.<sup>12</sup> Initially anthropologists often relied upon the work of missionaries, who by the nature of their work lived amongst Indigenous peoples, obtained insight into their lives over a sustained period of time, and frequently learned and recorded local languages. Indeed, missionaries themselves wrote and published anthropological texts without the mediation of »professional« anthropologists. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a growing anxiety in the professionalising discipline of anthropology that missionaries, who had previously provided much information to anthropologists, or had themselves published material, had attained a

9 Cf. H. G. SCHNEIDER, *Missionsarbeit der Brüdergemeine in Australien*, Gnadau 1882.

10 Patrick WOLFE, *On Being Woken Up. The Dreamtime in Anthropology and in Australian Settler Culture*, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33 (1991), pp. 197–224. Doi:10.1017/S0010417500017011, 204.

11 Claude E. STIPE et al., *Anthropologists Versus Missionaries. The Influence of Presuppositions [and Comments and Reply]*, in: *Current Anthropology* 21 (1980), pp. 165–179, at p. 165. DOI:10.2307/2741710.

12 For an overview of some of the more influential writings see: Anton QUACK, *Anthropology and Missionaries. A Review Essay*, in: *Anthropos* 103 (2008), pp. 560–567, at p. 562. DOI:10.2307/40467433.

degree of respect for their work that was not warranted according to scientific standards of the newly emerging discipline. Missionaries were deemed too dogmatic and blinded by their religious zeal to many details of the lives of others.<sup>13</sup> For example, Spencer, one of Durkheim's informants, was very critical of the work of missionaries in the centre of Australia, specifically the Hermannsburg missionaries (who had been working amongst the Dieri/Diyari since 1866 and the Aranda from the late 1870s), as he believed that the »wretched condition« of the inhabitants was an indication that the missionaries had done no good.<sup>14</sup> Another common criticism against missionaries was that they artificially and incorrectly projected the notion of a Christian God onto an Indigenous concept.<sup>15</sup> Spencer expressed such criticisms as did Edward Taylor who, in 1892, after examining material from various missionary groups, came to the conclusion that »missionary teaching has shaped native belief in a supreme Being«.<sup>16</sup> In other words, contemporary anthropologists were wont to criticise missionaries for their willingness to project monotheistic notions onto Indigenous spirituality, indicating a professional aversion to missionary (indeed also Indigenous) practices of cultural translation and concept assimilation. This stands in contrast to anthropologists who wished to preserve a »pure« image of Indigenous peoples, leading Sjaak van der Geest to argue that anthropologists themselves were not free from their own presuppositions, including their willingness to »impos[e] upon [Indigenous peoples] an exotic-cultural identity from an imagined past«.<sup>17</sup> In relation to Australia, the eminent historian on race and colonialism, Patrick Wolfe, has argued that Spencer's own approval of dubious concepts such as the »dreaming time« was culturally prefigured to create a notion of Indigenous culture that fitted into fin-de-siècle notions of modernity and Europeans' place within it.<sup>18</sup> Wolfe has further argued that Spencer and Gillen first misinterpreted then propagated Indigenous concepts, in particular the »dreaming time«, as a means to create an artificial cleavage between the »primitive« and the »modern«, as Durkheim had done with regard to

13 Patrick HARRIES, *Anthropology*, in: Norman ETHERINGTON (ed.), *Missions and Empire*, Oxford/New York 2005, pp. 238–260.

14 WOLFE, *On Being Woken Up*, p. 200.

15 Although Werner Ustorf makes some of the same claims as Patrick Wolfe, his work also assumes a certain homogeneity amongst Indigenous Australians. See: Werner USTORF, *The Aborigines, Their Religion, and Human Progress*, in: Ulrich VAN DER HEYDEN/Andreas FELDT-KELLER, *Missionsgeschichte als Geschichte der Globalisierung von Wissen. Transkulturelle Wissensaneignung und -vermittlung durch christliche Missionare in Afrika und Asien im 17., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 2012, pp. 401–415.

16 Edward B. TAYLOR, *On the Limits of Savage Religion*, in: *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 21 (1892), pp. 283–301, at p. 295.

17 Sjaak VAN DER GEEST, *Anthropologists and Missionaries. Brothers Under the Skin*, in: *Man New Series* 25 (1990), pp. 588–601, at p. 590. DOI:10.2307/2803655.

18 WOLFE, *On Being Woken Up*, p. 202.

the sacred and the profane. Moreover, the willingness of anthropologists, particularly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to document an unadulterated version of Indigenous Australians complements what Renato Rosaldo has termed an »imperialist nostalgia«, that is, the employment of emotions in order »to establish one's innocence and at the same time talk about what one has destroyed«.<sup>19</sup> Both missionaries and anthropologists were complicit in imperialism, and both were present within contact zones, and both groups were party to the »highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination« that characterised these spaces. Both groups through their work wrought change upon the lives of Indigenous peoples. Yet, as noted above, there were ideological differences between the descriptions of Indigenous religion drawn from their experiences within contact zones: missionaries were eager to present a dynamic image of religious change towards Christianity, in contrast to anthropologists, who wished to fix Indigenous religion in a timeless past. Both of these groups can be criticised for presenting information from the contact zone in ways that furthered their own aims and not necessarily those of the Indigenous peoples involved.

### Religious Amalgamation and Religious Assimilation Within the Religious Contact Zone

Within the current scholarship on nineteenth-century Aboriginal missions in Australia, a space in which the propensity for interaction within the religious contact zone was highest, there has been little sustained attention given to religious change. Over the last twenty to thirty years, secular historians have concentrated on missions within Australia, with much of this work exploring the hegemony of settler colonialism and how it affected the lives of Indigenous peoples.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, less has been written about the religious aspects of settler colonialism and missionary influences.<sup>21</sup> Within the disci-

19 Renato ROSALDO, *Imperialist Nostalgia*, in: *Representations* 26 (1989), pp. 107–122, at p. 108.

20 For an overview of mission history, including the influence of secular historians upon this field, see: Patricia GRIMSHAW / Andrew MAY, *Reappraisals of Mission History. An Introduction*, in: Id. (ed.), *Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Exchange, First Nations and the Colonial Encounter*, Brighton, Portland, Toronto 2010, pp. 1–9. For Australia particularly see: Patricia GRIMSHAW et al., *Empire, »the Civilising Mission« and Indigenous Christian Women in Colonial Victoria*, in: *Australian Feminist Studies* 16 (2001), pp. 295–309. DOI:10.1080/08164640120097534; Peter SHERLOCK, *Missions, Colonialism and the Politics of Agency*, in: Amanda BARRY et al. *Evangelists of Empire?: Missionaries in Colonial History*, ed. Amanda Barry et al., Melbourne: University of Melbourne eScholarship Research Center, 2008, pp. 12–20.

21 Two important exceptions are: HARRIS, *One Blood*, and Tony SWAIN / Deborah Bird ROSE, *Aboriginal Australians and Christian missions: ethnographic and historical studies*. Bedford Park, S. Aust 1988. For some case studies in ethnographic and historical analyses of Aboriginal mission stations in Australia see: Peggy BROCK (ed.), *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change*,

pline of anthropology, the »anthropology of Christianity« within Aboriginal Australia has been overlooked, particularly when compared to other geographical regions.<sup>22</sup> However, even within much of the newer scholarship on the anthropology of Christianity, the temporal focus is the twentieth century, thus excluding the period under examination here. An explanation for the neglect of the religious contact zones in Australia, both in terms of history as well as anthropology, is that the earliest missionary encounters with Indigenous Australians bore little fruit in terms of conversion, and many of the initial missionary attempts ended disappointed in the unwillingness of Indigenous peoples to engage with the Christian message.<sup>23</sup> This article will examine both missionary and Indigenous voices, however, it must be noted that predominantly missionary sources will be used to uncover these voices. There are, of course, a number of difficulties in reconstructing nineteenth-century understandings of religion from missionary sources, not the least of which is the limited access to Indigenous voices and, even when they are present, the question of authenticity. Missionary sources predominantly provide a view of the encounter that has been filtered through a religious lens as well as through the social specificities of a historical moment. Nevertheless, they can provide an insight into the shifting nature of religious concepts, which are often broader in detail than anthropological reports which at the end of the nineteenth century were focused upon capturing and recording traditional life before it was »lost« to modernity, just as modernity was itself a construction to legitimise hegemony over Indigenous peoples. Missionaries wrote of and from the religious contact zones, and like the travel writing which Mary Louise Pratt explores in *Imperial Eyes*, missionary writings provided European readers with a sense of being »at home« in non-European spaces. Yet unlike travel writing, which by its nature was transient, missionary texts were created to form a sense of rooted stability and increased conformity with European values within a non-European world. Although the exotic, strange, adventurous and curious nature of the »Other« was presented in order to

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Studies in Christian Mission, Leiden 2005; Tony SWAIN et al. (eds.), *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions. Ethnographic and Historical Studies*, Special Studies in Religion, Number 6, Adelaide 1988. Robert Kenny has written on the conversion of one particular Indigenous man. See: Robert KENNY, *The Lamb Enters the Dreaming. Nathanael Pepper and the Ruptured World*, Melbourne 2007.

22 As Schwarz and Dussart state, this is a newly emerging field, and one which has a temporal focus on the twentieth century and a spacial focus upon »remote« Australia. See: Carolyn SCHWARZ/Françoise DUSSAR, *Christianity in Aboriginal Australia revisited*, in *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 21/1 (2010), pp. 1–13, at pp. 1f.

23 Cf. Felicity JENSZ, *German Moravian Missionaries in the British Colony of Victoria, Australia, 1848–1908. Influential Strangers*, *Studies in Christian Missions* 38, Leiden 2010, pp. 47–56; Jean WOOLMINGTON, *Missionary Attitudes to the Baptism of Australian Aborigines Before 1850*, in: *The Journal of Religious History* 13 (1984), pp. 283–293; SCHWARZ/DUSSAR, *Christianity in Aboriginal Australia revisited*, p. 3.

legitimise the missionary endeavour and incite audiences at home to support the missions via any means possible, missionary texts also strove to identify commonalities – also termed synchronicities<sup>24</sup> – between peoples, especially ones that might lead to the dovetailing of Indigenous spiritual concepts with Protestant Christian ones, with the eventual aim being the complete conversion of Indigenous peoples to Christianity and the shedding (if not complete destruction) of any prior Indigenous religious beliefs. As such the engagement of Indigenous peoples within the religious contact zone was a precondition for religious change, for, as Peggy Brock has rightly noted, religious change »can only occur with support from within the community«,<sup>25</sup> and as such it was the dynamic interplay between Indigenous and Christian world views that was seen to be necessary for the missionary endeavour of converting Aboriginal Australians to Christianity.

There were multiple difficulties in recording Indigenous religious concepts, not the least of which was an aversion in the first decades of the white settlement of Australia around the turn of the nineteenth century to engage specifically with the task of missionary work amongst Indigenous peoples. The establishment of any form of contact zone, let alone a religious contact zone, was not a high priority for colonial administrators. Indeed, it took more than three decades for the first dedicated missionary work amongst Indigenous Australians to be established.<sup>26</sup> Even when missionaries did arrive and began seriously to record Indigenous religious and spiritual practices, they were hampered by their inability to speak Indigenous languages, as well as the reluctance of Indigenous people to share with Europeans what in current nomenclature is called »secret/sacred knowledge«, all intensified by the Indigenous practise of primarily transmitting knowledge orally. Initially Aborigines in general were expected to be examples of Rousseau's Noble Savage, an idea that was influential throughout the Enlightenment and Romanticism and was perpetuated in Captain James Cook's journal entries.<sup>27</sup> The invasion of the land mass later to be named Australia occurred at a time in which the disciplinary fields in the study of »man«, such as anthropology and ethnography, were also being developed, with these two new fields themselves having emerged parallel to the growing nationalism within Europe, which fuelled the desire to classify, measure, and place people according

24 Peggy BROCK, Introduction, in: Id. (ed.), *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change*. Studies in Christian Mission 31, Leiden 2005, pp. 1–11, at pp. 2f.

25 BROCK, Introduction, p. 7.

26 The first missionary, the Wesleyan Rev. William Walker, arrived 33 years after the First Fleet landed in 1788. See: HARRIS, *One Blood*, p. 23.

27 The historian Michael Christie gives a succinct overview of European attitudes towards Aborigines in the Colony of Victoria, particularly in Chapter 2 of his book. See: M.R. CHRISTIE, *Aborigines in Colonial Victoria 1835–1836*, Sydney 1979.

to European ideas of race. Soon after European settlement, the prevailing notion was that Australian Aborigines were a »fallen race«, partly due to the devastating effects of European diseases, punitive actions, and displacement from their land, and as such needed to be treated with paternal care.<sup>28</sup> The almost complete destruction of the Tasmanian Aborigines, who had been separated from the mainland for over 10,000 years, added to this belief, as too did the decimation of many groups (sometimes known as »clans«) through frontier violence as well as pandemics of European diseases. There also existed a line of thought which held that Australian Aborigines were not humans, which, if followed, would allow for settler violence to be carried out without the moral sanctions and legal ramifications that would have followed the murder of Europeans.<sup>29</sup> Settler colonists deemed the death of Aborigines from common European diseases and sickness to be a demonstration that they did not deserve to survive as a people. Yet, as John Harris has demonstrated in his seminal book *One Blood*, missionary societies did not share this view, as they were convinced that Australian Aborigines were of »One Blood« with Europeans, albeit very degraded and wretched ones. Being classified as humans, they could be seen as having the potential to be converted into Christians. Nevertheless, in the first half of the nineteenth century the common experience of missionaries, be they Wesleyan, Goßner, Dresden, Moravian or Church Missionary Society, was discouragement and decided lack of interest in Christianity from the side of the Aborigines.<sup>30</sup> This led to the thought within religious circles that Aborigines only had a weak glimmer of religious understanding.<sup>31</sup> Disappointment in the seeming lack of religiosity, combined with the devastating effects of settler colonialism in the South-Eastern part of the continent,<sup>32</sup> led to a pervasive belief in the extinction of Indigenous Australians.

One of the first missionaries in Australia was the London Missionary Society (LMS) missionary Lancelot Edward Threlkeld (1788–1859), who began his work amongst the Awabakal in the Colony of New South Wales in

28 See for example: Richard BROOME, *Aboriginal Australians. Black responses to White dominance, 1788–1994*, St. Leonards<sup>2</sup> 1994. See also: HARRIS, *One Blood*.

29 Within missionary literature, this idea is raised. See: Karl FÖRTSCH, *Kurze Geschichte der Goßnerschen Mission. Zum fünfundsechzigjährigen Jubiläum. Den Missionsfreunden in Stadt und Land erzählt*. Berlin 1911, p. 9. (German original: »[...] die klugen Einwanderer sich nicht klar darüber zu sein scheinen, ob diese gesunkenen Völker überhaupt Menschen oder nur Affen seien«.)

30 HARRIS, *One Blood*, Chapter 1.

31 Die Eingeborenen von Neuholland, in: *Evangelisches Missions-Magazin* 4 (1860), p. 168.

32 The particular form of settler colonialism within the Colony of Victoria led to much more devastation amongst Indigenous populations than in other settler colonies. See: Patricia GRIMSHAW / Elizabeth NELSON et al., *Empire, »the Civilising Mission« and Indigenous Christian Women in Colonial Victoria*, in: *Australian Feminist Studies* 16 (2001), pp. 295–309. DOI:10.1080/08164640120097534.



the 1820s.<sup>33</sup> Threlkeld was particularly dismissive of contemporary scientific theories equating higher number of folds in the brain with intelligence, for such theories had portrayed Indigenous Australians as not capable of being instructed. Such a line of thought had consequences for the racial categorisation of Indigenous people in Australia, as the ability to reason and the capacity to be instructed were seen as two aspects of human behaviour that Indigenous peoples needed to prove in order to be seen as members of the human race. He noted that many colonists believed that by not meeting these criteria colonists »arrive at the natural conclusion that [...] the Blacks being but a part and parcel of the brute creation, being deficient of intellect, there can be no responsibility attached to their destruction, more than there is to the extirpation of any other animal whose presence is obnoxious to the possessor of the soil«. <sup>34</sup> His argument objected to »scientific assessment of aborigines because it denie[d] the potential influence of God in their lives«. <sup>35</sup> That is to say, nineteenth-century scientific theories worked in opposition to religious notions of a universal humanism, and the concept of »One Blood«.

It was not only scientific theories that were thought to »den[y] the potential influence of God« in the lives of Aboriginal peoples, there were also many people in the mid-nineteenth century who questioned the notion of Indigenous Australians having any spirituality at all. For example, the editor of the *Port Phillip Gazette*, one of the leading newspapers of the protectorate that would become the Colony of Victoria, declared in a 1840 book that:

Their ideas of religion still need to be ascertained, some denying their knowledge of a superior being, or of a future state, others admitting these to be at best but vague and difficult to understand.<sup>36</sup>

Within Christian circles this view was also initially perpetuated. In describing the religious notions of Aborigines to a German public, the Moravian Church – a church that sent out missionaries to the Colony of Victoria in the mid-nineteenth century – described the religious notions of Aboriginal people as »blurred and dark«. <sup>37</sup> H. G. Schneider, the author of the book, noted that a

33 John HARRIS, Lancelot Edward Threlkeld. (1788–1859), URL: <http://webjournals.ac.edu.au/journals/adeb/t/threlkeld-lancelot-edward-1788-1859/> (access date: 03.03.2014). See also: HARRIS, *One Blood*, pp. 53–60.

34 L. E. THRELKELD, *The Annual Report of the Mission to the Aborigines. Lake Macquarie for MDCCCXXXVIII*, URL: <http://eprints.utas.edu.au/1862/> (access date: 04.03.2014).

35 Ibid.

36 George ARDEN, *Latest information with regard to Australia Felix, the finest province of the great territory of New South Wales. Including the history, geography, natural resources, government, commerce and finances of Port Phillip. Sketches of the aboriginal population and advice to immigrants*, Melbourne <sup>2</sup>1977, p. 96.

37 SCHNEIDER, *Missionsarbeit der Brüdergemeine in Australien*, p. 45.



concept of a good higher spirit called Pei-a-mei, or also Mahmammurok, was recorded, one that the missionaries translated as »father of all«. A concept of a malign spirit who lived in dark caves and was called Natje or Ngalia was also recorded, most likely amongst the Wemba Wemba, and applied to all of the Indigenous peoples of South-Eastern Australia. The good spirit, Pei-a-mei, was not to be understood in terms of a New Testament Christianity, but rather in terms of an Old Testament God, who often smote people – although it was not explicitly stated as such in Moravian books. Pei-a-mei was often angered by people, who needed to placate him through dances, such as those undertaken at corroborees. Following nineteenth-century norms, the names of any Indigenous informants were not given.

According to a renowned nineteenth-century anthropologist, A. W. Howitt, the use of a concept of »Tribal All-Father« was widely spread amongst the clans of South-Eastern Australia, however, the veracity of this cannot be ascertained for, if one follows Spencer's argument, missionaries (as well as other Europeans) were willing to equate the notion of a Christian God onto Indigenous concepts, making Howitt's claim dubious. In his imposing 1904 book entitled *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, Howitt recorded many examples of an »anthropomorphic being«,<sup>38</sup> with Howitt collecting his own material as well as relying upon observation from other missionaries, and informants at specific locations. The Wiimbaio used the term Nurelli, the Narrinyeri used the term Nurrundere and Martummere. The Wotjobalak, amongst whom the Moravians also worked, knew him as Bunjil »as a great man, who was once on earth, but is now in the sky«. <sup>39</sup> Howitt notes that caution should be taken in the translation of this term, and similar ones, into »our father«, and that it did not map onto Christian ideas of »our Father in heaven«. <sup>40</sup> The exact meaning of such terms was also difficult to ascertain as traditionally only initiated men were privy to certain knowledge and were not allowed to share it with uninitiated men. Indigenous informants thus often, to quote Howitt, »put on an appearance of dense stupidity, or have resorted to absolute denial of any knowledge, and even to lies«. <sup>41</sup> Although Howitt was not willing to equate Indigenous terms for »great father« with Christian terms, missionaries were often more doctrinal in their own understandings of religious concepts in the religious contact zone as their ultimate goal was to convert people to Christianity. For example, the Moravians at the Ebenezer mission station in the North-West of the Colony of Victoria on the traditional land of the Wotjobalak recorded the following discussion:

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38 A. W. HOWITT, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia* (1904). Canberra 1996, pp. 488–508.

39 HOWITT, *The Native Tribes*, pp. 488f.

40 Ibid., p. 491.

41 Ibid., p. 504.

Old Charley, after a long, serious discussion with Hagenauer on Epiphany, and after the latter mentioned prayed with him, pointed towards heaven, made a jump of joy and came out with the question, if up there there were also many sheep and oxen. For he could only think of the dear Lord first of all in the picture of a white, distinguished, and rich man, whose power and authority were evident through the good Australian [analogy of having] the possession of uncountable flocks, from which there would also be an occasion for there to be something in it for him.<sup>42</sup>

In this passage, Old Charley was portrayed as a man who could only reckon in simplistic terms, substituting an Australian squatter for God, yet it is possible that it was not a substitution of squatter for God, rather an amalgam (or synchronisation) of the Wotjobalak's belief in Bunjil and the idea of a Christian God in heaven. In Mary Louise Pratt's terminology, Old Charley was engaging in a form of »autoethnographic expression«, that is, an instance »in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves« – and, I would add, their world-views – »in ways that engage with the colonizer's terms.«<sup>43</sup> Unlike Pratt's examples of autoethnographic expression in which a person describes his or her own culture to another culture, Old Charley was explaining how he was able to adapt European knowledge into his world view, and at the same time explaining to the missionary present how this new world-view was achieved. As his voice was relayed through the pen of a missionary, it is difficult to ascertain how much of his voice was filtered out, or changed to reflect missionary aims. Indeed, such autoethnographic expressions are rare within missionary writings from the South-East of Australia in the nineteenth century. From the dismissive nature of the quote it is clear that although Old Charley was able to modify his belief system, the missionaries, or in this case the chronicler of missionary interactions, was not willing to take his autoethnographic expression seriously, and in not doing so demonstrated the power imbalances extant within the religious contact zone.

### Knowledge Transfer Outside the Religious Contact Zone

Information collected from missionaries in the religious contact zone in Australia was disseminated through local and global missionary networks, and thus had the potential to be read beyond local or denominationally specific groups. The following quote from the Basel Mission's *Evangelisches*

42 SCHNEIDER, *Missionsarbeit der Brüdergemeinde in Australien*, p. 101. A similar account is given in *Missionsblatt* 6 (1859), pp. 115f.

43 PRATT, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 9.

*Missions-Magazin*, is noteworthy, due to both the fact that it was itself a reprint from a Moravian source, and described in detail an interaction between a Moravian missionary and a Wemba Wemba man at the Lake Boga mission, as well as to the inclusion of an Indigenous voice, albeit filtered through that of a missionary:

A black, who has received the name Bonaparte from the Europeans, has supplied us with the most words. As I (writes Brother Spieseke) took a small tour with him, and he was very willing to share words, he said, amongst other things, with his finger pointing in the air »Kingka men Kirkatte«. After a bit of questioning, I found out that this meant: That is heaven. He tried to make it clear to me, that Pei a mei (God) lived in heaven. I asked him, what they thought about this. He said, that their Panghals (sorcerers and doctors) taught them that Pei a mei had created everything, but was very easy to anger, so they had to appease him through dancing. He also gave »Pei a mei« the name »Mahman-mu-rok«, which seems to mean that he is the father of all. Once as we were in their camp and were viewing different figures that they had drawn on bark, one of the Aborigines pointed out to us a very dreadful figure to which he said »Kingke Natta«, and to our question what »Natta« was, he replied: »White people say devil, black people say Natta«.<sup>44</sup>

Bonaparte's comments can be read as another example of autoethnographic expression – albeit once again through a missionary lens—and as a moment within the contact zone in which an Indigenous (Wemba Wemba) man was translating Indigenous religious concepts for a European audience. As no examples of Bible translations in Wemba Wemba are extant, we are unable to say if missionaries in this instance used the Indigenous concepts of Pei a mei and Natta for God and the devil. We also have no extant material as to the reception and understanding of such ideas. The passage just cited continues by describing some of the methods that the missionaries used to collect Indigenous words, and thus focuses more upon the labours of the missionaries than on Bonaparte's insights into Christian world-views. As such, it is representative of the broader pattern within missionary writings of the nineteenth century that privileged the work of missionaries rather than the contributions of Indigenous peoples.

As Peggy Brock has noted, it »is not widely accepted« that »Aboriginal people were actively engaged with the spread of Christianity during the mission era«, with her reasoning that the paucity of sources was partly to blame for this lack of acknowledgement.<sup>45</sup> Yet Indigenous Australians were

44 Evangelisches Missions-Magazin, Basel 1860, pp. 251f.

45 Peggy Brock, Setting the Record Straight. New Christians and Mission Christianity, in: Id. (ed.), Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change, pp. 107–125, at p. 110.

actively engaged within the religious contact zone, and just as Europeans were beginning to understand the differences and variations in Indigenous religion and spirituality Indigenous peoples became more familiar with European Christianity. With this familiarity also came the desire to discuss and spread this knowledge amongst other Indigenous peoples. By the late 1830s Threlkeld was reporting that the Christian message was being discussed by »tribes« some 40 miles away, particularly through the influence of an Aboriginal man called M'gill. In the colony of Victoria, the Moravians joyfully reported occasions when Pepper, a Wotjobalak man, took the initiative to speak to other people on the mission about the Christian message, preaching to them in his own language. He would become the first convert of the mission, taking the name Nathanael on the occasion of his baptism in 1860. However, not everyone was as interested in the Christian message as Nathanael. Threlkeld reported that on occasion when imparting information about Christianity that he thought had not yet been discussed he received the dismissive reply, »We know it, M'gill has told us.«<sup>46</sup> Similar responses were given by Wemba Wemba men at the Lake Boga mission in South-Eastern Australia, with one man responding »tirlkuk tjalle«, or »good story,« with another less hopeful response being »mellanda noaenin« – »I've already heard it.«<sup>47</sup> Such uncommitted and dismissive responses were not limited to the Australian experience, but were rather common from New Zealand to South Africa,<sup>48</sup> demonstrating that Christian knowledge was for some just another form of European knowledge that could be discarded, ignored, or used strategically at will. And, although some Indigenous people spread the Christian message as evangelists, others were spreading knowledge obtained within the religious contact zone without themselves believing in the veracity of the message. Such examples demonstrate that there were cross-cultural exchanges about religious concepts in the contact zone which were discussed, transferred, and integrated in new ways within Indigenous communities, providing expanded notions of religious concepts. How such discussion affected European notions of religiosity – or anthropological thinking about Christianity – remains much less studied, as well as much less reported upon.<sup>49</sup>

Indigenous people did indeed dismiss Christian knowledge, and missionaries certainly dismissed Indigenous religious knowledge. However,

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46 THRELKELD, *The Annual Report*, p. 5.

47 *Diaries of the Lake Boga mission station*, April – December 1855, quoted in: JENSZ, *German Moravian Missionaries*, p. 92.

48 THOR WAGSTROM, *Broken Tongues and Foreign Hearts. The Religious Frontier in Early Nineteenth-Century South Africa and New Zealand*, in: BROCK, *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change*, pp. 51–77.

49 An exception that focuses upon the twentieth century is the special issue of *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 2171 (2010).

there was a difference in the way these dismissals were reported. Whereas Indigenous dismissals were often linked to an ambivalent relationship to the new knowledge, missionary dismissals were used as a means to belittle Indigenous religion with the aim of replacing it with Christianity. For example, some missionaries requested Indigenous »sorcery« to be performed upon them so that they could debunk what they saw to be Indigenous superstitions when the sorcery did not have the effect that was claimed.<sup>50</sup> Indigenous practices such as corroborees were suppressed as they were seen to be evil, with missionaries wishing to eradicate them and replace them with Christian church services held during the day in praise, not fear, of the Christian God.<sup>51</sup> Ritualised Christian activities were similarly deemed as being unsuitable by some Indigenous men, with some men at the Ebenezer mission station responding to the missionaries' invitation to pray with the defiant: »Pray, tomorrow« and »No more prayer«.<sup>52</sup> After being reprimanded by a missionary for engaging in a corroboree, one man named Charley, who would take the name Phillip Pepper on his baptism, responded: »I see nothing wrong in that, and white fellow does the same.« However, in this instance the corroboree was stopped and some took the boughs of trees that had adorned their legs with these words – »I is done: no more.«<sup>53</sup> This episode reflects the unequal balance of power within the religious contact zone in that missionary pressure could result in the cessations of corroborees at the Ebenezer mission, but Indigenous peoples could themselves not alter the missionary presence. Resistance to Christianity was both passive and active within the religious contact zone, with some people accepting rather than rejecting the Christian message and taking it upon themselves to evangelise amongst their people. As Thor Wagstrom has noted in the context of the settler colonies of New Zealand and South Africa during a similar period, acceptance or rejection of the Christian message were the extremes, with Indigenous peoples displaying a much more complex response somewhere between these two poles.<sup>54</sup> Ultimately, within colonial Victoria the vast majority of Indigenous peoples were baptised upon birth or later converted to Christianity,<sup>55</sup> reflecting, in Pratt's words, the unequal and »highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination« within the broader context of settler colonialism. Within this colony government control made it increasingly difficult for Indigenous

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50 Cf. JENSZ, *German Moravian Missionaries*, pp. 127–129.

51 Cf. Committee of the Melbourne Association [CMA], *Facts Relating to the Moravian Mission. First Paper*, Melbourne 1860, p. 6. See also: JENSZ, *German Moravian Missionaries*, pp. 124f.

52 CMA, *Facts*, p. 9.

53 CMA, *Facts*, p. 11.

54 WAGSTROM, *Broken Tongues and Foreign Hearts*, p. 76.

55 JENSZ, *German Moravian Missionaries*, p. 209.

people to be autonomous in movement or action, with Aboriginal Australians expected to live in such fixed locations as mission stations or government reserves. Although mission stations provided protection, work and rations for Aborigines, the trade-off was that any aspects of Aboriginal religion that were not compatible with Protestant Christianity were quashed by the missionaries.

## Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, missionaries used descriptions arising from the religious contact zone to communicate to their supporters at home and within the colonies the promise as well as the necessity of missionary work. Such descriptions were presented as an indication of the willingness of Indigenous peoples to engage in the Christian message as the first step in the progress of becoming Christians. Thus, the dynamics of the situation were important, as they demonstrated movement towards Christianity. This stood in contrast to many anthropological reports from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which were interested in describing the »essential« aspects of Indigenous religion prior the polluting influences of missionaries. This essence reflected an idea perpetrated by anthropological thought at the end of the nineteenth century that Indigenous Australians were primitive and lived without time in a static world divided between the profane and religious. Although missionaries had provided much of the information for anthropologists, only »pure« or »idealised« notions of Indigenous religion were recorded and used to underscore European notions of religiosity well into the twentieth century. In the period discussed here, missionaries were able to observe and record instances of religious contact zones yet the transformation of religious understandings was ultimately carried by Indigenous peoples who, in the tumultuous post-contact period in which their traditional lives were disrupted and ruptured, were forced to be strategic and adaptive to religious change. This change was reflected in the almost universal conversion of Indigenous Australians in colonial Victoria to Christianity by the end of the nineteenth century.

Missionaries themselves were willing to accept that Indigenous Australians were of »One Blood« with Europeans and thus able to be converted to Christianity. Though their pre-departure understanding of Indigenous spirituality was usually negatively biased, it often became more nuanced following time spent amongst Indigenous Australians. The experiences of the nineteenth century focused upon in this paper stand in contrast to later missionary projects of the twentieth century in which Indigenous concepts were integrated into Christian ones and when more tolerance was shown

towards religious difference and religious ambiguity.<sup>56</sup> I have also deliberately avoided questions of personal belief and genuine internal religious change, instead examining how moments within the religious contact zone were described by missionaries and Indigenous peoples alike. The fleeting glimpses into the religious contact zones of the nineteenth century were often used within missionary texts to underscore an idealised view of the spiritual progression of Indigenous peoples from »superstitious« Indigenous beliefs via amalgamation towards the state of Christian belief. Thus, the initial reactions from the religious contact zone were important to demonstrate the spiritual curiosity of Indigenous peoples in their initial encounter with Christianity. This also mirrors Peggy Brock's observation that the first conversions of Aborigines to Christianity were described in great detail compared to later conversions,<sup>57</sup> indicating that the salience of the initial conversions was proof that Indigenous peoples could be converted to Christianity and thus the subsequent attention could be placed upon the progression of the whole Christian community rather than individuals. Thus, in missionary monographs and periodicals in which descriptions of the religious contact zone were disseminated to local and global audiences, it was important that the religious curiosity of the first converts was described in terms of their progression from »heathendom« to Christianity and civilisation. Any subsequent questioning or doubting of the veracity of the Christian world-view was not desirable, as it equated to an insincerity of belief, or a relapse into pre-Christian beliefs. Consequently, just as subsequent conversions were not discussed extensively, detailed information from the religious contact zone after conversion was also not mentioned. Underlying this was a constant concern amongst missionaries that their new converts would slip back into »heathen« ways if not properly supervised. That is, the religious contact zone was maintained although the information reported from it was selected to justify the ongoing need for financial, material and spiritual support for continued missionary work, rather than to question the underlying premise of the mission.

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56 See for example: HARRIS, *One Blood*, particularly chapter 13; Fiona MAGOWAN, *Experiencing Spirit. Religious Processes of Interaction and Unification in Aboriginal Australia*, in: Peggy BROCK (ed.), *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change, Studies in Christian Mission* [31], Leiden 2005, pp. 157–175; Diane AUSTIN-BROOS, *The Meaning Of Pepe: God's Law and The Western Arrernte*, in *Journal of Religious History* 27/3 (2003), pp. 311–328; See also the various articles in the special issue of *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 21/1 (2010) including: Fiona MAGOWAN, *Syncretism or Synchronicity? Remapping the Yolngu Feel of Place*, in: *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 12/3 (2001), pp. 275–290; Heather McDONALD, *Universalising the particular? God and Indigenous spirit beings in East Kimberley*, in: *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 21/1 (2010), pp. 51–70.

57 Peggy BROCK, *Outback Ghettos. A History of Aboriginal Institutionalisation and Survival*, Cambridge 1993, p. 162.





Stefan Rinke

## A State Within a State?

The »Jesuit State in Paraguay« and  
Eurocentric Constructions of Space

The Catholic orders that accompanied the conquistadors to the recently discovered islands in what Columbus had named »Las Indias« were the first to encounter the indigenous societies of Latin America. The Jesuits were latecomers to this group and thus had to concentrate on the plains, deserts and jungles of the hinterlands. It was there that they found out about the importance of learning languages and cultures of the completely alien cultures that they met. These were indeed exemplary zones of intensive contact between very different cultures.

Of course, the Jesuits were building on the experiences of the Franciscan, Dominican and other orders which had been on the spot more than half a century earlier and were the first to produce an ethnographic literature about the indigenous people they encountered. The first outstanding example was Ramón Pané – a Hieronymite – and his *Relación acerca de los antigüedades de los indios* written in 1498.<sup>1</sup>

All these early missionaries were cultural brokers trying to teach their pupils by using transcultural practices and appropriating indigenous symbols. The translation processes involved e.g. in the design of the first catechisms in America – often using logographic scripts reminiscent of Egyptian hieroglyphs – have been studied intensively and are fascinating examples of this early cultural brokerage.<sup>2</sup>

Mission was a central element in the discourse legitimising the conquest of the New World. When the Jesuits came to the Americas in the last third of the sixteenth century, they were a new element dynamically changing not only

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- 1 Ramón PANÉ, *Mitología taína o eyeri. Ramón Pané y la relación sobre las antigüedades de los indios. El primer tratado etnográfico hecho en América*, ed. Ángel RODRIGUEZ ÁLVAREZ. San Juan 2008, pp. 1–18. For an overview cf. Johannes MEIER, *Die Orden in Lateinamerika. Historischer Überblick*, in: Michael SIEVERNICH et al. (eds.), *Conquista und Evangelisation. 500 Jahre Orden in Lateinamerika*, Mainz 1991, pp. 13–33.
  - 2 Pedro BORGES, *Misión y civilización en América*, Madrid 1987. Gabriela RAMOS (ed.), *La venida del reino: Religión, evangelización y cultura en América, Siglos XVI–XX*, Cusco 1994; Robert H. JACKSON, *Introduction*, in: Erick LANGER / Robert H. JACKSON (eds.), *The New Latin American Mission History*, Lincoln 1995, pp. VII–XVIII, at pp. VIII.

the religious life but also the politics, economics and culture of an already quite settled colonial society. They acted especially in peripheral spaces which did not initially attract European settlement. Thus, their freedom of structuring these spaces according to utopian ideals of an early Christianity was presumably great.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter will consider questions such as: In how far did concepts of social and religious life change in the interplay between the Jesuit fathers and their indigenous »flocks«? What kind of space did they foresee for the present and future? How did Europeans react to that? Was it possible to demarcate alternative spaces in a tightly knit colonial world? This article will first introduce the expansion of the Jesuit order in Paraguay, which is important to understanding the cultural encounter and the resistance to their work. It will then discuss the cultural encounter and forms of brokerage, and finally sketch the problems in the images that Europeans formed of the missions and which led to the expulsion of the Jesuits.

### Expansion and Problems of the Jesuit Missions in Paraguay

The Jesuits first came to Portuguese America as early as 1549. In 1566 the order gained official access to Hispanic America and by the end of the sixteenth century created three American provinces. In the seventeenth century it expanded into the hinterland of the colonial empire where hardly any Europeans had settled. In 1606 they founded the province of Paraguay, which was much larger than today's nation state of the same name and included lands now on Argentine, Brazilian, and Uruguayan territory.<sup>4</sup>

After a phase of itinerant mission work, which was quite unsuccessful, the Jesuits turned to building stable mission settlements. These received special royal privileges and protection. In administrative matters the Jesuit missions enjoyed far-reaching autonomy from colonial authorities. Two of these mission villages, Nuestra Señora de Loreto and Ignacio Guazú, were built in 1609 and 1610 as the first so-called reductions amongst the Guaraní of this region. In the course of the following two decades, eleven more settlements were to follow. In 1750, the moment of their most extensive presence in Paraguay, the Jesuits kept 30 reductions of which eight were to the north of the

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3 Felix BECKER, *Die politische Machtstellung der Jesuiten in Südamerika im 18. Jahrhundert*, Köln 1980.

4 There is a broad bibliography on the Jesuit missions. Cf. Bartolomé MELIÀ LLITERAS/Liane Maria NAGEL (eds.), *Guaraníes y jesuitas. En tiempo de las misiones. Una bibliografía didáctica*, Asunción 1995.



**Fig. 1:** The Jesuit missions in the province of Paraguay. Source: Sélim ABOU, La »République« jésuite des Guaranís (1609–1768) et son héritage, Paris 1995. Map by Peter Palm, Berlin.

Paraná river, 15 between the Uruguay and the Paraná, and seven to the east of the Uruguay river. Approximately 100,000 to 140,000 people lived in these reductions by the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

The Jesuit expansion was not without setbacks. The huge distances led to problems in communication. Several indigenous groups violently resisted the approach of the European brothers. Even within the »reduced« groups there were revolts often led by holy men or women following the indigenous creeds.<sup>6</sup>

More troubling, however, were the almost constant conflicts with the Spanish settlers in and around the city of Asunción. According to the intentions of the Crown, settlers, Jesuits, and their »indios« were to build a united front against Portuguese expansion, which was pushing the line drawn in the Treaty of Tordesillas westwards. But on the ground, there was no joining of forces at all, at least not as the Jesuits had imagined: Spanish settlers as well as the encroaching Portuguese frontiersmen, the *bandeirantes*, had a common interest in exploiting the labour of the indigenous peoples. They thus perceived the Jesuits as a threat to their vital needs.<sup>7</sup>

The *bandeirantes* from Brazil continuously started new expeditions robbing the reductions, enslaving the indigenous people living there and even ransacking churches. Spanish governors in Asunción regularly did not enact royal orders demanding that they protect the reductions effectively. This was only partly out of a lack of military means, but also out of a lack of interest.<sup>8</sup>

Due to the heavy pressure and loss of life, the Jesuits decided to give up the northernmost villages and to resettle thousands of indigenous people to the south along the Paraná River. But Jesuit expansion toward the Atlantic region led to new tensions with the Portuguese, in reaction to which the Spanish crown allowed the Jesuits to equip their protégés with firearms. This was indeed a revolutionary measure in the colonial realm because the right to bear firearms had until then been reserved to colonists of European stock – with good reason, given their small number. In 1642, indigenous troops under Jesuit leadership managed to beat the Portuguese decisively and were even granted the status of royal garrisons. In the following they were often

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5 Selim ABOU, La »république« jésuite des Guaranis (1609–1768) et son héritage, Paris 1995, p. 23; Peter Claus HARTMANN, Der Jesuitenstaat in Südamerika, 1609–1768, Weßenhorn 1994, pp. 12–15.

6 Barbara GANSON, The Guaraní Under Spanish Rule in the Rio de la Plata, Stanford, CA 2003, pp. 87–116.

7 Fernando ROSAS MOSCOSO, Bandeiras y bandeirantes en el Brasil colonial, in: Estudios geopolíticos y estratégicos (Lima) 1 (1979), pp. 65–75.

8 Antonio BARCELOS, Os Jesuitas e a ocupação do espaço platino nos séculos XV e XVI, in: Revista Complutense de Historia de America 26 (2000), pp. 93–116, at pp. 100–103.

deployed defensively against attacking indigenous groups and against Portuguese slavers. They did so effectively and in 1687 seven new missions – as they were called – were built on the eastern shore of the Uruguay river.<sup>9</sup>

The positive development, however, was overshadowed by other threats coming from inside colonial society. In the 1640s, the bishop of Asunción questioned the privileged position of the Jesuits, accusing them of not paying the required tributes and for keeping rich silver and gold mines secret from him. The dispute was settled and the Jesuits were vindicated, but the suspicion that they were amassing wealth in secret stuck. When about half a century later rebellion broke out among the settlers of Paraguay, the so-called *comuneros*, the old conflict between the Jesuit reductions and the powers in Asunción flared up again. Again, settlers fought to limit the power and privileges of the Jesuits, but again indigenous troops supported by the crown were able to hold sway.<sup>10</sup>

### The Guaraní and Cultural Encounter in the Reductions

For about 160 years the Jesuits acted quite successfully in their Paraguayan province. They achieved this in large part because it served the interests of the Guaraní to accept the missionaries as a welcome assistance against their enemies. The Guaraní people were relatives of the Tupí who peopled the vast region of Eastern South America reaching from the Guianas in the North to the mouth of the La Plata in the south. According to early travelogues the Guaraní were relatively peaceful and boasted advanced agricultural knowledge setting them apart from their neighbours.

Their inner organisation followed clan rules which from the European perspective of the times seemed to be anarchic, lawless and characterised by the complete absence of authority. They organised in larger groups only in times of external threat. Only then did they elect a temporary leader, the *kazike*. More important for their social life was the shaman.<sup>11</sup>

It was a challenge for the Jesuits to overcome shaman power. However, the religion of the Guaraní did offer some interesting parallels to Christianity which the brothers could use. For instance, the indigenous people believed in a powerful god above all other deities. They also shared the belief in a life after death, in an apocalyptic end of the world and in a distant paradise. In the eyes of the Jesuits and other European observers, these were of course not

9 HARTMANN, *Jesuitenstaat*, pp. 20f.

10 Philip CARAMAN, *Ein verlorenes Paradies. Der Jesuitenstaat in Paraguay*, München 1979, pp. 43–59.

11 Guillermo WILDE, *Religión y poder en las misiones de Guaraníes*, Buenos Aires 2009, pp. 93–99.

elements of a religion in its own right but rather rudimentary elements of the »true Christian faith« that only had to be broadened in order to convert the natives and save their souls.<sup>12</sup>

In their everyday practices the Guaraní also differed from many other indigenous groups. Their hygiene, nutrition and healing practices offered useful approaches for Jesuit missionaries. Gender roles also resembled traditional European conceptions, with men acting as hunters, warriors and builders of houses and arms while the women were restricted to the domestic sphere, to child-raising and agricultural activities. The Guaraní were semi-nomads practicing shifting cultivation as well as hunting and fishing for subsistence. They had no concept of individual property.<sup>13</sup>

The aim of the Jesuit missionaries was not only to Christianise the Guaraní but also to civilise them. The first step in this process was to make them sedentary and to isolate them from the negative influence of the Spanish settlers. The reductions which the Jesuits founded were planned settlements, often for more than a thousand inhabitants. At their centre were the church and a large square surrounded by public buildings. Farther away were agricultural production lands. In general, the reductions strived for economic self-sufficiency.<sup>14</sup>

The missionaries tried to teach their charges the importance of property using a system of individual and collective goods. Families had the right to a parcel of land, which was redistributed on a regular basis. Instead of private property in the European sense, a lifelong right of use was granted. The people in the reductions worked collectively to take care of the sick and weak within the community. Through the sale of mate, they made a small profit, provoking the criticism of settlers who attacked the Jesuits for self-enrichment by exploiting the Guaraní.<sup>15</sup>

From the perspective of the missionaries the Guaraní were lazy, childlike, wild and treacherous but at the same time suitable for civilisation and Christianisation. In their relation to the Guaraní, the padres enjoyed a position of full authority. They controlled every aspect of their pupils' lives, teaching them to be humble, submissive, disciplined and diligent. The Jesuits' basic concept of the indigenous people was negative. Their reports, for instance, dwell on supposedly animalistic character traits, cannibalism, promiscuity, polygamy and the low intellectual powers of the people in their care.

12 Mark MÜNDEL, Jupiters wilder Bruder: Der Versuch der Missionare, den Tupinambá und Guaraní einen christlichen Gott zu bringen, in: Karl-Heinz KOHL (ed.), *Mythen der Neuen Welt. Zur Entdeckungsgeschichte Lateinamerikas*, Berlin 1982), pp. 101–109.

13 WILDE, *Religión y poder en las misiones de Guaraníes*, pp. 49–85.

14 Maxime HAUBERT, *La vie quotidienne au Paraguay sous le Jésuites*, Paris 1967, pp. 43–45.

15 Stephan DIGNATH, *Die Pädagogik der Jesuiten in den Indio-Reduktionen von Paraguay 1609–1767*, Frankfurt 1978.

If we read the Jesuit reports closely, we find many examples of utter disrespect and a lack of empathy or understanding. The example of the Guaraní man whom the brothers gave a plough and an ox is cited by various authors and is most revealing. That the man should have roasted the ox using the plough as firewood left the Jesuits speechless. From the Guaraní's point of view, his actions are reasonable because as a nomad he is not used to taking care of cattle and anyway, he has women for that kind of labour.<sup>16</sup> But, and this was important, the Jesuits also tried to reach the indigenous people by embracing some elements of their lifestyle and beliefs. Of course, looking into the historical roots of evangelisation the Jesuits were far from being the first to do so. Borrowing from and appropriating the beliefs and cultural concepts of the missionised is certainly the key for the missionary to make the other understand the language he is speaking.<sup>17</sup> In their missionary training the Jesuits had learnt that it was essential to build trust in the relations to the neophytes. The Jesuit ideal was that of a relationship of mutual trust and love like that between a father and his child.<sup>18</sup>

Indigenous elements were incorporated into the liturgy of the Christian mass. In the Hollywood blockbuster *The Mission* of 1986, the powerful influence music had on the indigenous people is broadly portrayed. While the movie in itself is not very true to the facts, this one aspect comes very close to depicting historical reality. Music fascinated the Guaraní, who trained and practiced in the reductions, with some of the pupils reaching astonishing levels of mastery not lost on their proud teachers.<sup>19</sup> The same was true of the visual arts. The Jesuits used architecture, painting and sculpture to impress and educate their indigenous students who soon excelled in these artistic activities, too.<sup>20</sup>

Learning the indigenous tongue and turning it into a written language were essential factors. In 1640 the first catechism in the Guaraní language, written by Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, was published in Madrid and distributed in the South American provinces. Renate Dürh has recently concluded: »Thinking about language as a kind of reflection about communication as

16 WILDE, Religión y poder en las misiones de Guaraníes, p. 70.

17 Judith SHAPIRO, From Tupã to the Land without Evil. The Christianization of Tupi-Guaraní Cosmology, in: *American Ethnologist* 14 (1987), pp. 126–139, at p. 126.

18 Barbara GANSON, Like children under wise parental sway. Passive portrayals of the Guaraní Indians in European literature and *The Mission*, in: *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 3 (4/1994), pp. 399–422, at p. 400.

19 T. Frank KENNEDY, Colonial Music from the Episcopal Archive of Concepción, Bolivia, in: *Latin American Music Review* 9 (1988), pp. 1–17.

20 Charles J. McNASPY, *Lost Cities of Paraguay. Art and Architecture of the Jesuit Reductions, 1607–1767*, Chicago 1982. Cf. also Josefina PLÁ, *El barroco hispano-guaraní*, Asunción 2006; Horacio BOLLINI, *Misiones Jesuíticas. Visión artística y patrimonial. Voces y emblemas en las reducciones jesuítico-guaraníes (1609–1768)*, Buenos Aires 2009.

such can be seen as a precondition for the lasting success of the Jesuit reductions of Paraguay.<sup>21</sup> And this success, as Dürr states clearly, did not only rest upon the willingness of the Jesuits to listen to and understand the Guaraní, but also vice versa.

Without a doubt, the Jesuit methods were progressive for their time in taking the importance of mutual interaction into account. Leading Jesuit intellectuals like José de Acosta or Ruiz de Montoya remain progressive even by modern standards. Yet the Jesuits were not always successful. The regular reports that the missionaries had to send to Europe provide an impressive account of the many obstacles they had to face. Despite the control over all spheres of their life, the Guaraní kept a certain autonomy in dealing with the Europeans, preserving their own values and beliefs.<sup>22</sup>

An illustration taken from the report of the Jesuit missionary Florian Paucke, who worked from 1748 to 1769 in the province of Paraguay, makes this point clear. Its title reads: »The Indian wears the skirt of his wife and the wife has her husband's trousers on the head.« Of course, Paucke's intention was to amuse his European readers by showing them what (to him) was a bizarre misuse of »civilised« objects. Yet what Paucke's illustration also reveals rather unintentionally is the pragmatic appropriation of these objects by the indigenous people who used the garments imaginatively, in the case of the woman obviously as protection against the sun.

Another illustration speaks to the stereotype of barbarity that Europeans would associate with the indigenous population. According to Paucke, it shows a drinking bout among the Mocobians which ends in fisticuffs while the old women chew corn. His interpretation of what he saw relates to his intention of making it clear to the recipients of his report that the work he is doing is dangerous and not yet finished. However, ethno-historical research suggests a rather different interpretation. Thus what the Mocobi, an indigenous ethnic group that did not live in reductions, were actually doing was to participate in a holy ritual which ends in the trancelike states of several of the participants. These rituals were important not only to communicate with the otherworld but also for the confirmation of social bonds within the group.<sup>23</sup>

21 Renate DÜRR, Sprachreflexion in der Mission. Die Bedeutung der Kommunikation in den sprachtheoretischen Überlegungen von José de Acosta S.J. und Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, in: *GeGe* 36 (2/2010), pp. 161–196. Translation by Stefan Rinke. Cf. also Esther SCHMID HEER, *America die verkehrte Welt. Prozesse der Verräumlichung in den Paraguay-Berichten des Tiroler Jesuiten Anton Sepp (1655–1733)*, Nordhausen 2013.

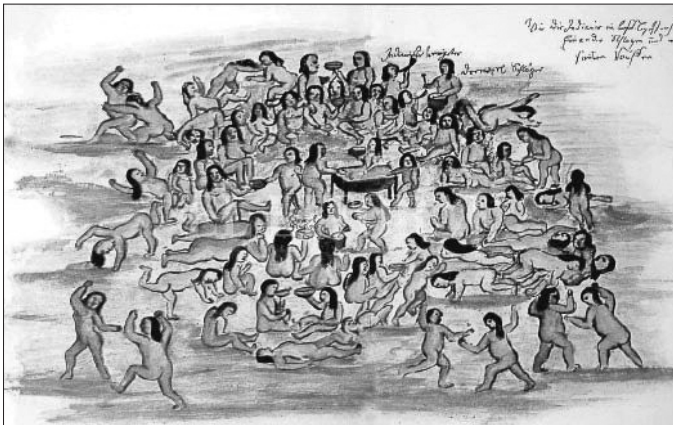
22 Gérard GÓMEZ, *Entre las bellas palabras y las palabras sagradas. El sincretismo lingüístico-religioso en las reducciones jesuíticas del Paraguay*, Asunción 2006, p. 58.

23 WILDE, *Religión y poder en las misiones de Guaraníes*, pp. 79–82.





**Fig. 2:** »The Indian is wearing his wife's skirt, and the wife her husband's trousers on her head.« Source: E. BECKER-DONNER/G. OTRUBA (ed.), *Zwettler Codex 420* by P. Florian PAUCKE S.J., Vol. 2, Vienna 1966, p. 30.



**Fig. 3:** »The Mocobians go on a drinking spree.« Source: E. BECKER-DONNER/G. OTRUBA (ed.), *Zwettler Codex 420* by P. Florian PAUCKE S.J., Vol. 2, Vienna 1966, p. 21.

## The End of the »State«

As a buffer between the expanding colonial empires of Spain and Portugal, the Jesuit missions had to live with animosity. When both Iberian powers agreed upon a new border between their empires in the Treaty of Madrid in 1750, some of the reductions came under Portuguese rule. Although the Jesuit general in Rome ordered his subordinates to leave, there was a lot of resistance to this enforced resettlement, resulting in the so-called »War of the Seven Missions« (1753–1756). The Guaraní and their supporters fought a bloody war under the *kazike* Nicolás Neenguirú but lost this armed conflict against a coalition of Spanish and Portuguese troops. About 15,000 people had to flee back into the wilderness.<sup>24</sup>

In this context, the long-standing attacks against and rumours about the Jesuits gained new currency in Europe. Allegedly, the order had led the rebellion and had even planned to found its own state with Nicolas I as king, whose fictitious biography was published in 1756. The book became a sensation in Europe and was translated into various languages. It revived the idea of America as a utopia or dystopia where different forms of order were possible, including an Indian kingdom inspired by Jesuit ideas. The issue was taken up by leading thinkers such as Voltaire.<sup>25</sup>

When the Treaty of Madrid was repealed in 1761, the Jesuits were allowed to return to their destroyed villages and for a short time managed to revive their mission. Yet the convulsions of what in Europe was known as the Seven Years War and the Spanish-Portuguese antagonism dampened any enthusiasm they might have felt. In the end, the expulsion of the order from Spain and its colonies brought about the end of the experiment in 1767/68. This act was legitimised – amongst other points – with reference to Jesuit resistance to the king during the War of the Seven Missions.<sup>26</sup>

## Conclusion

What the Jesuits encountered in the hinterland of the Americas were not the free spaces that some Europeans had imagined. Instead, they found huge, populated areas where a wide variety of indigenous groups with their own cultures lived. The interactions which developed in about two centuries in the contact zones of the Jesuit enclaves produced new forms of social life. So

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24 Ernesto J. MAEDER, *Misiones del Paraguay. Conflictos y disolución de la sociedad guaraní (1768–1850)*, Madrid 1992, pp. 12–23.

25 BECKER, *Die politische Machstellung der Jesuiten*.

26 MAEDER, *Misiones del Paraguay*, p. 78.

new, indeed, that outside observers from Europe jealous of the Jesuit order could create the myth of a »Jesuit State« within the colonial state and hence a challenge to established authority.

Indeed, if we take the word »state« as being a metaphor for a concept of independent space with its own rules and ways of life, there would be some truth to this claim. This space saw a new form of sociability between missionaries and missionised. Yet was this the great »experiment of the Jesuits«, the »alternative of universal dimensions« which failed because of Eurocentric resistance, as some writers have claimed?<sup>27</sup> I would not go that far but would rather think of it in terms of an interstitial space which developed its own dynamic no matter what the intentions of the Jesuits and the Guaraní had been in the beginning. In that regard the missions indeed remained an isolated state within a state which collapsed when it was forced into contact with a hostile and more powerful environment.

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27 Wolfgang REINHARD, Gelenkter Kulturwandel im siebzehnten Jahrhundert. Akkulturation in den Jesuitenmissionen als universalhistorisches Problem, in: HZ 223 (1976), pp. 529–590, at p. 535.



### III. IMAGINED CONTACT ZONES



Sabine Hübner

## To Sigh before God

Prayer in the Eighteenth-Century Lutheran Mission in Tamil Nadu

### 1. Introduction

Prayer as the human orientation toward a deity is an integral part of both Christian and Hindu traditions.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is a vague concept that »evokes different meanings in different religious contexts«. <sup>2</sup> Therefore, when Protestant missionaries of the Danish-English-Halle Mission in the eighteenth century came to India and interacted with the Tamil population, prayer was soon raised as an issue of high relevance. As prayer was integral to both religions, the question was not if, but how to pray. On his way to India the first missionary Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg wrote a book in which he discussed prayer as a means to receive true wisdom from God. He concludes his examination with the statement that Christians needed to learn how to pray »in the right manner and in a way pleasing to God«. <sup>3</sup>

To propagate this »right way« of praying was part of the missionaries' efforts since their first days in India. With this struggle they stood in a long line of Protestant theologians and believers who tried to find an appropriate way of approaching God. <sup>4</sup> Among the missionaries personal preferences differed, and hence they had different answers to questions about form, content and the right attitude of believers; the arguments as to what should be seen as the »right« way of praying were always part of the mission discourse. Although there existed a wide range of variations, it was agreed that prayer was both a source and an *essential expression* of Christian life that activated and sustained the rapport of the individual believer with God. For the Lutheran missionaries of predominantly Pietist background, personal communication with God, together with reading the Bible, constituted the basic element of their piety.

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1 For a general overview, see Sam D. GILL, Art. Prayer, in: The EncRel(E) 11 (1987), pp. 489–493; and Peter Constantin BLOTH, Art. Gebet, in: TRE 12 (1984), pp. 31–103.

2 Anand NAYAK, Viewpoint. Christian-Hindu Prayer in Interreligious Dialogue, in: Hindu-Christian Studies Bulletin 13 (2000), pp. 32–34, at p. 32.

3 Bartholomäus ZIEGENBALG, Schule der Wahrheit, Frankfurt et al. 1710, pp. 269–279, at p. 278.

4 For Martin Luther, the right way of praying was one of the important issues within his struggle for a better church. See Traugott KOCH, Luthers reformatorisches Verständnis des Gebets, in: Friedrich-Otto SCHARBAU (ed.), Das Gebet, Erlangen 2002, pp. 47–66, at p. 49.

As a religious practice, prayer was fundamental to the missionaries' world of thought. Hence, their mindset in the contact zone of the mission in India cannot be understood without analysing both the relevance and the dynamics of prayer. Nevertheless, so far there has been little research on prayer in general or in the field of mission history. Although new attention is being paid to prayer from a systematic perspective, research on prayer in modern history is still very limited. Various theological treatises written by distinguished men, normative prayer books or devotional guides that appeared after the Reformation period have been used as resources for academic works.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the prayer habits of the ordinary pastor, of the ordinary believer still await closer examination. The most vivid and dynamic dimension of prayer is the one with fewer academic works written about it. Despite the relevance of normative texts and liturgical forms, prayer is a practice that is primarily undertaken by individuals or small groups. Therefore, prayer has to be analysed within its specific socio-cultural setting and by focussing on the influence of that specific context.

There was a specific sociological dimension to prayer as an act of spiritual engagement with the »Other«. The act of prayer itself, the request for prayer and the assurance of future prayer were significant ways of interaction between Europeans and Indians. It can be assumed that, by means of prayer, Indians and Europeans built emotional relationships with their respective counterparts elsewhere in the world. Therefore I would suggest using the adjectives »intensive« and »extensive« to describe different forms of contact. The intensive contact zone describes the area in India where the mission station was located. The extensive contact zone encompasses all those areas where people thought of their brothers and sisters in India and Europe respectively. This zone includes all those who wrote and received letters from church members in India, who committed themselves to supporting children financially as godparents or as so-called »adoptive« parents. And it includes all those who prayed for their brothers in India in the knowledge that, in turn, someone in India would remember them in their prayers. Religious contact took place not only in India, in the realm of the mission station, it also happened by exchange of letters and in the way people involved in the mission thought of each other. The influence of intercession should not be underestimated in terms of spiritual and emotional engagement with the »Other«. While social, political and ecclesiastical hierarchies between

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5 There exists no recent extensive study on prayer in church history. The historian of religion Friedrich Heiler developed a phenomenology of prayer. See Friedrich HEILER, *Prayer. A Study in the History and Psychology of Religion*, Oxford 1932. For earlier centuries see Roy HAMMERLING (ed.), *A History of Prayer. The First to the Fifteenth Century*, Leiden et al. 2008. Additionally, there exist several case studies that focus mainly on male scholars or on prayer books.



Europeans and Indians remained in place even after the Tamil Christians were baptised, prayer could contribute to questioning such orders.<sup>6</sup> Intercession in missions can be seen, both in its religious and social dimensions, as an act that transcended, at least for a moment, cultural and biographical differences and created a spiritual contact zone with its own specific habits and dynamics.<sup>7</sup>

In the academic field of Mission History, prayer is scarcely regarded as a serious topic for research today.<sup>8</sup> I assume that the lack of historical interest is caused by the unspecific nature of the topic and by the fact that data available about personal prayer is rare. By using male missionaries and their congregations in India as a case study, this chapter represents an attempt to step into this gap. The various aspects of the prayer phenomenon, apart from simply being communication with God, form the focus of the analysis. Teaching and practice, form and content, language and performance, occasions and context, all these elements constitute prayer in the mission context and are to be considered not as separate, but as intermingling aspects that deserve to be scrutinised in a detailed manner.

This article discusses the notion of prayer as it was employed in the Danish-English-Halle Mission in the first half of the eighteenth century. It asks: What was the specific relevance of prayer in the mission context and how did the contact zone in India influence the practice of Christian prayer?

After giving an overview of the available sources and a short introduction into the historical and the theological background of the missionaries, the main part of this essay focuses on four aspects of prayer that were relevant in the contact zone: prayer as a precondition for the work of the missionary; prayer as the means for enlarging the »Kingdom of God«;

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6 Perhaps it was not a long-lasting or sweeping dynamic, but it is worth realizing that the notion of spiritual equality existed in various periods of Christianity, even in those which are supposed to have been more hierarchically oriented.

7 Gisela Mettele, who published a study on the Moravian Church, does not pay particular attention to the act of intercession, but concentrates on liturgical and narrative forms of creating a global spiritual community. Gisela METTELE, *Spiritual Kinship. The Moravians as an International Fellowship of Brothers and Sisters (1730s–1830s)*, in: Christopher H. JOHNSON et al. (eds.), *Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond. Experiences Since the Middle Ages*, New York 2011, pp. 155–174; cf. also Gisela METTELE, *Weltbürgertum oder Gottesreich. Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine als globale Gemeinschaft 1727–1857* (Bürgertum N.F., vol. 4), Göttingen 2009.

8 Important contributions are provided by Deborah GAITSKELL, *Praying and Preaching. The Distinctive Spirituality of African Women's Church Organizations*, in: Henry BREDEKAMP et al. (eds.), *Missions and Christianity in South African History*, Johannesburg 1995, pp. 211–232; id., *Power in Prayer and Service. Women's Christian Organizations*, in: Richard ELPHICK et al. (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa. A Political, Social and Cultural History*, Cape Town et al. 1997, pp. 253–267; Sam D. GILL, *Sacred Words. A Study of Navajo Religion and Prayer*, Westport, CT 1981; Kalena SILVA, *The Adoption of Christian Prayer in Native Hawaiian Pule*, in: *Pacific Studies* 20 (1997), pp. 89–99.

prayer as an indicator of faith; and prayer as an engagement with others. The last part of the chapter explores how the form and performance of the prayer taught to Indian converts were influenced by the dynamics of the contact zone.

## 2. The Sources

Praying was one of the topics on which missionaries of the eighteenth century wrote extensively in their reports and letters.<sup>9</sup> Considering the interpretative dimensions of prayer as text, prayer as subject and prayer as an act,<sup>10</sup> this article intends to combine all three, as they are deeply entangled in the case of mission work in India.

There are multiple sources that help us to explore the relevance and function of prayer in the contact zone: Primarily, missionaries held conversations with Tamil Hindus about the meaning of prayers. These discussions were reported by the missionaries in their correspondence with European readers so that they could be informed about the religious practices in India. These descriptions then were discussed in letters exchanged within Europe, correspondents commenting on or questioning the mission's work. Prayer here was the subject of discussion and thinking. These texts give information about the expectations, motivations and theological implications involved. Furthermore, the accounts of mission work contain indications about the way in which missionaries relied on prayer in their own lives. Moreover, the reports illustrate how the missionaries viewed and interpreted the prayer habits of their congregations and of those being prepared for baptism. In addition, the missionaries collected prayers that were offered spontaneously. When they witnessed a prayer that they thought was worthy of being mentioned, they translated it into German. These are valuable sources, because here we find prayers that were not written for publication. Not all of these prayers were recorded directly. In some cases the readers had access only to a summary, in other cases they could at least read a detailed narration of the prayer's contents and its specific setting. These texts demonstrate how missionaries heard and interpreted personal prayers spoken by converts. The last category of sources consists of prayers that the missionaries composed in order to

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9 Reports and letters were published from 1710 onwards by August Hermann FRANCKE and later by his son in the first Protestant mission journal: »Der Königlich-Dänischen Missionarien aus Ost-Indien eingesandter ausführlichen Berichten [...]« (Hallesche Berichte: hereafter HB. The year in parentheses is the reporting period).

10 Cf. GILL, Prayer, pp. 489–493.

send them to Germany or to use them in their work in India. These texts and descriptions provide a valuable basis for an analysis as to how, in the Lutheran Pietist context of the Indian mission, prayer was understood, performed and modified due to the dynamics of the contact zone.

### 3. The Historical and Theological Background

In 1706, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau, the first German Protestant missionaries, arrived in the small Danish trading colony of Tranquebar in the region of Tamil Nadu, in South East India.<sup>11</sup> Supported by Indian co-workers,<sup>12</sup> they were in charge of congregations consisting of Tamil and Portuguese speakers. Between 1707 and 1845 altogether 56 missionaries were officially sent out to this region. The Danish King Frederick IV, as the owner of the Tranquebar colony, initiated and financed this venture. Some of the missionaries were sent out by the Anglican Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge from 1726 onwards to work in the British-ruled areas around Madras (now Chennai). These two branches formed a common ecumenical project, which was supported by August Hermann Francke and his successors in Halle.<sup>13</sup> Before the missionaries set out on their journey, they would have studied or worked in Halle for at least some months, many even for years.<sup>14</sup> Thus, most of the missionaries were strongly influenced by the Lutheran Pietist theology of Francke. In order to understand the theology of prayer employed by the missionaries in India, the teaching of August Hermann Francke on prayer must first be outlined.

Francke saw it as the essential task of each believer to gather himself in the presence of God (*coram Deo*). Following the Lutheran tradition, he understood the act of praying as the individual's answer to the already spoken word of God. The fact that sinful humanity was able to offer a prayer to the most holy God was considered to be an expression of the doctrine of justification solely by faith (*sola fide*) and by God's grace (*sola gratia*). It was God who had laid the foundation for this form of communication by addressing mankind

11 For general information about the Danish-English-Halle Mission cf. Andreas GROSS et al. (eds.), *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India*, vol. I–III, Halle 2006; D. Dennis HUDSON, *Protestant Origins in India. Tamil Evangelical Christians, 1706–1835*, Richmond upon Thames 2006.

12 Cf. Heike LIEBAU, *Cultural Encounters in India. The Local Co-workers of the Tranquebar Mission, 18th to 19th Centuries*, New Delhi 2013.

13 Cf. Markus MATTHIAS, *August Hermann Francke (1663–1727)*, in: Carter LINDBERG (ed.), *The Pietist Theologians. An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Malden, MA 2005, pp. 100–114.

14 Cf. Jürgen GRÖSCHL, *Missionaries of the Danish-Halle and English-Halle Mission in India 1706–1844*, in: GROSS et al. (eds.), *Halle and the Beginning*, vol. III, pp. 1497–1527.

through the Gospel of Christ. The individual responded only to the love of God. Therefore, Francke stated, prayer should be like the talk of a child to its mother. In his instruction on the right way of praying he asked pastors to show the members of their congregations »that it requires no great art and skill to pray acceptably unto God; for they are to speak to him as children to a loving father, they are to spread before him their sorrows and complaints, they are to tell him of the state and condition of their souls, just as they find and feel it; and they need not be at all solicitous about propriety of expression and elegant phrases in their secret prayers; for God regards the sense of the heart, rather than the language of the lip.«<sup>15</sup> The distinctive core of Francke's theology of prayer lies in his insistence that prayer must come from the heart. The focus on the metaphor of the »heart« is typical of eighteenth-century Pietism. It is the seat of the emotions and hence the most important organ of human beings, as it causes motivation and changes the will and attitudes.<sup>16</sup> For the theology of Francke, it is crucial that by praying, the soul should enter into intimate contact with God. Genuine prayer should therefore be heartfelt, intensive, and include an inner dialogue with God. Prayer should not simply be mindless chatter, but should come from the inner depths of the soul.

Both Philipp Jakob Spener and August Hermann Francke shared a common rejection of prayer books,<sup>17</sup> but Francke nevertheless valued formulaic prayers as a means for learning how to pray.<sup>18</sup> While Luther had focussed on the Psalms and the Lord's Prayer as helpful texts, Francke pointed to phrases from scripture and sometimes used the texts of hymns to find words for prayers.<sup>19</sup> In one of his sermons Francke said that, like the beggar in Luke 18,38, who simply called out »Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!« (NET), the believer should cry to God.<sup>20</sup> The supplicant was expected to be aware of his

15 August Hermann FRANCKE, *A Letter to a Friend Concerning the Most Useful Way of Preaching*, Halle 1754, quoted after Peter C. ERB, *Pietists. Selected Writings*, New York 1983, pp. 117–127, at p. 118.

16 See Peter DAMRAU, *The Reception of English Puritan Literature in Germany*, London 2006, pp. 106–109. Cf. also Hans-Jörg NIEDEN, *Herzenseinkehr. Zum Beten in Mönchtum und Pietismus*, in: Id. et al. (eds.), *Praxis Pietatis. Beiträge zu Theologie und Frömmigkeit der Frühen Neuzeit*, Stuttgart 1999, pp. 135–149.

17 Cf. Johannes WALLMANN, *Herzensgebet oder Gebetsbuch? Frömmigkeit und Gebet im Pietismus*, in: Id., *Pietismus-Studien. Gesammelte Aufsätze*, vol. II, Tübingen 2008, pp. 284–307.

18 »Ja auch/ wenn du solche Gebet-Büchlein hast/ die durch den Geist Gottes geschrieben sind/ so wird auch das deine Gabe im Gebet vermehren/ wenn du aus denenselben mit gebührender andacht/ die Gebets-Formuln lesen wirst, wie wohl ich nimmer rath daß man sich allein an die Gebet-Bücher halte.« August Hermann FRANCKE, *Schrift-mässige Anweisung recht und Gott wolgefällig zu beten* (1695), in: Id., *Werke in Auswahl*, edited by Erhard PESCHKE, Berlin 1969, pp. 370–382, at p. 377.

19 See WALLMANN, *Herzensgebet*, p. 305.

20 August Hermann FRANCKE, *Die Zwei haupt-Mittel der wahren Erleuchtung* (1) das Wort Gottes (2) das Gebeth, in: Id., *Schriften und Predigten*, vol. 10, edited by Erhard PESCHKE, Berlin 1989, pp. 527–540, at p. 538.

sinful nature and to feel repentance for it. The correlation between prayer, sin and faith (which later became crucial to missionary work) is at the centre of Francke's theology of prayer. In the same manner as Luther, Francke emphasised that it was not only the fact of offering a prayer that made a prayer »right«. It was the attitude of the praying individual that was decisive.<sup>21</sup>

This was the theology of prayer that was applicable to every Christian. For ministers in particular, Francke recognised a more specific function of prayer. As a professor of the University of Halle he taught pastoral theology as part of the theological curriculum. After his death, the lecture series was published by his son Gotthilf August.<sup>22</sup> In these lectures, Francke described prayer as a highly relevant practice for all those who want to become, or already are, ministers in the Church. With reference to Martin Luther's words »orationem, meditationem et tentationem efficere Theologum« he elaborated that the exercise of praying was still essential for eighteenth-century ministers: it was needed because of the desolate condition of the Church. He saw ministers as being vulnerable to the risk of failing in their task because of the corrupt state of their congregations. To counter this risk, ministers should recognise and use prayers as the main source of strength. In the face of the desolate state of the Church that added to the responsibilities of its ministers, prayer was suggested as the only way to cope with these high demands.<sup>23</sup> According to Francke, the life of Martin Luther was an important example, because he had devoted the best hours of his days to extensive prayers and received from God the power that he needed to reform the Church.<sup>24</sup> In the same way a minister was to use prayer as a source of power for his task of being a good minister.

#### 4. Prayer as a Precondition for the Work of Missionaries

I will now turn to the question what happened when missionaries came to India carrying with them these thoughts and expectations. At first the specific relevance of prayer in the mission context has to be outlined. The contact zone created a challenging environment for missionaries. India was understood as a place of danger, difficulty and uncertainty. Here, it was not the corrupt state of the Church as in Europe but the non-Christian environment that posed a challenge for pastoral work. Petitionary prayers were regarded

21 See Erhard PESCHKE, *Studien zur Theologie August Hermann Franckes*, Berlin 1964, p. 110.

22 August Hermann FRANCKE, *Collegium Pastorale ueber joh ludovici hartmanni*, Halle 1713.

23 Ibid., p. 188.

24 Francke points out the statement of Veit Dietrich, who said about Luther, »daß er des Tages zwei bis drey Stunden, und zwar die besten, zum Gebet angewendet und eben daher dieselbe Kraft bekommen habe, deren die Kirche so reichlich genossen« (Ibid., p. 187).

as the only way to receive the vigour and the courage that were necessary to face this situation. On his arrival in India, the first missionary Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg stated:

Because we saw that here in this work everything is founded on mercy, grace and the power of God, we established a daily hour of communal prayer, wherein we brought before God our plans. And we must declare that prayer has been the most effectual way to start our high and important ministry with joy and blessings, and that it has helped us to avoid no efforts or dangers.<sup>25</sup>

It is only through prayer that the missionaries expected to have access to the divine guidance, consolation, and strength that were needed for their demanding work. And it was not only the troubling time of pioneer work that provoked this centration on prayer. Even twelve years later, after the troublesome pioneering period was over and the mission became settled, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg still wrote about the relevance of prayer for the work. Experience had taught them the valuable effect of prayer for their work and therefore they continued to meet every evening to communicate with God and to ask him to make them useful tools for his work in India.<sup>26</sup> The devotion expressed toward God in prayer was a reflection of the theological ambivalence that on the one hand without God no mission or no conversion was possible, but on the other hand it was demanded that the missionaries should be very productive. Theologically, their work and existence relied entirely on God, but at the same time, life forced them to make decisions and implement plans: in other words they had to be productive and passive at the same time. This tension was solved by the concept of prayer: prayer became the medium that linked the sovereignty of God with the agency of the missionaries. The missionaries experienced the tension of high demands and high hopes. They accordingly emphasised that their orientation toward God in prayer was an indispensable condition of their work.

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25 Wilhelm GERMANN, Ziegenbalg und Plütschau. Die Gründungsjahre der Trankebarschen Mission, vol. I, Erlangen 1868, p. 66.

26 See HB 13 (1719), p. 4.

## 5. Prayer as the Means for the Work of the Missionaries

Prayer was not only regarded as the medium through which God enabled the missionaries to do their work, it was at the same time considered a weapon in their spiritual fight for the Kingdom of God. The concept of the Kingdom of God was one of the key elements of the teaching of Jesus. Pietist theologians in the eighteenth century used this notion to describe the spiritual realm ruled by Jesus Christ. August Hermann Francke expected the coming of God not in the future but in the present. Therefore, it was an essential aim of his activities to facilitate the enhancement of God's realm on earth by stimulating and promoting Christian knowledge and values.<sup>27</sup> In 1735 Nikolas Dal described an encounter with a member of his congregation who was believed to have been possessed by the Devil. To banish the Devil the Tamil had suggested the use of a practice that he had observed among some Catholics in a remote area. They used to hang a paper with a note around the neck of the affected person that would distract the evil forces. The answer of the missionary was simple: He called such a ritual deceitful and asked some of the church members to form a circle around the man. Then he turned to God and asked for help and healing. By praying for an awakening and conversion experience, the missionaries hoped to strengthen the Kingdom of God and to weaken the power of the Devil. By uttering a prayer the power of God could be invoked. Therefore prayer in mission needs to be understood as a weapon in the eschatological fight against the Devil.<sup>28</sup> A reference to the power of prayer was also made in the discussion as to whether missionaries should marry or not. Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg argued that wives could and would »help us in our prayers and praise of God for the awakening of others«.<sup>29</sup> Prayer was an act of speech that was believed to be powerful. The expectation of the effects of prayer for the Kingdom of God was the reason as to why the missionaries permanently asked people to support them in prayer. Hence, the numbers of praying individuals and the amount of prayers correlated with the anticipated effect. Prayer for the missionaries was imagined as a speech act that had the power to change things.<sup>30</sup> Therefore the gift of prayer that they observed in some Indians was interpreted as something that influenced the audience and awakened them.<sup>31</sup> Prayer does not only transmit information to God. As a

27 Cf. Martin SCHMIDT, *Das Verständnis des Reiches Gottes im Hallischen Pietismus*, in: Max GEIGER (ed.), *Gottesreich und Menschenreich*, Basel et al. 1969, pp. 313–342.

28 Already Martin Luther defined prayers in terms of a fight against the Devil, the world and the flesh. Cf. KOCH, *Gebet*, pp. 47–66.

29 Erika PABST, *The Wives of Missionaries. Their Experiences in India*, in: GROSS et al. (eds.), *Halle and the Beginning*, vol. II, pp. 685–704, at p. 688.

30 John Langshaw AUSTIN, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford 1962.

31 See HB 74 (1750), p. 179.



performative utterance it also gives rise to feelings like commitment, dedication and affirmation on the part of the person praying. In the worldview of the missionaries, it even influences and extends the Kingdom of God. When the missionaries highlighted the relevance of prayer for their work in India, it had to be understood both as a consequence of their theology of ministry and as a result of their eschatological perspective. So far, the article has focused on the vertical layer of praying, the relationship between the supplicant and the deity. The next part investigates the horizontal layer of praying in the interaction between missionaries and Christian Tamils. As this essay will demonstrate, prayers and talking about prayers were related to the interpersonal dynamics within the contact zone of missions.

## 6. Prayer as an Indicator of Faith

Prayer played a significant role in the efforts of the missionaries to gain an insight into the religious state of the converts. Viewed from the missionaries' perspective, prayer was a necessity both for becoming and for being a Christian. Because in Pietist theology, prayer was the moment when God brought forth faith in the human soul, the teaching of prayers was part of the effort to bring people to their conversion. To pray was both a preparation for and a result of faith. Of a newly converted man, Ziegenbalg wrote in 1715: »He had not only acquired knowledge of the New Testament and the Theology, but also demonstrated with his behaviour that the Gospel is a power, that has the ability to change hearts and save souls. As we were able to tell by his Prayer of the Heart, the power of the Holy Ghost was given in Christ to his soul.«<sup>32</sup> The pioneer missionaries had emphasised the positive effects of regular praying hours for the congregation members, because prayer was the moment when God worked on the souls.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, the missionaries devoted a great deal of effort to teaching and practising how to pray. The Small Catechism of Luther served as a kind of prayer book<sup>34</sup> and the Lord's Prayer was a starting point for learning how to pray.<sup>35</sup> Encouragement was given to free-form prayers, and spontaneous utterances of devotion were common.

32 HB 11 (1715), p. 870.

33 See HB 6 (1710), p. 279.

34 Daniel JEYARAJ, *Inkulturation in Tranquebar. Der Beitrag der frühen dänisch halleischen Mission zum Werden einer indisch-einheimischen Kirche (1706–1730)*, Erlangen 1996, p. 130. Cf. HB 33 (1731), p. 929. For the catechism as a prayer book cf. Birgit STOLT, *Zum Katechismusgebet in Luthers »Betbüchlein« (1522)*, in: Friedrich-Otto SCHARBAU (ed.), *Das Gebet*, Erlangen 2002, pp. 67–83.

35 Cf. HB 22 (1726), p. 849.



Prayer was considered a crucial element in the complex and dynamic process of conversion. The missionaries expected to see a specific attitude in prayer from those who wanted to be baptised or wanted to take part in Holy Communion. The missionaries scrutinised both the habits and the emotions related to prayer. In doing so, they tried to spot the correlation between the act of praying and the effect of God in the heart of the individual. At the same time the content of the free prayers was considered revealing as it gave information about success in learning Christian doctrine.<sup>36</sup> Prayers had both a spiritual and a pedagogical purpose; they were to edify and instruct the church members.

Missionaries and catechists encouraged students in the schools and members of the congregation to make their own experiences with prayer<sup>37</sup> and rewarded them for what they defined as the right way of praying by giving them the possibility to say a prayer in public.<sup>38</sup> They expected prayers that were spoken freely, spontaneously and with feeling; they also expected them to include a confession of sin. In the report of two missionaries from Madras, an encounter with a former Catholic woman, who had health issues, is described as follows: »and she prayed [...] in a single-minded and heartfelt manner. She confessed her sins in this prayer and said among other things: I deserve not only this [...] disease for my sins, but something much worse. And she showed with her tears, which ran down her face, the sincerity of her prayer.«<sup>39</sup> This description of a conversion prayer demonstrates how strongly emotions and tears were considered to be part of the concept of »heartfelt prayer«. The distinction between superficial and heartfelt prayer was a typical way of depicting progress in terms of conversion. Thus, religious interactions were utilised as indicators that made the inner conversion both noticeable and measurable. Prayer not only brought divine strength and salvation to the supplicant, it also brought power to those who utilised the observation of prayer as a way to assess the progress or the stagnation of conversion.

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36 An example of a prayer that was interpreted as a summary of what the individual had learnt in the lessons is printed in HB 44 (1736), p. 946.

37 Ziegenbalg wrote in 1713 about the way they instructed the people in India on praying from the heart. See Arno LEHMANN (ed.), *Alte Briefe aus Indien. Unveröffentlichte Briefe von Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg 1706–1719*, Berlin 1957, p. 338.

38 See HB 39 (1734), p. 351: After a personal prayer time, a Tamil catechist told the catechumens the whole story of the centurion Cornelius in Acts 10 who had prayed continually to God even as a non-Christian, and his prayers were finally answered. When the catechist finished this story, he noticed that some people had started to pray in silence. To foster this habit of praying, he asked them to say a short prayer at the next gathering.

39 HB 87 (1757), p. 386.

European supporters wanted to read such views of the missionaries on prayer in the contact zone and asked for more »edifying stories« about converts.<sup>40</sup> As a result, many prayers, which were primarily directed to God or the congregation, were included in the reports and became public. Missionaries who had witnessed the prayers took them out of the private moment of pastoral care or congregational life and brought them into the public discourse of missions, where these prayers also functioned as signs of success or failure, both of the converts and the missionaries.

## 7. Prayer as an Engagement with Others

Prayer to God on behalf of others, called intercession, was a significant form of religious activity in the contact zone. In one of his early letters from India to friends in Germany, the 25-year-old Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg expressed how happy he was to know that his friends would always include the missionaries into their prayer because this was for him as good as to be with them face to face.<sup>41</sup> The fact that European Christians prayed for the missionaries, for their work, for the converts and for the so-called »Heathens« is well known. Already in 1714, only eight years after the beginning of mission work in India, intercession for the missions both in India and in Norway was officially introduced into the order of service in Denmark.<sup>42</sup> August Hermann Francke expressed, in a preface to his mission journal, the hope that the European Christians who read the accounts might be encouraged to pray for the converts.<sup>43</sup> When supporters put money in the collection boxes of their home churches, they sometimes added little slips of paper with prayers on them.<sup>44</sup> Other prayers were sent to Halle and printed in the prefaces of the journal or, since the 1730s, as addenda to the preface. Most of the prayers, written by Europeans, were in support of those in charge of the Indian congregations,<sup>45</sup> but prayers were also offered for the church members.<sup>46</sup> One might argue that intercessory prayer could seem patronising and presumptuous when Europeans prayed for the well-being of Indians. But intercession was not simply one-way. Indians were also strongly encouraged to intercede

40 Cf. AFSt/M 1 B 47:53 and AFSt/M 1 B 47:55.

41 Cf. LEHMANN, Briefe, p. 61.

42 See Jens GLEBE-MØLLER, *The Realm Of Grace Presupposes the Realm of Power. The Danish Debate about the Theological Legitimacy of Mission in:* GROSS et al. (eds.), *Halle and the Beginning*, vol. I, pp. 89–106, at p. 90.

43 See HB 37 (1743), preface p. 14.

44 Cf. e.g. AFSt/M 1 D 1b:88.

45 In later times this included not only European missionaries but also Indian co-workers, HB 78 (1752), preface p. 145.

46 Cf. HB 77 (1752), preface p. 120.

for Europeans. Ziegenbalg gave a description of the scope of intercession: When he wrote a letter to the members of the Tamil congregation in 1711, he admonished them: »when you pray, pray from the heart in the way I have instructed you: pray at the same time for me, for those who take care of you, and also for your brothers, and for your benefactors, even for those who hate you.«<sup>47</sup> A letter of 1713 mentions an Indian convert who had asked God in a prayer meeting to bless the Christians in Europe and to let their prayers be a help to them and vice versa.<sup>48</sup> Intercessory prayers were offered and received, expected and requested.<sup>49</sup> These intercessions for those who lived in remote areas of Europe served as a way of expressing faith in the universality of the Church and of building spiritual relationships with Christians in other parts of the world.<sup>50</sup> Personal Prayers were sent, in a literal and metaphorical sense, from Europe to India and also from India to Europe.

The reports of the missionaries contain a remarkable number of prayers said by Indian women.<sup>51</sup> The prayer as a moment of inspiration through the Holy Spirit gave them authority to speak and to argue in a world dominated by men. In 1737 the wife of one of the Indian Catechists was called to a Roman Catholic priest. When they began to discuss theological issues, the priest asked the woman where she had got the words for her arguments. Her answer was: »From prayer.«<sup>52</sup> In 1731 Christian Friedrich Pressier reminded some of the Christians in a village of the meaning of the spiritual union of all believers (*communio sanctorum*) as part of the Apostles' Creed. He stated that they stood, despite the remoteness of the place, in spiritual community with all the Saints and pious Christians in Europe, and that they should express their own love to these benefactors and brothers in heartfelt prayers.<sup>53</sup> Hence, the practice of prayer can be understood as offering a counter-moment of equality,<sup>54</sup> not in the sense of describing reality, but in the sense of being a value that challenged reality.

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47 HB 5 (1711), pp. 208–209.

48 »Segne deine Christenheit in Europa! Laß das Gebeth aller deiner Kinder uns zu statten kommen, und gib, daß unser Gebeth ihnen zustatten komme.« AFSt/M 1 C 5:68a.

49 The Indian catechist Paulus reminded one of his supporters in Germany to pray for him and his family, cf. AFSt/M 1 B 42:43, p. 3. An anonymous European supporter asked an Indian catechist as brother for his prayers, cf. HB 81 (1754), preface p. 227.

50 The focus on intercession can be understood as the most important new impulse provided by Pietism in terms of prayer, cf. WALLMANN, *Herzensgebet*, p. 303.

51 Cf. HB 53 (1741), p. 846; HB 75 (1751), p. 310.

52 HB 46 (1737), p. 1224.

53 Cf. HB 33 (1731), p. 958.

54 For a similar thought cf. also the concept of »counter-ideology« in Richard ELPHICK, *The Equality of Believers. Protestant Missionaries and the Racial Politics of South Africa*, Charlottesville, VA 2012, p. 2.

## 8. Different Forms of »Christian prayer« in the Hindu-Christian Contact Zone of Mission

After exploring the meaning of prayer in the theological conception of missions and its relevance for relationships both in the intensive and the extensive contact zones, the last part of this article focuses on the form and style of prayer that arose from the specific situation of the contact zone.

To translate the word »prayer« (*Gebet*), the missionaries of the Danish-English Halle Mission used the term *Mandiram*.<sup>55</sup> The word *Mandiram* referred to a formulaic Hindu prayer that was widely common in south-eastern India in the 18th century. As the article will argue, it was not only the name but also the character of the Hindu prayer that influenced the Christian prayer in the contact zone.

From 1730 on, 25 years after the first European missionaries arrived in Tranquebar, the ways of teaching and performing prayer became widely discussed. Over the years, expectations and attitudes towards prayer had changed. In the conference records of 1731 one finds a note written by missionaries that speaks of Indian catechists who had always started their catechesis with lessons on the Lord's Prayer. Observing the inefficiency of this approach, the missionaries came to the conclusion that they needed to reorganise the structure of religious lessons. They decided to begin with the Apostles' Creed and then continue with the formula of baptism, moving on to the Ten Commandments and only then to discuss the Lord's Prayer. The writers argue that a historical approach to Christian doctrine was easier to understand than the more abstract form of the Lord's Prayer.<sup>56</sup> But not only teaching normative prayer was seen as problematic, free prayer also became more and more of an issue. In 1731 Gotthilf August Francke, who had replaced his Father August Hermann as director of the Glaucha institute, wrote a letter to the missionaries in Tranquebar. He mentioned a complaint from European »friends of the mission« that he had received about the missionaries' failure to give instructions to the new church members regarding prayer.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, there exists a letter from January 1732 from Gotthelf Oesfeld<sup>58</sup> who asked the missionaries whether the Indian converts would regularly meet for prayer hours. Both questions, those of the instruction and of the meeting, were answered with a set of arguments by Dal and his colleagues in January 1733. First of all, they stated that communal prayer hours for church members were no longer well attended, supposedly because the Tamils were hard-working

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<sup>55</sup> HB 25 (1727), p. 158, n. 37.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. GERMANN, Ziegenbalg, pp. 304–305.

<sup>57</sup> AFSt/M 1 B 12:21 (October 1731).

<sup>58</sup> ALMW/DHM 5/7:40.

people and lacked spare time.<sup>59</sup> There was not even room for such private meetings because of the living conditions of most of the Tamil population.<sup>60</sup> Then, they pointed to the missionaries' experience that written instruction was not very helpful because many people were illiterate. Therefore, most instruction was given in personal contact.<sup>61</sup> Besides these pragmatic reasons they added another comment. There was also a general problem with communication about religious issues in the Indian context. Obviously people were not willing to use a lot of words. Dal explained that Indians were »quiet by nature« (»von stillem Wesen«).<sup>62</sup>

In the tradition of Lutheran Pietism, where prayers tended to be word-centred, this was a problem. Furthermore, the specific mission context challenged the meaning of words and brought the number of words into focus. The missionaries observed in both the Catholic and Hindu traditions the habit of prayers with only a few words in countless repetitions and wanted to distance themselves from these practises. In the so-called Malabarian correspondence, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg translated a letter of a Tamil about praying habits in Hinduism.<sup>63</sup> He was surprised to find in this letter a convincing doctrine on prayer among the Tamils. Nevertheless, he expressed in a footnote his dislike of the Hindu tradition of formulaic prayers such as *Mandirangöl*.<sup>64</sup> To justify his judgment, Ziegenbalg referred to Matthew 6,7, where Jesus warned: »When you pray, do not babble repetitiously like the Gentiles, because they think that by their many words they will be heard. (NET)« The constant repetition with many words was a problem for the first missionaries because they rejected any magical understanding. In the prayer God was asked, not caused or forced, to do something. Prayer therefore was always meant to be an act of confidence in God.<sup>65</sup> But the prayer habits of the Indians in Tamil Nadu contradicted the missionaries' expectations. They were awaiting the occasion to witness someone of the newly converted pouring out their heart to God in many words, all sincere and heartfelt. But this hardly ever happened. An example of how missionaries expected a prayer to be seen in a printed prayer of the catechist Aaron in the pioneer phase of

59 Cf. HB 34 (1731), p. 1059, and HB 36 (1732), pp. 1271–1272.

60 See HB 36 (1732), p. 1271.

61 Cf. HB 34 (1731), p. 1060.

62 HB 34 (1731), pp. 1054–1055. With reference to Philipp Jakob Spener's book *Nature and Grace*, Dal compared the differences in human natures with the variations in a flower field.

63 HB 7 (1712), p. 390. Cf. also the conversation that is described in HB 9 (1714), p. 788.

64 For the English translation of the correspondence see Daniel JEYARAJ et al. (eds.), *Hindu-Christian Epistolary Self-Disclosures. »Malabarian Correspondence«* between German Pietist Missionaries and South Indian Hindus (1712–1714), Wiesbaden 2013, pp. 219–220.

65 Johann Zacharias Kiernander wrote in January 1746 about a convert who had explained how happy he was that God had shown him grace so that he gained the ability to say the Lord's Prayer with childlike confidence. Cf. HB 61 (1744), p. 1080.

the mission. Its translation runs to five modern-day pages.<sup>66</sup> The fact that Aaron later became the first ordained pastor indicates that he met the high expectations of the European missionaries quite well. But Aaron obviously was an exceptional case.

What happened after the missionaries had realised that word-centred prayers were not well accepted by the church members? The incongruity between Pietist expectations and the reality of the mission confounded some of the missionaries, and different approaches to dealing with this problem were developed. In some cases the catechists wrote exemplary prayers for someone who asked how to pray.<sup>67</sup> In other cases they invented new forms of teaching. Nikolaus Dal described a meeting in July 1734.<sup>68</sup> Indians who wanted to be baptised met for their regular lessons, and on this day the lesson was on prayer. The leaders gave an introduction to the topic and explained to the catechumens that in order to become Christians, they had to turn in sincere prayer toward God, ask him to bring their sins to light and to awaken their desire for the good means of salvation. Then they asked those who attended the meeting to find a lonely place under one of the trees in the Garden of Poreiar and kneel down to pray.<sup>69</sup> They explicitly encouraged everybody to sigh, plead and moan about the misery of sin and to ask God for help. However, not only the way of teaching changed over time, so did the form of prayer. Dal noted in one of his reports that there was one form of prayer that became more common in the catechesis lessons: He had started to teach his flock to pray »in the moment they had internalised the truths [...] to turn their hearts to God in short, simple sighs«.<sup>70</sup>

For a better understanding of this comment we have to look at the meaning of the term »sigh« (in German: »Seufzer«). Originally, it is an expression for a single deep exhalation of breath; it describes an audible but wordless utterance. The act of sighing normally is related to lamentation, desire and sadness.<sup>71</sup> In the Christian tradition, it is understood as a wordless or verbal manner to express feelings of sorrow or the awareness of sin. Based on Luke 18,13, where a tax collector cries »God be merciful to me a sinner«, the term also describes a prayer that is a verbal utterance toward God with only a few words. Sighing is related to the practice of short intuitive prayer (in German *Stoßgebet*) that is offered in a situation of emergency. Martin Luther had

66 See LEHMANN, Briefe, pp. 337–341.

67 In 1734 one of the Indian co-workers wrote a prayer as a role model on a palm leaf. Cf. HB 39 (1734), pp. 317–318.

68 See HB 39 (1734), pp. 350–351.

69 It was common both to kneel while praying and to lie flat on the earth. Cf. HB 6 (1707), p. 233; 42 (1735), p. 808; LEHMANN, Briefe, p. 338.

70 HB 38 (1734), p. 242.

71 For the word »Seufzer« in the early modern period see Johann Christoph ADELUNG, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart*, Wien 1811, vol. IV, pp. 67–68.

himself used both *Seufzer*<sup>72</sup> and *Stoßgebet*<sup>73</sup> to describe spontaneous and heartfelt prayers to God. In the form of the Jesus Prayer (*Herzensgebet*), which combines the recitation of a sentence with the rhythm of breath, it was widely used in the Eastern Orthodox tradition.<sup>74</sup> Repetitive short prayers were also favoured in mysticism over the centuries and thence found their way into the Reformed Pietism of Gerhard Tersteegen.<sup>75</sup> In Lutheran Pietism it was Philipp Jakob Spener who encouraged his son to use *Stoßgebete* and sighs,<sup>76</sup> although he always emphasised the priority of free prayer. As far as my research has revealed, short formulaic prayers were not a significant object for theologians and church members in Halle.

Considering all this, we have to ask: Why did short formulaic prayers become favoured in the Lutheran Pietist mission in India from the 1730s on? This article suggests that the Hindu prayer tradition of mantras in the form of *nāma-japa*, in which only a few syllables, words, or sentences were repeated, was not only something missionaries contradicted, but also something that influenced Christian prayers in the Tamil congregation. In southeast India, the practice of contemplative chanting was well-known and prayer had a meditative character. The *bhakti* movement, which was popular among eighteenth-century southeast Indians, emphasised the religious devotion to a personal deity. One means of this devotion was the prayer called *nāma-japa*, which features the repetition of the name of a deity. These prayers were focused on specific manifestations of Brahman, such as Vishnu or Shiva, whose names were repeated.<sup>77</sup> Several scholars have already pointed to the

72 WA 10, II, p. 376, 3–5.

73 Commenting on Matthew 6:5 Martin Luther wrote in 1532 that already the prophets of the Old Testament said short prayers with only two or three words, that they sighed towards heaven: »Darumb haben die Alten veter wol gesagt, Es thue es njcht mit vielen langen gebeten, sondern loben die kurtzen stos gebetlin, da man mit einem woertlin odder zwey hinauff seufftzt gen himel ...«. WA 32, pp. 299–544, at p. 418.

74 Cf. HAMMERLING, A history of Prayer, pp. 12–13; Kallistos WARE, The Power of the Name. The Jesus Prayer in Orthodox Spirituality, in: Gray HENRY (ed.), Merton & Hesychasm. The Prayer of the Heart and the Eastern Church, Louisville, KY 2003, pp. 41–74; and Daniel MUNTEANU, Das Herzensgebet in der orthodoxen Spiritualität, in: OrthFor 22 (2008), pp. 201–212. A common prayer is »Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner«.

75 See Hansgünter LUDEWIG, Gerhard Tersteegen, in: LINDBERG (ed.), The Pietist Theologians, pp. 190–206.

76 Philipp Jakob SPENER, Väterliches Vermahnungsschreiben an meinen lieben Sohn Philipp Reinhard, als er in Leipzig die Apothekekunst lernte, in: Id., Letzte Theologische Bedenken IV, Halle an der Saale 1711, pp. 558–563, at p. 559: »erinnere dich dessen treulich, wie Christen allezeit bethen sollen, daß du [...] unter aller arbeit manchemal dein hertz zu Gott erhebest, er wolle dich in gnaden ansehen, [...] er wolle dir krafft verleihen, dasjenige zu thun, was ihm angenehm ist, er wolle dir hingegen deine fehler um seines Sohnes willen vergeben, und was dergleichen stoß-gebethlein und seufftzer seyn möge«.

77 Cf. Vandana MATAJI, Nāma japa. The Prayer of the Name in the Hindu and Christian Traditions, Delhi 1997.



similarity of *nāma-japa* and the Orthodox Jesus Prayer.<sup>78</sup> The *nāma-japa* of the *bhakti* tradition with the loving, intensive and exclusive devotion toward a personal God merits particular attention in this context.<sup>79</sup> This prayer is formulaic, repetitive, and meditational. The structural similarity between *nāma-japa* and sighing was why missionaries suggested practising the formulaic prayer of sighing and was the reason for the Tamils to use it.

In the report of the missionaries Dal, Bosse, Preßier and Walther, a biblical legitimation for calling a name in prayers is mentioned. In 1728 an Indian man dying of smallpox received an emergency baptism. When the missionaries gave him medicine in the following days they heard »now and then [...] a short sigh to his redeemer«.<sup>80</sup> The following explanation refers to Romans 10,13: »For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved« (NET). Prayer is reduced to its core, to the wholehearted address to God, and thus becomes comparable to the *nāma-japa* of the *bhakti* tradition. In the beginning of the mission, sighs were mentioned only once in a while, whereas they later became an established form of devotion. When in 1746 a young boy complained that he was not able to pray because of his sickness, the missionaries assured him that God would see his heart, and that his faint murmuring and short sighs were enough for and pleasant to God.<sup>81</sup> Here, the missionaries argued in the Lutheran tradition which holds that attitude matters, not eloquence or the number of words. The Pietist missionaries opposed both the practice of mantras which they observed in Indian temples and the practise of the rosary prayer which they saw in the Catholic mission, where the repetition of the words was essential for making the prayer effective. In contrast, they valued prayers only when they were spoken in full awareness of their meaning and relevance. Consequently, the sentences of the sighs were not to be repeated a certain number of times, but should be uttered from the depth of the heart.

Additionally, the content of the prayer was important. Only the continuous repetition of a phrase like »o God, o God«, for instance, was not enough.<sup>82</sup> The sigh should be a short sentence including the confession of being a sinner, bewailing sins and the plea for salvation. It combined different elements of traditional prayer forms such as petition, confession, and dedication.

78 Cf. Claetus Matthew VADAKKAKARA, *Prayer and Contemplation*, Bangalore 1980, p. 135.

79 See Annette WILKE, *Opfer, Gebet und Gebetsopfer im Hinduismus*, in: Ulrich BERNER et al. (eds.), *Opfer und Gebet in den Religionen*, pp. 20–45, at p. 28, n. 31.

80 HB 26 (1728), p. 85.

81 Cf. HB 66 (1746), p. 999.

82 Cf. HB 39 (1734), p. 364.



The formulaic prayers of sighs were probably adopted by the missionaries of the Lutheran Pietist mission in India because form and practice correlated with their theology of prayer. As short and concentrated prayers of confession, they focussed attention on anthropological assumptions such as the sinfulness of humankind and the absolute dependence of every individual upon the grace of God. It was an act of devotion and humility, and as such related to tears,<sup>83</sup> as both were expressions of humility before God. In the beginning, the word was primarily used in phrases like »to sigh at sins«,<sup>84</sup> or to »sigh for salvation«,<sup>85</sup> or was related to a moment of despair.<sup>86</sup> This confession of unworthiness and weakness comes from the centre of Pietist theology and anthropology. Awareness of being a sinner is a basic element of the theology of prayer since Martin Luther. In the address of the Lord's Prayer, Luther saw the humility that is necessary when approaching God.<sup>87</sup> Christian Friedrich Preßier used the same argument. He highlighted the first part of the Lord's Prayer as the most important one, because it emphasised dependency on God.<sup>88</sup> The »sigh« is distinguished by the fact that the term, content and practice imply the awareness of sin.

The sigh's brevity and the passivity demonstrated the theological assumption that everything comes from God alone. The humble attitude of the suppliant, which was a precondition for conversion, could be emphasised by this kind of prayer. In this form there was no place for excuses, explanations or self-justification. The worshipper was understood as someone who comes silently and empty-handed, and has to rely on expressions that were given by God through the Bible or other sources. The individual thus addresses God in borrowed sentences: from the biblical tradition, from hymns, from other Christians further along their spiritual path, etc. The language that was available for the converts failed to provide the right words, so other words were offered.<sup>89</sup> From the 1730s onwards, the number of sighs mentioned in

83 See HB 8 (1712), p. 608.

84 HB 23 (1726), p. 305.

85 HB 9 (1714), p. 791; HB 18 (1717), p. 305.

86 A hymn written by Christoph Theodosius Walther in 1725 contains the verses: »Doch scheint gleich aller Trost und Friede zu verschwinden, wird man doch zum Gebet sich angetreiben finden, und seufzen: Hilf doch, HErr! sieh' ich verderbe ja [...]«, HB 21 (1725), p. 692.

87 Cf. KOCH, Gebet, p. 47.

88 »Geheiligt werde dein Name! So oft ihr dis Gebet in eurem Kämmerlein betet, so stehet bey dieser Bitte, als der ersten und allerwichtigsten, etwas stille, erweget in tieffster Demuth euren Ursprung, eure dependence von GOTT in allen Dingen, die Majestät des Allerhöchsten und eure Nichtigkeit und Unwürdigkeit [...]«, HB 27 (1729), p. 231.

89 This is only a few steps from the interpretation of Ulrich Wilckens concerning Romans 8,26: »In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how we should pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings« (NET). Human beings are not able to find the right words to express what they hope for and what they need to say. Only the Holy Spirit translates the words that are directed towards God in sighs or groans that are

the mission reports increased continuously.<sup>90</sup> Often the sighs were used to demonstrate the spiritual progress of converts or church members. When missionaries thought of someone as not being very clever, they used the practice of sighs instead of complicated lessons to teach them the Christian doctrine. In the report of 1751 three sighs are mentioned that are addressed to the three persons of the Trinity and contain the elements of creation, redemption and sanctification.<sup>91</sup> This example demonstrates that the practice of sighing was already dissociated from the negative connotations of sadness and humility and became a general *terminus technicus* for a specific kind of formulaic prayer. A suggestion for sighing that was no longer directly related to sins, but which did emphasise the difference between God and humans, was »God, you are my creator, please, make me, your creature, blessed«.<sup>92</sup> Biblical verses were also used as sighs, for example Luke 23,46: »Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!«<sup>93</sup>

This way of praying was not only taught but also adopted and practised by the missionaries themselves. The sigh, which Nikolaus Dal had interpreted as a lower-grade prayer for beginners, later became an established form of devotion even for the missionaries. This conclusion is hinted at in one of the mission reports of 1753, which ends with the expression: »We [the missionaries] sigh as we conclude this account with Psalm 92,5: Lord, how great are your works, O Lord! Your plans are very intricate!«<sup>94</sup> Here the missionaries' use of the term »sigh« was different from the original meaning. It was dissociated from the negative connotation of sadness and became a neutral term for a formulaic kind of prayer.

Through its modified form and content, the »sigh« as prayer gave new impulses for worship in the mission. This modified style of prayer was thought to be an addition to, not a substitute for, other forms of prayer. Hence, it enlarged the variation of the prayer act in the contact zone. When Johann Zacharias Kiernander in 1770 delivered the dedication sermon for the newly opened church in Cuddelur, he used Isaiah 56,7 (»for my temple will

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unutterable and inexpressible for the believer, but appropriate for the communication with God. See Ulrich WILCKENS, *Der Brief an die Römer*, EKK VI/2, Zürich et al. 1980, pp. 160–161.

90 HB 39 (1734), p. 364: »O HErr, gib mir ein zerknirshtes Hertz« (Ps. 51,19); HB 62 (1744), p. 268: »JESUS, vergib mir meine Sünden, nimm mich zu dir in den Himmel«; HB 73 (1750), p. 969: »Ach GOtt, errette mich. Ach GOtt, bringe mich auf den Weg der Seligkeit«; HB 75 (1751), p. 300: »JEsu, erlöse mich«.

91 »Man suchte daher ihnen folgende drey Seufzer bezubringen: 1) GOtt Vater, der du mich erschaffen, sey mein Vater, und mache ich zu deinem Kinde. 2) HErr JEsu, der du mich Sünder erlöst hast, tilge meine Sünden, und eigne mir dein Verdienst zu. 3) O heiliger Geist, wircke in meiner Seelen Busse, Glauben und Gottseligkeit, damit ich nicht verloren, sondern ewig selig werden möge«, HB 76 (1751), p. 479.

92 HB 75 (1751), p. 430.

93 HB 52 (1740), p. 658.

94 HB 79 (1753), p. 998.

be known as a temple where all nations may pray») as the starting point to talk about the nature and form of prayer. He summarised his thoughts with the words:

The true nature of Prayer therefore consists in a humble and Confident Supplication to God for his grace, and Requests to grant such goods and Blessings, both Spiritual and temporal, as we shall need. And this may be done with words, or without words, by elevating the soul and sending the sighs & desires to God.<sup>95</sup>

## 9. Conclusion

In several ways, the mission in India can be considered as a prayer-intensive time. Prayer was fundamental to the religious life of the missionaries who started their mission work among the Tamils in the eighteenth century. The high regard which in European Pietism held prayer, the basis of the missionaries' attitude toward prayer, was boosted by the particular situation of the mission in India. Therefore, several specific elements of the phenomenon of prayer in the contact zone can be identified:

First, the practice of prayer was highly relevant for the missionaries' self-understanding, because only in prayer did they expect to receive the wisdom and strength of God which were both considered indispensable to the progress of their work. As prayer was the basis for the life of every Christian, for the missionaries in particular intense prayer was considered an essential precondition to mission work. It was seen as the main source of God's power, and his spirit and was therefore considered an indispensable guide to the Indian mission with its uncertainty of events and unpredictability of incidents. Second, prayers were understood as the means for fighting against the Devil and as an instrument that contributed to the enlargement of the Kingdom of God. They became a means of being actively involved in changing the world, in the Christian sense, into a better place. Third, the observation of prayers became the reason for assessments and demarcation. Prayers became indicators of faith that enabled the missionaries to depict conversion in someone else's life. Fourth, the exchange of intercessions through correspondence from India with Christians in Europe served to establish and intensify relationships across cultural, ethnic and social boundaries. The universal dimension of prayer created a kind of spiritual contact zone which was broader than the contact zone in Tamil Nadu and which – at least at the moment of prayer – was not restrained by borders, culture or language. Finally, the multi-layered dynamics of the contact zone augmented the religious practices, both of

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95 AFSt/M 2 C 16:23.

European missionaries and of Tamil Christians. Interactions between people of different cultural and religious backgrounds affected the practice of prayer in the Protestant congregations in matters of form, content and character. Whereas Francke had insisted on prayer from the heart as a dialogue with God, like a child talking to its mother, the attitude of the members of the Tamil congregation caused a change in the style of prayer over time. In addition to the word-centred prayers, missionaries started to encourage formulaic prayers. By reducing the act of praying to a few words or short sentences, they created a link to the Hindu tradition of *nāma-japa*. This prayer style, consisting of only a few syllables or words, was similar to meditative prayer practices in Orthodox, mystic and Protestant traditions and therefore had the potential to link Hindu and Christian traditions. As a result, word-centred prayers were complemented in the contact zone by more formulaic prayers. The *Seufzer* became more and more acceptable both for Tamil converts and for European missionaries. This style of prayer was of particular significance in the contact zone because it emphasised the suppliant attitude of the human before God, a theological notion that was of high relevance for the missionaries' task in the contact zone.

Peter James Yoder

## »Temples in the Hearts of Heathens«

### Post-Contact Developments in August Hermann Francke's Theological Language

The Danish-Halle Mission to India has been called the »adopted child« of August Hermann Francke's (1663–1727) institutes.<sup>1</sup> It is likely the Lutheran Pietist Francke never had any intention of an organised effort to evangelise non-European peoples early in his career as pastor and professor in Halle. His institutes began inconspicuously in the 1690s with the intent of educating and caring for children. Certainly, a portion of the motivation behind Francke's work in the Glaucha, a community that stood just outside the city walls of Halle, was rooted in Philipp Jakob Spener's (1635–1705) 1675 call to reform the three Lutheran estates (civil, ecclesiastical and household), but both Spener's and Francke's reform plans address those of the »world« peripherally. For Francke, this can be seen in his hope of bringing about what he called a »universal« change via education: educating children from various echelons of society and training those who would go on to populate vacated pastorates across German territories. It was only after the fame of his pedagogical methods gained attention elsewhere that Francke openly expressed his interest in involving his institutes in reforming regions beyond his front door. Through correspondence with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who saw Halle as the »suitable starting point for Protestant missions«, Francke set his sights on extending his spiritual influence eastward.<sup>2</sup> But as doors were being closed off for advancement into China, he was made aware of the chance to have two of his own Halle-trained pastors, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682–1719) and Heinrich Plütschau (1676–1752), travel to India in 1706 in cooperation with King Frederick IV of Denmark. There, the two men were to begin a mission to the indigenous people of the southeast Indian coast of Malabar. The seemingly unplanned nature of Francke's involvement in the rise of modern Protestant

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1 Johannes WALLMANN, *Der Pietismus*, Göttingen 2005, p. 132.

2 Thomas MÜLLER-BAHLKE, *The Mission in India and the worldwide communication network of the Halle Orphan-House*, in: Andreas GROSS/Y. Vincent KUMARADOSS/Heike LIEBAU (eds.), *Halle and the Beginning of Protestant Christianity in India*, vol. 1, Halle 2006, p. 62; Martin BRECHT, *August Hermann Francke und der Hallische Pietismus*, in: Id. (ed.), *Geschichte des Pietismus*. Bd. 1: *Der Pietismus vom siebzehnten bis zum frühen achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1993, pp. 517–521.

missions lends itself to the investigation of how contact with peoples of other cultures on the mission field affected Continental theology.

This study intends to encourage a conversation as to how those in India, who came into contact with missionaries, actively (though indirectly) affected and stretched Francke's theology. Specifically, it considers how the missionary reports coming from India may have served as agents of disruption to assumed meanings in Francke's Pietist theological language. These disruptions originate in the »native« voices of the *Hallesche Berichte* (*Halle Reports*), voices which were almost entirely whispers and »echoes« relegated to the shadows and background of the text.<sup>3</sup> Yet their presence is felt not only in the changing conceptions held by the missionaries who came into contact with these agents, but also in the shifting meanings of the terms Francke applied to the »Other«, specifically »heathen« and »heathenism«. To gain a better understanding of how contact zones may have had reverberations back in Europe and affected theological meanings, this chapter will first consider Francke's own perspective on missions and how it reflected the wider Lutheran reforming tradition in which he stood. Francke's use of »heathen« mirrored a common critique of the spiritual condition of the Church, a critique which was formative in the early Pietist mission efforts. Then, by contrasting Francke's early sermons with those that were held after the missionary contact, the article will consider the possibility of recognising a transition in Francke's use of the term »heathen«, in which the meaning is pulled from its context as a pejorative against the »unfaithful« in the church and injected with meaning derived from missionary contact with the indigenous peoples of India. Like other contributions to this volume, this essay approaches this shift in meaning in Francke's thought mindful of the important role »contact zones« play in challenging what Mary Louise Pratt calls the European »constructions of subordinated others«.<sup>4</sup> I am inclined to see post-contact theologies as places where the impact of the extending ripples of the contact zone can be seen. By tracing how Francke used the term »heathen« on both sides of missionary contact, we can begin to see how his interaction with the *Hallesche Berichte* sent by missionaries in India affected his own theological language.

3 This idea of the »echoes« of voices that resonate from the contact zone is found in Mrinalini SEBASTIAN, *Echoes from the Past: On Hearing the Voice of the »Native« Christian*, Presented at Candler School of Theology, Emory University, 28 May 2014; cf. Gayatri Chakravorty SPIVAK, *Echo*, in: *New Literary History* 24 (1993), pp. 17–43.

4 Mary Louise PRATT, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, New York 1992, p. 6; cf. id., *Arts of the Contact Zone*, in: *Profession* (1991), pp. 33–40.

## Setting the Stage: Education, Critique, and Mission

Born 1663 in the northern German territory of Schleswig-Holstein, August Hermann Francke received the upbringing which only an affluent family that was well-connected within the political and academic worlds could afford. His father Johann's work as a lawyer led the family to the court of Ernest the Pious in Gotha, but Johann suddenly died, leaving the young August Hermann in the care of his mother and sister. As a result of this tragedy, Francke's mother and sister, both of whom were committed to a late-seventeenth century reform movement in the Lutheran church, took an especially formative role in his life. As a child, Francke's sister read him such devotional literature as Johann Arndt's *True Christianity* and Lewis Bayly's *Practice of Piety*.<sup>5</sup> By the time he left as a young man to begin a life of study that took him to academic centres in Erfurt, Kiel, and Leipzig, Francke had become well acquainted with the theological themes of a religious group within Lutheranism that felt the Church had fallen into a mire of unbelief and so-called traditionalism.

This reforming Lutheran tradition that so heavily influenced Francke's thought held a particular disposition toward the spiritual condition of the Church that not only led to the rise of Pietism under Philipp Jakob Spener and his radical partner Johann Jakob Schütz (1640–1690) but also influenced the rise of modern Protestant missions under the guidance of the leadership at Francke's institutes. In Francke's posthumously published reform plan *Der Große Aufsatz* he indicates the influence of such prominent reforming Lutherans as Johann Arndt (1555–1621), Theophil Großgebauer (1627–1661), Ahasverus Fritsch (1629–1701) and Johannes Valentinus Andreae (1586–1654).<sup>6</sup> These men shared a desire to see a renewal in individual Piety that grew out of repentance and faith. To achieve this in the lives of their parishioners, they often called for an awareness of the fallen condition of humanity, of the centrality of the Gospel, and of the need for social and ecclesiastical reforms. Pastors like Großgebauer decried the »atheism« and »heathenism« they encountered in their congregations and called for a reform of the pastorate through education.<sup>7</sup>

5 Gustav KRAMER, August Hermann Francke. Ein Lebensbild, vol. 1, Halle 1880, p. 7. Though quite dated, Kramer's two-volume work is still considered the standard biography of Francke; cf. Martin BRECHT, August Hermann Francke und der Hallische Pietismus, p. 440.

6 August Hermann FRANCKE, Der Große Aufsatz, in: Otto PODCZEK (ed.), August Hermann Franckes Schrift über eine Reform des Erziehungs- und Bildungswesens als Ausgangspunkt einer geistlichen und sozialen Neuordnung der Evangelischen Kirche des 18. Jahrhunderts. Der Große Aufsatz, Berlin 1962, pp. 72f.; cf. Udo STRÄTER, Meditation und Kirchenreform in der lutherischen Kirche des 17. Jahrhunderts, Tübingen 1995.

7 Hans-Martin BARTH, Atheismus und Orthodoxie: Analysen und Modelle christlicher Apologetik im 17. Jahrhundert, Göttingen 1971, p. 44. For a concise description of Großgebauer's

Francke's affinity to the reforming Lutheran narrative concerning the spiritual state of the Church carried over into most areas of his religious thought, including his personal account of a dramatic conversion experience, which he claims to have had in 1687 while preparing to preach in Lüneburg on the topic of faith. There are multiple ways of interpreting his conversion narrative which Francke later described in his *Lebenslauf*. Scholars often recount Francke's experience in light of his conversion theology, but this perspective tends to pass over his critique of the Church and the educational system that appears throughout the text.<sup>8</sup> As he began to contemplate the Johannine text on the nature of faith from which he would preach, he took note of the condition of his own heart. He could not, he claimed, enter into the topic of faith when he himself was uncertain of his own spiritual state. Francke writes:

I thought I could surely speak on the Holy Scripture, but the idea quickly came to me, who knows whether it is God's Word? The Turks pass off their Quran and the Jews their Talmud as such. Who will then say which of these is right? Such questions quickly spread until I finally had not the least remaining faith in my heart towards all those things which I learned my whole life, especially the theological studies on God [...] which I pursued for over eight years. For I no longer believed in a God in heaven. And with this everything was gone, so that I could cling neither to the word of God nor to that of man. At this time, I found little power in one as I did in the other.<sup>9</sup>

A brief moment after these doubts about Christianity arose, Francke claims, »a hidden comfort through [the Scripture spoken by a friend] began to sink into my heart, but my atheistic mind quickly used my corrupted reason as its tool to again tear the power of the divine Word out from my heart.«<sup>10</sup>

Francke's conversion would soon be wrought out through the sequence of dramatic despair over his own sin and an overwhelming interposition of God's grace on his behalf – a process which he would go on to describe as *Bußkampf*, the struggle of repentance.<sup>11</sup> Yet it is not so much Francke's conversion but rather the way he describes his spiritual condition in the moment of his greatest spiritual doubt that is of interest. At the very moment Francke

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thought, cf. Jonathan STROM, *Orthodoxy and Reform, The Clergy in Seventeenth Century Rostock*, Tübingen 1999, pp. 195–221.

8 For a recent, invaluable examination of Francke's *Lebenslauf*, cf. Markus MATTHIAS, *Franckes Erweckungserlebnis und seine Erzählung*, in: Holger ZAUNSTÖCK/Thomas MÜLLER-BAHLKE/Claus VELTMANN (eds.), *Die Welt verändern. August Hermann Francke – Ein Lebenswerk um 1700*, Halle 2013, pp. 69–80.

9 August Hermann FRANCKE, *Herrn M. August Hermann Franckens [...] Lebenslauf*, in: Markus MATTHIAS (ed.), *Lebensläufe August Hermann Franckes*, Leipzig 1999, p. 26.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

11 Markus MATTHIAS, *Bekehrung und Wiedergeburt*, in: Hartmut LEHMANN (ed.), *Glaubenswelt und Lebenswelten. Geschichte des Pietismus Band 4*, Göttingen 2004, pp. 60–62.



falls into irreconcilable doubt over Scripture, he calls himself an atheist. This use of the term »atheism« by Francke reflects several elements of his theological thought. Elsewhere it has been shown that such a claim reflected an attempt to define a certain class of »unspiritual« or »practical Christians«.<sup>12</sup> Here, I am interested specifically in how Francke used the term »atheist« to address what he believed to be the wretched condition of the Church and the educational system that lay behind ecclesiastical institutions.

As Francke leads us through his conversion experience, and before we come to picture the Pietist kneeling in his bedroom seeking the true presence of God, we find that he was a student who had sought his salvation in the halls of academia. Yet Francke came to believe that education, or at least his valuation of the scholarly life, stood in the way of his salvation. He had pursued a life in search of what he perceived to be the glory and honour that crowned an academic. In what he would see as the great struggle of his soul, during which he doubted the very existence of God, he questioned all he had learned. This very important dimension of Francke's conversion experience is often overlooked. His academic prowess paled beside the immensity of his sinfulness, and as he peered over the accomplishments of his life, Francke realised he had enclosed himself in a tower that had kept him from truly being converted to God. The atheism that he believed to have crept into his soul reflected the overwhelming doubts that shook the foundations of his learning. Only through his conversion did Francke regain what he saw as an epistemological rooting in the »true« truth of the gospel. He claims,

[F]rom then on it became easy for me to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live [a] disciplined, righteous and pious [life] in this world. Since then, I have steadfastly adhered to God, disregarding [my own] advancement, glory and esteem by the world, wealth and good days, and outward, worldly gratification. And though before I had made an idol for myself of learning, now I saw that faith, like a mustard seed, is worth more than a hundred sacks full of learning [...].<sup>13</sup>

The claims of atheism that find their way into his autobiographical conversion narrative must be seen in light of his juxtaposition of academic learning and the true knowledge of salvation that came through *Bußkampf*. Francke, along with his seventeenth-century reforming Lutheran counterparts, including the likes of Theophil Großgebauer, concerned himself with what he deemed to be the rise of a serious *internal* adversary to the health of God's household: the attack of an academically rooted atheism. »Atheism«, though, was one

12 Peter James YODER, *Blood, Spit and Tears. August Hermann Francke's Theology of the Sacraments*, PhD. Diss. The University of Iowa 2011, pp. 81–91.

13 MATTHIAS, *Lebensläufe Franckes*, p. 31.

of a list of pejoratives Francke used to underscore what he deemed to be the unhealthy state of the Church. According to Francke, spiritual leaders and educators were »atheists« in that they promoted a form of Christianity that people would expect from those who did not acknowledge the authority of God in their lives. Another important pejorative Francke applied to these »unfaithful« leaders was »heathen«. Just as the atheistic Christian lived as if there were no God, so too, claimed Francke, they lived as if they were heathens, without knowledge of God.<sup>14</sup> Francke's use of these two labels interchangeably reflects the type of language commonly found in the harsher reforming Lutheran critiques of the Church.

Francke's energetic efforts in Halle focused on developing a specific plan to reform the lives of individuals and society, which would bring about the renewal of the Church. They should be seen in the context of his particular conversion experience and his subsequent attacks on the »heathens« who were leading the church astray. Early in his ministry, Francke spoke of these efforts as a »second Reformation«. As Wolfgang Breul has recently reminded us, Francke's reform plan, as it developed throughout his career, is important to contextualising the rise of Protestant missions under the umbrella of Halle Pietism.<sup>15</sup> At the heart of Francke's Pietism was the hope of a worldwide universal reform movement, which would see the positive transformation of the individual and society through the means of conversion and education aimed at the heart.

This reform plan at the centre of Francke's theology inevitably found its way into his preaching. While leading a small, working-class congregation outside the city walls of Halle, Francke delivered a sermon in 1697 – just a few years after establishing his institutes – in which he laid out what he called »the most needful reformation of church, house and heart«.<sup>16</sup> The sermon reflects a constant theme in Francke's preaching: the denunciation of the »depraved« state of education being offered and the condemnation of the unbelief he thought it produced. As he addressed what he deemed to be the tragic shortcomings found within the hearts of his congregants and the

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14 August Hermann FRANCKE, *Das Geheimniß der Bosheit*, in: Erhard PESCHKE (ed.), *Predigten I*, Berlin 1987, p. 503; id., *Von dem Dienst untreuer Lehrer*, p. 414.

15 Wolfgang BREUL, August Hermann Franckes Konzept einer Generalreform, in: Id./Carsten SCHNURR (eds.), *Geschichtsbewusstsein und Zukunftserwartung in Pietismus und Erweckungsbewegung*, Göttingen 2013, pp. 69–83; id., *Theological Tenets and Motives of Mission*. August Hermann Francke, Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, in: Barbara BECKER-CANTARINO (ed.), *Migration and Religion. Christian Transatlantic Missions, Islamic Migration to Germany*, New York 2012, pp. 41–60.

16 August Hermann FRANCKE, *Die höchstnöthige Kirchen- Hauß- und Hertzens-Reformation*, in: PESCHKE (ed.), *Predigten I*, pp. 270–302.

Church at large, Francke made a curious claim: the Lord had destroyed the Jewish Temple in order to raise up what he called a »temple in the hearts of the heathens«. He continued:

[In the early Church] the people in the Orient [...] first received the sunshine of the Divine Gospel but paid no attention to it thereafter. Rather [they] ruined it in every degree. Thus the Lord toppled the light in their lands, so that such places were flooded with heathenism or the religion of the Turks. Then the Lord turned to the Occident [...] and let his Gospel ring out clear and bright, that he may find proper praise for it. But should we choose not to accept the Word of God, should we reject it, he could turn away from us. He has enough lands [...], he can find enough people who could be converted through his Word.<sup>17</sup>

Francke had come to the harsh realisation that there was a consequence to the rebelliousness and evil in which he deemed the Church to be mired: God would withdraw the Gospel from its midst and turn to those regions which had not yet encountered Christianity. In a strange twist, it was a »dead« Church, which revelled in its worldly learning, and not a healthy, spiritually robust Church that would be the cause of missions.

Francke made this claim almost a decade before Ziegenbalg and Plütschau were sent out from his Foundations. Were we not aware that the Halle Foundations would become a centre for early Protestant missions, we might be prone to read these words preached in 1697 in a different light; one in which the small glimpses of a missional perspective could be simply explained as Francke's employment of harsh, hyperbolic language to shock his parishioners. From this perspective it might be surprising that thirteen years later Francke would go on to confirm this theological construction concerning missions in one of his introductions to the *Hallesche Berichte* published in 1710. He writes:

And in light of such knowledge [i.e. the advance of the gospel to the indigenous peoples of India], everyone is obliged not only to praise the Lord with a joyful heart, but also [...], since this is a day of salvation [...], to submit in all humility to honour and accept the Lord's Grace and to serve the Lord therein, that what Jesus foretold the Jews who had shunned his Grace and what thereafter befell them in full measure might not befall us; namely, that God's kingdom be taken from us and given to the heathens, who will yield his fruit.<sup>18</sup>

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17 Ibid., pp. 293f.

18 August Hermann FRANCKE, *Andere Continuation Des Berichts Derer Königl. Dänischen Missionarien in Ost-Indien/Von dem Merck ihres Amts/Und Bekehrung der Heyden daselbst*, Halle 1710, p. 75 [misprinted as 57], *Die Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle/Saale Digitale*

We find in these two quotes a direct connection between the Pietist view of the Church as a »dead institution« and the notion of the Gospel passing to a people beyond the West. The good news of Christ's atoning work would be taken from the »heathenish« German Christians and be offered to those who had yet to receive the knowledge of salvation, for God »has enough lands«. Francke's language concerning missions requires that any attempt to explain the rise of modern Protestant missions as the overflow of an eschatological »hope for better times« in Francke's reform plans must take into account that he believed the flourishing of the Gospel in non-European lands would (or could) occur at the expense of a »dead« Christianity in the West. Furthermore, as we consider the importance of Francke in the rise of the Halle mission work, we must also acknowledge that he did not dismiss education as a great evil and impediment to salvation outright, but rather sought to reform it, that it might serve as a tool for the Church.<sup>19</sup> The very thing that he saw as one of the roots of »atheism« and »heathenism« in the Church became the great *Werkzeug* for converting natives of other lands and establishing Protestantism. Out of the reform plan first conceived for the betterment of Europe grew plans for the reform of societies beyond the Continent. Missionaries took on the tasks of teaching, catechising, and book printing with this hope in mind.

### The Term »Heathen« in Francke's Pre-Contact Writings

As Francke was drawn into a global context, contact with cultures, groups and individuals of whom he may have only had a faint knowledge, let alone a direct interest in the role they might play in his plan for universal reform, affected his theology. Francke's theological language and shifts in word meanings after missionaries trained at his institutes made contact with the indigenous people of India provide fertile ground for exploring how contact zones influenced intra-European theological discussions. Francke had no direct contact with non-Europeans outside of working with the missionary reports he received from India, and consequently his »contact« was of an indirect nature. To speak of a »contact zone« in the context of Francke's life, we must recognise that the letters and reports he read transmitted in some degree the relational dynamics between the Halle missionaries and the Malabar people. The indirect contact zone in which Francke was active included

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Bibliothek, URL: <http://192.124.243.55/digbib/missionsberichte/teil01/cont002/start002.htm> (access date: September 2014).

19 BREUL, Franckes Konzept einer Generalreform, pp. 73–77.

several voices, faint and loud, which impacted how he communicated theological ideas from the pulpit and the classroom.

Specifically, his use of the term »heathen« in his preaching and writings held meanings that were stretched by the events, the communities, and the ministries that reverberated from a distant, unfamiliar region of the world. Up until Francke became involved with the *Hallesche Berichte*, he had been accustomed to using »heathen« primarily as a pejorative term in attacks on his theological opponents within the Church. In 1698 as he preached against the failures of Lutheran »teachers«, he openly accused them of heathenism.<sup>20</sup> Christian education, which Francke had once trusted, had not produced a Church of fruitful Christians, and thus he felt it fitting to use the pejorative title »heathen« for those pastors and professors who stood outside his notion of »true« Christianity. Francke can at times be seen employing the term in his writings and sermons to identify a religious belief system of a foreign people, but it is much more common in this pre-contact period to find Francke decrying the »heathen« (e.g. »unfaithful«) leaders and educators within the Church.<sup>21</sup> This use of »heathen« can be traced back to Luther's attack on the papacy and to those dutiful Lutheran theologians and pastors who were carried along in the reformer's wake.<sup>22</sup> In Francke we find, therefore, an example of a transition in the traditional appropriation of »heathen« in eighteenth-century theology.

In his early preaching, Francke used »heathenism« to denote the religious rivals of the monotheistic children of Abraham in the Old Testament. The main danger these »heathens« posed to the Israelites was their polytheistic form of idolatry. Their gods were carved from wood and chiselled into rocks; the heathens projected divinity onto the created world. The Israelites were admonished in the Law of Moses to worship the one God of their father Abraham, but as Francke noted, »heathens« tempted and turned God's people toward the worship of graven images.<sup>23</sup> These temptations led God's people away from right worship. The First Commandment, which warned against creating false gods, was neglected for the sake of a tangible, material form of security. Under »heathenism's« influence, the Israelites gave to creation the devotion due to the Creator.

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20 FRANCKE, Von dem Dienst untreuer Lehrer, p. 414.

21 The German word »Heiden« has traditionally been translated with the English words »heathen« and »pagan«. In context of early modern theology, each of these terms more often than not had a common reference to the »godless« state of individuals (e.g. individuals that lacked a saving knowledge of the Christian God). As it will be shown, Francke's use reflects this understanding.

22 Paul F. STUEHRENBURG, The »God-fearers« in Martin Luther's Translation of Acts, in: *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 20 (1989), p. 414.

23 August Hermann FRANCKE, Von Der äusseren Kirchen unter dem Bilde des alten Jerusalems, in: Erhard PESCHKE (ed.), *Predigten II*, Berlin 1989, p. 65.

Francke did not simply apply »heathenism« to those who tested the faith of the people of Israel. He also used similar language to describe those who opposed the progress of the early Church. The Roman authorities who persecuted the first Christians sought to hinder the Gospel. Their actions reflected a religious, »heathenish« orientation toward God. Like the Canaanites of the Old Testament, these Greeks and Romans primarily expressed their »heathenism« in idolatrous practices. Francke placed this type of »heathen« in the same rank as the Pharisees who persecuted Christ and the sixteenth-century papacy that had sought to bring down the »wild boar« Luther.<sup>24</sup> In Francke's own historical mindset, he was able to group this type of heathenism into the common triad of non-Christian religious peoples: »Jews, heathens and Turks [i.e. Muslims]«. <sup>25</sup> »Heathenism« found itself listed among these other religious systems primarily because »heathens« represented those who, like the »dead« teachers of the Church, led people away from »true« faith in Christ.<sup>26</sup>

Francke did, however, contrast such polytheistic practices with a higher level of religion found in the »heathenish philosophers« like Socrates and Plato, whose monotheistic leanings helped to explain the positive evaluation given them by theologians like Origen.<sup>27</sup> For Francke, such a form of »heathenism« expressed itself in a high form of morality. Ancient philosophers, some of whom were believed to have prepared the way for the Gospel in the West, promoted a form of life that Francke believed was qualitatively better than what would have been found in their respective polytheistic cultures. This moral »heathenism« of the philosophers, along with the »heathenism« that misled and endangered the Israelites, provided the basis for Francke's principal theological application of the label in his pre-contact sermons.

»Heathenism«, or being »heathenish«, was a term whose meaning Francke directed toward individual morality. For the most part, »heathenism« in Francke's theology explained a certain disposition that stood in contrast to right, pious action. The »true« Christian lived in a way that reflected the life of Christ. To act otherwise meant the individual had not personally realised the implications of the Gospel as it should be lived. Thus »heathenism« was primarily an ethical category in Francke's pre-contact sermons. Due to various factors – the foremost being a rejection of the true knowledge of God through faith in Christ – Francke believed »heathenism« exemplified a form of morality found in »unfaithful« Lutherans inside and outside the walls of academia. He held that those who did not know Christ *truly* could not be

24 Id., *Entdeckung der Bosheit*, in: Erhard PESCHKE (ed.), *Streitschriften*, Berlin 1981, p. 152.

25 Id., *Von Der äusseren Kirchen*, p. 47.

26 Thus in at least one sermon, Francke expands this frequently mentioned list to include the Socinians, Roman Catholics, and »various Sects«. FRANCKE, *Das Geheimnis der Bosheit* [*Entdeckung der Bosheit?* see above, n. 22], p. 503.

27 Id., *Gründliche und Gewissenhafte Verantwortung*, in: PESCHKE (ed.), *Streitschriften*, p. 291.

*truly* obedient, and therefore they had only a »natural morality« that was considered abhorrent within Pietist systems of thought.<sup>28</sup> Francke's application of »heathenism« to stories from the Old Testament and European antiquity reflected his concern that the Church was being misled by certain leaders. The label also embodied his caricature of people who he felt were entangled in a life of unbelief.

Therefore he employed the term to contrast godly and ungodly lifestyles within the Church. Specifically, he used »heathenism« to criticise and reject those around him whom he found to be living outside the moral boundaries expected of his Pietist reform plan. In a 1697 sermon on caring for the poor, he pointed a finger at Lutherans who had used the Protestant teaching of justification by faith to disregard the requirement to live a holy life. He argued that if Lutherans were to use the doctrine to claim that good works were not required of Christians then their faith »would be a more offensive religion than the heathens, Jews, and Turks. What could be more abhorrent than having a religion by which one need not lead a godly life and do good works?«.<sup>29</sup> Here Francke employed »heathenism« comparatively. Christians living impiously maintained a faith that fell below the strange religion of »heathens«. By using »heathenism« in such a derogatory way, Francke sought to dismiss his opponents, both learned and unlearned. Calling his fellow academics, who disproved of his theology and preaching, »heathens« allowed Francke to repudiate them and their arguments. For as Francke believed, his opponents practised a dramatically lower form of Christianity than was required by the very Scriptures they sought to uphold. Furthermore, by applying »heathen« to the lives of his congregants, Francke sought to instil guilt into them, as if to say, How dare you go about our streets living in a way unbefitting of our community?

### Francke's Reorienting of »Heathen« After Missionary Contact

Francke's theology had always carried with it an Augustinian emphasis on the corrupted state of humanity. He showed no reluctance in applying degrading terms like »worm« to anyone, including himself, who remained obstinate towards or ignorant of the salvation offered by Christ.<sup>30</sup> The young Francke's

28 Id., *Aufrichtige und gründliche Beantwortung*, in: PESCHKE (ed.), *Streitschriften*, p. 255; id., *Die höchstnötigste Kirchen- Hauß- und Hertzens-Reformation*, p. 296.

29 Id., *Die Pflicht gegen die Armen*, in: PESCHKE (ed.), *Predigten I*, p. 210.

30 Id., *Die sechzehente Predigt über die Lehre vom H. Abendmahl*, in: Id., *Catechismus-Predigten*, Halle 1726, p. 587; Gary R. SATTLER, *Nobler than the Angels, Lower than a Worm. The Pietist View of the Individual in the Writings of Heinrich Müller and August Hermann Francke*, New York 1989, pp. 31–41.



own entrapment in what he believed to be the snares of an education that led him away from »true« faith embodied this spiritual corruption. Francke's disposition towards viewing the human condition in this way caused him often to speak bluntly about the spiritual ignorance of his unconverted congregants. Without proper faith in Christ, no one could be confident of truly knowing God, especially those he considered to be »heathen« Christians. As mentioned above, Francke mainly related spiritual ignorance to what he called a »heathenish« morality, but a change in the way Francke applied »heathenism« can be seen after Plütschau and Ziegenbalg reported back from India with their experiences. In a post-contact Halle, Francke begins to reorient the term. No longer is »heathenism« broadly applied to »worldly« German Christians who expressed a less than satisfactory lifestyle. These were those in Francke's midst, whom he claimed were Christian in name only (*Scheinchristen*). Instead, Francke began using »heathen« with reference to groups of people who lacked salvific knowledge in two specific spheres.

First, Francke notes that »heathens« lacked knowledge of God as Father. In a 1720 sermon on the Seventh Commandment (which forbids stealing), he claimed the »heathen« fear of starvation was directly related to an ignorance of their »Heavenly Father.«<sup>31</sup> And thus in an introduction to the *Hallesche Berichte*, he praised the evangelising and caregiving work of the missionaries. They were to express a love to those around them in a way that revealed the fatherly care of God. Thus no area of mission work that communicated this specific knowledge of God was to be neglected, be it education, caring for the sick or printing translated devotional literature.<sup>32</sup>

Secondly, Francke began to speak of this »heathenish« ignorance in relation to Christian rebirth. Not only did »heathens« lack knowledge of God as Father, but they also had no » outward knowledge of Christ.«<sup>33</sup> In his earlier sermons and writings, he had used the term »heathen« primarily to identify those who had rejected the knowledge of God and lacked an identifiably Christian morality, but in Francke's later preaching he applied the term to a particular group that was different from those he had previously disparaged as »heathens«. This new group had not ensnared themselves in a spiritual ignorance which arose from rejecting the Christian faith that was seemingly inseparable from their culture, but rather they had yet to be exposed to the

31 August Hermann FRANCKE, Die siebente Predigt über das siebente Gebot, in: PESCHKE (ed.), Predigten II, p. 414.

32 Id., Vorrede, in: Dreyzehende Continuation des Berichts Der Königlichen Dänischen Missionarien/bestehend Theils in einem Tage-Register [...], Halle 1719, pp. A2<sup>r</sup>-A3<sup>v</sup>, Die Franckeschen Stiftungen zu Halle / Saale Digitale Bibliothek, URL: <http://192.124.243.55/digbib/missionsberichte/teil01/cont002/start002.htm> (access date: September 2014).

33 Id., Die Erkenntniß Christi/als der Grund alles wahren Christlichen Sieges und Triumphs, in: PESCHKE (ed.), Predigten II, p. 192.



Gospel. They had not fallen into spiritual ignorance by rejecting the faith of their fathers. This new group of people lived in an ignorance that came from following their familial traditions. These »heathens« required the same type of conversion that the corrupt Lutheran leadership required. Both people groups were in want of true salvation. One was »heathenish« for rejecting the true gospel, the other for having not yet heard it. Were the »heathens« who came into contact with the Halle missionaries to convert to Christianity, they would become »true« Christians while Francke's wayward parishioners would remain trapped in their »heathenism«. This label, which Francke had used to decry the impiety of European Lutherans, was now reoriented to express a hope in the salvation of peoples that had not yet been exposed to Christianity.

This reorientation of »heathen« in relation to Francke's doctrine of rebirth begins to make its way into his biblical theology. In a 1711 Epiphany sermon, Francke uses the example of the »heathens« from the East as a pattern for seeking and finding Jesus.<sup>34</sup> He was now using the term in a positive manner. »Heathens« no longer represented a warning against immorality, but rather they patterned a call to convert. Francke's listeners were to seek after Christ according to the example set forth by these »heathens« from the East. Interestingly, Francke claimed that these Magi had left their families – their parents, brothers and sisters – in order to find and follow Christ.<sup>35</sup> Francke draws on imagery from Biblical passages predominantly used to encourage Christian discipleship in order to explain the disposition of the Magi. Returning to the text five years later, he exhorted his parishioners to be like the »heathens« from the East, for »we too come from the heathens«.<sup>36</sup> The heathens, who two decades previously had served Francke as an example of how the Lutheran Church was not to act, had become the very model of the Christian life.

A shift in Francke's theological language coincides with the ongoing revisions he made to his plan for universal social reform, posthumously entitled *Der Große Aufsatz*. Francke originally wrote the three-part document in 1704, revising it three times between 1709 and 1711.<sup>37</sup> It reflects an expansion of Francke's earlier, rudimentary attempts at putting down in writing a Pietist-oriented plan for bettering the civil and ecclesiastical spheres of society. To various degrees, he had addressed such a reform in his 1701 *Die Fußstapffen Des noch lebenden [...] GOTTES*, an account of the establishment and growth of his institutes, and in his posthumously published *Projekt zu*

34 Id., *Wie die Weisen aus Morgenland den Herrn Jesum gesucht und gefunden*, AFSt/H M 4, pp. 295–395.

35 Ibid., pp. 316–317.

36 Id., *Aufmutterung zur freudigen Nachfolge der Erstlinge aus den Heyden [...]*, Halle 1717, p. 5.

37 Id., *Der Große Aufsatz*, p. 9.

*einem Seminario universali*.<sup>38</sup> As Wolfgang Breul has shown, Francke intended this reform to take place through education, and thus Francke's efforts corresponded in part to the Lutheran reforming narrative that sought to better the spiritual condition of German society.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, Francke evidenced an expectation in these early reform writings that such an endeavour would not be limited to German-speaking peoples or Europe. As early as 1701, he claimed that out of such a universal reform »the true knowledge of God would be planted in the whole world.«<sup>40</sup> Yet his revisions of the 1704 reform plan reveal that it took time for Francke to realise the global implications of his efforts. By 1716, a decade after missionaries were sent to India, Francke had made additions to *Der Große Aufsatz* that reflect the influence contact between missionaries and the indigenous peoples in India had on his thought. Here, too, we find the slightest shift in language, which took into account the »heathens« of foreign lands.

We see this shift in Francke's wording in the first chapter of the second section of *Der Große Aufsatz*, which Francke entitled »Concerning the depraved condition in which up until this day not only the heathens and other peoples, but also the so-called Christians find themselves«.<sup>41</sup> The title expresses the two meanings of »heathen« that Francke held in tension, and as would be expected, the chapter focuses entirely on the state of the German people. He complains against the state of the civil and religious authorities and against the unsuitable education endured by the young. Nevertheless, in the years between the first writing of the reform plan and the later rewrites, two endeavours grew in importance for Francke's institutes: the work of filling vacant military chaplaincies with Halle-trained pastors and the work of educating and converting the indigenous peoples of India.<sup>42</sup> Both of these projects found their way into his revisions. Mirroring the influence of the contact zone on Francke's thought, he made minor additions to the text. Where in 1704 Francke had spoken of a reform that would make teachers – as Christ had demanded of his Apostles – the »salt of the earth«, in 1716 Francke added »light of the world.«<sup>43</sup> Francke would make it clear in the later

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38 Id., *Die Fußstampffen Des noch lebenden und waltenden liebeichen und getreuen GOTTES*, Halle 1701; id., *Project zu einem Seminario universali*, in: Erhard PESCHKE (ed.), *Werke in Auswahl*, Berlin 1969, pp. 108–115. Podczek also mentions another early example of Francke's reform plan entitled, »Project wie die, zu Glaucha an Halle, zur Besserung in allen Ständen, fundierte Anstalten unter dem Seegen Gottes zu erweitern, und zu ihrem rechten Endzweck aus zu führen«; cf. FRANCKE, *Der Große Aufsatz*, p. 24.

39 BREUL, *Franckes Konzept einer Generalreform*, pp. 73–77.

40 FRANCKE, *Seminario universali*, p. 110.

41 Id., *Der Große Aufsatz*, p. 70.

42 Benjamin MARSCHKE, *Absolutely Pietist. Patronage, Factionalism, and State-Building in the Early Eighteen-Century Prussian Army Chaplaincy*, Tübingen 2005.

43 FRANCKE, *Der Große Aufsatz*, p. 75.

revision that such an improvement of education was to be for the benefit of »all people«. <sup>44</sup> At one point Francke refers to the wretched state of the Jewish people at the time of Christ as »sheep without a shepherd.« <sup>45</sup> To such »poor and unknowing« people Christ had sent his Apostles. In his later revision, Francke not only describes the work of the Apostles among the Jews in more detail, claiming they were sent to bring them to »repentance and faith by preaching God's Kingdom«, but he also states that they went out »among the whole world« to bring about a »necessary betterment«. <sup>46</sup> In these examples of Francke's later revisions to his reform plan we find the more inclusive language Francke began to use in his sermons delivered after the missionaries had begun sending their reports back to Halle.

## Conclusion

It is, therefore, possible to trace a post-contact shift in the meaning of »heathen« in Francke's preaching and writing. As Plütschau and Ziegenbalg began sending their missionary reports back to the institutes, Francke displayed a shift in his theological language. He had been in the habit of employing »heathen« as a pejorative term against those Lutherans who had supposedly led the people of God astray and encouraged a life unbefitting the faith they claimed to hold. These »heathens« had neglected the health of the Church in pursuit of academic renown and had fallen into spiritual destitution. They had chosen a »heathenish« form of knowledge over the knowledge of God. It was a mistake Francke acknowledged he had made and one from which he was rescued through his conversion. After studying the missionary reports, however, Francke's theological language began to reflect a more generous understanding of the global community in which he was now engaged. The »heathen« was represented as a group of people that still possessed the hope of converting to a »true« faith in Christ. Whereas the unregenerate, »heathenish« Lutheran had rejected the Gospel, the »heathen« from afar could enter into a saving relationship with God.

This brings us to a few concluding points. First, the early Pietist doctrines of human sinfulness and rebirth were of such a dramatic sort that they did not take ethnicity into account. All people, regardless of region, were fallen, and thus all people were in need of rebirth. The racism of later colonial projects does not appear to be part of the early Pietist narrative of conversion. Like the poor beggar on the streets of Glaucha, should the Malabar tradesman

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

convert to Christ, he would hold the same spiritual status as a member of the German nobility.<sup>47</sup> This status also had real-world implications: Christians were to love and care for their neighbours. This also helps explain the relatively uncomplicated shift Francke made in his application of the term »heathen«. It was used to expose spiritual ignorance and not ethnic inferiority. Thus its meaning could be stretched according to context. Secondly, considering contact zones and their influence broadens the lines by which we trace theological development. The indirect contact zones that arise in those European contexts, where such activities as editing missionary reports place individuals in dialogue with the »echoes« of the indigenous agent, are fertile grounds for studying the impact such global engagements had on early modern Continental religious thought. This study is limited to only a handful of examples offered by Francke and can only aim to encourage further research into whether, and how, language and concepts are reoriented in the indirect contact zone. Francke found himself in the midst of such a zone, in which he saw the partial fulfilment of his reform plan: cultivating »temples in the hearts of heathens«.

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47 Id., *Die Lehre unsers Herrn Jesu Christi von der Wiedergeburt*, in: PESCHKE (ed.), *Predigten I*, p. 201.

Michael Sievernich

## Comparing Ancient and Native Customs

Joseph-François Lafitau and the »sauvages américains«

The contact zones of early modern times were dominated by the political expansion of European powers and by religious missions. In the mission enterprise of that time, the Society of Jesus played a primary role in the Americas and in Asian countries. This new religious order was founded in the early sixteenth century by Ignatius of Loyola and worked in the fields of pastoral work, of education in Europe and of mission worldwide.<sup>1</sup> The early Jesuits and other religious orders (Dominicans and Franciscans) created worldwide networks by means of correspondence and publications about foreign peoples and cultures. In categorising these sources, one can distinguish between narrative and systematic ones.

Among the more narrative sources one can find two famous collections: The *Jesuit relations* of the seventeenth century are reports about the missions in »New France« (letters, reports, documents, ethnographic descriptions and missionary questions), published in France. In the eighteenth century, the famous multivolume *Welt-Bott* (world messenger), edited by Joseph Stöcklein in Vienna, is a collection of letters from all over the world arranged chronologically and regionally. Translated into German, the missionary letters were intended to be distributed in German-speaking countries.

The second type includes systematic descriptions of nature (geography, weather, flora and fauna) and culture (language, material culture, political constitution, customs, history, religion) of a country. Many missionaries wrote such descriptions to describe the »new worlds« of America and Asia to Europeans and to their fellow missionaries. In Spanish America this literary genre was called *Historia natural y moral*.<sup>2</sup> Some of these descriptions were written and illustrated with the participation of Indians (Bernardino de Sahagún) or written from an indigenous perspective (Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala).

The work we are concerned with here belongs to this systematic tradition. Its author was the French missionary and writer Joseph-François Lafitau

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1 John W. O'MALLEY, *The First Jesuits*, Cambridge, MA 1993.

2 Walter MIGNOLO, *Cartas, crónicas y relaciones del descubrimiento y la conquista*, in: Luis Iñigo MADRIGAL (ed.), *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana*, tom. I *Época colonial*, Madrid 1982, pp. 57–116.

(1681–1746), who was active at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the French colony of Nouvelle France in modern-day Canada.<sup>3</sup> His monumental work, *Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps* (*Customs of the American Indians compared with the customs of primitive times*), was published in 1724 in two quarto volumes of over 1,000 pages each.<sup>4</sup> The complete work was translated into German two decades later, and into English in the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> What is most interesting about this ethnographic work is the empirical approach to fieldwork, its comparative method, applied to indigenous and antique cultures, its development of anthropological constants across time and its observations about cultural spaces and their inclusion within a larger human space.

### 1. A Biography in Context

Who was Joseph-François Lafitau and what were the influences on his life and work? Lafitau was born in 1681 as the son of a banker and wine merchant in Bordeaux. At the age of 15, he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus and completed the standard course of studies at the time in the humanities, philosophy and theology in Pau, in Poitiers, at the college of La Flèche; and in Paris at the Collège Louis-le-Grand. This course of study was interrupted by several years of teaching. After this rigorous training, Lafitau was ordained a priest and in 1712 was sent, at his own request, to the Canadian missions. There he spent six years among the Iroquois, or to be more exact, among the Mohawk on the southern shore of the St. Lawrence River across from present-day Montreal. After his return to France in 1717, he worked as mission procurator and was responsible for the supply and financing of overseas

3 Christian F. FEEST, Art. Joseph-François Lafitau, in: Id./Karl-Heinz KOHL, Hauptwerke der Ethnologie, Stuttgart 2001, pp. 202–207; R. TOUPIN, Art. Lafitau, Joseph-François, in: Diccionario histórico de la Compañía de Jesús biográfico-temático, Charles E. O'NEIL/Joaquín M.<sup>a</sup> DOMÍNGUEZ (eds.), vol. III, Roma/Madrid 2001, pp. 2258f.; L. NORMAND, Art. Lafitau, Joseph-François, in: Dictionnaire de biographie Française, vol. 19, J.-P. LOBIES (ed.), Paris 2001, p. 170.

4 Joseph-François LAFITAU, *Mœurs des sauvages américains, comparées au mœurs des premiers temps*. Ouvrage enrichi de figures en taille-douce, 2 vols., Paris 1724.

5 German: Die Sitten der amerikanischen Wilden im Vergleich zu den Sitten der Frühzeit, hg. und komm. von Helmut Reim, Weinheim 1987 (Reprint of the Edition: Allgemeine Geschichte der Länder und Völker von America. Erster Teil. Nebst einer Vorrede Siegmund Jacob Baumgartens, Halle 1752 (the original German translation gives neither the author nor the title of the work); English: Customs of the American Indians compared with the Customs of Primitive Times, 2 vol., edited and translated by William Nelson FENTON and Elizabeth L. MOORE, Toronto 1974 (accessible online). I refer to the English edition by *Customs*, page number. [http://link.library.utoronto.ca/champlain/item\\_record.cfm?ldno=9\\_96848&lang=eng&query=lafitau&searchtype=Fulltext&startrow=1&Limit=All](http://link.library.utoronto.ca/champlain/item_record.cfm?ldno=9_96848&lang=eng&query=lafitau&searchtype=Fulltext&startrow=1&Limit=All) (access date: 14 October 2014).

missions. It was during this period that he wrote his magnum opus, for which he had already collected information in Canada. He died in Bordeaux in 1746.

Before turning to the text, I would like to consider the cultural and historical context that shaped Lafitau. European high culture at the time was influenced by the Catholic Church and the early Enlightenment of the Age of Reason. Initially, Lafitau was shaped by his education in colleges of the Society of Jesus, in which he spent more than one and a half decades. This training was characterised by the study of the liberal arts, ancient languages, and the writings of the classical authors as well as of geography, history and science. In addition, the extended course of study or *Ratio Studiorum* (1599) included Aristotelian philosophy and Thomistic theology as well as spiritual and social practice.<sup>6</sup> This humanistic education implied an openness both to the reception of ancient authors as well as to the mission reports coming from Asia and America at the time (*Lettres édifiantes, Welt-Bott*).

As a contemporary of the early French Enlightenment, Lafitau's judgment was sharpened by that movement's emphasis on criticism. For instance, he viewed religion as a fundamental and basic constant of human culture, and departed from the demonological interpretation of religion, meaning an interpretation of »false religions« as influenced by the Devil, which had been held since the Church Fathers. A conflict among the faculties erupted on the subject of religion at the time, in which Lafitau was clearly involved. But despite his progressive approach to the subject, his views on religion were criticised by leading Enlightenment figures. In a sense, Lafitau was ahead of Diderot and d'Alembert. Like them, he interpreted religion in a »modern« way, but at the same time and in opposition to the proponents of the Enlightenment, he acknowledged the religions of non-European peoples like the Indians. Voltaire ridiculed Lafitau's empirical approach,<sup>7</sup> and Diderot and d'Alembert, in an article on the »sauvages« (savages) in their multi-volume *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (1751–1780), make the surprising claim that native Americans lived »without law, polity and religion« (sans loix, sans police, sans religion). In fact, they are described in barbaric terms: »A large part of America was populated by savages (sauvages), most of whom were cruel (feroces) and fed on human flesh.« Accompanying this negative image is a starkly idealised construct, namely the idea of the »noble savage«, who cast off every yoke, aspiring only

6 Miquel BATLLORI, Der Beitrag der *Ratio studiorum* für die Bildung des modernen katholischen Bewußtseins, in: Michael SIEVERNICH/Günter SWITEK (eds.), Ignatianisch. Eigenart und Methode der Gesellschaft Jesu, Freiburg 1990, pp. 314–322.

7 VOLTAIRE, Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations (Œuvres complètes 12), Paris 1831, pp. 29–32 (Amérique).



to »natural liberty« (*liberté naturelle*). In either case, whether the dominant ideological construct is derogatory or idealised, the *Encyclopédie* claims that »savages« have no religious practices.<sup>8</sup>

Lafitau addresses and seeks to clarify these two widespread ideological constructs in his work. He was able to do so because of his experience of living among male and female »savages« (German: *Wilde*). Lafitau did not travel to the Americas as an ethnologist to do field research, but he rather did so as a Christian missionary who wanted to understand the world of the Indians from the inside and who studied that world as an observer-participant. He was active in the late phase of the French Jesuits' mission project in Canada.

At the time, the boundaries of the mission of New France ran from the St. Lawrence River to the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River basin. Men and women religious, including Franciscans, Jesuits and Ursulines were brought in to Christianise the region. They worked under very difficult conditions: in the midst of wars between the colonial powers of France and England, and in the middle of inter-ethnic conflicts between the indigenous peoples. The native tribes included the Montagnais and Wendat (Huron), and the Algonquian and Iroquois, who settled in the northeastern woodlands. These indigenous peoples traditionally lived by hunting, fishing and agriculture (beans, corn); later, during the colonial period, fur trading became an additional source of income.<sup>9</sup>

The Canadian mission to the sedentary Huron people had come to a tragic end through war (1650), in which missionaries, such as Jean de Brébeuf, a great authority on the culture and language of the Wendat, were among those killed. Missionary work later shifted to the east, to the nomadic tribes of the Algonquian and the Iroquois Confederacy (Mohawk, Oneida, Onodaga, Cayuga and Seneca).<sup>10</sup> The Canadian mission project of the Jesuits is well documented in the above-mentioned *Jesuit Relations*, a collection of 73 volumes of original sources and an enormous repository of material for interdisciplinary research.<sup>11</sup>

In the early modern period, the Jesuit missionaries were active in numerous initiatives worldwide. These missions were all connected with each other through a common correspondence with Rome, forming a network of communication characterised by centralised management and administration,

8 Denis DIDEROT/Jean Baptist le Rond D'ALEMBERT (eds.), *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 14, Neufchastel 1765, p. 729 [Art. Sauvages].

9 Wolfgang REINHARD, *Geschichte der europäischen Expansion*, vol. 2: *Die Neue Welt*, Stuttgart 1985, pp. 153–167.

10 Franz-Joseph POST, *Schamanen und Missionare. Katholische Mission und indigene Spiritualität in Nouvelle-France*, Münster 1997.

11 Reuben Gold THWAITES (ed.), *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents. Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France 1610–1791*, 73 vol., Cleveland 1896–1901, Reprint New York 1959.



mutual exchange and spiritual edification. In the Americas (running from north to south) mission projects existed in Canada and Maryland, California and Mexico; there were, in addition, missions on the Orinoco and in the Amazon, in Brazil and in the Andean region (Peru), in Paraguay (*Reductions*), in Chile and on the islands of Chiloe.<sup>12</sup> In Asia the primary Missions were in South and North India, in Japan and China, in Vietnam and Siam (Thailand), in the Philippines and the Mariana Islands.<sup>13</sup> These missionary enterprises were principally run by Europeans and members of religious orders, and they were primarily financed through the patronage of the crowns of Spain and Portugal. A worldwide concept of mission based on similar spiritual foundations, functioning according to similar ecclesiastical regulations, under similar political conditions thus developed. While varying according to the cultural context, as it did in the case of the mission to New France, this concept was nonetheless relatively stable.<sup>14</sup>

## 2. A Comparison of Customs

In the introduction to *Mœurs sauvages américains* Lafitau explains his intention and plan. He is motivated to write the book because of the paucity or the merely speculative character of the information that was available on the indigenous peoples of Canada. He contrasts this with his experience in the field, of living for several years »among the savages«, an experience supplemented by the reports of other experienced missionaries. Lafitau strongly criticises the idea that native indigenous peoples lived together without laws, community or religion, such that they could hardly be distinguished »from the unreasoning cattle«. Against this view, he wants to show »that no nation, be it ever so wild, is without religion and certain customs«.<sup>15</sup> In order to respond to the existing prejudices about the native American peoples, he turns to the method of comparison and thus can be considered as one of the founders of »comparative« ethnology.<sup>16</sup>

12 Cf. Peter Claus HARTMANN, *Der Jesuitenstaat in Paraguay 1609–1768*, Weissenhorn 1994; cf. also Stefan RINKE, *A State Within a State? The »Jesuit State in Paraguay« and Eurocentric Constructions of Space*, in this volume, pp. 143–153.

13 Michael SIEVERNICH, *Die christliche Mission. Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Darmstadt 2009, pp. 71–91; Horst GRÜNDER, *Welteroberung und Christentum. Ein Handbuch zur Geschichte der Neuzeit*, Gütersloh 1992; Philippe LÉCRIVAIN, *Pour un plus grand gloire de Dieu. Les missions jésuites*, Paris 2005.

14 Dominique DESLANDRES, *Exemplo aequae ut verbo. The French Jesuits' Missionary World*, in: John W. O'MALLEY et al. (eds.), *The Jesuits. Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts 1540–1773*, Toronto 1999, pp. 258–273.

15 LAFITAU, *Customs*, pp. 3f.

16 Anthony PAGDEN, *The Fall of Natural Man. The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, Cambridge 1982, p. 199.

He compares the customs of the Indians in Canada at that time – the Algonquian, the Huron and the Iroquois – and the Indian peoples in Mexico and the Caribbean, Brazil and Peru with the customs of ancient peoples as reported by authors such as Herodotus, Xenophon, Strabo and Pliny.<sup>17</sup> Lafitau deliberately chooses these cultures to show that they are comparable, in accordance with his anthropological conviction of the equality of all peoples. In the terminology of modern ethnography, he offers a »thick description« that addresses the semiotic issue of understanding and interpreting cultures. The American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926–2006) explains the concept of »thick description« as follows: »Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical.«<sup>18</sup>

According to Lafitau, the symbol systems of these two cultures are mutually illuminating and enlightening. He writes,

I have not limited myself to learning the characteristics of the Indians and informing myself about their customs and practices. I have sought in these practices and customs, vestiges of the most remote antiquity. I have read carefully [the works] of the earliest writers who treated the customs, laws and usages of the peoples of whom they had some knowledge. I have made a comparison of these customs with each other. I confess, that, if the ancient authors have given me information on which to base happy conjectures about the Indians, the customs of the Indians have given me information on the basis of which I can understand more easily and explain more readily more things in the ancient authors.<sup>19</sup>

In both cases Lafitau speaks in the French text of the »light« (*lumière*), with which the ancient authors and the Indian customs mutually illuminate each other. Contemporary readers would have probably associated the term »light« with the »Enlightenment« (*les lumières*), except that the light cast here is one by the ancient writers on the customs of the savages.

To make such a comparison required Lafitau to have knowledge of and access to the works of these ancient writers, but it also presupposed his familiarity with contemporary authors like José de Acosta, Garcilaso de la Vega, Grotius, Thévet and the oral tradition of similar eyewitnesses. Because of this fund of knowledge, Lafitau was able to compare more than 100 ancient and

17 Kaspar KÄLIN, *Indianer und Urvölker*, Fribourg 1943.

18 Clifford GEERTZ, *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays*, New York 2000, p. 5.

19 LAFITAU, *Customs*, p. 27.

modern authors whose writings represent their respective cultural webs. The outline of this magnificent work illustrates its systematic character, which compiles the central anthropological constants of human cultures. Lafitau thereby developed a kind of global cultural semiotics, which develops the basic categories of humanity across all the variability of cultural phenomena. These categories are:

- categories of the origin and character of the peoples;
- categories of religion (symbolic complexes such as fire, the cross and initiation rituals);
- categories of internal social organisation: government, marriage, education, the material cultures of men and women;
- categories of external relations (war, peace and trade);
- categories of exchange with nature, such as foraging (hunting and fishing);
- categories of leisure (games and sports);
- categories of natural risks of disease (types, remedies) and death (funeral, mourning);
- categories of communication (language and languages).

More precisely defined, the ten anthropological constants are: religion, government, reproduction, material culture, war and peace, food, leisure, sickness, death and language. Lafitau's achievement consists not only in comparison but also in an abstraction of categories and symbols. He thereby developed a functional semiotics. With respect to religion, he was less interested in the question of truth (*religio vera* vs. *religio falsa*) than in the common symbols, rituals, interpretations common to religions, notwithstanding their conflicting truth claims.<sup>20</sup> Life in the contact zone familiarised him with foreign realities and allowed him to abstract from concrete details in order to find categories for comparison. Consequently, the question of truth diminishes in importance.

On the basis of our current knowledge, many details of Lafitau's description of both antiquity and of Native American culture at the time could certainly be improved upon. But in the judgment of one modern ethnologist:

The degree to which the picture Lafitau offers of Indian social structures and ways of life in the *Mœurs des sauvages américains* corresponds to reality is something we can only measure on the basis of the knowledge we have from modern ethnology.<sup>21</sup>

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20 Carl F. STARKLOFF, Common Testimony. Ethnology and Theology in the *Customs* of Joseph Lafitau, St. Louis, MO 2002.

21 Karl-Heinz KOHL, Entzauberter Blick. Das Bild vom Guten Wilden und die Erfahrung der Zivilisation, Frankfurt 1986, p. 93.

### 3. Iconography at the Time

Lafitau's anthropological discourse is not only verbal but also pictorial. This is evident from the 41 illustrations spread across almost every one of the book's chapters. Text and illustrations mutually illuminate and interpret each other, such that one can speak of a kind of »iconic text«. This linguistic and pictorial »text« can only be read, seen and interpreted as a whole.

The first figure in the text is a map of the Americas, in which the regions and major river systems (the Mississippi, the Amazon, the River Plate) are recognisable. And the »savages« populating these areas do not remain anonymous, but are referred to by name. Through this *compositio loci* the space and the agents in this space are designated, like on a stage, and the drama can thus begin. This human drama is one in which the anthropological constants from birth to death are played out on the historical stage, bringing all the key moments of culture into a synthesis.<sup>22</sup>

The engravings (see the appendix to this article) can be sorted according to various criteria, but the following categorisation seems to be a plausible one:

There are images from the religious world of symbols compared from a cross-cultural perspective such as the symbols of the sun, fire, sacrifice, the serpent, the fertile virgin, initiations and the cross; examples are:

- Engraving XVI. Crosses in religious history
- Engraving XIII. Eclipse of the sun and Revelation of John

On the other hand, there are engravings depicting the activities of the American Indians and drawing upon scenes or activities from daily life, for example:

- Engraving XXII. Men's activities: branding and tattooing
- Engraving XXIII. Women's activities: food preparation

With regard to men and women, Lafitau reaches the judgment: »Few men are without flaws, and a good woman is as rare a domestic fixture in America as in Europe.«<sup>23</sup>

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22 Adrien PASCHOU, De la représentation de l'origine à la défense de la foi. L'usage de gravures dans les Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps (1724), in: Edith FLAMARION (ed.), La chair et le verbe. Les jésuites de France au XVIIIe siècle et l'image, Paris 2008, pp. 75–89; Claude REICHLER, La cité sauvage. La figure du cercle dans les images des *Mœurs des sauvages américains* de Lafitau, in: Etudes de lettres 1–2 (1995), pp. 59–79.

23 LAFITAU, Customs, p. 259.

- Engraving XLI. Festival of the dead

Through the use of visual images, Lafitau provides an illuminating juxtaposition: the lifeworld of the Indians is compared with other cultures and thereby situated within a single cultural and religious history and human space. Here identity and alterity no longer constitute alternatives, but the variety and diversity of cultural and religious practices unfold within the context of a single humanity. Accordingly, Native Americans are no more »savage« than the ancient savages were, but instead are understood as cultural and communicative beings. They are neither barbarians, to be paraded in front of civilised society as a proof of its superiority, nor idealised as noble or good savages, who serve as a cautionary tale for our »civilised« society. Rather, Lafitau's anthropology is a realistic one in which native peoples have physical and mental faculties like everyone else, with strengths and weaknesses, virtues and vices. The picture that emerges, in short, is that of the »civilised savage« (*sauvage civilisé*).<sup>24</sup>

In the context of their missionary work, Christian missions were continually confronted with the question of the »Other«, who was viewed as culturally »barbarian« and religiously »heathen«. Were these differences in the perception of the »Other« »essential« and immutable or rather »historical«, »gradual« and hence subject to change? How should people possessing different languages, cultures and religions be treated? Clearly, understanding the »Other« required learning their culture, language and religion. This missionary impulse led to numerous cultural contacts and discourses about the cultures, languages and religions.<sup>25</sup> And within this missionary context, there emerged a comparative version of ethnography, which is exemplified in Lafitau's work. This approach is present in other works of the period, but Lafitau's *Sauvages américains* creates a new textual and iconic ethnographic discourse. This is an achievement that amounts to nothing less than the emergence of »a new way of seeing and testifying to the existence of the Other«. <sup>26</sup> Contact zones could create a space for encounters between cultures, taking seriously a Christian anthropology based on the regulative ideas of the dignity and equality of all human beings. Yet the encounters between indigenous and European cultures in the contact zones are not always regarded so

24 Georges TISSOT, Jean-François [sic] Lafitau: Figures anthropologiques, in: *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 4 (1994), pp. 93–107, at p. 102.

25 Claude BLANCKAERT (ed.), *Naissance de l'ethnologie? Anthropologie et mission en Amérique, Vve–XVIIIe siècle*, Paris 1984.

26 Andreas MOTSCH, *Lafitau et l'émergence du discours ethnographique*. Sillery (Québec) / Paris 2001, p. 6: »d'une nouvelle manière de voir et de dire l'existence de l'autre«.

favourably. Critical interpretations of contact with the missionaries emphasise the negative consequences of cultural change, causing indigenous peoples to lose their traditional identities to a certain extent.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4. The Frontispiece as Hermeneutical Key

For gaining access to Lafitau's work one has only to look at the frontispiece. It depicts a woman seated and writing in an enclosed room surrounded by a mess of fragments from different cultures represented by their respective symbols: ancient culture is represented by Artemis; American culture is represented by a turtle, and contemporary European culture is represented by a globe, books and maps. Two geniuses are holding American Indian peace pipes (*calumet*) the ancient staff of Hermes (*caduceus*), and Iroquois and Oriental hand rattles (*sistrum*). At the table, a winged male figure with a scythe points at a picture behind his back.

When we follow his hand and look at the picture to which he is pointing, we notice that it is actually a picture within the picture, a mural, depicting a »spiritual vision«. It shows the »first origin of man« represented by two pairs of figures: on the one hand, Adam and Eve, separated by the tree of knowledge and the serpent in the tree. The other pair of figures depicts the risen Christ with the woman of the Apocalypse,<sup>28</sup> and between these two is the altar with a monstrance and a radiant triangle, symbolising the Trinity.

The woman writer and the reaper exchange glances, and their instruments, the pen and the scythe, approach each other asymptotically, towards the same goal. According to Certeau, the picture can be understood on three levels: as an assemblage of cultural relics, in terms of the technique of comparison (*genii*), and in terms of the woman writer or scribe who »weaves« together the creative texts (*Genitrix*).<sup>29</sup> Most of the figures in the picture are female, a clear indication of the important role of women in the matrilineal culture of the Iroquois, which Lafitau exaggeratedly described as a »gynecocracy«, a culture in which men were assigned economically more marginal roles (construction, painting, war). In any case, the woman scribe is the creative figure, even in her role of »weaving« texts, while the dominant male figure is assigned a destructive role (the reaper).

27 James P. RONDA, »We are well as we are«. An Indian Critique of Seventeenth-Century Christian Missions, in: William and Mary Quarterly 34 (1977), pp. 66–82.

28 »And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.« (Rev 12,1).

29 Michel de CERTEAU, Writing vs. Time: History and Anthropology in the works of Lafitau, in: Yale French Studies 59 (1980), pp. 37–64, at pp. 43–52.

Who is the winged Grim Reaper? He represents time (a masculine noun in the Romance languages: *le temps*) or the period depicted in the mysterious vision which is played out behind his back, and which brings oblivion and destruction in its wake. In contrast, the woman writer weaves her texts with a view to the original vision, stitching together the fragments of time and writing down their meaning. She does what Lafitau, the author, intends to accomplish with his work. Of course, the curtain may fall on this scene at any time, hiding from view the protological and eschatological drama, leaving the writer at the mercy of chronological time, to continue without the inspiration of this visionary image.

The Greek language has two concepts of time: *chronos*, linear time that passes inexorably, and *kairos*, the appropriate time, or the right moment. In ancient times, Kairos was personified as a winged youth and worshiped at Olympia. In the Bible, *kairos* is when »the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.«<sup>30</sup> In any case, this allegory of time makes the reader of this work into an accomplice to the writer and thus raises the question of whether they can let themselves be caught up in the woof and warp of the texts she weaves.

Lafitau's *Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps* is a systematic analysis of the Amerindian cultures in various contact zones of both Americas. This work represents an ideal prism through which to view the contact zones and the encounters made possible by the Jesuit missionary enterprise in Nouvelle France in early modern times. The comparison between native Indian customs, particularly of the Huron, and the customs of ancient European cultures shows clearly the anthropological constants of both cultural systems. The mission itself, though widely affected by the colonial context, shaped special contact zones based on human cohabitation, interaction and inter-religious encounters. Undoubtedly, Lafitau was one of the missionary agents of change by his very presence, but he probably did more to change the worldview of Europeans with his book. Giving his fellow Europeans a deeper knowledge of the Amerindian world, he helped to overcome ethnocentrism and the ideological constructs of the »noble savage« and the »barbarian savage«.

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30 καὶ λέγων ὅτι πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ (Mk 1,15). Cf. Hans Christoph HAHN/Wolfgang KRAUS, Art. Zeit/Ewigkeit, Kairos/chrónos, in: Lothar COENEN/Klaus HAACKER (eds.), Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament, vol. 2, Wuppertal 2000, pp. 2001–2013.

## Appendix

Order of images (I–XLI) corresponding to the anthropological constants (by chapter):

1. Origin
- I. Religious Symbols
2. Peculiarity
- II. North American Indians
- III. South American Indians
3. Religion
- IV. Idols Worldwide
- V. Symbols, Similar to those of the Indian (Sun)
- VI. Worship of Fire
- VII. Victims, of the Indians
- VIII. Hand Rattles (sistrum) inter-culturally
- IX. Rhombus and Turtle
- X. Coins with Symbols of Snakes
- XI. More Images of Snake Symbols
- XII. Isis and other Fertile Virgins
- XIII. The Eclipse and the Woman of the Heaven (Rev. 12)
- XIV. Initiation of a Chef
- XV. Initiation of a Soothsayer
- XVI. Crosses in Religious History
- XVII. More Crosses in Religions and Cultures
4. Government
- XVIII. Iroquois Dances<sup>31</sup>
5. Marriage
- XIX. Marriage Customs (Cabane)
6. Material Culture of Men
- XX. Clothing, Particularly Headdresses Intercultural
- XXI. Clothing and Jewelry of the Indians
- XXII. Pictures of Trees, Indian Tatooing

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31 Lafitau allocates these dances to the government because they are public assemblies that can take the form of councillor meetings, war dances or pantomimic representations of heroic acts.



- 7. Material Culture of Women
- XXIII. Women Preparing Food
- XXIV. Preparing for Council Meeting and Beverages
- XXV. Indian Religious Dances (Virginia, Brazil)
- XXVI. Preparing Maple Syrup
- 8. War
- XXVII. Europeans and Indians on the War Campaign
- XXVIII. Canoes, Eskimo Peruvians and Rafts
- XXIX. Navigating Waterfalls
- XXX. Locomotion in Winter (Sleds, Snowshoes)
- XXXI. Siege of a Fortified Indian Village
- XXXII. The Treatment of Prisoners
- XXXIII. The Death Penalty for Prisoners
- 9. Peace
- XXXIV. Peace Negotiations
- 10. Hunting
- 11. Games
- XXXV. Games with Dice
- XXXVI. Ball Games
- 12. Disease and Drugs
- 13. Death and Funerals
- XXXVII. Healing the Sick, Funeral Preparations
- XXXVIII. The Funeral of a Distinguished Indian (Louisiana)
- XXXIX. The Funeral Ceremony of the Iroquois
- XXXX. The Burial of People Frozen to Death or Drowned
- XLI. General Festival of the Dead: the Iroquois and Huron
- 14. Language



**Fig. 1:** Portrait of Joseph-François Lafitau. Bibliothèque Nationale du Canada, NL 15204. Source: Paul FOURNIER, *Les voyageurs naturalistes de Clergé français avant la Révolution*, Paris 1932.

M Œ U R S  
 DES SAUVAGES  
 AMERIQUAINS,  
 COMPAREES AUX MŒURS  
 DES PREMIERS TEMPS.

*Par le P. LAFITAU, de la Compagnie de Jesus.*

Ouvrage enrichi de Figures en taille-douce.

TOME PREMIER.



A PARIS,

SAUGRAIN l'aîné, Quay des Augustins, près la rue  
 Pavée, à la Fleur de Lys.

Chez { CHARLES ESTIENNE HOCHEREAU, à l'entrée  
 du Quay des Augustins, à la descente du Pont S. Michel,  
 au Phoenix.

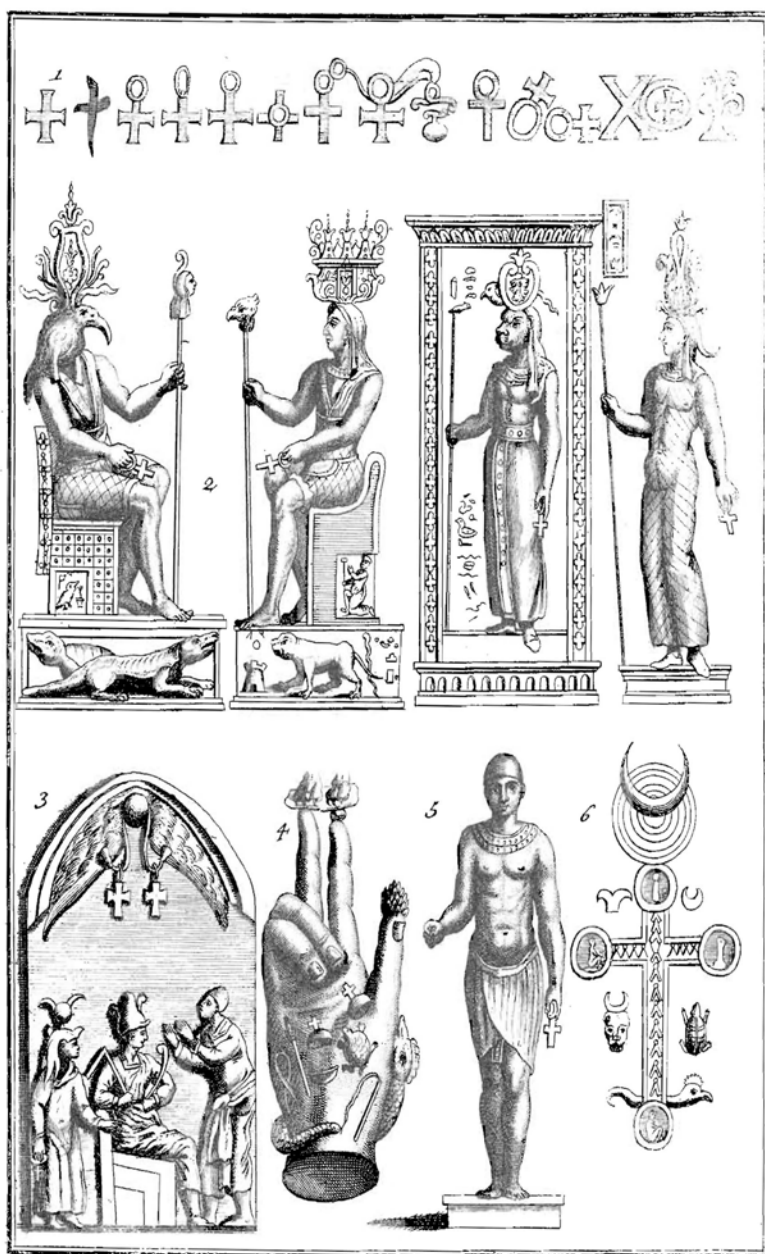
MDCCXXIV.

AVEC APPROBATION ET PRIVILEGE DU ROY.

Fig. 2: Title page of the French original edition of 1724. Source: LAFITAU, Customs of the American Indians, p. IV.

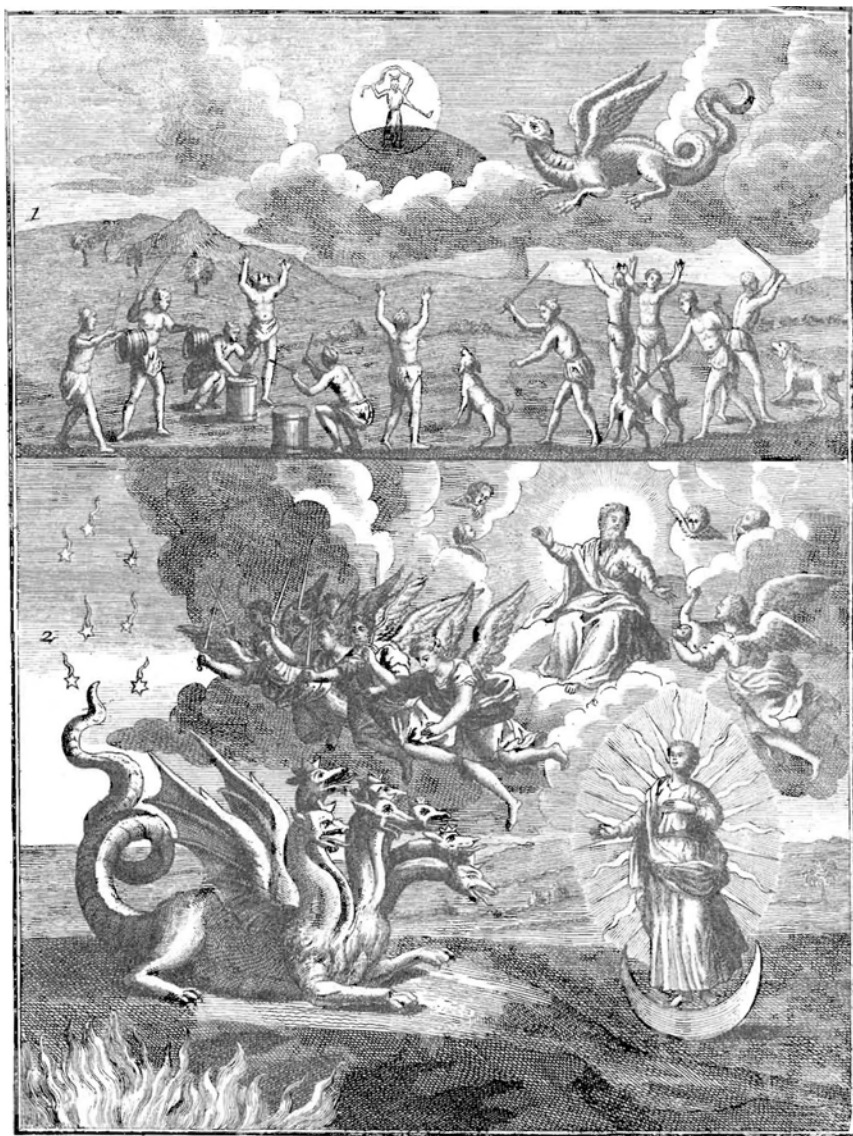


Fig. 3: Map of America in German translation. Source: LAFITAU, Die Sitten der amerikanischen Wilden, p. 8.

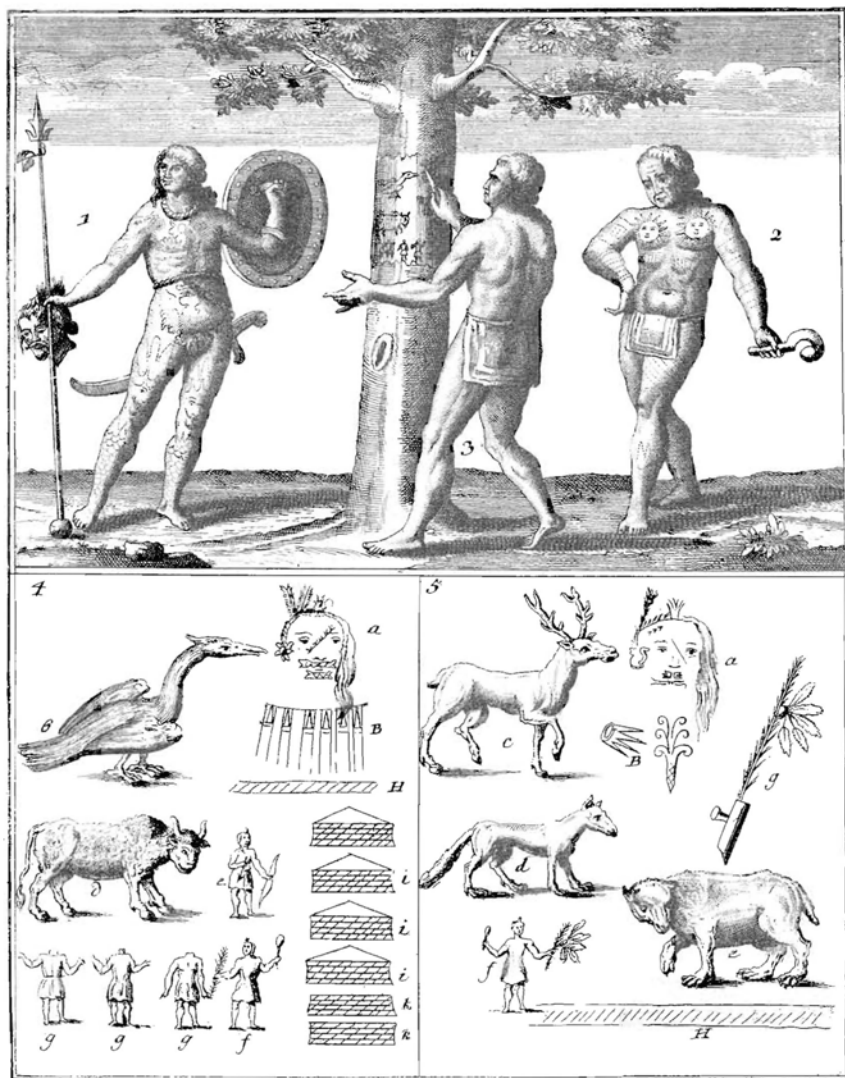


**Fig. 4:** Plate XVI: Figures of the cross in Egyptian Culture. Source: LAFITAU, *Die Sitten der amerikanischen Wilden*, p. 204.

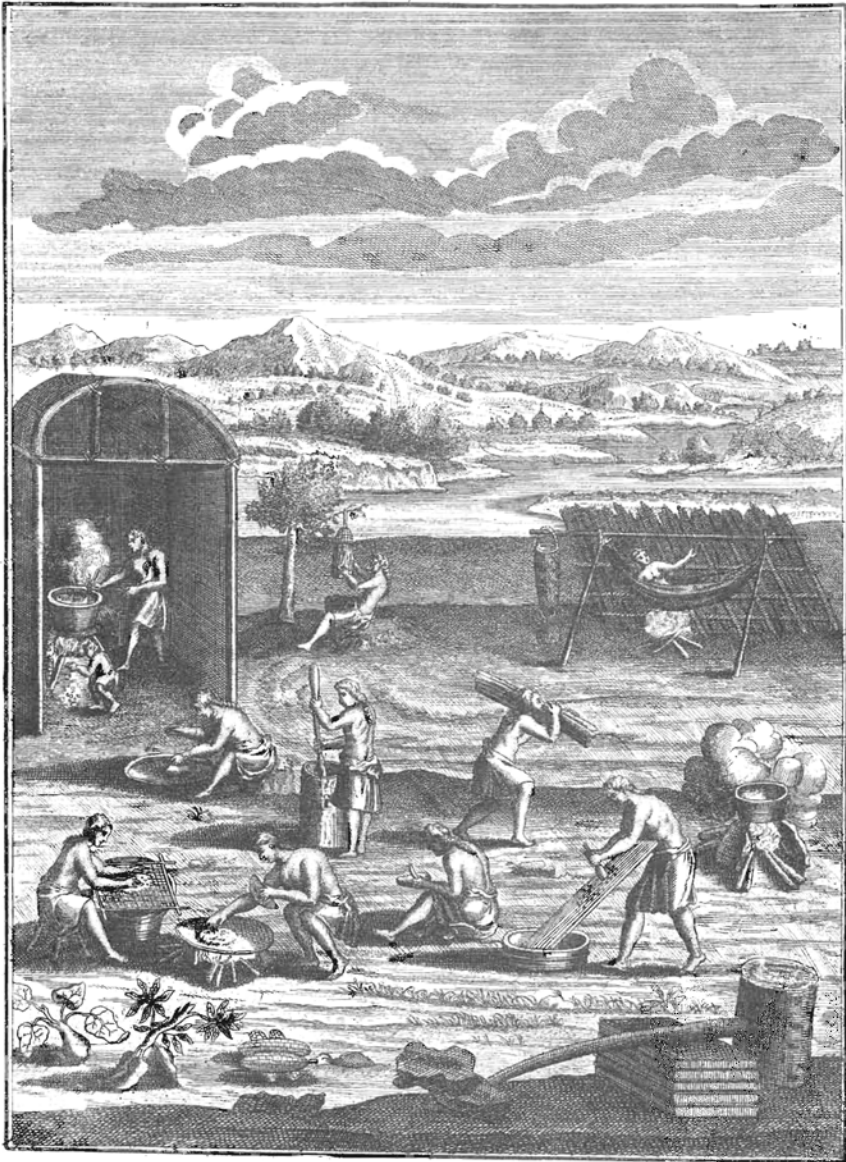




**Fig. 5:** Plate XIII: 1. Eclipse and religious ceremonies; 2. Biblical Apocalypse (Rev 12). Source: LAFITAU, *Die Sitten der amerikanischen Wilden*, p. 118.

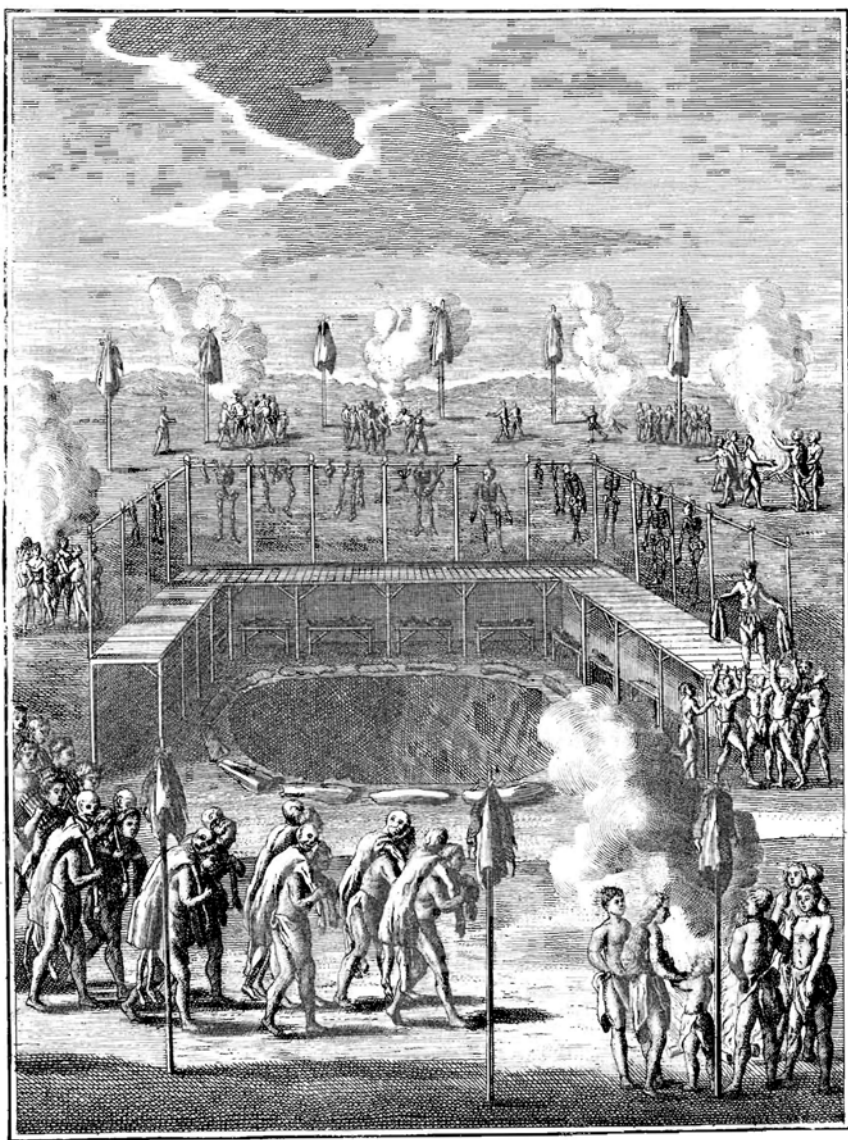


**Fig. 6:** Plate XXII: Male European Pict (left) and American Indians with hieroglyphs.  
Source: LAFITAU, *Die Sitten der amerikanischen Wilden*, p. 298.



**Fig. 7:** Plate XXIII: Iroquois woman (left side) and Caribbean woman preparing food. Source: LAFITAU, *Die Sitten der amerikanischen Wilden*, p. 316.





**Fig. 8:** Plate XXXXI: General Festival of the Dead: the Iroquois and Huron. Source: LAFITAU, *Die Sitten der amerikanischen Wilden*, p. 484.



**Fig. 9:** Frontispiece. Source: LAFITAU, *Die Sitten der amerikanischen Wilden*.

## IV. »PERSONALISED« CONTACT ZONES



Thoralf Klein

## How to be a Contact Zone

The Missionary Karl Gützlaff between Nationalism,  
Transnationalism and Transculturalism, 1827–1851

In the work of Mary Louise Pratt, the contact zone is defined as a liminal space where cross-cultural interaction takes place.<sup>1</sup> Obviously, this interaction does not imply an equal footing; on the contrary, such processes are governed by inequalities and hierarchies of power. Pratt herself defined the concept rather loosely, which is sometimes seen as an advantage, as it »does not presuppose the existence of any rigid, inflexible cultural boundaries. It enables us to see mingling, interaction, accommodation, hybridisation and confluence as well as conflicts across borders of many kinds.«<sup>2</sup> Still, her understanding of cultural interaction is not unproblematic. Pratt conceives of the contact zone as a constellation enabling the »spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect.«<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, she privileges direct interaction, for example in describing how a course she taught became a contact zone in which members of different ethnic groups shared their backgrounds and perspectives.<sup>4</sup> Importantly, although Pratt mostly analyses travel writings – i.e. texts addressing a metropolitan audience –, she apparently understands them as products of the contact zone rather than as agents of cultural interaction and transformation in their own right.<sup>5</sup> This also implies a distinction between the contact zone, where the original interaction takes place, on the one hand and the writing and, more broadly speaking, communication about this interaction on the other.

In other words, the contact zone is a rather narrow concept. As a consequence, the complex and dialectical processes of cultural flows between colonies and metropolises, between an increasingly hegemonic and domineering Europe and North America and the non-»Western« world, tend to

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1 Mary Louise PRATT, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London 1992; id., *Art of the Contact Zone*, in: *Profession* (1991), pp. 33–40.

2 Monika GANSSBAUER, »In China They Eat the Moon«: Western Images of China from the 19th to the 21st Century, in: *Asien* 121 (2011), pp. 119–129, at p. 126.

3 PRATT, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 7.

4 Id., *Art of the Contact Zone*, pp. 39f.

5 Ibid., p. 36, referring to the *First New Chronicle and Good Government* by Felipe GUAMAN POMA DE AYALA, a seventeenth-century text, which she analyses in great detail and whose impact she compares with Garcilaso DE LA VEGA's *Royal Commentaries of the Incas*.



be limited to tangible forms of interaction within a clearly demarcated if permeable spatio-temporal constellation. In the present essay, I attempt to broaden this perspective. My fundamental assumption is that in looking at processes of cultural interaction, we need to shift our attention beyond a narrowly defined contact zone to take global communication flows into account. Owing to the acceleration of communication that began as early as the Age of Sail, the sites of interaction between Europeans and non-Europeans were not limited to readily discernible spaces and situations of physical »copresence«; rather, they were enmeshed into an ever-tightening global network of media and information exchange. In bringing a broader perspective to bear, I do not mean to deny that the interactions described by Pratt are important and meaningful. However, as a result of the approach taken in this essay, the contact zone will merge into a multi-layered web of communication. This comprises face-to-face interaction as well as the variegated »mediascapes« – if this term may be appropriated here<sup>6</sup> – and the infrastructural processes (shipping, railways, telegraphy and others) underpinning the latter. It also includes the tensions arising from the unavoidable practice of translation.

The necessity of translation from one culture to another (or, indeed, several others) is, again, left vague in Pratt's work. But it is crucial to an adequate understanding of cross-cultural or transcultural processes and interactions, and it involves far more than just the linguistic dimension. As Nancy Hagedorn has written: »When interpreters translated and explained disparate languages and rituals infused with cultural meanings and values, they acted as brokers, mediating the confrontation of European and non-European cultures.«<sup>7</sup> Cultural brokerage in this sense depends crucially on the knowledge of languages, but also on a sensitivity for different sets of cultural symbols and practices. Taken together, they form the communicative expertise on which all cultural brokerage rests.<sup>8</sup> In a sense, then, the cultural broker can be called a »contact zone« in their own right, as in their

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6 Arjun APPADURAI, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy*, in: *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 (1990), pp. 295–310, at pp. 298f. The term refers to the »increasing distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information«, which explicitly includes both digital, visual and print media, as well as the images produced by such media. *Ibid.*, mediascapes are equally defined as »image-centred, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality«.

7 Nancy L. HAGEDORN, *Brokers of Understanding: Interpreters as Agents of Cultural Exchange in Colonial New York*, in: *New York History* 76 (1995), pp. 379–408, at p. 380. I have taken the liberty of replacing »Indian« with »non-European«, as the statement has value beyond its immediate historical context.

8 I am drawing here on ideas previously formulated in Thoralf KLEIN/Reinhard ZÖLLNER, *Einleitung: Karl Gützlaff als Kulturvermittler*, in: *Id.* (eds.), *Karl Gützlaff (1803–1851) und das Christentum in Ostasien. Ein Missionar zwischen den Kulturen*, Nettetal 2005, pp. 3–20, at p. 4. See also Nancy L. HAGEDORN, »A Friend to go between Them«: The Interpreter as Cultural Broker during Anglo-Iroquois councils, 1740–70, in: *Ethnohistory* 35 (1988), pp. 40–60.

very person at least two cultures become copresent. The ways in which this happens can vary: As a rule they will have been socialised into one culture, while they may acquire expertise in other cultures through socialisation or through more conscious and analytical modes of learning. As a consequence, it cannot be taken for granted that cultural brokers are equally well versed in all cultures they are familiar with. Distortions in the translation process may result from this hierarchy of cultural expertise, from the self-interest of the broker, or from their interactions with the groups they are mediating between.<sup>9</sup> It should be pointed out that such mediation does not necessarily involve face-to-face interaction, but can also take the form of long-distance communication and hence the use of what we commonly refer to as media.

Although media tend to have a life of their own that is determined by their underlying technological potential, they are nonetheless intimately linked with human action. Humans operate and use media technologies; conversely, media structure the scope, speed and depth of interpersonal communication. This is true anywhere at any time, but it especially comes to the fore where changes in media technology, broadly understood, enable new forms or an intensification of communication. Such a change occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, beginning with the increasing regularity of shipping and mail services, and it did not leave Christian missionaries unaffected. Indeed, one might say that the global scale that Christian missions took on in the nineteenth century was predicated on the ability to communicate effectively across long distances. Where missionaries evangelising overseas were part of a mission organisation, they became increasingly answerable to a home board (which became, in a sense, a remote participant in the contact zone) and/or connected them to the mission's supporting circles for purposes of fundraising. Where they were free missionaries lacking or deliberately foregoing an organisational prop, they were able to build up a network buttressing their activities. And missionary strategy relied not only on face-to-face interaction, but equally on the written word, both of which involved processes of translation in the broadest sense of the term.<sup>10</sup> Knowledge dissemination, in particular through translation, could again occur on a global scale. The idea of a limited contact zone (and really it only makes

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9 For the self-interest of the cultural broker see the typology developed in Robert PAINE, *A Theory of Patronage and Brokerage*, in: Id. (ed.), *Patrons and Brokers in the East Arctic*, St. John's, NL 1971, pp. 8–21. For the reinterpretation and appropriation of the translated message by a target group see Birgit MEYER, *Translating the Devil. Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana*, Edinburgh 1999.

10 I am thinking here, among others, of the classic study by Lamin SANNEH, *Translating the Message. The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Maryknoll, NY 1989.

sense as a limited space; there is no point in positing a contact zone that equals the whole world) needs to be supplemented by reconstructing global communication flows.

This article is focused on an early China missionary who established himself as a cultural broker and a hub of communication between China/ (East) Asia and Europe as well as North America: the German missionary Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff (1803–1851). Gützlaff can be described as a product of the contact zone, as he spent most of his adult life in Southeast and subsequently East Asia, and only thus became a public figure. But a quick glance at his multifarious activities as a freelance missionary, explorer, pamphleteer and propagandist, linguistic prodigy and translator, interpreter and self-made scholar, colonial official and spymaster, reveals something else: To begin with, no neat distinction is possible between his activities on the spot (in the contact zone) and his writings, as the latter were themselves vehicles of transcultural mediation. And as a consequence, the scope of his cultural brokerage between West and East was not limited. Beyond a copresence of various groups in the contact zone, what we see is a mediated communication on a global scale transmitting knowledge and information from East Asia to the various countries of Europe and the United States and vice versa. And this communication flow was without doubt accompanied by flows of funds, about which we know little as yet, but which are of vital importance.

The above is indeed confirmed by Gützlaff's very persona, as his identity became the site of a playful transcultural ambiguity: he was born Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff in the Eastern German region of Pomerania, but came to be known in the English-speaking world as Charles Gutzlaff. All of his three wives were English, and the list of his publications contains more English titles than German. And indeed his Anglicisation was not without repercussions: in 1837, an early admirer of Gützlaff's had his son baptised Charles Gutzlaff Hildreth, and upon the little boy's untimely death three years later made a donation to support Gützlaff's distribution of Christian tracts in China.<sup>11</sup> Even more importantly, Gützlaff styled himself Guo Shili (sometimes also Guo Shila) in his dealings with the Chinese and took obvious pride in his »adoption« into the Guo lineage of Tong'an in the southwestern Chinese province of Fujian.<sup>12</sup> Other Chinese names he adopted were »Gaihan« or *Aihanzhe* (which can be translated as »the China lover«), which he used

11 Jessie Gregory LUTZ, *Opening China. Karl F. A. Gützlaff and Sino-Western Relations, 1827–1852*, Grand Rapids, MI 2008, p. 128.

12 Patrick HANAN, *The Missionary Novels of Nineteenth-Century China*, in: *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 60 (2000), pp. 413–443, at p. 420. See also Gaihan's (Carl Gützlaff's) *Chinesische Berichte, von der Mitte des Jahres 1841 bis zum Schluß des Jahres 1846*, Kassel 1850, p. 170: »Several captains were my relatives and were sincerely happy to see me again.« Gützlaff employed several versions for writing his adopted name in Chinese characters.



in his Chinese-language publications until 1836 and in his correspondence with Christian supporters in Germany in the 1840s. His contributions to the *Chinese Repository*, an English-language periodical published in Canton (Guangzhou) in southern China between 1832 and 1851, were often signed »Philosinensis«, a Greek-Latin translation of the same name. In his writings in Chinese after 1836, Gützlaff adopted a new alias, *Shande* (»supreme virtue«).<sup>13</sup> Gützlaff's plays with transcultural identities even extended to his physical appearance, as in a conscious display of cross-dressing, he seems occasionally to have dressed in Chinese garb, for example in the famous painting by George Chinnery. This portrait, probably the best-known likeness of Gützlaff, was directed at a »Western« audience, underscoring Gützlaff's immersion into Chinese culture and by extension his expertise on all things Chinese. On the other hand, Chinese memory of the man has not accepted his sinophilic attitude as sincere, and Gützlaff – with some justification – is still rejected as a champion of »Western« imperialism.<sup>14</sup>

Establishing himself at the hub of a global exchange network, Gützlaff's role as a broker between different groups took on different forms. Much of his exchange with audiences in Europe and North America is best described as transnational, in the sense that Gützlaff was aware of national peculiarities, but emphasised a shared Christian (or more narrowly Protestant) culture as well as the common political interests of the »Western« states in East Asia. During the 1840s, his strategies were more strongly influenced by his German national identity as well as his Prussian citizenship; finally, as an intermediary between »Western« and East Asian cultures, he had grown into a transcultural figure by the early 1830s. In the following, I will analyse these different aspects separately.

### Gützlaff's Transnational Career, 1820–1842

With its national, transnational and transcultural dimensions, Gützlaff's career was the result of both circumstances beyond his control as well as of conscious decisions he took. To begin with the former: Gützlaff's talents were discovered by the Prussian King, Friedrich Wilhelm III (reigned 1797–1840), on the occasion of a visit to the former's hometown of Pyritz (now Pyrzyce, Poland). The King arranged for Gützlaff to receive training as

<sup>13</sup> LUTZ, *Opening China*, pp. 335f.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Yan WANG, *Review of Thoralf Klein/Reinhard Zöllner, Karl Gützlaff und das Christentum in Ostasien. Ein Missionar zwischen den Kulturen*, in: *Jahrbuch für europäische Überseegeschichte*, pp. 355–357, at p. 357: »For Chinese people it is not easy to place Gützlaff's unscrupulous activity and ambition in the shadow of a cultural broker.«

a missionary at Johannes Jänicke's (1748–1827) mission school in Berlin. In the emerging transnational missionary movement, Jänicke cut an interesting figure. Although he spent his entire life in Berlin, he was descended from a family of Bohemian refugees and preached in Czech as well as in German.<sup>15</sup> More importantly for Gützlaff, he was in touch with mission societies in other countries. In the 1820s, German mission societies focused not on evangelising, but on educating and training missionaries to meet the rising need for manpower in mission organisations abroad. The course at Jänicke's school included languages and mathematics, but was neither systematic nor geared towards the practical needs of evangelising work. Upon Gützlaff's graduation, Jänicke arranged for his transfer to the Netherlands Mission Society (Nederlands Zendeling Genootschap, NZG) at Rotterdam, where he received a more comprehensive and practical training, e.g. in medicine. Still, as a scholar Gützlaff was mainly a self-made man. In 1827, he was dispatched to Dutch East India (today's Indonesia), but in 1828 made up his mind to move to Bangkok and in 1831, he settled in the Portuguese colony of Macau on the Chinese coast. Gützlaff's strategy of focusing on evangelising among the Chinese was not approved by his superiors in Rotterdam, so despite holding on to his ties with the NZG for a while, Gützlaff had to all intents and purposes become an independent missionary.

This was a momentous decision. Gützlaff made use of his newly won freedom to embark on a flurry of activity. Christianity had been outlawed in China (or more precisely: the Qing Empire) since 1724, and in the 1830s the pioneers of Protestant missions, including Gützlaff, were busy searching for a foothold in the vast realm. This made them, as it were, natural allies of the »Western« merchants, who were basically trying to do the same in their attempt to circumvent the trade restrictions imposed on them by the Qing government. It is perhaps not surprising that Gützlaff was involved in a number of voyages along the Chinese coast and into other parts of East Asia. His most momentous trip, as ship's surgeon and interpreter on the British ship *Lord Amherst* between February and September 1832, took him along the Chinese coast as far north as Manchuria, thence into Korean waters and finally to the island of Okinawa, at the time part of the nominally independent kingdom of Ryūkyū, a tributary state of the Qing Empire. In attempting to wrest trading privileges from local officials through a mixture of bluff and persuasion (and to distribute Christian tracts in passing), the mission was

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15 Karl Friedrich LEDDERHOSE, Johann Jänicke, der evangelisch-lutherische Prediger an der böhmischen oder Bethlehems-Kirche zu Berlin, Berlin 1863, pp. 44f. Interestingly, as made explicit *ibid.*, p. x, the proceeds from this book were dedicated to the founding hospital in Hong Kong, which »owes its existence to Dr. Gützlaff, who in the meanwhile has been blessed and perfected and who was a spiritual son of the blessed father Jänicke.«

hardly successful, however. In the long run, the perceived intransigence of the Chinese officials stiffened the resolve of the merchants to »open« China at all cost, if necessary through war.<sup>16</sup>

In the following years, Gützlaff became involved with British opium smugglers like James Matheson (1796–1878) and William Jardine (1784–1843). In his writings, the German missionary was very apologetic about his participation and as well as distancing himself from the opium business, asserted that he had been unable to stop it, as he had taken part in the voyages as only a guest.<sup>17</sup> This claim, however, was disingenuous, as Gützlaff was again serving as interpreter, thus assuming a vital role in the transactions. In 1834 and 1835, he took part in two exploratory journeys to acquire tea seeds on behalf of an Indian-based tea company. At least the first of the two trips not only succeeded in obtaining the required specimens but also in hiring Chinese workers to process the tea leaves in India.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, the cultivation of tea plants imported from China proved a failure and attention turned to the cultivation of the native variety.<sup>19</sup>

Besides his alliance with merchants, Gützlaff looked for other sources of financial support for his evangelistic activities. Through his first wife (who died in childbirth two years into their marriage), he had become personally wealthy. Still, he needed additional funds and thus in 1834 accepted the post as Secretary to the British Superintendent of Trade in Canton, thus becoming more formally involved with British political and commercial interests in China. None of these were sufficient to fund Gützlaff's mission work, however. It was for fundraising purposes, then, that the free missionary built up a transnational network of supporters including both individuals and institutions (for example, Bible, tract and mission societies) in the 1830s and 1840s. This network extended from North America to the UK, Germany, the Netherlands and Scandinavia and its success was in large measure determined by Gützlaff's ability to speak to the current national mood in each country – in many of his publications as well as his private writings, the anglophile Gützlaff stressed the unprecedented contribution of the British to the advancement of humanity and Christianity. But he equally appealed to the enterprising and pioneering spirit of Jacksonian America and warned

16 Robert BICKERS, *The Scramble for China. Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire*, London 2011, pp. 69–75; for the context see *ibid.*, pp. 18–50.

17 Gützlaff to Church Missionary Society, Macau 13 October 1835, quoted in Gerhard TIEDEMANN, *Missionarischer Einzelgänger oder Visionär? Die Missionsmethoden Gützlaffs*, in: KLEIN/ZÖLLNER (eds.), *Karl Gützlaff und das Christentum in Ostasien. Ein Missionar zwischen den Kulturen*, Nettetal 2005, pp. 193–231, at p. 203.

18 Expedition to the Tea-District of Füh-këen, in: *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China and Australasia* 20 (1836), pp. 130–137. Cf. also LUTZ, *Opening China*, pp. 83–85.

19 Helen SABERI, *Tea. A Global History*, London 2010, pp. 126–131.

the Germans – then still a long way from unification – that they ought not to fall behind in their support for evangelisation.<sup>20</sup> Communication was vital to the effort and occurred at various levels: The most personal form was direct correspondence, but letters could reach a wider audience when published, a strategy to which Gützlaff occasionally resorted. Most importantly, his correspondence with Christian Gottlob Barth (1799–1862), a pivotal figure in south-west German mission circles and one of Gützlaff's most vocal supporters, went into print in Germany in 1850, covering the years 1841 to 1846 and filling an entire volume.<sup>21</sup>

Published letters formed part of the second form of communication, which consisted of short articles, extracts from his diaries and travel reports and opinion pieces appearing in papers and periodicals associated with missions and churches, but also in secular publications, especially in Germany.<sup>22</sup> The third level consisted of book-length volumes, such as his travelogue of the voyage with the *Lord Amherst* published in 1833, his *Sketch of Chinese History*, which followed a year later, and most notably his *China Opened*, which appeared in 1838. In all of his writings, Gützlaff forcefully supported the union of what has been called the three C's: Christianity, commerce and civilisation. In *China Opened*, he argued that China was not in fact a closed country (though it might have seemed so from a European perspective), but in fact was opened at least to »Christian heroes and martyrs«. At the same time, he suggested that it might be possible to establish mutually beneficial relations with the Qing Empire if only some Westerners would take the trouble to explain to the Chinese the benefits of free trade. This is interesting in view of his own failures to convince Chinese officials of these benefits.<sup>23</sup> What *Opening China* seems to suggest is that imparting »Western« knowledge – by which term Gützlaff understood both the Christian religion and the achievements of science – was a solution leading out of the impasse and would help realise China's potential for »becoming one of the first nations in the world«. <sup>24</sup> This idea was coupled with a rather condescending attitude

20 Jessie G. LUTZ/Rolland R. LUTZ, Karl Gützlaff as Propagandist and Fundraiser. Some Comparisons of Appeals and Sources of Support, in: KLEIN/ZÖLLNER (eds.), Karl Gützlaff und das Christentum in Ostasien, pp. 105–139. For Gützlaff's praise of Britain, cf. Charles GUTZLAFF, A Sketch of Chinese History, Ancient and Modern: Comprising a Retrospect of the Foreign Intercourse with China, vol. 2, London 1834, p. 291.

21 Gaïhan's Chinesische Berichte.

22 LUTZ/LUTZ, Karl Gützlaff as Propagandist and Fundraiser, pp. 111–125.

23 On his second voyage in 1832, Gützlaff had carried a Chinese translation of a pamphlet by Charles Marjoribanks (1794–1833), president of the Select Committee of the EIC and an MP at Westminster, entitled »A brief account of the people and affairs of the great English nation« (*Da Yingjili liguo renpin guoshi lüeshuo*) and translated into Chinese by the first Protestant missionary in China, Robert Morrison (1782–1834). Cf. LUTZ, Opening China, pp. 185f. As we have seen, the text failed to persuade Chinese officials.

24 GUTZLAFF, China Opened, vol. 2, p. 181.

towards China: once on a par with or even superior to Europe, it had meanwhile fallen far behind, as the Europeans' »spirit of improvement« had the latter the »umpires of the world«.<sup>25</sup>

However, rather than simmering down, tensions between the Qing and the British Empires came to a head in the late 1830s. And given Gützlaff's preferences, it is not surprising to find him involved in the British military effort during the First Opium War (1839–1842), when he ran a spy network, providing the British troops with military intelligence. In particular his information concerning the navigability of rivers was vital to the British campaign.<sup>26</sup> Gützlaff also was entrusted with administrative duties in conquered port cities: first as magistrate in Dinghai, principal town of the Zhoushan archipelago off the Chinese coast, in late 1840; from October 1841 to May 1842 in Ningbo and then briefly in Zhenjiang on the Yangzi River, before returning to his post at Dinghai in September 1842. He was recalled to Hong Kong in the summer of 1843.<sup>27</sup> A scholar from Ningbo named Xu Shidong has left us a satirical poem providing a rather unflattering description of Gützlaff's tenure. Xu made a mockery of Gützlaff's communication with the Chinese: his boastful display of his linguistic skills, his ignorance, his arbitrary dispensation of justice (which, contrary to Chinese custom, was not documented in writing) and his public justification of the war and the opium trade.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Gützlaff appears to have been sufficiently trusted by both sides to serve as interpreter at the peace negotiations at Nanjing in late August 1842 – although he was mostly doing routine jobs rather than translating diplomatic communication into Chinese. In his correspondence with Barth, he emphatically declared that he abhorred the war, yet justified it by pointing to God's higher purpose and the potential benefits to the missionary cause.<sup>29</sup>

In his career up to the First Opium War, Gützlaff appears as a genuinely transnational figure, setting out in the service of a Dutch missionary society, subsequently allying himself with British interests in China and creating a basis for his mission efforts that stretched from the US to Western and Northern Europe. Situated in East Asia, Gützlaff became the centre of a network

25 Ibid.

26 John OUCHTERLONY, *The Chinese War. An Account of All the Operations of the British Forces From the Commencement To the Treaty of Nanking*, London 1844, pp. 48f., 224–230, 248f.

27 LUTZ, *Opening China*, p. 103; for Gützlaff's recall see also Qiying to Pottinger, Daoguang 23/09/16 = 19 October 1843, in: Thomas Francis WADE (ed.), *Wên-chien Tzū-erh Chi. A Series of Papers Selected as Specimens of Documentary Chinese Designed to Assist Students of the Language as Written by the Officials of China*, Shanghai 1909, vol. 1, p. 4.

28 AYING (ed.), *Yapian zhanzheng wenxueji*, Beijing 1957, p. 24. An English translation is in Arthur WALEY, *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes*, Stanford, CA 1958, pp. 230f.

29 Gaihan's chinesische Berichte, pp. 3–11.

that integrated East Asia into a global communication flow. After the war, Gützlaff retained his attitude; it was the situation around him that changed and necessitated new responses.

### Gützlaff's Hesitant Honeymoon with Nationalism, 1842–1850

After the Opium War, Gützlaff continued to pursue both his secular and evangelistic activities. To begin with the former: in 1843 he was appointed Chinese Secretary to the government of the newly founded British crown colony of Hong Kong. In this capacity, he used his contacts to help non-British nationals to maintain their interests in China where possible. This included the attempts of Prussia and other German states to play a more active (if still marginal) role in China, now that the first of the so-called »unequal treaties« had loosened the strict Chinese trade regulations. Gützlaff gave active support to German efforts to explore the potential for trade and diplomatic relations.<sup>30</sup> From the letters of the German merchant Richard von Carlowitz (1817–1886), who became the first Prussian and Saxon consul in China, we know that he relied on Gützlaff's advice and contacts with the Prussian government (Gützlaff was a Prussian subject and seems to have had no ties with the Saxon government) and with high-ranking Chinese officials such as the Manchu Qiying (1787–1858).<sup>31</sup> From the same cache of letters we also know, on the other hand, that Gützlaff helped the Danish and Swedish commissioners to obtain the formal recognition of the Chinese officials, probably at Guangzhou (Canton).<sup>32</sup> Gützlaff's transnational outlook probably had not changed very much.

In Gützlaff's missionary efforts, however, Germany assumed a more important role than before the Opium War. This was partly down to the Pomeranian missionary's preferences, partly to the changing structure of Protestant missions in China. In the pre-war period, only a handful of pioneer missionaries had been active on the China coast. For this reason, Gützlaff had not found it very difficult to obtain funds from Anglo-American mission societies. After the war, however, these became directly involved in mission work in China, so funds became increasingly scarce and competition grew.<sup>33</sup> Gützlaff's first attempt in 1839 to get two of the biggest German mission

30 Elisabeth GRUBE, Friedrich Wilhelm Grube und seine Reise nach Indien und China, Krefeld 1848, p. 136 and *passim*.

31 Briefe Richards von Carlowitz aus Ostindien und China von 1844 an, unpublished typescript, private collection of the author, pp. 55–96.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

33 LUTZ/LUTZ, Karl Gützlaff as Propagandist and Fundraiser, pp. 129–131.

societies, the Basel and Rhenish Missions, interested in China was perhaps accidental: a Basel missionary stationed in India had visited Gützlaff in Macau the previous year. At this point, nothing came of his efforts and he did not pursue the matter any further.

By the mid-1840s, the situation had changed considerably. In 1844, Gützlaff founded the Chinese Union in Hong Kong, which became an agency for training Chinese as evangelists. Having his hands full with his government job but eager to convert all of China to Christianity in the shortest possible time, Gützlaff had resorted to a new strategy: Not without reason, he was convinced that Chinese preachers would be cheaper and more effective than »Western« ones. But he was paternalistic enough to assume that some form of European oversight was indispensable. This time, Gützlaff managed to persuade the societies in Basel and Barmen to dispatch two missionaries each to China. His relationship with the new arrivals soon became strained, however, as Gützlaff favoured extensive evangelisation, while the four missionaries were more intent on intensive mission work through congregations. Both parties soon went their separate ways.<sup>34</sup>

At about the same time, Gützlaff also became involved with attempts to found a common German Protestant mission to China. The originator and driving force behind this enterprise was a jurist named Christian Friedrich Elvers (1797–1862), President of the Court of Appeals at Kassel and a member of the directorial board of the Mission Society of Electoral Hesse. His initiative led to the founding of the German-Chinese Foundation in late 1846. Unfortunately, the new organisation suffered from a birth defect: Elvers had insisted that it be based on the Augsburg Confession, in other words: on Lutheran doctrine. Such narrow-minded confessionalism ran counter to the ideals of most German mission societies and led to the foundering of the organisation.<sup>35</sup>

Undeterred, Elvers changed his strategy and directed the foundation towards support of Gützlaff's Chinese Union. It was probably at Gützlaff's suggestion that the term »German« was dropped from the name of Elvers' foundation, and the newly constituted Chinese Foundation now became a general agency of sorts for Gützlaff's interests in Europe. It thus inherited the role that Barth had played up to this point, and indeed in 1847, Gützlaff

34 LUTZ, *Opening China*, pp. 220–228; Thoralf KLEIN, *Die Basler Mission in der Provinz Guangdong (Südchina) 1859–1931. Akkulturationsprozesse und kulturelle Grenzziehungen zwischen Missionaren, chinesischen Christen und lokaler Gesellschaft*, München 2002, pp. 16f.

35 Patrick DREHER, *Eine gemeinsame deutsche Mission für China? Die chinesische Stiftung und Gützlaff*, in: KLEIN/ZÖLLNER (eds.), *Karl Gützlaff und das Christentum in Ostasien*, pp. 141–153, at pp. 142–146.



officially transferred the responsibility for his home base from Barth to the Chinese Foundation.<sup>36</sup> The Foundation's principles paralleled those Gützlaff had envisioned for his Chinese Union: German leadership for a transnational and (indeed transcultural) enterprise.

When the new organisation began to totter again in the late 1840s, Gützlaff thought it was time to change his style of communication: Instead of relying on correspondence, he would personally advertise his cause. From January to November 1850 – in less than a year – he travelled almost the whole of Europe. It is easier to list the countries he did not include in this Grand Tour: Norway, Spain, Portugal and the Ottoman Empire. In other words, the Protestant missionary also visited predominantly Catholic countries.<sup>37</sup> Gützlaff's advertising strategy was meticulously planned and executed, as his visit to the provincial town of Erfurt shows: Before, during and after his short visit (which lasted less than twelve hours), the local newspaper published articles on Gützlaff, no doubt placed by himself.<sup>38</sup> And the marketing was successful: in Germany alone, about 100 associations were formed in support of Gützlaff, and more than a few people volunteered to become missionaries in China. The Chinese Foundation had already found a suitable candidate, a man named Carl Vogel (1825–1873), who arrived in China while Gützlaff was still in Europe. Unfortunately for the Foundation, Vogel soon became a critic of the organisation, which he eventually fell out with and left or – by his own account – was expelled from. Confessional issues again played a role: Vogel was a member of the Reformed Church, but the Foundation insisted on ordaining him as a Lutheran.<sup>39</sup>

More trouble lay ahead for Gützlaff. While he was still in Europe, missionaries in Hong Kong launched an enquiry into conditions in the Chinese Union and found that most of Gützlaff's Chinese evangelists were frauds who had not undertaken the extensive evangelisation tours they claimed to have made. Upon his return, Gützlaff sought to counter with an enquiry of its own, but the damage that had been done was beyond recall. Gützlaff lost his most important supporters, and his death on 9 August 1851, in the midst of

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 146f.

<sup>37</sup> LUTZ, *Opening China*, p. 229.

<sup>38</sup> Erfurter Zeitung, 4, 15 and 17 October 1850, in: KLEIN/ZÖLLNER (eds.), *Karl Gützlaff und das Christentum in Ostasien*, pp. 314f. and pp. 332–335. See also Sylvia BRÄSEL, *Missionar aus Überzeugung, Entdecker mit Marketingtalent. Gützlaff – der erste Deutsche in Korea*, in: Ibid., pp. 61–75, at pp. 73f.

<sup>39</sup> Carl VOGEL, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der chinesischen Stiftung in Kurhessen und der Gützlaff'schen Mission in China*, Frankfurt 1853, pp. 1–14; F. W. WINKEL, *Correspondenz. Confessionelles aus Kurhessen*, in: *Monatsschrift für die evangelische Kirche in der Rheinprovinz und Westphalens* nos. 4–5 (1853), pp. 238–250, at pp. 245f.; LUTZ, *Opening China*, pp. 233f.; for Gützlaff's supporters see DREHER, *Eine gemeinsame deutsche Mission*, p. 149.

the turmoil, deprived the Chinese Union of its main prop. Under Gützlaff's successor, the missionary Robert Neumann (1823–1890), the Union dissolved a few years later.

Gützlaff's outlook did not substantially change in his later years. He was not converted to the cause of Protestant German nationalism as championed by Elvers. On the other hand, he began to rely on Europe and specifically on Germany more, to the point where he openly advocated German trade in China during his tour of Europe in a public lecture he delivered at the Berlin stock exchange.<sup>40</sup> Despite a certain shift in focus dictated for the most part by the changing situation around him, he had maintained his transnational correspondence network, appearing in Europe as the situation seemed to require it. But although this essay has already revealed a vast communication network with Gützlaff at the centre, its perspective would remain incomplete without a look at Gützlaff's transcultural activities.

### Gützlaff's Transcultural Activities: Between Asia and the »West«

A good starting point for Gützlaff's role in processes of transculturation is his own self-assessment of his linguistic achievements. According to a famous list which he seems to have published several times, his works appeared in a variety of languages: English, German, Dutch and Latin on the European side; Chinese, Japanese, Siamese (or Thai), Laotian, Cambodian and Cochinchinese (Cochinchina being the southern part of Vietnam).<sup>41</sup> On the Asian side in particular, not all languages carry equal weight: Gützlaff's output in Chinese was by far the most voluminous, including a complete Bible translation, tracts and a number of secular publications. Japanese follows in second place (also including scholarly texts) and Thai comes in third place, whereas in the other languages he »only« produced a translation of the New Testament and/or a dictionary. The list is indicative both of how Gützlaff wanted to be seen by his supporters and of his practical achievements. What it shows most of all is that although the bulk of Gützlaff's work was dedicated to China, his perspective on Asia was as transnational as his view of Europe.

It is impossible in the context of this essay to examine Gützlaff's writings (both missionary and non-missionary) in detail, and I will not be able to do more than scratch the surface. But the point here is that Gützlaff's

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40 Carl GÜTZLAFF, Ueber die Handelsverhältnisse im östlichen Asien. Vortrag, gehalten am 9. Oktober 1850 im Börsen-Saal, Berlin 1850, p. 18.

41 Erfurter Zeitung, 15 October 1850, in: KLEIN/ZÖLLNER (eds.), Karl Gützlaff und das Christentum in Ostasien, pp. 314f.

transcultural communication, despite his continuing to preach well into the 1840s,<sup>42</sup> relied not only on face-to-face interaction. His writings, which included both missionary and secular publications, extended the scope of his impact beyond anything we could refer to meaningfully as a »contact zone«. And Gützlaff's transcultural mediation worked both ways: from Asia to the »West« and vice versa.

I shall begin with Gützlaff's non-missionary writings in »Western« languages. I have already mentioned his travelogues, historical works and overviews of the China of his day.<sup>43</sup> These became extremely popular and in the 1840s, even a version of his travelogues specifically targeting children was published in Germany.<sup>44</sup> Besides, Gützlaff authored a vast range of short texts on the geography, cultures and linguistics of Asia. It appears that the earliest of these texts were published in missionary journals such as the *Chinese Repository*. It is in this periodical that between 1833 and 1839, Gützlaff's three surveys on the Korean, Japanese and Chinese languages appeared, in which he gave an overview of their structure and writing systems, a subject to which he returned in subsequent publications.<sup>45</sup> A whole series of Gützlaff contributions to the *Repository* consisted of detailed reviews of Chinese literature, both fictional and non-fictional, about which he was occasionally unforgiving: An early eighteenth-century compilation about gods and spirits was dismissed by Gützlaff as »rubbish«, yet he took interest in a story on the Virgin Mary from the collection. The »Illustrated Description of the Maritime Countries« (*Haiguo tuzhi*), first published in 1844 by the eminent scholar Wei Yuan (1796–1857) and regarded today as the first global geography in the Chinese language, did not fare much better: Gützlaff scoffed at its »erroneous representations« as well as at a style that »does not rise above mediocrity«, and though he granted that the work was »not defective in perspicuity«, he still found it »devoid of all interest, except to the very diligent inquirer.«<sup>46</sup>

42 As is evident from Gaihan's *Chinesische Berichte* or from the account of the British missionary (later bishop) George SMITH, *A Narrative of an Exploratory Visit to Each of the Consular Cities in China and to the Islands of Hong Kong and Chusan, in Behalf of the Church Missionary Society, in the Years 1844, 1845, 1846*, London 1847, vol. 2, pp. 64–68.

43 For a comprehensive list of Gützlaff's publications see Hartmut WALRAVENS, Karl Friedrich Neumann und Karl Friedrich August Gützlaff. *Zwei deutsche Chinakundige im 19. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden 2001, pp. 120–152.

44 Emil WENDT/Theodor VOCKERODE (eds.), *Des Missionars Gützlaff Reisen nach den Küstengegenden des Chinesischen Reichs: nebst Auszügen aus vielen andern Reiseberichten, welche Religion, Regierungsverfassung, Volkssitten u.s.w. in China darstellen, für die Jugend bearbeitet*, Leipzig 1848.

45 Reprinted in: KLEIN/ZÖLLNER (eds.), *Karl Gützlaff und das Christentum in Ostasien*, pp. 298–303, pp. 309–314.

46 All quoted from Hartmut WALRAVENS, *Karl Gützlaffs Werke. Bemerkungen zu Rezeption und*

In the 1840s, when Gützlaff was better known, some of his papers were read at and published by scientific organisations such as the American Philosophical Society, the Royal Geographical Society and the Royal Asiatic Society.<sup>47</sup> He also corresponded with leading scholars, such as the Prussian explorer Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), to whom he confirmed in writing »the puzzling fact that all Chinese as well as Manchus living in China (ca. 370 million people), who, despite being nourished with breast milk, do not know milk, butter and cheese and indeed abhor and disdain all three«. <sup>48</sup> It must be noted, however, that after Gützlaff had dined with Humboldt, the famous geographer judged his missionary guest to be »very amusing but highly ignorant of the geography of Asia outside China«. <sup>49</sup>

It is probable that Gützlaff's greatest impact apart from his book-length publications was through more popular magazines such as *Das Ausland*, to which he either actively contributed or which published digests of his writings. An interesting case is his reception by the German writer Karl May (1842–1912), who was notorious for his plagiarising of scientific and geographical literature. In his novel *Der blaurote Methusalem* (first serialised in 1888/89 under the title *Kong-kheou, das Ehrenwort*), May copied a passage by Gützlaff on Chinese junks. Millions of mostly young German readers have read the passage without knowing its true author.<sup>50</sup> On the whole, however, Gützlaff's most profound impact in Europe and North America was as a populariser of China and especially of Christian missions in China at a very early stage. The buoyant missionary's optimism coupled with his insistence on the superiority of Christianity and European civilisation contributed to an Orientalist attitude that was to dominate relations between China and the »West« for nearly a century.

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Wissenstransfer aufgrund der nichtmissionarischen Schriften, in: KLEIN/ZÖLLNER (eds.), Karl Gützlaff und das Christentum in Ostasien, pp. 77–103, at pp. 86f., 94.

47 Letter from the Rev. Charles Gutzlaff to John Vaughan, Esq., on the Chinese System of Writing, in: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 7 (1841), pp. 7–9; C. GUTZLAFF, Frontiers of China towards Birmah, in: Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London 19 (1849), pp. 42–48; C. GUTZLAFF, On the Secret Triad Society of China, Chiefly from Papers Belonging to the Society Found at Hong Kong (1 January 1846), in: Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland 8 (1846), pp. 361–367.

48 Humboldt to Ritter, 12 June 1850, in: Ulrich PASSLER (ed.), Alexander von Humboldt – Carl Ritter: Briefwechsel, Berlin 2010, p. 112.

49 Humboldt to Ritter, after 23 September 1850, in: Ibid., p. 117. The same letter also quotes a very unflattering characterisation of Gützlaff by the German minister in London, Karl Josias Bunsen (1791–1860).

50 Compare Die Chinesischen Dschonken, in: Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes 6 (1834), pp. 319f., which is the adaptation of a passage from Gützlaff's Journal of Three Voyages, and Karl MAY, Kong-kheou, das Ehrenwort, Zürich 1991, pp. 93f. I owe this comparison to WALRAVENS, Karl Gützlaffs Werke, pp. 81f. See also Erwin KOPPEN/Bernhard KOSCIUSZKO, Der blaurote Methusalem, in: Gert UEDING (ed.), Karl-May-Handbuch, Würzburg 2000, pp. 275–279, at p. 275.

On the other hand, Gützlaff also targeted Asian audiences. Again, he published secular texts informing a scholarly readership of European societies and culture, e.g. two book-length treatises on Britain in Chinese. Some of these works deliberately adopt the style of Chinese novels, but are equally interspersed with quotations from the Chinese classics.<sup>51</sup> Between 1833 and 1839, Gützlaff ran a Chinese-language periodical called »The East-West Examiner and Monthly Magazine« (*Dong-Xiyang kao mei yue tongjizhuan*). In this periodical, he deliberately adopted the language of scholarly Confucianism, stressing the need for friendly relations between China and the »West« – a goal that he sometimes but not always emphasised in his »Western«-language publications. *Dong-Xiyang kao meiyue tongjizhuan* presented both biblical history (among other things, Gützlaff wrote articles on mankind before and after the Flood) and scientific knowledge.<sup>52</sup> According to one estimate the news section formed the largest part of the magazine, accounting for about 27% of its content. Geographical information was the next largest category, forming slightly less than a fifth of the entire output.<sup>53</sup> Some of the information presented here and in other writings of Gützlaff found its way into the first Chinese world geographies of the 1840s, in particular Wei Yuan's previously mentioned *Haiguo tuzhi*, first published in 1844 and expanded in 1852, »Four Treatises on the Maritime Countries« (*Haiguo si shuo*) by Liang Tingnan (1796–1861) of 1844/46 and »A Brief Description of the Maritime Circuit« (*Yinghuan zhilüe*) by Xu Jiyu (1795–1873), which came out in 1848.<sup>54</sup> The authors drew the attention of their readership to the importance of Europe as an alternative civilisation. Like their missionary source of information, they focused their attention on Britain and quoted India as a warning example for China (Gützlaff had written about India as a »tributary state« of Britain). In the political and intellectual climate of the 1850s, their publications did not win them many friends; and it was only in the 1860s, when China had accepted its subordination under the treaty regime (and hence »Western« imperialism) as a matter of fact that they were reappraised.<sup>55</sup>

51 HANAN, *The Missionary Novels*, pp. 423f.

52 A modern edition is: HUANG Shijian (ed.), *Dong-Xiyang mei yue tongjizhuan*, Beijing 1997; for an analysis see ZHENG Lian'gen, *Naxie huoyue zai jindai Zhongguo de xiyang chuanjiaoshi*, Taipei 2011, pp. 155f.; LUTZ, *Opening China*, pp. 182–199.

53 LIEN Hui-chu, »Dong-Xiyang mei yue tongjizhuan« zhong ditu yishi yu dilixue chuanbo yanjiu, <http://research.ctu.edu.tw/vra/resources/100/17100/B01/408/5/f8ed86eb37fd5f9a01382e7213aa003e.pdf>, pp. 1–10, at p. 2 (access date: 2 October 2014).

54 Ibid.

55 Bernd EBERSTEIN, *Hamburg – China. Geschichte einer Partnerschaft*, Hamburg 1988, pp. 141–146; LUTZ, *Opening China*, pp. 202–214. Wei's and Xu's works incorporate material from an unpublished work by Lin Zexu, »Account of the Four Continents« (*Si zhou zhi*).

It was as a translator that Gützlaff had the greatest impact in China, and of course one should not underestimate the impact of power relations on translation. In order to understand his contribution, let us first look at a contrasting example: Gützlaff's translation of the Gospel of John, the first ever Protestant Bible translation into Japanese. It was compiled with the help of three of the seven Japanese castaways whom Gützlaff had in vain tried to repatriate, all of them fishermen from Owari. The manuscript was sent off to the printer in Singapore before Gützlaff set out for Japan on board the *Morrison*, but Gützlaff only received it after his return from his unsuccessful mission.<sup>56</sup> According to the careful analysis by the linguist Yōko Nishina, the text deviates strongly from the standard for written Japanese, both in terms of vocabulary and grammar. It is strongly influenced by the Owari dialect and, most conspicuously, it is written in Katakana (a syllabary), as Gützlaff's collaborators did not know Chinese characters (called *kanji* in Japanese). Later versions abandoned the latter shortcoming, as a synoptic overview of early translations shows. With all its defects, Gützlaff's Japanese Gospel of John provides an interesting perspective on how important indigenous collaboration is for missionary translation projects. Gützlaff had clearly overestimated his proficiency in Japanese.

We do not know a lot about Gützlaff's Chinese collaborators, but gifted linguist that he was (his difficulties with Japanese notwithstanding), he immersed himself deeply into Chinese and his translations into that language may safely be said to have had a far greater impact. Gützlaff began a Bible translation in 1834, collaborating with his erstwhile mentor, the British missionary Walter Henry Medhurst (1796–1857), who had been instrumental in refocusing his attention on China in the late 1820s. Medhurst quit the project in 1836 but his Prussian colleague persevered and a first complete translation appeared in 1838, though Gützlaff continued revising it till 1845.<sup>57</sup> Historically, the Gützlaff-Medhurst Bible first attained importance as the version used by the Taiping movement (1851–1864) – a rebellion against the Imperial Qing dynasty based on the »folk-religionization of Christianity«, as it has been called.<sup>58</sup> This connection was rather accidental: The founder of the movement, Hong Xiuquan (1814–1864), who claimed to be the younger

56 Yōko NISHINA, Gützlaffs japanisches Johannesevangelium, in: KLEIN/ZÖLLNER (eds.), Karl Gützlaff und das Christentum in Ostasien, pp. 173–192, at pp. 173–175.

57 Zetzsche, Gützlaffs Bedeutung für die protestantischen Bibelübersetzungen ins Chinesische, in: KLEIN/ZÖLLNER (eds.), Karl Gützlaff und das Christentum in Ostasien, pp. 155–171, at pp. 158–164.

58 LIU Ying-hua, The Folk-religionization of Christianity in China – Hong Xiuquan's *Yuandao jueshi xun* and the Taiping Rebellion, in: WANG Chengmian (ed.), *Shizijia qian de sisuo – wenben jiedu yu jingdian quanshi*, Taipei 2010, pp. 77–106. For the impact of the Gützlaff translation on the Taiping see ZETZSCHE, Gützlaffs Bedeutung, pp. 170f.

brother of Jesus Christ, had been given a copy of the Gützlaff-Medhurst translation. Other effects only became visible in the long run: Theologically by far the most important was the rendering of God as *Shangdi* (an ancient term for the deified ancestor of the ruler) and of the Greek λόγος as *dao*, a classical philosophical term used by Confucians, Daoists and Buddhists alike. Some transliterations proposed by Gützlaff have found their way into everyday usage, such as *youtairen* for Jews and *Yiselle* for Israel.<sup>59</sup> But the greatest cultural curiosity comes from one of Gützlaff's non-religious texts, a geographical compendium called »Illustrated geography of the myriad countries« (*Wan guo dili quan ji*), probably composed in 1842–1843. Much like Gützlaff's Bible translation, this introduced quite a few terms that stuck, most notably transliterations of geographical names.<sup>60</sup> Arguably the most conspicuous of these is the name Gützlaff chose for the city of Hamburg, *Hanbao* – a rather counterintuitive term for Chinese, as it means »Han Castle« or »Chinese Castle«. Via Wei Yuan and his *Haiguo tuzhi* (which still uses three other versions for the same city), the name entered the Chinese lexicon. Indirectly, Gützlaff is also responsible of the Chinese word for the Hamburger, called »Hamburg wrap« (*Hanbao bao*) in Chinese.<sup>61</sup> Nothing could provide a stronger testimony to the lasting impact of Gützlaff's trans-cultural activities than this.

## Conclusion

Karl Gützlaff's diverse activities at the intersection of cultures were embedded in multifarious communication flows. Both his active involvement with British imperialism and his evangelising depended on his presence on the spot. In this sense, not only was he operating within the contact zone, he was also a product of the contact zone. Only by situating himself at the boundary of Chinese and »Western« cultures – and here, for once, I am referring to the contact zone as a tangible space – could he develop the transcultural persona he eventually adopted and which combined the copresence, however hierarchical and uneven, of various cultural strands of East Asia and the »West«. It was this persona which enabled him to speak and write, with the authority of a culturally competent intermediary, on things Chinese, or more broadly East Asian, in the »West« and, conversely, on things »Western« in China

59 ZETZSCHE, Gützlaffs Bedeutung, pp. 167–170.

60 ZHUANG Qinyong, Guo Shilie »Wan guo dili quanji« faxian yu yiyi, in: Journal of the History of Christianity in China 7 (2006/07), pp. 1–18.

61 EBERSTEIN, Hamburg – China, pp. 150–152.



and more generally East Asia. This did not preclude, caused by Gützlaff's obvious capacity for self-aggrandisement, his personal ambition or overestimation of his capabilities.

But it would be a gross injustice to Gützlaff to understand him merely as a figure of the contact zone, because to do so would mean to overlook the many ways in which the liminal space within which he operated was connected with the world at large. As an independent missionary, Gützlaff could only sustain his work by building up a supporting network in Europe and the United States. This network had to be cultivated by way of regular transmission of information. This is most obvious in the 1830s, but even after Gützlaff had moved toward a greater institutionalisation of his home base in the mid-1840s, keeping his supporters informed was of the essence. That Gützlaff felt his personal presence was required in Europe in 1850 further attests to this, as does his careful handling of local media during his Grand Tour.

Besides, Gützlaff's cultural mediation between East Asia and the »West« far exceeds the notion of a contact zone in a limited and geographic sense. Gützlaff digested information from the »West« and transmitted it to China and vice versa. In so doing, he relied on a global infrastructure of communication – letters that could reach their addressees with certainty and within reasonable time, scholarly publications that could be read at learned societies' meetings and published in their periodicals. Much of the impact he created was not so much down to his own writings but rather through indirect forms of transmission, as in the case of the first Chinese geographers. This was a »copresence« in an extended sense, one that stretched across space and – again most obviously in the case of the Chinese geographers – also across time. Applying the concept of a »contact zone« alone is insufficient to capture it. The lessons of Gützlaff and his communications network are twofold: Firstly, the contact zone cannot be studied in isolation; it must be analysed in its connections with global communication flows. Secondly, the case of Gützlaff points to the role of individual human agency within such flows.



Rosemary Seton

## Close Encounters, Racial Tensions

The Church of Scotland Mission in Calcutta [Kolkata], India

»The social gatherings of native and European Christians are another means of great good«, wrote a missionary wife from Calcutta in a letter home, in November 1880.<sup>1</sup> »As you probably know,« she continued,

the Committee of Management is composed of all the native pastors of the different congregations in Calcutta, who invite their own people, and in this way have each a personal interest in the success of the meetings. The last gathering we had was the largest (about 600), as well as the most interesting and delightful of any I have been at. It was on Friday evening, the 15th October. A large conference of native Christians had been going on all week, and it was arranged that after their own meeting was over, they should all come along, have something to eat, and join our social gathering. As many of them were from country villages around Calcutta, and had never been so far from home before, Miss Pigot and the members of the Committee were anxious to have something both entertaining and instructive; and after a little trouble, they succeeded in getting a splendid magic-lantern with a set of beautiful dissolving views. When we arrived at the mission-house, the whole place seemed full, but still the friends came pouring in. About 200 of the men were squatted on the terrace, busily engaged in eating from the plantain-leaves before them; in another part, a number of native musicians were singing hymns and playing on their peculiar instruments. In the long verandah the women were sitting patiently waiting until the drawing room was ready for their reception. All the ladies were then got into the darkened room, and the children made to sit on the floor in front of the screen; the doorways and verandah and side rooms were filled up with men. The dissolving views proved a great success [...]. At nine o'clock the exhibition was over, the room was lighted, and the ladies now had to get tea and native sweets; and for another hour we had Hindustani, Bengali, and English hymns, and then we finished the evening by prayers in Bengali [...]. There was a large attendance of European missionaries and friends, and I think everybody enjoyed themselves.

The mission house of the Church of Scotland's Female Mission in Calcutta was to be the setting for frequent social gatherings during the late 1870s and

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1 Letter, dated 24 November 1880, from Mrs Thomson, published in: *News of Female Missions in Connection with the Church of Scotland*, Edinburgh 1881, pp. 11f.

early 1880s, of which that just described was perhaps the most extraordinary. It was a place where representatives of the Calcutta missionary fraternity, native clergy, Christian converts and sympathetic Indian visitors could meet in apparent harmony and friendship. Inter-racial gatherings of course took place on the premises of other missions in that imperial city, then the capital of British India, but as a number of guests agreed, none with such élan as those presided over by Mary Pigot, the Lady Superintendent of the Church of Scotland's Female Mission in Calcutta. Pigot had been in post for ten years, the most successful missionary ever to hold that position. She and her assistants also excelled in educational work. By 1882 with 75 boarders, 890 school pupils, and 453 *zenana* pupils, making a total of 1418 pupils, the Church of Scotland's Female Mission had more students than any other mission in Calcutta.<sup>2</sup>

But the seeds of Mary Pigot's downfall had already been sown. A group in the Church and Mission in Calcutta were moving against her, alleging *inter alia* mismanagement and immorality at the mission house. The allegations were endorsed by the Church of Scotland's senior missionary in Calcutta, William Hastie, recently-arrived Principal of the General Assembly's Institution. In forwarding documents to Edinburgh containing the charges against Pigot he added the comment that, although they contained disclosures which had surprised him, he had »long been more than suspicious of such things as are stated here, and have myself observed that every external propriety was more than disregarded«.<sup>3</sup> After a somewhat cursory investigation of the charges Pigot was summarily dismissed in May 1883. In order to defend her reputation she then decided to sue Hastie for defamation of character, leading to an infamous case at the Calcutta High Court which she eventually won on appeal. What has become known as the Calcutta Mission Scandal, with its allegations of sexual impropriety and other murky doings, has provided ample material for scrutiny by scholars since Kenneth Ballhatchet's brief but seminal analysis in his *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj*, published in 1980.<sup>4</sup>

2 The Chronicle of the London Missionary Society, London 1882, p. 355.

3 Quoted in Supplement, Indian Daily News, Calcutta 17 April 1884.

4 Kenneth BALLHATCHET, *Race, Sex and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and their Critics, 1793–1905*, London 1980. See also Margaret STROBEL, *European Women and the Second British Empire*, Bloomington, IN 1991; Deirdre DAVID, *Rule Britannia: Women, Empire and Victorian writing*, London 1995; Mrinalini SINHA, *The politics of Gender and Race in the Ilbert Bill Controversy, 1883–1884*, in: N. CHAUDHURI/M. STROBEL (eds.), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance*, Bloomington, IN 1992; Lesley OTT MACDONALD, *A unique and glorious mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland, 1830–1930*, Edinburgh 2000; Eliza KENT, *Converting Women: Gender and Protestant Christianity in Colonial South India*, Oxford 2004; Rosemary SETON, *Western Daughters in Eastern Lands: British Missionary Women in Asia*, Santa Barbara, CA et al. 2013.

This chapter uses the many available sources: documents cited in the court case, newspaper coverage of the trial as well as missionary records and periodicals such as *News of Female Missions*, the quarterly periodical of the Church of Scotland Ladies' Association, to evaluate Pigot's record as Lady Superintendent during her thirteen-year tenure. In particular it focuses on how she used the Mission House, in the Prattian sense, as a »contact zone« freely entered by both Europeans and Indians, an achievement which brought her high praise in some quarters, but hostility in others.

The Church of Scotland had been relatively late in beginning overseas mission work. While a Scottish chaplaincy was established at Calcutta in 1813, and St Andrew's Kirk, built to serve the growing Scottish community, opened in 1818, the Church's first missionary to Bengal, Alexander Duff, did not arrive until twelve years later. Scottish Presbyterians laid great emphasis on education and Duff had been charged by the Church's General Assembly to make his priority the establishment of a higher education institute. Duff aimed to reach »the more wealthy, influential and learned classes« of Bengali society and his foundation, the General Assembly's Institution, rapidly became one of the most prestigious higher education establishments in Calcutta.<sup>5</sup> Church and mission existed amicably alongside each other, the affairs of the mission being administered locally through a Corresponding Board, comprising chaplains, missionaries, and lay representatives of the Kirk, which communicated with the Foreign Missions Committee in Edinburgh.<sup>6</sup>

Inspired by this success and by the exemplary work of Margaret Wilson, wife of a Scottish missionary in Bombay [Mumbai], the Scottish Ladies' Association for the Advancement of Female Education in India was set up in Edinburgh in 1837. The work got off to a slow start. It was difficult to find suitable agents; some married almost as soon they had reached the sub-continent, others fell ill. There were also funding difficulties, exacerbated after the Disruption of 1843 which split the Church of Scotland into two factions, most missionaries and their supporters joining the Free Church. In Calcutta, Duff and all but one of the Church of Scotland's agents transferred their allegiance away from the Established Church.

However, by the 1850s agents of the Ladies' Association were running an orphanage in Calcutta catering for around 30 to 50 girls, and one or two schools. These were administered for the most part by missionary wives, or by agents engaged locally, since it proved almost impossible to recruit female agents in Scotland. With the gradual opening-up of *zenanas*<sup>7</sup> to lady teachers, the Church of Scotland was eager to embark on this extension of mission work

5 Quoted in M. A. LAIRD, *Missionaries and Education in Bengal*, Oxford 1972, p. 203.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 222.

7 Closed apartments for women in Muslim and high-caste Hindu houses.

but only found a suitable agent in 1870 when John Macalister Thomson, the Senior Chaplain at St Andrew's and Secretary of the Corresponding Board, invited Mary Pigot, a well-qualified and experienced Christian headmistress, living in Calcutta and fluent in Bengali, to establish this endeavour on their behalf. What particularly recommended her were her enviable contacts with upper-class educated Bengali families. As Macalister Thomson reminisced on the eve of his departure from Calcutta in 1878, »the access which her large acquaintance with native families gave her into houses, enabled us almost at once to begin our Mission on a large scale«.<sup>8</sup>

Mary Pigot was born in 1837 in the French colony of Chandernagore [Chandannagar], some 30 kilometres up the River Hooghly from Calcutta. Her parents were Julius Pigot, an indigo planter, and his wife Désirée Casabon. By 1842 the family were living in Calcutta where her father kept a hotel. It may not be too fanciful to imagine that here Mary Pigot learnt the hospitable ways she was to display later in her life. In 1846 her father died suddenly, of cholera, leaving his widow to bring up their three young children. It is not known where she received her early education although there is some evidence to suggest that she attended the European Female Orphan Asylum which had been founded in Calcutta in 1815 to educate children of European parentage.<sup>9</sup> By 1854 she was a pupil of the Calcutta Female Normal School. This had been founded in 1851 out of the need for well-educated local teachers who, through »knowledge of the native language, manners and customs and with little risk to their own health, can convey the tidings of salvation where European ladies cannot«.<sup>10</sup> Here she came under the careful tuition of two sisters, the Misses Suter, sent out by London supporters of the school. The Suters's thorough educational scheme was subsequently abandoned as too costly and lengthy, but Pigot, a bright and capable student, benefited considerably from her three years there.<sup>11</sup> She emerged very creditably from this establishment in 1856/7, and began a successful career first visiting and teaching in *zenanas* before going on to teach at, and preside over, schools in Lucknow and Calcutta.

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8 News of Female Missions, 1878, p. 120.

9 A retrospective article states that »three of the most promising pupils [at the Calcutta Normal School] were girls from the European Orphan Asylum [...]. The third became assistant teacher in the Normal School for some time, and then went to Lucknow, where she did valuable service under Lady Muir«. This description corresponds to Pigot's own account of her career. *India's Women: The magazine of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society*, London 1992, p. 107.

10 Lal Behari SINGH, *The history of native female education in Calcutta*, London 1874, p. 57.

11 Report of the Calcutta Female Normal School, Central and Branch Schools, Calcutta 1859, p. 16.

During the course of her educational work Pigot became acquainted with Keshab Chandra Sen, a leading, if ultimately a divisive figure in the Brahmo Samaj, the movement founded in Bengal by Rammohun Roy earlier in the century to reform both the Hindu religion and Indian society. For a time missionaries and their supporters saw the Brahmo Samaj as a sort of »half-way house to Christianity«, or at least »a step in the right direction« with Sen himself as perhaps more of a Christian than he himself realised.<sup>12</sup> Sen and Pigot became allies in their efforts to educate and improve the lives of Bengali women and to her he entrusted the education of his daughter Sunity Devi, later the Maharani of Cooch Behar. Pigot attended the meetings of Brahmo women inaugurated by Sen in the 1860s and 1870s, entertained gatherings of ladies on at least one occasion and on another invited a group to the St Andrews Kirk's annual Sunday school picnic at the Botanical Gardens.<sup>13</sup> It was through these contacts that Pigot was able to gain access to so many Indian houses and to attract pupils to her schools.

Despite having been engaged in Calcutta Pigot was readily adopted as Lady Superintendent of the Female Mission by the Ladies' Association in Scotland which funded her work. Rapid progress was made. By 1874 she and her assistants were teaching 300 *zenana* pupils in 60 different houses. In addition she ran the orphanage and had greatly increased the number of the mission's day schools and of the pupils attending them.<sup>14</sup> Possibly as a result of her exertions she fell ill and it was thought advisable on health grounds for her to spend some time out of India. Her visit to Scotland during 1875 and 1876 was hardly a rest cure; she attended and spoke at 42 meetings of the Ladies' Association in all parts of Scotland, greatly increasing support for the female mission in the process.<sup>15</sup>

While much of the work was carried on in private houses and in different schools, Pigot made the mission house itself a centre for multifarious activities. When she first took over as Superintendent the mission was based in Upper Circular Road, on the outskirts of Calcutta. But in 1877 the lease of the property came to an end. It was decided to move away from an area thought to be malarial. The new, larger premises at Bowbazaar, in the »centre of the native city« of Calcutta did not at first impress. In her report to the Ladies' Association Pigot described going to look at the property with two members of the Corresponding Board.

12 Quoted in John A. STEVENS, *Colonial Subjectivity: Keshab Chandra Sen in London and Calcutta, 1870–1884*, PhD dissertation, University College London, 2011, p. 119.

13 Meredith BORTHWICK, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal*, Princeton, NJ 1984, pp. 273f.; M. PIGOT, *A Brief Reminiscence of Keshub Chunder Sen by The Pioneer Zenana Missionary of 1856*, Calcutta 1910, p. 7.

14 *News of Female Missions*, July 1874, *Annual Report*, pp. 264–275.

15 Annie S. SWAN, *Seed Time and Harvest*, London 1937, p. 95.



I met him [Mr Steel] and Mr Thomson to judge of it; and as we stood in the inner courtyard, choked with rank, tall weeds, and saw the neglected and dismal look of the large, dirty rooms, and all the strange nooks of a purely Indian house, and a wide drain surrounding the house, bubbling in its steamy, black mass, my heart sank [...]. But the question resolved itself into, »this house or no house at all«.

Some months of busy activity saw the house restored, Pigot reporting that

Mr Thomson and Mr Steel devoted weeks contriving for every room, economising and devising. And now our house presents a central quadrangle, turned into a charming garden, and good carriage way, with buildings north and south, and a range of low buildings east and west. The north possesses one large drawing room, and two halls that we have partitioned into four rooms. These rooms have been allotted to parlour-boarders [...]. The south block has one hall and four small rooms. The hall has been made into the dormitory of the Upper School, and the rooms have been given to the teachers of this school, Orphanage, and *zenanas*.<sup>16</sup>

It seems that every room in the building was utilised for mission purposes, even the room in which she slept. As a Calcutta missionary observed, Pigot could not

call one room in the house her own. Her bedroom was often a dormitory for teachers and pupils at night, and as often during the day a class room, an examination hall, an ante-room for gentlemen attending the social gatherings, &c; in fact anything for which it might be useful.<sup>17</sup>

Mention has been made of accommodation for parlour boarders, a somewhat novel service Mary Pigot offered to »the wives of Indian gentlemen that have been to England, and formed English habits, and desire that their families adapt themselves to English homes«. This was a service which Mary Pigot found at times burdensome and perhaps might have been wiser to refuse. »I am additionally fettered just now with having two families staying with me. The husbands are both in the Civil Service«, she reported to *News of Female Missions*. She was at first asked »to take care of [...] two elder girls but the mother could not bear the parting [...] since last May the mother and four girls have come to stay with us [...]. They are a sweet, tractable family, and have fallen a good deal into our ways. But«, she wrote, »I have had such a time with the other family«. The husband admitted that

16 »Miss Pigot's Report«, *News of Female Mission*, 1878, p. 101.

17 Kenneth Somerled MACDONALD, Editorial, *Pigot vs Hastie Defamation Case*, in: *The Indian Evangelical Review*, Calcutta October 1883, p. 135.

it was the wretchedness of his home that had caused him to bring his wife to me [...]. Everything put under tribute to the clamour and caprice of the children [...]. I told the father it was no wonder that Indian gentlemen had their rooms outside of the *zenana*, to escape the terrible roaring of their ill-managed families. He said ›just so, indeed‹.<sup>18</sup>

While parlour boarders were appreciated as a source of funds, at least one member of the Ladies' Association Committee queried their relevance to the work of a Christian mission.<sup>19</sup> It is clear however, Pigot saw her role as Christianising as well as civilising her guests.<sup>20</sup> Such was her approach also to the Indian women friends who on occasion came ›stealthily‹ to visit her. ›Some ladies,‹ she wrote,

who belong to a very numerous household, found that in the noise and confusion of so many mothers, and the multitude of so many children, it was not possible to get sufficient serious talk. The grandmother, a daughter-in-law, and two of the daughters came to me – three generations – and the Lord Jesus and His precious work of redemption were entered into and discussed the whole time. ›We have had a very sweet evening‹, they said, at going away.<sup>21</sup>

It was the new mission house in Bowbazaar Street which came to be particularly associated with Mary Pigot's popular social evenings. The proportions of the premises, used occasionally in the past by visiting rajahs and their retinues, helped. As a fellow missionary commented, the large drawing room was ›a room the equal of which as regards suitableness for such meetings was not elsewhere to be [...] obtained‹.<sup>22</sup> An impressed Scottish visitor reported on one of these meetings and its transformative significance.

›Without doubt‹, he wrote, ›Miss Pigot is a ›power‹ in the native community within her reach. The old Orphanage was, and now the new one is, a meeting-place, where native and European come into contact in a way not seen elsewhere [...]. Among the innovations she has been able to introduce is this: On the third Tuesday of every month she has a meeting of Christians, native and European, for what I might call a *réunion*. The time is occupied in a general conversation with each other; native and European music (for there

18 News of Female Missions, 1878, p. 7. The ›sweet tractable family‹ were the wife and daughters of R. C. Dutt while the other family was that of Bihari Lal Gupta who, like Dutt, had passed the examinations for the Indian Civil Service in 1869, among the first batch of Indians to do so. Both were members of the Brahmo Samaj.

19 Scottish Ladies Association, Committee Minutes, 18 January 1878.

20 Justifying her actions she wrote ›The husbands are, no doubt, seeking more civilisation for them. I hope by God's grace, we shall be able to give it to them in its truest form of Christianity‹, News of Female Missions, 1878, p. 8.

21 ›Miss Pigot's Report‹, News of Female Missions, 1877, p. 91.

22 MACDONALD, Editorial, p. 134.

is a good piano in the room); sometimes a reading or recitation is given; and sometimes there is a speech [...] the large room was filled. *Jerusalem, my happy home* was sung, *Abide with me &c.* Ices went round, and all seemed to enjoy themselves till ten o'clock, when a hymn in Bengalee was sung, a chapter in Bengalee read, and Mr Banerjea prayed also in Bengalee. Now this was a strange meeting, and the more I think of it the stranger does it seem. It was an attempt to bring together two races who have become one in Christ Jesus». <sup>23</sup>

Some others took a very different view. A few years later, during the summer and autumn of 1882 a leaflet, anonymous but signed »a member of St Andrew's Kirk«, Calcutta, was circulated among subscribers and supporters of the female mission in Scotland and India. <sup>24</sup> The author noted that

Last year Scotland remitted to Calcutta £1.854 alone towards this precious mission. Better far if the money had been used in doing good in Scotland than in doing evil in Calcutta [...]. The money scraped and gathered from often such poor people with so much trouble and self-denial is continually wasted on vain entertainments, feastings and native brass bands for the glorification of a Eurasian in the eyes of the natives. Not a word is said on these occasions for the cause of Christ, or the advancement of your Mission. Hence, the reason of her popularity with the Bengali Baboo. <sup>25</sup>

It transpired that the author was Mrs Annie Walker, whose husband, an army colonel in the Royal Artillery, had recently become a member of the Corresponding Board. She was also sister to Georgiana Smail who had, in December 1881, come out from Scotland to assist Mary Pigot in *zenana* work. Smail was shocked by her first impressions of the mission house. »Pianos and harmoniums abounded [...] and dirt and disorder reigned everywhere«, she complained. <sup>26</sup> Within a couple of months of her arrival, during which she sent several letters of complaint to the Ladies' Association, she withdrew her services and allied herself to those in St Andrew's Kirk and on the Corresponding Board who were critical of Pigot. It was Smail and her sister who were largely responsible for orchestrating the campaign against Pigot,

23 Letter, dated 1 February 1878, from John Steel, *News of Female Missions*, 1878, pp. 44f.

24 To the Subscribers and Supporters of the Scottish Zenana Mission, Calcutta, in: *Report of the Case Pigot vs. Hastie as Before the High Court*, Calcutta: Containing the Official Documents, Evidence and the Judgments in the Original and Appellate Courts, Calcutta 1884, pp. 310–12.

25 »Babu« or »Baboo«, originally a term of respect for Indian males, often used disparagingly in British India to indicate a »superficially cultivated, but too often effeminate, Bengali«. Henry YULE/A.C. BURNELL, *Hobson-Jobson, The Anglo-Indian Dictionary*, first published in 1886, reprint, Ware 1996, p. 44.

26 A Vindication, in reply to the »Report« [...] to the Committee of the Scottish Ladies' Association, by Miss G. Smail, late Assistant Superintendent, Scottish Ladies Association, Calcutta, in: *Report of the Case*, pp. 333–338.

joined by William Hastie who had fallen out with Pigot when, following his arrival in 1879, he had attempted to bring the Female Mission under his direct supervision. While distancing themselves from the invective, several members of the Corresponding Board joined in the criticism, including the Rev George Gillan, senior chaplain at St Andrew's. The leaflet, along with correspondence containing similar charges, was read by a special Committee of Investigation, set up in Edinburgh early in 1883. A few months later Pigot was dismissed.<sup>27</sup> Distorted by envy, enmity and malice though they undoubtedly were, the accusations identified aspects of Pigot's missionary record which could plausibly raise doubts in the minds of those not familiar with the work of the mission or with conditions in Calcutta.

There were more than a dozen charges against Pigot, some personal, others more general. Four are relevant to this chapter: her sectarian disloyalty, her lack of evangelistic zeal, her racial status and, particularly, her overly friendly relations with Indians. Pigot did not hold strongly sectarian views. She had been raised as an Anglican and was appointed at a time when the established Church of Scotland found it difficult to recruit suitable agents from within its own ranks. Her chief accusers, part of a coterie worshipping at St Andrew's Kirk, the hub of the large and influential Scottish community in Calcutta, accused her of undermining their national church, even of bringing »Romish« influences into her work.<sup>28</sup> She headed an educational rather than a distinctly evangelistic mission, but had always insisted on Christian teaching in her schools and *zenanas*. She had indeed read a paper at the Calcutta Missionary Conference in February 1882 in which she pointed out that the baptism of an Indian woman, independently of other members of her family, would separate her »for life from husband and children«. Many in that audience agreed with her.<sup>29</sup> Nor had she kept her supporters in Scotland unaware of her views, writing in the *News of Female Missions*:

It is impossible for any one not brought into actual contact with such cases to conceive the difficulties which lie in the way of any more decided avowal of Christianity. Were she (an Indian woman) to be baptised, she would at once become an outcast, and all the blessed influence which she is exerting in her home would be for ever at an end. [...]

27 Report of the Committee of Investigation comprising Dr Scott, K M Phin, James C Herdman, James Williamson, T G Murray, Thomas Stevenson, Robert H Muir, *News of Female Missions*, January 1883, p. 4. The Committee noted that »the »private« leaflet signed by »A Member of St Andrew's Kirk, July 1882«, widely circulated from the same Indian postmark, »reiterates in a more offensive form all the charges brought against Miss Pigot in the correspondence previously alluded to«.

28 »The Scots«, as Elizabeth Buettner observes, became »an important component of Calcutta's European society to an even greater degree than was normally the case in India«. Cf. Elizabeth BUETTNER, *Haggis in the Raj*, in: *Scottish Historical Review* (2002), p. 223.

29 Indian Baptist, Calcutta, March 1882, p. 111.

The reality of our work is evidenced not merely by such cases as the above, in which we see the seed taking deep root, but also by the opposition not unfrequently met with. Many cease to receive our visits after a time, through fear of the effect likely to be produced.<sup>30</sup>

Eurasians, members of the mixed-race community in India, later known as Anglo-Indians, were regularly employed by missionary societies in India, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century. Familiar with European customs, yet fluent speakers of local languages, they were indispensable intermediaries in the transmission of the Christian message. They were, however, rarely to be found in positions of authority. When Pigot was appointed Lady Superintendent of the Female Mission in 1870 it did not seem to matter a jot, to members of the Corresponding Board in Calcutta, or to the members of the Ladies' Association in Edinburgh that she was, or was not, Eurasian. There were, in any case, blurred distinctions between those of mixed race and Europeans domiciled in India, and Pigot might have belonged to either group.<sup>31</sup> She was paid a European salary and treated in all respects as though she were European.<sup>32</sup> But a decade later her opponents declared it »out of place to have a Eurasian at the head of our mission«.<sup>33</sup> William Hastie wrote sneeringly about her Upper School that it was »largely attended by illegitimate half-castes – a class [...] with which Miss Pigot has naturally the strongest affinities«.<sup>34</sup> Hastie, whom Kenneth Ballhatchet describes as »unduly conscious of his standing as a member of the ruling race«, formed together with Smail and Walker a trio of socially elite Britons.<sup>35</sup> Envious of Pigot's achievements and independent standing, they found fault with her methods and in doing so used the race card against her. Holding such

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30 News of Female Missions, 1874, p. 271.

31 Cf. E. BUETTNER, *Problematic Spaces, Problematic Races*; defining »Europeans« in late colonial India, *Women's History Review* 9 (2000), pp. 277–298; Report on the census of the town and suburbs of Calcutta, taken on 17 February 1881. H. Beverley. Calcutta 1881, p. 36.

32 When a European successor was asked to take over temporarily as Lady Superintendent in October 1882 she was appointed on the same terms as Pigot i.e. »150 rupees a month with board, rooms and carriage and some servants«, Ladies' Association, Committee Minutes, 4 October 1882.

33 Miss Gordon (Madras) in a letter quoted in *A Vindication*, p. 335.

34 W. HASTIE, Remarks on the report circulated to the members of the Corresponding Board, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1882, in: *Report of the Case*, p. 304. Pigot was able to prove her legitimacy in court but it is likely that one at least of her parents was of mixed racial heritage. Both her father and brother followed occupations customarily taken up by Eurasians, since they were excluded from official positions, one as an up-country indigo planter and the other on the railways. For more on the position of Eurasians cf. C. J. HAWES, *Poor Relations: The Making of a Eurasian Community in British India 1773–1833*, Richmond 1996.

35 BALLHATCHET, *Race*, p. 115.

views they would clearly deride her attempts to bridge the social and racial abyss dividing ruler and ruled in late nineteenth century Bengal. It has been remarked that although

like Eurasians missionaries [...] occupied an ambiguous position on the margins of the social distance between the ruling race and the peoples of India [...] they were clearly members of the ruling race [...].<sup>36</sup>

The divide between ruler and ruled was perhaps particularly great in Calcutta, home to both a metropolitan elite and an increasingly disaffected Bengali one, which makes Pigot's achievement in creating a liberating space for European and Indian Christians all the more remarkable. This was commented on at the time. The *Indian Christian Herald* noted how »she made all her friends, native and European feel at home in her house, and spent away all she got in acts of kindness and hospitality«. <sup>37</sup>

The indigenous style and location of the mission-house at Bowbazaar in the middle of the »native city« perhaps made Indian visitors feel more at home than some Europeans. Significantly, the *locus* of Pigot's key opponents, Hastie, Walker and Smail, was the General Assembly's Institution in Cornwallis Square and St Andrew's Kirk in Dalhousie Square, part of what has been called Calcutta's »White Town«. However, as the architectural and urban historian Swati Chattopadhyay points out, boundaries between the »Black« and »White« towns were, in reality, blurred; Calcutta consisting of »overlapping geographies and conceptions of space and territory, both indigenous and foreign, that were constantly negotiated«. The differences between the two towns were, he argues, more apparent to visitors than to inhabitants.<sup>38</sup> It is worth pointing out that two of Pigot's adversaries, Hastie and Smail, were newcomers to Calcutta, and, indeed, to India; Smail, who had found her short sojourn at the mission house so distasteful, very much so. There were few outright criticisms of Pigot from the established Calcutta missionary fraternity, many of whom regularly attended her communal evenings. On the other hand K. S. Macdonald, a member of the rival Scottish Free Church Mission, in a powerful editorial otherwise very favourable to her, remarked that her »having large parties or social gatherings in her own house, but accepting of no invitations, or scarcely any, to parties given by other people« did not make her popular with female co-workers. Nor was she, he observed, careful about the »conventionalities of society«. In fact he thought her »defiant of them«. <sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>37</sup> *Indian Christian Herald*, 5 October 1883.

<sup>38</sup> Swati CHATTOPADHYAY, *Representing Calcutta: modernity, nationalism and the colonial uncanny*, London 2005, pp. 77–79.

<sup>39</sup> MACDONALD, Editorial, p. 135.

Using Pratt's conceptual approach it can be argued that Pigot herself constituted a veritable »contact zone« effortlessly criss-crossing racial boundaries in India and in Britain. Her familiarity with the cultural background of both countries, her fluency in Bengali and English, her ability to reach out to both communities, and her friendly and hospitable nature made her a rare and outstandingly effective intermediary. Her unique social standing, a person of status in both European and Indian communities, enabled her for a time to achieve »the ideal of a mission-house«, an ideal »very hard to reach«, in the words of Emily Bernard, a visiting missionary from Poona, »when there is not thorough acquaintance and sympathy with Indian thought and habit«.<sup>40</sup> The drawing room of the mission house became a contact zone where guests engaged in informal and harmonious activity across gender, language and cultural divides.<sup>41</sup> But perhaps there was something of what Bhabha has termed an *au-delà* in that achievement.<sup>42</sup> At any rate, it was an engagement that did not survive Pigot's downfall at the hands of those who, in an imperial city, and during a high imperial era, were disinclined to engage in cross-cultural encounters except on their own terms.

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40 Emily BERNARD, *News of Female Mission*, 1879, p. 37.

41 Mary Louise PRATT, *Imperial Eyes. Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London 2008, p. 8.

42 Homi K. BHABHA, *The location of culture*, London et al. 1994.



Andreas Köller

## One's Own Concept Challenged

Renegotiations of the Concept of the »Missionary« in  
the Age of Decolonisation and Ecumenism<sup>1</sup>

In historical research, the time is largely past when mission historians depicted missionary endeavours in a unidirectional way, according to which Western missionaries brought Christianity, »civilisation« or certain values to non-European countries – or to put it in more critical terminology: imposed it on the indigenous people. Instead, research has become increasingly aware of the fact that all sides involved in the mission contact went through transformations and modifications due to the encounter with the respective »Other«. The transformations on the side of the missionaries will be the object of this essay, too.

However, in the contact zones emerging in the missionary context, it was not only particular attitudes of the Western missionaries that were questioned, but the concept of the missionary could be challenged as a whole. This concept of the missionary is often conceptualised as a fixed entity that enters into close contact with the »mission objects«, thereby creating a contact zone. However, the concept of the missionary is itself and has always been an unstable one. What a missionary was like, or could be like, was not just determined once – either by missionary society headquarters, by mission discourse or by the individual missionary himself – and then perpetuated in the day-to-day life of the missionaries. Instead, the very conditions prevailing in each particular missionary context dramatically influenced the concept missionaries developed of themselves.

This chapter deals with redefinitions of the concept of the missionary in the postcolonial era – with challenges of this concept in the particular con-

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1 The chapter is based on more extensive reflections in the author's PhD thesis, which was developed in the same research project; cf. Andreas HEIL, *Neuausrichtungen der protestantischen Mission im Zeitalter von Dekolonisation und Ökumene. Die Basler Mission in Indien, 1947–1972*, Dissertation, Ruhr-Universität Bochum 2014. The author is grateful for the support in the archive in Basel (hereafter referred to as Basler Mission/mission21), in the Cadbury Library in Birmingham (hereafter: UBL/CMS) and at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London (hereafter: SOAS/CWM, LMS). The author thanks the participants of the conference for their valuable comments and contributions in the discussion and Julia Kind for commenting on and proofreading the manuscript at different stages of its creation.

ditions of that time in general and particularly within part of the mainline missionary movement.<sup>2</sup> The source material is mainly taken from the Basel Mission and the Church Missionary Society, and it is mainly the developments in decolonised India in the period between the late 1940s<sup>3</sup> and the late 1960s which form the background to the descriptions. The article first (1.) introduces concepts of the missionary prevailing in mission thought in the late 1940s and the framework developments that led to challenging such images of the missionary. In its second and main part (2.), the article deals with the contested process of redefining the concept of missionary work and the missionary since the late 1940s. The paper concludes (3.) with impulses for reflecting on the concept of contact zones with regard to the case presented in the chapter.

### 1. The Situation in the Late 1940s: Prevailing Images and Circumstances Challenging them

In the mission fields, the exact role of the missionary has always been subject to negotiation. Nevertheless, in popular thought there was and is a tendency to create clear images of the missionary. »Popular stereotypes presuppose that there was one identifiable creature – the nineteenth-century missionary«,<sup>4</sup> as Diane Langmore concluded in her study of nineteenth-century missionaries in Papua. And this tendency to stereotyping was just as prevalent at the time which this article deals with. However, fundamental changes in the environment of missions challenged those images.

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2 I restrict myself to the mainstream missionary movement and thus neglect, for example, developments occurring in the history of faith missions which was quite different to the history of missions presented in this paper. Cf. amongst others Timothy YATES, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge/New York 1994, pp. 209–211 for the developments of faith missions after 1945.

3 At several points, this article will take the year 1945 as a point of departure for its argumentation. It does so, even though it is well aware that the missionary movement itself did not see a deep rupture in this year, and certain continuities in mission structures and strategies support such a view. Nevertheless, as mission theorists and mission historians have rightly emphasised in retrospect, it was in this very time that »a gale of wind [came up], which took the historic missionary movement in new directions«; cf. Bernard THOROGOOD, *The Gales of Change*, in: Id. (ed.), *Gales of change. Responding to a Shifting Missionary Context. The Story of the London Missionary Society 1945–1977*, Geneva 1994, pp. 1–18, at pp. 17f.

4 Diane LANGMORE, *Missionary Lives. Papua, 1874–1914*, HI 1989, pp. xv–xviii. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. xv–xvii for a presentation of prevalent stereotypes in research and popular accounts on missionaries.

### 1.1 Prevailing Images of the Missionary

The concept of the missionary which dominated the mission discourse in the late 1940s sounds quite familiar to us: Missionaries were widely seen as a group of pioneers to be sent from the established churches to the mission fields and to be sent ever and anon anew to the borderlands of Christendom. It was seen as the missionaries' main task to preach to the Heathen and to found new Christian communities. However, in this perspective, working in the churches was not seen as a permanent task for missionaries: In the words of nineteenth-century mission thinker Henry Venn, still often cited in the twentieth century,<sup>5</sup> mission should only be a scaffolding for the edified indigenous church, accompanying the church in its formative phase, but leaving it behind as soon as the church is stable, in order to continue the missions' real task.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, Jeffrey Cox reminds mission historians that the image of the

itinerant evangelist in a pith helmet [...] deeply ingrained in popular culture [is] very misleading [as] [t]he overwhelming majority of missionaries were not wandering preachers in search of converts but institution-builders presiding over churches, schools, and hospitals.<sup>7</sup>

And many researchers, who spent their time meticulously tracing the footprints of individual missionaries, were soon to find that only a minority of missionaries spent most of their efforts on travelling and preaching, while

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5 Cf. e. g. Max WARREN, *Untitled [Confidential Memorandum]*, March 1952, in: CBL/CMS, G59/AP 6, p. 1.

6 Cf. particularly Henry Venn's instructions to CMS Madagascar missionaries in 1863: The missions' object is »the raising up of a Native Church – self-supporting, self-governing, self-extending. The Mission is the scaffolding; the Native Church is the edifice. The removal of the scaffolding is the proof that the building is completed. You will have achieved the greatest success when you have taught your converts to do without you and can leave them, for fresh inroads into the regions beyond«; as cited by Wilbert R. SHENK, *Henry Venn – Missionary Statesman*, Eugene, OR 1983, p. 46. Cf. Peter BEYERHAUS, *Die Selbständigkeit der jungen Kirchen als missionarisches Problem*, Wuppertal-Barmen 1956, pp. 41–44 for an analysis of Henry Venn's position in this regard.

7 Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines. Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818–1940*, Stanford, CA 2002, p. 7. *Ibid.*, pp. 7f. continues by stating that a »typical missionary in the late nineteenth century [...] was not a male itinerant preacher but a female schoolteacher or administrator«, thus also illuminating the prevailing image's ignorance of the gender realities in mission work. This claim is no less true of postcolonial times because social work then played an even more important role in missions, as part 2.1 will show. Even though the redefinition of the missionary after 1945 had a gender dimension, this challenge to the concept of the missionary was not as intensively discussed in the conversations occurring around and inside the missionary movement as those challenges presented in part 1.2.

many missionaries were quite content to engage in congregation building, education, or administrative work in the churches.

Nevertheless, what was a fact in the reality of mission work was not necessarily prevalent in the missionary movement's imagination. Decades of mission periodicals, which depicted the missionary as someone who pursues a heroic »mission, which, undaunted by death, goes into close combat with heathenism [...] and pushes the front further«,<sup>8</sup> did not leave general thought in the missionary movement unaffected.<sup>9</sup> Quite the contrary, the notion, that mission is not something static and preserving, but should be a decidedly expanding endeavour, was very powerful and widely available, at least implicitly. Some missionary societies even made it explicit: the Church Missionary Society's general secretary Max Warren, for example, was at pains to emphasise in the 1950s that – in the modes they were working at the time, assisting the churches in their activities in manifold ways – »the missionary societies [were not] set [...] free to perform the tasks for which they properly exist – the pioneering of those new frontiers [...] which have not yet been marked with a cross«.<sup>10</sup> Of course, individual missionaries were influenced by this notion just as much as any other person in the missionary movement – at least, before they were sent out and then struck by the realities of the mission field. The tendency to privilege pioneering evangelism was probably even strengthened by the fact that missionaries were experienced in leaving

8 The description used here stems from Emanuel KELLERHALS, *Sind wir noch Pioniermission?*, in: *Evangelisches Missions-Magazin* 92 (1948), pp. 104–119, at p. 104: »Sind wir noch die alte Basler Mission? [...] Jene Mission des todesmutigen Nahkampfes mit dem Heidentum [...], der stets vorwärts drängenden Front?«

9 For the tendency of mission publications to spread heroic images of the missionary to their audiences cf., inter alia, Andrew N. PORTER, Introduction, in: Id. (ed.), *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880–1914*, Grand Rapids, MI 2003, pp. 1–13, at p. 9; Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines*, pp. 116f.; id., *From the Empire of Christ to the Third World. Religion and the Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, in: Andrew S. THOMPSON (ed.), *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford 2012, pp. 76–119, at pp. 88–90. Cox himself, however, also makes the necessary qualification that already in the nineteenth century »the missionary movement had worked hard [...] to transform the image of a missionary« and that »[by] the time the heroic explorer and enemy of the slave trade David Livingstone was buried in Westminster Abbey, missionaries were no longer sent out as little detachments of maniacs, but as social reformers who were feted for devoting their lives to making the world a better place«; *ibid.*, p. 90.

10 International Missionary Council Assembly Report 1958, p. 94; as cited by Daniel Thambyrajah NILES, *Upon the Earth. The Mission of God and the Missionary Enterprise of the Churches*, London 1962, p. 33. – It has to be mentioned, however, that Max Warren himself slightly qualified this statement by using a broad definition of »pioneering frontiers«, not restricting frontiers to their geographical meaning, but also talking about societal frontiers; cf. the remarks in the Minutes of a »Conversation between the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mr. Kenneth Grubb and M. A. C. W[arren], on Monday, May 12, 1952, on the subject of the Memorandum presented to the Executive Committee in March, 1952«, CBL/CMS/G59/AP 2, p. 2.

firm churches behind in order to promote Christianity beyond Christendom's frontiers – as this was exactly what they had done in leaving the churches of their homelands for mission work.

## 1.2 The Challenges of the Concept by Nationalist and Ecumenical Discourses

While the realities in the mission fields had always forced the concept of the missionary to adjust in some way, the general conception of what a missionary is or could be was questioned in the twentieth century in an unprecedented way. These fundamental challenges were influenced by indigenous nationalism just as much as by ecumenical thought. Around 1945, decolonisation was increasingly and obviously on its way. Moreover, important milestones in the history of mission theory, like the World Mission Conference of Whitby, were taking place. Those challenges gained such momentum that the traditional mission organisations inevitably had to deal with them.<sup>11</sup>

In the late colonial and postcolonial eras, with radical nationalist forces coming into power in some countries, traditional mission endeavours in general were questioned.<sup>12</sup> It has to be stressed that some radical nationalist attitudes towards mission followed, rather unjustly, the notion that mission and colonialism were always closely connected.<sup>13</sup> However, it is easy to understand where such attitudes originated: In newly founded nations, especially in Asia, postcolonial anxieties concerning their nation's integrity and stability led to suspicions towards an enterprise which was foreign and Western (i. e. potentially neo-colonial),<sup>14</sup> and which promoted religious conversions as well as aimed at building up distinctive communities (i. e. expansive and potentially disintegrating).<sup>15</sup> These opinions, be they appropriate or not, shaped

11 Cf. for example Fritz RAAFLAUB, »Die Krisis der Mission am Ende der Kolonialepoche«. Paper held in Zürich, 27 April 1959, Basler Mission/mission 21, Zwischenarchiv/HA0-W02-07-797 or Max WARREN, Untitled Document [Confidential Memorandum], March 1952, CBL/CMS/G59/AP 6, front page and pp. 3–5 for mission leader's reflection on important changes in the environment of missions and on how those changes forced missionary societies to rethink their shape and structure.

12 Dana Lee ROBERT, *Christian Mission. How Christianity Became a World Religion*, Malden, MA 2009, pp. 67–69.

13 While earlier works on mission and colonialism have strongly stressed that a close connection between the two phenomena existed, recent studies have argued for more differentiated and nuanced judgements; cf. Hilde NIELSEN et al., Introduction, in: Id. et al. (eds.), *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Unto the Ends of the World*, Leiden 2011, pp. 1–22, at pp. 4–6.

14 RAAFLAUB, *Die Krisis der Mission am Ende der Kolonialepoche*, p. 4.

15 Chad M. BAUMAN, *Postcolonial Anxiety and Anti-Conversion Sentiment in the Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee*, in: *International Journal of Hindu Stu-*

the political discourse in the decolonising and decolonised countries and had significant consequences for missions: In some countries (e. g. in China), missionaries were expelled, and in others (e. g. in India), visa procedures became difficult for missionaries and foreign missionaries' itinerant preaching was restricted.<sup>16</sup> »Preaching to the Heathen, as Hebich once did,« a Basel Mission visitor in India described the situation in the mid-1950s, »preaching to the Heathen done by European or American missionaries, foreigners, as the Indian says, is not allowed in the new India, is not even possible«.<sup>17</sup>

The ecumenical discourse questioned prevailing images of the missionary in quite a similar way. In global Christian discourse, a particular view became increasingly important: Mission should be a task fulfilled by the whole Christian community, and therefore mission and church should not be two separate entities. As two parts of the same entity they should intermingle (or integrate, as mission discourse generally had it) and – ideally – be one. It was in the former mission fields where this thought gained ground first. Of course, this was connected with the pursuit of independence mentioned above: For those people in the mission churches demanding self-governance, only such a full integration of mission and church ensured that indigenous churches would not be subject to a disguised threat from an influential counterpart and that the former mission churches would not be reduced to the status of second-class members, in need of missionary bodies as inter-church mediators within the global community of churches.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, as was stated in mission discourse of that time, such a »desire [...] to establish a new relationship between missionary society and young church [...] was] actuated not only by a nationalistic attitude and by the questions of prestige [...] but by] the Christian desire [...] to achieve a genuine oecumenical[!] fellowship«.<sup>19</sup> And nor were the pleas for integration by any means separated from general

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dies 12,2 (2008), pp. 181–213, at pp. 194–203 for an illuminating account on those fears of disintegration in the Indian case.

16 Cf. for the restrictions in China and India Jeffrey COX, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700*, London 2008, pp. 243–245; Judith M. BROWN, *Indian Christians and Nehru's Nation-State*, in: Richard Fox YOUNG (ed.), *India and the Indianness of Christianity. Essays on Understanding, Historical, Theological, and Bibliographical*, in Honor of Robert Eric Frykenberg, Grand Rapids, MI 2009, pp. 217–234, at pp. 228–233.

17 Bericht von Landesbischof D. Haug über seine Indienreise am 26. Februar 1956 in der Leonhardskirche in Stuttgart, *Basler Mission/mision 21*, Zwischenarchiv/PS2-C02-02-2102, p. 10: »Heidenpredigt, so wie sie einst Hebich gehalten hat [...], Heidenpredigt von europäischen oder amerikanischen Missionaren, von Ausländern, wie der Inder sagt, in dem neuen Indien ist nicht erlaubt, ist [...] garnicht möglich.« Haug is referring to nineteenth-century Basel missionary Samuel Hebich (1803–1868).

18 Cf. for example Basel Mission's RAAFLAUB, *Die Krisis der Mission am Ende der Kolonialepoche*, pp. 5–11, who identifies such connections between nationalist and ecumenical discourses.

19 Georg F. VICEDOM, *The Rôle of the Missionary. A Consultation at Nagpur*, in: *International Review of Mission* 51 (1962), pp. 163–170, at p. 165.

mission discourse: The idea of Mission and Church being one could always be found in the missionary movement and in the history of the Christian church. And in the course of the first half of the twentieth century it had already become dominant, at least in the leading circles of mission theory. It found its expression, for example, in the 1947 Whitby agreement on a »partnership in obedience«, meaning that missions and churches should show their obedience to the Gospel by acting in partnership as missionary forces.<sup>20</sup> In any case, the practice of only non-church workers taking over the missionary mandate, which had evolved due the Protestant churches' initial disregard of the endeavour,<sup>21</sup> was difficult to maintain in such a discursive environment.

## 2. The Encounter of Different Conceptions of the Missionary

I understand the case under consideration as a contact zone in the sense defined by Mary Louise Pratt.<sup>22</sup> In this contact zone, there was an encounter of groups of people, who differed in their conception of what a missionary is or should be. Their respective conceptions, thus, met, clashed, and entered into negotiation: A traditional concept of mission and missionaries came into contact with different patterns influenced by nationalist and ecumenical discourse. However, this encounter was not simply one between Western missionaries on the one side and indigenous bearers of the other concept on the other side: Instead, there was a very important encounter of different groups within the missionary movement itself.<sup>23</sup> Besides, the discussion was not a theoretical and abstract one, but a discussion directly connected with the everyday and working life of the people involved and disputing. It was a discussion, which touched basic elements of their personal and professional self-understanding. In the course of this encounter and its conversations, a new conception of what a missionary is emerged.

20 For information about the World Missionary Conference in Whitby and its discussions cf. Wolfgang GÜNTHER, *Von Edinburgh nach Mexico City. Die ekklesiologischen Bemühungen der Weltmissionskonferenzen*, Stuttgart 1970, pp. 70–73; Graham A. DUNCAN, *The Growth of Partnership in Mission in Global Mission History during the Twentieth Century*, in: HTS Theologies Studies/Theological Studies 63 (2007), pp. 1033–1065, at pp. 1040–1042.

21 However, in the course of the nineteenth century the relation between the missionary movement and the institutional churches was renegotiated and a closer relationship was developed; cf. for those renegotiations Johannes AAGAARD, *Mission, Konfession, Kirche. Die Problematik ihrer Integration im 19. Jahrhundert in Deutschland*, Lund 1967.

22 Mary Louise PRATT, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London 1992, pp. 4 and 6f.; id., *Arts of the Contact Zone*, in: *Profession* (1991), pp. 33–40, at p. 34.

23 The concluding remarks will return to how this chapter argues for broadening the concept of contact zones in this regard.



At this point, it is important to explain why it is helpful to use the concept of contact zones in the case presented: By conceptualising the processes of redefining the missionary as a contact zone, this article is open to understanding this processes as a dialogical one: It illuminates how these redefinitions were contested and how these contestations were constructive as they allowed bringing in elements of the traditional concept of the missionary into the redefinition process. In this way, I take a stand against narratives about what the development of mission after 1945 was and had to be in the given circumstances. Here, I refer especially to narratives which state that mission simply gave way to the expectations laid upon them by nationalist or ecumenical influences, and which argue that mission just adopted the logics coming from outside.

## 2.1 In Retrospect – and in Short: Redefinitions After 1945

To begin with, it is necessary to introduce what are seen as the obvious redefinitions of mission (and that also means the missionary) after 1945. In retrospect, several major redefinitions of mission after 1945 are discernible, which were also the missions' own responses to the challenges to the traditional concept of mission. Two of them are of major importance with regard to the previously prevalent image of the missionary as the preaching pioneer who was sent from the established churches to the mission fields.<sup>24</sup>

Firstly, in the time after 1945, it appears as if mission just »became development«. In the given conditions mission concentrated even more than before on »service-oriented mission work«<sup>25</sup> instead of preaching. Due to the spread of the theory of modernisation throughout the world, which made »development« [...] the *raison d'être* of independent [...] states«,<sup>26</sup> such a redefinition was even widely welcomed in independent states. In the decolonising countries, for example in India, the visa-approving authorities

24 How prevalent this image was, is illustrated by the fact that mission leaders in the late 1940s felt the urgent need to deal explicitly with this image and its challenges by new circumstances when they got into direct conversation with the mission supporters. The above mentioned article of KELLERHALS, *Sind wir noch Pioniermission?*, for example, was based on a talk held by this Basel Mission leader at the annual meeting of the Bern mission club.

25 Ruth Compton BROUWER, *When Missions Became Development. Ironies of »NGOisation« in Mainstream Canadian Churches in the 1960s*, in: Hilde NIELSEN et al. (eds.), *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Unto the Ends of the World*, Leiden 2011, pp. 259–291, at p. 263.

26 David MAXWELL, *Post-Colonial Christianity in Africa*, in: Hugh McLEOD (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 9: *World Christianities, c. 1914–c. 2000*, Cambridge 2006, pp. 401–421, at p. 411.

distinguished between missionaries being sent to do evangelical work and those being sent to work in the social or development sector – with the latter obtaining visas much more easily.<sup>27</sup> On the surface level, it seems as if these redefinitions entailed an abandonment of conversion as a goal: In India, for example, many missionary societies introduced the pattern in their schools of religious instructions only being given when their pupils' parents requested it explicitly<sup>28</sup> – thus trying to appease nationalists' fears of ongoing subliminal influences<sup>29</sup> of the nation's youth. Seemingly, in processes like these, »the churches' social activism had become »unhitched« from its original mandate [...] to win overseas souls for Christ».<sup>30</sup>

Secondly, the relationship between mission and church was redefined by implementing integration schemes. This meant that in the end, the mission sector ceased to exist as a separate entity in the mission fields and became incorporated into a church which was supposed to undertake missionary activities on its own. The idea of integration spread in global mission discourse, too, as can be seen, for example, in the merger of the World Christian Council and the International Missionary Council in 1961.

Both redefinitions included a rejection of the missionary as a preacher as well as of the missionary as a pioneer setting up new churches. And both redefinitions came along with the described conditions in the global mission discourse and the political restrictions of Western missionaries' evangelistic work given in independent countries. This is what makes it so easy to suggest that missions were merely driven by external influences which they had to accept fully.

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27 This is, for example, what Basel Mission leaders and Basel missionaries in India observed; cf. Hermann WITSCHI, *Indien*, in: *Jahresbericht der Basler Mission* (1955), pp. 14–20, at p. 15; Christian SCHULER, *Wieder in Indien*, in: *Evangelischer Heidenbote* (1953), pp. 84–87; 90; 98–101, at pp. 86f. Because of this, some leading Indian Christians even brought up the idea to label new missionaries as »social workers« in order to avoid the impending restrictions; cf. Henry C. LEFEVER: Letter to Charles Stuart Craig, 21.05.1953, in: SOAS/CWM, LMS/1951–1960/IN 5/E, pp. 3f. for such a suggestion by members of the National Christian Council towards a member of the *London Missionary Society*.

28 Jacques ROSSEL, *Historischer Aufriß*, in: Fritz RAAFLAUB (ed.), *Der bleibende Auftrag. 150 Jahre Basler Mission*, Stuttgart 1965, pp. 57–63, at pp. 60f. for example for the Basel Mission case.

29 The fear of ongoing subliminal influences of non-Indian, non-Hindu groups in India was prevalent in Hindu nationalist circles and often expressed – most prominently and influential by the so called Niyogi-Report of 1956; cf. M. Bhawani Shankar NIYOGI, *Report of the Christian Missionary Enquiry Committee Madhya Pradesh, Nagpur 1956* and – for a contextualisation and discussion of the report – BAUMAN, *Postcolonial Anxiety*.

30 BROUWER, *When Missions Became Development*, p. 285.

## 2.2 Redefinitions Under Dispute: The Dialogical Process of new Missionary Concepts Emerging

However, these narratives do not tell the whole story. I propose that under the surface of these big redefinitions, missions did not merely bend to circumstances. Instead, I argue that what emerged was a product of different missionary concepts brought into contact by their representatives, thus allowing redefinitions which included elements contributed by both sides. In order to understand what this means, one needs to take a closer look at the processes of redefinition. In particular, one has to focus on the claims brought into the conversation by critics of the new mission and missionary concept.

Those new concepts were partly disputed by individual groups in the indigenous churches, which were eager to maintain the influx of missionary personnel allocated to evangelical, but not to social work,<sup>31</sup> since they opposed »developments which conceptualise Christian mission solely in forms of a diluted technical aid program under a Christian banner«.<sup>32</sup>

And there were groups inside the missionary movement which opposed those redefinitions promoted by their colleagues in a similar way because those groups feared the dilution of what they had always stood for. For example, criticising the enhancement of development work in the missionary societies' agenda as secularisation was representative for some missionary societies' discourse in the 1960s and 1970s, for instance for the Basel Mission.<sup>33</sup>

Those redefinitions which promoted integrating mission and missionaries into the church appeared even more disputable to missionaries and mission leaders. For placing the churches at the centre of the missionary society's work and the missionaries into church service rekindled old reservations in the missionary movement towards churches. To the missionary movement, churches seemed to be prone to lethargy with respect to the missionary task. The new church-centric approach was accordingly hard to convey to mission supporters at home: »There is a crisis at home, too«, a Basel Mission secretary declared in a reflection on missions' challenges in the late 1950s, »one [reason] for this is that many mission supporters and groups are not able to change [...]. One prefers to hear of advances, of new missions, of success [...].

31 Brouwer, *When Missions Became Development*, pp. 278f.

32 This statement by a Burmese Christian, who is unfortunately not identified any more closely, is reproduced in RAAFLAUB, *Die Krisis der Mission am Ende der Kolonialepoche*, pp. 12f.: »[i]ch fürchte aber, hier handelt es sich bereits um Entwicklungen, bei denen christliche Mission nur noch in den Formen eines verwässerten technischen Hilfsprogramms unter christlicher Fahne gedacht wird«.

33 Cf. for example the collected material in *Basler Mission / mission21*, Q-41,23.

If you report on the churches abroad, some groups blame us that we have obviously ceased to be a mission and that we have become ecclesiastically institutionalised«. <sup>34</sup>

As a result, some missionaries and missionary institutions in the West quite decidedly opposed the idea of missionaries as integrated personnel of the indigenous churches. For example, in the Church Missionary Society an organisational reform was considered, a reform which was intended as a means to dilute full integration in the mission fields: In 1952, CMS general secretary Max Warren wrote an influential memorandum demanding that the CMS should be structured »on the analogy of a »Missionary Order««. <sup>35</sup> This meant that in the mission fields missionaries should be full and integrated members of the church, but should also still be members of a parallel body, to which the members were to owe their »primary loyalty«, <sup>36</sup> as it was repeatedly phrased in subsequent conversations about this memorandum. To some CMS members, such a constitution seemed to be the logical instrument for keeping alive what were thought of as the essential elements of the concept of a missionary. As, for example, the CMS Asia Secretary Campbell Seymour Milford remarked in a speech in defence of Warren's memorandum against criticism from its own ranks: »The point which we do feel is essential [...] is that missionaries go as representatives of the sending Church and they do therefore owe a loyalty to the organisation«, because »however closely [...] the missionary] identifies himself with the Church of which he becomes a member, this identification can never be absolutely complete«, but »[if] it were, [...] then the missionary would have ceased to be in a strict sense a missionary at all«. <sup>37</sup>

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34 RAAFLAUB, *Die Krisis der Mission am Ende der Kolonialepoche*, pp. 14f.: »Es gibt [...] auch eine Krise in der Heimat. [...] Die eine [Ursache] ist die Unfähigkeit vieler Missionsfreunde und -kreise, sich umzustellen [...]. Man hört ja lieber vom Vormarsch, von neuem Einsatz, von Erfolg [...]. Wenn man von den Kirchen draussen berichtet, machen uns manche Kreise den Vorwurf, wir seien offenbar nicht mehr Mission, sondern verkirchlicht«.

35 MAX WARREN, *Untitled Document [Confidential Memorandum]*, March 1952, CBL/CMS/G59/AP 6, p. 7.

36 CAMPBELL SEYMOUR MILFORD, *Letter to Carol Graham from 29.10.1953*, CBL/CMS/G2 Ig/O 1/1, p. 1. However, in his later correspondence, Milford tried to qualify this statement by stating that »we do not see any inconsistency between loyalty to the Society and complete loyalty to the local Church« and that »there surely always must be different circles of loyalty which are bound to some extent to overlap but need not compete in any bad sense«; cf. CAMPBELL SEYMOUR MILFORD, *Letter to Carol Graham from 23.04.1954*, CBL/CMS/G2 Ig/O 1/1, p. 1.

37 *Ibid.*

### 2.3 Redefinitions Executed and Lived by Individual Missionaries

These statements are not meant to accuse the missionary movement of stubbornness or immobility, or to depict the redefinitions mentioned before as final rejections of those attitudes. Instead, I would like to argue that such opposing attitudes should also be seen as constructive contributions to the redefinitions of mission and missionary after 1945.

While the external influences from nationalist and ecumenical discourse made the perpetuation of the traditional concept as a whole impossible, the insistence on certain aspects of this traditional concept prevented missions from simply falling into line with outside expectations. And such contributions were essential to those missionaries who tried to continue working as missionaries, because it helped those of them, who thought of those traditional aspects as being fundamental, not to get lost by giving up everything.

It was the critical attitudes which preserved the redefinitions of mission after 1945 from being weak dilutions of what was seen as the original mandate: to give visible and convincing account on their Christian belief. Following the impulses of traditional missionary thought allowed missionaries to keep alive essential aspects of the old image in a shape of mission which was, presumably, very different on the surface. Stressing the importance of missionaries as preachers and pioneers allowed the individual missionaries to strive for and to find practices of preaching and pioneering in their new forms of work, too.

It is illustrative in this regard, for example, to see how members of missionary societies positioned themselves in relation to the evident pressure to redefine their work as something similar to the work done by development aid organisations, i. e. social and development work. It was due to fears of straying from the missionary mandate that the missionaries had to reflect on how to sustain their former attitude in their new working environment. But it was possible for them to recognise for themselves that work done in the social sector, work so similar to the work done by decidedly secular organisations, could still be seen as a preaching activity, i. e. (as some missionaries put it) »preach[ing] the word by action«.<sup>38</sup> It was the missionaries' own aptitude to find modes of perception not to see their work being secularised to the point of becoming pure development aid. It was possible for the missionaries to approach their social work in a manner that enabled them to continue seeing themselves as spiritual companions to the people they worked with, and thus

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38 Mollie SMITH, *A Living Gospel. Word and Action*, in: *The Chronicle* [of the London Missionary Society] (1965), pp. 262–264 and 266, at p. 263; Cf. similarly Jacques ROSSEL, *Der bleibende Auftrag*, in: Fritz RAAFLAUB (ed.), *Der bleibende Auftrag. 150 Jahre Basler Mission*, Stuttgart 1965, pp. 246–250, at p. 247.

to still be preachers of the Gospel. Insofar as they recognised something like this for themselves, it was possible for them not to join in in the complaints about the end of the missionary. From such a perspective, for instance for the Basel India missionary Jacques Rossel in the 1950s, it was quite natural to state that a missionary was »every person who places himself at the disposal of any relief organisation« when he does it »out of inner conviction«.<sup>39</sup>

A similar line of argument was followed in considering the question of missionaries who were not working as pioneers but in the churches: »Everything that mission does to open the church's eyes to the mission task [...] everything, that contributes to the missionary movement remaining dynamic [...], is pioneer work«, Basel Mission Africa Secretary Emanuel Kellerhals pointed out in such a manner as early as 1948, leading him to conclude: »It is not about the kind of pioneer mission, but about the spirit of pioneering«.<sup>40</sup>

In each case, the reasoning was quite similar: Not the occupation itself, but primarily a fundamental missionary impulse was considered the essential characteristic of a missionary.<sup>41</sup> In such a perspective, those missionaries who had chosen to become a missionary for genuinely religious reasons and who acted accordingly were still able to feel as pioneers or as preachers, even though patterns of work had changed dramatically.

However, this required of missionaries more than ever before to develop a self-understanding which enabled them to bring their decision to become a missionary, which they based on a previous understanding of what mission and missionaries were, in line with new understandings so powerful that they had to be followed in at least some respects. This was a challenging task as it meant finding a path between a sense of betraying either the original mandate or powerful mainstream discourses. And it was challenging because it meant finding ways to cope with transitional ambiguity in their self-conception as a missionary during this redefining process.

Not every missionary was able to reflect and reconnect these aspects of different missionary concepts. But those who were able to see that not every aspect of their former self-image as a missionary had to be sustained and

39 Jacques ROSSEL, »Mission und Entwicklungshilfe«. Copy of an article published in BUND on 26.02.1961, Basler Mission/mission 21, Q-41,23, p. 3 (emphasis in the original): »WER IST DER MISSIONAR? [...] [Verkündigung geschieht auch] durch jeden Menschen, der aus innerer Ueberzeugung sich irgendeinem Hilfswerk zur Verfügung stellt.«

40 KELLERHALS, Sind wir noch Pioniermission?, pp. 118f.: »[A]lles, was die Mission tut, um der Kirche die Augen zu öffnen für ihre Missionsaufgabe, [...] alles, was dazu beiträgt, dass die missionarische Bewegung im Fluss bleibt [...], das ist Pionierarbeit. [...] Wesentlich ist nicht die Form der Pioniermission, sondern der Pioniergeist.«

41 Repeated emphasis was put on this aspect, e.g. in the Basel Mission; cf. inter alia Hermann WITSCHI, Bericht über die Indienreise 1952 from 14 August 1952, Basler Mission/mission 21, C-4-7,6, p. 13; Jacques ROSSEL, Letter to Hermann Witschi from 1 August 1957, Basler Mission/mission 21, Zwischenarchiv/PS2-C02-01-2086.1, p. 2; ROSSEL, Der bleibende Auftrag, pp. 248f.

that the basis of missionary self-understanding could remain unaffected by the developments on the surface of activities were able to come to grips with the new demands while retaining a missionary self-understanding which deserves its name. Those missionaries who were able to develop a fluid self-understanding drawing on different missionary concepts could survive as missionaries in new conditions.

This essay considers it justified to think of those missionaries as »third space« people in the sense of the term introduced by Homi K. Bhabha:<sup>42</sup> Confronted with different concepts, these missionaries blended aspects of different missionary concepts and created a fluid, distinct and individual new home of missionary self-understanding for themselves to live in: They »have decided to create new *routes* for themselves as an alternative to finding their *roots*«<sup>43</sup> in self-conceptions already existing.

### 3. Discussion:

#### On »Contact Zones« in the Light of the Case Presented

The final part of this essay aims, on the one hand, to summarise the findings of the case study of this paper: In short, this article is about how the concept of mission and the missionary was redefined in the process of different conceptions meeting after 1945, in the environment surrounding the missionary movement as well as inside of it. It has shown how the concepts of the more powerful side, which questioned traditional characteristics of the concept of the missionary, were influential in the mission's redefinition procedures. But the article also highlighted contributions not visible at first glance, contributions which were brought into the debate by dissenting opinion leaders.

On the other hand, the article aims to give some thought-provoking impulses on the concept of the contact zone through the peculiarities of and reflections on the case presented. The argument – explicitly or implicitly – assumes a fourfold position towards the concept of contact zones. First, by throwing light on the late colonial and postcolonial times, the article illuminates that in a contact zone, the Western missionary is not necessarily the more powerful agent. However, just as much as we are now used to seeing the indigenous position as being influential in colonial encounters, we have to take seriously the contributions brought into the contact zone by the seemingly weaker Western participants in the postcolonial age. Second, the paper re-echoes

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42 Homi K. BHABHA, *The Location of Culture*, London/New York 1994, pp. 53–56.

43 For this description of what »third space« people are cf. Jonathan C. INGLEBY, *Beyond Empire. Postcolonialism & Mission in a Global Context*, Central Milton Keynes 2011, p. 104 (emphasis in the original).



the important statement that conflicts and contestations between bearers of different concepts occurred in the contact zones, but did not have to be destructive, even if these conflicts were not dissolved in the end. It argues that disagreements should be seen as very constructive parts of the conversations: In this view, it were such disagreements that were expressed clearly which ensured that the different participants in the encounter could make their contributions. Third, I argue for a concept of contact zones which does not restrict itself to analyses of meetings between representatives of big cultural blocs: For Mary Louise Pratt the »[c]ontact zone« [...] is often synonymous with »colonial frontier«<sup>44</sup> between the colonisers and the colonised, between the Europeans and the non-Europeans – and for many mission historians following her footsteps: between the missionaries and the indigenous people. But for this essay it is not: The defining line between different missionary concepts, for example, cut right through the Western missionary movement, challenging the often implicitly assumed homogeneity of the Western group. This aspect deserves to be taken even further, since the use of the concept of »contact zone« in research appears to be ambivalent: Even though it aims at breaking the essentialist dichotomies of big cultural blocs by introducing cultural brokers operating in the contact zones and by accentuating transcultural results emerging from the contact zones, the concept implicitly creates an opposition of distinct cultural blocs as its point of departure: It is Westerners meeting non-Westerners in the contact zones and the transcultural results are to be explained in relation to the Western respectively non-Western base material. This basic assumption is negated in the case presented by using the concept of »contact zones« for contacts occurring mainly in what could be called the Western side of the missionary encounter. Fourth and last, by introducing Homi K. Bhabha's concept of »*third space*«, a hint is given as to how the concepts of contact zone and »*third space*« may be usefully combined: The concept of »contact zone« is helpful in order to perceive the intercultural nature of encounters, and helps to remain open to results and reactions apart from the alternative between imposition and radical resistance. When it comes to appreciating the capacities for adaptation of the people involved, and when it comes to grasping the indeterminacy of the transcultural results, it is useful and essential to have assisting concepts like »*third space*« which have a clearer focus on individuals and, thus, can better illuminate how individuals navigated these contact zones.

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44 PRATT, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 6.



Heather J. Sharkey

## The Case of Henry Athanassian, an Armenian in the Suez Canal Zone

Questioning Assumptions about  
Missions and Missionaries

### Introduction

On Christmas Day in 1953, Egyptian police in the Suez Canal Zone town of Port Said arrested a sixty-three-year-old Armenian named Henry Athanassian, after receiving word that he had broken into a locked apartment. This apartment was in »Shaftesbury House«, or as the building was more commonly known around town, »the Bible House«, which belonged to a British Christian mission known as the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS). News of the arrest immediately reached Port Said's Anglican chaplain, who rushed from church to the police station, where he identified Athanassian as a loyal member of his congregation and as a longstanding employee of this Bible society. But the Egyptian police needed little persuading. According to papers in the Bible Society Archives of Cambridge University Library, the police quickly decided that nothing wrong had occurred, and sent Athanassian home. Today, this incident and the records that survive about it illuminate the social tensions and hierarchies that were dividing the Christians within a Christian mission during a moment of imperial collapse. This moment occurred less than two years after anti-British riots broke out in Cairo and Ismailiyya (another Suez Canal town), and less than three years before Egyptians nationalized the Suez Canal and expelled all British people and organizations from Egypt.

For this volume dedicated to the study of European missions in »contact zones«,<sup>1</sup> this chapter considers the circumstances surrounding Athanassian's arrest before examining the history of the BFBS, its character as a mission, and its operations in Port Said. As a major international shipping hub located at the Mediterranean end of the Suez Canal, Port Said was the quintessential global contact zone: sea travelers converged there from all over the world, in most cases pausing briefly before they moved on. In the early 1950s, when the British Empire was succumbing to the political and economic pressures of decolonization, and when social hierarchies between British and non-British

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1 Mary Louise PRATT, *Imperial Eyes. Studies in Travel Writing and Acculturation*, London 2008.

people were therefore also falling apart, Port Said – and Egypt at large – was in a state of political flux, and contacts were causing friction. These tensions were on full display as the case of Henry Athanassian unfolded.

This contribution will argue that the incident of Athanassian's arrest in 1953 reveals a British mission which was torn between British parochialism and xenophobia on the one hand, and Christian pluralism and universalism on the other, during a transitional and imminently postcolonial era. His case also suggests ambiguities about who qualified as a European – in this case a Briton – and about who counted as a »missionary«. This last point is particularly relevant for a publishing organization like the BFBS, which performed no baptisms and sponsored no churches, and which aimed to be a business as well as a mission.

### The Backstory: Henry Athanassian and the Christmas Arrest

To begin, it is worth surveying the case of Henry Athanassian in closer detail. We must consider who he was, what he did, and why the police arrested him in 1953.

In 1953, Henry Athanassian was a newly retired employee of the BFBS, which had as its mission the translation, printing, distribution, and sale of Bibles. Athanassian had worked for the society in Egypt from 1909 until 1953. He started as a typist, but over the years assumed greater responsibility within an organization that had recurring problems with maintaining its British management in Egypt. Indeed, for two separate five-year periods (from 1926 to 1931 and again from 1941 to 1946), when the society's headquarters in London were unable to send a British supervisor, Athanassian served as the *de facto* agent in Port Said, Egypt.<sup>2</sup> In this capacity, he managed logistics and finances for a Bible operation that covered the global shipping traffic through the Suez Canal as well as ground distribution for an area that variously stretched from Syria to Zanzibar. In other words, for ten years Athanassian did the work of a British regional director but without enjoying either the job title or the salary that a British agent would have had.

Early in 1953, as his retirement approached and the modesty of his pension became clear, Athanassian wrote to the society's newly appointed British Agent in Cairo, some 125 miles away, to ask for permission to continue

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2 These details appear in the society's annual reports for the period from 1909 to 1953 and in the society's accounting files, which are preserved in the Bible Society Archives, Cambridge University Library (henceforth BSA), BSA/E1/2/3/6/2, Accounts, 1916–1926; BSA/E1/2/3/6/3, Accounts, 1927–1936.

renting an apartment in the society's Port Said building – the »Bible House« mentioned earlier – where he had lived and worked since 1912. This arrangement had precedents; for example, the widow of a former warehouseman had been living in one of this building's apartments for several years. To his dismay, this supervisor, backed up by a new British General Secretary (organizational director) in London, answered »no« while mentioning the vague possibility of seeking private renters.<sup>3</sup> When Athanassian showed no signs of vacating the building, these two British executives made plans to evict him and asked him to give up his keys. But in fact, Athanassian had kept an extra set of keys and chose to use them just before Christmas, to enter and claim another apartment in the building. When the BFBS officials found out, telegrams flew between Port Said, Cairo, and London, and the director in London ordered a swift and strong response.<sup>4</sup>

This backstory helps to explain the sequence of events that occurred on Christmas 1953 in Port Said. It helps to explain, first, why Henry Athanassian, aided by the building's longtime Egyptian *bawwab* or doorkeeper, tried to break into an apartment that another employee – in fact, another Armenian Christian, who was his official successor in managing the Port Said office – had barred shut on the telegraphed orders of distant British superiors in Cairo and London; second, why British authorities immediately telegraphed orders to this other Armenian to notify Egyptian police of a break-in; and third, why Egyptian police arrested Athanassian on Christmas Day, but then, in apparent sympathy with his situation, let him go and essentially gave him a *carte blanche* to enter into the locked apartment. But the story did not end there. Annoyed by the inaction of the Egyptian police, the society's British director in London authorized the British Agent in Cairo to hire a lawyer and pursue a case against Athanassian in an Egyptian civil court.<sup>5</sup>

At first, the case of Henry Athanassian looks like a storm in a teacup when set against the grand disputes involving Britain, Egypt, and the Suez Canal during this mid-twentieth-century period of decolonization. One may be tempted to dismiss it, too, as a trifling episode in the labor history of

3 On the continuing rental to the widow of the »faithful Abyssinian employee Markos Girgis [who had] died about 9 years« before, cf. Athanassian to Cockburn, Port Said, 23 June 1953; on the society's rejection of his rental application, cf. General Secretary to Roe, 25 February 1954; Roe to Rev. Dr. N.J. Cockburn, Cairo, 19 September 1953; General Secretary to Crouch, [London] 22 September 1953. These documents are all in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15 (North Africa: Egypt, General Correspondence).

4 See, for example, BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15, telegram, Roe to BFBS London, Cairo, 27 December 1953; correspondence in BSA/E1/3: Property Records.

5 This other Armenian was V.M. Ekmekjian, and he apparently had a »difficult personal relationship« with Athanassian. General Secretary to Crouch, 22 September 1953. This letter and details about the court case appear in BSA/E1/3: Property Records. Cf. also BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15: General Secretary [Cockburn] to Paul [Collyer of the American Bible Society], 26 January 1954.

Christian missions, involving a dispute over retirement benefits. But this case deserves closer scrutiny. For through the story of Athanassian's exchanges with the British Secretary in London and the Agent in Cairo; through the exchanges of these two British executives along with the society's previous, retired director in England; and through the testimony of Athanassian's supporters (who included two British chaplains and his own daughter and British son-in-law in Surrey, England), we can detect some of the strains and doubts besetting British missions in this period. Having once benefitted from British imperial expansion, British missions were now contracting along with the British Empire itself.<sup>6</sup> Through the private correspondence that survives in the archives at Cambridge, we can also detect on the part of the British Agent in Cairo and the British Secretary in London an arrogance, which I suggest we call a »culture of imperiousness«, that reflected a brand of British imperialism. This imperiousness was at odds with more universal strains of British thought, and with the profoundly egalitarian impulses that had propelled the British and Foreign Bible Society in its historic commitment to translating and distributing Bibles.

### Understanding the British and Foreign Bible Society

To understand the work of the BFBS in Egypt, one should have some idea of what the society was and what it did.

Founded in London in 1804, the BFBS was a British publisher, mission, and business. It published only one book – the Bible – or portions of it. It maintained a non-sectarian Protestant character by refusing to identify with one church, and depended on diverse British supporters, such as Anglicans, Methodists, and Baptists.<sup>7</sup> The BFBS collaborated abroad with scores of other missions that represented different churches and nationalities (including Americans, Germans, Swedes, and others). The society offered grants to missionaries abroad who were working on Bible translations, and then published the results. Its first translation, for example, was a Gospel of John in a Native American language, Mohawk, issued in 1804 or 1805 for readers

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6 On the impact of anti-colonial and nationalist politics on missions in decolonizing Egypt, cf. Heather J. SHARKEY, *Empire and Muslim Conversion: Historical Reflections on Christian Missions in Egypt*, in: *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 16:1 (2005), pp. 43–60; Heather J. SHARKEY, *American Evangelicals in Egypt. Missionary Encounters in an Age of Empire*, Princeton, NJ 2008.

7 Leslie HOWSAM, *Cheap Bibles. Nineteenth-Century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society*, Cambridge 1991; James Moulton ROE, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1905–1954*, London 1965; Stephen BATALDEN et al. (eds.), *Sowing the Word. The Cultural Impact of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1804–2004*, Sheffield 2004.

in Canada.<sup>8</sup> With every year, the BFBS published more translations from all over the world, until by 1965 it was able to claim full or partial Bible translations in 872 languages.<sup>9</sup> These all testified to what the society recognized as the pluralistic global culture of Christianity in practice.

The Society expressed its evangelical character in its translation policies. Successive leaders of the organization held what the literary scholar Isabel Hofmeyr, in her study of the southern African translations of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, called »evangelical theories of language by which texts are empowered to seize and convert those they encounter«.<sup>10</sup> In other words, successive leaders of the BFBS believed that the Bible itself was a missionary insofar as the Bible had the power to transform its readers while giving comfort and guidance. The society's leaders had historically believed, too, that no language or person was too humble for a Bible. Whether prostitute or potentate, a speaker of French or of a language like Taungthu (spoken, according to the society's 1913 report, »by a race of swarthy hill-men scattered among the eastern borders of Lower Burma«), everyone deserved a comprehensible version of this mighty text.<sup>11</sup>

In other respects, however, the BFBS was *unlike* many Protestant missions. The society sponsored no churches; performed no baptisms; and in many parts of the world, checked up on or counted no converts – partly because the society specialized from its earliest days in appealing to transient people, including the seafarers who had been so central to Britain's maritime imperial expansion.<sup>12</sup> And while the BFBS was a mission, it was also a business: it sold books, though its goal was not necessarily to generate a profit. Its founders aimed to keep Bibles cheap, and priced books according to what they thought people could pay. Reports from the field suggest that, in practice, the society even accepted payment in kind – bartering a copy of the Gospels, for

8 There has been some debate about whether this Mohawk edition appeared in 1804 or 1805. Joyce BANKS, *The BFBS and Native Language Literature in Nineteenth-Century Canada*, in: BATALDEN et al. (eds.), *Sowing the Word*, pp. 316–326.

9 British and Foreign Bible Society, *The Gospel in Many Tongues. Specimens of 872 Languages in Which the BFBS Has Published or Circulated Some Portion of the Bible*, London 1965.

10 Isabel HOFMEYR, *The Portable Bunyan. A Transnational History of The Pilgrim's Progress*, Princeton, NJ 2004, pp. 13f.

11 On Taungthu, cf. the British and Foreign Bible Society, *The Hundred and Ninth Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society for the Year Ending March MCMXIII [sic, 1913]*, London 1913. Henceforth I cite reports in this series as »BFBS Annual Report« plus the year. On the linguistic egalitarianism of the BFBS, cf. Heather J. SHARKEY, *The Gospel in Arabic Tongues: British Bible Distribution, Evangelical Mission, and Language Politics in North Africa*, in: Id. (ed.), *Cultural Conversions. Unexpected Consequences of Christian Missionary Encounters in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia*, Syracuse, NY 2013, pp. 203–221.

12 Heather J. SHARKEY, *The British and Foreign Bible Society in the Suez Canal*, in: *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:3 (2011), pp. 439–456; Roald KVERNDAL, *Sowing by Sea: Empowering Seafarers with the Gospel*, in: BATALDEN et al. (eds.), *Sowing the Word*, pp. 327–343.



example, for some eggs.<sup>13</sup> Believing in values of economic self-discipline, and convinced that a person was more likely to cherish a Bible if he or she gave something for it, the society's leaders insisted on payment and gave out free copies only under exceptional circumstances (as for example, to wounded soldiers in hospitals, or to traumatized war refugees).

To effect sales, the society depended on local networks of male Bible-sellers, called *colporteurs*, and female Bible sellers, called »Bible Women«. Its activities were often extremely gender segregated.<sup>14</sup> Bible Women tended to work under the local sponsorship of other church-based Protestant missionary societies, and specialized in visiting »respectable« women in homes. By contrast, *colporteurs*, or male Bible sellers, travelled frequently and visited towns, market squares, caf  s, brothels, fairs, and harbors, where they sold their books mostly to men – with female sex workers being a notable exception in their customer base. Appeals to the latter were especially important in a town like Port Said, which was the site of a booming sex trade. The society called neither its *colporteurs* nor its Bible Women »missionaries«. Yet these workers did evangelize, not only by selling Bibles but sometimes also by trying to explain their texts. In many places (Egypt included), Bible Women also helped illiterate and semiliterate adults to learn how to read and interpret the Bible for themselves.

The American Bible Society, founded New York 1816, was the BFBS's closest ally and chief rival.<sup>15</sup> The two organizations were like siblings, for better or for worse. They constantly cooperated, colluded, and competed with each other and argued and bickered along the way.

Finally, the British and Foreign Bible Society had global aspirations: as the twentieth-century opened, it tried to be everywhere. One of the society's historians – the Reverend James Moulton Roe, who coincidentally, was the very same man who, in his capacity as the society's Agent in Cairo in 1953, sent orders for Henry Athanassian's arrest – claimed in 1965 that, »there was not a country in the world in which the Society was not in some way concerned« in the decade before World War I.<sup>16</sup>

13 Cf. BFBS Annual Report, 1916, p. 7 for a bartering case in Cairo.

14 HOWSAM, *Cheap Bibles*, p. 60.

15 Peter J. WOSH, *Spreading the Word. The Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America*, Ithaca, NY 1994; Paul C. GUTJAHR, *An American Bible. A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880*, Stanford, CA 1999.

16 ROE, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, p. 29.

## Port Said and the Suez Canal Zone

With this background in place, we can turn to consider the work of the society in Egypt and the significant role of the Suez Canal. The BFBS began sporadic Bible-selling in Egypt in 1817. But it was only after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 that the society intensified efforts in Egypt, and only after the British invasion and occupation of Egypt in 1882 that the society decided to »occupy« this country firmly itself. Building on its long record of appealing to sailors, the society initially focused on the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria, and on the Egyptian Delta region beyond it.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, as the success of the Suez Canal became evident, and as the reliance of Britain, more than any other country, on Suez shipping became equally clear, the society decided to move there. And so, in 1912, it transferred its Egyptian operations to Port Said, which had become the biggest coal-fueling station for ships in the world. Reports convey the almost giddy enthusiasm that the society's directors felt for the Port Said site, which straddled the canal while putting its work closer to Jerusalem and the heart of the Bible lands. The grandeur of the society's Port Said building reflected its high hopes: for the society spent a huge sum to construct a magnificent edifice on the town's main boulevard, and imported marble from the same quarry in Greece from which the Parthenon in Athens was built. The society officially named the building »Shaftesbury House«, to honor Lord Shaftesbury, the nineteenth-century British parliamentarian who had been one of the earliest and most ardent Christian Zionists. People around town commonly called it just »Bible House«. The building had a street-level shop; a warehouse capable of storing 150,000 books; rooms for other street-level shops, rented out to raise money; and apartments, some intended for private rentals, and others intended to house the society's office workers and colporteurs.<sup>18</sup>

The Bible House in Port Said performed three major functions, which attested to its importance as a site of contact zones within a dense web of land and sea travel. It was the regional distribution center for Egypt, as well as for an area that included Syria, Sudan and Ethiopia, southern Arabia, and the East African coast as far south as Zanzibar. It served as a major conduit for Bible shipments coming from or going to London and other places in the world. And it carried out a brisk local business, by appealing to sea travelers who passed through the harbor: sailors and soldiers; tourists, refugees, and emigrants; and even Chinese, Indian, and Southeast Asian men who worked in the kitchens of ships. The society also worked on land, by sending colporteurs into the bars and brothels that gave Port Said a reputation as a place that

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17 BFBS Annual Report, 1912, p. 181.

18 SHARKEY, *The British and Foreign Bible Society in the Suez Canal*, p. 446.

contained, in the words of Rudyard Kipling in his 1890 novel, *The Light that Failed*, »the concentrated essence of all the iniquities and all the vices in all the continents«.<sup>19</sup>

With the constant coming and going of polyglot crowds, Port Said was the perfect place to sell Bibles. In 1914, for example, just two years after establishing the Bible House there, the society reported sales of Bible texts in 57 languages. English, German, French, Dutch, Greek and Ethiopic (in that order) were the six best-selling languages in 1914 for full Bibles or New Testaments, but in terms of »portions« (just the Psalms, for example, or a book like John or Luke), which were sold mostly to poor people, the six best-selling languages were Chinese (in first position), followed by Dutch, Arabic, Bengali, Hindustani, and Greek. Aggregate figures were equally impressive; in 1918, for example, the society sold 144,492 volumes in Port Said.<sup>20</sup>

Keeping track of this enterprise of book shipments and book sales was a huge challenge. The fact that colporteurs accepted payment in any currency made the task of recording sales even more complicated. Here was where Henry Athanassian came into the picture, and where he was able to contribute his meticulous attention to the finances that kept this business – this Christian mission – afloat.

### Henry Athanassian and His Times

In the mid-1890s, the Muslim Turkish and Kurdish populations of what is now Turkey led a series of massacres against the Armenian Christians who lived in their midst. These attacks predated by some twenty years the events of 1915 that many Armenians now regard as genocide.<sup>21</sup> Citing estimates from Christian missionary observers, *The New York Times* reported in 1896 that these massacres had left about 50,000 Armenian children without parents.<sup>22</sup> Henry Athanassian, who was born in 1890 to an Armenian Orthodox family in Constantinople (Istanbul) as »Aram Athanassian« (with Henry being the English name that he assumed later), survived one of these massacres with his parents, brother Edward, and sister Melanie. As a family they fled to

19 Rudyard KIPLING, *The Light that Failed*, New York 1966, pp. 33f. Cf. also Sylvia MODELSKI, *Port Said Revisited*, Washington, DC 2000, pp. 51f.

20 SHARKEY, *The British and Foreign Bible Society in the Suez Canal*, p. 447.

21 On the 1896 events, see Jeremy SALT, *Imperialism, Evangelism, and the Ottoman Armenians, 1878–1896*, London 1993, p. 97; François GEORGEON, *Abdülhamid II: Le sultan calife (1876–1909)*, Paris 2003, pp. 292–295; Donald BLOXHAM, *The Great Game of Genocide. Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*, Oxford 2005, p. 55.

22 »Fifty Thousand Orphans Made So by the Turkish Massacres of Armenians«, *The New York Times*, 18 December 1896.

Bulgaria before reaching Alexandria, Egypt in 1896.<sup>23</sup> A colleague later elaborated on this story in 1978, in an addendum to Henry Athanassian's obituary, by noting that Henry and his sister had in fact survived an attack because they »were hidden at the top of a well covered by a wooden lid« and rescued afterwards. Once in Egypt, Henry received an education at the Scottish Presbyterian mission school in Alexandria.<sup>24</sup> His sister Melanie later became a »Bible Class« teacher, where she displayed a great talent for language by »switch[ing] from one European language to another as she explained the Bible lesson« to children from half a dozen or so different countries.<sup>25</sup> Henry Athanassian, as we know, pursued a Bible career, too, in his case by joining the BFBS in Alexandria as a typist and depot manager in 1909, when he was nineteen years old.<sup>26</sup>

When the society moved to Port Said in 1912, Henry Athanassian went along, and made a home in one of the Bible House's staff apartments. Within a few years, however, and as evidence of the society's faith in his abilities, he accepted a two-year post in Ethiopia to set up a depot for the society in Addis Ababa. With the aid of the expatriate Armenian community there, Athanassian achieved his task, and expanded the society's operation in a country where demand for Bibles was soaring.<sup>27</sup> During this time in Ethiopia, he also became conversant in Amharic.<sup>28</sup>

When Athanassian returned to Port Said, he kept accounts for the society, and his responsibilities increased. By 1917, as the evidence of handwriting shows, he was preparing the society's year-end reports; by 1924, he had the title of Sub-Agent (meaning second in the regional command).<sup>29</sup> But when the

23 Email from Stephen Brittain, grandson of Henry Athanassian, to the author, dated 24 October 2014.

24 Email from Stephen Brittain, grandson of Henry Athanassian, to the author, dated 24 October 2014.

25 I am grateful to Kathleen Cann, formerly of the BFBS and the Bible Society Archives of Cambridge University Library, who conveyed this information in an email dated 23 May 2008. Cann told me that she found this information in a file about the death of Bernard Tattersall, Accountant and later General Secretary. Following a reference to Athanassian's death in a letter from Ivy Stutchbury, dated Easter 1978, to members of the Bible Society's retired staff, a man named James McDonald of the BFBS Northern Ireland Auxiliary responded. McDonald shared these recollections about Athanassian in a letter from Belfast dated 27 March 1978. This file remains closed to private researchers.

26 Addressing my inquiry about whether the society had a personnel file for Athanassian, Kathleen Cann, formerly of the BSA, explained in an email of 29 May 2008: »We do have a personnel file for Henry, but it is very meagre. This is a confidential series, but I can tell you the basic facts, which are merely that he was born on 21 January 1890, his nationality was Turkish (Armenian), and he joined the BFBS on 1 June 1909, and was unmarried and living in an unfurnished room in the Bible House.«

27 BFBS Annual Report, 1916, pp. 128f.

28 From the recollection of James McDonald, cited in the email from Kathleen Cann of 23 May 2008; see above.

29 BSA/EI/2/3/6/2 Accounts, 1916–1926.

British Agent died suddenly in 1925, it took the Secretariat in London five years to send a replacement. So Athanassian became »Acting Secretary« and assumed responsibility during what proved to be one of the busiest periods that the society ever had in Port Said. In 1929, for example, the Egyptian Agency based at Port Said circulated a total of 145.573 volumes in ninety languages – some sold in Port Said itself, and others distributed through missions, notably in what is now South Sudan. A British replacement arrived in 1931 but then this man died on the job in 1941, leaving Athanassian alone with the management again until 1946.<sup>30</sup>

In 1912, Port Said had seemed like the perfect meeting place for the world in motion, and therefore a perfect place for selling Bibles. Beginning in the late 1930s, however, the situation in Port Said was changing in ways that proved critical for what later happened to Henry Athanassian. A series of events occurred to make Port Said increasingly less important and more vulnerable as a British Bible book-selling enterprise. It is worth summarizing these events briefly here.

First, in 1937, and amidst the Great Depression in the world economy, the American Bible Society and the BFBS reached a cost-saving agreement that reorganized Bible distribution in the Middle East. In short, the British society assumed leadership over Palestine, Arabia, the Nile Valley, and the Horn of Africa, calling this region the »Bible Lands Agency, South«, while the American society assumed leadership over the area including Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Greece, and Bulgaria, calling this region the »Bible Lands Agency, North«.<sup>31</sup> With this partnership, the BFBS took over the former American offices in Cairo – and from this point the society's planners in London seemed to imagine Cairo, and not Port Said, as its center in Egypt.<sup>32</sup>

Second, in 1939, World War II broke out. For Port Said, the war meant that few boats came into harbor, and those that did lacked tourists. In 1940, Prime Minister Winston Churchill issued orders to re-route British shipping around the Cape of Good Hope, to avoid the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal: this meant that few ships aside from military vessels entered Port Said. Bible sellers were not permitted to board military vessels, the links of the Port Said

30 This information comes from BFBS Annual Reports. On sales for 1929, cf. BFBS Annual Report, 1929, pp. 68f.

31 ROE, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, p. 375.

32 The society's directors did not explicitly acknowledge this point. When they appointed Roe to Egypt, they explained to Athanassian that they had posted Roe to Cairo because he had asthma and needed to be in a dry climate. Secretary General [Wilkinson] to Athanassian, 4 November 1952; and Bible Lands South, Report on Situation in Agency, 16 October 1952, in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

office to London were cut for long periods, and sales sank. During the war the society kept busy in Port Said mainly because it worked with active and wounded soldiers who landed there.<sup>33</sup>

Third, in 1948, Jewish nationalists declared the establishment of the state of Israel. This event provoked immediate war with surrounding Arab states, which were still under varying degrees of British and French colonial control, and displaced 700,000 Arabs, who, as refugees, increasingly began to identify themselves as »Palestinians«.<sup>34</sup> Since Britain had been the architect of the post-World War I mandate of Palestine, British enterprises faced deep hostility from many Arabs and Jews alike. Consider, for example, that in 1948 insurgents blew up the BFBS's building in Jerusalem. Even the society's Armenian representative in Jerusalem became a »Palestinian« refugee in Ramallah and later Amman.<sup>35</sup>

Fourth, in 1952, Egypt experienced a military coup led by the »Free Officers«, who were veterans of the first Arab-Israeli War. Advocating a popular nationalism that privileged ordinary people over elites, and locals over foreigners, the Free Officers developed a regime under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser that was vehemently anti-British and deeply resentful of Britain's continued military and economic presence in the Suez Canal. Needless to say, this situation did not bode well for a very British operation like the BFBS in Port Said.

Besides these political factors, there was a technological one as well. By the early 1950s, airplanes were beginning to make flying, as opposed to sailing, an affordable option for civilian travelers – and this development, too, began to call into question the future of a port-based operation like Port Said. As early as 1951, for example, the society arranged for one of its colporteurs, an Arab man based in Transjordan, to fly rather than sail to get from Aden (now in Yemen) to Djibouti and then to fly again to Addis Ababa, in Ethiopia.<sup>36</sup> For all of these reasons, the future of Port Said was looking shaky when Athanassian approached his retirement.

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33 BFBS Annual Reports, 1939–1945; SHARKEY, *The British and Foreign Bible Society in the Suez Canal*, p. 449; ROBERT FRASER, *War and the Colonial Book Trade: The Case of OUP India*, in: Id. et al. (eds.), *Books without Borders, Volume 2. Perspectives from South Asia*, Houndmills 2008, pp. 137–150.

34 Charles D. SMITH, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Boston 2013.

35 BFBS Annual Report, 1948 and 1949 (joint report for two years), p. 244. Telegram from Geary, 1 June 1948, in Minutes of the Meeting of the Overseas Administration Sub-Committee »A«, 15 June 1948; Minutes of the Meeting of the Overseas Administration Sub-Committee »A«, 8 November 1949, in BSA/C25/2: Overseas Administration (A): Sub-Committee No. 21 (Minute Books, 1945–1950).

36 Minutes of the Meeting of the Overseas Administration Sub-Committee »A« held on Thursday, 13 March 1952; in BSA/C25/3.

## The Unraveling

»The British missionary enterprise was multiracial and multinational from the first«,<sup>37</sup> Jeffrey Cox pointed out, in his history of British missions. Yet, as Cox also noted, British missions tended to keep the majority of non-western participants nameless in missionary chronicles, thereby rendering them nearly invisible. Like other European and American missions in this period, British missions also tended to keep non-western participants in subordinate roles.

The case of Henry Athanassian reflected these hierarchies. For when World War II ended, the society sent out another British agent, a young ordained minister from Canada named Leonard Geary, to lead the work in Egypt. Recognizing this young Canadian's extreme inexperience, authorities in London gave him the same job title as Athanassian, declaring them both »Co-Secretaries«. However, in consideration of his supposed Englishness, the society gave him a higher salary than Athanassian, on the grounds that he needed more money to sustain his British lifestyle. A division of labor then followed: Athanassian continued to manage finances from Port Said, while Geary handled decisions about strategy and planning in Cairo. But this young man reportedly made some bad choices, such as ordering a large print run for a Bible in an obscure language (Kashgar Turkish) that did not sell, and publishing comments about the society's success in appealing to Muslims. The latter was an unwise and inflammatory thing to do in Egypt at this time, when Muslim nationalism and anti-missionary sentiment were running strong, reinforcing deep-rooted attitudes about the forbidden nature of both Muslim apostasy and Christian evangelization among Muslims.<sup>38</sup> More seriously, Geary reportedly gave a large advance payment to a Greek paper-seller who ran away to Greece with the money, leaving the society paperless, with book stocks depleted, and at a loss of thousands of pounds. BFBS leaders in London privately speculated that Geary may have made a deal with the Greek paper-seller, to take a cut of the money himself, though they could not prove their suspicions. What *was* clear to them was that, as the news of his mismanagement reached Port Said and London, Geary sold some of the society's property (including a car), pocketed the money, and left Egypt before Athanassian could travel to Cairo to confront him.<sup>39</sup>

37 Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700*, New York 2008, p. 16.

38 On anti-missionary sentiment in Egypt at this time, cf. SHARKEY, *American Evangelicals in Egypt*, pp. 179–214.

39 Excerpts of correspondence with Athanassian, 1946 and 1952; Athanassian to Rev. A.H. Wilkinson, Port Said, 9 August 1952; General Purposes Sub-Committee, 18 July 1952; Athanassian to Wilkinson, Port Said, 5 June 1952; Report to the Committee, by A.H. Wilkinson, 25 July 1952, in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.



The society did not press charges of theft against Geary and let the matter drop. Their laxness contrasted with their pursuit of Athanassian in the eviction case, and Athanassian said as much, writing to the British Agent in Cairo and the Secretary in London to complain of discrimination.<sup>40</sup> When the former Anglican chaplain of the British military garrison in Port Said, who was rector in a church in Bletchley (now part of Milton Keynes), wrote to the society's Secretary in London to convey dismay over the society's treatment of Athanassian, this former chaplain alluded to the Geary affair, too, by writing that, »Some of us feel that Mr. Athanassian's scurvy treatment at the hands of your Committee is not entirely unconnected with his unmasking, of certain, shall we say, irregularities [...]«. <sup>41</sup> But what connection was there between the two incidents? Were BFBS executives angry at Athanassian for exposing the extent of the Canadian's financial misdeeds? Were they embarrassed? Or was it simply that they felt annoyed by the demands of an aging employee who seemed to think of himself as a »father« in the Bible House, a patriarchal figure in the local clan of employees and their families?<sup>42</sup>

It is impossible to know now in retrospect; even Roe, the British Agent in Cairo in 1953, struggled in letters to express cogent views and intentions when it came to the future of Port Said. Roe's zeal in pursuing the case against Athanassian probably reflected the fact that the Society had hired him to clean up operations in Egypt in the aftermath of the Geary affair,<sup>43</sup> His zeal seemed to reflect, too, the tone set by the new director of the BFBS in London, the Reverend N.J. Cockburn, who pressed him to take a hard line throughout the Athanassian affair. Indeed, Cockburn appears to have egged Roe on in every significant decision that he took – for example, in rejecting Athanassian's initial request to continue renting, and later advising his deputy to call the Egyptian police.<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile, in discussing their difficulties with Athanassian via letters, Roe, Cockburn, and Wilkinson (who was the previous, retired secretary, by this time living in Kent) wrote a series of derogatory comments about Athanassian's Armenian-ness that recall discourses of anti-Semitism, Orientalism, and Islamophobia, and that show how alien they found him.<sup>45</sup> He is a »shrewd Armenian«, one wrote; »He loves money«, agreed another. It

40 Athanassian to Roe, Copy for Cockburn, Port Said, 5 March 1954, in in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

41 Rev. Leslie Garrett, Rector of Middle and East Claydon and sometime Garrison Chaplain, Port Said, to The General Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Middle Claydon, Bletchley, 23 April 1954, in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

42 Roe to Cockburn, Cairo, 19 September 1953, in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

43 General Secretary to His Excellency Sir Ralph Stevenson at the Foreign Office, 4 March 1954, in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

44 Cf. the correspondence in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15, such as [Cockburn] to Roe, 8 January 1954.

45 The use of anti-Semitic language to describe Armenians was unexceptional. In the Caucasus, Russians sometimes called Armenians »Caucasian Jews« and regarded them as »wily

was difficult to read him without having a »penetrating understanding of the mind of an Armenian«. Athanassian had run the Port Said offices, one continued, with »a rule verging on despotism«, and had displayed not merely »hot-headed and impulsive resentment«, but also a capacity for making »cunningly planned scheme[s]«. <sup>46</sup> The then-incumbent Anglican chaplain in Port Said took exception to such language, and complained that Roe in Cairo had made Athanassian out to be »a wealthy and shrewd and somewhat penny-pinching Armenian« <sup>47</sup> when Athanassian was in fact worried about his pension as living costs in the area were rising. Roe, Cockburn, and Wilkinson also raised questions about Athanassian's honesty and integrity. He did not behave like a good Christian, one wrote; his behavior was »un-Christian«, wrote another. <sup>48</sup> The former garrison chaplain, now back in Bletchley, rebutted their various claims, attesting to Athanassian's »deep charity, his kindly, wise humour, his sacrificial hospitality and his very real desire for Christian unity and his undoubted zeal for the spreading of the ›good news‹ [...]«. <sup>49</sup>

The society's British executives may have recognized Athanassian as an Anglican, an English-speaker, and a 44-year veteran of their organization – but they did not recognize him as European, and certainly did not regard him as British. To some extent this may have been because the borders of Europe were fuzzy to begin with, while Armenians (as a people indigenous to the Caucasus Mountains and Asia Minor) occupied a particularly ambiguous relationship to Europe, as did the Turks. <sup>50</sup> In other respects this was because British missions during the late nineteenth and early-to-mid twentieth centuries tended to assume a clear divide between »British« workers and »natives«, so that others, like Athanassian as an Armenian in Egypt, fell through the cracks. <sup>51</sup> Then, too, in this mid-twentieth-century period, Britons

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commercial types«. Nicholas B. BREYFOGLE, *Heretics and Colonizers. Forging Russia's Empire in the South Caucasus*, Ithaca, NY 2005, p. 189.

46 Strictly Confidential, The British and Foreign Bible Society, Bible Lands Agency South Matters, Report to the Committee, by Wilkinson, 25 July 1952; Roe to Cockburn, Cairo, 6 February 1954; [Cockburn?] to Arthur [Wilkinson], 23 February 1954; Extract of letter from Roe 28 January 1954; in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

47 A. R. Walter [English Chaplain in Port Said], Church of the Epiphany, Port Said, 31 May 1954; in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

48 General Secretary [Cockburn] to Roe, 18 January 1954; Wilkinson to Cockburn, 25 February 1954; in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

49 Garrett to General Secretary, Bletchley, 23 April 1954; in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

50 Talal ASAD, *Muslims and European Identity: Can Europe Represent Islam?*, in: Anthony PAGDEN (ed.), *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 209–227; Jochen WALTER, *Turkey as Borderland: Inside Europe, Outside, or In-Between?*, in: Roland VOGT/Wayne CRISTAURO/Andreas LEUTZSCH (eds.), *European National Identities: Elements, Transitions, Conflicts*, New Brunswick, NJ 2014, pp. 253–269.

51 For a comparable example of someone who fell through the cracks, cf. Heather J. SHARKEY, *An Egyptian in China: Ahmed Fahmy and the Making of World Christianities*, in: *Church History*, 78:2 (2009), pp. 309–326.

were only beginning to grapple with the fact that the British Empire, in the throes of decolonization and having been a kind of »contact zone« in itself, was setting off waves of immigration into Britain in ways that were poised to change what and who was British.<sup>52</sup>

In April 1954, as the court case was pending, the Anglican chaplain in Port Said sent a final warning to the secretary in London. »Christian love and charity flowing from the Committee down through and to the least of its members can be the only spirit worthy of a Christian society. Without this«, he added, »the Society may produce Bibles but it will have lost its soul«.<sup>53</sup> His comment, in retrospect, suggests the difficulties that the society was having, in defining its Christian mission, at this tense moment of decolonization.

### The Society's Defeat

The society's British executives remained convinced till the end that the society would win its case.<sup>54</sup> But unbeknownst to the society, Athanassian had not only kept an extra set of keys, but had also, just eighteen days before his retirement, signed a rental contract for one of the building's apartments, in the name of his second daughter Araxie with whom he lived. Athanassian produced this document when the case went to court.<sup>55</sup> According to the Anglican chaplain in Port Said, the society's Muslim lawyer claimed to the judge that Athanassian was not really Co-Secretary, but was »merely the accountant« and had no authority to sign a contract of this kind.<sup>56</sup> Athanassian's other daughter, Christine, who had settled in England after marrying a man named Eric Brittain, was livid when she heard this. She wrote to the BFBS director in London to protest, noting that whereas she and her husband had formerly raised money for the BFBS in their local church, they were no longer willing to do so. »Perhaps the money will be used to pay your Moslem lawyer to evict my father«, they wrote, »with a jab«.<sup>57</sup> The society's executives were

52 Much of the scholarship on immigration and national identity in postcolonial Britain views the phenomenon through literature. Cf., for example, Ashley DAWSON, *Mongrel Nation: Diasporic Culture and the Making of Postcolonial Britain*, Ann Arbor 2007.

53 Arthur Walter to Cockburn, Port Said, 20 April 1954; in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

54 »Mr. Athanassian, undated memo«; in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

55 V.M. Ekmekjian to Khilla Boulos, Port Said, 14 January 1954; in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

56 Walter to Cockburn, Port Said, 6 April 1954; in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

57 Christine Brittain to Cockburn, Warlingham, 24 February 1954; Eric Brittain to Dr. Cockburn, Warlingham, 9 April 1954. The English chaplain in Port Said also believed the lawyer to be a Muslim: Walter to Cockburn, Port Said, 6 April 1954; in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

unrepentant, though her comment about the Muslim confused them, for their letters show that they believed their lawyer to be Greek!<sup>58</sup>

Ultimately, the Egyptian judge decided in Athanassian's favor. Noting that Athanassian for many years had held the Power of Attorney, and had signed contracts on behalf of the society before, the judge ruled that the contract in Athanassian's daughter name was legally valid. The society could not evict him.<sup>59</sup>

After this defeat, the British secretary in London and the British Agent in Cairo agreed in letters that they would continue to give Athanassian a pension out of the goodness of their hearts. But other papers show another, less »Christian« reason for continuing his pension. Namely, the secretariat consulted legal advisors in London who told them that while *British* law would not require them to give Athanassian a pension, it was unclear whether *Egyptian* law would require it. They agreed that they did not want to go to court again to find out, especially in this period when anti-British sentiment was running hot in Egypt.<sup>60</sup>

Athanassian was still living in a Bible House apartment in 1955. But war struck Port Said in 1956 when Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal, prompting Britain, France, and Israel to attack. In the wake of the Suez Crisis, the Egyptian government seized the society's assets – everything from paper, books, and desks, to buildings and bank accounts. The government allowed the American Bible Society to manage what was left of the British enterprise in Cairo, and appointed an Egyptian sequestrator – a Coptic Christian man – to oversee things.<sup>61</sup> American management was temporary, because in the next decade the Bible Society transitioned into a national, Egyptian-Christian-run and Egyptian-Christian-led enterprise, which focused on selling Bibles to Egypt's Coptic population.<sup>62</sup>

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58 General Secretary to Christine Brittain, 1 March 1954; in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15. Perhaps both were true: perhaps the Greek lawyer had a Muslim associate who represented them in court.

59 Extract from letter of Roe, 7 June 1954; note on Athanassian, G. C. [sic] 14 June 1954; in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

60 General Secretary [Cockburn] to Roe, 18 January 1954; Roe to Cockburn, Cairo, 7 June 7 1954; and other letters in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

61 BSA Egypt, E1/3/7/5/6, Property: North Africa: »Special Situation, UK/Egypt 1956–1957«, December 1956–March 1959; General Secretary to Collyer, 22 January 1957; »The Present Situation and Proposals with Respect to Bible Society Work in Egypt«, Memorandum by Paul A. Collyer, London, 23 February 1957.

62 Heather J. SHARKEY, American Missionaries, the Arabic Bible, and Coptic Reform in Late Nineteenth-Century Egypt, in: Mehmet Ali DOĞAN/Heather J. SHARKEY (eds.), *American Missionaries in the Modern Middle East. Foundational Encounters*, Salt Lake City 2011, pp. 237–259.

After the Suez Crisis, the Egyptian government deported all British nationals from Egypt. Thus Egypt expelled James Moulton Roe, the British Agent in Cairo who had played such a large role in the Athanassian affair and who then went on to write the society's history. Egypt also evicted the other Armenian employee in Port Said – V.K. Ekmekjian, who had carried out the orders from London and Cairo by calling the police to arrest Athanassian on Christmas Day – because he held a British passport.<sup>63</sup>

Apparently Athanassian himself had an Egyptian passport. Nevertheless, he did not stay in Egypt permanently. In 1956, while sailing back from a trip to England after visiting his daughter's family, the Suez Crisis broke out. Unable to reach Port Said, Athanassian and his wife caught a Polish ship called the *Batory* and sailed back to England. »From that moment on they lived in the UK,« recalled their grandson, »initially as aliens, but later becoming British citizens.« Henry Athanassian died in 1978, around the age of eighty-eight.<sup>64</sup>

### Conclusion:

#### Being British, Being a Missionary, and Being a »Contact Zone«

The story of Henry Athanassian and the BFBS in Port Said yields insights into a mission that specialized in making transient contacts during an »Age of the Sea«, when books, like people, moved around the world on steamships that covered long distances in ever-shorter timeframes.<sup>65</sup> The incident that transpired between Athanassian and the BFBS in 1953 also casts light on a British mission that was torn between British parochialism and xenophobia on the one hand, and Christian pluralism and universalism on the other, during a period of decolonization.

Among the fascinating questions that this story evokes, there are still three more that persist and that are worth raising by way of conclusion. The first question is about what it meant to be a missionary. Was Henry Athanassian a missionary himself, or was he – as the society's lawyer reportedly claimed to the civil court – just an accountant?<sup>66</sup> Who deserved the honorific title of

63 BSA Egypt, E1/3/7/5/6, Property: North Africa: »Special Situation, UK/Egypt 1956–1957«, December 1956–March 1959.

64 Email from Stephen Brittain, grandson of Henry Athanassian, to the author, dated 24 October 2014.

65 Robert FRASER/Mary HAMMOND (eds.), *Books without Borders*, Volume 1. *The Cross-National Dimension in Print Culture*, Houndmills 2008, pp. 9f.; Heather J. SHARKEY, *Ambiguous Conversions: The Selective Adaptation of Religious Cultures in Colonial North Africa*, in: Nadia MARZOUKI/Olivier ROY (eds.), *Religious Conversions and Nationalism in the Mediterranean World*, Houndmills 2013, pp. 77–97.

66 Walter to Cockburn, Port Said, 6 April 1954; in BSA Egypt, D8/3/14–15.

missionary; what did one have to do to qualify? This question is particularly tricky here, because the BFBS was a mission that was also a business, and one which regarded Bibles, not people, as the most important »missionaries« of all.

The second question is about what it meant and was starting to mean to be British. Imperial expansion triggered colonial and post-colonial migrations as people from colonies and former colonies sought educations, jobs, or simply refuge in Britain, which came out changed from all of this settlement. Consider, again, who was in the process of becoming British in this story: Athanassian's daughter Christine, who settled in Surrey after marrying an English soldier who had passed through Port Said during World War II; the Armenian who called the police on Christmas Day and who found himself deported to Britain after the Suez Crisis (even though it is unclear if he had ever visited Britain before); and Henry Athanassian himself, who died in England in 1978.

The third question relates to the attitudes and actions of the Egyptian authorities. What were the Egyptian police, who released Athanassian after his arrest, and the judge, who rejected the society's efforts to evict him, thinking when they acted? Some degree of anti-British, anti-colonial sentiment probably informed their thinking. But their attitudes probably also reflected a characteristically Egyptian respect for a senior man like Athanassian, who had lived a quiet, upstanding life working for this Bible society in a town that was often known for its raucous behavior, and who had achieved a kind of patriarchal authority and responsibility as the head of an extended family. This »family« included not only his daughter (in whose name he made the rental contract), but also the current and former employees of the society and their relatives.

Henry Athanassian is fascinating because he is so hard to place. The fact that he was not British, but was not a »native« Egyptian either; that he came from and was chased out of one collapsing empire, the Ottoman Empire, before finding a home in an outpost of another, the British Empire, which later collapsed as well; and that he was born Christian, to a family that belonged to the Armenian Apostolic (Orthodox) Church,<sup>67</sup> but shifted (or converted?), to another kind of Christianity, by becoming Anglican; complicates our efforts to understand him. And, again, what should we call him: a missionary, a mission worker, or just an accountant? Athanassian is fascinating, too, because his work in the Suez Canal Zone made him into a kind of one-man »contact

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67 A.R.W. [Arthur R. Walter], »Mr. Henry Athanassian, Port Said, the Bible Society,« *The Diocesan Review*, n.d. [c. 1952], retirement notice with biographical information sent by Stephen Brittain by email to author, 3 December 2014.

zone».<sup>68</sup> In his experiences as a refugee and as a business manager for a multilingual Bible-translating and Bible-selling enterprise, he connected empires and countries, as well as members of different ethnic, religious, and linguistic communities. There is no doubt about it: viewed through a post-colonial lens, as we reassess the history of missions, his experiences raise questions that linger.

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68 See the article in this volume: Thoralf KLEIN, How to Be a Contact Zone: The Missionary Karl Gützlaff between Nationalism, Transnationalism, and Transculturalism, 1827–1851.





Brian Stanley

## Afterword

### Conversations with Contact Zones

The concept of the »contact zones« has proved to be one of the more fertile – but also tantalisingly elusive – themes in recent postcolonial approaches to the myriad encounters between Europeans and non-European peoples in the period from the eighteenth to the late twentieth century. The rich assortment of papers contained in this volume confirms the impression of a concept that is both productive of new perspectives and yet consistently hard to pin down. At the colloquium in Mainz at which these papers were originally presented, the concept of the contact zone appeared in relation to every continent (with the obvious exception of Antarctica). Contact zones were located in the pages of the *Hallesche Berichte*, in the persons of August Hermann Francke and Karl Gützlaff, and in such chronologically and geographically diverse contexts as seventeenth-century Paraguay, early eighteenth-century New France, or the Suez Canal Zone in the final years of British colonial control. Katharina Stornig's paper uncovers the paradoxical way in which Catholic nuns in German New Guinea succeeded in breaking down their traditional exclusion by ecclesiastical authority from the supposedly dangerous »contact zone« of childbirth, and established the role of the missionary midwife. Paraphrasing John Wesley's most-quoted (and most widely misunderstood) saying, we might conclude that »the whole world is my contact zone«.

As one presenter at the colloquium observed, the participants were, for the most part, a group of European scholars analysing sources and visual images created by other Europeans in the past. These sources and images tell us something about what these outsiders observed, how they fared in the sometimes unfriendly environment of the contact zone, and how they emerged from the experience as in some measure changed persons. Only a few papers attempted the more challenging task of attempting to view encounters in the contact zones from the perspective of the indigenes, and only one paper was presented from a non-Western scholar – that by Mrinalini Sebastian. It is not accidental that her paper aims to recover some lost indigenous voices from missionary documents of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even if by necessity what we can now hear in such texts are merely echoes of the voices themselves. The majority of the papers presented focused, as might be expected, on missionaries who were of European origin, although Heather Sharkey's selection of the Armenian, Henry Athanassian, as the subject of her

paper provides a welcome reminder that the equation between »missionary« and »white European« has never been an exact one, and is of decreasing accuracy as we move from the eighteenth towards the twentieth century.

The papers in this volume correctly identify the contact zone as an arena of contestation, transformation and paradox. The contestation was not invariably between »outsider« and »insider« on a simple binary model. It could involve those who were half-insiders and half-outsiders, caught in the uncomfortable intermediate space between the fully indigenous and the wholly alien. It could equally involve a clash between those outsiders who were new arrivals and others for whom the indigenous context had long since become »home«: Rosemary Seton's paper, for example, shows how in the early 1880s the newly arrived William Hastie (who was appropriately named) and Georgina Smail found the female educational work conducted by the Indian-born Mary Pigot of the Church of Scotland mission in Calcutta to be lacking in evangelistic zeal or unacceptably close in its relations to Indians. One is reminded of the similar but better-known charges levelled against Bishop Samuel Crowther on the Niger by the zealous young missionaries of the Church Missionary Society who arrived on the scene from 1887. Conflicts between generations, whether among foreign missionaries or among national church leaders, have often formed the warp and woof of mission history.

The transformations that took place in the contact zone affected a variety of different areas of personal life and Christian understanding, extending even to the area of spirituality and theology. Andreas Köller reminds us that the contact zone could transform missionaries, perhaps more fundamentally than missionaries ever managed to transform the societies in which they worked. Jeffrey Cox draws attention to the ground-breaking work by John D. Y. Peel on the role of Christianity among the Yoruba of Nigeria, where biblical concepts of nationhood helped to form the Yoruba as a nation, just as Yoruba understandings of religious power contributed to the distinctive shape of Yoruba Christianity. Sabine Hübner's study of Lutheran missionaries in eighteenth-century Tamil Nadu shows how Christian prayer changed shape in this context from being an intimate and often wordy exercise of private pity to a brief and formulaic performative speech act, a publicly wielded weapon against the power of the Devil, which was influenced by the mantras of Hindu tradition while at the same time being deployed in contestation against indigenous religious powers. Both Hübner's paper and that by Judith Becker show how the Devil – who had become a somewhat remote and theoretical figure in much post-Enlightenment Protestantism – became an identifiable and very tangible force locatable in specific Indian practices and social structures. The analogies with both modern-day Pentecostalism and with liberation theologies that have identified the power of evil in particular oppressive social structures are illuminating. The process of transformation

could also affect the ways in which both practitioners and outside observers understood indigenous religious traditions. Thus, in response to the critiques of Christians, Theravada Buddhists in nineteenth-century Burma sought to purify indigenous spirituality by the cultivation of practices of meditation and came to describe their »religion« using the term employed by the American Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson in his English-Burmese dictionary. Felicity Jensz shows how missionaries in Australia viewed aboriginal religion through the only theological spectacles available to them – those of biblical theology – and hence interpreted High Spirit figures using distinctly Christian categories. Jensz’s narrative presents many parallels with Africa, where a similar process of Christian readings of indigenous belief and ritual ultimately created the essentialised and arguably inauthentic theological construct now known to theologians as »African Traditional Religion«.

The paradoxes thrown up by these papers are telling. Peter James Yoder’s discussion of the evolution of August Hermann Francke’s theological language in response to the reports reaching Germany from the Tranquebar mission brings into question the conventional assumption that the epithet »heathen« was uniformly associated with racist attitudes to non-Europeans. On the contrary, the »heathen« in South India were those who, like the Magi of old, were seeking the grace of God in Christ, in contrast with those in European Christendom who had spurned the grace that surrounded them and made a conscious decision for practical godlessness. Francke’s theology – which theologians today would dismiss as exclusivist – was the basis of a radical inclusivism of culture and ethnicity that relativised the very notion of Christendom. Francke stands in a long tradition of European missionary thinking, going back at least to Bartolomé de las Casas in the early sixteenth century. Las Casas had insisted against his Aristotelian opponents in Spain that the »Indians« of central America were fully human beings, with rights that must be respected; for that same reason, they also had souls that needed saving through the Catholic Church.

The Mainz colloquium took its participants on a number of intersecting journeys into the far country that is the past, bringing them into an unfamiliar historical contact zone peopled by strangers whose stories were full of contestation and paradox. The readers of this volume will be taken on a similar set of journeys. The enduring challenge for both the participants and the readers will be to what extent the encounters with the past embodied in this volume will also be agents of transformation of heart and mind, questioning previous assumptions, eroding stereotypes and opening up new vistas of human understanding.



## List of Contributors

Judith BECKER is Senior Researcher at the Leibniz Institute of European History in Mainz. From 2010 to 2014, she directed the BMBF junior research group »Missionaries' Images of Europe in Contact with the Other, 1700–1970«. Her main areas of research include change of values and contact religiosity in mission histories as well as ecclesiology and confessionalisation in Reformation history.

Jeffrey COX is Professor of History at the University of Iowa. He has published broadly on mission histories and particularly on missions in India and is now working on a book on religious socialisation in Germany, Britain and the United States in the second half of the twentieth century.

Sabine HÜBNER teaches history of Christianity at the Institute of Theology and Religious Education at the Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg. From 2010 to 2014, as a doctoral student in the junior research group »Missionaries' Images of Europe«, she worked on her dissertation on the early Tamil Nadu Mission. Her main areas of research include the history of Protestant missions in India and the history of European Christianity in the eighteenth century.

Felicity JENSZ is a postdoctoral researcher and academic mentor within the Graduate School of the Cluster of Excellence for Religion and Politics at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster. Her main areas of research include colonial history, missionary history and print history.

Thoralf KLEIN is Senior Lecturer in Modern History at Loughborough University and a former visiting fellow of the College of Cultural Studies, Konstanz. His research interests include the social and cultural history of modern China, the history of imperialism and colonialism, Christian missions and transnational/global history.

Andreas KÖLLER works in the archives of the Diocese of Würzburg. As a doctoral student and member of the junior research group »Missionaries' Images of Europe«, he worked on missions in postcolonial times and wrote a thesis on »Re-adjustments of Protestant Missions in the Era of Decolonisation and Ecumenism: The Basel Mission in India, 1947–1972«.

Andreas NEHRING holds the Chair of Religious Studies and Mission Studies at the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen. His fields of research include Hindu and Buddhist reform movements, Buddhism in the West, postcolonial theory and postcolonial theologies.

Stefan RINKE is Professor of Latin American History at the Free University of Berlin. His main areas of research include Latin America in global history and Latin American memory studies.

Mrinalini SEBASTIAN is an independent scholar and an Adjunct Faculty member at the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. In 2013/14, she was fellow-in-residence of the junior research group »Missionaries' Images of Europe«. Her current research interests include an exploration of global connections in the social and intellectual history of Christianity in South India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, postcolonial theories and literature, multiculturalism and feminism.

Rosemary SETON is a Research Associate in the Department of History of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Her research areas of interest include gender, religion and archive studies.

Heather J. SHARKEY is Associate Professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. She has published on colonialism, missions and culture in the Sudan and Egypt and is currently writing a book about the history of Muslim, Christian and Jewish relations in the modern Middle East.

Michael SIEVERNICH SJ is Professor Emeritus of Practical Theology at the Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz. One of his main areas of research includes the history of Christian missions in the Americas in the early modern period.

Brian STANLEY is Professor of World Christianity and Director of the Centre for the Study of World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh. Most of his publications are in the history of modern Protestant missions. He is currently writing a world history of Christianity in the twentieth century.

Katharina STORNIG is a research fellow at the Leibniz Institute of European History in Mainz. In 2011/12, she was fellow-in-residence of the junior research group »Missionaries' Images of Europe«. Her main research interests



include gender history, religious history and the cultural history of aid and philanthropy.

Peter James YODER is Visiting Assistant Professor of Christian Studies at Berry College, Georgia. In 2012/13, he was fellow-in-residence of the junior research group »Missionaries' Images of Europe«. His current research in Church History and theology primarily focuses on German Pietism.