Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Unto the Ends of the World

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STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN MISSION [40]
Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Hilde Nielssen, Inger Marie Okkenhaug and Karina Hestad Skeie

The number of academic studies on Christian mission has exploded during the last couple of decades. Carried out in many different fields and disciplines, studies on Christian missions have different and even opposing perspectives on mission. Common to most studies of Christian missions, however, is the way they have tended to follow national and denominational boundaries.

This book addresses an important but largely neglected aspect of Christian mission: its transnational character. The contributions are written by an interdisciplinary group of scholars from various European countries and North America. Bringing together a series of case-studies dealing with missionaries from many different countries who worked in a variety of different places around the world, we explore the mission movement as a transnational network: a mobilisation of Christians across national borders and continents, unified by a common vision of a Christian Empire.

“Missionaries have been some of the most pervasive, powerful and persistent protagonists in the long story of globalization”, claims the anthropologist Peter Pels in the entry for ‘missionaries’ in the Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History.\(^1\) Particularly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Christian missionaries constructed transnational allegiances, considering themselves global actors and participants of a worldwide community working for the benefit of common humanity. However, missionaries also came from, and operated within, a variety of nation-states. As David Thelen argues, “scholars can use transnational

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movements and moments as sites for listening to people as they look beyond national borders to place in larger context and find solutions for problems they first discovered within their nations”. Mission, in line with for example women’s rights-, democracy- and socialist movements, often grounded their identities and dreams outside the nation-state even as they confronted states or sought new nations to fulfil their dreams. The missionary endeavour was linked to, and affected, social processes both at home and abroad. Thus, although the mission movement is transnational, it articulates with local and national processes. The contributions to this volume demonstrate how processes on a national level are closely linked to, and often even a product of, larger transnational processes. How the transnational dimensions interfere with local and national dimensions is a key area of investigation.

_Transnationalism, ‘World Culture’ and Christianity_

Transnationalism, understood as the multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of the nation-states, has recently become a key concept in scholarly research within the humanities and social sciences. The term is linked to issues and policies connected to globalisation, addressing the importance of cross-border interaction while inherently questioning the coherent narrative of the nation-state. The term connotes movement and connection through time and space. Following Hannertz, we prefer the term ‘transnational connections’ to ‘globalization’, because the term is more adequate for phenomena of quite variable scale and distribution. Transnational interconnectedness need not be international in the sense of states acting as corporate actors. Instead, “[i]n the transnational arena, the actors may now be individuals, groups, movements, business enterprises, and in no small part it is this diversity of organization we need to consider”? The transnational character of Christian mission is multifaceted and includes all these components – individuals, groups, movements and business enterprises.

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3 Ibid. p. 974.
4 Ibid. p. 968.
6 Ibid. p. 6.
The transnational mission movement was part of a larger development. While history has seen many types of global flows for centuries, it was not before the second half of the nineteenth century that a transnational cultural complex became so organised that many scholars later would use the term World Culture to describe it. The Western European countries were at the core of this culture, endorsing world views, philosophical and political thought, promoting Western technology and science, shaping individual and societal ambition, and establishing forms of organisation in ways perceived as universally applicable. Transnational organisations and global structures emerged, forming a global ‘civil society’– volitional organisations with a variety of purposes (INGO’s). These international bodies defined themselves as global actors. They formed a global public realm for discussions of issues, challenges and solutions, a venue where World Culture was defined and proliferated. Christianity has played, and continues to play, a vital role in these processes.

World Culture is not only a homogenising force; it also engenders and supports diversity and differentiation. For instance, while the transnational formations execute power beyond state control and thus may represent a challenge to the nation-state, the spread of the nation-state is itself a product of global forces. Thus, World Culture, or perhaps better, World Cultures, of which transnational Christianity forms an important part, contains a variegated complex of different and conflicting principles and forms. While World Cultures have been heavily influential most places, locally they have been appropriated, transformed and resisted. Missionary culture provides a prominent example of the varieties of World Cultures which emerged during the nineteenth century. It has also contributed significantly to the foundation of contemporary

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transnational bodies in various areas, both in terms of general principles (the general humanitarian vision and Christian universalism) and working areas (aid work, health care, education).

World religions – Christian missions included – are powerful drivers of social change. The Protestant mission movement emerging during the nineteenth century represented “a new kind of social action, based on voluntary associations and the mobilization of public opinion – typically through appeals to a mix of consciousness and self-interest – to effect change in the public sphere”\(^\text{10}\). This anthology seeks to contribute to the understanding of the social force of religion in an increasingly globalised world. Religion has been important to the formation of the nation-state, but is also a social force that transcends national borders, existing and working outside the state. More than ever, the dynamics of transnational religion is an urgent topic to address.

Transnational history differs from the writing of national history in that its perspective moves beyond the boundaries of the nation. It differs from colonial history in that its scope is pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. It differs from imperial history in that it sees empire as merely one of many structural forms within transnational history. It also differs from a history of Christian world expansion in its preoccupation with more than changing patterns of religious content and form. In writing transnational history, we nevertheless draw on important insights from most of these other fields.

**Christian Missions and Colonialism**

Colonialism has been one of the main contexts for historical, socio-logical and anthropological studies on Christian missions outside Europe and North America. Studies like the two-volume *Of Revelation and Revolution* brought examination of the missionary–African interaction centre stage in colonial history.\(^\text{11}\) The Comaroffs’ processual


understanding of culture and religion and attention to the “long conversa-
tion”12 between colonisers and colonised, made visible how the mis-
sionaries’ messages were both transformed and appropriated locally
through the dynamics of the encounter. The tactile quality of the mis-
sionary-encounter was further explored by the anthropologist Peter Pels
in A Politics of Presence.13 The missionaries’ intimate connection to
European colonialisms’ cultural and institutional structures and their
more or less conscious and willing roles as colonial agents, were central
themes in the Comaroffs’ work, as it had been in several earlier
studies.14
The last two decades have brought forward a number of studies which
have further explored the complexities of the missionary encounters in
different parts of the world. They have focused on inconsistencies within
the European colonial project and the partly overlapping, partly differ-
et, and sometimes opposing projects of Christian missions and colo-
nial powers.15 Indeed, it is exactly these inconsistencies which have
drawn examination of missions and missionary culture into post-colo-
nial studies of colonisation and empire as “fruitful sites for re-examina-
tion of a number of postcolonial paradigms”.16
The globalisation of Christianity was no doubt paramount in moti-
vating and legitimating globalisation, colonialism included. However,

13 Peter Pels, A Politics of Presence. Contacts between Missionaries and Waluguru in
Late Colonial Tanganyika (Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Harwood, 1999).
14 T.O. Beidelman, Colonial Evangelism: A Socio-Historical Study of an African
Mission at the Grassroots (Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 1982); Johannes
Fabian, Language and Colonial Power: The Appropriation of Swahili in the Belgian Congo,
1880–1938 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986); Valentin Y. Mudimbe,
The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge (Bloomington IN,
Indiana University Press, 1988); Vicente L. Rafael, Contracting Colonialism: Translation
and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule (Ithaca N.Y.,
15 Nicolas B. Dirks, Colonialism and Culture (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan
Press, 1992); Nicholas Thomas, Colonialism’s Culture. Anthropology, Travel and
Religion and Modernity Among the Ewe Ghana (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press,
1997); Elizabeth Elbourne, Blood Ground. Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for
Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853 (Montreal, McGill-Queen’s
University Press, 2002); Anna Johnston, Missionary Writing and Empire 1800–1860
(Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003); Peel, Religious Encounter and the
Making of the Yoruba.
while missionary culture clearly was part of colonialism’s culture, the missionaries’ vision of Empire also diverged from those of the imperial states. Their vision was often at odds with Empire as it actually worked. Thus, the missionary enterprise had an ambiguous relationship to colonialism. Moreover, while mission movements joined in the idea of a shared Christian culture, other contesting ideologies and notions of collective identities circulating in Europe at the time also influenced the mission movement. The missionary enterprise was as ambiguous in its relationship to nationalism as it was to colonialism. Thus, tension and ambiguity are important in the exploration of the dynamics of transnationalism.

Christian Missions and Representation

Much research on Christian missions has focused on their effects on indigenous societies. However, the mission movement also involved considerable activity at home. This activity included representations of the missionary encounter with the outside world. As several of the contributions to this volume show, many missionaries were deeply involved with ethnographic activities. The missionaries were among the first ethnographers, collecting and transmitting information about other places to their home society. From the early nineteenth century onwards, missionaries were one of several agents within the emergent fields of ethnography and geography, together with other travellers such as sailors, soldiers, artists, novelists, surveyors and naturalists. Indeed, many of the agents within the field combined several of these roles. Felix Driver describes this activity as a culture of exploration, “the wide variety of practices at work in the production and consumption of voyages and travels.” The practice and representation of ethnography by missionaries should be seen in relation to the forms of knowledge production and consumption which formed a part of the cultural production of the colonial era. Missionary representations reached large audiences through books, magazines, expositions, and films, and through the missionaries’ travels around the country, giving oral accounts during the

17 Thomas, Colonialism’s Culture. Anthropology, Travel and Government.
meetings of the mission movements. This activity can be seen as part of a larger phenomenon. During the colonial era, the Western world showed a massive interest for, and distribution of, representations of non-Western peoples. As Said posited, virtually all aspects of European culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were suffused with colonial motifs.\(^\text{19}\)

An important part of the missionaries’ ethnographic activity was the collection of ethnographic objects, in this volume exemplified by Inbal Livne’s study of the pioneer missionary and collector Annie Royle Taylor. The missionaries collected ethnographical artefacts from the very start of their work. Why was collecting material culture seen as a missionary task? Missionary collectors clearly formed a part of what has been termed the ‘culture of travelling’\(^\text{20}\) in a general sense. In the nineteenth century, collection was a most common activity among travellers. Ethnographic collection belonged to the general Zeitgeist. Missionaries, explorers, colonial officials, sailors and tourists all brought home artefacts from their travels. Many of the missionary collectors were obviously driven by curiosity, fascination and a genuine interest for ethnographic knowledge. Some of them, like Annie Royle Taylor, collaborated actively with museums and supplied museum collections on demand.

The importance granted to the collection of ethnographic artefacts is underlined by the fact that some of the missionary societies even founded their own museums. Mission museums, both Protestant and Catholic, appeared many places in Europe during the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. The London Missionary Society established its own museum in London very early, their ethnographic collections originating from the very start of their missionary activity in the late eighteenth century. The most valuable of these collections were transferred to the British Museum in 1891. In the Vatican, Pope Pius XI founded the Ethnological Missionary Museum in 1926, following a large mission exhibition in 1925, where twenty-four pavilions were built to expose 100 000 objects.\(^\text{21}\) Moreover, missionary collections constituted a considerable part of museum collections in general, all over Europe.

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\(^{20}\) Driver, *Geography Militant. Cultures of Exploration and Empire*.

\(^{21}\) [http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/MET/MET_Main.html](http://mv.vatican.va/3_EN/pages/MET/MET_Main.html).
Collected objects played a significant role within the mission activity in the missionaries’ home society. Typically, the missionaries carried with them objects and used them as powerful, evocative illustrations when they spoke to promote the mission cause. Such objects were also presented in smaller or bigger exhibitions, depicted in written publications etc. In mission premises all over the country, one could find small showcases with collected objects. In these contexts they served as means to inform the home audience of the mission progress and to gain financial and moral support. This was an important motivation for the production of missionary activity in general.

Missionaries were also responsible for a considerable literary production. Missionaries authored thousands of publications and reached a vast audience. Mission literature represented most literary genres, ranging from travel accounts and memoirs to documentaries, novels and even poetry. Missionaries also wrote scholarly works that in addition to theological works included history, geography, ethnography and language studies.

The various forms of missionary representations treated in this book have much in common despite the missionaries’ various cultural backgrounds and despite the fact that they worked in different places around the world. Such similarities can be connected to the way the mission movements across the world constituted a transnational network. The mission movements formed complex webs of relationships involving cooperation and exchange – a global social system. These networks operated on several levels: on a local level, linking persons and local institutions and societies across national borders, and on a macro-level, operating as international religious bodies. This activity took concrete forms. Common strategies for ideology, practice and cooperation were even discussed and agreed upon at large international mission conferences.

The networks were constituted by, and constitutive of, a global missionary culture. Missionary culture involved production and exchange of forms of aesthetic practice ranging from literary genres (such as letters, magazines, popular fiction, scholarly works) to music and visual culture (imagery, symbols, iconography and popular art forms, exhibitions, photography, films, architecture). We will argue that the transnational missionary aesthetic worked as the glue linking disparate parts of the missionising world together as an imagined community with a shared missionary imaginary. We understand the term ‘imaginary’ as
the way people imagine their collective social life. A focus on missionary aesthetic practice, as well as the recognition of aesthetics as a creative and dynamic force, is vital for the understanding of the dynamics of the transnational mission movement.

Borrowing from the language of imperialism, the mission cause was conceptualised through the language of conquest. The entire globe was invoked as frame of reference in a shared vision of globalising Christianity. The ultimate goal was to conquer the world in the name of Christianity and civilisation. The imaginative geography, or the mission’s vision of the world and its own place in it, was visualised through the image of the globe in shades of light and darkness – the light of Christianity and the darkness of heathendom. As Brantlinger has put it, ‘Africa grew “dark” as Victorian explorers, missionaries and scientists flooded it with light.’

How did the missionaries represent the peoples among whom they worked? Missionary representations tend to move from generic markers such as race and cultural difference to a message of a universal humanity underlying all difference. This ambiguity, which on the one hand underlines radical difference and on the other hand emphasises a universal humanism, is typical for the missionary gaze. The local populations were therefore often described in both positive and negative terms. They were heathen, wild, and primitive, but they also had potential for improvement, that is civilisation and Christianisation. However, the missionaries did not only represent paganism and primitivism through images of radical difference. It was also important to signal the universal humanism upon which the mission project depended. As Thomas notes, “If savages are quintessentially and irreducibly savage, the project of converting them to Christianity and introducing civilization is both

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23 Driver, _Geography Militant. Cultures of Exploration and Empire_.
Thus, missionary ethnography represented people both as exotic and familiar. The local peoples were not just primitive and wild; aesthetic qualities and skilled craftsmanship were emphasised and appreciated. Besides, missionary representations should also present the results of the mission work, which meant that the various local populations were presented not only as uncivilised heathens, but as pupils, teachers, medical doctors, nurses and pastors. The aim of missionary ethnography was above all to promote the mission cause by stimulating the interest for mission work and the generosity of potential donors. To provoke pity and engagement among people also demands identification. Heathens were therefore not only showed as unfamiliar and strange. They were shown as people in need.

Thus, transnational missionary imaginary involved certain ways of imagining both ‘self’ and ‘other’. In fact, the history of the discovery of otherness is also a history of becoming ourselves. The missionaries’ engagement in ethnography ties the missionary activity directly to the role of ethnography in the larger process of the constitution of the European self-conception: how Europeans reinvented themselves through the colonial encounter. As several researchers have pointed out, colonialism had an impact on the formation of national European cultures. The colonies were not empty spaces easily transformed into a European image, nor did Europe consist of self-contained entities merely projecting themselves out into the world. Just as the colonial encounter was induced by internal conditions within Europe, Europe itself was formed through the encounter. As Comaroff & Comaroff argued, “colonialism was as much involved in making the metropole, and the identities and ideologies of colonizers, as it was in (re)making peripheries and colonial subjects.”

The process of the formation of ‘self’ and ‘other’ is a theme explored by several contributors to this book. Lisbeth Mikaelsson analyses...
missionary autobiographies and shows that the categories of self and other can be seen as mythical categories with a biblical anchor. Drawing on material from Estonia and the writings of the Estonian missionary Hans Tiisman, Werner Ustorf explores the paradoxes and tensions in the contrasts between ‘self’ and ‘other’ by examining the writings, life course and career of the German missionary Jacob Spieth. Hilde Niellsen discusses the contrasts between ethnographic works written by the Norwegian missionary Lars Dahle and the British missionary James Sibree. She shows how their texts about Madagascar are actively connected to contemporary struggles and debates, and to various ideological streams and social transformations taking place in Europe at the time. The differences between the two authors’ portrayal of the Malagasy peoples point to significant contrasts between constructions of ethnicity, conceptions of civilisation and processes of nation-building in Norway and Britain. While several of the contributors focus on the many interconnections between the colonies, or peripheries, and the metropole, Michael Marten problematises the use of these categories. He argues that even though these terms are used within the field of post-colonial studies, they nevertheless carry a colonial legacy by favouring the metropole and reproducing dichotomies. In order to capture the complexities, Marten explores alternative ways of re-imagining the concepts of periphery and metropole as well as the relations between them.

Missionaries and Socio-Cultural Transformation at Home and Abroad

Social and cultural transformation that can be linked to the colonial encounter took place on a broad scale, with an impact on several fields within the society ‘at home’ as well as within the colonies. The formation of social policy, processes of cultural homogenisation and an intensification of cultural prescriptions in the domestic society resonated with colonial policies and the construction of the colonial other. Social distinctions such as hierarchies of class in the domestic society and race in the colonial context influenced each other. Moreover, issues of gender, sexuality, medicine and race became deeply imbricated in each other, exercising a critical function to the making of identity, and mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion.30 Sigurd Sandmo shows in his article how

medical and missionary discourses interfere with each other in the construction of leprosy as a category as well as in the development of medical theories on contagiousness, heredity and segregation. The missionary writings, Sandmo argues, formed an important part of nineteenth-century colonial medical discourse. Both the missionary and medical writings were highly politicised.

The discourses of class, race, gender, sexuality, religion, morality, health and medicine were formed through reciprocal processes, creating and reinforcing boundaries and hierarchies, but also instigating cultural critique, political movements and social reforms. Several contributions to this volume touch these matters. The mission movement played a significant part in such processes. Nation-building and processes of homogenisation are closely tied to the colonial encounter. While Nielssen’s article reveals connections between missionary ethnography and nation-building in Norway and Britain, Okkenhaug points to the significant role played by missionaries in the construction of the Armenian nation.

Missionaries were active agents of social engineering involved in social transformative processes. It is impossible to separate the missionary movement from broader processes of propagating modernity. In this book we document and analyse missionary practice and role within the larger processes of modernisation, such as the formation of welfare, civil society, nation and state. The missionaries’ role as welfare agents active in the formation of civil society through engagement in education, health or social work is an issue running through several of the contributions.

Missionaries, Local Agency, Multiple and Alternative Voices

While many of the contributions mainly focus on the missionaries, two of the essays in this book draw attention to the significant fact that

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the peoples among whom the missionaries worked had their own socially transformative projects. Anne Folke Henningsen and Karina Hestad Skeie’s chapters show how people in colonial South Africa and pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Madagascar appropriated Christianity for their own purpose, partly in cooperation with the missionaries, partly independently of, and in opposition to, the missionaries’ project. Both essays also demonstrate the extent to which the missionary encounter was thoroughly influenced by the social, cultural and historical context within which it took place.

What was initially analytically conceptualised in terms of a communication situation between two parties – the missionaries and the locals – has been greatly expanded to include many different ‘voices’ both among the missionaries and among the local populations. Both the missionaries and the local populations consisted of several different parties with different points of views and sometimes also different agendas. Religion, such as Christianity, was mobilised in struggles between different power elites. It was employed in conflicts between the influential and the socially marginal, and within and between classes and (constructed) categories like gender and race, both in Europe and in Africa, Asia and elsewhere. Significant interaction, in many cases the most influential interaction, went on in-between local groups, not merely between the missionaries and the locals, as suggested by the initial, two-party encounter model. The challenge for most scholars of Christian missions is the abundance of first-hand accounts from the European missionaries and the scarcity, and often absence, of first-hand sources to the local populations’ voices in the encounter. The benefit of having narratives describing the European missionaries from the point of view of their local co-workers is demonstrated by Heleen Murre-van den Berg and Hestad Skeie in this volume.

The re-evaluation of local agency is one of post-colonial history’s most important points vis-à-vis studies on Christian missions. For instance, it is now generally agreed that local evangelists and Christians, not European missionaries, were the primary missionary agents after

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33 Elbourne, Blood Ground. Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853.
the introductory phase.\textsuperscript{34} Murre-van den Berg focuses on one of these local evangelists, the Assyrian minister Shamasha Yonan of Ada, and his public writing and reflections on the Protestant American mission in Urmia, Iran.

Moreover, Christianity was domesticated in Africa, Asia and Latin America earlier than previously thought. Christianity is therefore equally (if not more) an African, Latin-American, and Asian religion as it is European and North American. Indeed, one of the rather ironic results of this ‘long mission conversation’ is that the number of Christians outside Europe and North America by far outnumber those in Europe and North America. First and foremost this insight has resulted in greater scholarly focus on local appropriations of Christianity everywhere, a focus which also includes so-called main-line or mission-initiated churches.\textsuperscript{35} In many cases this has reduced the interest in European missions and missionaries, or at least removed the missionaries from their previous position centre stage, as one of the prime movers. While this is an important result of the greater awareness of local agent and agency, scholars could analyse why the European mission narratives continued – in some instances continue still today – to portray the missionaries as the prime movers, systematically underplaying or even making local agency invisible in their narratives.

It is also clear that it was not merely local communities outside Europe and Northern America which were transformed and marked through the interaction: also the missionaries and the European countries were heavily influenced through the encounter. While some of the studies of empire have indeed focused on how this transnational activity marked


\textsuperscript{35} Maia Green, \textit{Priests, Witches and Power: Popular Christianity after Mission in Southern Tanzania} (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997); Fenella Cannel, \textit{Power and Intimacy in the Christian Philippines} (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), to mention two among a vast number of studies. In the 1960s and 70s, studies departing from holistic and essentialist understandings of ‘culture’ were primarily interested in churches founded by refractors from main-line churches (so-called Bantu- or African Independent Churches/African Initiated Churches), because their Christianity was considered more ‘authentic’ than the Christianity of main-line churches.
and transformed European culture and society in Europe, studies of how the interaction influenced the missionaries and the missions still largely remain to be done. Ruth Compton Brouwer's contribution to this anthology is an interesting beginning in this field. Tracing how the decolonisation process of former European colonial states left many of the missionaries and missions in an identity crisis, she explores how the mission sought to redefine its relationship and interaction with Christian churches in now independent national states. While there is a clear shift in the way the missionaries and the missions think and speak of this encounter, the interaction continues. This underlines how the transnational networks that the Christian missions constitute go beyond historical epochs like colonialism. Indeed, while there are apparent changes in the missionaries and the mission's self-understanding and rhetoric (and perhaps also in their level and type of activity?) it is important to explore how this continued interaction is experienced and viewed from the point of view of the local ‘partners’, as they are currently called.

Christian Missions and Gender

Women constituted a majority in the mission movements, and women were also a central object of mission ideology, rhetoric and practical work. A number of studies focusing on issues of women, gender and Christian missions have contributed decisively to our understanding of both missions and missionaries. They have made visible the role gender played in the professional development of Protestant missions, women's central role in the missionary enterprise, and how the missions provided arenas for women's work beyond the domestic sphere. They have

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shown that “women played a central role in conflating the professional and the private in mission practice”,38 and how practice often contradicted and undermined the mission’s ideological and organisational patriarchy. Thus some of the inherent tensions that often existed in the missions’ ideologies and their organisational apparatus have been revealed.

Embarking on a career in the transnational mission profession could signify escape from traditional gender constraints in Western societies. However, that was not necessary the case, as shown by Livne in the Tibetan life story of British missionary Annie Royle Taylor. Livne argues that “rather than the mission field bringing greater freedom to women” it presented them with a different set of rules which derived from a broader spectrum of behaviours; from embodiments of evangelical zeal to more dispersed senses of mission derived from the notion of “woman as a specially civilising influence”.

While Annie Royle Taylor established her own mission, she did not focus primarily on work among women. Thus she differed from many of her contemporaries; female missionaries who saw it as their main priority to include non-Christian women in what they perceived as the collective of Christian, liberated women. This solidarity with non-Christian women was based on the Evangelical belief in all women’s right to salvation and the corresponding spiritual equality of men and women. Numerous women’s mission organisations in North America and Europe were established in the late nineteenth century. Here single, educated women inspired by religious calling used their professions to realise the ideal of Christianity’s global outreach in the name of Protestant mission.

In their roles as professional missionaries, European and American women conquered new areas within the patriarchal structures of the

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INTRODUCTION

Protestant church. However, did these women's success in expanding the scope of gender boundaries build on undisputed notions of racial hierarchies? In her study of female missionaries in India, Barbara Ramusack used the term ‘maternal imperialists’ and asked: “Is it possible for women from one race or ethnic group to promote effectively reforms or institutions designed to modify or improve the conditions of women of another race or ethnic group in a colonial society that embodies such a pervasive dominant-subordinate power structure?” This is still one of the most central issues in mission studies. Yet, more recent studies emphasise the complexity and many-facetedness that characterises the mission encounter. Lisbeth Mikaelsson reminds us that:

In the interwar period, as pointed out by Compton Brouwer, the phrase ‘women’s work for women’ was increasingly abandoned as a way of representing the work carried out by women in the mission. Compton Brouwer, who was one of the first to foreground the waning of the

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phenomenon of separate spheres, continues: “So few case studies of interwar missionary activity have been undertaken to date that other accounts of shifts in gender roles and professional responsibilities are largely unavailable”. The transnational mission movement opened up a space for women in the public sphere. Women’s participation in the mission movement, which was considerable, is an important issue for this book. Of particular concern is women’s participation in the formation of a global consciousness and their pioneering contribution to the establishment of organisational structures and working methods within international relief work. So far, studies on manhood and masculinity in the missionary context are still sparse. In this volume, Murre-van Den Berg’s article is a contribution to this field. The focus on how a male Assyrian minister speaks publicly about his spiritual father provides a fascinating example of the male reception of a male missionary and highlights characteristics of American missionary masculinity in the mid-nineteenth century.

Mission and Biography

Several of the contributions to this book focus on one individual missionary and his/her life story. These articles (by Gaitskell, Livne, Okkenhaug and Ustorf) exemplify how the agency of missionaries and global mission history can be analysed through the methodological approach of biography. A biographical approach reinstates the human being into the field of academic history. It brings closeness to the concrete and tangible by exploring a different dimension of the relevant past: the interplay between structure and agent. In this manner the biographical approach enriches a structural analysis and sheds light on the preconditions for individual choice that existed within the type of familiar, financial, social and cultural connections.

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43 Ibid.
A historical biography of an individual missionary might reveal the possibilities of agency, experience and thinking that the specific mission organisation created for its workers. Birgitte Possing, who is one of the leading historians in Scandinavia working with biography, argues that the great challenge of historical biography today is to explore the dialectics between life, work and contemporary social, political and cultural currents. She sees the historical biography as a methodological approach that implies an overall picture of a theme. Her position implies a reaction to the increasing specialisation within the humanities that have led to the development of separate disciplines of political history, women’s and gender history, mission history, colonial history, educational history etc. The biographical approach can be a stepping stone to unite fields that hitherto have been held apart.

When studying individual missionaries, the perception of historical biography as a way of unifying various sub-histories is productive. Besides the aspect of uniting various sub-disciplines, biography is important for another reason: it enables us to grasp the complexity of the colonial and global–local encounters of which mission history forms a part. For example, there is a tendency in the existing literature that women missionaries are either seen as heroines, or as ‘maternal imperialists’. The biographical method enables us to probe beyond the heroic myths and the coloniser’s image. It can humanise history through a focus on complex and contradictory individual lives. Such complexities and contradictions become particularly visible in the chapters by Livne and Ustorf.

*From Mission to Development: The Formation of a Global Consciousness*

The interwar period also saw other reorientations in the missions, and was in many ways a time of transition. After the carnage of the World War, it was impossible to argue that civilisation and Christianity were the same. Missions had to be justified in secular terms because support simply for evangelisation did not generate funding. As shown in Inger Marie Okkenhaug’s article, the refugee catastrophe during and after the World War forced women missionaries to become relief workers, aiding the survivors – mostly women and children – in Turkey and the Caucasus. It was a time of “Mission by other Means” to quote the title of Deborah Gaitskell’s article.
Gaitskell looks at ways missionaries helped pioneer international philanthropy. Her concentration is on missionary Dora Earthy who after retiring from mission work in Mozambique for a period worked for the Save the Children Fund. The focus is also on ways international aid in this period connected to the mission inheritance. In the case of Earthy and Save the Children it was pragmatic: the organisation was concerned with the scientific collection of information on children, and the missionaries’ closeness to African life made them well placed to get accurate statistics. Gaitskell argues that Earthy’s work for this pioneering NGO in the early 1930s was an alternative outworking of a missionary vocation. Instead of reinventing herself in a non-mission context, Earthy reconfigured her missionary message in the changed circumstances.

Ten years earlier, as shown in Okkenhaug’s article, missionary Bodil Bjørn declined to work for another pioneering, secular NGO, the Near East Relief, which would have been the most obvious organisation to join in the chaotic post-war period in Caucasus. Instead she created her own relief project, sponsored by Norwegian women supporters, in order to combine her missionary vocation with modern aid work among refugees in Armenia. Bjørn’s many years working for and with Armenians gave her confidence in creating her independent relief work. In addition these ties, enforced by war and genocide, led to a strong wish to leave a personal mark on the rebuilding of Armenian society. Even so, Bjørn’s relief efforts in a Soviet ruled country might have had a more lasting impact if she had toned down the religious aspect. After being forced out by the Soviet rulers, Bjørn worked with aid among refugees in Syria, yet another version of her missionary vocation in a transnational, humanitarian setting.

After World War Two, anti-colonial movements and increasing secularisation and globalisation led missions to reinvent themselves as ‘faith-based NGOs’. The experiences of these former evangelistic organisations convey the challenges involved in disengaging from missionary colonialism. Ruth Compton Brouwer’s article “When Missions Became Development” discusses changes in organisation, discourse and practice that characterised the course from mission to development in the United Church of Canada. Brouwer argues that the 1960s was the decade when the overseas missionary work of the mainline Canadian churches effectively became development work. This term includes not only technical and economic assistance but also support for struggles for justice and human rights and against colonialism and neo-colonial exploitation.
By the end of the 1960s the social activism of the churches had become unhitched from its original mandate of furthering evangelisation. In a time of increasing secularisation these ‘faith-based NGOs’ were losing in the competition for support to secular development agencies. Thus the development of Canadian missions seems to have followed a transnational trend where Protestant mission was increasingly becoming irrelevant to the general public in the Western world. Even so, as Brouwer points out, to the people on the receiving end of NGOs, it was perhaps not important to determine whether assistance was coming from a secular or a faith-based organisation.

Although tensions and differences evolved between secular and faith-based NGOs, missionaries may nevertheless be seen as pioneers of global humanitarian engagement. Through their vision of themselves and their role in the world, and through the aim of conquering the world in the name of Christianity and civilisation, the mission movement introduced a certain kind of global consciousness, knowledge and values. The network of mission organisations became an international body devoted to a humanitarian vision, advocating internationalism and claims to human brotherhood. With this a new form of transnational philanthropy was born. The influence reached far beyond the mission movement’s own circles. Missionaries were vital in introducing the idea of thinking internationally. The mission movement is an example of how transnational religion is a potent actor in the international community. The movement also brought the invention of new organisational forms and working methods. It created new instruments for forging transnational relationships.

Though mission work was intrusive and sometimes destructive, the missionaries nevertheless contributed to a fractured and often contradictory picture of the Western project. The missionary work epitomises the great paradox of the project of modernisation, which functioned as an instrument for Western governmentality but also provided tools for threatening and subverting colonial hegemony. Literacy, for instance, and Western political ideas became important sources of self-control and resistance. Moreover, global Christianity never became a totalising

45 Thomas, *Colonialism’s Culture. Anthropology, Travel and Government.*
47 Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. A Derivative Discourse?*
phenomenon; the missionaries’ messages were sometimes accommodated, sometimes resisted, appropriated or transformed into something new. The local populations were actively engaging and resisting the foreign imposition, transforming the terms of the missionary encounter. Indeed, they were and still are; the missionary encounter still continues. Christian missionaries are as active as ever in the twenty-first century. Paradoxically, while the post-colonial re-evaluation of European colonialism made Christian missionaries focus of inquiry, the scholarly interest in local appropriations of Christianity has largely left missionaries and mission organisations in the dark. As a result, Christian mission organisations are relegated to the colonial past in much contemporary scholarship. The anthropologist James Ferguson claims this is highly unfortunate, because Christian mission organisations “are arguably more important today in Africa than ever”.48 We believe that the transnational perspective is a fruitful way to continue to pay scholarly attention to the long term and continuing dynamics of missionary encounters. In the words of Dana L. Robert, mission in the twenty-first century “is a network, an international web of human relationships in which the “missionaries” scamper back and forth like human spiders, weaving and expanding the web in all directions. It is important to study the spiders, but it is equally important to notice the web”.49 It is our hope that this book will contribute to a deeper understanding of this complex picture.

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CHAPTER TWO

JAMES SIBREE AND LARS DAHLE:
NORWEGIAN AND BRITISH MISSIONARY ETHNOGRAPHY AS
A TRANSNATIONAL AND NATIONAL ACTIVITY

Hilde Nielssen

The settler makes history and is conscious of making it. And because he constantly refers to the history of his mother country, he clearly indicates that he himself is the extension of that mother country. Thus the history which he writes is not the history of the country which he plunders but the history of his own nation.

Frantz Fanon

In the 1870s, two missionaries, one British and the other Norwegian, produced two books with almost identical titles. James Sibree, a missionary working for the London Missionary Society (LMS), published Madagascar and its people in 1870, while the missionary Lars Dahle from the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) published the two-volume work Madagaskar og dets beboere (Madagascar and its inhabitants) in 1876–7. Both authors’ works provide a rich source of information about Madagascar at the time, and reflect the knowledge about the island’s history, geography, natural science and ethnography that was currently available. However, while these books have much in common, there are also marked differences between the ways these two authors describe the Malagasy population and culture.

The history of the protestant mission in Madagascar is closely intertwined with the history of a pre-colonial kingdom, the Merina kingdom in highland Madagascar. The Merina kingdom, which was a small kingdom among many others until the eighteenth century, owed its expansion largely to the international slave trade. The arrival of the

protestant mission was part of a larger process of imperial powers seeking influence and establishing relations with an expanding local state. In 1820, the LMS started a successful mission literally within the Merina court, cultivating its relationship with a government who at the time was positive towards, and profited from, European influence. The missionaries became tools in an ambitious project to create a modern state in Madagascar. Though the British missionaries were expelled from the country for a long period between 1835 and 1862, their position within the Merina court resulted in one of their most successful missions ever. The British success lay in the background of the Norwegian mission’s arrival on the island in 1867. In short, the two missions operated in the local context as warmly welcomed missionaries in the largest pre-colonial kingdom south of Sahara. However, while the relationship between the missionaries and the Malagasy government at the time was quite harmonious, the relationship between the mission societies was more ambiguous. When James Sibree and Lars Dahlé wrote their books, the relatively recently arrived Norwegian missionaries stood as rivals to the LMS. They tried to position themselves, both in terms of territory and as Lutherans, against the long-established British Congregationalists.

This chapter addresses the divergences in the ways Sibree and Dahlé portrayed the Malagasy people and society. Are the contrasts between the two, otherwise so similar, texts understandable in terms of the rivalry between the mission organisations? Can they be attributed to differences in scholarly interest, personality or religious affiliation? Do the texts represent differences between a British and a Norwegian perspective? Historically there had been close contact between the British and Norwegian missions; information and written publications circulated between the two countries and between the missionaries. Both Sibree and Dahlé were familiar with each others’ work. However, significant contrasts between the British and Norwegian societies at the time made both the missionaries’ background, and the context for the reception of their ethnographic work, vary. I discuss the contrasts between the texts in relation to social and cultural processes in the authors’ home societies.

Colonialism was a plural phenomenon involving different groups, different empires and nations, different projects and different outcomes. If missionary ethnography can be seen as a part of a larger colonial discourse, what difference will it make if one of the authors was a representative of the British Empire, while the other came from Norway, a country situated on the periphery of the colonial empires?
Missionary writings contributed in important ways to the constitution of ethnography as a field of knowledge, and as a written genre. As James Sibree once stated:

Both philology and literature and folk-lore would be in a very bad way were we dependent upon colonists and traders for our knowledge of such subjects; and had not Christian missionaries in all parts of the world, in addition to their chief work of making known the gospel, been determined to study accurately for themselves the languages and ideas of the peoples among whom they live. I therefore have no hesitation in again affirming that missionaries, notwithstanding the disparaging remarks often made about them by those who know least about what they do, have done, and are doing, valuable service to philological and anthropological science.

Both Sibree and Dahle’s books reflect that ethnography at the time was a genre in the making. The composition of the books shows a close affinity to the polyhistors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The books appear to us as a mixture of genres and themes. They not only contain ethnographical information, but also history, geography and natural history. Judged by the table of contents, the books appear almost identical. On closer inspection, however, there is a variation in emphasis and elaboration of certain themes, as well as variations in terminology, and subtleties like tone and choice of words in the way the authors colour their descriptions.

Both authors were men of science. They were considered prominent experts on Madagascar, with a long list of publications covering fields like geography, history, ethnography and language. Apart from publishing two books with same titles at the same time, they both published scholarly articles in the same reviews on a regular basis. They both even published autobiographies at the same time: Dahle published his three-volume work, *Looking back on my life and on my mission life in particular* (*Tilbakeblick paa mit liv og særlig paa mit missionsliv*), in 1923, while Sibree published his, *Fifty years in Madagascar: personal experiences of mission life and work*, in 1924. They knew each other well: Sibree even lists Dahle among his intimate friends. Besides, although they belonged

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3 For instance in Antananarivo Annual, a scientific review founded by the LMS.
to different church confessions,\(^4\) there are clearly parallels between the role and position of the non-conformists in British society and the mission movement in Norwegian society with its pietistic, lay movement affiliations. Both movements represented a social and political force, and became important in the formation of their respective nations.

James Sibree was born in Hull in 1836, the son of a congregational minister. Trained as a civil engineer, he was sent by the LMS to Madagascar in 1863 in order to lead the construction of churches and other mission buildings. After a few years he returned to England for a two years training period for the Congregational ministry before he went back to Madagascar once more. Sibree the engineer reveals himself through the careful treatment of architecture and craftsmanship. Lars Dahle was born in 1843. The clever son of a farmer, he studied theology and language for five years at the Mission School in Stavanger and the University of Christiania (now Oslo). Substantial parts of his book consist of the results of his own studies of the Malagasy language and oral literature, and his assumptions, analyses and theories of Malagasy history and culture based on these studies. Apart from general theories of evolution, his work was highly informed by theories on the history and development of language as well as German studies of Völkerkunde and religion. In the preface of the second volume of *Madagascar and its inhabitants*, he mentioned names such as E.B.Tylor, John Lubbock, Max Müller and Adolf Wüttke as important sources of inspiration. If Sibree emphasised local architecture, skills and craftsmanship, Dahle showed, apart from language and oral literature, a particular interest in issues of morality and the “character” of the Malagasy people.

*Why did Missionaries Write Ethnography?*

Knowledge about local languages, religion and culture was considered vital for mission work. There are many reasons for this. First, documentation of local customs and morality was used as proof of the necessity

Lars Dahle: Madagaskar og dets beboere 1876, Title page.
for Christianity. Such knowledge legitimised mission work and was used actively in the promotion of the mission in the missionaries' home societies. Secondly, it was necessary for mission work itself. Knowledge of the local cultural, religious and linguistic context was considered important for the monitoring of the conversion process, as it gave missionaries better control of the social and moral change they sought to induce. Thirdly, such knowledge was indispensable for the identification of points of translation of Christianity into the Malagasy context.

Apart from these more general reasons, both Dahle and Sibree stated quite clearly in their prefaces that they also had more specific agendas — agendas that in certain ways influenced their texts as a whole. Sibree wrote, “It appears to me that there was room for such a work, more especially at the present time, when Madagascar is throwing off the traditions of long centuries of superstition, and standing forward as a country ‘resting upon God’.”5 What Sibree wanted was to afford a representation of “the wonderful story” of the island’s “religious progress”. Sibree's book can be read as an account of the long history and successful work of the LMS.

In contrast to Sibree's book, Dahle's texts can be seen as a report of the conditions of a new mission field. His account underlined the need for continuous Norwegian missionary effort. In the preface of the first volume, he held that the book was borne out of a need to produce a revised and updated ethnography of Madagascar:

Hardly any country has to this extent been shrouded by uncertainty, thanks to the fibbers of the world, as Madagascar. It would distress me much if my stay at the very scene of the hereby described events had not made me capable of avoiding at least some of the errors of my predecessors. And since I do not intend to tell fibs, I will not be able to make the island as “interesting” as other people have done, but then I hope that the image I give, in return, will have more truth.6

Thus, Dahle's critique of the LMS, both of the work they did and their representation of the work and its results, pervades Dahle's book in both explicit and implicit ways.

These statements in the prefaces of both books should give a general impression of the authors' contrasting agendas, but how does this

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5 Sibree 1870 p. 7.
6 Dahle 1876 p. [V].
James Sibree: *Madagascar and its people*, Title page.
contrast manifest in the text? And what does this tell us, apart from the tension between the two organisations or the contrast between an optimistic Sibree and a more dark-minded Dahle?

*Evolution and Civilisation*

Let us turn to the descriptions of the Malagasy. Both books are marked by certain ways of imagining the ‘other’. Notions of ethnicity, race, evolution and levels of civilisation underlie and structure the texts. The ethnographic descriptions in both books reveal a racial and civilisational hierarchy with different degrees of savagery and civilisation. The missionaries considered the Malagasy more advanced than, for instance, their African neighbours. Apart from placing Madagascar on the world map in terms of level of civilisation, the missionaries also engaged in the classification and evaluation of the different groups within Madagascar. Their descriptions revealed notions of hierarchy and racial typification based on common markers such as skin colour, practical and mental capacities, morality and level of material culture.

Studies of missionary ethnographies point to the way they describe people in both negative and positive terms: as heathen, savage and primitive, but also as having potential for progress. The potential for progress seemed to increase with the conceived level of civilisation. Both Sibree and Dahle shared the basic principles of categorisation of the Malagasy population into a hierarchy depending on conceptions of race and level of civilisation, and they judged and ranked the population through comparison and evaluation. However, there is a difference in emphasis and tone between their descriptions. In short, while Sibree tended to describe people in positive terms and stressed their potential for progress, Dahle emphasised what he conceived of as negative aspects.

For Sibree, the Malagasy were, above all, a semi-civilised people. They were even better than many other semi-civilised peoples, such as the Chinese and Indians, because, as he said, they lacked many of those

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peoples’ cruel customs. Although the Malagasy might also be cruel, their cruelty was not worse than the cruelty of more civilised nations: “… they differ remarkably from most other semi-civilised nations, and in some points might even set an example to those who pride themselves upon their superior culture”.

While Sibree emphasised the Malagasy as semi-civilised, Dahle was concerned about the lack of racial purity; the “mixture of the Malayan, Negro and Arab type” in his terminology. Racial terminology was here more clearly articulated. Dahle used this racial type-terminology in his description of the various ethnic groups: “the more the Malayan traits appear, the more intelligent, but also the more deceiving is the facial expression, and vice versa, the more the Negro type appear, the more good-natured, but also the more stupid is the expression”. The difference in tone between Dahle and Sibree may perhaps be illustrated by the following quote drawn from Sibree: “The Sakalavas are perhaps the finest race, physically considered, and their quick, intelligent, and lively disposition indicates great mental ability; while the Hovas [Merina] are handsomer in face, and more acute and subtle in intellect”.

The Degeneration of Racial and Cultural Mixture

The fact that the Malagasy peoples consisted of “an aggregate of heterogeneous components”, a physical or racial as well as a moral and cultural mixture, seemed to be problematic for Dahle. As he wrote:

The nation as well as the individual is like a chameleon that incessantly changes colour and whose shades one may in a way designate, but thus as such that the designation becomes almost without worth, if it is not simultaneously informed as to which stage of transformation they belong. What is characteristic of this people is – if one may express it that way – that it lacks character.

The Malagasy were deemed lazy, with a low working capacity, a poor spiritual capacity, without the ability of logical thought and with a

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8 Sibree 1870 p. 187.
9 Sibree 1870 p. 187.
10 Dahle 1877 p. 5.
11 Sibree 1870 p. 275.
12 Dahle 1877 p. 3.
13 Dahle 1877 p. 3.
limited ability to reason, but more capacity for imagination and emotion. When it came to the capacity of learning he saw a lot of potential — but also lack of practice. One important reason for the shortage of character he found in the Malagasy class society was not only the institution of slavery, but also the institution of nobility. Nobility created indolence, he held, and, as he said, “idleness is the root of all evil”.14

British Civilisation

For Sibree, England was the point of reference above all, whether he described the landscape, architecture or the people. Beautiful landscapes were likened to England: “The scenery was delightful, both shores being covered with trees; reminding me in many places of the Wye, in others of the lake at Longleat, and, in narrow parts, of Studley Park. Our road for miles much resembled a footpath through a nobleman’s park in England … Clumps of filaos, a lofty larch-like tree gave a very English appearance to much of the scenery”.15 Sibree’s passages on landscape and scenery echo nineteenth century Romanticism. It might be worth noting in this context depictions of landscape in British literature and poetry, such as Wordsworth for instance. According to Helen Tiffin, the focus on, or obsession with, landscape may be interpreted as a form of cultural nationalism and defence of British imperialism, and as a way of evoking a sense of British identity.16

Sibree’s book was written like a travelogue where he described his travels throughout the country before dwelling more extensively on flora, fauna, local people and customs. During his travels, Sibree regularly met what he termed British- or English-looking persons, and he spent a lot of time describing physical appearance as well as the use of British-looking clothes. One of the first persons he described in his book was:

The governor, whose name was Andriamandroso, was seated in a chair, dressed in English fashion, with a black silk hat and worked-wool slippers. He had a very European looking face, dark olive complexion, and is an Andriana – that is, of a clan or tribe nearly related to the royal family.17

14 Dahle 1877 p. 16.
15 Sibree 1870 p. 60.
16 Helen Tiffin, Helen (ed.): Five Emus to the King of Siam: Environment and Empire. (Amsterdam/N.Y.: Rodopi, 2005).
17 Sibree 1870 p. 39.
One of the English-looking persons Sibree encountered.
Later in the book he mentioned another person: “a fine-looking man (whom I afterwards found to be connected with the royal family) with a very English-looking and intelligent countenance”\textsuperscript{18} When describing a reception at the royal court, he wrote: “The queen was seated in a chair, raised two or three steps above the floor, with their ladies on one side, and the gentlemen on the other. The former were all dressed in English fashion, and some really looked well”\textsuperscript{19} These English-looking persons appear throughout the book, and in each case they turn out to be members of the Merina aristocracy, mostly members of the royal family who hold different positions at the court or in the various provinces of the Merina kingdom. In short, Sibree’s concern seemed above all to portray the people’s achievement of, or potential for, civilisational and religious improvement.

According to Sibree, Madagascar had undergone a political and social revolution: a breakdown of feudal power and, following what he termed “the spread of intelligence and education and liberal ideas”, there were signs of a development towards parliamentarism\textsuperscript{20} The source of this development was clear: the English influence, which was noted in numerous ways, for instance when writing about the military and governmental institutions: “The influence of English ideas and liking for English institutions is curiously apparent in the names of the highest offices of the state. The words “prime minister” and “commander in chief” have become naturalised in the language”\textsuperscript{21} The introduction of a jury system in cases involving death penalty is seen as another sign of the spread of ideas of “English liberty … another testimony to the admiration of the intelligent part of the people for English institutions”\textsuperscript{22} British Congregationalists no doubt had a unique position in Madagascar, both because Madagascar was not a British colony and because of their particular relation to the pre-colonial Merina kingdom. Their influence on the formation of the pre-colonial Malagasy state and society was significant. Thanks to this influence, Sibree looked optimistically to the future:

\textsuperscript{18} Sibree 1870 p. 106.
\textsuperscript{19} Sibree 1870 p. 328.
\textsuperscript{20} See Sibree 1870 p. 280
\textsuperscript{21} Sibree 1870 p. 297.
\textsuperscript{22} Sibree 1870 p. 304.
The future of the country is bright with promise; should no retrograde movement take place – and this seems, humanly speaking, highly improbable – we may look forward to Madagascar soon taking an honourable position amongst civilised and Christian nations.\textsuperscript{23}

Dahle seems not to have shared Sibree's optimistic view: "I have tried to provide short sketches of the history of this new kingdom during its years of childhood and in the awkward age in whose last stage it unquestionably still belongs".\textsuperscript{24} Later writings revealed that Sibree was against French colonisation. Dahle, for his part, seems to have attributed the sufferings of the people following the French aggression as a divine punishment for their sins. In his autobiography, he told how he had preached on this topic when he was invited to give a sermon at the royal court. It was the first time any Norwegian had been asked to do so. He talked about humbleness and the necessity to do penance:

\begin{quote}
I think I could read on their faces that the sermon was not really to their taste; but I thought it was exactly what they needed; as they are so self-righteous … It was just that this difficult-minded France had, without any reason, picked a quarrel with them.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

\textit{The Dark Side of Civilisation}

For Dahle, civilisation clearly also have entailed negative aspects. Savagery may be an expression of degeneration, caused by the negative influences of the darker sides of civilisation, immorality and bad conduct of Western tradesmen and others. As he wrote in his description of the Betsimisaraka peoples of the East coast:

\begin{quote}
Since in this region there exists several coastal towns … with quite a few traders, French speaking creoles from Mauritius and Bourbon in particular, who are not exactly famous (they are indeed notorious) for their morality, and since the whole of the region from ancient times has had a lively connection with the above-mentioned islands, the population in this coastal area has come into lasting contact with Whites (or half-whites), who have helped thoroughly to deprave their character by having accustomed them to strong beverages and in full measure having made
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{23} Sibree 1870 p. 312.
\textsuperscript{24} Dahle 1877 p. 1.
\textsuperscript{25} Dahle 1923 II p. 219.
use of and developed their already strong inclination to indecency … As a consequence, most of the population consists of drunkards and harlots.\textsuperscript{26}

However, the corruptive influences of civilisation were not, in Dahle’s view, restricted to the coast, with its alcohol and prostitution. On one hand, Dahle clearly appreciated the level of progress he found among the highland population, the consequence of the London Missionary Society’s work. He praised the industry and practical proficiency of the Londoners — although he clearly stated that the progress of Christianity in their mission fields had not had the same speed as the level of education and development of practical skills. The London Missionaries, he argued, “have both spoken and acted as if the useful knowledge of reading, writing etc. was Christianity”\textsuperscript{27}. In other words, civilisation, even the British one, did not necessarily imply the spread of true Christianity.

The Malagasy, Dahle argued, easily “change stages” through the attribution of elementary knowledge and external form; a very doubtful capacity according to Dahle, as this had led the Malagasy to acquire the reprehensible rather than the commendable. As he said: “when it comes to imitating European fashion, appreciating European wines and delicacies, European dances, card-playing and all kinds of amusements, the Malagasy have already brought it far”\textsuperscript{28}. In contrast to Sibree, Dahle ridiculed the mimicry of Europeans, the use of European finery, and the way high-ranking persons, noblemen and army dressed, and he criticised their “vanity and frivolity”. He also expressed concern about the sexual promiscuity that he seemed to encounter everywhere and criticised peoples’ conduct as well as appearance in this respect. According to Dahle, the British accounts romanticised the Merina court and underplayed negative aspects such as vanity and sexual promiscuity. Dahle himself compared the Malagasy to the French; he actually called them “Africa’s French”:

Everybody is familiar with the frailty that accompanies the French’ rashness and how it has led to the ruin of family life. Upon this foundation of family life is grounded the rottenness of the bourgeois society, something Europe so recently has seen the evidence of. Also here in Madagascar rashness has born the same fruit in that it has to a terrible degree predisposed the people to vanity and voluptuousness.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{26} Dahle 1876 p. 65.
\textsuperscript{27} Dahle 1877 p. 22.
\textsuperscript{28} Dahle 1877 p. 23.
\textsuperscript{29} Dahle 1877 p. 17.
Civilisation as an empty form, without its true content of Christianity, he found also among the LMS converts. As he wrote about the LMS:

Their mistake has been to seize more than they were capable of, partly because of the incorporation of the masses into the congregations at a time when their hearts have not yet been reached with the Word of life, partly by reserving for themselves regions that they lack missionaries to serve. Furthermore, they cannot be acquitted for having overestimated the results of their work, in that they have not sufficiently emphasised the difference between the baptised and the Christians, between the spread of enlightenment and the spread of Christianity.30

I will argue that Dahle’s position here not only reflected the tension between LMS and NMS; it also revealed a notion of civilisation different from the British.

The Noble Savage

While Dahle’s *Madagascar and its inhabitants* presents a rather negative view of the local population, his other works bear witness of a development of perspective. Dahle was at the time also busy with another work: a collection of Malagasy oral literature. This work, called *Specimens of Malagasi Folk-Lore*, came out in 1877 and included folk tales, legends, myths, speeches and songs. Today Dahle’s collection is still being published and read in Madagascar. A small excerpt from this collection was presented in the appendix of *Madagascar and its inhabitants*. Working with Malagasy oral literature appeared to have left its traces. In a letter published in the *Norwegian Missionary Review* in 1877, it seemed that Dahle had changed his mind about the character of the Malagasy people:

The character of the people has for me been standing in an unfavourable light … The collection I have made shows me that in this respect there has at least been better times, and this gives a hope that these can return when the nation’s present stage of improper awkward age is left behind … It is therefore both exhilarating and raises new hope to be able to look back on a former stage in the life of this people, when with all its raw naturalness it nevertheless seems to have lived a far more energetic life than now — a time when a certain chivalry was not unknown, and when poetry, often with great naivety, bridged over all obstacles’ and conditions’ humdrums

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30 Dahle 1877 p. 275.
and frequently, in a splendid language, preached morality, such as “Falseness hits its own master on his neck” and “the evil carries with it the germ of its own conviction”, and that goodness and what is worthy of recognition will always, in one way or another, show to advantage, no matter how long it is despised and misrecognised.”

Malagasy oral literature, therefore, provided evidence of a noble past.

Circulating Ideas of Collective Identity

In nineteenth century Europe, several different ideas and ideologies of collective identities circulated, ideas that often were in opposition to each other, but nevertheless amalgamated into contradictory and paradoxical combinations from a logical point of view. These ideas included primordialism, traditionalism and universalism — all were incorporated into the repertoires of the European nations. The categorical universalism of the Enlightenment, evolutionism (which temporalised the border between inside and outside), and German romanticism (with its idea of the natural nation) all influenced European thought. Which of these ideas became most important in the nation-building of the different European states varied according to context, political circumstances etc. Cultural heritage and primordialism became more important in a Germany lacking natural borders — and also in Norway — in contrast to France (with the French revolution as a universal mission) and Great Britain (who considered herself privileged by historical circumstances and as a pioneer of civilisation), where universalist ideas became more important. In this light, the way Sibree in his book focused on levels of civilisation, while Dahle used racial terminology and was concerned about the lack of racial purity among the Malagasy population, may also be connected to the different positions of these ideologies in the missionaries’ own home societies. For example, the idea of a uniform global civilisation did not resonate with the form of nationalism that evolved in Norway, one which was heavily influenced by German thought. As Todd Kontje argues in his book *German Orientalisms*, the German concept

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of culture put a stress on national differences and a particular identity. Whereas in England culture was equalled with civilisation, in Germany ‘culture’, in the tradition from Herder, came to mean ‘cultures’ in the plural, designating particular ways of life, shared values and meanings characteristic for distinct groups of people. Thus, exclusionary concepts of ethnicity became more important than abstract ideas potentially open to anyone, anywhere. As Helgard Mahrdt holds, referring to Hanna Arendt’s writings, the völkisch character of German nationalism paved the way for racial thinking and tribal consciousness. However, despite the emphasis on particularism, ideas of a common Christian culture nevertheless became important in Germany and Norway as in many other European countries. Thus, the contrast between Norway and England can be formulated as follows: In Norway, Christian universalism was combined with cultural particularism, while in England, Christian universalism went together with evolutionism and imperial nationalism.

Within nineteenth century Britain, empire was more important than the nation. The British Empire made the development of ethnic nationalism meaningless. Indeed, it can be argued that the lack of nationalism in Britain has been seen as a virtue and as one of the significant markers of British identity. British nationalism, Kumar holds, was an imperial or missionary nationalism: the nationalism of a people with more to celebrate than merely themselves. Kumar argues that although notions of nation and empire may be seen as antithetical, empires may nevertheless carry certain kinds of national identity providing the dominant group with a particular sense of themselves and their place in the world. Imperial nationalism, however, does not emphasise ethnic identity. Instead the focus is on the empires’ political, cultural or religious mission as the carriers of civilisation and as the standard bearers of modernity and progress. Likewise, Kathleen Wilson points to the way Empire is a fundamental part of English culture and national identity, and how Empire is linked to notions of progress, mission and historical destiny. Empire is a right for Englishmen, proclaimed in the name of English liberties, and is about diffusing freedom, sciences, political order and

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33 Helgard Mahrdt: “Race-Thinking” and “Tribal Nationalism” versus a “Political Organisation of Citizens”. In *Telos* 32, 2005, p. 126.
Christian knowledge.\textsuperscript{35} In his book \textit{Civility and Empire. Literature and Culture in British India, 1822–1922}, Anindyo Roy holds that for the British of the nineteenth century, civility was part of an idea of a “gentlemanly character”, connected to hierarchies of different kinds of social and cultural authority and rooted in “metropolitan ideas of social decorum and class privilege”.\textsuperscript{36} In Sibree’s account, the Merina nobles become the local counterpart to the British gentleman.

In nineteenth century Norway, however, the situation was quite different. Norway was then marked by a growing nationalism. For 400 years Norway had been dominated by the kingdom of Denmark, and, after the Napoleon wars, had been in union with the Swedish throne. No wonder Dahle had contempt for the nobility class with all its “idleness and vanity”, coming from a country without any nobility of its own and with a foreign-dominated elite. Norwegian nationalism idealised the free peasant as the carrier of a unique form of liberty which was considered to be a central element of the Norwegian Volksgeist. Dahle grew up in Norway during the height of national romanticism, a cultural movement that gained massive support and resonance within the population.

The central idea of national romanticism was that a nation’s progress or advancement should begin with the tracing and revitalisation of its true and unspoiled character. This hidden treasure within the heart of Norway was rediscovered in the peasant society and the in past — the distant golden age of the Vikings. Oral literature was considered to be an expression of this hidden treasure — the Volksgeist — and an important source to information about a nation’s character. In his memoirs from 1923, Dahle compares his work with Malagasy oral literature with that of Asbjørnsen and Moe, Norway’s version of the German Grimm brothers. In his explanation of why a missionary should spend time on the study of the oral literature of a heathen population revolves exactly around this point: oral literature was an invaluable source to a people’s Volksgeist — \textit{folkeaanden} in Norwegian — as well as to the the study of the native language. The idea of the native language as the uniting element of a national community was important to national romanticist thought.

\textsuperscript{36} Roy 2005 p. 7.
Another important movement in nineteenth century Norway was the great religious awakenings and the Norwegian lay movement. The founder of this movement was a peasant called Hans Nielsen Hauge. Hauge's movement gained enormous popularity. Hauge was also a founder of industrial activities, and this combination of pietism and industrial innovation made him into a national icon. The movement, called haugianerne or Hauge's Friends, became important for the formation of the mission movement. In fact, Lars Dahlé came from a “Haugian” home. The lay movement could perhaps be seen as a spiritual empowerment of the people in the process of nation building, not least in a country with a state church and where the state apparatus, and also the church leadership, in a sense were foreign.

For Lars Dahlé, as for many Norwegians at the time, the rebirth of a nation also entailed a religious vision: the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. National romanticism and the religious revivalism could meet in the idea of the free peasant. The revival movement was an important agent in the process of nation building: with democratisation, modernisation and social liberation. In short, for Norwegians, civilisation comes from within and can never be imposed by others. As Dahlé formulates it in his book:

If one finally asks when one can hope for a living and powerful Christian life in Madagascar, a real contrition in penance and improvement, a true joy of faith, a true struggle of sanctification, a true blissful hope of victory, not only within the hearts of a few but of many, then this is a question that He alone can answer, who knows the hearts of men and knows individuals and nations alike. For me it has always seemed that such a change will not take place, until the Lord, through a vivacious awakening, has blown life into the dead bones. When Norway slept in death and lethargy, He let an unlearned peasant boy become the means for letting the wind of victory blow through the country. Maybe He has reserved for Himself the appropriate time to find a chosen tool among Madagascar's own children to carry the serious words of the awakening's call.37

In 1894, Madagascar got its own Hans Nielsen Hauge, according to the Norwegian missionaries, a peasant and former medicine man called Rainisoloambo. Rainisoloambo was baptised by LMS missionaries, but was apparently not very active in the church, until he received a vision and started a revival movement. He and his movement were soon

37 Dahlé 1877 p. 355.
embraced by the Norwegians and the Lutheran church. The movement continues to grow today, not only within the contexts of the church, but at the national level, penetrating many state institutions and positions of power.

If Lars Dahle’s text can be linked to social transformation both at home and in Madagascar, so can James Sibree’s. According to Susan Thorne, the non-conformists were an important force in the transformation of nineteenth century England that was linked to the growing influence of the middle classes. This growing influence of one class (with its political radicals, new liberal ideas and progressivism) fuelled changes both in terms of domestic policies and social reforms, and led to a reformulation of the imperial culture in Britain as well as a shift in colonial policy. The missionaries were vital in this process.

James Sibree’s and Lars Dahle’s texts are more than representations of certain perspectives, or projections of ‘self’ into ‘other’. As Mary Louise Pratt argues in her book *Imperial Eyes*, European imperialism was also a scientific expedition, where new forms of natural history were used in order to bring new worlds into the patterns of European order. The practice of reading and writing was also vital to the domestic culture of Empire. The writings of Sibree and Dahle were, together with hundreds of similar texts written from many parts of the world, linked to the making of the societies at home. In Susan Thorne’s words: “missionaries were not simply products of their time but were agents in its making”.

Thus these two texts about Madagascar can be seen as actively connected to contemporary struggles and debates, to various ideological streams and social transformations taking place in Europe at the time.

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40 Thorne 1999 p. 11.
CHAPTER THREE

THE MANY PURPOSES OF MISSIONARY WORK: ANNIE ROYLE TAYLOR AS MISSIONARY, TRAVEL WRITER, COLLECTOR AND EMPIRE BUILDER

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Introduction

Annie Royle Taylor, member of the China Inland Mission; founder of the Tibet Pioneer Mission; writer and creator of a significant collection of Tibetan ethnographic material at the National Museums Scotland, is today best remembered as an anecdotal incident in the many biographies of the men who fought in the Younghusband Expedition to Tibet in 1904.¹

Whether intentional or not, Taylor’s public image was both as ‘God’s little woman’² and as an eccentric zealot, who found her calling among the people of Tibet, with whom she formed relationships far more easily than she did with the home audience in Britain. However, once examined in detail, Taylor’s life portrays a woman of many contradictions; a middle class Victorian woman when in Tibet; an eccentric missionary who ‘went native’ when back in Britain and all the time using her gender, social status and religion to move between each group in order to strive further towards her personal goals, which themselves appear ambiguous.

The British colonial enterprise in Tibet at the end of the nineteenth century can itself be seen as a series of contradictions. Tibet remained peripheral to the empire but was observed within its well-established

¹ See for example P. Younghusband French, The Last Great Imperial Adventurer (London: HarperCollins, 1994); D. MacDonald, Twenty Years in Tibet (London: Seeley Service and Co., 1932); Peter Fleming, Bayonets to Lhasa: the first full account of the British invasion of Tibet in 1904 (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961). The Expedition was political in intent but developed into a full scale military operation, largely due to the role of Capt. Younghusband, after whom the mission is named.

framework. The image of Tibet presented to the popular Western imagination in the late 19th century was both confusing and contradictory. Whilst Buddhist ‘high’ art and culture, for example the decorative arts of the monasteries and Lhasa elite, did conform to Western notions of Orientalist splendour, Tibetan culture and ‘religion’ as experienced in a ‘popular’ context did not. These factors, together with the perceived blurring of secular and religious life and the complete disregard Tibet itself appeared to have for the rest of the world, were all details struggling for space within Western perceptions of Tibet.

Annie Royle Taylor positioned herself in the midst of the social and cultural negotiations that took place between Britain and Tibet at the turn of the 20th century. She presents an interesting case-study for the consideration of the varied roles a single woman in Victorian Britain could inhabit when physically relocated outside of the imperial hub, and how these roles could be used to subvert the social norms of the time, allowing women a more accessible route for competing with men in the colonial endeavour. As such, these women were builders of empire as much as their male counterparts. Missionary work was a means by which a woman could travel the world in a relatively independent manner and in doing so, should they choose, could subtly become part of the greater colonial enterprise.

Through the biographic narrative of a particular individual, this paper will examine how the field of ‘Mission’ allowed for changing attitudes to, and ideas about, gender and social status and the liberating experience of travel afforded to women, in relation to the colonial frontier of Tibet at the end of the nineteenth century.

*From Woman of Means to Missionary with a Motive* \(^5\)

Annie Taylor came from a large, prosperous family, many of whom travelled widely. Her mother had been born in Brazil, the daughter of

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\(^3\) The 1904 Younghusband Expedition threw Tibet into the British public consciousness, although for many involved in the ‘Great Game’, Tibet had existed on the political radar for some time.

\(^4\) Prior to 1904 Tibet was essentially ‘closed’ to foreigners. However, monasteries on the Tibet-China border, the Tibet-India border, and those of Mongolia were more readily accessible and offered a glimpse of Tibetan monastic cultural life. For example, the scholar and Orientalist L.A. Waddell purchased a monastery to examine its inner workings.

\(^5\) Biographical details of Taylor’s life come from the Introduction to her 1895 publication *Pioneering in Tibet.*
missionaries, and her father was a ship owner with the Black Ball Shipping Line, an avid traveller, and a member of the Royal Geographic Society. Taylor was the second of ten children, three of whom had immigrated to Australia by the early 1900’s.

As a child, Taylor suffered from a heart condition and this deeply influenced her education as “the doctors advised that I should not be troubled with study, as they did not expect me to live to grow up.” Her lack of formal education had a significant impact in later life, showing strongly in her written work on Tibet and her public speeches on her travels.

In her diary, she cites a moment at the age of thirteen as the defining point at which she felt ‘called’ to Jesus and at the age of sixteen, following an inspiring talk from a son of the missionary Dr Moffat, she set her heart on missionary work. It was then that Taylor had her first experience of the effect her gender was to have on her future aspirations; “He [Dr Moffat’s son] seemed to think that women were more of a hindrance than a help to the missionary work in Africa. I was longing to be a missionary; and felt then, for the only time in my life, sorry that I was a girl.”

Although the debate regarding the use and value of independent female missionaries continued throughout the mid-late 19th century, by the time Taylor was of an age to fulfil her evangelical ambitions, most British missionary societies were readily accepting lone female missionaries, and by the end of the 19th century, single women outnumbered single men in many mission stations.

Taylor’s father was also against his daughter becoming a missionary. His in-laws had been missionaries and he may have had some experience of missionary life through his wife’s family. Interestingly, her father suggested that instead she go abroad as a nursing sister with the British army. Female, professionally trained nursing within the army was still relatively new at this time and was being met with some hostility by certain members of the armed forces. It would therefore appear that

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7 Ibid.


on one level John Foukes-Taylor was quite a forward thinking man, but took issue with the specific religious environment of the mission, rather than the idea of his daughter travelling abroad independent of a man. I would argue that despite the squalid conditions of army barracks, the fact that the army offered a clear structure and hierarchy understood by all within the wider social colonial framework, made it a seemingly more appropriate place for a woman to work alone. Within the army a woman would remain an English-woman and would retain the qualities that allowed her to remain socially acceptable within Victorian British society, which was so enmeshed with notions of status and class.

Without family approval, but with a perseverance for which she became renowned, Taylor sold off her jewellery to pay for her nursing qualifications and joined the China Inland Mission (CIM) in 1884. Recognising her seriousness, Taylor’s father relented and gave her both money and letters of introduction to major shipping lines, expecting her soon to return to England.

The Importance of ‘Englishness’ and Empire

Records of Taylor’s early work can be found in a book published under her name called “Pioneering in Tibet”, which is comprised of a series of previously published articles and lectures from 1893/4 and later letters from 1895–7. Although the overall editor of the volume is unknown, their voice is clearly heard in two key ways; in a continuing expression of the importance of Taylor’s work in relation to England and Englishness, and in the elevation of Taylor’s status through her superior morality and Christian integrity. This is the focus of the opening chapter, which contains four comments on Englishness in the space of three pages. The reader is informed that Taylor had the distinction of being the first English person to reside in Tau-Chau and that no English person had gone beyond the monastery at Kum-bum, which she had also visited.

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10 For example, a paper given at the Royal Scottish Geographical Society in December 1894. The later letters are from an unknown source.
11 Tau-Chau (19th century spelling) is located near Kumbum Monastery in Western China.
These comments are important for two reasons. Firstly, in the context of Victorian travel writing, being ‘British’ enabled a person, whether male or female, to surmount any danger or difficulty. When Tibetan officials asserted that an armed escort should accompany Taylor back across the border to China, she replied: “I am English, and do not fear for my life.”13 Secondly, they set up a language of ‘boundaries’ and ‘frontiers’ that was already well known to the British reading public, used in commentaries on Britain’s expanding Empire, which was geographical, political and intellectual.14

The manner in which women had established their right to work in the mission field independently of men was also tied up in ideas of Englishness, as was the notion that the level of ‘civilisation’ a society might have achieved was visible in the position of women within that society. Jayawardena notes that from the beginning of the missionary project, Christianity and the importance of Western values were a package.15 As part of that package, British Victorian ideology cast women as ‘civilizers’,16 establishing for them a gender specific role within the missionary project specifically, and the wider colonial project in general, which required them to both protect and project an idealised notion of both ‘English’ and ‘woman’.

The roles that both men and women working within the mission field were expected to fulfil as British colonial agents were broader than civilisers and Christians. In the 19th century it extended to science and classification. Collecting and disseminating information regarding the Empire bordered on an obsession. The British Empire was more productive of knowledge than any previous empire in history.17 Fundamentally, as Cohn notes, the invasion of physical space was accompanied

14 As Richards notes, ‘An empire is partly fiction, No nation can close its hands around the world’. Therefore many ideas associated with ‘Empire’ can be assumed to stretch beyond the formal geographical boundaries over which Britain had control (T. Richards The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire (London, Verso, 1993), p. 1).
by an invasion of epistemological space, where the strange was to be made knowable.\textsuperscript{18} Connecting themselves to the Empire through the use of appropriate descriptive language validated the missionary record as a crucial part of the wider colonial one. In Tibet, this was made easier by the fact that in the mid 1890s, little systematic work had been undertaken to map, catalogue and record Tibetan geography, religion and culture.\textsuperscript{19} Therefore missionaries who had single-handedly ‘pioneered’ beyond the fringes of Empire, attempted to maintain their role as being a fundamental part of the greater quest for knowledge. Part of the reason for this lack of information was the nature of Tibet itself, which was both politically and geographically cut off. But another crucial factor was the embryonic state of disciplines such as anthropology, which meant non-professionals, such as missionaries, had the opportunity to add something to a continually developing field.

This was still felt to be the case into the 1920s when the missionary anthropologist Edwin Smith commented that “Social anthropology might almost be claimed as a missionary science, first, on account of its great utility to missionaries, and second, because the material upon which it is built has so largely been gathered by them.”\textsuperscript{20}

Whilst the growing professionalism of the discipline altered the role of non-professionals within the field, in the 1890s Taylor still had the opportunity of significantly adding to the imperial knowledge producing mechanisms of the British Empire.

After living in China for about a year, where she learned the local dialect, customs and the CIM way of doing things, Taylor became ill and temporarily left China for Australia to recover her health. In 1888 she returned, but rather than continue her work for the CIM in Western China, she moved to Darjeeling, India, where she learnt Tibetan, before moving even closer to the Tibetan border in Sikkim.\textsuperscript{21} Again, she recounts that Sikkim was not under British rule and that for ten months


\textsuperscript{19} A major exception being L.A. Waddell, \textit{The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism with its mystic cults, symbolism and mythology, and in its relation to Indian Buddhism} (London, 1895). This was a well known text.


\textsuperscript{21} India was out with the remit of the CIM and Taylor worked alone there, although she remained on the books of the CIM for some years.
she saw no Europeans, only natives. Her only company was Pontso, her servant who, although Tibetan, was supposedly from the upper echelons of Tibetan society and had converted to Christianity. He was therefore considered to be on a higher moral plain than many of his fellow Tibetans in Taylor’s eyes.

Taylor had met Pontso in Darjeeling, when he had come to her for medical treatment and theirs seems to have remained a lifelong companionship. Although always referred to as her servant by other westerners, Pontso performed a wider role. He was her companion, confidant and, later, business associate. Their relationship undoubtedly helped with Taylor’s emersion into Tibetan society and, conversely, Pontso’s own standing within the community was elevated through his personal connections to a Western woman and the additional advantages this afforded him culturally and financially.

**A New Understanding of Tibet and the Impact of the China Inland Mission**

It was in Darjeeling and later at Kumbum Monastery that the importance of Taylor’s training with the CIM and its ethos became apparent in her own outlook on working and living as an independent missionary. In her diary and public lectures, she continually stressed the need to learn the native tongue in order to engage in purposeful conversation (and evangelisation). This notion was the direct result of the principles practiced in the field by the CIM, stemming from the new philosophy of the ‘Faith’ missions, who stressed the effectiveness of lay preaching in the native tongue and a ‘bottom up’ approach. For the CIM, this was translated into the ideology that one should be Chinese “in every way other than sin.” Hudson Taylor, founder of the CIM (and no relation of Annie Taylor), had been setting a new standard of missionary practice

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22 Annie R. Taylor, *Pioneering in Tibet: the origin and progress of the Tibetan Pioneer Mission; together with, My experiences in Tibet; and, Some facts about the country* (London, Morgan and Scott, 1895), p. 21. This is unlikely to be true. The Tibet-Sikkim war occurred in 1888 and she would have almost certainly have come into contact with solders and colonial officials in the area.


with his strategy of integration, rather than segregation, of missionaries into the society within which they were working. Equally important, and appealing to Annie Taylor, and many other independent women, was Hudson Taylor’s realisation of the importance of lone women missionaries. He recognised that to integrate the Christian message into a society where women and their home was a very private world, women missionaries could play a key role. For Annie Taylor, a working method that seemingly allowed such freedom must have been inspirational for her future work outside of the CIM.

Taylor’s emersion into Tibetan society was outwardly complete; she spoke Tibetan, adopted Tibetan dress, cut her hair short and went by the name of ‘Ani’, the Tibetan word for a nun. ‘Fitting in’ at a fundamental level remained an important part of Taylor’s work for the rest of her missionary career. In 1897 when a group of lady missionaries joined her, one of the party, Bella Ferguson, noted;

On arrival it looked as if all the inhabitants were out to greet us, we being the first European ladies to arrive here in English dress…the day after our arrival I put on the native dress, at which the Tibetans were delighted, and named me Anni Saba, or the new Anni.25

Once comfortable with the Tibetan language and customs and with Pontso at her side, on the 2nd of September 1893 Taylor began her famous journey to Lhasa, where no European woman had visited before. Her aim was to see how Tibet could be opened up to Christianity. Having witnessed the success of missionaries in China, a long ‘closed land’, Taylor felt sure a similar result could be achieved in Tibet. The story of her attempt to reach Lhasa is well-documented elsewhere,26 but the most important events to this study were the writing of her diary and the formation of her ideas on Christianising Tibet. Read out of context, Taylor’s diary gives little evidence of her evangelical mindset. Rather, it is dedicated to detailed observations of Tibetan custom, dress and popular religion. Particulars of named groups and individuals that she

26 See for example W. Carey, Travel and Adventures in Tibet, including the Diary of Miss Annie R Taylor’s Remarkable Journey from Tau-Chau to Ta-Chien-Lu through the heart of the Forbidden Land (India, Mittal Publications, (1902) 2002); I. Robson, Two Lady Missionaries in Tibet (London, S.W. Partridge and Co., 1909) and D. Middleton, Victorian Lady Travellers (London: Routledge, 1965).
encountered were details unknown to most travellers in the Himalayas at this time. Where they were recorded elsewhere,\(^{27}\) it was not with the empathy or understanding Taylor’s diary provided. In part, this seems to have been a necessity, arising from her badly provisioned plans. Robbed of most of her valuables early on, she had no choice but to interact with the people she met on her journey in order to procure food, fuel and a level of protection.

It was her comfort with Tibetan people that gave rise to important meetings, including her encounter with the Golok chieftess Wachu Bumo.\(^ {28}\) The Golok were known for robbing those who crossed their territory and were avoided by most travellers, but Taylor befriended their leader and was given an armed escort through their territory. Perhaps Wachu Bumo saw an ally in the equally formidable English woman she met. The role of women in Tibetan society was significantly different from that of women in the upper classes of Victorian England. In nomadic Tibetan society, women played a more active role, in contrast to the lives of women in the Christian West. Despite Tibetan women’s freedoms within marriage,\(^ {29}\) which must have gone against all Taylor’s Christian values, she would no doubt have understood and appreciated the significance of the autonomy these women had. Being amongst Tibetans allowed Taylor a return to the liberties of her childhood. Women travellers often looked back to pre-pubescent girlhood as a time representing not only freedom to be physically active, but also freedom from an awareness of the restrictions on acceptable feminine behaviour.\(^ {30}\)

Her relationship with Pontso also changed on their journey. Pontso was one of only two reported conversions from Taylor’s missionary

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29 Polyandry was a relatively common practice amongst nomadic Tibetans. This kept the family wealth together and also allowed for animals to be herded cross-country and the home to be run. Although women worked hard physically, they often had a level of domestic and financial control not available to their British Victorian counterparts. Indeed, Taylor’s guide Norbu was returning his wife to her family as the time limit of their union had been reached; an incomprehensible idea to a Victorian Britain seeking a family ideal.
career.31 When Taylor returned to England in 1894 and began to give talks around the country, she took the step of bringing Pontso with her, probably as much of a crowd puller as her talks themselves. They both dressed in Tibetan dress and Taylor translated for Pontso, who was evidently less than enamoured with Britain. In an interview for ‘Queen’ magazine, the following is quoted; “In Pontso’s opinion, a mission from Tibet to England to teach the English courtesy was as much needed as any mission could be in Tibet.”

Pontso was not an official and held no rank. At a time when the British public’s view of the native peoples of the Empire’s fringe was heavily influenced by hierarchies of race and class, I would suggest that he had far more agency in his relationship with Taylor then was acknowledged at the time or in subsequent publications about Taylor. He had acted as a key intermediary during their attempt to reach Lhasa and retained that position, shown in his rather blasé statement on manners made to a British establishment magazine. Later still, when Taylor returned to Tibet, Pontso and his wife had their own quarters within their mission compound, a more substantial space then that afforded to some of the other missionaries there, never mind a servant. While Taylor clearly cared deeply for Pontso, and no doubt he cared for her, conversion also gave him a level of agency amongst Tibetans and English alike that he may not have otherwise achieved.

Writing about Tibet: Women as Scholars in Victorian Britain

Taylor’s return from Tibet in 1894 was met with a certain amount of celebrity, and resulted in a series of lectures across Britain in which she recounted tales from her travels. Taylor herself clearly felt she had let down the British academic establishment through her lack of geographical, zoological and botanical knowledge,33 however, as Carey noted in his introduction to the publication of her diary in 1902: “the absence of scientific research does not; however, detract from the human interest of

31 The other was a boy whose family lived next door to Taylor when she moved to Yatung in the late 1890s. Another missionary met him many years later in China and reported the meeting in the CIM journal ‘China's Millions’.
Miss Taylor’s story.”34 Isabella Bird Bishop echoed this, outlining the
importance of women’s travel narrative as; “the intensely human interest
of the journey.”35 However, I suggest that Carey did Taylor a slight dis-
service with such a statement and in fact, Taylor produced one of the
earliest ethnographic records of the Tibetan people for wider public
consumption.

Why then, with so much new information of intense human interest,
did Annie Royle Taylor fade into obscurity a decade later? As noted
above, Taylor’s formal education had been limited, leaving her writing
style lacking the adventure, romance and narrative flow which popular-
ised so much of the missionary literature of the time. This coupled with
her zealous attitude widened the gap between her abilities and her aspi-

eration. No doubt, she alienated many intellectuals from institutions
such as the Royal Geographic Society (of which her father was a mem-
ber), which had a significant role as one of the Empire’s key ‘knowledge
producing institutions’, and as such held a great deal of power over both
the imperial production and dissemination of information.36 Taylor
lacked the dynamism and authority both in her writing and her oratory
skills needed to create any real interest in such circles. In Twenty Years in
Tibet the trade agent David Macdonald describes Taylor as “a zealot,
absolutely sincere in her profession of Christianity”37 but clearly lacking
in both social etiquette and academic potential. It seems Taylor was
unable to tailor her personality to varying occasions and audiences as
would have been required to make headway amongst the British aca-
demic elite.

In addition to her lack of confidence in public speaking, there were
few serious societies or occasions for women to access a learned audi-
ence. Even if Taylor had been more personable, or more like Isabella

34 W. Carey, Travel and Adventures in Tibet, including pthe Diary of Miss Annie R
Taylor’s Remarkable Journey from Tau-Chau to Ta-Chien-Lu through the heart of the
35 I. Bishop-Bird, Among the Tibetans (http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/4244/
pg4244.html). Unlike Taylor, Bishop’s travel writing received much acclaim and she was
accepted into the male dominated academic sphere, becoming the first woman to be
inducted into the Royal Geographic Society in 1892. However, in 1893 membership was
once again closed to women. Two decades later, Taylor’s sister Suzette became a fellow of
the RGS when the Society once again accepted women.
36 T. Richards, The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire (London:
37 D. MacDonald, Twenty Years in Tibet (London, Seeley Service and Co., 1932),
p. 2.
Bird-Bishop, the Royal Geographic Society did not admit women members at this time, although women were permitted on occasion to present. However, the Royal Scottish Geographic Society had always admitted women members and in 1894 Taylor spoke at their Glasgow branch, entering a paper into the journal for that year. She also gave many talks in smaller halls associated with Church groups and missionary organisations; an audience with whom she felt more comfortable and who were far more receptive to her style of communication.38 Taylor’s knowledge of local customs, dress codes and herding practices was therefore considered informative for her Church-going public audience, but unqualified when placed in the arena of serious study.

Taylor was not the first amateur academic to venture into Tibet. There had been several non-British excursions prior to Taylor, including a number that reached Lhasa. The Moravian mission had been based in Leh since the mid nineteenth century. As well as working extensively with Ladakhi and Tibetan people, they had produced the earliest translations of the gospels into Tibetan and had developed a dictionary which was the basis of much of the scholarly work to follow.39 The French priests, Huc and Gabet, had been to Lhasa in the 1840s40 as well as the Indian Chandra Das41 who managed to map the city in secret, using a rosary to take street measurements. The broader public accessed few of these accounts and they had limited success in furthering popular knowledge on Tibet. I would argue that the lack of popular interest in early accounts of Tibet relates to their role as part of the ‘fantasy of imperial archive’18 that existed in the late nineteenth century. This archive of knowledge was

not a building, nor even a collection of texts, but the collectively imagined junction of all that was known or knowable, a fantastic representation of

38 Many of these talks were in Scotland, where the missionary movement was both strong and vocal in the public arena, and the furlough lecture tour, of which this occasion may have been a part, was considered a particularly Scottish tradition. See J.M. Mackenzie, ‘Making Black Scotsmen and Scotswomen? Scottish Missionaries and the Eastern Cape Colony in the 19th Century’, in H.M. Carey (ed.), Empires of Religion (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 122.
39 The Tibetan-German Dictionary was produced in 1871 by the Moravian Missionary Heinrich August Jäschke.
40 Huc and Gabet Published Christianity in China, Tartary and Thibet, in three volumes in 1857–8. Although they reached Lhasa, they were later expelled.
41 Das travelled in and wrote about Tibet between 1879–82, and for a time worked for the British information gathering in the region.
an epistemological master pattern, a virtual focal point for the heterogeneous local knowledge of metropolis and empire.42 These early accounts operated outside this heterogeneous imperial narrative framework, being ‘un-British’ and therefore, to an extent, unverifiable by the general public. The obsession with ‘facts’ did not correspond with the need for ‘human interest’ which fuelled the general readership and was evident in popularist missionary narrative. However, missionary narrative did not seek to place the adventure or romance within the foreign culture or landscape, but within the work of the missionaries themselves, removing the need for detailed cultural or geographic accounts.43

This is not to suggest that Taylor’s more descriptive observations were somehow more enlightened than her contemporaries; they contained her own opinions regarding notions of civility and social conduct (her personal views on alcohol consumption are particularly prevalent). However the nature of her narrative, as a diary, recording daily events in a matter of fact manner, marks her writing out from much of the contemporary missionary literature. Despite protestations to the contrary in the introductions to their books, most of the narratives in travel literature were obviously carefully crafted by the travellers with an eye to literary merit and dramatic impact.44 There seems little evidence of this in Taylor’s writing, and perhaps she had no intention of publishing an account before she went to Tibet, hence the resulting Pioneering in Tibet; a combination of edited papers and letters in which Taylor’s own voice and purpose gets lost. It is only in William Carey’s publication of her diary in 1902, that the forthright nature and simple prose that is clearly Taylor’s own, comes through. Despite her clear descriptions of people, cultural activities, religious practices and the Tibetan landscape, her personal mission was to see how Tibet could be opened up to Christianity and the information contained within her written work acted as the tools for a missionary plan of attack.

Fundamentally, Taylor’s writing has an acceptance that the Tibetans were essentially not going to change. This view offered an uncomfortable

juxtaposition to her missionary work and even had the potential to thwart her evangelising goals. Although her efforts for Tibetan conversion were tireless, she never sought to change any of the principles of Tibetan life; the very things which in effect were preventing the introduction of Christianity. This balance of western Christian values and Tibetan culture remained uneasy throughout her working life.

The Tibet Pioneer Mission

Taylor’s written volume had been compiled to serve a purpose, namely the promotion of missionary activity with Tibetans, and specifically the opportunities which may have been available for working within Tibetan territory. With renewed vigour she began planning a permanent missionary presence in Tibet. She wished to take a Christian Mission to Tibet under the auspices of the CIM, whose working methods, she knew allowed for more flexibility and integration within the community one wished to work. However, the CIM board were not prepared to spread themselves so thin with work in Tibet as well as China, especially as Taylor wished to work from the Indian side of the boarder.45 The records also show that the board of the CIM felt it was “not wise for a woman to be responsible for work in Tibet.”46 They did however direct her to an American mission stationed in Northern India looking to work in Tibet,47 and certainly Taylor would have known of the Church of Scotland Mission at Kalimpong from her stay in Darjeeling.48 Despite the opportunity to work within known and well equipped missionary centres, Taylor chose to form her own independent missionary venture; the Tibet Pioneer Mission.

In 1894 she left for Darjeeling with nine missionaries and an ambition to live on the Tibet/Sikkim border until such time that it was possible to enter Tibet itself. Taylor had specifically asked for male missionaries, believing that women were not up to the task of living and working in such harsh conditions. Whilst independent female missionaries were common at this time, few were in positions of real authority, which was

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45 China Inland Mission Archives. CIM Minute Book (London, SOAS, 1894)
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 A large network of Scottish mission stations, hospitals and schools existed across the Darjeeling-Kalimpong area, which incorporated many British missionaries.
for the most part still in the hands of men. Her decision to lead the mission, and lead a group of men, suggests a shedding of her own femininity in order to achieve her vocational ambitions. In effect, if mission societies would not approve of a woman running a mission station, then she would not be a woman. But her need for independence may have been as much about her particular personality as it was about escaping the confines of her gender. Having lived in varying degrees of solitude, without European companionship, the thought of submitting to another organisation purely for the sake of the leadership of a man was likely to have been equally unappealing. The safety net of the large-scale mission society does not appear to have held an appeal for Taylor as it did for many others.

Almost as quickly as it had begun, the Tibet Pioneer Mission failed. Taylor's religious zeal gave her a disregard for personal comfort and the practicalities of planning and running a mission station. As Carey noted in his introduction to her diary “Miss Taylor aimed at opening a way for the gospel; her simple notion was to march through the closed land

The Tibet Pioneer Mission before leaving for Darjeeling. Taylor sits in the middle with Pontso at the front. Only one other woman was present, the wife of the Scottish missionary Evan Mackenzie.
and claim it for God." Such statements are reoccurring through her leaflets, letters and published work and, I would argue, whatever her ulterior motives for wanting to enter Tibet – such as solitude and independence – her primary motivation was clearly to take Christianity to Tibet.

Not all missionaries had such single purpose and drive, nor were they always willing to make such drastic personal compromises both to their physical well-being and to their character. Taylor herself was unlikely to have been the sole reason for the failure of the mission. A subtle but contributing factor may have been the way in which Tibet was portrayed in written missionary discourse, which portrayed the missionary lifestyle as heroic and romantic, but often failed to adequately illustrate the realities of life in the field. Missionaries developed their own romantic vision of Tibet, full of dark mysteries waiting to be cast aside by Christian progress. Coupled with this romanticism was a language akin to that of military exploration, in which missionaries were called to be ‘soldiers of Christ’ and to help bring down the heathen fortress. As noted above, the use of a language structure that made sense within the wider notion of ‘Empire’ was important for the movement of knowledge between different colonial agents and the populations of both the home (Britain) and periphery (colonies). Few linguistic paradigms had such a strong resonance with the Empire as those of the military forces who had established it. This mixture of romanticism and military bravado lent itself to create an idea of missionary work in Tibet as a Boy’s Own adventure. At the same time, such adventures were being played out in the reality of the Great Game, which spawned its own share of adventure stories of spies and espionage, taking place on the very soil to which Taylor’s missionary activity was aimed. The young men who signed up to Taylor’s mission may have been as influenced by their literary heroes as they were by the possibilities of their Christian endeavour.

The Tibet Pioneer Mission had settled in Darjeeling and almost immediately received word that they would not have permission to

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51 See Ibid., p. 28 for further discussion on the missionary use of military language.
enter Tibet. Already the adventure had fallen flat and, rather than planning another daring escapade into Tibetan territory as she had attempted with Pontso, Taylor relocated the group from the relative comforts of Darjeeling to Gangtok, which was the last British outpost at this time and a step closer to Tibet. It lacked the British comforts of Darjeeling and yet Taylor seemed quite happy for the party to stay there, living in rather primitive accommodation until passports for Tibet could be secured. This was not the romantic adventure story that these young men had anticipated when they signed up.

Within weeks at Gangtok the mission fell apart and the men were taken under the wing of Cecil Polhill-Turner,\footnote{Entry for 4th December 1894. China Inland Mission Archive, 
*CIM Minute Book* (London, SOAS, 1894), p. 263.} who worked for the CIM. Polhill-Turner had been working with Tibetans in a similar manner to Taylor but within Chinese territory and sanctioned by the CIM. Additionally, Polhill-Turner had also been one of the Cambridge Seven (one of the first and most famous groups to go to China with the CIM) and so was held within high esteem amongst the missionary establishment back in Britain in a way Taylor had never been.

It is impossible to know the true reason for the disbandment of the mission, although I would suggest that it was a mixture of misguided ‘missionary romantic fantasy’ on the part of the men and a clash of cultures; Taylor’s established female independence which may have been in conflict to the men’s own views on female emancipation, and the fact that Taylor clearly did not have particularly good social skills when it came to other Europeans. Within the context of a foreign country and a lack of guidance for these young men, tempers and emotions were bound to erupt. Alternatively it could simply be that without the support of a large and financially strong umbrella organisation (such as the CIM who Taylor had severed ties from), Taylor’s venture could never have sustained itself.

*Annie Taylor and the Scottish Connection*

Undaunted by the failure of the Tibet Pioneer Mission, Taylor and Pontso (who had married by this time) remained at Gangtok, and in May 1895 Taylor wrote to her remaining supporters, people who had initially backed the Tibet Pioneer Mission in 1894, to inform them that
under the Sikkim/Tibet Convention of 1893 a Trade Mart had been established just inside the Tibetan border at Yatung,\(^{53}\) which she saw as a new opportunity to take her missionary work within Tibet’s borders. Ever resourceful, and with Pontso, she moved to Yatung and set up a shop, medical dispensary and a mission house. The shop established, and her place in Yatung secure, Taylor, Pontso and Pontso’s wife left for Britain in the spring of 1897. The visit is recorded in the local newspapers of many of the towns she visited, including a small article in the Scotsman newspaper regarding a talk that Taylor and Pontso gave in North Berwick.\(^{54}\) No doubt the aim of the visit was to attract more (suitable) missionaries to work with Taylor in Yatung and, in the tradition of the furlough tour, raise awareness of and funds for the mission. She had clearly learnt from her mistakes, asking this time for ‘women of God’ and making it clear that;

\[(\ldots)\text{workers for Tibet must feel they are sent from God. They must be ready to endure all kinds of privation… to sleep in the snow, to live at times on barley flour alone, while to wear the native dress and live as much like the Tibetans as possible is absolutely necessary.}\(^{55}\)

She emphasised the need for true missionary vocation, which was not for the faint hearted or idealistic.

Around the time of that visit to Britain in 1897, in which she had visited Scotland, two consignments of objects were sold to the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (later renamed the Royal Scottish Museum and then the National Museums Scotland) and one consignment was sold to Glasgow Museums. It is within this collection of eighty-four objects that all the elements of Taylor’s life in Tibet are encapsulated; the place, the people, the fabric of daily life and a glimpse into the Tibet she herself experienced in Yatung.

Why did this self-confessed ‘English-woman’ sell her worldly Tibetan goods to Scottish museums? Several factors were likely to have informed this decision; Taylor had prior links with the Royal Scottish Geographic Society, which had previously received her well and she seems to have had strong ties with the Scottish Presbyterian Church. The Scottish Missionary Society at Kalimpong must have been known to her from her time in Darjeeling. In addition, based at Ghum from the mid-1890s

\(^{54}\) Anon, ‘Miss Annie Taylor at North Berwick,’ The Scotsman, (16 August 1897), p. 8.
Annie Taylor in traditional Tibetan dress. When in Tibet, she was commonly known as the ‘Yatung ani’.
was one Mr. J.W. Innes Wright, who had been at Kalimpong in 1894/5 and who also sold material to the Royal Scottish Museum – within days or weeks of Taylor’s sale.56 His working methods were similar to Taylor’s, as he had fallen out with the Church of Scotland Mission, and he ran his own mission which was self-funded. Wright sold substantial collections to Glasgow and Liverpool museums as well, and this may have inspired her to take her collections to Edinburgh. Fundamentally, the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art was still relatively small at this time, and Taylor’s artefacts would have substantially built-up this growing institution’s Himalayan collections. Unlike the museums in London, whose early collections focused on metal work, scripture and ‘art’, the Scottish museums seem to have been keener on ethnographic items. Perhaps the most crucial reason for choosing these institutions was that they were willing to pay. As a missionary working in an exotic field, Taylor was object rich, but money poor, and had to attend to certain practicalities in order to get by.

In her usual no nonsense manner, we can speculate that Taylor brought the first collection to Scotland with her. Most likely the pieces were used to illustrate the talks that she and Pontso gave about Tibet, providing an educational role prior to their sale. She then persuaded the museum in Edinburgh to take an additional collection to compliment the first one. This is certainly established by the collection itself; in which the second batch of items clearly compliments and builds on the first. For the museums in Edinburgh and Glasgow,57 with relatively limited Himalayan collections, such an opportunity to purchase items was likely to have been quickly taken up.

The Edinburgh collection documented native techniques and provided an insight into daily life in Tibet, particularly in Yatung. The collection covers many areas of daily life (there are numerous bags, tea churns, bowls and even some Tibetan cheese) and popular religion (prayer wheels, charm cases and a *damaru* or Lama’s drum) with few items being replicated. The two parts of the collection complement each other, the second more ‘religious’ part of the collection filling the gaps in the more vernacular earlier material.

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56 Wright’s 1897 collection in Edinburgh is number 319 for that year, and Taylor’s is 320, showing they were sold within quick succession.

57 In fact, prior to 1897 Glasgow Museums only had three Tibetan objects in their collection.
Taylor’s vocation as a missionary may also be apparent, not through an investigation of what is present in the collection, but by examining what is absent. Whilst there are many items of popular religion (prayer wheels, amulet cases etc) there are no statues or overtly Buddhist items of the type one might find on an altar, in a monastic setting or pertaining to a formal practitioner, such as a monk. Although happy to immerse herself in Tibetan ‘daily’ culture, Taylor seems to have shied from an association with ‘pure’ Buddhism. I use the word pure, because it is apparent from both missionary texts and collections that most missionaries working amongst Tibetans saw popular religion; the use of prayer wheels, flags and mani stones, as a ‘superstition’ only loosely connected to the ‘proper’ religion of Buddhism. The error of this judgement is rather ironic, as it is within the collections of missionaries such as Taylor, that we find Buddhism as it was most commonly practiced amongst the Tibetans missionaries administered to.

The collection reflects the simple way Taylor herself lived – as a pseudo-Tibetan, depicting a modest appreciation for well-crafted wares. Although no longer working with the CIM, their ethos on missionary work remained with her. She continued dressing as a Tibetan, giving several items of her personal clothing to the museum. Pontso is also embedded in the collection, both as collector and owner of objects. Many items have labels attached denoting Pontso, not Taylor, as the primary collector. There are other items known, from photographs, to have belonged to Pontso and his wife as well. It is important, then, to note that the reflection of Tibet Taylor presented to Scottish museums was in part Pontso’s notion of how his country should be understood and appreciated. That such native agency is acknowledged within a Tibetan collection in Scotland is almost unique, and presents us with evidence of the importance of Pontso in Taylor’s life.

There are also several items that seem to have been given to Taylor by Tibetan soldiers stationed at Yatung. The soldier’s gau is quite unique amongst the museum’s collection; a simple item a soldier crafted from scrap metal and glass to offer protection. Rather than an example of well crafted Tibetan material culture, such items offer a glimpse at the personal relationships a missionary might build with local people, through their long-term residence and the pastoral (and in this case medical) care they might offer to a community. High status items are rare in this collection, but included is a chopstick case with a chain made of rupees that can be dated from the coins to 1896/7. It may have come from
someone such as the chief at Yatung, who Taylor had befriended. It is unlikely that Taylor would have purchased such an ostentatious piece for her own use. Although she was independently wealthy, she did not use her personal wealth for her missionary work, choosing instead to raise funds separately. If she lived in a bare and minimal wooden house, with limited heat, it is doubtful she would have bought herself a highly decorative and expensive set such as this. If this were a gift, it suggests
that within the community at Yatung, Taylor was mixing with a varied demographic, for this piece certainly came from other opposite end of the social scale to the soldier’s gau mentioned above.

The manner in which Taylor collected is also of interest. The shop at Yatung must have played a significant role in acquiring items. Many items have a very homemade quality about them, not made for any kind of market but possibly traded within her shop. Others clearly were made for sale and may have come via the Lhasa-Kalimpong trade route, on which Yatung sat. As a trading station, Yatung offered an ideal location for the collection of goods for sale. The shop however was not a profitable venture. Taylor was known not to take money for the medicines provided and seems to have had a series of wealthy lady benefactors in England who paid for medicines, bibles and text cards.58

If we assume that the collection started life as a mixture of Taylor’s own possessions, gifts and market acquisitions, we can see that she found beauty in simple things, as seen in the exquisite detailing on the leather pieces. Taylor’s own simple and almost austere way of living shaped a collection that saw splendour in life’s little pleasures rather than in the pomp and ceremony of monasteries and palaces. In short, she collected items that many collectors of the later Younghusband Expedition59 simply overlooked.

Through this collection we are given material evidence of the world Taylor inhabited at Yatung, where she mingled with all walks of life, from chief to solider to herdsman, and became an established and known part of the community.

The museum paid some thirty-two pounds for all the material, a considerable sum towards Taylor’s missionary efforts in 1897. Taylor’s reasons for selling artefacts to museums were not unique; she came in a long line of missionaries looking to fund their mission stations and educate the home support. The selling of easily accessible local goods to the British public, hungry for such exotica, was one method of fundraising which seems to have been particularly popular.

59 The British military expedition of 1903/4 which saw the looting of several monasteries of their goods.
Taylor collected during a moment where western intervention into Tibet had not yet impacted on Tibet’s relations with the west, and at a time when the rest of the world was as foreign to Tibet as Tibet was to the rest of the world. It was, importantly, a snapshot only open to Taylor and the women who worked with her at the end of the century. Along with her female missionary companions, Taylor was the first missionary to have resided within Tibetan borders for more than a century. In essence, Taylor really had carved out her own piece of the Empire in Yatung, and gave a piece of it back to the West through her collection.

The Great Game Comes to Tibet

After her brief visit to Britain in 1897, Taylor quietly returned to Tibet. She had many visitors over the years, along with a series of woman missionaries, including Bella Ferguson, whose letters were added to the volume Pioneering in Tibet.

Her nemesis at this time seems to have been one Captain Parr, who worked for the British and the Chinese at the same time. So violent was their dislike of each other that Peter Fleming noted in his account of the Younghusband Expedition; “…at least the short British aggression upon Tibet interrupted the long hostilities between Captain Parr and the eccentric Miss Taylor.” Clearly Taylor’s personal skills had not improved since the disbandment of the Tibet Pioneer Mission. However, as amusing as this comment on their feud suggests the situation was, it was anything but. The Younghusband Expedition of 1904 changed Taylor’s life dramatically.

It must have felt to Taylor that almost as soon as she had found some happiness in Yatung, working in relative solitude as master of her own affairs, the rest of the world had eyes for her beloved Tibet. In Pioneering in Tibet she states “I have no doubt that Tibet will shortly be opened up without war, and that free intercourse will be established between Tibet and all other nations.” Taylor must have believed this

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'opening up' would be accomplished by missionaries, after which the forces of empire could install its configuration of clerks, political agents and local officials under which Tibet could be open to all. Instead, in 1903 the Younghusband Expedition, a full-blown military campaign, was beginning.

Captain Younghusband was as zealous in his desire to establish a British presence in Tibet, as Taylor was to establish a Christian one. It was at this juncture that Taylor’s worlds of England and Tibet collided. Since she had moved to Yatung in 1897 she had been slowly removing layers of ‘Englishness’. Although clearly not Tibetan, she was known all over the area as the ‘Yatung Ani’, the Yatung nun, and had built a world of mutual respect and understanding between the Tibetans, Chinese and missionaries in the town. However, this network relied on the fact that Taylor was one of the only Europeans there. Her position therefore was not dissimilar to that of a trade agent at some other outposts of the far reaches of the Empire, where the holder of the post was outside the confines of the main structure of Empire, but still represented ‘home’ and ‘Englishness’ to those they encountered. Flying the flag of Christianity and ‘Englishness’, terms which were interlinked in regards to what they suggested about an individual and their morality, possibly gave Taylor some enjoyment against the struggle and the lack of converts. Her place in the world had reached a happy medium on her arrival in Yatung and then hung in a state of suspended animation for five years.

Taylor ultimately chose her birth heritage over her adopted one. She took up the life her father had suggested all those years before, and volunteered herself to the Younghusband Expedition as an army nurse. She left Pontso and his wife to run the shop in Yatung and moved to the Chumbi Valley where the army was based. At this time she published a letter in the Scotsman pleading with the “honourable Captain Younghusband to treat the Tibetans well.” Whether this was a plea based on hope or naivety is unknown – living in Yatung Taylor must have had some awareness of the coming events. Conversely, Younghusband’s faith was in his own abilities and achievements and anyway, there was no place for women in his Great Game. As Patrick French notes in his biography of Younghusband “the only woman to feature significantly was Queen Victoria. For nearly three quarters of a century her squat image loomed

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over the antics of her minions." Taylor’s position was therefore once again placed under the scrutiny of men.

It seems to have been within the army that Taylor had most of the ‘successes’ of her later life. She did well as an army nurse, and continued her mission work by running gospel groups and newspaper clubs for the men. Perhaps her father had been right and the army was a more suitable vocation. However it was a short-lived career change. The incursion into Tibet lasted barely a year, in which the British had a limited amount of casualties. The same couldn’t be said of the Tibetans, who lost several hundred soldiers in the fighting at Guru in May 1904. Although only part of the mission in a peaceful capacity, Taylor no doubt felt she was ultimately connected to the fate of those Tibetans, having made her decision to choose the British over her adopted people.

She was already physically unwell and there is evidence she was under increased mental strain. Charles Bell, later political officer in Sikkim, noted in his diary of the time that she accused Younghusband of trying to have her murdered when he offered her an armed escort to safety away from the fighting. Presumably after the military campaign she returned to Yatung, but in 1907 she left for England where she was deemed unable to care for herself. She was admitted to Otto House Institution where her sister and brothers continued to take care of her welfare until her death in 1922, the causes of which are listed as heart disease and insanity.

Making Sense of the Missionary Encounter

Although Taylor was clearly an eccentric character, she was one of many independent women to embrace the mission field as a site of personal liberation. The gender induced boundaries that British society lived within were far less controlling in the mission field. The difficulty for women missionaries was discerning how those boundaries operated in order to work successfully both home and abroad. However, I would argue that, rather than the mission field bringing greater freedom to women, it presented them with a different set of rules which derived

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65 C. Bell, Private Diary (Liverpool World Museum, n.d). With thanks to Emma Martin, Liverpool Museums, for access to this information.
from a broader spectrum of acceptable norms, but which still set boundaries and limitations, in order to limit the disjuncture between a woman’s place at home and abroad.

It would be easy to accuse Taylor and women like her of using their role as missionaries as a ruse for establishing greater personal autonomy. However, I propose that, despite limited success, Taylor’s heart and mind were always with missionary work. And although the written accounts of the Younghusband Expedition portray her in a less than positive light, they leave little doubt as to her goals and drive.

It is this genuine evangelical zeal that makes Taylor such an interesting study. She lived two lives simultaneously in Tibet – the English missionary and the English lady traveller. Sometimes these two lives came together, but quite often they seem to have been separate and distinct. Whilst her missionary self created her over-riding persona, her writing, observation and collecting place Taylor amidst a different social set, that of the amateur ethnographer. Her knowledge of Tibetan culture was clearly as well developed as any professional scholar, and her collections include some of the best Tibetan ethnographic objects held in Scottish museums. Unaware in her lifetime of the importance of the knowledge she was able to provide and regarded as too amateurish by her contemporaries, today her collections play an active role in a more fully developed discipline, which was still in its infant stages in the late 19th century. A large body of evidence tells us that missionaries were often highly regarded botanists, geographers and ethnologist, offering their insight as the ‘man on the spot’ and providing the growing discipline of anthropology with its source material. Perhaps then, we should refer to Taylor as an unwitting ethnographer, who provided a great deal for the discipline in order to sustain a completely different cause.

This paper should conclude with a return to Tibet and the encroaching British Empire. Tibet was never opened up in the way Taylor envisaged. No sooner had the British forces ‘opened’ the closed land, than the political furore this caused closed it again. Whatever we choose to believe of Taylor’s true purpose in the missionary field, that life allowed her access to a time and place that cannot be recaptured save for in the writings and collected materials of Taylor and her contemporaries. This must of course be tempered with an understanding of how her evangelising mission under-pinned her actions, and how her vision of Tibet was therefore seen through the missionary looking-glass.
This staged photograph of Tibetan curios includes several items now in the National Museums Scotland collection, including the chopstick set discussed in this paper.

As with image 3, this photograph could be circulated amongst supporters, who could directly see the material culture of popular Buddhism juxtaposed with a Tibetan Gospel card, a Tibetan Prayer Union card and other evidence of the influence of Christianity on Tibetan society.

‘God’s little woman’ was a sincere and zealous missionary, but should perhaps be better remembered for the advances she made as an ethnographer, collector and pioneer of the role of women within the Empire. To pigeon-hole her as any one of these things alone would lead to a misapprehension of the many facets of Taylor’s life, and the many purposes of missionary work.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE MISSIONARY’S PROGRESS.¹ EVOLVING IMAGES OF ‘SELF’ AND ‘OTHER’ IN THE CAREER OF JAKOB SPIETH (1856–1914)²

Werner Ustorf

Introduction

In recent years we have been witnessing a revival of public interest in the history of Christian mission. It is no longer only the missiologists and theologians who are dealing with mission history, but scholars coming from various disciplines such as history, political science, anthropology, ethnology or sociology. The sociological study by Jon Miller on the Basel missionaries,³ or Jeff Cox historical analysis of mission in imperial India and his new study by British missions,⁴ or Jean and John Comaroff’s anthropological interpretation of colonial mission in South Africa⁵ are cases in point, and showing that the area that was previously called “mission history” has now become a multi-disciplinary field. The most used archival source in Birmingham is not the Chamberlain papers or other holdings of political importance, but the collections of the Church Missionary Society.⁶

¹ “Then I saw in my dream that they went very lovingly on together; and had sweet discourse of all things that had happened to them in their pilgrimage.” John Bunyan, The Pilgrim’s Progress (1678/84), Chapter 11. Here quoted after John S. Roberts (ed.), Accrington: Daniel Chadwick, 1873, p. 74.
⁶ Missionary archives have been “re-discovered” by the public because we understand now – in a time of intercultural circulation and the renegotiation of international relations – that here are primary materials where the public can trace best the archaeology of the construction of the Western “self” vis-à-vis that of the “other”. The experiences
This paper will discuss the case of Jakob Spieth, the most important and influential missionary (practitioner, organizer) of the Bremen Mission in West Africa (in what is now Ghana and Togo). His spiritual background in Württemberg Pietism continued to be an important element in his life. Politically, his missionary involvement covers precisely the turn from free trade colonialism to high imperialism (with its much more rigid structures in terms of colonial domination and the engineering of cultural change); and, theologically, his engagement reflects the increasing accommodation of missionary Pietism to the liberal project of global knowledge and humanism. Being a “missionary” for a lifetime, he doubled as a linguist and ethnologist (writing a standard work on Ewe culture) and, in his last stage of life, as a scholarly theologian (producing a theology of African Traditional Religion that he was not able to support as an active missionary). Thus, different role ascriptions led to variants in the conceptualisation of images of self and other and, on the wider canvass of theological meaning, of the purpose of mission itself. This paper analyses the complexities of the missionary role(s) and modes of self-reflection and, therefore, has its focus on a number of paradoxes: why did Spieth the missionary try to exclude African culture and tradition from the African answer to the call of the biblical God, whereas Spieth the theologian and scholar loved to describe and preserve

made in the colonial period of Western and Christian history are important for the profound learning processes many cultures of today are currently going through in response to the challenges produced by our global context. It is therefore no accident of history that writers and novelists have discovered this field too. Barbara Kingsolver’s well-noticed novel The Poisonwood Bible (New York: HarperCollins, 1998) may stand for many others. In fact, one of these other novels is about the Bremen Mission in West Africa. A couple of years ago, the German writer-cum-anthropologist Jens Kramer published his novel Die Stadt unter den Steinen (München: List, 2000), a source-based retelling of the first encounter around 1850/60 between the missionaries and the Ewe people. The hero of the story is the fictitious missionary Johann Straub and his search for an alternative to the missionary project of enforced unity, namely that of non-coercive communication across the cultural and religious boundaries.

7 The official title was Norddeutsche Missions-Gesellschaft, established 1836 in Hamburg. By the mid-century, however, the society’s Bremen branch (theologically of the Reformed tradition) had taken over the management of the mission. Its missionaries were educated in the seminary of the Basel Mission and worked in close, though not always peaceful, proximity to the Bremen overseas merchants (such as the Vietors), who also financed the mission to a substantial degree. On the West African coast, the mission was simply known as the “Bremen Mission”, whereas the Vietor trading company had a reputation for being “pious”: they did not engage in the lucrative alcohol trade (but did not disapprove of the arms trade).

8 This ethnic group straddles the coastal areas of what is now Ghana, Togo, and Benin.
African tradition? How come that he expressed his love and understanding of the African brother in Christ best in his theological and ethnological writings, whereas his missionary practice was characterized by an extreme degree of control and suspicion?

This paper is organised in three sections: 1) biographical notes on Spieth; 2) an analysis of his missionary practice; and, 3), an assessment of his practice as a scholar. This is followed by a reflection on the relationship between these areas, with particular emphasis on the development of Spieth’s thinking on “self” and “other”.

**Biographical Context**

Jakob Andreas Spieth grew up in the Württemberg village of Hegensberg near Esslingen. Missionary literature from Basel was readily available in Spieth’s parental home, which was characterized by piety, prayer, and patriarchy. He was 18 years old when he was admitted in 1874 to the Missionary Seminary of Basel, Switzerland. His career from son of a peasant to missionary and, then, scholar, is remarkable, but not unusual for the modern missionary movement. Most of the Basel missionaries of the time belonged to the lower classes. They found out soon that the

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9 This was a historical period when German nationalism peaked and industrial production was ever increasing – with the Deutsches Reich just established (based on the humiliation of France) and the imperialist lobby pushing further, namely for German colonies. Some months before the Berlin (Congo) Conference of 1884, Germany managed to seize some colonial territories, among them the small stretch of land on the West African coast, Togo, which was to become Germany’s Musterkolonie (model colony; cf. here Sebald, Peter, *Togo 1884–1914. Eine Geschichte der deutschen “Musterkolonie” auf der Grundlage amtlicher Quellen*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1988.). All of Bremen’s mission work, however, took place west of Togo, in territories clearly under British influence (partly within, partly beyond the Gold Coast Colony which was to become Ghana). His mission station where Spieth spent most of his life in Africa, belonged to the Gold Coast and came under German rule only in 1890 (as a consequence of the Helgoland-Zanzibar Treaty).


11 An overview (1816–1882) of the social background of Basel (and Bremen) missionaries is given by Wilhelm Schlatter, *Geschichte der Basler Mission 1815–1915*, vol. 1, Basel: Basler Missionsbuchhandlung, 1916, p. 260. Statistically, the missionaries came from Württemberg peasant or working men’s families with many children, had a Pietist orientation and were of low educational backgrounds. Academic theologians represented only 1% of the seminarians. Other mission agencies, such as the theologically liberal East Asia Mission (also, like the Basel Mission, a Swiss-German enterprise) employed only academic theologians as missionaries.
missionary service abroad offered prospects of knowledge and social advance that at home were blocked to them by the privileges of property and education, – and sometimes also, as in Spieth’s case, – by a father preventing his son from gaining more than only an elementary education (from 1862–1870). The modern missionary movement was particularly attractive to men such as Spieth because it represented not only the Christian project of liberation from sin as a way to salvation, but also the Enlightenment project of self-emancipation from ignorance and the freedom to independent thought.

Almost all the missionaries graduating from the Basel Mission Seminary, where also Bremen’s missionaries were trained, had in those years a decidedly pietistic orientation.¹² This involved the interpretation of culture by standards that were believed to be biblical. However, it also placed a resolutely modern emphasis on the individual experience of faith. After all, the Seminary had adopted “victorious confidence” as the final goal of its missionary education, and did only accept candidates who were “born again.”¹³ Not only did Spieth share this spiritual background, he wished to share it, as the two curricula vitae show that he had written in 1872 and 1874 in order to be admitted to the Seminary.¹⁴ I have analysed these texts elsewhere,¹⁵ but it may be useful to emphasize that the decision to become a missionary resolved at a stroke two basic conflicts in the life of the adolescent young man: 1. the tension between the son and his bible-bashing father – namely by adopting the sacred role of the missionary Ùbervater;¹⁶ and 2. the tension between his love of

¹² Altena, in his analysis of almost 400 biographies (including Spieth’s, see the attached CD-ROM, pp. 416–417) of German Africa missionaries in the colonial era, has found that they more or less shared a common social, cultural background and missionary spirituality. His hypothesis is that their “Selbst- und Fremdverständnis” and their “geistiger Hintergrund” had a formative influence on the missionary context. Cf. Thorsten Altena, “Ein Häuflein Christen mitten in der Heidenwelt des dunklen Erdteils”. Zum Selbst- und Fremdverständnis protestantischer Missionare im kolonialen Afrika 1884–1918, Münster/New York: Waxmann, 2003.


¹⁴ StAB (Staatsarchiv Bremen) 7,1025–74/2.


¹⁶ The missionary instructions for Spieth stated explicitly that God had appointed him to be a missionary, Dienstanweisung 24 May 1880, StAB 7,1025 – 74/2. This phrase was standard and applied to all missionaries sent by Basel and Bremen.
the world and its knowledge and the renunciation of this very world in the name of salvation – namely by joining the missionary project as an enterprise of salvation and, at the same time, a cognitive encounter with the world.

After Spieth had finished his six-year studies at Basel Seminary in 1880, the Bremen Mission sent him to Ho in the South of what was to become Togo, in 1890. The director of that mission agency had early on discovered Spieth’s talent for leadership and found in him a reliable partner. In 1887, the 31-year old was made the Chairman of the whole mission enterprise in West Africa. He would hold this position until his final return in 1901, which saw him go first to Tübingen, and then on to Hamburg where he would occupy himself up to his death with ethnographic work and the edition of the Bible in the Ewe language.

Among the European missionaries, Spieth was the most influential linguist of the Bremen Mission, and he was in charge of the international team of translators that produced in 1913 the full text of the Bible in Ewe, a fact that has been acknowledged by a number of current dictionaries. Spieth’s papers are held by the Bremen State Archives, and the research interest in him is growing though we do not yet have a scholarly biography. For his ethnographic studies of Ewe culture, in particular his extensive collection and translation of materials in 1906 – a

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19 Depositum Norddeutsche Missions-Gesellschaft, 7,1025 (in particular the “Stationsberichte” and “Konferenzprotokolle” of Ho station; the minutes of the missionaries’ “Generalkonferenzen” and Spieth’s individual files). There is also a private diary (not part of the archive), which Spieth kept at Ho (with some interruptions) from January 1896 to April 1899 (351 handwritten pp.) and which is in the possession of the author (copy: Prof. Adam Jones, Leipzig).

20 There is a number of smaller, but important pieces by Spieth such as Das Sühnebedürfnis der Heiden im Ewe-Lande, Bremen: Norddeutsche Mission, 1903, reprint 1914 (Bremer Missions-Schriften Nr. 13; this is the version I am using here); Die Übersetzung der Bibel in die Sprache eines westafrikanischen Naturvolkes, Bremen: J. Morgenbesser (Flugschriften der Hanseatisch-Oldenburgischen Missions-Konferenz),
massive study the publication of which was financed by the German Colonial Society,21 he received an honorary doctorate from Tübingen University in 1911. In response, Spieth published in that year a major study on Ewe religion.22 More recently, Spieth has been accused of ethnogenesis — that is of having engineered through his writings the idea of Ewe nationalism.23 However, his writings have not yet been translated into Ewe, English or French, and, therefore, we may be better advised to reserve our judgement as to his influence on nation-building in Togo and Ghana. But there can be no doubt that his linguistic contributions and his ethnographic and religious descriptions have not only contributed to shaping Ewe as a liturgical language, but also directly influenced much of today’s research consensus on the shape of Ewe culture and Ewe religion.24

**Spieth's Missionary Practice**

Spieth’s task was the development of an indigenous, namely African variant of Christianity – not the export of European denominationalism and theological privilege to West Africa. His appointment papers as a missionary specified this in no uncertain terms: “the difference of denominations in our part of the world is a product of history and must
not be transplanted to the non-Christian world” and, therefore, the shape of the future church in Africa would develop in a particular way [“eigentümlich”] through the preaching of the gospel under the leadership of the Lord and his Spirit.25

In today’s missiological jargon, we would describe this task as the preparation of a local and inculturated understanding of the gospel. This job description for a Christian mission rested on a particular vision of the Christian transcendent, namely a vision of a global Christian world, multi-racial, diverse and peaceful; and, as a matter of principle at least, as an alternative to colonialism and imperialism, that is, the vision of dominance and power. Michael Zahn, the director of the Bremen Mission from 1862 to 1900, was, among the German mission thinkers of the time, perhaps the one who placed the strongest emphasis on this eschatological vision and, consequently, was the most critical of German colonialism.26 It is also important to note here that the target was the creation of an African church, not that of a Christian tribe, nation or state in Africa. The Bremen mission was particular in that it had not subscribed to the mission strategy that was promoted by Gustav Warneck and that was dominant in Germany, namely the Christianisation of complete ethnic units with the final aim of creating “Christian states” abroad. Zahn’s mission policy was also distinct and differentiated from the Anglo-American ideal of making native churches economically viable and independent as soon as possible (cfp. the three-self formula of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson and Venn’s much-quoted phrase of the “euthanasia of mission”). Zahn believed that the conversion process was a long-term development that was best be supported by tight educational structures; he anticipated a very long period of missionary control over the native church – and Spieth was the man whose job it was to make sure that there would be no toleration of “premature” spiritual independence. There is no problem as such with the view of spiritual development as a long-term process. However, in a colonial situation where missionaries became the exclusive judges and policemen of what they thought spiritual development was, the matter soon spiralled out of control.

25 Dienstanweisung (job description), dated 24 May 1880, StAB 7,1025 – 74/2.
Spieth worked hard to make Africans respond personally to the bible and the promise of salvation, but he also excluded as unacceptable elements of African culture from this response. Still in 1910, Spieth let the Bremen Mission know that he regarded Ewe traditions as a “water- and hopeless wilderness” offering nothing to those searching for God.27 This was said in the knowledge that second generation African Christians, in fact the very group of people that were meant to run the church in the future, had already begun to rebel against such Eurocentric perspectives. One of them, Hermann Yoyo, had raised the matter of polygamy as a theological issue, arguing biblically and using his skills of exegesis. He also asked Spieth in 1896 a number of fundamental questions such as which of the “two natures” the Christian African had to follow: the nature of Europe or that of Africa, and whether the many crosses the Christian Africans were supposed to carry were really crosses of Christ or rather man-made in Europe.28 This first open challenge to the theological justification of missionary control was not resolved theologically – Yoyo was dismissed. Such incidents are frequent and typical for the missionary practice in the age of imperialism. Jeff Cox speaks of the “characteristic double vision” of missionary thought in this era: on the one hand we have the doctrine of the universal depravity of humanity, which makes mission ready for imperialism and dining with Caesar, and on the other there is that of the essential unity of humankind, which works at times as a considerable irritant to the colonial project. During this phase of rapid colonial expansion and some real degree of missionary progress, the distinction between the “empire of Christ” and the “empire of the Europeans” was difficult for many, and the missionaries’ rhetoric became increasingly brutal. How could the missionary movement, which thought in terms of eternity and which was “multinational and eventually [had] a pronounced multiracial character”, ever be reconciled with European nationalism and imperialism that were


temporary and both based on domination and the politics of difference? How to create independent Christianity in the context of dependence?29

Whereas Rudolf Mallet, the first African ordained as a pastor by Bremen in 1882 (against the will of Zahn, who kept this fact secret for years), was theologically and socially inclusive in his sermons, Spieth was uncompromising in his exclusivity. Mallet wished to build bridges to his non-Christian compatriots, and as a biblical expression of their inclusion in God’s salvation, he used to focus on the parable of the prodigal son.30 Spieth, however, insisted on categorical difference and preferred to create fear and trembling in his mission sermons. He insisted that terrible judgement and punishment were the fate of all who would not convert. He showed no mercy, and it did not matter to him whether he talked to young or old. Even at non-Christian funerals Spieth refused to show compassion and did not spare the bereaved ones with his message of doom and damnation.31 He had previously shown similar attitudes vis-à-vis his de-churched peers in the village of Hegensberg, but the difference was that there he was ridiculed: the post-Christians of Württemberg could not be threatened by his image of a violent and vengeful God – here, in West Africa, Spieth was not prepared to be ridiculed.

Not much different in character were Spieth’s actions vis-à-vis the African staff. Here we find the complete guide to the politics of cultural difference. His measures included the so-called education for work, corporal punishment, the exclusion from medical treatment (in the case of venereal diseases) or from pension or salary payments (for so-called pedagogical reasons), and the tool of forced redundancy. These sanctions were all used as a means of deterrence.32 Spieth is also the driving force in the 1890s behind the introduction of a system of salary

30 For Mallet cf. W. Ustorf, Christianized Africa – Dechristianized Europe, Ammersbek bei Hamburg: Verlag an der Lottbek 1992, pp. 29–38. Alsheimer, Zwischen Sklaverei, has also a chapter on this remarkable preacher (pp. 156–171). Alsheimer’s claim that Mallet had a relationship outside his marriage does not take any of his achievements away and is certainly not evidence that Mallet had returned to “afrikanisches Sexualverhalten” (p. 171).
31 See the entry in Spieth’s diary, dated 7 March 1897, p. 235 f.; also Spieth to mission director Michael Zahn, 25 November 1880; StAB 7,1025–74/1; Spieth to Zahn, 24 August 1895, StAB 7,1025–10/7.
32 Such cases are well-documented by Eiselen (1986), Ustorf (1989) and Alsheimer (2007). However, here is an African voice recorded by Spieth himself: “Wenn die Trommel schön klingt, dann braucht man die Leute nicht zu zwingen auf den Tanzplatz zu gehen” (When the drum is sounding inviting, you do not need to force the people
increments for African staff based on their productivity. This modernisation was an adaptation to the market economy on the coast, but it was Spieth who defined productivity as the general usefulness for the purpose of mission.33

This related to the degree to which African staff were prepared to obey and, secondly, to let go of any hope of finding a much better paid post in trade and shipping.

With Spieth, Holy Communion became the habitual occasion for checking the inner-most motivations of the African Christians.34 The character of Baptism as the sacrament of initiation into the faith changed into a kind of test of maturity, the criteria for which, again, were defined by him. In 1896, out of 30 candidates for baptism in Ho he would accept only eight.35 Many were forced to repeat the baptismal class year after year. The reason for this is not simply a matter of pastoral concern, but also a very specific, but rather one-sided anthropology. Spieth assumed, that he (the African; WU) has remained a complete child as regards the development of his positive sides – a crippled, not a healthy child that is. The development of malice, however, is in his case not retarded.36

Spieth’s approach to mission work in Africa cannot simply be described under the heading of discipline. He exercises the rigorous control over the African Christians for other reasons, namely another vision. Rather than the eschatological Kingdom of God this vision is that of the *homo novus Africanus Christianus* that must be created here and now. This new African, who is obliged to leave Africa behind, is a missionary’s dream, one that is driven by a rather impatient desire. This desire does not necessarily drink from the biblical well – it has another source best

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34 Zahn had noticed this development and insisted in 1896 that a European missionary may not torment in the manner of an inquisitor: “kann u. soll nicht Herzenskundiger sein; ich darf auch nicht quälen, wie ein Inquisitor […] Jede Menschenseele ist ein Heiligtum, vor welchem der Seelsorger Respekt haben muß.” Zahn, Erläuterung zur Taufordnung, 4 July 1896; StAB 7.1025–85/2.

35 Spieth, Diary, 28 November 1896, p. 175.

36 Spieth, Taufpraxis in Ho, 19 June 1895; StAB 7, 1025–43/5.
described in Daniel Defoe’s novel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719/20). It is the enlightened dream of creating the new human being through education. This dream is itself a secularized version of Christian eschatology. It is, however, not this, but its immanent variant, namely the belief in the perfectibility of our world through education, that is dominant in Spieth’s approach.\(^\text{37}\)

**Spieth’s Practice as a Scholar**

From the start – and like many other missionaries of this period — the young missionary was determined to make himself knowledgeable about Ewe culture. He kept records of his interviews with village elders, and he had instructed his African mission staff to collect and write down for him the oral traditions among the Ewe, from history and social order to religion, mythology and language, including the proverbs.\(^\text{38}\) Decades later, these collections and the knowledge derived from them provided the source materials for his two major books on Ewe culture and religion. In the field of linguistics and translation, he was therefore in a unique position, and this may explain his ambition of being to the Ewe now what Martin Luther then was to the Germans.\(^\text{39}\)

However, there is another red thread running through Spieth’s “self” — and we have already identified it: Spieth was highly critical of his cultural “other” or of what he called the “essence” of Ewe culture. Particularly in his private notes, written in the midst of his missionary activities, he was scathing as to the moral and intellectual status of the language and the traditions of his target culture:


\(^{38}\) See Spieth’s report to Generalkonferenz, Ho, 16–18 July 1883; StAB 7,1025–24/2; quoted by Eiselen, 1986, p. 55.

\(^{39}\) Spieth to director August Wilhelm Schreiber, 24 December 1903; idem to idem, 7 November 1905; StAB 7,1025–74/4; quoted by Eiselen, 1986, p. 90. The edition of the bible in Ewe (1913) lists more names regarding translation: the missionary Gottlob Däuble, the African members of staff Andreas Aku and Samuel Kwist in addition to two unnamed African elders. In Spieth’s *Die Übersetzung der Bibel* (1907, 1 und 6) we do learn that Ludwig Adzaklo and other “tüchtige eingeborene Gehilfen” were also involved, and on p. 2 Spieth makes explicit that the translation of the bible was not the achievement of one person only.
Just like the Ewe people, so is their language … The language is another piece of evidence that the Ewe have regressed from the bright pinnacle of a higher intellectual talent to a level where speaking consists largely of the instinctive application of misunderstood phrases to a given situation.⁴⁰

This is the same man who in his published scholarly writings, that is as a scholar, argues the opposite case, and insists that linguistics and lexicography had demonstrated that “the accusation of linguistic poverty” of the Ewe language had no basis at all.⁴¹ A paradox of a comparable nature between the missionary and the scholarly self emerges in the area of religious interpretation. Spieth, the scholar, does not seem to share the Pietistic missionary ideology (from where he is coming), which tended to be exclusive and to demonise African traditional religion. Spieth’s academic persona has switched to an alternative mindset by choosing a concept of religion that is much closer to that of Friedrich Schleiermacher, that is to liberal thought. Spieth defines religion as “ideas about non- and supra-human beings people feel dependent on and with whom they try to reconcile through religious acts”.⁴² Quite explicitly, religion is defined as human activity or as part of human nature. The way Spieth applies this approach within a theological framework is that of inclusivism. The fulfilment hypothesis claims that:

All religion existing in peoples’ hearts point to Christianity; and all manifestations of religion in the world are only imperfect structures and a surrogate for what we Christians believe to possess in truth and perfection.⁴³

Imperfect the African traditional religion may be, but Spieth knows as a theologian – and he includes this point in his publication — that according to Romans 2:14–15, God Himself is the source of Ewe religion.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ “Wie der Ewheer, so ist seine Sprache … Auch die Sprache ist ein Beweis dafür, daß der Ewheer von der lichten Zinne einer höheren geistigen Begabung herabgesunken ist auf den Zustand, auf dem das Sprechen größentheils die instinktive Anwendung unverstandener Formeln auf gegebene Verhältnisse [last word repeated] ist”; diary Spieth, 10 April 1899, p. 332 and p. 335.

⁴¹ Cf. Spieth’s Die Übersetzung der Bibel (1907, p. 2). This would correspond to the “intentionally positive image of Africa” described by Altena. The mission agencies preferred this image in their pro-mission propaganda in a largely hostile secular context.

⁴² Spieth, Die religiöse Veranlagung des Afrikaners (1912), p. 18.


God was there, before the missionaries came. This, however, is an approach which Spieth the missionary was never able to accept. If this is indeed a conversion towards transcultural openness, the question arises whether the European missionary is now moving towards the Africans and a readiness to approach them on the basis of equality, or whether something very different is going on here, namely a mutation from missionary to scholar. If this is the case, Spieth would have not necessarily moved to Africa, but rather moved towards European mainline culture — achieving his own equality in, and his transculturation to, the European culture of learning. A missionary who had left Europe as a religious dissenter and cultural pauper is returning as a new man, able to navigate religion and mainline culture — at home.

**Conclusion**

It is noteworthy that Spieth’s individual progress and academic emancipation occurred in the historical period of high imperialism, a time when the North-Atlantic powers seized and divided the African continent and when nationalist ideologies and racist and social-Darwinist thinking undermined both Western Christianity and the humanitarian ideals of the Enlightenment. He certainly had colonialist attitudes, but if he was a colonialist, he was one who was irritated by dreams and visions – religious as well as secular — which symbolised a global order that was different from that of colonialism. In fact, the battle lines between these alternative visions were running right through his head. “Double vision” may be a term that is helpful in dealing with this paradox. Yet, it is significant that the vision of peace and equality comes through much more clearly in Spieth’s academic works, whereas his missionary practice is heavily influenced by its captivity to secular interests. As scholar, Spieth is able to transcend the notions of native marginality and imperfection that he himself had constructed in his missionary discourse and practice. By letting go of his battle image of the Ewe and emphasising the universal brotherhood of humanity, the image of the violent God loses its relevance. Our hero can now take off his armour and make himself vulnerable. The search for unity and the dream of cosmopolitan Christianity is still on, but the nightmares have gone. Spieth’s progress is the insight that he is on a pilgrimage with others.
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CHAPTER FIVE

‘SELF’ AND ‘OTHER’ AS BIBLICAL REPRESENTATIONS IN MISSION LITERATURE

Lisbeth Mikaelsson

The Centrality of the Bible

This article is concerned with the genre of missionary autobiography, more particularly with how the Bible is inscribed in many autobiographical texts produced by Norwegian missionaries in the 20th century. The analysis is based on a broad study of Norwegian mission literature that includes more than two hundred autobiographical works published by Norwegian missionaries.1 Like their British counterparts (cf. Johnston 2003:3), the Norwegians were prolific writers, displaying their textual skills in a number of genres: diaries, letters, reports, magazine articles, histories, biographies, fiction, and scientific works in linguistics, the history of religions, and ethnography. The approach to autobiographical literature employed in this paper has a textual, not a referential or historical focus. It calls attention to some of the intertextual structures of these works, namely those involving biblical elements in the construction of ‘self’ and ‘other’. These appear as key identity categories wrapped in a wide array of semiotic procedures. Narrative mimesis and direct or indirect Bible citations are the chief techniques through which biblical elements are used in the creation of identity. The intertextual structures are seen in relation to their institutional context, the organizational missionary apparatus in Norway in which most of

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1 Cf. my dissertation Kallets ekko [The Echo of the Call] (2003), which concentrates on the autobiographical books written by Norwegian missionaries published between 1843 and 1994. Altogether 228 volumes were registered, distributed across 136 authors, 93 of them male, 43 female, producing 176 and 52 works respectively (Mikaelsson 2003(a):137). It is often difficult to draw clear dividing lines between the genres of life writing, such as autobiography in the strict sense, memoir, travel account, and missionary account; but the genre distinctions are not essential for this analysis. Here I use the term autobiography in a wide sense, covering the sub-genres.
the audience is located. There is a selective use of Bible texts in this literature, and similarly, I concentrate on main tendencies, leaving out divergent voices.

The genre as such is a ‘self’-manifestation, exhibiting established self-identity and betraying unreflecting attitudes. ‘The other’, here limited to its religious dimension, i.e. foreign religions and their followers, belongs to the construction of the ‘self’, being the object legitimating the missionary endeavour. Anticipating what is to follow, it can be said that the dominant tendency vis-a-vis non-Christian religions is to ‘other’ them (cf. Bhabha 1994), i.e. to subject them to a critical judgment based on Christian conviction and Western standards of civilization.

This approach means that mission is highlighted as a religious movement involving a mythical world view and personal belief in the biblical God that is supposed to stand behind Christian mission. Both ‘self’ and ‘other’ have cosmic aspects, linked to a metaphysical dualism of varying intensity. Mission in the modern era has many different aspects; therefore, studying it without having its religious subject matter in view is unproblematic. Nevertheless, the importance of religious motivation and a mythical world view should not be played down in the general appraisal of the missionary movement. Modern mission is an acculturation of Christianity in a Western thrust for global domination. However, this is a general perspective which cannot fully explain the role of idealistic motivation, faith, and pious dedication. Neither does it suffice to account for the variety of views, activities and experience in mission.²

The Bible is central to the piety, belief and dogma of Protestantism. Protestantism (like most Christian branches) holds that the Bible has absolute authority as ‘the word of God’, that its validity is universal and its scriptures are translatable, principles having great impact in modern mission, resulting in hosts of Bible translations to local languages. Two distinctive Protestant principles with wide implications are the claim that the Bible’s ‘plain meaning’ is accessible to anyone (‘the general priesthood of man’) and the importance attached to personal Bible reading. The combination of these two necessitates common literacy in

Protestant churches. Literacy is therefore one of the goals in which the two grand missionary projects, Christianization and civilization, unite.

Reading missionary autobiographies reminds one of the personal religious basis of mission, and besides, how central the Bible is in Protestant religiousness. Broadly speaking, the missionary movement in Norway grew out of the great Pietist awakenings in the 19th century. Personal Bible reading, enjoined as a Christian duty, was one of the legacies of these spiritual manifestations. What could be termed the national religious culture has since been deeply shaped by the practice of pious reading and identification with biblical models. Some of the most important are the models attached to mission and the figure of the missionary. Asking for the grounds for mission in a nation having no imperialist, and very limited colonialist, ambitions, the answer – not the whole answer, though – is a biblically motivated idealism based on Jesus’ well-known ‘Great Commission’ in Matt 28:18–20:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

This kingly command is supplemented by the obligation ‘to help the heathens in their spiritual, social and medical distress’ which is another main incentive, also legitimated by the Scriptures.

While some are Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals and Congregationalists, the majority of Norwegian missionaries have been Lutherans belonging to the state church and representing one of the large missionary organizations: the Missionary Society, founded in 1842; the Santal Mission, established in 1867; and the Norwegian Lutheran Mission, founded in 1891. Unquestionably, authors have varying opinions about the Bible and its scriptures, but, in general, missionary autobiography is not the place to raise disputes about the Bible or biblical interpretation. Instead, a personal commitment to the sacred book is often heard, together with tokens of one’s loyalty to the Bible, a loyalty transcending denominational bounds. Authors may for instance express their belief in the Bible as the word of God. Such proclamations happen quite frequently. Texts differ in this respect as in others, however. While some are vibrant with religious fervour and Bible citations, others are matter-of-fact descriptions of missionary work. Even the latter group may display the fundamental impact of biblical religion in their rendering of
experience. Childhood memories, the realization of the missionary call, missionary work abroad, local people and dramatic incidents belong to the recurring topics. While there is a variety of writing modes that should not be overlooked, it is relevant to point out that quite often the narration is packed with biblical references and allusions, creating a life history ‘exegesis’ of the Bible, or a ‘biblical’ rendering of the self and his/her experience. Besides, it can be surmised that the biblical associations attached to the missionary and his/her work may bring about ‘biblical’ interpretations of neutral accounts among readers.

The Impact of the Literary System

The great bulk of Norwegian mission literature has been published by the voluntary mission societies or publishing firms wholly or partly owned by the societies, a parallel for instance to the publishing system in Britain (Johnston 2003:6). The audience of Norwegian mission literature is found within the mission-supporting culture connected to the organizations. Books are generally not meant for critical outsiders, a fact authors seem well aware of. The implied reader is primarily a mission sympathizer, familiar with the missionary commitment and its inherent value system. It can reasonably be expected that the life experience of missionary authors has caused several to develop attitudes which do not fully confirm the dominant views in their home base. However, the closed literary system does not readily open up for divergent opinions that could harm the justification of missionary enterprise or counteract the interests of the missionary apparatus. Knowledge of these features is vital to our understanding of the popular mission literature, as they explain dominant tendencies and gaps in the texts. Biblical intertextuality also has to be seen in this light. Its social background is the controlling hand of missionary organizations as well as a readership sharing the authors’ familiarity with biblical narratives and veneration of the sacred

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3 I have documented some of the editorial practice of publishers in the case of China missionary Hanna Holthe. She was a school teacher who disagreed with the education policy of her colleagues. However, no hint of her frustration is voiced in her book Blandt Kinas ungdom [Among Chinese Youth] (1931). Not indicating exactly what kind of material he wanted removed, the sources reveal that the editor would not publish the manuscript unless it was shortened. Besides, he wanted to privilege the kind of material he presumed would interest the readers, i.e. stories featuring action and impressions (Mikaelsson 2003 (b):169–170).
book. Biblical models constitute a common religious repertory uniting authors and readers, a repertory which contribute to make strange experiences both understandable and meaningful to relate.

**Bible Identification and ‘Self’**

To be a Christian missionary means to identify with a biblical category having the apostle Paul as its foremost representative as well as responding to the word of God. These are basic features belonging to the religious foundation of Christian mission.

The phrase ‘word of God’ has come down from antiquity. It points to a connection between the Bible and the godhead which can be summed up as ‘revelation’, but the phrase can have several meanings.\(^4\) In this particular literary context it refers mainly to two separate, but related ways of understanding the Bible, both having consequences for the construction of ‘self’ and ‘other’. The first views the Bible as a sacred text containing the truth about the nature of God and his actions, as well as his plans and will concerning the future of sinful humanity. It could be termed a great myth, one that integrates a mythical idea of the Bible. The understanding of myth I have in mind corresponds to Wendy Doniger’s formulation, i.e. a narrative that is transparent and often retold, and which is able to carry paradoxical meanings and different viewpoints that vary according to time and place (Doniger 1998:80). The last point about variation is definitely true of the biblical great myth; its plasticity has enabled it to be linked with humble self-sacrifice as well as imperialism, to mention two extremes.

The second main understanding of the Bible surfacing in these texts depends on the first. It perceives the Bible as a communicative medium for the individual believer, in which God speaks to the person through sentences taken from the Bible. This may happen during prayers for instance, or as divination, i.e. the procedure when an individual opens the Bible in a casual way and interprets what he/she reads as a personal message from God about some question or problem. In both cases the scriptural passages are transformed into statements completely adjusted

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\(^4\) The phrase ‘word of God’ involves several elements, such as a divine voice, message, spirit, power, person (the Christ), and written text, subject to different understandings and combinations. Cf. my article “Verification of the Word of God in Missionary Autobiography” (2010) for a more extensive treatment of the concept.
to the situation of the individual. When such incidents are connected to the missionary’s career or work, they probably nourish the belief in mission as divinely ordained, corresponding with the biblical layout. Judging from the missionary texts, personal experiences of the Bible as a communicative medium are quite common, particularly in the process of becoming conscious about one’s missionary calling. Kristine Skjeslien is one of several authors who reveals how, as a young woman, she was in serious doubt about her calling and against using divination to figure it out. A friend pressed her to try, however, and the message she received was Acts 13:46–47, where Paul and Barnabas exclaim that they will take the word of God to the Gentiles. According to the text this immediately convinced Skjeslien of her own path (Skjeslien 1989:18). She describes such ‘receive a word’-experiences as a ‘handshake’ with God, connecting them with the promise of Jesus about always being with his disciples (1989:7).

The witness-aspect of missionary texts is relevant to emphasize at this point. According to widespread genre conventions, autobiographical texts are telling the true story of the author’s life, sometimes also focusing on the self, its line of development, and key experiences (cf. Ilsøe 1987; Lejeune 1989). The truth claim is central in a mission context; without it texts would lose their status as testimonies and their function in the mission institution would be harmed. To be a trustworthy witness is part of the expectations for the missionary. So important is the witness function that one of the authors with literary ambitions in Norwegian mission, Johannes Einrem (1868–1956), had to face criticism from colleagues and superiors for his ‘stories’ and novels from the mission field in Madagascar (Mikaelsson 2003(a):102).

A preliminary conclusion at this point would be that the large majority of missionaries’ autobiographical texts contain personal narratives about the self and the mission work that are saturated with meanings and concepts drawn from the great myth about God’s will to disseminate Christianity, and the certainty that this intention is stated in the Bible. To a varying extent the manner of writing echoes the Bible; yet the general impression is that individual self-constructions affirm the biblically oriented identity existing in the mission institution. This is a central function with a view to the missionary’s status as a main symbol in mission, carrying the common project on his/her shoulders, so to speak.

Their dependence on the great myth makes the personal narratives ‘box myths’, which is the term Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe have
coined for such interlaced meaning structures. Another relevant term for such structures could be 'master narrative', defined by Jeffrey Cox as "[...] a big story that makes smaller stories intelligible" (Cox 2005:3). Cox identifies a number of master narratives operating in the wake of modern Christian expansion; the one corresponding most to what I have called the great myth is the providentialist narrative, which "focuses on the documentation of God's providential work in the world" (Cox 2005:4). Reading autobiographical texts shows that there are few limits to the application of a providentialist perspective on missionary experience.

One type of mythical entanglement worth emphasizing concerns chronology. Through the mimetic repetition of biblical models, apostolic and present-day mission are represented as essentially one and the same, the missionary figuring as a replica of New Testament models. Modern mission thus becomes a scene where the *illud tempus* of apostolic Christianity is repeated, implicitly verifying the great myth and its eternal validity. The self-presentations of legendary China missionary Annie Skau Berntsen (1911–1992) provide some of the most telling examples (Berntsen 1986 and 1988, cf. Mikaelsson 2003(a):288–289). One remarkable episode echoes the story of Jesus when he withdraws to a mountain in order to pray and then meets a man possessed by demons on his way down; another episode arouses associations to Paul being transported to the third heaven. Her rendering of life experience is 'biblical' in several ways. She was imprisoned by Chinese communists during the revolution and endorses the truth of Jesus' promise that "I am with you always...". She applies the mustard seed as a symbol of her own life journey, echoing the parable recorded in Mark 4: 30–32. This is a frequently used metaphor for missionary work developing from a modest start into something great. It is a pretentious metaphor as a description of self one could say, but the author is insisting on her humility, constantly pointing beyond herself to the figure of Jesus. Her fame is connected to the hospital Haven of Hope in Hong Kong, which she started and ran for many years after the Second World War. She presents the hospital as the project of Jesus; he is the real manager even tending

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5 "A box myth is a myth within a myth. And the particular box myth-making that attracts contemporary new religionists is that of creating a **personal** myth within a **cosmic** myth" (Hexham and Poewe 1997:69).
to practical matters, while Berntsen’s role is to be his assistent. Constant communication with Jesus, often in biblical wording, characterizes her narration. Annie Skau Berntsen’s texts document that personal piety, combined with a mythical understanding of the Bible, makes Scripture speak in many ways.

Texts by female authors in particular evince a similar pattern emphasizing God’s guidance, with the Bible functioning as a medium stating his plans for and protection over the protagonist. Why should such a representation of self be more common among female authors than male? Not all women have it, however, and there are several male authors who show the same features. Still there is a marked gender imbalance concerning this matter, as uncovered by the investigation I made. Discussing this topic elsewhere, I pointed at the authority structures in the missionary societies, which generally have assigned an inferior position to the female missionaries. There is the possibility, one which should not be overlooked, that piety varies with gender; however it seems as reasonable to interpret the women’s writing practice as a way of underlining their status as God’s messengers. Or, one could say, as a manifestation of their spiritual equality in terms that comply with the authority of the Bible. In view of the appeals to Scripture in order to keep women in their subordinate place – a common practice also in the mission context – relating about their communicative experience with the deity is a subtle way for women to assert their worth (cf. Mikaelsson 2003(b)).

The ‘Other’ in Biblical Terms

Personified, the ‘other’ in this literature is a non-Christian, and religion is made a key aspect of his/her ‘otherness’. Up until the latest decades the usual terms in Norwegian mission for non-Christians and their religion have been ‘heathen’ and ‘heathenism’ (‘hedning’, ‘hedenskap’). The primary characteristic of heathenism is the worship of false gods, resulting in numerous ills for society and the individual, according to the dominant view. An important biblical authority on heathenism is Paul, the ‘apostle of the Gentiles’. In his first letter to the Romans the apostle enumerates a catalogue of heathen ills. The unbelievers are

filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice […] envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious towards parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless (Romans 1:29–31).
According to Alison Twells this is the passage most often quoted by missionary evangelicals (Twells 2009:18). Whether Norwegian testimony would endorse this assertion is not for me to say, but it is undoubtedly an important passage also in the Norwegian context.

While the Great Commission does not explicate why the nations in themselves have a need to become disciples of Christ, the idea of the miserable state of the heathens provides it. It adds an emotional as well as a moral basis to the missionary imperative. The Great Commission is justified, even rationalized, by the wretchedness prevailing under heathenism. Rhetorically, the sad state of affairs is transformed into a ‘call’ to Christian compassion and moral responsibility. This ideological manoeuvre, which fits in with the civilizing thrust of colonialism, also has a particular biblical model. It is not a divine one, such as the commission of Christ; it is a human voice made symbolic as a mouthpiece for humanity. In Acts 16:9 the Apostle Paul, during one of his mission journeys, has a vision of a Macedonian pleading with him and crying “Come over to Macedonia and help us”.

Other New Testament material, for instance the parable of the good Samaritan and the stories about Jesus’ compassion and healing of the suffering, provide prototypes of Christian behavior towards the needy. Being anchored in the biblical traditions about Christ himself, they allow, so to speak, a ‘Macedonian’ interpretation of the Great Commission. It happens sometimes that Acts 16:9 is explicitly cited in the autobiographical literature. The idea of the cry arising from the suffering heathens is so common, however, that it gets across to readers without any express biblical references, being part of the common opinion of what the mission call is about. Considering the institutional function of mission literature, it is hardly surprising then that stories and allegations about the misery connected with heathenism abound.

The ills of heathenism, personified in horrifying, dramatic or sentimental tales, frequently offer the best reading in this literature. The above-mentioned Annie Skau Berntsen dramatically locates non-Christian religious expressions to the realm of demons, a judgment more characteristic of free church missionaries than Lutherans. ‘Heathen’ medicine-men, magicians, and priests – in other words local religious experts – figure as the primary examples of the ‘other’, independently of denominational background. They are protagonists in many anecdotes, and rivals – generally losing rivals – to religious authority in confrontations with the missionaries. Contests between the missionary and the local experts, regarding for instance the cure of sickness or demolition
The frontispiece of *Norsk Missionstidende*, depicting the 'heathens' welcoming the divine light of the gospel, illustrates 'the Macedonia call' as it was commonly conceived during the early part of the 20th century. Source: Mission Archives, School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway. Used with permission.
of cult objects, are the most dramatic type of confrontations. The age-old division between the transcendent, almighty god of the Bible and the idols and home-made images of the heathens, is manifested in such plots. The contests have several Old Testament precedents, among them the well-known battle between the prophet Elijah and the prophets of the Canaanite god Baal, which proved to the Hebrews that the Lord was God and Elijah the true prophet (1 Kings 18:19–40). In the Old Testament there are also examples of magic practices being denounced and magicians killed. By framing incidents as contests between magicians and missionaries, stories become testimonies that the Christian god is the god of the Bible, who, in accordance with the above-mentioned mythical chronology, is consistent in his rejection of heathenism and its representatives. If the contest entailed that the missionary was in danger, a story may also ‘prove’ that God protects his followers in moments of danger. There are many such episodes in this literature. The promise of Jesus (Matt 28:30) functions as a sort of a motto in several books, and it is often the message to be learnt from stories about dangers and oppositions in missionary work. Life-history ‘proofs’ that Jesus stands by his followers at the same time define foreign religions and resistance against mission as ‘other’, against the will of the true God.

The Norwegians are not the only ones representing local religious experts in this manner. In his study of Canadian missionary texts, The Missionary Lives. A study in Canadian Missionary Biography and Autobiography (1997), Terrence Craig asserts that the public defeat and humiliation of such leaders is a constant theme, persisting into the 1960s (Craig 1997:75).

While the magician figure often appears as a threatening enemy, his clients are generally seen as victims. Their helplessness at the hands of ignorant or brutal native experts is a chief variant of the ‘Macedonia call’. Quite often happy endings are secured by missionaries providing the right medicines, protection or other kinds of assistance. It is often argued however, that Western medicine, schools and hospitals are not sufficient to create a better society in Africa or Asia; people also need a change of heart provided by the conversion to Christianity. Vis-a-vis readers, insisting on the necessity of religion can be seen as an argument for mission, not just financial and humanitarian aid.

The stories featuring the ills of heathenism are quite often accompanied by reminders that readers should contribute to the mission project
with gifts and prayers, explicitly pulling them into the story, one could say. In the Norwegian framework it is established that only some are elected to become missionaries abroad, but since their domestic supporters provide the necessary means, these too have their share in the realization of the missionary calling. Responding to the cry from the miserable and contributing to the carrying out of God’s will, they can identify with the biblical models and see themselves as part of the missionary ‘self’. Addressing readers directly confirms this interdependence, but one could argue as well that there is an implicit affirmation of the same link in the messages and stories being imparted. The ‘democratic’ identification with the mission call made possible in the mission institution, which of course exceeds this particular literary manifestation, is essential for the growth of the mission enterprise into a large popular movement, as has been the case in Norway.

Conclusion

The dualism of religion surfacing in the construction of ‘self’ and ‘other’ is not just a division distinguishing between Christianity and other religions. It is also an ideological totality, uniting missionary and heathen, mission work and misery in a mythical vision legitimating the missionary conquest.

According to the inherent understanding of religion in this literature, religion is more than worship and piety. Religion, true or false, is seen as a mighty force, determining social and individual behaviour. Paralleling the way heathenism is put forward as the chief explanation of social misery, Christianity is given the credit for the blessings of Western civilization, for instance in the shape of schools and medical aid which accompany evangelization. This is a standard opinion in the texts.

‘Self’ and ‘other’ crystallize as mythical categories, anchored in the great myth about the Christian God and his dealings with humanity. The Bible, seen as revelation and word of God, is the myth’s textual foundation, itself a part of the mythical conception. Various types of biblical intertextuality are literary means to annex the missionary ‘self’ and the non-Christian ‘other’ to the great myth.

The ‘other’ has two main aspects, one belonging to the sphere of religious rivalry and authority, the other pointing to poverty, social injustice, disease, and fear as results of false religion. The two aspects may be
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intertwined, for instance when magicians or priests are accused of holding people down in ignorance and superstition. The missionary ‘self’, on the other hand, represents the opposites: true authority in religious matters, liberation, and relief. This contrast is imparted as the reflection readers are invited to identify with.

Bibliography

CHAPTER SIX

CONFESSIONALISED MEDICINE
THE NORWEGIAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY’S LEPROSY
NARRATIVES FROM MADAGASCAR 1887–1907

Sigurd Sandmo

During the late 1880s, The Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) established a leprosy home, Ambohipiantrana, close to their mission station Antsirabé in the highlands of Madagascar. At a time when Norway obtained recognition for leprosy research and leprosy policies, both missionaries in the field and medical practitioners in Norway expressed their interest in the connection between the famous Norwegian leprosy expertise and the great tasks of the Norwegian missions. However, not much research has been done to investigate how the two Norwegian leprosy universes were related to each other, nor on how missionary writers responded to the changing medical understanding of the Biblical disease in the late nineteenth century.¹

This paper is a textual analysis of the written missionary narratives on Ambohipiantrana during the two first decades it was run by the NMS, from 1887 to 1907. The ambition has been to examine these narratives as literature, and how this literature is part of a discourse interacting with other texts, narratives and understandings of leprosy at the time. A more specific goal for the following readings has been to examine how the missionary narratives on leprosy and sin counteracted and clashed with the medical understanding of contagion, and how new hybrid narratives developed within this specific missionary discourse, colored by the colonial framing.

The period covers the two first decades of Ambohipiantrana and also the period when Pastor Thorkild G. Rosaas was responsible for the home. The period is also particularly interesting because it covers the years when the theory of the contagious nature of the disease had its international breakthrough in the medical world and also the time when France declared Madagascar to be a French colony.

*Contagionism and Segregation: The International Leprosy Discourse in the 1890s*

By the beginning of the 1890s, it was still a matter of dispute whether leprosy was contagious or not. Contagion was, as a medical and microbiological term, not fixed, and hereditarians, sanitarians and others often opposed the unicausal etiology of the contagionists. In Norway, however, most physicians working within the leprosy institutional system, which included five hospitals at the time, considered leprosy to be a contagious and not a hereditary disease. Gerhard Armauer Hansen's first observations of the leprosy bacillus had been published in 1874, and in 1877 and 1885 the Norwegian Parliament had passed a new leprosy legislation based on the supposition of the contagious nature of the disease. Several international publications from around 1890 presented the Norwegian system of segregation and legislation as a groundbreaking prototype, and in 1890 the director of the Reknes leprosy hospital, Edvard Kaurin, had an extensive pro-contagionist article

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published in the influential medical journal *The Lancet*.\textsuperscript{5} The Norwegian model had been developed under the influence of both hereditarians as D. C. Daniellsen and contagionists like G. A. Hansen, but was now to be seen as an international example of a contagionist approach in the struggle against the disease. In 1897, the First International Leprosy Congress in Berlin produced a Final Statement declaring Norway a role model: “If the measures in vogue in Norway could only be put into universal practice, the disease would be quickly eradicated.”\textsuperscript{6}

Some critical voices were also heard, in Norway too, claiming that the segregation policies were the results of reductionist medical rationalism. When anti-contagionists protested against the new segregation act in Norway from 1885, their arguments were linked specifically to how contagionist theory was transformed into harsh politics in the new act.\textsuperscript{7}

The scepticism towards contagionism and segregation – today often referred to as anti-contagionism – included several medical and other branches within the world of leprosy, from Christian-conservative wings to anti-positivists, anti-Darwinists and others fearing that the influence of laboratory medicine and medical positivism would replace traditional Hippocratic and Christian values of Western medicine.

In a “Request to Norway’s Physicians”, written in December 1890 and published in the medical journal *Norsk Magazin for Lægevidenskab* in early 1891,\textsuperscript{8} the already mentioned internationally profiled contagionist Edvard Kaurin addressed his medical colleagues on a missionary issue. Kaurin encouraged his colleagues to contribute economically to the establishment of an orphanage for “healthy children of leper parents” in the recently established leprosy home Ambohipiantrana. In 1890, Kaurin had received the young deaconess Marie Føreid at Reknes for a

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\textsuperscript{6} Pandya, 1998 p. 381.

\textsuperscript{7} A heated debate that brought anti-contagionist views to the Norwegian stage was the Norwegian “Act On the Seclusion of Lepers” (“Lov om Spedalskes Afsondring”) from 1885. Hansen, who had been the architect behind the act, was accused by his opponents of being unscientific and biased (J. Bucholz in *Medicinsk Revue*, 1885: 446–481) 1885), “for å sverme for eftersnak og tidsmessige ideer” (Thv Bucholz in *Tidsskrift for Practisk Medicin*, 1885 pp. 382–391) and of moving “lepers from a category of the sick to a category of criminals” (T. Wulfsberg, *Tidsskrift for Practisk Medicin*, 1885: 407–416).

couple of weeks training at Reknes Hospital before her departure to Madagascar, where she would be in charge of the home. Kaurin himself had presented her with the idea of an orphanage, and now he presented the idea to the medical professions in Norway:

With my knowledge of the conditions down there, and in the belief that leprosy is not a hereditary, but only a contagious disease, I asked her [Foreid] to tell the Norwegian medical missionaries that a task that one should take on in particular at the leper home, was as soon as possible to remove the children from their leprous parents. Then it was possible, as had been seen elsewhere, to hope that the children would escape the illness, and thus a healthy generation would emerge from leprous parents.

It is a fact that we can thank Norwegian doctors in particular for the thorough studies and those discoveries that have been made concerning leprosy. We also observe with pleasure that the precautions we have taken against the disease are used in other nations also, as the best and most efficient measures. Whether the disease is hereditary is still an open question, and it would be an honour for the Norwegian medical profession if we could contribute to an answer.

Kaurin’s text speaks the language of contagionism, and it links the leprosy work of the mission to Norwegian leprosy research, medical discoveries and public leprosy policies. It also expresses the hope that medicine and mission could serve each other. But did they? And could they? It is obvious that leprosy to the missionaries of the 1890s had a religious imagery that made it different from the medical understanding of the disease. But was contagion understood differently also in a missionary setting? What role did contagion get to play in the missionary narratives from Ambohipiantrana?

Source Material: Missionary Narratives as Leprosy Discourse

The text material from the leprosy work of NMS in Madagascar is extensive. For decades, Norwegian missionaries wrote letters and reports

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9 Some of Foreid’s personal religious experiences during the stay at Reknes are referred by her biographer G. Nakkestad (Nakkestad, (1941) pp. 73–76) based on oral tradition. A diary from Foreid’s own hand, kept in the NMS archive, contains medical notes on leprosy dated May 20th 1890. The notes include, in five small handwritten pages, a very brief history of leprosy, references to Danielssen and Boeck’s famous work from 1847 and their view that the disease was not contagious, and also a more thorough symptomatology.

10 Quoted from Missionstidende (MT), (1891) pp. 71–72.
from the leprosy homes Ambohipiantrana, Mangarano and Beokoaka, so that the mission friends in Norway could read about the important work and the protestant evangelization among the “lepers” of Madagascar. They could also follow the work through good times and bad times, through war, peace and French occupation, as well as the rivalry with French Jesuits and their missionary strategies.

The texts in Norsk Missionstidende (MT) had functions on different levels. The missionaries wrote reports to the board of NMS once or twice a year. These were a crucial part of the dialogue between the mission station and the leadership in Norway, and only minor changes in the reports were made before they were printed in the journal, which for many years had more subscribers than any Norwegian newspaper. Now, they became part of the circulation of texts meant to create enthusiasm and economic support from the readers. This could only happen by merging the missionary’s daily work with the story about the growth of God’s Kingdom. With such a religious or theological meta-narrative, the daily work of the missionaries was transformed into the mission itself.

We may regard this kind of religious literature as conventional and programmatic. Nevertheless, there are several reasons why one should pay interest to the literary aspects of missionary writings, and how they – through their conventional transparency – reflect the conflicts between e.g. colonial, religious and racial categories. To the individual missionary writer, it has, as we will see, seldom been important to aim at clarity and stringency, but rather to create texts that include acknowledgements and understandings on different and often ambiguous levels. To the modern reader of missionary writings it may be tempting to look for the anachronisms that sometimes occur when e.g. religious and secular narratives collide, as in the case of leprosy issue. However, a systematic search for conflicts between medical and religious notions of the

12 A thorough analysis of Norwegian missionary writings is Lisbeth Mikaelsson, Kallets ekko. Studier i misjon og selvbiografi (Bergen: UiB, 2000). Mikaelsson argues that missionary autobiographic writing covers a range of sub-genres which seem fruitful to differentiate only to a certain point (Mikaelsson, 2000, p. 17). Karina Hestad Skeie refers to the widespread but specific genre of missionary accounts as “missionographies”, representing a religious genre of its own, see K. H. Skeie, “Misjonsmateriale som historisk kilde”, Norsk tidsskrift for misjonsvitenskap 62 (2008), pp. 89–100.
disease will soon result in reductionist readings. Missionary writings do not reach for the ideals of empiricism and rationalism. They are under a higher authority than science, and their quality and integrity depend on this. A fruitful approach must therefore take the ambiguous nature of missionary writings into consideration, a nature reflecting the semi-professional author, the function of the texts on different levels, and also the conflicts between the missionary’s daily life and the divine authority of the text.

In the following I will present four readings of texts about the leprosy home Ambohipiantrana. The first reading examines the writings in MT about the Flemish Catholic missionary priest Damien, who was infected in the leprosy colony Kalaupapa in Hawaii and died there in 1899. The event became a reference in the whole leprosy discourse of the 1890s, but also a problematic narrative and a matter of dispute in MT. The second reading examines how pastor Rosaas in particular writes about sexuality and marriage among the inhabitants of Ambohipiantrana. The third reading discusses the impact that the French colonization had on the operations of Ambohipiantrana and how the narratives of the orphanage developed in this period. The fourth reading discusses some aspects of the deaconess Marie Ørsted’s writings about the leprosy home in the women’s missionary journal Missionslæsning for Kvindedeforeninger (MfK), in comparison with Pastor Rosaas’ writings in MT.

Anti-Contagionism and Anti-Catholicism: The Story of Father Damien

In April 1899, the Flemish Father Damien de Veuster died from leprosy in Hawaii, after having been infected in the famous leprosy settlement Kalaupapa, where he worked as a missionary. The story about the self-sacrifice of the Catholic priest soon became a key narrative to the missions in both Europe and the US, and the death of Damien obtained great interest also in the secular public sphere. After having been considered extinct in most European countries, with a few exceptions, the disease was now back in the news in a colonial Europe as an unpleasant reminder of the existence of the Biblical disease and as a thought-provoking reminder of how white, Christian Europeans were once again within its range.

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Ambohipiantrana had received its first inhabitants two years earlier, under the leadership of Pastor Thorkild G. Rosaas. Rosaas had written a few lines about the home in MT in 1888 and 1889, about how the land had been acquired, and about funding, water supplies and the first building operations. A more thorough report dated December 9th 1889 was printed in the spring of 1890, at the same time as the leprosy question was highlighted in European media, caused by the news about Damien’s death.\(^\text{14}\) In this report, Rosaas gave a brief presentation of the history and spread of the disease in Madagascar, and he wrote about “the Christian compassion to call on the wretched, poor and ill”, about the new leprosy home, and about his own optimistic expectations for evangelization and baptizing.\(^\text{15}\)

Although the international leprosy discourse after Damien’s death was colored by leprophobia and fear of contagion, Rosaas seems not to have taken a clear opinion when it comes to the question about the cause of the disease. Fear of contagion is something he observes among the natives, but Rosaas himself returns several times to the presumed heredity of leprosy. He also mentions other possibilities, but the reasoning leads him to the different aspects of heredity:

> The Malagasy have their own beliefs about the causes of the disease. Even though they know of the heredity of the disease, they often allege that they have contracted it from drinking water or from eating a particular piece of meat from the slaughtered animal (!). But it is a fact that it is often difficult to track the actual cause of the disease. That lepers get leprous children is a fact, but quite often the parents are healthy, and yet their children get the disease. In these cases one could be led to believe that the grandparents had the disease, but this is also denied.\(^\text{16}\)

Although Rosaas’ language often refers to his sincere religious feelings – through formulations about the inhabitants’ “sad and pitiful lives,” and about how their “wretchedness and misery” has become “as a heavy weight on heart and mind,” and that he sincerely would have wished “that we be capable of doing something” – his early texts are characterized by a pragmatic interest in the engineering and practical

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\(^{14}\) Gussow shows how the number of articles on leprosy in British press reaches its peak between 1889–1891. Gussow refers to this period as “the peak years of alarm” (Gussow, 1989: 113–114). This is also when Wright (1889) and Roose (1890) publish their alarming reports on leprosy and contagion.

\(^{15}\) *MT*, 1890, pp. 46–55.

\(^{16}\) *MT*, 1890, p. 53.
construction of the home. No references to the disease of the Bible can be found, and there are neither any attempts to sublimate the work among the “lepers” through Biblical connotations, nor any hinting at the work as dangerous or self-sacrificing.

Quite different was the text printed in the British paper The Madagascar News on September 13th 1890, which the editorial office of MT translated and offered to their readers, with some introductory remarks about how they probably will be interested “in hearing what outsiders think about the work we do.” The editors also wrote that the presentation of “this our home […] is evidently written with much understanding of the significance and extent of this important work.”

In an explicit way, the English text made the connection between Rosaas and the recently arrived deaconness Marie Føreid, and Damien’s martyrdom in Hawaii: “A Frenchman,18 Father Damien, has now led the way, and heroic British and Norwegian men and women have felt that they have been called upon to follow his noble example. Like France has Father Damien […] Norway now has Deaconess Føreid.”19 With explicit references to the risk of infection and the death of Damien, the work among people with leprosy was presented as particularly noble, self-denying and heroic:

Every Sunday Pastor Rosaas allows himself to be exposed to the contagion, as he preaches to these people in the church, and every day Deaconess Føreid will go from house to house visiting them. Every day she will walk from the mission station at Sirabe to the by all others shunned leper town and as an angel of mercy serve these unfortunate souls. It is truly a work which is as daring as it is noble and self-denying. […] She has dedicated her life to this task. May God see to that she avoids contagion and becomes a means […] to fulfil the great task to which she has sacrificed herself. The prayer of all our readers must today be: God bless and help her!”

The connection between the Catholic Damien and the Protestants Rosaas and Føreid was made at a time when the rivalry between missionary interests in Madagascar, between the Anglican London Missionary Society and Norwegian Lutherans on one side, and French

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17 MT, 1890, p. 470.
18 Damien was from Leuven in Belgium, but the author of the article in The Madagascar News calls him French (The Madagascar News, Sept. 13 1890, p. 2), not Flemish, a misunderstanding repeated by the Norwegian translator in MT.
19 MT, 1890, p. 470.
20 MT, 1890, p. 472.
Catholics on the other, was about to come to a head. The comparison drawn between the Catholic Damien and the Norwegian missionaries had apparently not been seen as problematic by MT’s editorial office when the translated text was published in the first place. The reaction came the following year, interestingly enough from the editorial board.\textsuperscript{21} In a mildly correct style, the article introduces the distinction between bodily leprosy,\textsuperscript{22} and “another leprosy, much worse than the bodily leprosy, of which the bodily is caused. That is the leprosy of the

\textsuperscript{21} It seems reasonable to believe that it was the editorial associate S. E. Jørgensen who either made the translation from The Madagascar News or brought it to MT, and that the editor himself, the famous secretary of NMS Lars Dahle, wrote the reprehending second article. Jørgensen and Dahle represented the editorial staff in MT. Since the two articles seem to have different authors, and one is reprehending the other, one has reason to believe that the reprehending article is written by Dahle, not his young assistant.

\textsuperscript{22} The literary devices in the descriptions of the disease are more explicit and picturesque than those we find in Rosaa’s texts: “misery in every form” and “a shapeless piece of meat with the most hideous wounds” (MT 1891, p. 122).
soul, the deprivation of sin.” Leprosy of the soul may here be read as a metaphor for original sin (in Norwegian “arvesynd”), a term which plays a key role within Protestant understanding of sin. The original sin, the sin one is born with as a human being, is inherited from Adam and Eve and cannot be washed away. The distinction between bodily and spiritual leprosy (“legemlig og åndelig spedalskhed”) was to be repeated in MT for many years to come, emphasizing an ambiguous, but still specifically Protestant, understanding of leprosy, both as a bodily disease for some, but also as a universal metaphor for sin.

The emphasizing of original sin as heredity, and also the idea about leprosy of the soul, should be understood in relation to the Catholic beliefs that Protestants saw as sanctimonious self-glorification – conceptualizations of sacred deeds and martyrdom. When the article in MT moves on from the reflections on leprosy of the body and leprosy of the soul to, in the following quotation, criticism of the Catholics’ proclamation of their own sacrifices, their attempt to “capitalize” on Damien’s death, and their “disgusting self-praise” (“ækle selvros”) in general, we see a confessional polemic with deep theological and historical roots:

When one some years ago read in the journals that a Catholic priest, Father Damien, had sacrificed himself for the care of the lepers at one of the South Sea Islands (Molokai), this was proclaimed as an unprecedented self-sacrifice, and when Father Damien was infected and died, the Catholic Church tried to capitalize on it and use it as proof that its missionaries had quite a different level of self-sacrifice than the Protestants. […] We have in saying this no intention to dispute the Catholic mission’s efforts for the lepers, but only to repel its disgusting self-praise.

To the editors of MT, the narratives about Damien might have appeared as an example of “disgusting self-praise.” However, one can also sense a more profound problem in the fact that these stories represented religious leprosy narratives where the modern idea of contagion actually played a crucial role, and supported the Catholic concept of martyrdom. To Norwegian Protestants from Norway, it was a challenge that leprosy – an old metaphor for original sin inherited by Adam and Eve – in a medical sense seemed to be contagious, and presumably not hereditary at all. The hostile polemics towards Catholic self-praise in connection with Damien’s death was also about defending the Lutheran notions about

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23 MT, 1891, p. 122.
24 MT, 1891, p. 123.
leprosy in particular. They also gained momentum from latent political conflicts in Madagascar, a country characterized by colonial rivalry between French and British interests. France had forwarded their colonial ambitions since 1883, and in 1890 Great Britain had accepted Madagascar as a French protectorate. NMS ran their mission activities in a strained political situation, in close dialogue with both French and Malagasy authorities, and sometimes in open rivalry with the French Jesuits, who also established leprosy homes. The medical theory about leprosy as a contagious disease gave the Catholics a new possibility to sublimate their narratives about self-sacrifice and martyrdom, while the theory about leprosy being a hereditary disease, a legacy from heathen forefathers and a seed, was more easily transformed into vehicles for Protestant missionary leprosy narratives. The idea of heredity could also easily be coupled with ideas of race, heathen culture and, as we will see, sexuality – all issues with roles to play within conventional missionary writing.

The articles in MT on Damien’s death from 1890 and 1891 added confessional aspects to the narratives about Ambohipiantrana, from representing heroic parallels to Rosaas and Føreid, to becoming part of a system of anti-Catholic propaganda within the NMS. In the struggle against Catholic interpretation of Damien’s death, the contagious nature of leprosy is more or less admitted in MT, but it is put on paper, as the etiological issues in general, with great ambiguity: “It is correct that Father Damien was infected at Molokai […], but it is said that […] the reason was great carelessness”, and “Besides, the question of the risk of contagion is still debated, and so is, to an even greater extent, the question of heredity.”

It is not clear when Rosaas, situated in Madagascar, got to read the writings in MT, but a delivery to Antsirabé took several months. He must have noticed how his work with Ambohipiantrana was about to be filled with political and theological subtexts by the editorial office in Norway, in a language charged with rhetorical ambitions as well, quite different from Rosaas’ own writings. In one of the spring issues from 1892, there is a new article signed Rosaas, referring to his last article two years before, which criticizes the two other papers; “especially the one from Madagascar News was misleading and incorrect in several ways.”

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26 *MT*, 1892, p. 106.
When he refers to contagion in passing, it is again in an ambiguous style: the people on the east coast "are so much worse when it comes to contagion," but he also writes that the natives in general have an "awkward fear of contagion."  

As a literary motif, "leprosy of the soul" conceptualizes the leprosy mission's mandate and understanding of sin. In MT, the motif is part of a cluster of Lutheran conceptions, also including the notions of original sin. Heredity, family, culture, heathenism, and race could all by easily hinted at within this concept. Observations of suffering in Ambohipiantrantra, like descriptions of "swollen and disfigured faces" and "swollen, spongy hands and feet," are followed by Lutheran reflections on sin: "It is hard to witness so much wretchedness and misery which is a consequence of man's sin towards his God and Father, but also wonderful to be able to lead them to our great, rich and merciful Saviour Jesus Christ, who has both ability and will to clean, heal and comfort all who search him."  

Even though several texts in MT refer to the question about contagion, the narratives are always drawn towards the dynamics and metaphors of heredity. Thus, the anti-Catholicism and anti-contagionism are united in ambiguous narratives about Ambohipiantrantra. The leprosy home becomes both a place for "leprosy of the soul," where the disease is a result of the individual sin, and also a reflected image of a common Lutheran concept of original sin. This makes Ambohipiantrantra itself an ambiguous place, but also a topos from which fruitful and edifying narratives can be developed. The friction and interplay between leprosy metaphors, theological terms and conflicting medical theories makes leprosy a dividing metaphor which brings out a range of conflicts between Catholic and Protestant missions.

Sexuality and Marriage

Already in his report in 1890, Rosaas introduces a concern that was going to be a recurring theme for many years: uncleanliness, immorality and sexual activity as possible causes of leprosy:

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27 MT, 1892, p. 108.
28 MT, 1894, p. 255.
However, we have several examples that uncleanliness and immorality cause leprosy. A warning example in this direction is a young, handsome man, who was a teacher here six years ago, but who strayed horribly. He has now been leprous for five years, and is in a terrible state. He has now been admitted to the home, and has thus every opportunity to repent his sin and seek salvation for his soul.29

As already shown, Rosaas’ texts are vague and ambiguous when it comes to the question about leprosy and contagion. However, when approaching the delicate issues of sexual activity, pregnancies and childbirths in this setting, heredity and contagion are connected in joint narratives of immorality and sin. Neither specific moral nor medical categories are easily extracted from these narratives. Like in the quoted story of “the beautiful man” who became a victim of uncleanliness and immorality, Rosaas seems ambiguous about the actual moral or medical cause of the disease. The idea about contagion seems close, but the reflections are on the other hand never explicit, only hinted at through the introductory comments on uncleanliness and immorality. The man’s life in Ambohipiantrana is also linked specifically to his remorse for his sins, not to the sickness itself on a physical or bodily level.

Sexuality was to Rosaas not only a question of indecency. Also the wishes of the inhabitants of Ambohipiantrana to marry, which would to some degree eliminate the aspect of indecency, is discussed by Rosaas with great uneasiness. He makes the heredity of leprosy a main issue, including how the children from these marriages will be born with or develop the disease. However, a few years later, Rosaas admits that his reluctance with regard to marriage more than anything else is his wish that the sick should be thinking about more important matters: “Every day, I have presented their miserable state to them, and death too, hoping that they would think about something more important than to marry.”30

After the writings on Damien’s death and Kaurin’s pro-contagionistic suggestion about the orphanage, Rosaas starts hinting more often at the contagious nature of leprosy, not primarily in terms of medical acknowledgements, but in form of nuances and short comments in passing. Some of Rosaas’ texts from the early 1890s present ambiguous

29 MT, 1890, p. 53.
30 MT, 1892, p. 111.
reflections on the etiology of the disease, like when he writes about the French missionaries’ orphan home in 1890:

The French missionaries in Antananarivo have made the very peculiar assertion that children of leprous parents avoid the disease if they are taken from the parents immediately after birth. They have a home for lepers just outside the capital, where the sick are permitted to marry each other. As soon as a child is born, it is placed in an asylum where it is cared for and raised. We may have to do something similar here as well, as I already have several married couples at the home, and it is so terribly sad when their little ones shall suck the poison of leprosy through the mother’s milk.31

On the one hand, the idea to separate the children from their sick parents seems “very peculiar,” on the other hand Rosaas feels that it is “so terribly sad” to see the children “suck the poison of leprosy” that the Norwegians may have to do something similar. Again, the references to contagion are not clear – one could rather question if Rosaas is actually presenting the transmission of the disease through breast-feeding more as a kind of heredity than as a kind of contagion. Such a reading gains support from the fact that Rosaas has a tendency to write about “poisonous mother’s milk,” “sprouts” and “seeds,” expressions more easily interpreted within the concept of heredity than specific medical terms on contagion.32 In addition to this, Rosaas seldom writes about other cases of contagion than the specific transmission of leprosy from the parent to the child. The reflections on the sight of the mother poisoning her child through breast-feeding did not only communicate with medical ideas on contagion, but also fit his preferred narratives on leprosy and heredity.

Rosaas also admits that the whole idea of the orphanage is problematic for other reasons. Because the idea reflects the belief that the disease is not hereditary, it undermines the arguments concerning marriage. In a text from 1892, Rosaas writes quite frankly about his thoughts on the issue:

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31 MT, 1890, p. 53.
32 MT, 1892, p. 111.
33 See Robertson, op. cit., on how metaphors of seed and soil, in medical texts, have served as linkages between different medical descriptions of leprosy, both before and after the discovery of the leprosy bacillus. Also in this particular setting the seed serves as an ambiguous and nonspecific metaphor for the cause of the disease, not very different from the image of the breastfeeding, leprous mother.
There is of course much that speaks against such a permission, namely if it turns out that their children get the same disease, but upon this subject the experts disagree. If it could be stated that children of leprous parents do not carry the seed and the contagion from birth, they can be saved through separation from their parents. Of course, it is because we hope that this theory is correct that we considered building a small orphanage down here. But if the children can be saved through separation from their parents, the objection against marriage has lost much of its weight.34

In texts such as these, Rosaas’ acknowledgement of contagion seems quite clear. At the same time, he emphasizes that the consequences of such an acknowledgement are problematic. However, Rosaas sees some benefits of marriage too: If married, the sick could live a proper and decent life and be spared many temptations,” and in addition it is “impossible to have both sexes living in a town without permitting marriage.”

The wedding ceremonies were carried out by an unwilling Rosaas and followed by grievous self-examination in MT. In 1902, he writes that it is the hardest work I carry out […] Time and again, I give urgent cautionary speeches to them on the subject, and I present several reasons that argue against these marriages; but it does not seem to help at all.”35

To Rosaas, the question of contagion becomes more and more connected to the moral questions of marriage and sexuality. He expresses disappointment because the acknowledgement of contagion would make marriage legitimate among sick people who should rather be thinking of their own salvation. In Rosaas’ writings in the early 1900s, contagion has become a problematic and ambiguous category, especially when coupled with questions of marriage and sexuality. A crucial point is the children being born at the home, reflecting medical, moral as well as literary challenges.

34 MT, 1892, p. 111.
35 MT, 1902, p. 264. After the French colonization, Rosaas takes, as we will see, a more pragmatic stand on the issue of marriage and contagion, and he uses the danger of contagion as an argument to protect spouses from being separated because of leprosy. In 1902, in connection with a case where a local administrator wants to have healthy spouses dismissed from Ambohipiantrana to make room for more people with leprosy, with authorization in new state regulations, Rosaas notes that he has argued that if “the healthy are subject to the same regulations as the sick, there is no danger that they will bring contagion to the healthy community.” The result of the discussion was that the 27 healthy spouses could stay, but no more such people could be accepted at the home.” Thus, from now on every leper will be separated from a healthy spouse. Poor lepers! Their fate is truly miserable!” (MT 1902, p. 261).
It must have made a strong impression on his first readers when
Rosaas almost dissociated himself from the ceremonies he conducted.
Also to the modern reader, his open-heartedness is striking and often
surprising. The coupling of pious and edifying reflections on the one
hand and surprisingly frank and abrupt comments on the other has
similarities with the texts on Father Damien’s death. In both cases we
may see the tensions in the texts as results of conflicting layers of mean-
ing. Even though Rosaas seems to hold on to heredity as a key to the
understanding of leprosy missions for many years, the influence from
medical contagionist theory must have represented a challenge to him
as a writer. His shifting objections against marriage can also be read as
signs of how the heredity of leprosy, as a literary strategy, is under pres-
sure from a competing understanding of the disease, provoking a change
of arguments and, more generally speaking, an unpacking of the reli-
gious imagery.

A Time of Medicalization: The Orphanage and the French Colonization

Rosaas’ concern about the child mortality in Ambohipiantrana is men-
tioned many times in the 1890s, but once again he is not very clear when
reflecting on the causes. In 1894, he writes about Sister Marie Føreid
who, after the deaths of two infants born at the home, took care of a
third one in her own house. However, she had to have a native woman
as her assistant when she went to work at Ambohipiantrana. “This child
died as well.”36

Child mortality has many faces in missionary literature, both in this
and similar cases, where the deaths are not linked to the disease itself,
but vaguely to aspects of the Malagasy society and parental care. In spite
of vague reflections on the issue, the need for an orphanage for the
“healthy children of leper parents” was repeated many times through
the 1890s and early 1900s.

In 1894, three years after Dr. Kaurin’s formal suggestion in 1891,
Rosaas writes that it seems cruel to let “seven children from the last four
years stay with their parents,”37 but that the NMS is not able to carry out
the plans under “today’s less favourable conditions”.38 And even bigger

36 MT, 1894, p. 257.
37 MT, 1894, p. 256.
38 MT, 1894, p. 257.
In 1895, Rosaa writes only a short account from Ambohipiantrana, uncertain if the letter will make it to Norway, “because of the war France has brought upon Madagascar.” He writes about the “2 nasty assaults on the home” and lets his readers know that most of the buildings at Sirabé, “are now plundered and burned” (MT, 1896: 319). “Imagine to have been working for 27 years, and then see everything ruined!” (MT, 1896, pp. 319–320).

The first couple of years after the French takeover, the articles in MT are very skeptical towards the new colonial rule. One was not only afraid that the French would favor the French Jesuit mission. One also blamed France for having provoked the anti-colonial riots that the Norwegians were stricken by and complained about the
carried out, a work hardly mentioned in MT. That the anti-colonial response of the Malagasy was also directed towards the NMS, was a troublesome issue, not suited for edifying missionary narratives in MT.

For the Norwegians, the new colonial rule represented challenges on different levels. Due to new regulations prohibiting school activities in ecclesiastical buildings, most of the Norwegian missionary activities were closed down. When it came to leprosy however, there were political opportunities in cooperating with the French. The Norwegian leprosy segregation policies were widely known and respected in French circles through Henri Leloir’s monograph on leprosy from 1886, published at the expense of the French government, which highlighted the Norwegian experience with the leprosy problem in the French colonies as a backdrop.\(^{41}\) Leloir was definitely the leading leprosy authority within French colonial medicine at the time. The Norwegian leprosy expertise was also part of the negotiations on Ambohipiantrana with the French officials, and after the French governor Gallieni had visited Ambohipiantrana in 1899, an agreement was signed. Now, Ambohipiantrana became part of a national network of leprosy asylums. The Norwegians would have to report to French authorities, but would receive financial support from the French government, and also have the formal responsibility for hospitalizing the sick in their region. French money was put into the rebuilding of the home, which was now substantially enlarged and improved to meet with the new times. Finally, the plans for the orphanage could be carried out, partially funded by Norwegian Sunday schools. The orphanage seems to have been completed in 1902\(^ {42}\) with dwelling houses and a school building, ten minutes northeast of Ambohipiantrana,\(^ {43}\) outside the wall surrounding the home.

The new regime not only contributed to a more professional administration of the home, but apparently also to a medicalization of both infrastructure and management. Fences and signs came up, barriers


\(^{42}\) Marie Foreid writes that the orphanage was completed in 1903 (MfK 1905, p. 30).

\(^{43}\) *MT*, 1904, p. 20.
were built around the whole area, and the French demanded that a medical doctor formally replaced the pastor as the director. These substantial changes are reflected in Rosaa’s writings in MT from the turn of the century, both as changes of great symbolic significance and as a new reporting regime. Thoroughly, he cites the numbers of marriages, childbirths and child mortalities. In 1902 there were 45 marriages in Ambohipiantrana, 16 children were born, and 7 of these died. Rosaas apologizes that the joint report for 1902 and 1903 has become “so businesslike, and thus not very edifying. However, also numbers can speak,” he argues, and asks his readers to think “about the 723 lepers we have in our care, and about their poor children.”

One can see this almost scientific turn in Rosaa’s own writings on the one hand in connection with a growing awareness of the narrative and literary potential of the reports on the other. In 1905 we find an extensive report in MT from Rosaa on the activities in 1904, in two parts, with seemingly higher ambitions for the edifying narrative and a strong wish to touch the readers at home with more than numbers. The orphanage is also presented. “It is a true pleasure to see how the children thrive. They do after all meet love and kindness in abundance. We do not doubt that these children are blessed by God. He is the Father of the fatherless. […] Remember us often with prayers and gifts. Your labour shall be fruitful.”

In 1907, Rosaa and his wife left Madagascar for good after 38 years in the mission field. In his very last report from Ambohipiantrana, he

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44 MT 1904, p. 17.
45 MT, 1904, pp. 16–17.
46 MT, 1904, pp. 20–21. Also on later occasions Rosaa apologizes for the rate of numbers, and he claims to have “heard that the people back home do not dot like numbers from the mission field […] I believe they should make an impression on a compassionate Christian heart. Look at the final number: 845 leprous men and women and children. Think of this total sum of suffering, need and pain this number includes!” (MT, 1906, p. 298). Subsequently he presents a detailed table of growth, deaths and leaves, including births and those put in care, during the last year, with calculated averages and more.
47 Rosaa now makes room for presentations of individuals, like the recently deceased Rahary who is presented in three long paragraphs (MT, 1905, p. 231). There are also more references than in earlier texts to the emotional aspects of the work in Ambohipiantrana, like sorrow, joy, memories, want, yearning, awe, patience, etc, and also explicit requests to the readers to join the work: “All friends of the home must take delight in this […] and exert themselves to support the home” (MT, 1905, p. 247), and “Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days” (MT, 1905, p. 248).
48 MT, 1905, p. 248.
keeps up the edifying style, giving more space to the orphanage than ever before. And this time Rosaas inserts arguments from another text: Dr. Kaurin's 17 year old article from *Norsk Magazin for Lægevidenskaben*, and the ambition that the orphanage in Ambohipiantrana could serve medical science:

> The work with these wretched children is a deed of hope. We hope that they shall avoid being lepers, and become useful among their people. It is this hope that gives encouragement and strength in our work. If it succeeds, it will be interesting proof that leprosy is not hereditary, as many still allege.\(^{49}\)

While Kaurin in 1890 had connected the idea of the orphanage to research questions that had current interest to the leprosy world at the time, Rosaas emphasizes in 1907 that the orphanage is seen as a work of hope, and part of the altruistic calling of the mission. As he associates himself with Kaurin's arguments, the contagionist discourse becomes a framing for the hope and altruism of the mission. Behind this framing, we sense the medicalization of Ambohipiantrana and the new reporting regime.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to see that Rosaas, on a medical level, now places the belief in the heredity of leprosy among others than himself. “Many still allege” that the disease is hereditary, but Rosaas himself seems to be looking forward to interesting proof of contagion. However, at this stage, the hereditarians were only a marginal group within the world of leprosy, and Rosaas' statements on this issue seem outdated and no longer as progressive as they did in Kaurin's text 17 years earlier.

To a writer like Rosaas, it has been a crucial challenge to communicate the greatness and importance of the work to his Norwegian readers, and his texts reflect the challenges he has faced as a semi-professional writer, struggling to create meaningful missionary narratives from a leprosy issue that was constantly changing. After grappling with the narratives and metaphors of heredity for almost two decades, Rosaas is finally outspoken as a contagionist before his final departure.\(^{50}\)

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\(^{49}\) *MT*, 1907, p. 324.

\(^{50}\) In the opening of his book *Korsets Lægedom (Healing by the Cross)* from 1910, Rosaas follows up this medical expert topos, and stresses the Norwegian expertise in leprology and the important experience from the struggle against the disease, honoring the famous Norwegian leprosy researchers Danielssen and Hansen (Thorkild Rosaas, *Korsets Lægedom* (Kristiania: Johs. Bjornstads Forlag, 1910), p. 1. See also Sandmo, 2007.
This change comes late compared to the shift within the medical discourse in general, and one could ask why it appears in his writings at all. He was obviously under the influence of the medical professionalization brought to the home through the French colonization, and perhaps one could see the shift as a result of medical education. However, the contagionist views had been easily available to Rosaas and his missionary colleagues for many years, and we have seen how Rosaas’ writings were still drawn towards the Protestant metaphors of sin and heredity. To explain why Rosaas seems to abandon these strategies in 1907, one could suggest that the narrative of the “healthy children of leper parents” must have been an attractive and manageable one compared to the more theologically complex allegories of leprosy, sin and healing. The orphanage had potential as a topic for missionary writing, again putting heredity and its powerful metaphors of dangerous legacy on display. Thus, it still corresponded with the original cluster of leprosy metaphors from the early 1890s, without challenging medical theories on etiology.

In the years to come, we see that the stories about these children became quite essential to the missionary writings from Madagascar, and a central part of the work for fund-raising for NMS. The narrative strategies do not only reflect the medicalization of Ambohipiantrana, but perhaps also a textual shift from eternal theological horizons to a rhetoric based on presence and near future of Ambohipiantrana’s inhabitants, more closely linked to more general philanthropic aspects of medical missions. The religious subtext was preserved, but Rosaas’ old-fashioned hereditarianism, rooted in intellectual Protestant theological terms and conservative leprosy imagery, was now silenced for good and replaced by more uncomplicated stories about saving children from a present, dangerous heritage.

In a discursive setting, we can of course speak of an interaction between medicine and mission in a joint leprosy discourse, characterized as a whole by scientific factionalism, colonial interests and missionary activities. In Rosaas’ writings from 1887 to 1907, the complexity of these discursive formations are exemplified. The complexity is increased

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51 I. e. Rosaas’ close friend and colleague in Madagascar, the medical missionary Christian D. Borchgrevink, had studied with Armauer Hansen. Both he and Rosaas obviously knew the Norwegian leprosy contagionist views well. Also the contact with Dr. Kaurin brought contagionist theory to Ambohipiantrana.
by the fact that heredity played such an important role in the key narratives for early NMS leprosy missions, at the same time as Damien’s infection and death became a key figure for the Catholic missions, as well as a pro-contagionist argument. When Ambohipiantrana is rebuilt and reorganized in agreement with the French colonial rule, Rosaas becomes more open about his contagionist views and more in touch with the colonial leprosy medicine at the time. In such a perspective, one can see the Norwegian leprosy home both as something being colonized by the French, and as a willing part of the colonial infrastructure.

A Feminine Perspective: Missionslæsning for Kvindeforeninger

Kaurin’s text from *Norsk Magazin for Lægevidenskaben* mentions the young Marie Føreid’s stay at Reknes leprosy hospital before she departed to Madagascar in 1890. As a devoted deaconess in daily charge of Ambohipiantrana, Sister Marie became a famous figure within the NMS, as well as to readers of the missionary journals. Although she was an eager writer of diaries and letters, she did not publish in MT, even though both Rosaas and others expressed their wish that she and the other deaconesses in Ambohipiantrana would share their experiences in the journal.

However, in NMS’ journal for women, *Missionslæsning for Kvindeforeninger* (Missionary Reading for Women’s Associations) (MfK), which came as an enclosure with MT from 1884, some texts from Føreid’s hand can be found. The famous editor of MfK, Bolette Gjør, published both letters that Føreid had written to the journal and also letters she had written to local associations which forwarded them to MfK. The ambition of MfK was to be a connection between women in the mission field and at home, and a journal by women, about women and for women. A letter to Bolette Gjør from Føreid, dated October 24th 1894 begins as follows:

You write that the interest for the lepers out here would increase ten times if you were to hear some more about the work at Ambohipiantrana.

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52 I thank Bjørg Bergøy Johansen at the Mission Archives, School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway, for making the search in MfK and collecting Føreid’s articles for this study.

53 Kristin Norseth, entry “Bolette Gjør”, [Norsk biografisk leksikon, 2001]
This makes me write to you, for I am so very fond of the lepers that I certainly wish that the work here should be met with far more interest.  

All of Føreid’s writings show signs of this affection for “the lepers,” and the wish to communicate this affection to the women at home. If one were to point at some literary characteristics in contrast to Rosaas’ writings in MT, one could say that Føreid’s descriptions tend to focus on the sick themselves to provoke pity and compassion, while Rosaas usually lingers on the causes of the disease. Føreid’s writing has a personal and almost confidential style, making direct connections between the sufferers in Ambohipiantrana and the readers back home. In 1897, Føreid passes greetings and thanks to the readers from “the lepers” themselves, but most of all the relationship between readers and the sick is developed through the use of personal information like names, short biographies, visual descriptions and dialogue – and even by including the implied reader as a character in the text. The most consistent piece when it comes to such devices was printed in MfK in May 1895, entitled “De spedalskes by” (The Lepers’ Town). Here, Sister Marie takes her reader for a walk in Ambohipiantrana:

Go then in your thoughts to the leper town, which is situated approximately 20 minutes from here. We cannot see the town from Sirabé, as there is a small hill in the way. In the town centre we have the church, two storage houses for rice […] and a hospital […] Let us now make some visits. We come in to Petera, he is lying there on his mats, his face is full of nodules, but right now his hands are even worse, they are terribly swollen.  

Føreid also introduces her reader to Manoela, who lies “in the other corner of the room”. Now quotes from the devastated reader are included in the dialogue: “Oh no, look at him, you will say.” In another perceptible passage, about the very sick Elias who seems confused, but clear every now and then, Elias whispers something to Føreid and her reader:

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54 *MfK* 1895, p. 11.
55 In 1897, Føreid writes “Please receive the deepest thanks from the lepers and myself” (*MfK* 1897: 35), while Rosaas does pass on such greetings from the inhabitants of Ambohipiantrana until 1907 (*MT*, 1907, p. 324).
56 *MT*, 1895, pp. 33–34.
57 *MT*, 1895, p. 34.
We bend closer towards him, and hear him say: ‘Everyone has rejected me.’

‘Have you now again forgotten that God is the Father of the fatherless?’

‘Yes, God is my Father.’

The literary play between the sufferings of the sick and the pity of the readers is subject to a careful consideration by the author, as in this example, where the abandoned, dying Elias makes the reader listen carefully to, and reflect upon, his statement about God being his Father. The text unfolds itself as literature with several layers, provoking pious emotions among the readers, who are invited to see and listen, and to experience Ambohipiantranra as a place of compassion. The dialogues with the sick are referred as direct quotations, combined with perceptible impressions, experienced by a “we,” by Føreid and her implied reader together: “We hear a little bell chime,” “now it appears that it will rain,” “now we cannot make any more visits, but still, we must look in on Rajoanarivony,” and “what is that sound, it sounds as if somebody is shouting for joy?” All the impressions from the walk in Ambohipiantranra, all the confrontations with suffering and need, lead to the acknowledgement of compassion: “At the sight of all this misery, one is struck by one overwhelming emotion, and that is compassion.”

Like Rosaas, Føreid also takes up the relationship between bodily and spiritual suffering, but she develops this distinction as a literary figure including both the sick and the helper, and the relationship between them. The sight of misery and suffering provokes pity. When she thinks of her own meeting with Ambohipiantranra in 1890, she recalls how “compassion for these miserable people filled my soul, together with a sincere wish to be a blessing to them, both in bodily and spiritual sense.” About the sick, Føreid writes that “their faces express a great need, bodily as well as spiritually.” While Rosaas only occasionally goes in detail about the sickness as such, the visual descriptions of the individual sufferer represent the turning point in Føreid’s narratives, structuring the interaction between the sufferer and the reader.

But what about the clinical training Føreid had received from the profiled contagionist Kaurin before she left Norway in 1890? Can it be

58 MT, 1895, p. 34.
59 MT, 1895, p. 35.
60 MT, 1895, p. 35.
61 MfK 1895, p. 11.
62 MfK 1895, p. 35.
traced in her writings? As early as in 1894, in Føreid’s first published text in MfK, she refers explicitly to contagion when writing about the orphanage: “If they are to stay here at Ambohipiantrana for years, then most of them will probably be infected with the disease.”63 Here she appears to be a more progressive contagionist than Rosaas did even 10 years later. But after this, she is silent about the cause of the disease, and contagion is no longer an issue to her.

One can think of several explanations. One could be that she experienced a controversy with Rosaas concerning this issue, and that she chose not to bring this up again. Another could be that she doubted, or disagreed with Rosaas, on how the issue should be presented in the edifying narratives. The coupling of contagionist theory and Catholic missionaries’ self-praise and martyrdom might have struck her, too. Finally, one may suggest that she considered the cause of the disease to be irrelevant to her readers, as her main ambition was to provoke compassion and pity, not reflections on moral or medical causes. No matter

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63 MfK 1895, p. 13.
what the reason has been, the result is that the whole issue is silenced in Føreid's writing. In her texts, leprosy is constructed through the suffering and pity, not through its medical or religious causes as in Rosaas’.

Both authors relate to a Protestant universe where the leprosy narratives are part of a representation of Protestant missions. Føreid reproduces the distinction between spiritual and bodily need, and she often expresses the deepest feelings of her own human and moral inadequacy. She emphasizes on several occasions that her work is a privilege and not a sacrifice, and on one occasion she explicitly opposes the Catholic idea of sacred deeds: After a visit to one of the Catholic leprosy homes a few hours’ walk from the capital, she writes that there was “one thing I could not like, and that was that the sick were allowed to walk on the roads and sing their beggar songs. In one of these, they sing that the alms are the ladder, on which you come to Heaven.”

The texts in MT and MfK are all, not depending on the sex of the author, written in a genre that was meant to encourage the readers to contribute to and take part in mission activities. However, there are some formal differences between Rosaas’ and Føreid’s writings. Rosaas wrote more formal reports also meant for publication in MT, while Føreid’s texts seem to have been written for no other reason than to be read as edifying narratives by a general public of women. One should therefore avoid jumping to the conclusion that the differences are connected with gender. However, it seems relevant to question whether it could be seen as a masculine aspect of Rosaas’ writing to concentrate on the causes of the disease, and the lingering on suffering, compassion and pity in Føreid’s, a feminine one.

The etiology issue is only discussed by men in MT, and not in MfK, although Marie Føreid is the only one of them with first-hand medical experience and training from Reknes and Kaurin. In spite of her medical experience and education, Føreid writes mostly about compassion and pity, and does not take part in the ongoing discussions on the causes of the disease that colored the leprosy discourse in her time. More interesting than trying to divert etiological debates into gender issues in this material (it is, after all, not a surprise that nurses tended to be

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64 MfK 1898, p. 29.
65 The material does not say anything about the influence Sister Marie might have had on the actual activities and practices in Ambohipiantrana, only what kind of issues that were discussed in her writing for MfK.
women, nor that nurses did not take part in the etiological discussions), one could use this opportunity to point at the obvious mechanisms of power that derive from the pending discussions on the causes of leprosy in missionary writings. We have seen how Rosaas, in his early writings, possesses a powerful position as an interpreter of the nature and causes of the disease, and also how this position is constantly challenged by medical discourse. When Rosaas finally abandons his big theological leprosy imagery and accepts medical reasoning as a framing for missionary altruism, his position as an author appears less authoritarian, and perhaps also, one could say, more nurse-like and even feminine. Føreid, on the other hand, controls a genre in MfK where she stages herself as a nurse in a preacher-like role, presenting and interpreting life and death in Ambohipiantrana in a literary play with her readers.

Conclusions

During the last decades, several leprosy historians have tried to see the international leprosy discourses around 1900 as a whole and to analyze these discourses in a context of imperialism and colonial thinking. Key terms have been “the retainting of leprosy”, “racialism”, “sexualism”, “lepraphobia”, and the dichotomy of “horror” and “pity.” Zachary Gussow’s book *Leprosy, Racism and Public Health* from 1989 has been a reference for many years, but recently several studies have been colored by post-colonial theory and literature studies, including studies on the history of the missions, like Rod Edmond’s *Leprosy and Empire* from 2006. However, missionary writings on leprosy have to a very small extent been included in such studies, and neither Gussow nor Edmond have included readings of conventional missionary narratives in their studies, although these texts often had a vast distribution. Their general statements on the role the mission played in the colonial leprosy discourse reflect the assumption that missionary writings on leprosy have been a rather static genre. They neither reflect missionary writings as dynamic in their interaction with medical discourse, nor the differences between Catholic and Protestant narratives on leprosy missions.66

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66 Gussow acknowledges that there are “fundamental differences between Protestant and Catholic interpretations about the place of lepers in Christian history and between their respective involvements with modern-day sufferers […], but denominational differences [….] are not the issue here.” (Gussow, 1989, p. 210). Edmond’s thorough readings
The Norwegian material presented in this paper supports their statements and conclusions on the colonial leprosy discourse, including the missionary writings on leprosy, as highly politicized. However, it also shows how medical theories of contagion and heredity were confessionalized and transformed into theology when used in missionary writings, as well as how missionary interacted with a changing medical discourse.

Another issue to be discussed is the relationship between contagionism and segregation. It has been said that the debate on contagion in the nineteenth century “was never a discussion on contagion alone, but on contagion and quarantines,” but the early days of Ambohipiantrana also makes a good example of how quarantine could be carried out within a non-contagionist context. As the leprosy historian Shubhada Pandya has argued, segregation policies were approved by different medical branches of the leprosy world: hereditarians approved sexual segregation in asylums to prevent hereditary transmission, sanitarians saw the benefits of institutions providing food, shelter and moral improvement, and, Pandya adds, “missionaries quickly saw the opportunity for evangelization among captive asylum inmates.” Pandya’s statements on the mission’s embracing of segregation policies, and also the possible motives behind, are obvious simplifications. Still, the NMS material on Ambohipiantrana supports the idea that substantially different notions and understandings of leprosy may result in quite similar practices, although rooted in different leprosy discourses and loaded with substantially different subtext; as in the cases of confessionalized causes of Father Damien’s death, in the questions of marriage in leprosy homes, and in the relationship between competing interpretations of the orphanage in Ambohipiantrana.

The number of inhabitants of Ambohipiantrana peaked one thousand in 1904, and some would question whether it should be understood as an altruistic project or a Norwegian colonial property, owned by one of Norway’s biggest organizations at the time. The distinction

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of leprosy in the high colonial era include only a few references to missionary literature and make no distinctions between Catholic and Protestant missions.

67 Ackerknecht 1948, quoted from Pandya, op. cit. p. 375.

68 Pandya, op. cit. p. 381.

between the colony and the fenced home is perhaps not definite, but the term colony is not used about Ambohipiantrana in the Norwegian material presented here.70 The Norwegian mission was certainly part of a general European expansion and imperialist activity in Madagascar from the 1860s, but one should be careful by stating that their leprosy activities represented colonial ambitions on the same level as those of the French government. The ambiguous colonial status of the NMS becomes particularly evident under the new French rule from the end of the century, when NMS had to accept the French regulations, and report to the new colonial powers, behaving more like colonized than colonizers. When it comes to evangelization, it is worth noticing that Rosaa himself, in the early years of Ambohipiantrana, does not seem sure whether the home should be for heathen or Christian “lepers.” At this moment, the cluster of heathenism, leprosy, healing, segregation and evangelization was not fixed, and it can be questioned if it ever was.

Missionary writings on leprosy were a crucial part of the colonial leprosy discourse around 1900. Both regarding to the number and distribution of texts, there can be no doubt that these texts represent the biggest genre and the main corpus of popular leprosy discourse between 1880 and 1920. Thus, it is hard to understand the heated debates on contagion in the high colonial era without taking this vast material into consideration.

The crucial task for the missionary writer was not the rational understanding of the disease, but the structuring of meaningful and edifying narratives that could make the writings function within the missionary organizations. In the cosmology of the missions, the leprosy issue had its force through the seemingly endless narrative potential of the personal and collective fall of men, of exclusion of heathen societies and inclusion in the Christian community, about the acknowledgment of sin and spiritual growth, about gratitude and praise with connotations to the Gospels, and about a new generation of healthy Christians, freed from the dark legacy of their ancestors.

In spite of all differences, we must be aware of the similarities and interactions between medical and missionary leprosy discourse. Through imitations of medical language, the missionary writings borrowed integrity and authority from medical terms, narratives and

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reasoning in general. This is not to be seen only as a rhetorical mimesis without substantial content. In the missionary writer’s play between specific medical references on the one hand and the multitude of religious connotations on the other, leprosy is constructed as a category. This kind of constitution must be seen as fruitful and true within this particular discursive framework, gaining authority from something bigger than science. In this language, the “true” task of the mission can be presented, with higher ambitions of clarity and integrity than the purely medical ambition of understanding and healing bodily disease.
CHAPTER SEVEN

ON DIFFERENCE, SAMENESS AND DOUBLE BINDS
AMBIGUOUS DISCOURSES, FAILED ASPIRATIONS

Anne Folke Henningsen

This paper investigates the mission endeavour of the Moravian Church in Eastern South Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.1 The main analytical focus is the agency and appropriation strategies of the black Moravians and their apparent failure of bringing their religio-political aspirations to fruition. This will be shown through case studies of the black Moravian minister William Mazwi and his struggle for equal recognition within the Church, and of dissenting congregants at the Moravian mission station Shiloh and their fight for rights to landownership at the station. As Sherry B. Ortner2 has rightly pointed out, it is important to recognise the intentions and projects of indigenous peoples in scholarly analyses, but I have been forced, through the substance of my material, to further reflect upon the failure of such projects. Through the juxtaposition of these two very different cases, I will make the argument that the Moravian missionaries inadvertently use double bind communications in their mission practice, and that this, combined with the segregation policies of South Africa at the time, is instrumental in creating situations in which the immediate aspirations of the black Moravians become difficult to fulfil.

The double bind communications of the missionaries revolve around racial categories linked to notions of difference and sameness: the Moravian mission theories involve an emphasis on racial authenticity simultaneous with an insistence on ‘civilising practices.’ These

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1 The paper is based on the findings of my PhD dissertation Race, Rights, Religion. Interactions between White Missionaries and Black Congregants in the Moravian Mission Church in Eastern South Africa, c. 1870–1940, unpublished manuscript, University of Aarhus 2008
ambiguous discourses create situations in which the black Moravians cannot win: if they display association with whiteness, they are in danger of ‘losing their authenticity’ and can thus no longer be considered authentic black subjects, and if they insist on displaying what is considered racial difference, they become unintelligible as legitimate Moravian subjects. These difficult positions of the black Moravians are my main concern in the following analyses.

In order to make the arguments of the paper understandable a brief contextual section on the history and mission theology of the Moravian Church will set the scene for the empirical analyses of the two specific case studies.

The Moravian Church

The history of the Moravian Church can be begun from many points, but one possible starting point is with the young pietistic Saxon Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf. On his land, on a spot at the foot of the hill Hutberg – which would soon develop into the village Herrnhut – the Count in 1722 granted asylum to a couple of German speaking religious refugees from nearby Mähren (Moravia) and Böhmen (Bohemia), areas that at the time suffered severe religious oppression by the Catholic authorities. These refugees carried the heritage of the early Moravian/Bohemian evangelical reformer Jan Hus and the stern religious beliefs and practices of the Unitas Fratrum.

Zinzendorf and the refugees found common ground in their intense religiosity, and in 1727 Zinzendorf authored a founding document containing a common set of religious practices – the so-called Brotherly Agreement – that would form the cornerstone of the Moravian Church in its renewed form. Put together the two strains of Christianity – pietistic and Hussite – would form a truly trans-national mission organisation, crossing borders of countries both in terms of the nationalities of

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3 The most accurate name of the movement would be ‘the Renewed Unity of Brethren’ (or the German: Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine), but there seems to be scholarly consensus on using the term ‘Moravians’ even though it is less precise as it can also refer to the old Hussite movement Unitas Fratrum

4 J.E. Hutton: A History of Moravian Missions, 1922, p. 9–14

the missionaries and, of course, of the worldwide extent of their mission activities. Within the first decade of the enterprise, they counted stations in Danish and British West-Indies, Greenland, South Africa, North and South America as well as the so-called ‘Diaspora missions’ within the Christian communities of several European countries.

Mission theology and strategies of the Moravians

“‘There never will be a Unity of the Brethren without a Mission to the Heathen, or a Mission of the Brethren which is not the affair of the whole Church as such. The Missions do not belong to themselves, nor yet to a Society, nor even to a portion of the Brethren’s Church, but to the whole Brethren’s Unity.’”

Even though this Synodal Result was authored nearly 100 years after the death of Zinzendorf, it was in excellent accordance with his position on the mission obligation; the missions remained one of the most central tasks of the Moravian Church.

Besides the emphasis on the overall importance of missionary work, an interesting aspect of the quote is the underlining of the fact that the Moravians did not organise a separate missionary society such as many other evangelical churches did once they began to partake in the Christianising of the world outside of Europe. Instead they conceived of the mission enterprise as an obligation for the Church as such. The Moravians set up missions in most parts of the world during the 18th century, and by means of the circulation of letters and Lebensläufe as well as through the communality experienced in the liturgical and ritual practices they built a strong trans-national network.

On the same note, the Moravian missionaries were not colonial officials but agents sent by the movement’s main congregation in Herrnhut. Even though the first missionaries from Herrnhut were sent with the blessing of the Danish king Christian the Sixth to some of his colonial possessions, they were not colonial officers in the way that

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6 The group of missionaries that was sent out by Zinzendorf from Herrnhut was a mixed one: Moravians, Bohemians, Saxons, Danes, Swedes, Dutchmen, Englishmen etc.
7 Excerpt from Synodal Results 1857, found in Hutton 1922, p. 463.
10 The Moravian practice of writing life stories (Lebensläufe) will be expanded upon later in this paper.
e.g. Hans Egede was in Greenland and the Dutch reformed ministers were in South Africa. This was important, because their allegiance and their loyalty did not automatically lie with the colonial authorities, even though they of course were obliged to follow the dictations of those authorities to some extent. But they were not necessarily thought of as colonial agents by the indigenous peoples they encountered. This partial independence from colonial projects can be seen as either advantageous or disadvantageous according to context: it depends on the conversion motives of the mission receiving people.

Like most Christian missionaries the Moravians believed in a universal religion for all. And even though they were peculiar in their practices and beliefs, most of the missionaries sent from Herrnhut acted in accordance with their ecumenical prescriptions. It was particularly the Blood and Wounds-theology and the emphasis on the suffering Christ that made them stand out from other missions, but it has been argued that this emotional Christianity was exactly what paved the way for the successes the Moravians would celebrate in their early global missionary endeavours.

Thus, not only were the Brethren among the first evangelical Christians to take the so-called mission obligation of the Bible seriously; they also employed new and seemingly more efficient methods of mission. Central to the mission theology of the Moravians was the idea of the creation of Erstlinge or First Fruits. According to the German scholar Heinz Israel, the theory of the conversion of Erstlinge was proclaimed by the Count von Zinzendorf in 1742 as a part of the mission strategy: “Since conversion of entire nations was probably not to be expected, the missionaries have not offered their message to larger crowds but rather sought to gain First Fruits on whom to build the further conversion of the people.” The theology of Erstlinge within the Moravian Church is not widely present in the literature on the Moravians, except for the almost mandatory mentioning of the famous painting from 1747 by the Moravian artist Johann Valentin Heidt bearing the title Erstlingsbild or

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14 Bergmann 1957–1961, p. 71
15 Stefan Hertrampf: Unsere Indianer-Geschwister waren lichte und vergnügt, 1997; Hutton 1922, p. 72–73
16 Heinz Israel: Kulturwandel grönländischer Eskimo im 18. Jahrhundert, 1969, p. 16; emphasis in original, though not in this form; my translation (AFH)
in English *First Fruits*. The painting is a portrayal of the world wide mission effort of the Moravian Church as well as a celebration of the diversity within the Church. In the painting the Erstlinge of each Nation reached by the Moravian mission at the time are pictured – including the “Hottentot Kibbodo” from South Africa. In his study on the black Moravian Rebecca Protten, Jon Sensbach points out that even though much of the clothing and attires in the picture are based on Haidt’s own imagination, the portrait manages to convey the sense that the Erstlinge “far from being an abstract collection of exotic species, are individuals from particular places with specific conversion narratives, each its own record of victory now recorded in church mission lore.”

I am interested in the Erstlinge or First Fruit theology as it links up with my idea that the Moravian missionaries were influenced by theories of racial authenticity, which had an impact on their assessments of what they, accordingly, thought of as the *racial capabilities* of the black members of their congregations. Furthermore, I contend that the Moravian missionaries were eager to guide their black brethren back to a supposedly lost authenticity that would be an expression of their truest selves. In my view, this quest for a lost authenticity (of the other) is also connected to or at least enhanced by a theology which emphasises the importance of a nation’s First Fruit in paving the way for the entire Volk, to use the German term. That is, when the first convert of a particular ethnic or ‘racial’ group was celebrated by the Moravian missionaries both as a unique individual in itself and as the key to the conversion of the entire group, then that must entail an idea on the part of the missionaries of the importance of racial or ethnical exclusivity – an importance that will only make sense if guided by an idea of (ontological) racial or ethnic difference.

The Moravians in South Africa

The Moravians were the pioneering mission society in South Africa. Georg Schmidt established the mission station Bavianskloof in the Cape in 1737 and began his mission work among the Khoi living in the vicinity of the station. His work among the Khoi was not welcomed by the Dutch reformed ministers, who suspected that he was attempting to

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create a separate church to rival theirs and who objected to his baptisms of the Khoi. In 1742 he received a letter of ordination from Zinzendorf, who himself had recently been consecrated bishop and thus authorised to ordain ministers.\footnote{18} It had been a problem for Schmidt that he was not an ordained minister because he had no ecclesiastical authority to perform the baptisms. The solution to this problem, the ordination by mail, seems ingenious in a time in which travelling was expensive as well as time consuming, but the legitimacy of Schmidt was still questioned by his Dutch peers.

The conflict with the Dutch ministry prompted the Dutch authorities to expel Georg Schmidt from the Cape in 1744, and nearly fifty years went by before a Moravian missionary settled in South Africa once again, in 1792. A new station was established in the vicinity of the old station Baviaanskloof and given the name Genadendal. This return of the pioneering Moravians took place just prior to the influx of British non-conformist missionaries from the London Mission Society arriving in South Africa from 1795 onwards.\footnote{19} Interestingly, the common scenario sketched out above, of Moravian missionaries having a special status with the indigenous peoples they encountered around the world because they were not colonial officials must be modified somewhat in the case of South Africa. When, a few years after the return of the Moravians, the Cape became a British colony, the new colonial authorities viewed the German-speaking Moravians as more trustworthy and compliant than the potentially radical British non-conformists. Thus, the Moravians were actually preferred and recommended for new mission endeavours by the colonial authorities rather than the missionaries from the London Mission Society.\footnote{20}

\footnote{18} Timothy Keegan (ed.): *Moravians in the Eastern Cape*, 2005, p. xvi-xix; Cf. Berhard Krüger: *The Pear Tree Blossoms*, 1966 for a thorough account of the history of the Moravian Church in, mainly, the western parts of South Africa from 1737 until 1869, when the Moravian mission to South Africa was formally split in an eastern and a western province. The sequel *The Pear Tree Bears Fruit*, 1984, by Bernhard Krüger & P.W. Schaberg deals with the Moravian (Mission) Church in the western province in the period from 1869 to 1980

\footnote{19} The Moravians enjoyed a special status among missionaries in South Africa as the true pioneers, and, thus, whenever the name Genadendal was evoked, it brought with it an air of authenticity and pioneering effort that the Moravians often made good use of. For reflections on the Moravian use of symbols of pioneering and authenticity, see associate professor Crystal Jannecke “Reconstructing the South African Moravian Missionary Narrative”, unpublished paper from the conference Christian Missions in 19th and 20th Century Southern Africa and in Comparative Perspective, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, July 2007

\footnote{20} Keegan (ed.) 2005, p. xix
Good relations with the colonial authorities of the Cape prevailed. The Moravians were politically conservative, and since they were also aware of the fact that they as German speakers were a foreign feature in the Colony, they were eager not to get into conflict with the colonial authorities. From the early 19th century the Moravians slowly expanded the range of their mission work eastward in the Colony. They were encouraged by the good will of the authorities, but also by the Xhosa speaking peoples who had come to settle at the mission’s stations in the Western parts of the Cape, and who offered stories of their peoples and families to the east living in sin and without the word of God. In 1828 the Moravian station Shiloh was established beyond the borders of the Colony proper, where British non-conformists, too, had begun to set up stations in the first decades of the 19th century.

The establishment of the Shiloh mission station was actually prompted by the colonial authorities, who had been approached by the Thembu chief Bawana with a request of a formal tightening of the bonds between the Thembu and the Colony as a way of dealing with the enormous migration pressure in Southern Africa in the mid-nineteenth century. The colonial authorities advised him to ask for the establishment of a mission station in his territory rather than having colonial officials stationed there, and recommended the Moravians as the society best suited for the job. This recommendation of course lends support to the contention that the British colonial authorities preferred to further the propagation of Moravian stations over British non-conformist ones.

The Moravian mission stations came to be models for the stations of many other protestant mission societies active in South Africa. The main features of station life were discipline, hard work, and obedience to the rules and regulations of the stations as enforced by the missionaries in charge. The Moravian stations were involved in trade and crafts. Extensive fields for farming and pasturage surrounded the tightly knit settlements in which the missionaries insisted their adherents live, so as to ease the supervision of the inhabitants. The missionaries often complained that this supervision and the duties as authorities of the mission stations, also in mere earthly matters, were extremely time-consuming.

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21 Keegan (ed.) 2005, p. xix–xx. For instance, the history of the Xhosa woman Wilhelmine Stompjes who was a main driving force behind the Moravian expansion eastwards and thus became an important iconic figure within Moravian self-narratives


23 Keegan (ed.) 2005, p. xxiv
consuming and a great hindrance to the performance of their proper duties as missionaries.24

A source of conflict at many mission stations was the access to and ownership of land. One of the main reasons for this was the fact that legal arrangements around ownership of mission land were often very ill defined. Particularly the so-called grant stations were affected by this legal confusion, which became the cause of much disagreement and eventually lawsuits between missionaries and dissatisfied congregants. In for instance Hlubiland, the Moravian settlements were less elaborate and always under chiefly patronage and thus not occasions for the same amount of conflict as the grant stations.25

The Moravians were not particularly successful in gaining converts to their faith in South Africa. They demanded adherence to strict rules and acceptance of extensive control and surveillance, which did not appeal to ordinary people with a more or less secure life situation. Rather, those attracted to settlement at the Moravian stations were people at odds with society or those who had lost their home and livelihood in connection with war, forced migration, natural disasters or other external pressures.26 Alternatively, the Moravians were invited by African rulers who saw an advantage in having a mission society settle in their lands, but such a settlement did not necessarily entail a lot of conversions, even if – which was not always the case – the inviting ruler himself and/or his family chose to convert.

A major issue in the mission churches in general, and the Moravians were no exception, was the question of the indigenisation of the churches. The first mission church to ordain a black minister in South Africa was the Free Church of Scotland which ordained the later so famous Tiyo Soga in 1856. This first ordination did not, however, initiate a huge wave of ordinations of black ministers in the mission churches. The first ordained black Moravian was a Sotho called Joseph Nakin, who served as pastor from his ordination in 1883 almost until his death in 1904. In 1901 a Moravian teacher’s and theological seminary was established in order for the Moravian Church to educate black Moravians from the Eastern Cape without having to send them off to school at

24 Keegan (ed.) 2005, p. xxiv
Genadendal in the Western Cape. Even so, no more than five black Moravian ministers were active in the Eastern Cape in 1914, though a large group of black evangelists and teachers was employed there.27

The Black Moravian Minister William S. Mazwi

One of the few black ministers serving in the Eastern Cape was the Hlubi William S. Mazwi. His individual history is in itself interesting on several levels, but in this paper I will pursue one aspect of it in particular: his attempts at associating himself with practices and discourses of the European missionaries, what I in my analysis will describe as the strategy of sameness.

William Mazwi was born into a well-known Moravian family: his grandfather had converted and his mother, his father and some of his siblings were all active in the Moravian Mission Church.28 He was trained at the Moravian Seminary at Genadendal outside of Cape Town in the Western Cape to work as a teacher and missionary assistant until he himself was ordained as minister. In this section I will make the case that Mazwi employed a strategy of associating himself with the white missionaries, but this does not mean that he would abide by their rule without conflict or dissent. He was openly critical about the course of action taken by the mission church in order to eventually indigenise the church, and as his retirement age approached, he had a longstanding conflict with the church over his pension plan. With this practice, William Mazwi placed himself between the strategies of two of his siblings: his elder brother Petrus Mazwi, who did not engage in any conflictual relation with the Moravian Mission Church, and his younger brother Jonathan Mazwi, who opposed the strategies and politics of this Church to an extent that he chose to secede from it and join the South African Native Presbyterian Church founded by Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba, one of the numerous African Initiated Churches created from the 1880s.29 It is the failed ambition of being treated like an equal within

28 His grandfather and his father served as Moravian evangelists, his mother’s life story was published by the mission church (H.G. Schneider (ed.): Marianne Mazwi und ihre Landsleute, Verlag der Missionsbuchhandlung, Herrnhut 1910), and one of his brothers was an ordained minister within the church
the Church and more specifically the case of Mazwi’s pensioning, that bears the main burden of substantiating my claim that the black Moravians had difficulties in fulfilling their aspirations. The conflict over his pension plan takes place in 1934–1935 and contains several interesting points. The crux of the matter is that Mazwi does not want to retire when the Mission Society orders him to. He tries to make the case that this instruction is based on unequal treatment between black ministers and white missionaries, since the missionaries can continue working in their home country whereas the black ministers are left with no possible income after retirement. During the course of the conflict – which, as I have hinted at, ends with the involuntary retirement of Mazwi – he also points to other inequalities, such as differences in salaries, in living conditions, and in degree of respect towards one another.

As he writes in one letter to the Bishop Baudert in Herrnhut he had had an argument with his colleague, the missionary Rev. Hickel, in which Mazwi felt so unjustly treated that he had told the Rev. Hickel: “Sir, remember you are a minister and I am also a minister.”

My argument that William Mazwi employed a strategy of sameness in his relations with the Moravian Mission Church relies heavily on the contents of his Lebenslauf, and thus a brief introduction to this phenomenon seems appropriate. Lebensläufe are retrospective narratives on life, conversion and religion, to be produced by every member of the worldwide Moravian Church as a clarification of life and belief for oneself and to the edification of others. They are sent to the central Moravian Church in Herrnhut in Germany to be gathered in the archives there, and are occasionally read out as devotional literature to congregations around the world at meetings and gatherings. As such these narratives are semi-public and probably carefully thought through and edited. This can present the researcher with methodological challenges as well as advantages. I will argue that such sources provide great analytical opportunities exactly because of their edited nature: one can read from them how the authors wished to represent themselves to the religious authorities and their fellow Moravians in the rest of the world, and, obviously, also


30 Letter from William Mazwi to Bishop Baudert, dated 10.05.34; found in archive box MD 1172: William Mazwi at the Moravian Archives Herrnhut; the entire correspondence over the conflict is located in this box
discern what they tellingly did not want to put in the semi-public record of their life. For the purpose of this paper, my interest in the Lebenslauf of William Mazwi is precisely his self-representation in this narrative of life and beliefs.

Many features of Mazwi’s Lebenslauf are shared by the other Lebensläufe from indigenous ministers that still exists, but Mazwi’s is in almost every respect always much more elaborate than the rest. For instance, his description of his childhood is extremely detailed as is his account of his assignments in different areas of the Eastern Cape. The narrative of his break through in faith – an experience described in many Lebensläufe – is also quite detailed: At school in Genadendal he experienced both illicit temptations upon which he sometimes acted but also his break-through in faith. Born into a Moravian family he did not of course convert to Christianity or Moravianism, but he did nevertheless experience a defining moment of faith which he accounts for in the Lebenslauf. Another striking point about the contents of Mazwi’s Lebenslauf is his extensive comments on current affairs and political and social matters of the country.

At a late point in his Lebenslauf, Mazwi gives an account of the poor relationship between black and white in general in South Africa, and he describes the way the Europeans look upon the fruit of the missionary endeavour:

[T]his class of natives [the mission educated] is in great disfavour especially with the low class or illiterate Europeans. They call him proud or an intellectual or a spoilt native and eventually the missionary must carry the blame for having spoilt the native. Indeed what the educated native is he is the natural fruit of a century’s missionaries’ labours.31

Throughout the Lebenslauf William Mazwi is trying to define the un-Christian ‘natives’ as others to himself, thus distancing them from him as different and backwards as opposed to civilised and progressive like himself. In this section I wish to analyse his self-appointed role of ethnographer of the ‘native’ peoples or ‘races’ of South Africa in connection with his general descriptions of the progress of Christianity in the country and his own widespread efforts to associate himself with whiteness, progress, white culture and enlightenment. These points are intimately

31 William Mazwi: Lebenslauf, unpublished manuscript; Signature at the archives in Herrnhut: MD 1172 William Mazwi, p. 62
connected, as they, in my view, all are part of the same move of distancing himself from ‘heathenness’ while associating himself with the white missionaries. However, as we shall see later on – and as has already been hinted to – Mazwi was in his life and his account of it in the Lebenslauf not only making this affiliating move; he was actually also very critical of the Church and the attitudes of the white missionaries.

In the Lebenslauf Mazwi writes that he masters the “Bantu” languages as well as English and Dutch, and he reads German. But not only is he a master of Western languages, Western culture is no stranger to him either. Thus he relates how the Solfa-system of music was introduced to him as a school boy and helped “his school-choir gave admirable renderings of such master-pieces as ‘the Hallelujah Chorus by Händel’ too!” The boys at the school were also fond of the European games such as cricket, which became the most popular pas-time during the school intervals. In the Lebenslauf Mazwi gives grand descriptions of civilisation and (Christian) progress which guides the reader in the direction of understanding him as a man of the (Western, white) world, but also the constant drops of small remarks and sentences throughout the narrative helps in that direction. On page 26 Mazwi describes a “lake, comparable in beauty and grandeur with those of Switzerland” just after describing the amphitheatres of old, without ever having seen either. At another point in the Lebenslauf, he describes his joy over having Rev. Marx visiting at the station Elukolweni, where Mazwi is serving, since seeing “a solitary white face in an ocean of black faces all over, was a real consolation for us in the house who had come from the enlightened part of this dark continent.” He writes further that there was a lot of singing going on when Rev. Marx was visiting him, to the great astonishment of the servant boys and girls who would often listen “with their white teeth” to the music “hitherto unknown by them.” Yet another form of distancing himself – though his use of the word is not completely consistent – is the way he writes about ‘natives.’ He can refer to himself (and other black ministers that he associates himself with) as a “native minister” but when he just writes ‘native’ it means ‘the others.’

32 William Mazwi: Lebenslauf, p. 16. His Lebenslauf also exists in a German version in William’s own handwriting, but that is of course no guarantee that he himself translated it to or formulated it in German.
33 William Mazwi: Lebenslauf, p. 1
34 William Mazwi: Lebenslauf, p. 30
35 William Mazwi: Lebenslauf, p. 30
Thus, for instance, he includes in his Lebenslauf the following sentence when describing the situation at the stations Bethesda and Magadla when he took over: “The war fever had taken the natives and an open rebellion was only averted by the Natives being unarmed.”\textsuperscript{36} In this short sentence he manages to portray ‘the natives’ as warlike and rebellious, and by using the term ‘native,’ he lets the reader understand that this is not a course of action he agrees with.

The most explicit and obvious demarcation between himself and ‘the others’ Mazwi makes in the Lebenslauf is his ethnographical descriptions of the peoples of South Africa. Even when he describes ‘his own’ people, the Hlubi, it is with distance – a distance based on his dissociation with the Hlubi as consequence of greater association with European-ness or whiteness.

In the following I will analyse Mazwi’s self-appointed role of ethnographer of the ‘native’ peoples or ‘races’ of South Africa in connection with his general descriptions of the progress of Christianity in the country and his own widespread efforts to associate himself with whiteness, progress, white culture and enlightenment.

Most of the ethnographical comments of the Lebenslauf are devoted to “the Bantus” – for instance when he describes the Mfengu people as the “self-conceited, capricious, cantankerous and parsimonious Hlubi Fingo.”\textsuperscript{37} One paragraph of his Lebenslauf is explicitly devoted to ethnography, as he puts it under the headline of “The people of Goshen and their habits.”\textsuperscript{38} In this paragraph he lists and categorises the different “Bantu” peoples of the station. He continues in an echo of much colonial and missionary ethnography by stating fixed ‘naturalised’ characteristics of the peoples he describes; here the ama-Xhosa and the aba-Thembu:

Whilst the ama-Xosa and aba-Thembu are less amenable to become Christians than the Fingos, they are by nature more virtuous. One can learn from the Gaika-Xosa what it is to be a true friend, as also to be an opponent. He is gay and philanthropic; but when things turn against him he is hardy and rather reckless. The Tembu has perhaps the best marks in his character to cope with the changes of history. He is prudent and peaceable.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} William Mazwi: Lebenslauf, p. 41
\textsuperscript{37} William Mazwi: Lebenslauf, p. 18
\textsuperscript{38} William Mazwi: Lebenslauf, p. 18
\textsuperscript{39} William Mazwi: Lebenslauf, p. 18–19
A different type of association with Europeanness is emanating from Williams description in the Lebenslauf of how he, once graduated from the Genadendal seminary, went home to live with his family once again. The return to his home and family was not without its problems; he now spoke Dutch better than Xhosa and as he, in his own words, was a “stranger from the most developed and civilized part of the land”, he was surprised to find such modest living conditions at ‘home’ with his family.40 As an ‘educated native’ he had become accustomed to other living conditions than those of his family. This last point can, in my opinion, be taken as support for the idea that in his Lebenslauf William Mazwi is not only doing whiteness, he is also doing class. The two categories are obviously connected, but it is, however, important to point out the distinct aspect of his association with whiteness that has to – also – with an association with middle class values and living conditions.41

What I have been trying to show in this section of the paper, is the demarcation and affiliation strategies that William is employing in his Lebenslauf: One the one hand he is associating himself with Western education and culture, and on the other he dissociates himself from the uncivilised ‘native’ peoples of South Africa – in short: the strategy of sameness. Still, this strategy of sameness only gets him so far. He is forced to retire against his will, and no matter how ‘European’ he constructs himself in the Lebenslauf, he is nevertheless lacking the recognition as equal that he desires.42

The ‘Goshen Kloof’ Land Conflict

Land struggles hold a prominent position in present day South African politics and economic and social thought. The backdrop of the prominence of land issues in the present day and former political landscape in South Africa is the land hungry settler colonialism and segregationist laws implemented in this country from the mid 19th century, combined with the practice of establishing mission settlements as so-called ‘grant stations’, where the mission societies were granted land for their

40 William Mazwi: Lebenslauf, p. 13
41 I thank Dr. Rikke Andreassen, Malmö University, for suggesting this point
42 It is, however, important to remember how limited these conclusions are. Even though William Mazwi himself failed in some of his projects, his agency and struggles helped pave the way for others who came after him
mission activities by the colonial government and/or local rulers on rather unclear terms. This uncertainty caused much dispute and conflict between mission societies and congregations throughout southern Africa and across denominational boundaries.43

The Moravian missionaries working in the Cape Colony found themselves deeply entangled in the geopolitical conflicts, which shaped South African society. Particularly those living and working on the grant stations felt the weight of the conflicts over land rights heavily. The grant station system was widespread in Southern Africa and thus affected not only the Moravians but all the ‘old’ mission societies active there.44 The principle behind the grant station system was that the Cape authorities in order to facilitate the Christian ‘civilising mission’ would grant a piece of land to a given mission society, which would then, on certain conditions, build a station suitable for their missionary efforts. These missionaries were given very near absolute power at the stations, with authority to rule in matters both spiritual and worldly – within the overall laws of the Colony.

What I find interesting in the ‘Goshen Kloof’ case study presented here is the way black Moravians use their positions as inhabitants of mission land (i.e. their position as Christians) to try to secure and/or better their future – even if that future would be outside of the Moravian Church. The dissenting black congregants active in the conflict navigate – though ultimately unsuccessfully – within the power hierarchy of colonialism and mission life instead of completely rejecting the hegemony of the whites, but they do this while simultaneously contesting white privilege through dissenting actions and critical discourse. Interestingly, among the chief discourses employed in this challenge was one of ‘aboriginality’ – what I in this paper have termed the strategy of difference.

The Goshen Kloof conflict is, strictly speaking, not a conflict derived from the grant system described above, but the confusion and dissatisfaction caused by this system played a large role in the Kloof case. The heart of the conflict lay in disagreement over the ownership of a farm adjoining the Goshen mission station, called Farm no. 11. This Farm

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44 Keegan (ed.) 2005, p. xxiv
was leased by the Moravian Mission Society in 1869 and then purchased in full from the Cape Government in 1871. The Farm was used as pasture ground for the missionaries and the residents of Goshen alike, though on different terms as the residents unlike the missionaries were required to pay an annual fee to obtain the right to use the farm as grazing land. It is the terms of the user rights to this grazing land and the nature of this annual payment that constitutes the crux of the Goshen Kloof conflict: a group of congregants living at the station continues to let their stock graze on the Farm despite continuing attempts at prohibitions and stock impounding by the missionaries. In the end the Moravian authorities at the station decide to try to stop what they perceive as unlawful behaviour by the group of dissenting congregants by filing an official law suit against them, with the purpose of re-establishing their status as rightful owners of the land.

From the transcripts of the ensuing court cases that the Moravian missionaries filed against the dissenting congregants it is possible to tease out the strategies of the two parties: the Moravian missionaries are claiming landownership based on the possession of the title deed to the Farm no 11, while the dissenting congregants are strategically constructing themselves in terms of their authentic difference from the white missionaries, as ‘aboriginals of the country.’ This strategy is chosen because the identity as ‘aboriginal’ constitutes a crack in the property rights of the missionaries: all parties agree that the mission land (the grant stations) were given to the mission societies in trust and in the best interest of the aboriginals. Thus, the question of who is to decide what is in the best interest of the aboriginals – the missionaries or the aboriginals themselves – becomes crucial in deciding who has the rights to the land. The strategy of the dissenting congregants becomes to construct themselves as aboriginals, to emphasise their authentic difference, as a means to claim legitimate rights to the land they inhabit. This strategy was, however, not efficient in court since the judge ruled in favour of the mission society. In the colonial court, the written title deeds to the station lands that the missionaries can produce to support their claim to ownership weigh more than the oral testimonies of the dissenting congregants to hereditary claims to the land and/or their constant insistence on their authentic difference as aboriginals of the country.45 Neither

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45 I am aware of the possibility that this insistence on aboriginality, as I call it, can be an expression of convention: that whenever ‘an aboriginal’ person appeared before a
side of the conflict seem to disagree that the mission lands were given to the indigenous population, but the title deeds which are in the possession of the Mission Society apparently give the right to decide what is in the best interest of the ‘aboriginals’ to whom the land was given. And this includes the right to demand certain behaviour from the inhabitants at the mission stations subject to the rules of conduct at these stations. Hence the power to decide who can be said to be legitimate ‘aboriginals’ rests with the mission, as those failing to live up to conduct which is expected by such ‘aboriginals’ are evicted from the stations. The only chance the dissenting congregants have of gaining rights to the land they inhabit, independent of missionary control, is to claim authentic difference. This is a strategy that ultimately fails, since the mission lands were not given to ‘aboriginals’ but in the ‘best interest’ of the ‘aboriginals.’ In a country governed by strong feelings of white supremacy and notions of the superiority of white culture and religion, what is in the ‘best interests of the aboriginals’ cannot be decided by the, according to such views, inferior ‘aboriginal’ population itself.46

**Difference, Sameness and (Designated) Authenticity**

In the two case studies presented above I have argued that the black Moravians involved are employing either strategies of *sameness* or of *difference*. In this section I will present some of the theories on which

46 Even though the conclusions drawn above have a rather defeatist flavour, since the dissenting congregants did not succeed in their undertakings, it is important to remember that the matter did not end in the court room. The white missionaries were not completely unsympathetic to the position of the dissenting congregants, and they could, if not condone it, then at least understand their confusion. And thus, the missionaries were forced, by the civil disobedience of the dissenting congregants and their attempts at constructing arguments in court which would position them as legitimate owners of the land, to induce the colonial and later Union governments to change the laws in order to settle the disputed question of ownership of grant station land once and for all. It is difficult to say whether or not this new legislation actually worked to the benefit of the black inhabitants at the mission land – there were voices for and against – but the influence of the dissenting black congregants in the decision to try to change the legislation is undeniable. And so – as in the case of Rev. William Mazwi presented above – despite their own personal failure in their aspirations, the dissenting congregants became influential movers of change in the country.
I base my argument, as well as show the ambiguity of the discourses of the Moravian missionaries. A central factor in this is the practice of what I have coined ‘designating authenticity’ which might need some explaining. What I wish to invoke with this notion is the idea of the white Moravian missionaries that ‘uncivilised’ peoples must be led ‘back’ to their natural state through Christianity and with the ‘civilised’ missionaries as their guiding lights – as designators of the true authenticity of the ‘others’.47

The basis of my thinking around authenticity is a special issue edited by Trinh Minh-ha of _Discourse. Journal for theoretical studies in media and culture_ from the Fall of 1986–87 with the title: _She, The Inappropriate/d Other_. Trinh Minh-ha begins her article _Difference: ‘A special Third World Women Issue’_ by confronting the reader with an Audre Lorde quotation:

> Survival…is not an academic skill…It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. _For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house_. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change.48

With this quote the scene is set. Minh-ha is interested in difference as power tool. But as one reads on in the article it becomes clear that she is extremely critical of the point that Lorde is making: that insistence on difference can be transformed into strength in the hands of the oppressed.49

Minh-ha dedicates a lot of space to a discussion of racial segregation, particularly in South Africa – one of the hot topics of the mid-1980s. She writes about separation as a way of conserving the ethnic values and ways of life of the different(!) black populations _within the borders of their homelands_ and as a means to prevent the overstepping of designated boundaries – in short, she criticises the idea of separate development that became prevalent in South Africa after the 1930s.50

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47 Authenticity has in recent years become an increasingly popular research issue. For two excellent publications on the subject set in other contexts than this, see: Paige Raibmon: _Authentic Indians. Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast_, Duke University Press 2005; and Regina Bendix: _In Search of Authenticity. The Formation of Folklore Studies_, The University of Wisconsin Press 1997


50 Trinh Minh-ha 1986–87, p. 12–13
Minh-ha’s point runs along the lines of my own thinking around ‘designated authenticity’ as a notion or a tool that can be used to create separateness and legitimate insistence on difference, while she also recognises the heavy and pervasive power moves embedded in this creation of and insistence on insurmountable difference. As Minh-ha points out this policy of separate development – where everyone is ‘allowed’ to bloom in their own gardens – could be of great value for the white government as a way of confining the different black populations in ordered ‘nations’ within the boundaries of their ‘homelands’, without a sense of common struggle against the white rule.51

One of the most convincing points made by Minh-ha, concerns the difficult and ambiguous position of the black South African population as considered by the white population as a both dangerous and endangered species: dangerous because of the threat of violent revolt, and endangered because they are “suffering pathetically from a ‘loss of authenticity’” and as such are encouraged to emphasise and express their authentic difference.52

This invitation to speak out one’s difference – as ‘Other’ – is very much in line with the idea of ‘designated authenticity’, in that the insistence on authentic difference is tied up to a power move of creating difference and keeping ‘the other’ in its place. This, in my view, can be applied to the efforts of the white Moravian missionaries to designate specific ethnic or ‘völkerlich’ authenticity to the different non-White peoples of South Africa. A task that the peoples, in the discourse of the missionaries, cannot be trusted to engage in and/or complete on their own. In Minh-ha’s article it is anthropologists and policy makers who act as designators of authenticity, whereas in my case it is missionaries (and to a certain extent also black ministers). The point Minh-ha is making is that the insistence on authentic difference, and the persuasive arguments that authenticity is fading away or in danger of being lost, plays straight into the hand of the white government, while it at the same time supports a desire of suppressed groups to find common grounds – and insist on legitimate common identities and roots.53 Thus, authenticity discourses can work both ways: they can be part of a divide-and-conquer policy while simultaneously being an empowerment tool.

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51 Trinh Minh-ha 1986–87, p. 12–13
52 Trinh Minh-ha 1986–87, p.22
53 Trinh Minh-ha 1986–87, p.23
in the hands of the oppressed. Minh-ha, however, remains sceptical to a
romantic notion – like that of Audre Lorde – of insistence on authentic
difference as the only way of making genuine change.

Similarly, in my view, the insistence on authentic (racial) difference
has another problematic implication, namely that of supporting the
idea that non-white/non-western peoples are static peoples without
history: that they should never change lest they disrupt and lose this
authenticity. The effect of designating authenticity is precisely to empha-
sise incapability of change in the peoples to which the authenticity is
designated, and thus, unwittingly perhaps, construct obstacles to change.

The Moravian bishop of South Africa, Ernst van Calker, reflects upon
such matters in a pamphlet written to commemorate the first hundred
years of Moravian mission in the Eastern Cape region:

Particularly, one should not make the Kaffirs take over the congregation
regulations grown out of European congregation life, and thus alienate
them from their own national customs. It is important to value and keep
their opinions and traditions as long as they are not contradictory to the
spirit of Christianity.54

In another contemporary pamphlet he states: “How does the mission
react to this dilapidation of native traditions? How the missionaries
would like for the heathens to preserve their national peculiarity to the
greatest extent possible in their transition to Christianity.”55 And van
Calker continues by mocking those black South Africans who have
taken the mannerisms of white culture to heart:

In addition comes the fear of being perceived as less valuable, when going
or when being led by different roads than those paved by the Europeans.
[...] To every attempt at leading the Kaffirs along their own roads, they
answer with ‘we want no colour bar.’56

With these statements it is almost as if he puts forth the idea that the
missionaries should lead the indigenous peoples back to their authentic

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54 Ernst van Calker: ‘Aus der hundertjährigen Geschichte der Kaffernmission der
Brüdergemeine’ in Evangelisches Missionsmagazin, 1928, p.181; my translation (AFH)
55 Ernst van Calker: Südafrikanische Gegenwärts-Fragen. Südafrikas politische und
völkische Lage zur Frage der Verselbständigung der Missionskirchen in Südafrika, in
Hefte zur Missionskunde, no. 22, 1928, p. 36; my translation (AFH)
56 Ernst van Calker: Südafrikanische Gegenwärts-Fragen. Südafrikas politische und
völkische Lage zur Frage der Verselbständigung der Missionskirchen in Südafrika, in
Hefte zur Missionskunde, nr 22, 1928, p. 36; emphasis in original; my translation (AFH)
selves, away from the path of the white people – and thus precisely creating or advocating division and colour bars.

In the above quotations van Calker emphasises the problem of the ‘educated natives’, who mimic the white peoples instead of embracing their own ‘Volksthum’ in all matters compatible with Christianity. Such a view is not uncommon among German missionaries at the time. In an article on German missions in South Africa, Gunther Pakendorf has shown how they were extremely interested in the traditions and customs of the nations they encounter, and how they were heavily influenced by theories of deeply rooted national characteristics developed by Johann Gottfried von Herder.57 Thus, the general trend among the German missionaries is to take a large interest in the authentic way of life of the different peoples – Völker – that they come into contact with, and van Calker is no exception to this tendency.58 He too ‘designates authenticity,’ or authentic traits or features, to the peoples he encounter.

In this section I have tried to show how the Moravian missionaries, through their own ambiguities regarding racial issues, and in the context of a racially segregated South African society, create situations in which it becomes very difficult for the black Moravians ‘to win.’ If they are too ‘Native’ they are not intelligible as legitimate Moravians, but if they present themselves as too ‘white’ they are – pathetically – loosing their ‘Volksthum’ and can not be understood as authentic Africans.

**Concluding Reflections on Difference, Sameness and Double Binds**

I embarked on this research project with the basic assumption, derived from the ideas presented by Mary Louise Pratt, that even in an unhappy situation of colonial oppression it is still possible for the oppressed to make use of the dominating cultures to suit their own purposes.59 Such

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practices of appropriation were what I was in search of – expecting to find examples of successful indigenous appropriations of Moravian Christianity. It became clear however, as the work progressed, that even if my basic assumption was correct, it was so only to a certain extent. Even in the situations in which agency on the part of the colonised and racially discriminated people was possible, the aspirations of these people were never quite fulfilled. All the case studies in my material are, in a sense, stories of failure.

This apparent state of failure puzzled me. Did it mean that my initial assumptions were wrong and thus ought to be discarded, or was there something else at work in the processes I was analysing, which my tools were perhaps too unrefined to capture? I was reluctant to reject my initial assumptions, because the agency of the black Moravians and their appropriations of Christianity stood out quite clearly in the material. So instead of discarding my theoretical assumptions, I decided to try to refine my methodological approaches enough to grasp the processes at play in the material. If the appropriation of Christianity by the mission recipients was so obvious in the material, how come their aspirations came to nothing? The answer, I will argue, lies in the double bind communication of the missionaries which creates double bind situations for the black Moravians – combined, obviously, with the repressive segregationist politics of the colonial and, after 1910, Union governments. To explain it very briefly, double bind communication is a phenomenon described by Gregory Bateson in which an authority figure communicates two mutually exclusive wishes or desires for the dependent or subjugated to carry out. In Bateson’s case it has to do with parental guidance, but I will argue that the process can be seen in my material as well – though I am aware of the bitter irony in the fact that I am thus transferring a theory created to describe a relation between child and parent to the mission situation which has too often – and with painful consequences – been framed in paternalistic discourse. Bateson and his colleagues describe the double bind situation as “a situation in which no matter what a person does, he ‘can’t win.’”

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61 Bateson et. al. 1956, p. 251
The ambiguous discourses of the Moravian missionaries are inviting the black Moravians to employ the above described strategies of sameness and difference. Thus, my point is that the entire Moravian mission endeavour can be seen as one long double bind communication of saying: become like us, but stay as you are/were. Central to this, I will argue, is the Moravian ideology of Erstlinge. The discourse of Erstlinge or ‘First Fruits’ contains an implicit assumption of racial authenticity that goes hand in hand with the ideas of ‘Volksthum’ that the Moravian missionaries in South Africa are very concerned that their converts keep, or rather let the missionaries lead them back to. Thus, on the one hand the Moravians try to further ‘civilised’ or European practices and ideas while on the other hand they are concerned with the racial authenticity of their converts and congregants – of preserving their ‘authentic Volksthum.’

The state of ‘failure’ that I am describing here is obviously connected to the difficult positions within which the segregation politics forced black South Africans to navigate, and cannot be ascribed solely to double bind communications from the missionaries. In fact I will contend that the double binds created by the ambiguous discourses and practices of the Moravian missionaries are being supported, and the effects of them are being enhanced, by the surrounding segregationist society. The hybrid subjects (i.e. black Christians), the creation of which the missionaries – despite their ambiguities with respect to the desirability of keeping the ‘natives’ authentic – have as their highest goal, face grave difficulties in a society divided according to racially legitimised privileges. The black Christian hybrid subjects are almost exclusively offered impossible subject positions within a society based on strict segregation according to skin colour and ‘authentic’ culture and practices: they are never quite ‘white’ enough and never quite ‘native’ enough to be properly categorised and dealt with accordingly.

What I have tried to show in this paper, is the way in which the dissenting congregants at Goshen and the Rev. William Mazwi employ opposite strategies and still both fail. William Mazwi points in his Lebenslauf to his sameness when he constructs himself as a man of white culture and taste – as well as religion – but his aspiration of being treated as an equal by the missionaries and by church policy is not fulfilled. The dissident congregants, on their side, employ the opposite strategy of pointing to their authentic difference and to the fact that the land was given to them exactly because of this difference, but that does not bring
them victory in court. Thus, within the double bind communication of the Moravian missionaries William Mazwi attempts the ‘sameness’ branch of the discourse and fails, while the dissenting congregants try the ‘difference’ branch and fail; the double bind seems to be working no matter what – particularly as it (with a metaphor borrowed from the card game bridge) is re-doubled by the policies of the colonial and Union society. In other words, the black Moravians studied in the two cases presented in this paper are employing different strategies in their different situations – of sameness and integration and of authentic difference and segregation. None of these seem to work, however, in the difficult situation of negotiating the political discourse of segregationism through the integrationist ideal of the missionaries communicated in terms of double binds.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

MISSION APPROPRIATION OR APPROPRIATING THE MISSION?
NEGOTIATING LOCAL AND GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY IN NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY MADAGASCAR

Karina Hestad Skeie

Introduction

The relationship between global Christianity and local Christianity has been a prominent theme in the study of missionary encounters. Recent research on Christian missionary encounters in Africa argue that local conversions to Christianity cannot be interpreted simply as a result of Western imposition. Local Christianities are always appropriations based on already existing concepts and notions, results of complex interactions between actors who are empowered and constrained by social and historical contexts. Thus, all local Christianities in Africa are genuinely ‘African’ and ‘indigenous’, both from a theoretical and an

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1 Research and field work for this paper was generously funded by the Norwegian Research Council.


3 Neither European missionaries nor Africans constituted singular homogeneous groups, and usually the interaction involved more than two parties. Also, different understandings of Christianity were usually at play among different groups. See for instance Elizabeth Elbourne, Blood Ground. Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799–1853 (Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002).
empirical point of view. This does not imply that local Christianities have the same understanding of and relationship to already existing local concepts and cosmologies, or that local processes of appropriation are identical. Also, religions and cosmologies are dynamic and change over time.

Recent studies of local Christianities tend to relegate foreign missions and missionaries to the background, or altogether into oblivion. This is a result of greater interest in contemporary expressions of Christianity, and a logical consequence of the recognition that local agents are more decisive for the expansion and development of local Christianities than foreign missionaries. Removing European and North-American missions and missionaries from the position of prime movers in World Christianity has been long overdue. Yet, disregarding external missions and missionaries altogether is premature, as long as foreign missionaries and mission organisations are present in Africa. Denominational churches and mission organisations continue to constitute important transnational networks for people, money and ideas in global Christianity. Therefore it is important to continue to study foreign missions and missionaries’ shifting interactions with and relationships to various local Christianities over time.

Recognising the significance of local agents and local appropriation also require re-examinations of the long-term interaction between foreign missionaries and local communities in (and beyond) Africa.

This chapter re-examines the relationship between a European mission, a Protestant church and particular local Christian revival movements in Madagascar known as fifohazana. Fifohazana’s prominent position is a striking feature of contemporary Protestant Christianity in Madagascar. With its strong emphasis on personal religious experience and divinely inspired powers to heal, fifohazana may appear as one of many examples of the general global growth of Charismatic Christianity. However, unlike most charismatic Christian movements in Africa,
which seem to trace back to North American or European influence\(^7\), the *fifohazana* movements in Malagasy Christianity are of Malagasy origin.\(^8\) The first dates back to 1894. Cooperation between various *fifohazana* movements and Protestant churches in Madagascar goes back to the same period. This is unusual in a comparative perspective. Most locally initiated revival movements in Africa towards the end of the nineteenth century, emerged within main-line, mission-founded churches to become independent churches, often referred to as AICs (African Independent/Indigenous/Initiated Churches).\(^9\) For reasons which will be discussed in the following, Madagascar does not have a history of independent churches alongside main-line or mission-initiated churches. Instead, particular *fifohazana* movements have existed partly parallel with, partly within main-line churches from 1894 until today. The revival movements, the churches and the European missions have contrasting, even contradicting understandings of the nature of their mutual relationship and interaction through history. Analysing their long history of co-existence cooperation and conflict from 1894 until today, I explore the ways in which local and global Christianity are negotiated over time. Similar processes in Africa constitute comparative contexts for my analysis of the Malagasy case.\(^10\) I start by defining the Malagasy term *fifohazana*, and then describe the characteristics of *fifohazana* cosmology and practice. Finally, I analyse the dynamic relationship between the *fifohazana* movements, missions and main-line churches from the end of the nineteenth century until today.

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8 Both Pentecostalism and the Prosperity Gospel are also part of contemporary Christianities in Madagascar. (Sophie Blancy et al. (ed.), *Les dieux au service du peuple. Itinéraires religieux, médiation, syncrétisme À Madagascar* (Paris, Karthala, 2006)). So far, however, their influence has been considerably less than that of *fifohazana* Christianity.


10 Analysing the missionary–Malagasy interaction regarding the *fifohazana*, I follow a different trajectory than both the *fifohazana*- and the Norwegian missionary self-narratives. From the *fifohazana* point of view, a secular point of departure such as mine fails to grasp the movement's thoroughly miraculous and divine nature. Focus on missionary-*fifohazana* interaction is potentially provoking, because the *fifohazana* movements' independence of foreign missionaries and missions is an important aspect of *fifohazana* and some Malagasy theological self-narratives.
Fifohazana, Revival and Shepherd Movements

The Malagasy word *fifohazana* derives from the root *mifoha* which means to wake up; *fifohazana* means revival, awakening. The term denotes both Christian revival in a general sense and specific revival movements connected to distinct founders, dates and geographical locations. From the early 19th century until today, there have been many revivals in Malagasy Christianity. Only a handful have become *fifohazana* movements. Named after their place of origin, the following four have historically been the most important:

1. *Fifohazana* Soatanana – founded in 1894 – connected to the founding ‘father’ Rainisoalambo (ca. 1844–1904) and the Soatanana area in southern Betsileo.

2. *Fifohazana* Manolotrony – founded in 1900 – connected to the founding ‘mother’ Ravelonjanahary (unknown - 1928?) and the village Manolotrony close to Ambositra in central Betsileo.\(^\text{12}\)

3. *Fifohazana* Ankaramalaza – founded in 1941 – connected to the founding ‘mother’ Volahavana Germaine, also called Nenilava (tall mother) (ca. 1922–1998) and the village Ankaramalaza on the east coast.


All these revival movements have a village centre called *toby* (camp) erected at their respective places of origin. In these centres, inaugurated ritual specialists called shepherds (*mpiandry*)\(^\text{13}\) live and work together with supporters, sympathisers and clients. In the following I will use the term shepherd movements to denote these specific revival movements. The clients at the centres are ordinary people who are sick and come for the shepherds’ distinct treatment through exorcism and prayer. Major camp activities besides nursing and treatment of the sick, are prayer and

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\(^{13}\) At first the *fifohazana* followers and ritual specialists called themselves ‘the Lords Diciples’ (*mpiandry ny Tempo*) (A. Thunem, *Vekkelsen paa Madagascar* (Det Norske Missionsselskaps forlag, 1926), p. 49).
devotion several times a day, and subsistence farming. New shepherds are trained and inaugurated regularly at the centers. The training takes two years and the inauguration usually happens once a year, on the date celebrating the founder’s initial revelation, which is also the movement’s founding date. I concentrate my description and analysis in the following on the three shepherd movements currently connected to the Malagasy Lutheran church: Fifohazana Soatanana, Ankaramalaza and Farihimena.

The Shepherd Movements’ Cosmology and Practice

The shepherd movements’ cosmology and practice are intimately connected to their special point of departure. All shepherd movements’ starting point is their respective founders’ experience of direct communication with the divine, often in a context of illness and personal hardships. In most cases the founders were lay people of little formal (Western) education, and in all cases, the founders had first-hand knowledge of traditional Malagasy divination and healing practices. Another important precursor for the shepherd movements’ emergence, is the development of a popular Christianity, characterised among other things by lack of formal religious education often combined with little contact with institutional churches.

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14 For a current study of the shepherd movements see Hans Austnaberg, Shepherds and Demons. A Study of Exorcism as Practised and Understood by Shepherds in the Malagasy Lutheran Church (New York: Peter Lang, 2008).
15 I have most sources on these three movements, due to their special connection to the Norwegian Lutheran mission and the Malagasy Lutheran church.
16 The exception is the ordained Lutheran pastor Razanandrasoa Daniel who founded the Farihimena movement. See more details later.
17 Rainisoalambo and Ravelonjanahary of the Soatanana and Manolotrynom branches respectively, were traditional ritual specialists prior to their calling, while the other two came from families with prominent traditional ritual specialists among close kin. (Daniel Rakotojoelinandrasana, ‘Holistic and Integrated Care for Spirit, Mind, and Body as Practiced by the Fifohazana’ in Holder Rich (ed.), The Fifohazana. Madagascar’s Indigenous Christian Movement (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2008), p. 87.) See also Roger Rafanomezantsoa, ‘The Contribution of Rainisoalambo to the Indigenization of the Protestant Churches in Madagascar’, in Ibid., pp. 14–15. This corresponds directly to similar African cases, see David Maxwell (ed.) with Ingrid Lawrie, Christianity and the African Imagination: Essays in Honour of Adrian Hastings, Studies of Religion in Africa (Leiden, Brill, 2002), vol. 23, p. 8.
Rainisoalambo – the founder of fifohazana Soatanana’s personal story epitomizes this link. In 1894, assembly houses and churches with smaller and larger congregations were scattered all over the Malagasy highlands, even in relatively remote rural villages like Ambatoreny, where Rainisoalambo lived as a peasant. The assembly houses, churches and congregations were visible results of the Kingdom of Madagascar’s appropriation of Protestant Christianity as state religion twenty-five years earlier. The Christianisation from ruler to ruled in the Malagasy highland society was characterised, among other things, by the adding of new beliefs and practices to the already existing. As a result, Rainisoalambo together with tens of thousands of other highland people, had received baptism and attended Christian assemblies more or less regularly, considering it their duty as loyal subjects. In most other respects, Rainisoalambo and the great majority continued to live according to traditional cosmology and practice. In Rainisoalambo’s case, this implied that he worked as the lay leader of the Independent Christian congregation in his village, while at the same time remaining an active ritual specialist in traditional divination and medicine.

In the course of 1894, epidemics roamed the highland area. Rainisoalambo’s cattle became ill and died and Rainisoalambo himself got very sick. As a result, Rainisoalambo lost all credibility as a traditional healer, and both his family and his clients abandoned him. Destitute and desperate, Rainisoalambo allegedly prayed for help, sometimes to the ancestors, other times to the Christian God. One night he dreamt that a beaming figure stood in front of him and told him to throw away his “sikidy” and “sampy” – objects of divination and protection in traditional medicine. Convinced that the Christian God in person had appeared in the dream, Rainisoalambo gathered all traditional medicine equipment and objects in his house and threw it over a cliff by the house. From that day onwards his illness vanished without a trace, happiness,
contentment and his powers and abilities returning. Rainisoalambo began a new life, with the Bible and prayer as main guidances.23 He also insistently told his neighbours, kin first, how the Christian God would heal all their illness too, if only they got rid of their old medicine.24

The centrality of healing is also at the forefront in the female founder of fifohazana Ankaramalaza’s calling moment. Besides prayer and dreams, visions and auditions are prominent in the narratives on Volahavana Germaine. With minor variations, this is how the decisive

From left to right the Soatanana Apostles Rajeremia and Rainitiaray with their wives, and founder Rainisoalambo with his wife. (Photo: Unknown. Source: MHS-MA_A-1045_Uc, album from Aagot and Thomas Jørgensen. Mission Archives, School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway)

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24 “Foana ny ody rehetra eo aminareo; fa ho sitranin’Andriamanitra hianareo amin’ ny aretina rehetra” (Ibid., p. 45).
turning point and the divine calling of Volahavana Germaine are described in both outsider and insider sources.25

On 1. August 1941 in the small village Ankaramalaza on the Malagasy east coast, the eighteen-year old26 woman Volahavana had watched and in various ways assisted as a local catechist called Petera carried out exorcism on her gravely ill stepdaughter. Volahavana was an illiterate woman of no formal education, the daughter of a local chief and traditional healer (mpsikidy) and the second wife of Mosesy Tsirefo, widower, evangelist and local congregational leader, who had several children by his first wife. While Petera exorcised the sick child, Volahavana began to prepare the campfire for cooking a meal. As she was blowing on the fire, she felt a hand touch her shoulder and heard a voice tell her loud and clear to stand up and act. Startled, her limbs froze. Too afraid to turn and look who this was, she cast a careful glance behind her back and was surprised to see a tall, strange man standing behind her. “Who is this? Perhaps it is Jesus?” she asked, yet continuing to stay put. The man behind her stamped his foot hard on the floor and again told her to rise up and drive the evil spirit out of the child. Still immobile, Volahavana suddenly felt as if a powerful force carried and led her to the bedside of her sick stepdaughter. As soon as she laid her hands on the child, the devil inside the child spoke and said: “We will leave, we will leave. Someone stronger than us have arrived.” And the miracle happened: the young girl was released and recovered fully. With this Volahavana Germaine began her ministry.27 Before dawn on 2. August, Jesus told Volahavana Germaine, her husband Tsirefo and the catechist Petera: “Stand up, preach the Good Tidings to all humankind. Exorcise demons.


26 Different sources provide different age. According to Gabriel Nakkestad, Med smil i gråt på Øst-Madagaskar (Oslo, Luther forlag, 1978), she was 21.

Engage yourselves, and do not postpone it. Time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified all over Madagascar.28 I have chosen you for this mission. I order you to accomplish it.”29

It is not a coincidence that both these calling and founding stories concern healing in a concrete sense. Health and healing are primary concerns for the shepherd movements, and healing through exorcism constitutes their central ritual. Compared with studies of Christianity in other parts of Africa, this is another characteristic feature of popular Christianity: it “helps ordinary practitioners come to terms with existential passions and empowers them, through faith, to deal with material concerns for health, wealth and protection against evil.”30 That illness is caused by malignant spirits constitutes a direct point of continuity between ancestral Malagasy religion and Christianity. In order to understand why exorcism constitutes a proper and powerful cure for all kinds of illnesses, it is necessary to understand Malagasy notions of illness and health.

**Illness (Aretina) and Health (Fahasalamana)**

The Malagasy word for illness – *aretina* – has a very broad meaning.31 It refers to all unwanted conditions which threaten life and wellbeing in general. While all illness is considered to have a cause, it is not always easy to determine what the causes are. This is because the concept of

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28 Literally the passage reads “from Matitanana to Ambohibe”. Maritanana is a place on the east coast and Ambohibe on the northern tip of Madagascar. Thus, this passage could also be translated ‘from south to north’.


31 This section draws extensively on Hilde Nielsens’ explanations of health, illness, Malagasy medicine, Malagasy medical practice, clinical medicine, curing and religion in Hilde Nielsen, *Ritual Imagination. A Study of Tromba Possession among the Betsimisaraka of Eastern Madagascar* (Dr. Polit. thesis, University of Bergen, 2003), pp. 43–58. While Nielsens explains these terms vis-à-vis the ritual practice of spirit possession called *tromba*, it is nevertheless relevant here, because the shepherd movements largely act and work within the same Malagasy cosmology.
health – *fahasalamana* – encompasses both physical and psychical dimensions of health and social and material conditions of life. In addition, distinctions between the individual body and the social body is fussy, in certain contexts even absent. Individual health is thus merely one aspect of *fahasalamana*. *Fahasalamana* can be translated as health, happiness, and peace.\(^{32}\) In short it includes people’s small and great events in life, daily concerns as well as the concern for society and the cosmological order. Also, microcosm and macrocosm are interconnected, according to Malagasy general understanding. Microcosm and macrocosm influence and are influenced by each other, also in notions of illness and health, not least due to the omnipresent power called *hasina* which according to Malagasy thought, is inherent in everything from animate beings to inanimate things.\(^{33}\)

This interconnectedness gives special meaning to the fact that all the shepherd movements have emerged in contexts of particular social tension and hardships in Malagasy history. When exorcism in the name of Jesus is made available as a cure for *aretina* in its broad sense, Christianity’s realm is expanded in a very powerful and all-encompassing way, from down-up in society. In doing this, the shepherd movement founders interpret Christianity concretely into ordinary people’s central concerns for *fahasalamana*: health, wellbeing, happiness, peace – everything from individual, daily concerns to the cosmological order. God and Jesus are proclaimed as the strongest powers in the world, and humans have direct access to this power, through the shepherd movement leaders and the inaugurated shepherds’ special connection to God and Jesus through the exorcism ritual.

With the shepherd movements, Christianity enters an area in Malagasy cosmology which until then had primarily been occupied by traditional non-Christian ritual specialists. This combination of ancestral cosmology and orthodox Christianity is characteristic also for

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\(^{33}\) *Hasina*, which means power, vigour, fertility, potency, efficacy, holiness permeates all biological, physical, psychological, economical and political relations between living and dead individuals and their surroundings (Francoise Raison-Jourde, *Bible et pouvoir* 1991, p. 85). Connected to this, *hasina* also denotes ‘the essence of superior rank’ which differentiates people and kinship groups. For a more detailed discussion see Maurice Bloch, *Ritual, History and Power. Selected Papers in Anthropology* (The Athlone Press, London School of Economics 1989), p. 64 ff. Fines and royal tribute was also called *hasina*. (Gwyn Campbell, *An Economic History of Imperial Madagascar, 1750–1895* (Cambridge University Press 2005), pp. 90, 277).
popular Christianity in mainland Africa. Since all the founders of the shepherd movements had strong links to traditional Malagasy medicine, it is logical that they would interpret Christianity into this particular context. The shepherd movements’ diabolisation of all spirits (apart from the Holy Spirit) and the ensuing need to exorcise evil spirits in order to cure, overlap with the New Testament world view. From the very beginning in 1894, the shepherd movements started to exorcise according to Jesus’ direct example in the New Testament. Jesus’ command to his disciples to do the same legitimised and continues to legitimise the shepherd movements’ practice:

> Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick. (Luke 9, 1–2)

> Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. (James 5, 14–15)

When Rainisoalambo at the turn of the twentieth century sent out the first ‘Apostles’ from Soatanana to other parts of the Malagasy highlands, he underlined that they were both to preach, exorcise demons and heal in the name of Jesus. Not merely one of the things but all three things had to be carried out in faith. Later Rainisoalambo allegedly contrasted his ‘Apostles’ with other contemporary Christian preachers: “Do not do as current evangelists, they preach but do not heal and do not exorcise demons; you do everything!” Also Volahavana Germaine was called both to exorcise the devil and to preach the gospel.

Nineteenth-century main-line churches in Madagascar did not deal with problems of illness and health in this direct way. While they too

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35 Allegedly Rainisoalambo referred to these passages as he was sending out his first missionaries (A. Thunem, *Vækkelsen paa Madagaskar* (Det Norske Missionsselskaps forlag, 1926), pp. 58–59).

36 21st Century King James Version.


38 Ibid., pp. 61–62.
were indirectly connected to health and healing through the introduction of Western medicine and health work, the particular Malagasy understanding of illness – *aretina* – makes it evident why neither Western medicine nor main-line Christianity as it was practiced, could replace Malagasy ancestral medicine to most people.

Popular Christianity’s success lies both in its continuity and discontinuity with what has gone before.\(^{39}\) I have already mentioned the continuities which explain the shepherd movements’ success. Their significant break with Malagasy ancestral cosmology is the diabolisation of all ancestral spirits, and a corresponding dualistic division of the world into good and bad, into God’s and the Devil’s realms respectively. This seems to have another important consequence vis-a-vis ancestral cosmology. The power of *hasina* thought to permeate all living and inanimate things in the universe is fundamentally amoral and can cause good and harm, according to whether it is handled right or not. Therefore, all power tends to be thoroughly ambiguous within Malagasy cosmology.\(^{40}\)

It seems that dividing the world in two, with one good and one bad power, placing the shepherds and their exorcising activity on God’s good side, helps the shepherds and the shepherd movement-founders avoid the ambiguous and potentially dangerous aspect of power otherwise so prominent in Malagasy cosmology.

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**Extraordinary Ordinary People**

The shepherd movements’ leaders have a special connection with the divine through their personal calling. This is thought to empower him or her in a particularly strong way. People understand the shepherd movement leaders as people with unique knowledge and with direct contact with God and Jesus. This provides the founders with enormous

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authority, and explains both the founders’ particular prominent position and why the main shepherd movement centres become places of pilgrimage.

Parallel with the founders’ extraordinary position and quality, the movements’ narratives stress the fact that the revival leaders are ordinary, simple and humble individuals. Their lack of formal education is held forward as signs of the founder’s genuine calling; an ordinary person could not see and hear and do all the miraculous things that the founders do without a genuine contact with Jesus and God. While the special calling sets the shepherd movement-founders apart from other people, their ‘common’ point of departure nevertheless makes them more approachable for ordinary people. The founders too have felt the worries, difficulties, needs and happiness of the rank-and-file practitioner. Their humble point of departure also suggests that direct and special communication with the divine is potentially within reach for everybody.

Explicitly, qualities like humbleness, diligence, patience and modesty are generally held forth as some of the shepherd movement members’ characteristic virtues. Rainisoalambo allegedly emphasised humbleness in mind as well as humble demeanour through words, physical conduct and behaviour, and in clothing. Humbleness was also characteristic for Nenilava when she was not preaching, according to eyewitnesses. However, this humbleness and simplicity is combined with a strong sense of self-consciousness characteristic for the shepherd movements from the beginning to this day. In many sources this self-consciousness often comes indirectly to the fore, through the things the shepherd movement founders and -members do and say. Allegedly

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41 For instance, still today, more than a decade since her death, respect and awe continues to surround Volahavana Germaine’s name and person. The chapel in her house in the toby Ambohibao (in the capital Antananarivo) is called ‘the gate to heaven’ (vavahadin’ ny lanitra) (Skeie and Nielssen fieldnotes 2009).


44 Field interviews Skeie 2005 and Skeie and Nielssen 2009.
Rainisoalambo told his first missionaries: “You, who know nothing are to preach for teachers, elders and evangelists and warn great and small, foolish and wise.”45 And this they did – lay men and women, often poor and with little education, travelled around Madagascar teaching and reproaching high and low, pastors and European missionaries alike for what they considered to be non-Christian conduct. The shepherd movements’ direct connection and communication with the divine is of course a very powerful source of empowerment. This is probably the most important explanation for the movements’ strong sense of self-consciousness. Indeed, one can hardly overestimate the boundary-breaking power which lies in the notion of direct contact with the divine.

Because the shepherd movements were founded by Malagasy individuals, and because of their combination of ancestral and Christian cosmology, fifohazana Christianity and the shepherd movements have been portrayed as more ‘authentic’ and ‘indigenous’ than for instance main-line Malagasy churches, who appear more ‘foreign’ both in origin and expression.46 It follows from my introduction to this chapter why such normative positions are theoretically problematic and empirically wrong. Also, the categories ‘Malagasy’ and ‘foreign’ are dynamic categories constantly negotiated and changed; things which may be considered ‘foreign’ in one context can become Malagasy in another.47 For instance, in comparison with Catholic Christianity as the religion of the French colonial occupants, Protestant Christianity becomes the religion of the ancestors due to the connection with the nineteenth century Malagasy martyrs and the Kingdom of Madagascar.48 As for the long white robes which are the shepherds’ ritual garment, this can be considered Malagasy49, compared to the first Malagasy Lutheran pastoral robes,

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45 ‘Ny fanekena vaovao amin’ny anaran’ I Jesosy’ told by Rainisoalambo and written down by Radaniela (Rainisoalambo was illiterate), quoted in Thunem, Vækkelsen paa Madagaskar (Det Norske Missionsselskaps forlag, 1926), p. 60.
47 For a discussion of the dynamic dichotomy Malagasy–Vazaha, see Maurice Bloch, Placing the Dead: Tombs, Ancestral Villages, and Kinship Organization in Madagascar, p. 30 ff and Jennifer Cole, Forget Colonialism. Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar, pp. 221–222. I am indebted to Hilde Nielssen for suggestions on this point.
which were copies of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Norwegian pastoral robes. However, seen alongside Christian revival movements in Africa starting in the same period, the long, white robes appear less Malagasy and more part of a transnational garment code for revivalist Christianities with strong links to popular African Christianities. Before I can begin to analyse the relationship between main-line churches and the shepherd movements, I have to describe one final aspect of the shepherd movements’ cosmology and practice.

Rootedness

The fact that the shepherd movements are signified by their places of origin, points to a special rootedness, which is another significant new side of fifohazana Christianity. In Madagascar, ancestors are normally the key aspect of rootedness. Ancestors are connected to particular geographical locations, usually the places where the ancestral communal tombs are built and family members buried, but also to the location of houses and people’s (farming) land. This connection between ancestors and place at once creates and reflects people’s social identity. Much anthropological literature on Madagascar has shown how people’s relationship to ancestral places have been and indeed still is considered significant for constructing person-hood and identity, community and social order.50 Related to this rootedness is the distinction made between natives of the land (tera-tany/tompo-tany) and guests/outsiders (vahiny).51 The fact that identity, community and social order are so

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Madagascar’s Indigenous Christian Movement, p. 87.) claims this as one of Rainisoalambo’s Malagasy influences on the church, p. 20.


closely connected to ancestors and place generally makes social mobility difficult for people who are considered outsiders.52

The shepherd movements create a new and different kind of rootedness. The direct connection and communication with the divine made – and continues to make – the surpassing of existing boundaries and power hierarchies in Malagasy society possible for people within the shepherd movements. These are boundaries connected to social position, ancestors, seniority, class, education, gender, ethnicity or race. In this sense the shepherd movements’ particular form of empowerment implies a de-ancestralisation of people’s identity and community, and the creation of a fundamentally new beginning. One current shepherd explained that the shepherd movements give people a chance to break off, whether it is from a destructive life, different taboos, fear, or old gender roles. The fact that female shepherds can lay their hands on top of the head of men irrespective of these men’s social standing, was given as one radical example of how the shepherd movements are able to transgress existing gender and social hierarchies and create a new social order in ways that few - if any other movements can.53

This new and de-ancestralised rootedness is reflected in the historical sources in different ways. Among the shepherd movements’ strongest ideals reported from the very beginning, is equal treatment of everybody, strangers or family. Allegedly, the Biblical commandment from John 13 was the first and last in all of Rainisoalambo’s teaching: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”54 In a social and cultural system built on the fundamental distinction between natives of the land (tera-tany) and guests/outsiders (vahiny), treating strangers and family without distinction was radical and new. On this point, Rainisoalambo’s teaching and practice simultaneously re-enacted the fifohazana movement as the first Christians described in the New Testament and as a new extended family in the Malagasy social and cultural context.55

52 Sandra Evers, Constructing History, Culture and Inequality. The Betsileo in the Extreme Southern Highlands of Madagascar (Brill 2002) and David Graeber, Lost People. Magic and the Legacy of Slavery in Madagascar (Indiana University Press, 2007).
53 Skeie and Nielsens, field notes 2009.
54 John 13, 34–35.
55 Arguably, also the aspect of biological family-ties were important in the Soatanana movement’s initial phase, as Rainisoalambo’s family and kin were among his first supporters.
Using the Bible as a direct model for life,\textsuperscript{56} the shepherd movement center (toby) was made into a community sharing everything: faith, work, meals, what was sold, what was bought, even ownership. Money and land was to belong to the shepherd movement, not to any individual.\textsuperscript{57} The subsequent fifohazana movements have continued this practice. In this way, the people of the fifohazana become like the first Christians, and- from their point of view also the new, true Christians in Madagascar.

There are several signs that may be interpreted as support for the notion that the shepherd movements constitute a new family. The shepherd movement founders are called ‘father’ and ‘mother’, and the shepherds in the Ankaramalaza shepherd movement refer to themselves as Neni’s children. Marriages across familial and ethnic boundaries are generally more frequent within the fifohazana movements than outside it. The same is true for burial in individual tombs.\textsuperscript{58} In the Ankaramalaza movement this new family-aspect has been rather strong in several respects. Nenilava (‘tall mother’) was a very active matchmaker while she lived. She very often disregarded the boundaries which (still) tend to be decisive for marriages in most areas in Madagascar. Yet, Nenilava also created a new family around her in another sense. Jesus is said to have promised to give Nenilava many descendants, fulfilling the promise from Isaiah 54,1: “Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.”\textsuperscript{59} Nenilava never gave birth to any child. However, a number of children were brought to Nenilava as babies, to

\textsuperscript{56} This exemplifies another aspect common for popular Christianity: the local appropriation of biblical accounts by making them into African texts. The fact that not everybody can read does not alter this. As Christianity and the Bible becomes widely distributed, biblical stories become part of people’s oral repertoire, and not merely within the organised churches (David Maxwell (ed.) with Ingrid Lawrie, Christianity and the African Imagination. Essays in Honour of Adrian Hastings (Brill, 2002), pp. 13–15.)

\textsuperscript{57} A. Thunem, Vækkelsen paa Madagaskar (Stavanger, Det Norske Missionsselskaps forlag, 1926), pp. 57–58.

\textsuperscript{58} Several places in Madagascar practice burial in familial tombs. This is a central aspect of the particular Malagasy identity politics connected to ancestral land. Historically, the fact that only criminals and witches were buried outside the family tomb made it difficult for the foreign missionaries to insist on individual tombs for Christian converts.

be legally adopted by her and brought up as her children. For example, the present (2009) leader of the fifohazana-department in the Malagasy Lutheran Church, Germain Andrianarijaona Rajaofera, was the second child given to be adopted by Nenilava. Both his father and grandfather were prominent revivalist pastors in the Malagasy Lutheran church. He was allegedly given to Nenilava in fulfilment of a prophecy once made by his grandfather, Rajaofera.

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**The Norwegian Mission and ‘The Revival Within Our Mission’**

The Soatanana shepherd movement emerged in 1894 in an area in Southern Betsileo where the Norwegian mission was working. The Lutheran churches in highland Madagascar were administered by the Norwegian mission until 1950. Therefore the Norwegian missionaries’ attitudes to the shepherd movements became highly influential for the general relationship between the shepherd movements and main-line Lutheran Churches in Madagascar.

When the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) took up work in Madagascar in 1866, their ultimate goal was to create an independent national church. In practice, the Norwegian missionaries worked hard, yet contradactorily and inconsistently towards this goal, as did their contemporary Protestant colleagues in and beyond Madagascar. Neither the Norwegian missionary-community, nor the missionaries and the Malagasy Lutherans agreed what it implied to create an independent Malagasy Lutheran church, nor how long time it was supposed to take.

Some of the Norwegian missionaries thought there was only so much foreigners could do while they waited for God to raise up a Malagasy
person who could touch the “deepest and most sensitive strings” of the Malagasy hearts.  

The Norwegian missionaries came from a Norwegian Lutheran state church which in the course of the nineteenth century had been profoundly influenced by the inclusion of a strong Pietist lay revival of Norwegian origin called Haugianism. Some missionaries were more profoundly influenced by this revival than others. One of them was missionary Theodor Olsen, who worked in the Soatanana district. He was the first to report on Rainisoalambo and what later developed into fifoha-hazana Soatanana. “There is, without a doubt something from God in this phenomenon, something brought about by God’s spirit and not by humans,” Olsen wrote in his account February 6th 1896. Also Martin Julius Meeg who returned to Soatanana mission station in 1896, welcomed the movement as a Malagasy example of the general Christian revival phenomenon, and sought closer contact and cooperation with Rainisoalambo and his Disciples. It is claimed that Meeg played a role in encouraging the consolidation and expansion of fifoha-hazana Soatanana. Since Meeg was among the missionaries who worked most actively for greater Malagasy influence and self-governance in the Lutheran church, this is not unlikely.

There were different attitudes to the shepherd movements among the Norwegian missionaries, both in the field and in the home organisation in Norway. Even Lars Dahle, who had expressed hopes for a genuinely Malagasy revival some twenty years earlier, was not fully convinced after having met Rainisoalambo in person and heard him preach during Dahle’s journey of inspection to Madagascar in 1903. However, the

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65 Lars Dahle, Madagaskar og dets beboere (Christiania, 1877), vol. 2, p. 355. See also Hilde Nielssen’s chapter in this book. Other missionaries expressed similar thoughts at other points in time, for instance Martin J. Meeg ‘Om Kirkeorganisationen paa Madagaskar (‘On church-organisation in Madagascar’) in Nordisk Missionstidsskrift, vol. 5, 1903, pp. 58–68; p. 68.
66 For more details see Karina Hestad Skeie, Building God’s Kingdom in Highland Madagascar, 2005, p. 70.
68 Meeg had previously worked at Soatanana between 1881–1891. Theodor Olsen took over in 1991–96, while the Meeg family were on furlough in Norway.
70 Lars Dahle, Inspektionsreisen til Zulu og Madagaskar i 1903. Indberetning til Generalforsamlingen i Bergen 1941 (Stavanger, Det norske Missionsselskabs Forlag, 1904).
general Norwegian missionary recognition of the Soatanana revival as a genuinely Christian revival was important. From the beginning the movement was encouraged and welcomed into the churches and congregations, and this in turn contributed to the movement’s expansion and influence into different areas in Madagascar.71

While the Norwegian missionaries recognise the Soatanana-revival and the subsequent shepherd movements’ independent (and divine) point of departure, they nevertheless systematically connect these and other revivals within the Lutheran churches to the Norwegian mission by representing the missionary work as having prepared the ground for the revivals. Making the shepherd movements and other Malagasy church revivals into direct fruits of the missionary work, can be seen as the mission’s appropriation of the fifohazana, not least because this understanding had important consequences for the missionaries’ understanding of the relationship between themselves, the churches and the shepherd movements. Interpreting the shepherd movements as fruits of the missionary work, gave the missionaries ownership and responsibility for the shepherd movements, and, according to themselves, a right and duty to supervise and decide what was best for the shepherd movements. Some missionaries even considered missionary supervision a precondition for the shepherd movements’ sound development and continued strength.72 (According to pastors in the Malagasy Lutheran church, the missionaries still tend to want to rule and decide.)73

The missionaries sought to contain and control the shepherd movements’ boundary breaking powers within the structures of the church. Among other things, they insisted on the importance of biblical instruction of the shepherd movement leaders, the ritual specialists and missionaries. Also, the missionaries challenged what they considered to be unsound aspects of the movements’ practice, for instance the special position the movement founders tended to have. Understanding the

71 ‘Apostles’ and ‘iraka’ (‘messengers’) were sent from Soatanana to other areas in and beyond the highlands at the turn of the twentieth century, to teach and exorcise. Everywhere they were welcomed in Protestant churches and assembly houses, drawing large crowds.

72 This view is consistent through a long period of time, expressed for instance in Johannes Johnson, Det første Hundredaar av Madagaskar’s kirkehistorie (Stavanger, Det norske Missionsselskaps forlag, 1914); A. Thunem, Vekkelsen paa Madagaskar (Stavanger, Det Norske Missionsselskaps forlag, 1926); Gabriel Nakkestad, Med smil i gråt på Øst-Madagaskar (Oslo, Luther Forlag, 1978) to mention a few.

73 Karina Hestad Skeie field-interview 2007.
shepherd movements in terms of a general Christian revival in an important sense made the individual movements less unique. Insisting on the Malagasy shepherd movements’ similarity with other minor revivals within the main-line churches in the same period, can also be seen as an effort to play down tendencies within the shepherd movements to nurture an understanding of being set apart and unique.

From the missionary point of view, the recognisable transnational revivalist features of shepherd movement cosmology and practice were most cherished and encouraged: the ethical message to seek a strong personal relationship with God, and make clean and decisive breaks with certain aspects of ancestral cosmology and practice. What the missionaries considered as the fifohazana’s “national particularities”74, for instance the exorcism and healing-activities, and “nervous, extatic phenomena” connected to this practice, were tolerated but closely watched.75 The shepherd movements’ enchanted world view, their particular understanding of illness and the way the world was thought of as fundamentally permeated by spiritual forces not merely corresponded to Malagasy ancestral cosmology but also to biblical cosmology in the New Testament. Both the Norwegian missionaries and French colonialists tended to understand the shepherd movements’ strong sense of self-consciousness as an assertion of national pride, and thus something to be discouraged.76

The Relationship Between Shepherd Movements and Main-Line Churches

In what sense did the shepherd movements become part of the main-line Lutheran church, and how was this relationship understood from the point of view of the shepherd movements and from the church and mission respectively?

74 Johannes Johnson, *Det første Hundredaar av Madagaskar's kirkehistorie* (Stavanger, Det norske Missionsselskaps forlag, 1914), p. 143.
75 According to the Norwegian missionary Johannes Johnson, British LMS missionaries refused to accept healing through exorcism altogether. Johnsons kirkelhistorie. This of course requires verification from LMS sources.
All the shepherd movements developed within a colonial context.\textsuperscript{77} Between 1896 and 1950, independent Malagasy-led organisations were prohibited. Highly weary of potential anti-colonial Malagasy movements, the French colonial government closely watched whether the Lord’s disciples encouraged anti-French political engagement. Not least at the turn of the twentieth century, ‘the Apostles’ and the ‘messengers’ (\textit{iraka}) were arrested and fined for their activities.\textsuperscript{78} Formal Norwegian missionary leadership of the shepherd movements was required by the French colonial government in the colonial period. The missionary-led main-line Lutheran church therefore constituted an important space for the existence of local expressions of Christianity like the \textit{fifohazana} in colonial Madagascar. In reality, the shepherd movements also had their own leadership independently of the Norwegian mission throughout this period. Efforts on the Norwegian part to unite the shepherd movements’ economy with church- (and mission) economy, were turned down in various ways.\textsuperscript{79}

While cooperation with the mission-led main-line churches was necessary for the shepherd movements during colonial times, there was an option to become independent after 1950. In 1950 the Malagasy Lutheran Church got its formal organisational independence from the Norwegian mission, and in 1954/55 the largest part of the Soatanana shepherd movement seceded and became an independent church. This break was the result of decades with power struggles between the shepherd movements, the Norwegian mission and the Malagasy Lutheran church.\textsuperscript{80} However, not only did the majority of the shepherd movements chose to stay within main-line churches. The formal relationship between the shepherd movements and main-line Protestant churches was strengthened after Madagascar became independent from France in 1960. In 1965 the four shepherd movements were officially united in a

\textsuperscript{77} This is true also for the Soatanana movement, which began one year before Madagascar became occupied by the French.

\textsuperscript{78} A. Thunem, \textit{Vækkelsen paa Madagaskar} (Stavanger, Det Norske Missionsselskaps forlag, 1926), p. 67ff.


joint Protestant *fifohazana* committee called *fifohazana* FFPM, a committee which still exists.\(^{81}\)

Today both ordinary people and scholars tend to place each of the shepherd movements in specific main-line churches. *Fifohazana* Manolotrony is considered part of the Reformed Church (FJKM), and the three others are viewed as part of the Lutheran Church (FLM).\(^{82}\) When asked, pastors, shepherds and lay people alike find it significant that shepherd movements are part of main-line churches. If not, people say, the shepherd movements would become ‘sects,’ and sects are not considered to be a good thing. Currently, all the four recognised shepherd movements are formally included in their respective main-line churches’ organisation, while at the same time constituting a separate organisational entity independently of the churches. Each of the shepherd movements elect their own leadership, and also have a separate economy from the church organisation.

At the moment it is harder than ever to tell where the line goes between the shepherd movement and the main-line church, not least because an increasing number of Lutheran pastors have been inaugurated as shepherds during the last 2–3 decades. During the same period, an increasing number of lay people have also become inaugurated shepherds. The majority of these are women – in a church which educates but does not yet ordain female theologians. Currently, shepherds are found at all levels in the church hierarchy, not least in the central and regional administration of the Lutheran Church and in leading positions in church institutions within health care, education, and evangelisation.\(^{83}\) The majority of shepherds belong to *fifohazana* Ankaramalaza connected to Nenilava, albeit Soatanana and Farimihena both seem to have been revitalised through Ankaramalaza’s popularity. The shepherd


\(^{83}\) Karina Hestad Skeie field work Madagascar 2007 and Karina Hestad Skeie and Hilde Niesssen field work Madagascar 2009.
movements’ prominent position in the Malagasy Lutheran church is also reflected in the fact that in the course of the last five years fifohazana’s main ritual of exorcism and strengthening has been included on a regular weekly and monthly basis as part of Lutheran congregational activity, also in the main Lutheran areas in the highlands.

The shepherd movements’ very prominent current position within main-line Lutheran churches in Madagascar, makes it easy to forget that it has not always been like this. For most of the nineteenth century, the typical shepherd was a poor peasant with little formal education. Today, all categories of people become shepherds; people of low income and little education and people with doctoral degrees from the USA. As a group within the church the shepherd movements constituted an important albeit marginal group. While many Malagasy pastors were spiritually influenced by the shepherd movements and other revivals, the theologically trained pastors had more influence than the shepherds on the church’s life and mission, at least until ca. 1970–1980, when an increasing number of fifohazana supporters and inaugurated shepherds subsequently became Lutheran theologians and pastors. Indeed, it was not merely missionaries who were critical to aspects of the shepherd movements in the colonial period.

The shepherd movements directly and indirectly challenged several aspects of main-line Christianity at the time. Firstly, the founders’ uneducated point of departure broke the intrinsic connection between Western education and Christianity that had existed in Madagascar until then. From the very beginning, Christianity was introduced in the Malagasy context through schools and the teaching of literacy. However, the shepherd movements’ emphasis on direct divine contact, opened up an alternative Christian knowledge independent from schools and literacy, an alternative which in principle was open to everybody. The pastor and the shepherd represented different types of Christian knowledge which potentially challenged each other’s power and authority. With time, the power balance has shifted between the pastors and the shepherds. Today it is not self-evident that it is the one with most formal education who has the most authority. Statements like ‘Pastors are from


“abroad”’ and “shepherds are from “above”’86 brings in the Malagasy–Vazaha dichotomy in the power discussion between the two, and not to the advantage of the pastors. However, such normative positions ignore the long indigenisation process which has taken place also within main-line church Christianity in Madagascar.

Different breaks and continuities between the local and the global are important at different points in time. Both the school education and the conceptual continuities between the old and the new worship were decisive for the initial appropriation of Christianity in the Malagasy highlands. The Kingdom of Madagascar’s appropriation of Protestant Christianity as state religion from 1869 onwards, transformed Christianity into a Malagasy religion for all posterity. At the same time, this connected a certain Protestant Christianity intimately to Merina royalty and more generally to the Merina ethnic group. The facts that all the shepherd movements emerged outside Imerina,87 and that all the shepherd movement founders belong to other ethnic groups than the historically dominant Merina, created a type of Christianity in Madagascar which was not connected to the Merina royals and the Merina ethnic group. During the French colonisation of Madagascar, ethnicity gained particular significance as a political identity category. One of the first acts of the French colonial government was to divide the peoples of Madagascar into ‘ethnies’ according to peoples’ customs and the main areas where they lived. The colonial administration’s aim was to facilitate colonial rule. In doing this, the French created essentialised ethnicities from what used to be more fluid political groupings. Still today, the ethnic categories exist88 and are sometimes used in the struggle for power and influence in Malagasy society.

Today, the importance of ethnicity is generally underplayed on an every day level, but tends to surface whenever difficult issues of power and influence arise. When I asked several shepherds whether it mattered that Nenilava was not Merina, the majority answered that it did not matter. Only one burst into laughter and replied spontaneously: “If she had been a Merina, we would not have followed her.”89 Then, the statement

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87 *Imerina* is the name of the land of the Merina, i.e. the area around the capital Antananarivo.
89 Karina Hestad Skeie, field-notes 2007.
was qualified: It would not have mattered now. Within the particular colonial and immediate post colonial context, the shepherd movements’ ethnic aspect was perhaps more significant than it is today. Once established, the shepherd movements have worked hard and quite successfully to transcend also the boundaries of ethnicity, as I discussed earlier.

Despite these aspects of *fifohazana* cosmology and practice which directly and indirectly challenged church-Christianity, there are strong and long-term historical links between the shepherd movements and the Malagasy Lutheran church. One thing is the mission’s efforts to keep the movements within the church. Another thing is the concrete manner in which *fifohazana* religiosity has influenced clergy and laypeople within the church for more than a century, culminating in Nenilava’s deliberate policy to make a number of her supporters and shepherds into Lutheran pastors, and her adoption of prominent Lutheran pastors’ children. A third significant factor, is *Fifohazana* Farihimena which is – compared to the other three movements, a shepherd movement erupting from within the Lutheran church. Probably reflecting the founder’s more educated and theological point of departure, this movement was also different from the other three in the relative primacy given to the feeling of guilt from sin, to repentance, and to spiritual rather than bodily salvation. In these respects, *fifohazana* Farihimena in its initial phase was more similar in expression to revivals in Europe than the other shepherd movements. However, the difference between Farihimena and the three others should not be exaggerated. It is a difference in relative importance between elements and themes present in all *fifohazanas*; there were certainly also miracles of soteriological healing in *fifohazana* Farihimena. Rather than contrasting the shepherd movements’ particular practice and cosmology to church-Christianity, the fact that they have existed side by side for so long has in fact expanded Malagasy Christianity in highly potent ways. Not least is this true for Malagasy Christian cosmology and practice, including the notion of salvation, illness and misfortune. How has the relationship and cooperation with the Malagasy Lutheran Church and the Norwegian mission been understood from the point of view of the shepherd movements?

**Appropriating the Mission and the Church?**

There is an interesting difference in detail between the Malagasy and the Norwegian sources’ description of Nenilava’s calling moment. In the
French translation, which I have quoted in the beginning of this paper, Nenilava received the command to evangelise ‘à toute la création’ starting in Madagascar.\(^90\) In the Norwegian version Nenilava receives the call to evangelise ‘this entire area’ and to honour the Son of Man among the Malagasy people.\(^91\) There is clear evidence that Nenilava understood her mission to be both within and beyond the borders of Madagascar. Until the 1950s it seems Nenilava primarily worked on the east coast. In 1953 she started ‘holy crusades’ in the Antsirabe-area and subsequently also in other places all over Madagascar and in the Comores.\(^92\) In 1973 she travelled to Norway, France and the United States.\(^93\) Financial support and logistical support from believers and the Norwegian and American Lutheran missions in Madagascar, made possible this gradual transition from small East-coast movement into a national and even transnational movement.\(^94\) In 1973\(^95\) she moved from Ankaramalaza and made the capital Antananarivo her new headquarter. She established a house-congregation and toby in an area called 67H. Later she was also to establish another toby at Ambohibao in the outskirts of Antananarivo. There are currently some 55 shepherd movement centres (toby) in different places in Madagascar, and also one in Pouru Saint Rémy in France.\(^96\)

The shepherd movements’ willingness to cooperate with main-line churches – both Protestant and others\(^97\) - has been described as an inter-denominational and ecumenical feature of the fifohazana movements. According to the shepherd movements’ self-understanding, I think it is more precise to speak of the shepherd movements as transdenominational. The direct contact with the divine gave the shepherd movements

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\(^{91}\) Gabriel Nakkestad, Med smil i gråt på Øst-Madagaskar, pp. 154–155.

\(^{92}\) ‘Holy crusade’ (tafika masina) is the general term for Nenilava’s and also the Lutheran Church’s evangelising journeys. Linnea Borgenvik, I vekkelsens spor, p. 113; Gabriel Nakkestad, Med smil i gråt på Øst-Madagaskar, pp. 165ff.

\(^{93}\) Troisième partie: ‘Bref historique du mouvement de reveil d’Ankaramalaza’ in Histoire et témoignages Ankaramalaza Germaine Volahavana Nenilava, p. 158.


\(^{95}\) Ibid., however, according to others this was in 1975. Skeie and Nielssen field-interviews 2009.


\(^{97}\) Laurent W. Ramambason, Missiology: Its Subject-Matter and Method (Peter Lang, 1999), p. 72ff.
an authority which effectively transcended all existing (mundane) categories and power hierarchies. Seeing themselves as a community based on the New Testament model of the first Christians, the shepherd movements’ Christianity in one sense becomes ‘pre-denominational’. Together this creates a base for cooperation with anybody without succumbing to the others’ authority. Instead of constraining the shepherd movements, the cooperation with the Norwegian Mission and the Lutheran Church increased all the shepherd movements’ power and scope. This is particularly true of Nenilava and her work. The transdenominational cooperation resulted in holy crusades all over Madagascar and eventually also abroad. The parallel to current Pentecostal movements’, such as ZAOGA of Zimbabwe, for instance, is evident.  

Volahavana Germaine, founder of fifohazana Ankaramalaza receives St. Olav’s medal of honour from the Norwegian ambassador Fougner, assisted by consul Eidesen, September 1967 during the 100-year jubilee for the Norwegian mission in Madagascar. (Photo: Borgenvik, Johannes. Source: MHS-MA_A-1045_Uc-000379. Mission Archives, School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway)
When the Norwegian mission began their more formal cooperation with Nenilava’s shepherd movement from the 1950s onwards, struggles for decolonisation and national independence challenged European missionaries everywhere. Nenilava’s cooperation with the Norwegian mission, not merely the Malagasy Lutheran church, meant a lot, both on an organisational and on a personal level for the Norwegian missionaries who came in contact with her. \textsuperscript{99} International preoccupation with ecumenism and contextual theology emphasising the theological appropriation of the Christian message, actualised and legitimised the shepherd movements’ Christianity in new ways, both in Madagascar and in Norway. According to one pastor in the Malagasy Lutheran Church, the pastors who sympathised with the shepherd movement tended to be ridiculed and challenged before the mid 1970ies. Today, he estimates that maybe eighty – eighty five percent of the pastors in the Malagasy Lutheran Church have their roots in or are part of the shepherd movements. \textsuperscript{100} In the missions’ post-colonial redefinition of their tasks, described in detail with regard to Canadian missionaries by Ruth Compton Brouwer in this book, Nenilava’s preoccupation with education and health probably further facilitated the Norwegian mission’s and other external actors’ continuous support for her ministry. \textsuperscript{101}

Conclusion

The shepherd movements have come to epitomise Christian revival in Malagasy Christianity. While it is evident that the mission has sought to appropriate the shepherd movement at different points in history, it is equally clear that the shepherd movements can be claimed to have appropriated the church and the mission in the last few decades. Rather than seeing the different movements and parties in opposition to each other, I have tried to show how cooperation created synergies and momentum to all, and how each of the parties profoundly influenced and was influenced by the others. The fact that their relationship was understood differently by the different parties was not an obstacle for successful cooperation. With each party primarily preoccupied and encompassed in their own perspective, it didn’t really matter whether the missionaries fully understood the shepherds and vice versa.

\textsuperscript{99} Personal communication, Norwegian missionary Helena Trydal 2009.
\textsuperscript{100} Skeie and Nielssen, field work 2009.
\textsuperscript{101} Historire et temoignages, pp. 158ff.
CHAPTER NINE

A “GOOD AND BLESSED FATHER”
YONAN OF ADA ON JUSTIN PERKINS, URMIA (IRAN), 1870

Heleen Murre-van den Berg

It is difficult to overestimate his labors, continued now for more than a third of a century, or the value of his experience. It is a gratification to him, and to us all, that he can leave us in the atmosphere of revivals; and that, after he is gone, the many works from his pen will continue to speak to the people whom he loved. But many will sorrow at his leaving Persia, and most of all that they shall see his face no more.1

John. H. Shedd, missionary in Urmia in the northwestern province of Azerbaijan in Persia, wrote these lines in a note to his employers in 1869. The note refers to his fellow missionary Justin Perkins, who had returned home after a missionary career of thirty-five years. Perkins died in that same year, at the 31st of December. In the following year, missionary administrator Rufus Anderson, in the first comprehensive history of the missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) who had sponsored the mission in Urmia, styled him the “father of the Nestorian mission” and “the Apostle to the Nestorians,”2 honoring his continuous presence from the early beginnings of this mission and his crucial role in transmitting Evangelically-attuned Protestantism to the Christians of the Church of the East. This positive reception of Perkins’ contribution was reiterated by his only surviving son, Henry Martyn Perkins, in a hagiographical work that was published in 1887.3

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2 Anderson, History II, pp. 304, 322.
While there can be little doubt about the depth and breadth of Perkins’ contribution to the Urmia mission with regard to the development of the Syriac language and literature as well as more generally to the mission’s theological stance and practical policies, this article seeks to understand his influence not from the perspective of his fellow missionaries or home board administrators, but from the local recipients of his mission. This is possible because, almost uniquely in nineteenth-century mission history, a local perspective on Perkins’ contribution has been preserved. It is this that forms the basis of the present chapter.

So far it has been difficult to retrieve the voices of those that were missionized in the nineteenth century, even if critical reading of mostly unpublished missionary reports has yielded a wealth of information on the local reception of Western missions. Especially in cases where missionaries introduced writing, local texts that reflect on the missions usually lag behind a good many decades to the start of the missions.

This is also true for the “Nestorian Mission” of the ABCFM in Urmia, one of the many mission posts that this organization maintained in the Middle East from the middle of the 1830s. This mission, which at its high point comprised a foreign missionary community of about fifteen people was active among those who today call themselves the Assyrians of the Church of the East but were then usually referred to as the “Nestorians”. Concerning the introduction of writing, the missions in the Middle East were atypical: in Urmia missionaries learned to write the local languages from the Assyrian clergy rather than the other way round. However, by popularizing the writing of the vernacular, the missionaries not only encouraged the non-clerical segments of the population to take up writing, but also stimulated the writing of texts other than the texts from the ancient liturgical and scholarly traditions. Thus, like elsewhere, it took some time before Assyrian Christians started to write about the missions that had changed the life of their community.
The first pieces of writing that were preserved in the context of the “Nestorian Mission” were published in the 1840s, in the local missionary magazine, Zahrîre d-Bahra (‘Rays of Light’). These are anonymous pieces, some of which can be traced to Assyrian pupils in the schools. Most, however, cannot be ascribed with certainty to a specific author. What is more, in style and content these pieces are difficult to distinguish from the writings of the missionaries – which is not so strange, because missionaries and converts were closely cooperating and probably copying each other: the missionaries’ Neo-Aramaic was corrected and rewritten by local converts, whereas the converts in their stories were imitating American Protestant vocabulary and style. In addition, we must assume that pieces written by converts were copy-edited by the missionaries before publication, although it is difficult to know to what extent this was the case.

Whereas a further reflection on the writing of local converts should include these anonymous pieces that were printed in Zahrîre d-Bahra, in this contribution I will discuss one particular piece of writing which may well be the first lengthy, public and local reflection on the American mission in Urmia, Iran. It is called “Sermon on the death of Mister Perkins, by Shamasha Yonan of Ada.” The introductory paragraph tells us that it contains a sermon which was held when “the news came to us from America, […] that he, good and blessed father, he, the old general in the battle of Zion, Mr. Perkins, has put down his head to rest.” Considering his death at the end of the year 1869, the sermon probably was held in the first half of the year 1870 and printed on the mission press in Urmia in the same year. The sermon is a classical funeral eulogy, dwelling on the life and merits of the missionary rather than critically analyzing his work. It is, therefore, but one out of many
possible voices and reflections on the missionary work that had started in the late 1830s and by 1870 was firmly established in the region.

In the following, I will analyze this sermon thematically in order to understand more of the local reception of the missionaries, in particular of the person Justin Perkins. I will focus on to the text of the sermon, leaving a discussion of its wider context for a later occasion. Before discussing the most important themes of the sermon, a short summary is in place.

“A Sermon on the Death of Mr. Perkins”

The tract is written in the local Neo-Aramaic vernacular of the Christians (“Modern Syriac”), which through the schools, Bible translations and printing press of the missionaries had become a major vehicle of learning and writing among the Assyrians of the region. In print, the tract consists of almost sixteen pages. The preacher was Yonan, of the village of Ada. He is honored by the title shamasha, which indicates that he had attained the rank of deacon in the Church of the East. This implies that Yonan, alongside his education with the missionaries, had learned to recite the deacon’s parts of the liturgy, and, in the process, learned to read the liturgical language of church, the Classical Syriac. Missionary sources indicate that Yonan was involved in the work of the Bible translation into the modern language, and had been taught Hebrew and Greek by Justin Perkins. In 1846, Perkins compared him with another bright Assyrian assistant, Yosep of Digalah, writing that Yonan was “quite young, but […] little, if at all, inferior to Joseph, in talent and promise.” Yonan might have been in his mid-teens when joining the translation project about 1845, and about forty at the time of this sermon in 1870. He died in 1880.

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9 A vast number of printed and archival sources is available for the history of this mission, see the bibliographical references in the monographs mentioned in n. 1; despite these earlier studies, much of the history of the American mission in Urmia remains in the dark, including most details of the lives of Justin Perkins and his Assyrian co-workers.

10 A copy of the Syriac text is preserved in the collection of the Andover-Harvard library of the Divinity School (Cambridge, MA), as part of a considerable collection of printed publications of the mission in this and other holdings of Harvard University; I refer to this text with page numbers (part of the printed text) and line numbers (added by me).

The Reverend Justin Perkins (b. 1805), a graduate of Andover seminary and tutor in Amherst (Massachusetts), was the pioneer missionary of the Urmia mission. In 1835, he established the mission in Urmia, together with his wife Charlotte (née Bass, 1808–1897). They were soon afterwards joined by a missionary physician and his wife, Asahel and Judith (née Campbell) Grant. Unlike most others of the first missionary generation, Perkins survived the early years and lived in Urmia until 1869, when he was 64.12

Until 1843, the “Nestorian Mission” did reasonably well, growing to a group of about sixteen missionaries, male and female. In that year, a political crisis resulted in the massacre of Assyrian Christians by a Kurdish force in the Hakkari Mountains. In the next year disagreements over mission policy led to the departure of some of the missionary families. From 1845 onwards, things started to improve and early in 1846 the first revival took place. A number of Assyrian Christians, mostly young adult men and women in the secondary school in Urmia, experienced a conversion along Evangelical lines. Later in the same year, the vernacular translation of the New Testament came from the press. Slowly a Protestant community emerged, of which Yonan became an influential member – so much so that in 1870, he apparently was the most obvious person to conduct the memorial service for Perkins.13

As said, Yonan’s sermon fits well in the genre of funeral sermons, describing Perkins’ life, his character, and his missionary work in a fundamentally positive way. Yonan does this with the help of a single Bible verse, a characteristic feature of Protestant sermons. In this case, the

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Society x/2 (1996) pp. 3–17, 8–9, Murre-van den Berg, From a Spoken to a Written Language, 100, n.83, pp. 105, 107; compare also Yonan’s reference in this sermon (12.4): “I was assisting him from the beginning of the translation of the New and Old”.

12 On the first years of the missions, see further the memoirs written by Perkins and Grant: Asahel Grant, The Nestorians or the Lost Tribes (London, 1841); Justin Perkins, A Residence of Eight Years in Persia among the Nestorian Christians with Notices of the Muhammedans (Andover: Allen, Morrill & Wardwell, 1843); idem, Missionary Life in Persia: Being Glimpses of a Quarter of a Century of Labors among the Nestorian Christians (Boston: American Tract Society, 1861).

verse from Acts 11,24 is little more than a motto, taken out of context, which without further hermeneutical ado is applied to Perkins: “Because he was a good man, and filled with the Holy Spirit and faith, and many people were added to the people of the Lord.” Although the key elements of this verse, “Holy Spirit”, “faith” and “adding to the people of the Lord”, are important themes of the sermon, the verse or parts of it are quoted not more than three times. Only once Barnabas, a co-worker of the apostle Paul and the person to which the verse originally referred, is mentioned. Obviously, at least on this occasion, biblical exposition was not Yonan’s main objective.

The sermon is divided into four main parts. The first part consists of an introduction followed by three paragraphs on Perkins’ earlier life, with the following titles: “1. The lifetime of Mr. Perkins and the purpose of his coming to Persia”, “2. Difficulties that beset his path” and “3. How he found our fathers when he arrived in our nation”. In these paragraphs, Yonan sets the context of this sermon (“a very sorrowful task”), Perkins’ strong motivation to come to Iran (“my heart was very excited”), what awaited him (“the wild countries and nations of the Kurds and the Yezidees and the Muslims”) and the situation in which he found the Syrian people (“this wild and ignorant nation”).

The second part focuses on Perkins himself, under the fourth heading, “What were the special characteristics of this good man?” In seven paragraphs, Perkins is described in seven key words or phrases: simplicity, generosity, nobility, trustworthiness, love and zeal for the Syrian nation, love for the sake of God in this nation, and, finally, sensitivity. This part, like the preceding one, is concluded by a reference to the verse from Acts: “he was a man filled with the Holy Spirit and faith.”

In the third part of the sermon this character description is complemented by a description of Perkins’ actual missionary work, with a focus on his two basic tasks: preaching and writing. According to Yonan, Perkins was loved for his moving sermons, in which he presented Jesus Christ as a living reality to his hearers, leaving his hearers

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14 The wording corresponds with the Bible translation of 1893; I have not been able to check the translation of 1846, or the revisions of 1854 and 1860. On the different versions, see Murre-van den Berg, From a Spoken to a Written Language, pp. 100–1, 108–9.

15 See the first half in 4.21–22, 5.9, 10.10, and an even shorter reference in 9.11.

16 1.1–5.15.

17 10.9–10.

18 10.9–10; see also 4.21–2.
“with eyes streaming with tears: they entered as sinners, and came out full of hope.” Just as important were his continuous and often nightly labors to produce books in the modern language. Among these, the Bible translation ranked first: “Look in every house and in every church, from the mountains to the plains and valleys, from the hamlets to the villages and towns – the labors of Mr. Perkins have filled them with the Holy Scriptures.” In addition, Yonan mentioned several biblical commentaries and translations of a number of Puritan classics, like the Pilgrim’s Progress by John Bunyan, The Saints’ Rest by Richard Baxter and Phillip Doddridge’s, The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul.

The fourth part of the sermon mainly consists of a long quotation from a letter from a former missionary in Urmia, Miss Susan Rice. This letter may have been the one that brought the news of Perkins’ demise. Rice’s description of the last weeks of Perkins’ life and his last words of advice for the Syrians are quoted at length. In conclusion, Yonan adds a few words of his own, stressing once more Perkins’ great contribution to the Syrian people.

Whereas at first sight the sermon is little more than a concise and sympathetic summary of Perkins’ activities in Urmia, close reading reveals a number of themes that are of wider relevance than the Urmia missions alone. Three themes are particularly important in view of the reception of the missionaries in Urmia: (1) Perkins and the boundaries of the community that received him; (2) Yonan’s highly gendered interpretation of Perkins’ “love and labor”; and (3) Yonan’s interpretation of the religious content of Perkins’ message.

Communal Boundaries

“The greatest friend of our people and father of our nation”: that is how Yonan introduces Perkins in the first lines of his sermon, immediately focusing the attention of his listeners on the exclusive reciprocal

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19 11.1–2.
20 12.6–8.
22 1.7–8. In Syriac: “ḥā dāwst (a friend) buṣ gurā men kullāy (greater than all) d-ṭayyep-an (of our people), w-bābā d-mellat-an (father of our nation).”
relationship between Perkins and what he at one instance calls the “nation of the Syrians”, but mostly refers to as “our nation”. This exclusive relationship forms the backbone of this sermon and, thus, of Yonan’s interpretation of what Perkins meant for his community. This exclusiveness is underlined by the way in which a number of well-known facts about Perkins’ life are introduced in the sermon.

The first is that of Perkins’ conscious choice for the Syrians: according to Yonan he first wanted to go to the “heathen” (ḥanpē), but after hearing a report on the “Nestorian Christians,” he was immediately convinced that this was his call: “From the moment I heard about the Syrians, my heart was very excited.” Perkins knew that this was the people he wanted to serve. Yonan believed that this cannot have been an easy decision for this young American and his wife; in vivid colors he paints a picture of what was known about the “countries and Christians of Asia” in the early nineteenth century:

The countries were very troubled, the governments indifferent, and the roads were feared because of robbers, murder and plunder. Frightening news reached Europe and America, about a European entering within the borders of Persia, especially when he entered the mountains of Kurdistan. Only one man from Europe reached Mar Shimun, his name was Mr. Schultz, a German. And he was killed by the brother of the Emir of the Hakkarnaye. This very terrible and frightening news about the wild countries and nations of the Kurds and the Yezidees and the Muslims instilled fear in the heart of people.

Further on in the sermon, Yonan describes how Perkins was motivated for coming to Iran by the glorious missionary history of the Syrians,

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23 3.2; in Syriac: “mellat d-Surāyē”. The word ‘nation’ is used at least 30 times, 28 of which refer directly to the Syrians. The term tayyep is used only in the line quoted above; other instances of “people” in the translation refer to the plural form of “man”, “human being” (nāšā/nāše). The word mellat, parallel to the Ottoman millet is customarily translated with ‘nation’, but its semantics underwent important changes in the 19th c., mostly to do with the fact that what in the early modern period was defined primarily as a religious community (albeit with distinct ethnic and linguistic characteristics), more and more became defined as an ethno-religious community, more or less fitting Western categories of ‘nation’.

24 The adjective “Nestorian” is used only once, in this sentence attributed to Perkins (3.5), referring to the report that convinced the board of the ABCFM of the feasibility of this mission. For the public version of the report, see Eli Smith and H.G.O. Dwight, Missionary Researches in Armenia: Including a Journey through Asia Minor, and into Georgia and Persia, with a Visit to the Nestorian and Chaldean Christians of Oormia and Salmas (Boston 1833/London 1834).

25 3.7–10.

26 4.1–9.
when their forefathers had been responsible for the beginnings of Christianity in China and India.

With a face beaming with holy pride, he would speak about the Syriac missionaries of the early period: ‘your fathers brought the Gospel to China and India; the monument they left in China is a sign of the labor of their missionaries and it honors their faith and teaching, of the early church in her simplicity.’

This gave Perkins hope that also present generations of Syrians would be able to become successful missionaries. As an aside one may note that this focus on the early missionary history of the Church of the East served at least a double purpose: it helped the missionaries to publicize the Syrian Christian community, despite its present dismal state, as a crucial and once important part of the world Church, thus motivating over and over again for increased missionary efforts and donations. It also provided an excellent muster for the message of Evangelical Christianity that they brought in Iran. Though Christianity in the Middle East had long lost its missionary force due to the restraints of the Islamic context, the missionaries could present this as a vital part of Syriac history, rather than as a Western, Protestant, invention. Yonan, who describes Perkins as the first missionary after the ages of the missions to India and China, proves that this interpretation of Syriac history had been accepted by the early converts.

Perkins’ devotion to the Syriac nation is also evidenced in the way in which he did not shun any effort or danger when it came to the well-being of the Syrians. This not only included their spiritual well-being, expressed in his continuous laboring in nightly translating as well as in traveling in the midst of summer to preach in remote villages, but, as a true Middle-Eastern patriarch, also included issues that concerned the material state of the community. According to Yonan,

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27 7.26–8.4.
28 References to the missionary history of the Church of the East are found in practically all missionary publications; for the explicit connection between their missionary history and missionary potential, see Perkins, A Residence, 24. There are also several indications that the missionaries paid ample attention to the history of the Church of the East in their schools and publications in Iran; compare, e.g., Tašʿitā kritā ḍ-ʿeditā d-Māran Išʿ Mšīhā, men ṣa(n)ṭā mšīhāytā 33 hal ādiyā [Short History of the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, from the year 33 AD until today] (Urmia, 1856).
29 4.26–5.6.
30 8.10–11.
Perkins journeyed to Tehran in the midst of winter to plead its case before the authorities.\footnote{8.9–10. It is not certain to which incident Yonan refers; we know from other sources that the missionaries had to travel regularly to Tehran to settle matters of dispute in connection to the mission, sometimes as a result of the rivalry with the Catholic missions, sometimes in response to accusations from other quarters; compare Murre-van den Berg, “The American Board and the Eastern Churches.”}

He also was eager to protect the community’s “good name.” According to Perkins, “shame” had come upon the Syrians because some of their young men had begun to travel in Europe and America, pretending to collect money for good causes in Persia, only to use the money largely to their personal advantage. This “begging” was something that Perkins thought disgraceful for the Syrians, and to combat these practices he employed familiar Protestant discourse that constructed begging as a personal “sin”. However, Perkins also used the vocabulary of “shame” versus the community’s “good name”, a type of discourse much more familiar in the Middle Eastern context. It is this way of speaking about begging, interpreting it as a communal issue, that Yonan copies in this sermon.\footnote{See 8.11–16 (šemnā bāsimā). For Perkins’ understanding of begging, see the tract that he published in Urmia in sometime in the 1860s: Qalā d-ḥā ḏawst d-Ṣurāyē but gābyutā, nhēptoh w-ḥtyātōh [The voice of a friend of the Syrians: Begging, its shame and sin].}

All these aspects of Perkins’ life are used by Yonan to underline Perkins’ unfailing commitment to the welfare of Syrian nation. This implies, however, that such a thing as a Syrian nation exists, something that in this period is not as evident as one may think from reading this sermon. For most of the preceding centuries, the community of the Church of the East had first and foremost been constructed as a religious community, which, in addition to its religious distinctiveness, had also been different because of its Syriac linguistic and literary heritage. From the sixteenth century onwards, the Chaldean (that is, Catholic) community, separating itself from the Church of the East, contested this religious unity. In the nineteenth century, the arrival of Protestant missionaries of different denominations added to this process of diversification, making it ever more difficult to retain religious identity as the primary factor. Meanwhile, in the Ottoman Empire, some of the Christian minorities started to redefine themselves as ethnic as much as religious minorities, fuelling processes of modern
nationalism that also affected the Syrians in the Eastern Ottoman provinces and the Safavid Empire.\footnote{33}

Whereas we can safely say that this process was well under way by the time of Yonan’s sermon, it certainly was not completed. The term “Assyrian,” that soon would become so important in delineating this modern form of nationalism, is not yet used by Yonan. However, his frequent use of the terms “nation” and “Syrian” come close in conveying the same general ideas. It seems to me that this sermon provides an interesting stage in the transformation of a religious community into a community defined by religion and ethnicity. However, it does more than that: by giving the “nation” such an important place in this memorial of Justin Perkins, Yonan makes clear that his characterizing him as “father of the nation” is not an incidental slip of the tongue – it is the most important title that is conferred to Perkins in this sermon. Metaphorically at least, Perkins’ love for the Syrians became constitutive of the nation.

In Yonan’s use of the “nation of the Syrians”, two aspects warrant further attention. The first is that his sermon deliberately overlooks the growing distance between the Protestant community and the ‘old’ Church of the East, leading to a separate “Evangelical Church” in the year 1870.\footnote{34} Not once Yonan explicitly refers to this new church. Neither does he include an explicit call for conversion to what was seen as the “true religion”. The sad occasion of the commemoration of the death of the “father of the nation” was neither the time nor the

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\begin{itemize}
  \item[33] The history of Assyrian nationalism still needs to be written; for an introduction, see Wolfhart Heinrichs, “The Modern Assyrians – Name and Nation,” R. Contini (ed), Semitica: Serta philologica Constantino Tsereteli dicata (Turin: Silvio Zamorani Editore 1993), 99–114; further Joseph, The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East and Murre-van den Berg, From a Spoken to a Written Language.
  \item[34] Anderson, History II, 302–20, Dieter Lyko, Gründung, Wachstum und Leben der Evangelischen Christlichen Kirchen in Iran (Leiden: Brill, 1964), Murre-van den Berg, From a Spoken to a Written Language, pp. 66–70.
\end{itemize}
occasion to stress the emerging denominational separation within the Syrian people.\textsuperscript{35}

Yonan’s proto-nationalism includes another element that is characteristic for many forms of nationalism: the period preceding the nineteenth century is painted in stark colors. The era preceding the missionary activities, was the “age in which faith and goodness had been lost among people and among this wild and ignorant nation”.\textsuperscript{36} It was from this dismal state that the Protestant missionaries rescued the Syrians: “What blessings there have come among us: our schools, our books, our readers, our sons and daughters, our learning, our knowledge and our understanding, our families.”\textsuperscript{37}

\textit{Missionary Masculinity}

In the past few decades, mission studies have brought to light the highly gendered way in which nineteenth-century missionaries thought about themselves, their tasks and the recipients of their message.\textsuperscript{38} Most of these analyses started from the perspective of women studies and focused on female missionaries and female converts. So far, studies on the diverse expressions of manhood and masculinity in the missionary context are still sparse.\textsuperscript{39} Yonan’s sermon, in which a man speaks

\textsuperscript{35} Note that the “papal churches”, probably referring to Catholics from abroad, are constructed as different from the nation, in line with Muslims (8.7–9): “He also exerted much zeal for the nation, when they were oppressed because of their religion or because of the papal churches or by the Muslims.”

\textsuperscript{36} 4.25.

\textsuperscript{37} 16.8–10.


\textsuperscript{39} See Inger Marie Okkenhaug, “To Give the Boys Energy, Manliness, and Self-command in Temper: The Anglican Male Ideal and St. George’s School in Jerusalem, c. 1900–40,” in Inger Marie Okkenhaug and Ingvild Flasketrud, \textit{Gender, Religion and Change in the Middle East. Two Hundred Years of History} (Oxford: Berg, 2005), pp. 47–65; Erik Sidenvall, \textit{Gap Men: The Making of Manhood among Swedish Missionaries in China and Mongolia} c. 1890–C. 1914 (Forthcoming: Leiden: Brill, 2009); the first focuses on the (upper) middle class context of the British Mandate period in Palestine, the second on working class missionaries in the late 19th-c.; for two major studies on ‘manhood’ in the American context, both, however, disregarding the missions, see E. Anthony Rotundo, \textit{American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern
publicly about his spiritual father, provides an interesting example of the male reception of a male missionary, highlighting a few interesting characteristics of American missionary masculinity in the mid-nineteenth century.

As indicated above, Yonan describes the special bond between Perkins and the Syrians in two highly symbolic terms: that of friendship and of fatherhood. The image of friendship is used sparsely and only in two instances applied to Perkins’ relationship with the entire nation, as in “a loving friend of this nation.” Yonan uses it more literally to describe Perkins’ relationship with a number of early supporters of the mission, under the heading of “trustworthiness”. He quotes Perkins as speaking about his “friends from old times” some of the bishops and a local notable, who were given special gifts when he left the country for good.

Whereas Yonan applies the terminology of ‘friendship’ to a select number of older male Syrians, for himself, a man of a younger generation, the terminology of fatherhood apparently was more appropriate. Yonan identifies himself as a spiritual son of Perkins:

How close I was to him from my childhood and how acquainted I was with him and his characteristics, and also somewhat with the conditions and inclinations of his heart and the desires and anxieties which occupied him completely.

He then uses his own closeness to Perkins to paint him as a loving father of all the nation, whose sons and daughters “grew up on his knees,” who wanted to “embrace all the nation” and to whom, literally, the Syrians owed everything: “All we are and that we will be, is from his hands, he is the cause.” It can hardly be coincidental that this sentence invokes the image of procreation, of Perkins as the begetter of the Syrian people.

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40 8.19: Pārkens sāhāb dāwst mārē ḥubbā qā d-āhā mellat; compare also the title of the tract mentioned in n. 28.

41 7.4–20.

42 The word father (bābā) is used 14 times, in addition to a number of instances of “head of the household,” “patriarch” and “his family.” Note that the plural “fathers” is used a number of times to refer to the earlier generations, the forefathers of the Syrians in most instances.

43 2.9–13.

44 See, respectively, 2.4, 3.15 and 16.10–11. Compare also 4.15, where Perkins is described as “the begetter (ḥašlānā) of the mission.”
However, the image of a father is not without its contradictions. The most important of these is the obvious tension between Perkins’ biological and spiritual fatherhood, a tension not lost on Yonan. The Perkinses’ first-born daughter died before her first year, not long after the family had settled in Urmia. Over the years, the couple had six more children, four of which died young. The most painful death was that of their daughter Judith who died in 1852 at the age of twelve, about whom her father wrote a moving tract. These losses may have contributed to the weak mental health of Perkins’ wife Charlotte, and when, in 1860, the family returned to America for their second furlough, they decided that Charlotte would stay back with their only surviving son Henry. Justin Perkins returned alone to Urmia. His was a rather unusual decision, since health problems of one of the spouses was considered one of the few good reasons for early retirement from the mission. Perkins, however, chose to remain in Urmia for another eight years, giving greater weight to his responsibilities to his adopted family in Urmia than to his biological family in America.

Yonan is well aware of the tensions and ambiguities suggested by this part of Perkins’ life, and he refers to it a couple of times. He describes how the Syrians became his new family, laying a greater claim to Perkins’ affection than his original one. He underlines this by describing the difficulties Perkins had in finally separating from the Syrians. Even if physically the biological family and first fatherland reclaimed their rights, making Perkins return to America in 1869, spiritually Perkins was not able to separate himself from the Syrians: his heart remained in Persia and at his deathbed he spoke Syriac rather than English. Notably, in the description of his last days, his wife and son play no role at all. However, Perkins’ devotion to the Syrians never was without tension: not only did Yonan himself seem to have felt some

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45 Justin Perkins, The Persian Flower: A Memoir of Judith Grant Perkins (Boston, 1853); see also Perkins, Missionary Life in Persia, p. 222, where he writes about missionary hardships: “Hardly more crushing to his spirit [than burying his co-workers] is it to lay his loved children there, as I have known, by the bitter experience of burying six dear children in Persia.” The graves of Perkins’ children, among those of others of the Urmia mission, are still to be found in the missionary graveyard in Sir, a village near Urmia.

46 Published sources reveal little on the reasons for and circumstances of Charlotte Perkins’ return; Yonan notes: “it [the love of Christ] persuaded him to take his sick wife and his only son to America, to return and work for the salvation of lost souls here. He lived about eight years here on his own, separated from his feeble wife.” (8.23–25)

47 9.24, 16.1ff.
embarrassment about Perkins’ priorities; Yonan also appears to spot the doubts in Perkins himself:

When news arrived about the illness of his son, Mr. Perkins’ suffering affected me greatly, and I thought that immediately he ought to return to America. And friendly I said to him: ‘it is better when you go; Hanim [Mrs. Perkins] is weak and Henry, your only son, is ill. How can you be patient? It is evident that you ought to return.’ He said, ‘Shamasha (while his eyes filled with tears that rolled down over his cheeks on his beard), I am sure that this my dear child will become better, but whatever happens, the will of the Lord is to be. Christ says: ‘whoever loves wife and children more than me, is not worthy of me.’

As this quote indicates, Yonan also sketches Perkins as a deeply emotional man. Nothing in the sermon suggests that Yonan felt any embarrassment about this aspect of Perkins’ character, whereas he also saw no tension between this emotional engagement and his physical and intellectual contributions. As noted above, Yonan does not spare his praises for the hard labor Perkins spent on the Syrians, the days and nights in working on the translations, the perils and difficulties of the roads he was traveling, the continuous zeal in preaching and warning, praising him as “the old general in the battle of Zion”.

However, more than the physical effort Perkins put into missionary work, it is his emotional investment that has impressed Yonan. The substantive most often used in the sermon (that is, after the word ‘nation’) is the word ‘heart’. It is used to cover a whole range of the emotional states of Perkins. Some of these were perhaps generally expected from a missionary in the mid-nineteenth century: the anxieties and worries of mission work, the excitement and motivation for mission work, the love for the Syrian people, and the love for God. Other references indicate that Perkins, perhaps more so than his fellow missionaries, was indeed perceived as an emotional man, whose passions burnt high during preaching, whose own emotions showed on his face, who had a simple, straightforward character, and who was softhearted and sensitive when it concerned the loss of friends and family, his own

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48 8.26–9.8.
49 1.21–22.
50 2.14.
51 3.8, 4.17, 8.20, 14.5.
52 5.8, 7.25, 9.24, 15.26.
53 6.17, 9.12, 10.17.
and that of the Syrians. In this respect, it is remarkable that Perkins in this sermon three times is portrayed as a man crying, in all cases when torn between the love for his son and his people in Iran.

One sermon is not enough to know to confidently place Yonan’s interpretation in the wider context of missionary masculinity in the mid-nineteenth century. Most importantly, his description and obvious appreciation of Perkins’ emotionality tell us about the particular local context in which the personal approach of Perkins fitted well into the demands and expectations of the receiving community, especially those of the male converts. However, one might venture that Yonan’s sermon also reflects a kind of missionary sentimentality that not long after, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, when so-called ‘muscular Christianity’ was gaining influence, became more and more rare among Protestant missionaries.

The Man and his Message

The highly personal impact of Perkins becomes even clearer when we look at the sermon from yet another angle. What was the message Perkins brought to Iran? What, according to Yonan, was the purpose of his mission?

According to Yonan, the most important theme of Perkins’ preaching was the person of Christ, being almost visibly present:

And the sermons at the occasion of the Lord’s Supper, the seriousness of his counseling during this service – these would make this hour for us as if we were in the Spirit, seeing Christ sitting at the head of our dinner tables and that we were talking. How good it is for us to have been there.

While such christocentrism seems fitting enough for a Protestant pastor, it is remarkable that Yonan pays much less attention to the theological counterpart of Christ’s presence, that is, the dogma of Christ’s atoning death on the cross. He does not hide that this was an important motivation for Perkins; he explicitly quotes one of the texts that inspired Perkins to become a missionary in Iran: “the purpose of your preaching should be Christ nailed to the cross.” This is one of the lines which accurately captures the crucicentrism of the Evangelical movement of

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54 10.15, 10.24, 5.19, 9.24, 10.19.
55 9.5, 9.24, 16.4.
56 11.24–27
which Perkins was a natural part.\textsuperscript{57} Yonan refers to “the cross” two more times, in both cases underlining that Perkins himself, as an Evangelical missionary, put high value on the doctrine of the cross. Once he describes Perkins as attracting (“pulling”) people to the cross, once he refers to the title of one of Perkins’ favorite songs, entitled “Cross and Crown.”\textsuperscript{58} When one compares these three instances with the many phrases in which Christ is presented as a person one should go to, according to Yonan, ‘christocentrism’ is a much more adequate characterization of Perkins’ message than ‘crucicentrism.’

This ties in with what I found to be the most striking aspect of Yonan’s representation of Perkins’ message: the overriding importance of the individual religious experience – as seen in Perkins and as advocated by Perkins. Perkins’ faith is described as a thoroughly personal one, to which, according to Yonan, the Bible verse “filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith”, is one hundred percent applicable. He describes this in vivid language:

Especially during the times of the revivals, he appeared like someone whose heart had melted and turned to water, and like someone who, before he came up to the pulpit, had first gone to Christ and talked with Him, thus still reflecting the glory of the face of Christ. In his posture, his face and his countenance, one could read his heart; and a holy silence would fall on the entire congregation and with open ears and faces, with expectation and attention, we would watch him and await what he would tell us today, this holy ambassador from the Lord. He himself would boil and melt with holy fire.\textsuperscript{59}

Perkins’ personal closeness to Christ is also a prominent feature in the description of his last hours, which Yonan quotes from Susan Rice’s letter from America. She describes the dying Perkins as resting his head in the arms of Christ, looking forward to seeing him face to face in his glory.\textsuperscript{60} This personal closeness to Christ, in turn, also warmed the hearts of his hearers. Yonan remembers the mutual love that was kindled when Perkins arrived, and he dwells on the dear memories that he

\textsuperscript{57} Compare D.W. Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s (London: Routledge 1989), pp. 1–19; he notes crucicentrism as one of the four major characteristics of Evangelicalism (in Britain and elsewhere), together with conversionism, activism and biblicism. Whereas I would not want to suggest that the American Presbyterian missionaries in Urmia did not fit this pattern, this sermon indicates that this perhaps was not the case for the new Evangelicals in Urmia.

\textsuperscript{58} 3.13–14, 11.5 and 14.14.

\textsuperscript{59} 10.18–27.

\textsuperscript{60} 14.9; note that there are no traces of any near eschatology or millennialism.
carries in his heart now Perkins is gone. Tears also streamed from those hearing Perkins preach.\textsuperscript{61} As far as Yonan is concerned, it is this emotional, heartfelt love that was the kernel of who Perkins was, of his message and of his importance for the Syrian nation.

There can be little doubt that this highly personal approach to Christianity, basing missionary work on experiential individual piety, was characteristic for many of the Presbyterian missionaries of the mid-nineteenth century. This was certainly true for those that worked in Urmia, who were all thoroughly influenced by the Evangelical movement of the time, which highly valued this type of revivalist religious experience. Although this approach did not succeed in reforming the Eastern churches to an Evangelical model or to convert considerable numbers to Protestantism, a sermon such as this one once more suggests that it is precisely this aspect of Protestantism that attracted the small band of converts.\textsuperscript{62}

The attention to Perkins’ personal devotion and piety, however, in some ways is not quite identical to the usual Protestant depictions. In a number of instances, Yonan uses terms and phrases that remind us more of Eastern Christian than of Protestant hagiography. A phrase like “good and blessed father”, which occurs in a number of variations,\textsuperscript{63} in addition to the emphasis on Perkins’ goodness, nobility, generosity and reliability,\textsuperscript{64} suggests a theological anthropology that is different from the Presbyterian focus on the essential sinfulness of all men. The identification of the “blessings” that result from his presence and work perhaps are common to both traditions, but at the same time reinforce the reminiscences of Eastern hagiographic terminology,\textsuperscript{65} especially when combined with phrases like “may the memory of this saint be with us forever.”\textsuperscript{66} Perhaps the most explicit connection between the Protestant and Eastern hagiography is Yonan’s remark: “[i]t was generally thought among the nation that he was not just a father, but a patriarch, like one of the ancient fathers,” putting him in a different rank

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\textsuperscript{61} 5.8, 11.13, 1.14, 1.2.
\textsuperscript{62} Murre-van den Berg, “Dear mother of my soul.”
\textsuperscript{63} The phrase “good and blessed” (\textit{tābā w-brīhā}) is used six times; two times in “good and blessed people”, referring to the missionaries in general (1,10, 1,16), three times in “good and blessed father” (1.24, 2.10, 2.23), and once in “good and blessed man” (5.5), the last four referring to Perkins, as does the short form “blessed father” (15.24).
\textsuperscript{64} Compare the list of character traits on pages 5–7.
\textsuperscript{65} 2.24, 13.24, 16.7–8.
\textsuperscript{66} 16.11 (\textit{taklā d-tkārā l-ābād hāwē l-d-hāw zaddiqa b-gāwan}).
altogether from the other Protestant missionaries or the contemporary Eastern clergy. By using the term patriarch, Yonan includes Perkins in the ranks of the ancient church fathers that set the terms for the later development of the church.\(^67\)

In this way, Yonan places Perkins in a long tradition of holy men that were a blessing to the nation and whose remembrance would continue to be a blessing after their death. In this light, one should perhaps read the phrase attributed to former missionary Susan Rice – “our dear father is no longer praying for the Syrians” – as a friendly reminder of the difference between Syriac and Protestant saints. The latter, different from the Eastern saints, cannot be counted on to pray for their people after they are gone.\(^68\)

Conclusions

A memorial sermon, by virtue of the genre, summarizes and interprets the meaning of the deceased for the community that has gathered to listen. From this perspective, there can be little doubt that the Reverend Justin Perkins, the missionary pastor who spent most of his adult life among the Syrian community of Urmia, had been a successful missionary who was loved and revered by the community he devoted his life to. In this sermon, Yonan, the Protestant pastor representing this community, paints Perkins as a saint, a holy man, whose life was constitutive, beneficial and exemplary: constitutive because of his fatherhood of the nation as well as of the individual believers, beneficial to all by virtue of his contributions to writing and teaching, and exemplary in his Christian life and enduring commitment in preaching the gospel.

Whereas these characteristics are important to understand the meaning of Perkins in the Syrian community of Urmia, they may help us to understand in which ways Protestant missions influenced both the new Christian communities and the wider society. In the Middle East especially, this influence is not expressed in numerical successes: nowhere were Protestants able to convert any significant number of Eastern Christians to Protestantism, let alone Muslims or Jews. However, Yonan’s sermon suggests that the importance of missionaries like Justin Perkins may have been not so much in the number of converts to

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\(^{67}\) 5.13–14.

\(^{68}\) 14.20.
Evangelical Protestantism, or even in their contribution to education, literature and wider academic developments, however well-received these contributions may have been. Yonan's sermon suggests that over and above these, missionary devotion, despite all its antithetical content, was also interpreted as affirming and transforming local identities. These transformations concerned individual persons in their trajectories to new forms of Christianity or secular modernity, but it also concerned communal identities, communities on their way to modern-style, ethnically-based nationalisms.

Yonan's sermon suggests that a further study of local receptions of the missionary contribution may help us to further understand the various elements of this transformation of identities. In this respect, Yonan's sermon adds something very specific to the image of Perkins compared to the Western missionary sources which single out Perkins' contributions to the conversionist and literary activities. For Yonan, these are part of a wider process that leads to a modern national Syrian community that transcends the boundaries of the Protestant community that was the initial focus of the missionaries.
CHAPTER TEN

REFUGEES, RELIEF AND THE RESTORATION OF A NATION:
NORWEGIAN MISSION IN THE ARMENIAN REPUBLIC,
1922–1925

Inger Marie Okkenhaug

Introduction

War and the dissolution of empires generated large-scale human displacements in the first half of the 20th century. In the Middle East, World War I and the end of the Ottoman Empire were followed by the forced removal of hundreds of thousands Armenians as well as the expulsion of Asian Greeks from the emergent Turkish state. Missionaries from the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, with the ardent support of President Woodrow Wilson, established the Near East Relief in 1915. This organization distributed humanitarian relief among Armenian refugees across a wide range of geographical locations.1 From 1915 until the NER ended its operations in 1930, the organization aided 1–2 million refugees, two-thirds of them women and children. This assistance included caring for 132,000 Armenian orphans scattered across a region extending from Tbilisi and Yerevan to Constantinople, Beirut, Damascus, and Jerusalem. In 1920, an American peace negotiator declared that it was “no exaggeration to say that the Armenians would have disappeared as a nation” had it not been for the relief efforts initiated by American missionaries.2 This is undoubtedly true. During this period most of Europe and the former Ottoman Empire were recovering from the war. Even if the Scandinavian countries

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had remained neutral during the war years, USA was the only nation that could afford to fund such a relief operation. Even so, Scandinavian women missionaries were important players in relief work among the Armenians.³

Women from Denmark, Sweden and Norway, employed by the independent female mission organization, Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA), had come to Turkish Armenia around 1900 and worked with long-term development among victims of the Armenian massacres in 1894–96. They ran health institutions, schools and work programs. With the outbreak of World War One, when the Ottoman government began deporting and killing its Christian minorities, the character of mission labor changed dramatically. The war led women missionaries to become relief workers, war correspondents and part of the illegal network that opposed the Ottoman Empire’s war against its Armenian population. After the war, missionaries together with individuals from the Red Cross, Save the Children and other secular organizations, continued refugee work in disintegrating societies where local governments were unable or unwilling to meet the basic needs of the populations.

This essay aims to situate women’s role in missionary relief in the refugee crisis in the years after World War One. The focal point here is the work of the Norwegian missionary, nurse and midwife Bodil Biørn (1871–1960). What role did she play in the early years of international philanthropy? How did she combine missionary and relief work in a period where Protestant mission was forced to redefine its reason for existence? After the carnage of the war, it was impossible to argue that civilization and Christianity were the same. It was a time of “Mission by other Means”.⁴ Even so, there were individuals who attempted to combine pre-war mission work with modern relief and aid. In the Armenian case, missionaries became important actors in the project to rebuild the Armenian nation. Through her care and education for

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⁴ D. Gaitskell, “Mission by Other Means? Dora Earthy and the Save the Children Fund in the 1930s”, in this volume.
Armenian orphans, Bodil Biørn participated in the national reconstruction of Armenian society, at the same time as she never compromised the Lutheran Evangelical part of her work. This explicit religious dimension, in addition to her support of Armenian nation-building, was the main reason behind the Soviet government's decision to ban her work in Armenia in 1925. Until 1934 Biørn continued her educational and health work among Armenian exiles in Syria, where the French government welcomed mission aid as an important contribution to the Mandate's health system. The topic here is Bodil Biørn's humanitarian contribution in the Armenian republic from 1922 to 1925.

In an Armenia under Soviet rule, and from out of the shadow of the enormous and highly efficient American relief project, Biørn managed to carve out a unique, small scale and modern relief operation – an orphanage for boys – that also promoted her deep evangelical conviction to the young receivers of aid. This relief project would not have been possible without the financial and psychological support of members of the Norwegian KMA, who shared the conviction of relief as a combination of spreading the Lutheran belief system, practical work and prayers. Just as invaluable were the Armenian women who worked for KMA in Alexandropol (Leninakan, now Gumri).

I will argue that Biørn's many years working for and with Armenians gave her confidence in creating her independent relief work. In addition these ties, enforced by war and genocide, led to a strong wish to leave a personal mark on the rebuilding of Armenian society. Even so, Biørn's relief efforts might have had a more lasting impact if she had toned down the religious aspect. If Biørn had given her services to the NER, she would have had protection from the USA and League of Nations. The sources are scarce on this topic; however, the Soviet authorities were in general highly suspicious of Western aid, and KMA's explicit Christian profile might have influenced the decision of having the successful KMA orphanage closed down after less than three years. Biørn's Christian values and Armenian education were tolerated as long as the country needed aid. As soon as Armenian society was on its way to

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recover, the Norwegian orphanage had to shut down. How did Biørn justify her work in Alexandropol in relation to mission and relief in the early 1920s? What was this Lutheran missionary’s strategy in dealing with the mainly Orthodox (Gregorian, Apostolic) Armenians as a national and religious group? How does Biørn’s approach compare with those of other missionaries engaged in post-war refugee work?
Background

KMA was the first independent women’s mission organization in Scandinavia. Established in Sweden in 1894, Denmark and Finland in 1900 and Norway in 1902, its aim was to improve the lives of women in “heathen countries”. KMA’s founders were influenced by the numerous women’s mission organizations in North America, Great Britain and Germany that were established in the late nineteenth century. Single, educated women inspired by religious calling used their professions to realize the ideal of Christianity’s global outreach in the name of Protestant mission.7

The Scandinavian KMA missionaries belonged to the upper and upper middle classes and were to a large extent highly educated, professional women who all shared an understanding of a personal calling to mission work.8 The few women who chose to work in Turkish Armenia had a vocation to become missionaries that was closely tied to the idea of healing suffering Armenians after the Ottoman Government’s massacres in 1894–96.9 These women’s deep Lutheran conviction was a direct link both spiritually and in practical terms to German missions and especially with the pietistic Deutscher Hülfsbund. Even so, it did not prevent cooperation with other Protestant denominations, for example the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

While Biørn had her training in both American and German institutions in her first year in Turkey, from 1905–06, she also learned the Armenian language. She then moved to Musch in Eastern Anatolia, one of the worst hit regions after the 1890s massacres. In October 1914, when the Ottoman Empire joined Austria and Germany in the war, Biørn had already spent a long period of time in Musch. She was in charge of the Deutsche Hülfsbund’s policlinic, an orphanage for boys

and a school for girls. In the beginning of the war Biørn worked in military hospitals nursing Turkish and Armenian soldiers. After the summer of 1915 when the genocide against the Armenian population began, she became part of the illegal relief-network of Armenians and Western missionaries. In the old Armenian provinces in Eastern Anatolia, close to the Russian-Ottoman front in the Caucasus, where Biørn had been based for eight years, Armenians were generally killed village for village, often without making a difference for men and women. All her Armenian colleagues and the children in her care in Musch had been killed in July 1915. After these devastating events, Biørn worked with aid in Turkey for two years. She came back to Norway in August 1917, bringing with her Fridtjof, her eighteen-month-old adopted Armenian son.

Similar to several other single, women missionaries who adopted children, Biørn also experienced a conflict of interest between the needs of one’s own child and the wants of the many Armenian orphans. In the early 1920s she had to choose between staying with her young son in Norway and relief work. Biørn left for Armenia, giving greater weight to Armenian children than her own child in Oslo. This was a decision she regretted deeply later in life. At the time it was normal for missionaries to leave their children behind, as it was deemed too dangerous to bring them to the field. Even so, it was possible: A Danish KMA-colleague, Maria Jacobsen, lived with her young adopted Armenian daughter in Lebanon.

Biørn shared the deep urge to go out and do relief work with Scandinavian colleagues who had been involved in relief during the genocide. At least five of these went out to work with refugees in the 1920s. It might have been the only way of dealing with the trauma all of these women suffered. There are few sources that disclose their actual feelings. Biørn’s Swedish KMA-colleague in Musch, Alma Johansson (1880–1974), said that even a couple of years after the genocide, the idea of continuing living was beyond endurance. Yet, she seems to have kept her faith. The same is true for Biørn, even if it at times was difficult.

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12 Her grandson, Jussi Biørn, who lived with her in Oslo after she retired, remembers her as an exceptionally pious woman who prayed in private by her footstool, at certain hours and five times a day. Private interview with Jussi Biørn, Kragerø, June 2008.
In a letter written in early September 1915, not long after the extinguishing of the Armenian population in Musch, she wrote:

> Often I become quite tired from waiting for God’s help and must say: Ah, Lord, how long. Why does He not come to help us? … In such times one has to believe and wait, but it is very difficult. All our people are probably ‘home’ now, with the exception of those who came with us here. It was a terrible time! Ah, if God soon could give us peace on earth. Pray for that.\(^\text{13}\)

The reference to “all our people are probably at home” is a way of saying that all children and staff at the mission station in Musch had been killed. This was written in such a manner because of the strict censorship. But the keen censor had not detected Biørn’s codes: Through using references to Bible quotations, she was able to give a vivid illustration not only of the disaster, but also her own feelings of loss and powerlessness.\(^\text{14}\) Biørn also used the language of religion in later attempts at communicating what she knew no one in Scandinavia could comprehend: “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: [yet] surely my judgment [is] with the Lord, and my work with my God.”\(^\text{15}\) Biørn expressed her distress in terms of futile efforts. Yet, work was also a way to salvation. In the Lutheran tradition it is believed that the imperative of labor can also cure damaged spirits. When Biørn after the war wanted to go back to work in Turkey, she explained her move as motivated by a calling from God.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{13}\) KMA Kvartalshilsen 1916, nr. 1, 5. Okkenhaug’s translation.

\(^{14}\) In her letter home it said: Jer. 15, 2–4 – which referred to the Old Testament’s Jeremiah. Norwegian readers were not left with any doubt as to the violence against the Armenian population:

> “…Thus saith the Lord; Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the Lord: the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy.”

> They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head: they that would destroy me, being my enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away.”

> “Ps 69, 2–4” (Psalms) left no uncertainty about what state Biørn was in:

> “I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

> I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: my eyes fail while I wait for my God.


\(^{16}\) Unpublished article by Bodil Biørn, “Armenia og armenierne”, Oslo, dated October 1944. Private archive. I would like to thank Jussi Biørn for allowing me to use this material.
At this time more than two and a half million Armenians, Syrian, Greek, and Persian refugees were absolutely destitute. 400,000 were orphaned children.\textsuperscript{17} Even so, for Biørn it was not a question of alleviating physical suffering alone. She was still a devote missionary inspired by the pious side of her Lutheran calling. Her first encounter with the post-war refugee situation was a visit to refugee camps in Skutari close to Istanbul, where Johansson had been working since 1920. Biørn expressed concern with the religious life in the camps and encouraged KMA members to pray for the refugees, many of whom were deeply depressed and dispirited.\textsuperscript{18}

How did Bodil Biørn combine her pious Lutheran conviction with relief work among Armenian orphans in the new post-war reality?

\textit{From Mission to Relief}

Mission based refugee aid took different forms. In the years during and after the First World War, many European missionaries worked for the Palestine and Syrian Relief Fund, established in 1916 by the Anglican Church in Jerusalem in order to “relieve distress and provide for hospital missions in Syria and Palestine”.\textsuperscript{19} Many other missionaries worked for the Near East Relief in Caucasus and the Middle East.\textsuperscript{20}

The NER was a private humanitarian, non-political organization with a Christian base, dominated by American Board missionaries.\textsuperscript{21} Despite

\textsuperscript{17} News Bulletin of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, Vol. 1, August 1st, 1918.
\textsuperscript{18} KMA Kvartalshilsen, 1921, nr 3, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{19} http://www.mundus.ac.uk/cats/12/264.htm. In central Anatolia (Urfa), the Danish woman Karen Jeppe's efforts in saving Armenians during the war earned her an international reputation. Before the war Jeppe had worked for the German Orient Mission, even if she herself, as a Grundtvigian, did not believe in converting Armenians. From 1920 Jeppe was active in refugee aid in Syria, working for the secular organisation “Armenien Vennen” (Friend of Armenia). In 1921 Jeppe joined the League of Nations’ committee for release of abducted Armenian women and children. Maria Jacobsen went on a large fund-raising tour in the USA for NER. In 1922 she established and ran the largest orphanage in Lebanon, “The Bird’s Nest”, financed by Danish KMA. Both Jeppe and Jacobsen became important in the French Mandate Regime in Syria and Lebanon.
\textsuperscript{20} Middle East Centre Archive, St. Antony’s College, Oxford, Emery papers, box 2/4, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{21} S. E. Moranian, “The Armenian Genocide and American Missionary Relief Efforts”, in Winter (Ed.) (2004), 202. See also News Bulletin, published by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, August-September 1919, Vol. IV, No, Total Number 27 8. Even if the NER was non-political, many of its supporters and workers
that, the emphasis was not on evangelization but on refugee work: “practical Christianity without sectarianism and without ecclesiastical form, recognizing the rights of each and all to their ancestral faith” (President Calvin Coolidge’s words). Even so, there were close and entangled links between American mission and the NER. Historian Merrill Peterson points to the ties between Near East Relief and the foreign missionary moment of the Congregational Church as manifested in the close connection between the leaders of the two organizations:

It must have been difficult at times to separate the work of one hand from the other, the work of the missionary from the humanitarian. The most scrupulous care could not prevent the intermingling of accounts, financial and otherwise. The American Board and NER shared facilities and personnel and they served the same Armenian clientele.

Many missionaries divided their time between missionary and relief work and some thought the coordination of the two a problem. Peterson writes about an American missionary, Lorin A. Shepard, who split his time between missionary and relief work in Aintab in 1919 and thought the coordination of the two difficult. However, working for the NER could also be the only way for missionary personnel to continue a presence in a war-torn region. In January 1920, L. O. Fossum, founder of the Lutheran, Norwegian-American Kurdistan Mission, and his sister Anna Fossum were on their way to the organization’s station in Tabriz, Persia.

wanted an American mandate for Armenia: Many NER supporters (and Armenians) wanted the Peace conference in Paris to proclaim the USA as Mandate power over the Armenian Republic, similar to the French and British Mandates in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. "Paris Responsible for the Safety of the Caucasus", ran the headline of NER-journal: “The only relief up to now that has gone into this Christian republic has been out of the pockets of American men, women and children... – It represents $ 30,000,000 in money, but greater than that, the crystallized ideals of the free people of the Western World.”

23 Peterson 2004, 53–54. James L. Barton, a former American Board missionary to Kharpot and later president of the American Board’s Euphrates College, became the first chairman of the NER, while William W. Peet, American Board missionary in Constantinople and treasurer of the NER's Constantinople Committee. In 1915 Peet estimated that upwards of 500,000 refugees, mostly women and children and mostly Armenians, were receiving relief from the NER.
24 Ibid., pp. 54–55.
25 Ibid.
But the way from Tiflis to Tabriz was closed and they ended up working for the NER in Tiflis for a period of time. 27 L. O. Fossum became the Finance and Supply Officer of the Erivan District of the American Relief, while Anna Fossum worked in a NER hospital for Armenian orphans in Ahakoloki, Georgia. 28 Yet another example of missionaries with a long time experience from working in Turkish Armenia who transformed into relief workers are Miss Silmann and Miss McClair, former American Board missionaries with long careers in Van. In the early 1920s they both worked for the NER’s educational program in Alexandropol. Silmann was head of NER schools in the city. These former missionaries had knowledge of Armenian culture, language and recent history that was invaluable to the NER.

The new and diverse post-war ways of interpreting and practising mission based refugee work are seen in the three different strategies chosen by the Swedish, Norwegian and Danish KMA’s Armenian refugee work. Since 1902, Norwegian KMA had supported the Danish KMA’s orphanage in Mezereh with funds, practical work and prayers. In 1922, this close cooperation came to an end. Collaboration with NER was not accepted by the Norwegian KMA’s Armenia committee, which was now to be independent from the organisation in Copenhagen. The new partner for Norwegian refugee work in Armenia was the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Most probably this was Biørn’s decision. She wanted to work with a Protestant mission organization. In any case, her decision was strongly supported by the KMA board. 29

Swedish KMA followed the Danish model. Alma Johansson worked together with the NER until the organization withdrew from Skutari in 1924. Swedish KMA then established their own workshop for Armenian widows and young women. 30

While many former missionaries, both American and Scandinavian, worked for or cooperated with the NER, Biørn did not want to give up on the evangelical side of her work. Biørn could use her NER contacts in practical matters, and she travelled to Caucasus in the company of NER workers. Nevertheless, she did not want to join the organization

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27 Ibid., 5–6: “The relief work in Caucasus and Transcaucasus, however, is in great need of workers and we will go into work at once, until the way is open.”
28 The Kurdistan Missionary, letter dated May 13, 1920, Constantinople, from Anna Fossum.
29 KMA Kvartalshilsen, nr. 1 1922, p. 3.
30 Johansson, p. 5.
even if that must have meant much easier operational conditions than building an independent relief project on her own.

The purpose of Biørn’s visit to Istanbul in 1921 was to get an overview of the refugee situation. Large numbers of internal refugees, Armenian, Syrian and Greek, from the former Ottoman provinces had gathered in Istanbul. After the revolution many Russians fleeing from the communist regime also ended up in Istanbul.31 Besides Alma Johansson, who worked with refugees in Greece until she retired in 1941, there were several KMA workers based in the Istanbul region. In Lebanon Danish KMA supported a large orphanage outside Beirut.

Most of the Scandinavian KMA missionaries had originally planned to go back to former work areas in Anatolia. But the Turkish nationalist regime refused missionaries entrance.32 Biørn now decided to go to the Armenian republic, as the need in this “frigid, violent and starving” country was enormous.33 Biørn’s idea of religiously based relief must have been strengthened by the fact that Soviet communists ruled Armenia. Even so, there might also have been nationalist motivations behind her choice of work place. Historian Matthias Bjørnlund has shown how Biørn’s contemporary, the Dane Karen Jeppe, who before the war had worked for the German Orient mission in Urfa, preferred the establishment of an independent Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia, as promised by the Western powers in the Sèvres Treaty. As this solution grew more illusory, Jeppe supported the League of Nation’s High Commissioner for Refugees, the Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen’s attempt to settle Ottoman Armenians in the newly established Armenian Soviet Republic.34 As a young adult Biørn had witnessed Norway’s peaceful national independence from Sweden, and this experience might have made her inclined to work in the young Armenian nation state. Besides the physical healing of children, in what manner did Biørn’s initiative become part of Armenian nation building?

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32 Johansson, p. 5.
33 Peterson, 72–73. At Tiflis, Georgia 20,000 Armenian refugees were being fed by NER. During the winter of 1919, following upon a season of drought, 20 percent of the people perished. At Alexandropol, a city left in ruins by the retreating Turks, the counts of refugees had soared to 58,000, and 200 to 250 died daily.
The independent Armenian Republic, recognized by the peace conference in 1920, had soon been invaded and divided by Turkey and the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{35} In addition to a large influx of refugees from Turkey, the small, war-torn country with “only a shadow of government”\textsuperscript{36} experienced a devastating famine in the years from 1919–22, together with the Soviet republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan and eastern Russia. In January 1920 Col. Haskell, High Commissioner for the Allied Powers in the Caucasus reported:

The entire population of the Caucasus, consisting of two and a half million, is in desperate straits on account of the shortage of food, business

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\textit{Refugees and Relief in the Armenian Republic}
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\textsuperscript{35} W. Cleveland, \textit{A History of the Modern Middle East}, Boulder/Oxford 2000, p. 119.
\textsuperscript{36} Peterson, pp. 72–73. Herbert Hoover’s words. Hoover was former director of United States Food Administration, head of the American relief in Europe.
paralysis, and political agitation. America is the only country endeavoring to help. Disaster and anarchy will undoubtedly follow...37

Even if the NER claimed to be a non-political organization, it had very close connections with the American government. American support in this region also had a political overtone, bringing American influence as a counterbalance to Russian communism. Peterson points to the fact that the American movement failed in helping to create an independent Armenian republic under USA mandate.38 Even so, the American public did succeed in giving humanitarian relief as based on a deep moral tradition. While Scandinavian KMA supporters had no political ambitions, they were influenced by the same Christian tradition that led to great efforts in sustaining the remaining Armenian population.

Even if they did not see themselves as political agents, the Soviet authorities might have viewed Biørn and other missionaries and aid workers differently. In the Soviet-ruled Caucasus region there was initially suspicion of Western relief organizations. Despite that, Christian aid was welcomed in Soviet Armenia in the early 1920s.39 The Soviet authorities were fighting against internal anti-communist opposition and were not able – or willing – to deal with the overwhelming needs in Armenia.40 After years of war there was hardly any infrastructure left in the region, and Herbert Hoover, former director of United States Food Administration and head of the American relief in Europe described the situation:

If anyone wants material for a treatise on human woe, intrigue, war, massacre, and governmental incompetence, he can find ample sources in the mass of reports from relief officials in Armenia 1918–1919.41

The terrible conditions were made worse by “… hundreds of thousands of refugees from war and genocide returning to the Armenian homeland. They hoped to resume the life they once had known in eastern Anatolia”.42 That was not possible. In his report from January 1920,

38 Peterson, p. 177.
41 Peterson, pp. 72–73.
42 Ibid. p. 74.
Col. Haskell, the earlier mentioned High Commissioner for the Allied Powers in the Caucasus, outlined grim conditions:

The streets are lined with shivering beggars. The coming of a cold, bleak winter increases the suffering. Armenian refugees, arriving at Erivan, Kars and Alexandroupol, are barefooted and their only clothing consists of bits of sacking wrapped around their emaciated bodies. Tiny children wear only the shreds of filthy rags, and crouch on the streets, numb with cold, whimpering with pain. Often, they are compelled to fight off the hungry parish dogs which; driven by hunger, attack any living thing. Relief workers are gathering in the helpless that are too exhausted from the cold even to crawl for aid. Our workers every day come across dead bodies in corners where the poor people have dragged themselves, seeking shelter from the wintry blasts.

All along the railroads the freight cars are packed with refugees, massed together in an effort to keep warm. These cars drift back and forth from one place to another. They might be called death trains; it is a hopeless journey. Each new stopping place, these refugees find, is only worse than the one before. At every railway station we see huddled together and vainly hoping for a train to take them some better place. … Peace may come elsewhere in the world, but hunger knows no armistice. Only America can save these suffering thousands in the Bible Lands.43

“Hunger knows no armistice” became one of the most famous slogans of the NER and appeared on one of the organization’s posters.

Without being overtly religious and by using the term “Bible Lands” to locate the Caucasus, the High Commissioner created a familiar ground that appealed to both Christian and Jewish supporters in the USA. This support across religious divides was of crucial importance for funding the aid; NER was the only major player in Armenia and the organization was also strongly supported by Fridtjof Nansen. Despite his nationality and growing concern for the Armenian refugees, Nansen never seemed to have showed any interest for Biørn’s work in Alexandroupol. The KMA orphanage might have been too small in size for the busy High Commissioner to notice. It was no doubt overshadowed by the enormous American organization and its secular profile that found resonance with the scientist, polar explorer and atheist

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Nansen. How did Bodil Bjørn see her religious welfare work in relation to the secular Near East Relief?

The New Near East: American Relief

The Ottoman government’s war against its Armenian population resulted in tremendous need for external “mothers” – to feed, shelter and bring up the many young children without guardians. The main targets of the genocide had been men. The surviving women and children were deeply traumatized physically and mentally on an individual level, in addition to the collective trauma. As pointed out by Bjørnlund: “This explains why not only individual aid and rescue was necessary, but that it was also necessary to save and regenerate the remnants of a completely destroyed and humiliated nation.” This long-term restoration had eventually to be a task for the Armenian state and welfare organizations. But in the early 1920s, the Armenian society was not able to provide for its starving citizens. In the fall of 1921 aid workers from the Armenian republic asked the NER for food supplies:

Last week two committees came to the office to beg for assistance for the general population to carry them over for fifteen days. This we were compelled to refuse as we had only three weeks’ supply for our 18,000 orphans.

The NER was far from being able to rescue all needy children:

There are at present 800 orphans in the Alexandropol town house in desperate condition who are receiving a pitifully small ration and a hopelessly inadequate amount of care by volunteers in the town, themselves only slightly better off. In a very short time this number will probably approximate 1,500. The children are gathered nightly off the streets. If possible they should be taken into our orphanages.

There was a desperate need both for NER’s secular efforts of rebuilding Armenian society and small-scale projects like the Norwegian

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46 The New Near East, Vol. VI, September, 1921, NO. XI.
47 The New Near East, Vol. VI, September, 1921, NO. XI.
orphanage. Both establishments focused on children’s physical nourishment and basic education.

The Near East Relief was to become the second largest philanthropic movement in American history. The American aid was indeed overwhelming, well organized and seemingly transparent. The amount of American money spent where and on what was printed – for all supporters to see – in the monthly journal of the NER, *The New Near East*. The name indicates the spirit of modernity, professionalism and transformation that was part of the organization’s ideological base. Alexandropol, situated on the railway between Tiflis and Erivan, was the “show” district of the Near East Relief. This was due to the good housing possibilities found in Kazachee Post, former Russian military barracks, which housed over five thousand children: “There are about forty substantial dignified stone houses, which are surrounded by extensive fields and this ‘village’ is located about a mile from the city.” Kazachee Post was a “well organized, efficiently manned, beautifully housed and smoothly run” American orphanage and hospital institution.

The community also included schools and training courses in agriculture and crafts for older children. In addition there was another group of barracks situated on the opposite side of the city, the Polygon, where twenty thousand refugees lived. To supplement these institutions, the NER had established a receiving hospital where the children were:

Received of the streets, heads clipped, bathed, clothed as far as our meagre supplies will allow, fed, and put to bed. They are kept for twenty-four hours and then given a thorough (Sic.) medical examination and later distributed either to orphanage or hospital; thus this receiving station has a new set of inmates every day and there are never any empty beds. … about thirteen hundred children had passed thru (sic.) this station in the few weeks it has been established.

In 1925 Fridtjof Nansen visited Leninakan, as Alexandropol had been renamed, and the Polygon. He was deeply impressed by the facilities, where 11 000 orphans were taken care of.

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49 For example “Inventory” in *The New Near East*, January 1920, p. 11.
50 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
The implementation of NER’s refugee program was to be done in several stages, defined as the “Seven Stages of Man and Near East Relief”.54

1- Rescue
2- Healing
3- Sustenance
4- Repatriation
5- Shelter
6- Education
7- Self-support

These stages – or methods – were to become classic in international refugee work. Thus missionaries working for the NER were central in the making of modern, humanitarian aid. In his position as High Commissioner for refugees from 1920–29, Nansen ministered to hundreds of thousands of Russian, Turkish, Armenian, Assyrian and Assyro-Chaldean refugees. He introduced and utilized methods that were similar to the NER’s stages: custodial care, repatriation, rehabilitation, resettlement, emigration and integration.55 Nansen received the Nobel Peace Prize the same year partly because of his “appeal to world opinion with brotherly love as the driving and animating force”.56 The stages Bodil Biørn wanted to focus on when she decided to establish an orphanage for boys in Alexandropol in 1922 were rescue, healing and sustenance. But in contrast to Nansen, Biørn included religious nourishment in her relief project. KMA-members played an important role in this part of the work. Women in Norway prayed for Biørn, her venture and the children. This gave precious strength and comfort, and Biørn encouraged them to carry on. The power of prayer can do amazing things, she told them.57

The Source of Light: A Small Scale, Norwegian Orphanage

Biørn wrote home about nights without sleep. Abandoned children crying for bread outside her windows kept her awake. Mothers or other relatives who lived in extreme poverty begged Biørn and her staff to take

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55 http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1922/nansen-bio.html
56 http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/articles/sveen/index.html
57 KMA Kvartalshilsen, 1924, nr. 1, p. 4.
Children before

Children after
Photos courtesy of National Archives of Norway
care of their children.\textsuperscript{58} The KMA-members in Norway were moved by these reports of suffering. Funding – 900 Norwegian crowns – paid one year’s rent for a house owned by the Armenian government. This former luxurious villa made it possible for Biørn to create an orphanage after her own design. She named it \textit{Lyskilden} – Source of Light.

Contrary to NER’s extremely large, highly efficient and groundbreaking refugee work, Biørn wanted to establish a small, personal and unhurried recovery for the weakest children. She saw her venture as a qualitative addition to the NER. The American enterprise was invaluable, but their orphanages were much too large to be real homes for the children.

The house had ten rooms, two kitchens and gardens both in front and in the back. Biørn made it practical, with running water being connected up: “one of the most important things in an orphanage”\textsuperscript{59} She hired two “kind and able” Armenian women; one cooked and one looked after the children. Because prices doubled during the wintertime, it became necessary to buy all they needed for one year at a time, so she also employed a man who bought food and other necessities.\textsuperscript{60}

Biørn’s aim was to create a “home feeling” for each child, and much effort was put into making the surroundings pleasant and comfortable. Here she and Armenian staff cared for thirty weak, sick and extremely undernourished children.\textsuperscript{61} Many of them had very large stomachs, caused by a diet consisting of grass and “greens”.

While the NER struggled to find enough foodstuffs to distribute, Biørn seemed to have had enough provisions for the children. She only accepted the number of children she could properly feed.\textsuperscript{62} Besides having enough to eat, the children at the Source of Light had their own beds.\textsuperscript{63} This was a contrast to the children in the NER institutions who slept in bunk beds. During his visit Nansen had seen several hundred children in each large sleeping hall. These halls were clean and light, but not heated during the wintertime.\textsuperscript{64} In a region with winter

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{KMA} KMA KVARTALSHILSEN, 1923, NR. 1, P. 4.
\bibitem{Ibid} Ibid, P. 8.
\bibitem{Biørn} Biørn, “Armenia og armenierne”.
\bibitem{KMA} KMA KVARTALSHILSEN, 1923, NR. 1, P. 2.
\bibitem{Letter} Letter from B. Biørn, Alexandropol, November 9, 1922.
\bibitem{Interview} Interview in the film “They Call Me Mother”, 2008.
\bibitem{Nansen} Nansen, p. 122.
\end{thebibliography}
temperatures of minus 20 degrees Celsius and five months with snow, even the polar explorer reacted to the fact that these halls were unheated. Alexandropol/Gumri is located 5000 feet above sea level. Bodil Biørn was reminded of the climate and air of Norwegian mountains – healthy, but freezing during the winter months. She was concerned with the cold winters. The children’s beds were made up of wool, which Biørn and her staff had washed and dried out on the roof. Later the wool was stuffed and made into mattresses and quilts. Warm clothes were sent in boxes from supporters in Norway via the American Board, and a shoemaker made shoes for the children.

The many photographs taken of the children before and after entering the Source of Light show the profound physical transformation of the refugee child. This was of course a crucial part of the children’s welfare. The images were also tokens of success, and encouraged supporters at home to continue to finance the home. But Biørn always emphasized the spiritual side of relief. Her aim was “not only to give the children food and clothing, but also to give them something for the soul.” Every day there were ten-minute morning prayers and half an hour of evening prayers with the children. Tuesdays nine of the older boys came to Biørn’s room to talk about “eternal issues.” Although the sources are not clear on this point, the children were most likely given an introduction to Lutheran thinking.

There was not only religious instruction in the home, however. There was an explicit idea – shared by the NER – that Armenian children needed to be educated in order to be useful citizens: “give them an upbringing in order for them to become competent, capable human beings and a blessing for their country”, as expressed by Biørn. A school was established in the orphanage. Teaching the children the Armenian language was one central task in the educational program of the school. Many Armenian orphans had been living in Turkish households and did not know Armenian when they came to the NER or Biørn’s orphanages. American and Norwegian missionaries with years of experience from Armenian societies in the former Ottoman Empire were now teaching Armenian children Armenian language and culture.

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65 KMA Kvartalshilsen, 1923, nr. 1, p. 7, Letter from B. Biørn, Alexandropol, November 9, 1922.
66 KMA Kvartalshilsen, 1922, nr. 4, p. 38.
67 KMA Kvartalshilsen 1924, nr. 3, p. 31.
68 KMA Kvartalshilsen, 1922, nr. 4, p. 38.
In the Ottoman Empire the principal ethnic marker for Armenians was the Armenian Apostolic Church and not language. Armenians spoke regional Armenian dialects and depending on region, Armenians could also have Turkish or Kurdish as their main language. After the genocide, when the restoration of the nation became imperative, Western-Armenian was regarded as the true language of the Armenian people – at the expense of other languages.\(^{59}\) Fuelled by contemporary ideas of nation building, missionaries taught only Armenian in their schools. In this manner missionaries not only contributed to the physical nourishing of survivors, but also to the larger Armenian national reconstruction.\(^ {70}\)

All in all there were 200 American orphanages for Armenian children in the region. These institutions were significant in giving schooling to both girls and boys. Donald and Lorna T. Miller, who have interviewed Armenians who grew up in the American orphanages, emphasize this aspect. Yet, the orphanages had a double educational function – as schools but also as substitute families:

> The orphanages were … vital in offering children educational opportunities; indeed, the few survivors we interviewed who were illiterate were those who had lost their parents in the genocide but did not grow up in orphanages. … it is difficult to overestimate the importance of these institutions in healing the wounds of the children they nurtured. The orphanages functioned as “families” for the survivors who had lost parents as well as siblings. Here, orphans bonded to each other, seeking to recreate the closeness they would otherwise have enjoyed with their own family.\(^ {71}\)

The Armenians was a “nation of orphans and widows”, to use George Hintlian’s phrase.\(^ {72}\) There was an enormous need for children and women to be able to support themselves. The NER established large workshops to educate both boys and girls. Anna Fossum reported from the NER orphanage in Georgia that: “(v)ery small children learn to knit and weave, and also to spin. It is nothing strange to see a four- or

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\(^{59}\) Bjørnlund, 2008, p. 28.


Despite the emphasis on education and training, the greatest challenge was to introduce a notion of carefree childhood to the famished and traumatized children. According to Fossum: “We have found it hardest to teach these poor children to play. They have not the playful instinct, as they grow up amid such hard surroundings.” In The Source of Light, playing, outdoor activities, song and music were also important to the healing process. Bjoern was an excellent pianist, and in her youth she studied music in Berlin. In Alexandropol she bought a small organ with money from the KMA. She played for the children and taught them religious Armenian songs. They were also introduced to outdoor activities. Bjoern belonged to the class and generation that became the first competent female skiers in Norway. She wanted the children to have fun in the snow. The first Christmas in Armenia Bjoern gave the children a sled, which she brought along on hikes that she took with the boys. They could go all the way to Polygon, where the children played outside and Bjoern visited her friends and colleagues, the earlier mentioned Miss Silmann and Miss McClair.

Some of the children were, however, too sick to enjoy the outdoors. Bjoern’s willingness to accept these seriously ill children in the orphanage reveals a relief-ideology that not only stressed the need to create useful citizens in a new Armenian society, but also had a profound religious and humanitarian base. This as a contrast to the harsh Social Darwinist inspired ideology that was expressed by a central Near East Relief representative, the Director of the organization’s Committee in Syria, Robert A. Lambert:

“The returning refugee, says Dr. Lambert, ‘exemplified the survival of the fittest, and in spite of his rags and dirt, he did impress one with his hardiness, and his relative resistance to certain types of diseases. Few of the halt, lame and blind had survived, and the leper, a common sight in certain

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76 Ibid, 13.
77 K M A. Kvartalshilsen, 1923, nr. 2, p. 11: Jeg vilde saa gjerne at de skulde ha det rigtig godt, før de blev tat bort; men Gud vet, hvad er bedst for dem.
parts of the country before the war, had practically disappeared, one of the few contributions of the war to the general good.\textsuperscript{78}

The Norwegian orphanage accepted children no matter their condition. For instance, two boys who suffered from scabies, trachoma and kidney disease when they were admitted to the home, died soon after. Biørn’s favourite Bible quotations from Matthew 25, 40 – “in as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me”\textsuperscript{79} – was readily accepted by KMA as justification for spending money and time on the children who might not grow up to become useful Armenian citizens.\textsuperscript{80}

In contrast, the NER had to justify the American donors’ investment by showing them that the money was well invested in rebuilding Armenian society. In addition the NER had to convince supporters that the organization was promoting the “ideals of the free people of the Western World.”\textsuperscript{81} In a region where the communist Soviet Union was strengthening its grip this was done, despite the claim that NER was a non-political organization. In 1919 the NER News Bulletin commented on the Peace negotiations in Paris and the situation in the Armenian Republic:

The only relief up to now that has gone into this Christian republic has been out of the pockets of American men, women and children… – It represents $30,000,000 in money, but greater than that, the crystallized ideals of the free people of the Western World.\textsuperscript{82}

NER was a player in international politics in a manner that the Norwegian establishment never was. Even so, politics yet again

\textsuperscript{78} The New Near East, October 1921, 6. One Dr. Lambert commenting on the 250,000 Armenian and Syrian refugees that returned to the Aleppo district after the Armistice. This Dr. Lambert was probably Dr. Robert Lambert. See http://library.georgetown.edu/dept/speccoll/fl/f169%7D1.htm

\textsuperscript{79} http://bible.cc/matthew/25–40.htm, Webster’s Bible Translation. Biørn’s Norwegian version: “Hvad I har gjort imot én av disse mine mindste brødre, det har I gjort imot mig. She then continues: Det, vi gjør for Jesus, er visselig ikke forgjæves. (What we do for Jesus is never done in vain.)

\textsuperscript{80} KMA Kvartalshilsen, 1923, nr. 3, p. 30.

\textsuperscript{81} News Bulletin, published by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief, August-September 1919, Vol. IV, No 3,–, 8: Heading: "Paris Responsible for the Safety of the Caucasus". The only relief up to now that has gone into this Christian republic has been out of the pockets of American men, women and children… – It represents $30,000,000 in money, but greater than that, the crystallized ideals of the free people of the Western World.”

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
intervened in Biørn’s work. This time it was not war but the communist power’s increasing intolerance towards Christian humanitarian relief that brought her operations to an end.

The problems started in 1924 when the authorities refused to rent the house of the Source of Light to the KMA. The orphanage had to move to a small house that the NER let them use. The house was in bad condition, and it was cramped, but it was the only building available. The next year more misfortune happened. Biørn became seriously ill and was forced to go back to Norway. She employed a Protestant Armenian woman from Bitlis, educated at the American Board mission, and felt confident that this Armenian woman would run the orphanage in the spirit of KMA. However, the Soviet government did not tolerate the Christian institution any longer. When Biørn, after regaining her health, tried to return to Armenia, she was denied permission. A letter from the Director of the Secret Department to comrade Sarkisyan, the representative of “Amerkom”, makes this very clear:

We inform that the Norwegian children’s home is to be liquidated, and asks its representatives to leave Armenia. If Amerkom (NER) refuses to accept the children, hand them over to the “Gortskom” (the Executive Committee). Comrade’s Lukashiva’s order on this matter is final.

The only way Biørn could have been allowed entrance to Armenia was if she was employed by the NER. KMA gave her the option of leaving the organization in order to join the philanthropic American organization. The offer was turned down; it was impossible to imagine relief without a Christian context. Biørn wanted to work for a mission, even though that meant leaving the children in Leninakan. The fact that the children were taken care of by the NER, was a great comfort. “I cannot tell you how it hurt me not being able to return to my dear children”, she later wrote. At the time Leninakan (which was now the official name of

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83 KMA Kvartalshilsen, 1925, nr. 3. p. 2.
84 In the Norwegian text it is called “The international aid organisation, Den internasjonale hjælpeorganisasjonen, KMA Kvartalshilsen 1926, nr. 2.
85 National Archive of Armenia, Store II 113, list 38, dossier/file 42, page 356 Letter NO 271, NO8 26. July 1924 (It has to be 1925), to comrade Sarkisyan, the representative of “Amerkom”, signed the representative of “Joghkhhorhoud” (Public Committee Board), Director of Secret Department. I thank Jussi F. Biørn for bringing this source to my attention.
86 National Archives (Riksarkivet), Oslo. Kvinnelige misjonsarbeidere (KMA) PA 699. Letter from the KMA- board to “Friends of Armenia”, Oslo, December 1926.
the city) had been badly damaged by a large earthquake, and this was an additional agony in Bjørn’s state of exclusion. Fortunately the children at the Source of Light had not been hurt, but the general need in the area was great. The NER dealt with relief among the victims and continued to maintain orphanages in the country until expelled by the Soviets in 1927.87

For the second time Bodil Bjørn had to leave her work uncompleted. When she began her third and last venture among the Armenians, it was in Syria, to work among the country’s 120,000 Armenian refugees. This time she brought her son Fridtjof along. While it has been said that Nansen’s work in the Armenian cause sapped much of his strength in the late 1920s, Bodil Bjørn did not let international politics stop her work among refugees.88 In Syria she established an orphanage in Aleppo for girls and an evening school for women. She also worked among the many poor, old widows who lived in the large refugee camps.89 Also here Bjørn’s mission work included not only physical sustenance but the teaching of Armenian language, culture and work skills.

**Conclusion**

In the summer of 2008 the Armenian Genocide Museum in Erevan held a memorial plaque dedication ceremony in the honor of Bodil Bjørn. On the date of her death, July 22, she was given a commemorative inscription at the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial Complex. When this center was dedicated in 1968, Fridtjof Nansen’s name was the first to be inscribed. 40 years later the Armenian people gave Bodil Bjørn an official recognition for her ability to transform a deep Christian belief into a social force. Nansen and Bjørn both believed in the goodness of hard labor. However, Nansen had a non-religious base for his humanitarian endeavor. For Bjørn, her Armenian co-workers and KMA-supporters in

87 http://www.neareast.org/main/countries/cr_9_pr.aspx
88 http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/articles/sveen/index.html  
In 1925 Fridtjof Nansen was invited by the League of Nations to draw up a plan that would save the remnants of the Armenian people from extinction. Nansen’s plan for creating a national home for the Armenians in Erivan was never implemented.
89 When Bjørn left in 1934, the Armenian crisis was over. The number of refugees in camps in the early 1930s was only 30 percent of previous levels. E. M. Lust-Okar, “Failure of Collaboration: Armenian Refugees in Syria”, in *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, January 1996, pp. 53–68, (64).
Norway, religious commitment created the actual foundation for their joint efforts in being a factor in the rebuilding of the Armenian nation.

The young Armenian Republic would not have survived without the Near East Relief’s immediate aid and long-term development scheme of healing, education and training of thousands of Armenian orphans. The NER’s success was partly due to the many former missionaries with a long and deep knowledge of Armenian culture, history and society, who were willing to change from mission to secular relief in the new political realities of the inter-war period. Some Scandinavian missionaries joined the “secular” NER, while others, like Bodil Biørn, managed to create a version of post-war humanitarianism based on her own religious understanding and values also in the context of Soviet rule.

For the Armenians it became an issue of the nation’s right to existence to create conditions that would sustain the survivors of the catastrophe. Through their work, Biørn and other missionaries became part of the process of securing the survival of the Armenian nation. In this process mission work came to include not only humanitarian aid but also the teaching of Armenian culture. Orphanages and schools run by missionaries were molded in contemporary national ideology, where Armenian language and customs were core subjects. Even so, while on the local level mission work had become part of Armenian nation building, these missionaries were also located within existing transnational missionary networks. This system was crucial in the transformation from mission to international relief and development. With their long-term experience from thinking, organizing and acting on a global scale, missionaries became pioneers of modern, humanitarian aid.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

MISSION BY OTHER MEANS?
DORA EARTHY AND THE SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND
IN THE 1930S

Deborah Gaitskell

Introduction: Missions, International Charity and Modern NGOs

“Missions figure prominently as pioneers of modern welfare states and international philanthropy”, comments a recent survey of mission healthcare and schooling.¹ Likewise, in their transnational aid operation after the Armenian massacres, it has been suggested, missionaries can be seen as forerunners of present-day development or aid workers.² Historians of East Africa similarly assert that the international NGO movement was rooted in its religious and missionary past, deriving from the way the first major provision of charitable relief and welfare services to non-European populations came via nineteenth-century Protestant missions.³

This paper aims to link this general macro-level assertion current today with scholarly appraisal of the impact of returning missionaries on their home societies. By looking at the links that Dora Earthy (1874–1960) forged in the 1930s with the Save the Children Fund (SCF), having been retired back to Britain from Anglican church work in Mozambique, it may be possible to unpick the connection between missions and NGOs in a more personal way. How exactly did missionaries help pioneer international philanthropy? How, in turn, did international aid in the interwar period relate to or draw on the mission inheritance, with its

religious and cultural insights, in particular instances? How can we move beyond the axiom of there being a historically proven link between the two to actual confirmatory case studies?

Before resigning from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in 1930, Dora Earthy had spent two decades as a keen and gifted missionary, doing evangelistic work among African women: first running church classes and female devotional meetings for five years in the more urban settings of Johannesburg and Potchefstroom (1911–16) in the southern Transvaal, South Africa, followed by a transfer to Maciene, in rural southern Mozambique, where she was based 1917–30. As one of the many unmarried “family standbys” of the interwar period expected to find their life validated by a caring role, Dora ostensibly left Africa because she was needed back home – not, though, as a “dutiful daughter” to an ageing mother, but so that her sister would not be alone, again typical of the importance of that sibling connection in that period.

Previous perusal of Dora Earthy’s retirement letters in the mission archives had suggested a rather poignant, pitiful figure, stuck way down in deepest Cornwall, compelled by her (married) brother to eschew any return to Africa, but rather, after their mother’s death, to stay on in the dilapidated family home in Truro with their younger, invalid sister, eking out an uncomplaining, Spartan existence. Dora was poor enough to be grateful for help with medical bills and a small increase in her pension from SPG in 1935. As she wrote to the mission society in the year she turned 60, “being no longer young and strong…it is so difficult to find paid work these days that I could do.” Yet without some public work, she reflected, “one feels so cut off from everything.” I knew she had presented some South African data (almost immediately published in a nursing periodical) at an international conference on African children in Geneva in June 1931 and that Save the Children sent her to West

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6 Ibid. 73.
7 United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Archives, Rhodes House, Oxford (hereafter USPG), Dossier 2640, letters from Dora Earthy to Women Candidates’ Secretary, 20 December 1934, 4 January 1935. She was writing this as her links with SCF were weakening – see below.
Africa for six months in 1932–3, spent half in Sierra Leone, half in Liberia. But, until learning it from Dominique Marshall’s research on that 1931 conference,9 I had no idea that Earthy had been on an SCF committee for five years subsequently (until 1936) and was published at least nine times in their literature.10 Her connection with global humanitarianism turned out to be more substantial than at first imagined, necessitating a fresh evaluation of her “retirement”.

Hence, charting some of Earthy’s dealings with SCF and trying to gauge their significance should offer a way into personalising and embodying what might otherwise be rather airy assertions about the inevitable link between Christian missions and the international philanthropy of the interwar years, which formalised itself by the 1960s into developmental NGOs. After exploring Earthy’s role in the 1931 SCF conference, much of the presentation evaluates the use to which she put the subsequent West African research trip on which the charity sent her. Highlighting how SCF compelled a change in emphasis in Dora’s relationship with Africa (towards child-centred issues of education and healthcare), the argument nevertheless contends that Earthy was not completely reinventing herself in a non-mission context but rather reconfiguring her missionary message in changed times and circumstances. First, though, the discussion briefly highlights the public role in British interwar scholarship on Africa for which she is slightly better known.

**Dora Earthy and the International African Institute**

Rather than Dora Earthy contributing to international child-oriented philanthropy, the entirely different area of missions and ethnography might seem the main way in which she engaged with metropolitan society on her return from Africa. Dora was a self-taught anthropologist who had done some relevant reading in the 1920s, as she set about increasingly systematic fieldwork among Valenge women in southern Mozambique, the sphere of her church endeavours. She was building on

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10 I am indebted to the kindness of Dominique Marshall, who provided me with photocopies of work authored by Earthy which she had come across during her own research.
a lifelong gift for languages and over a decade and a half spent cataloguing and sometimes translating scientific papers at London’s prestigious Royal Society, her employment before becoming a missionary. This had given her the scientific curiosity and taste for research which led the SPG to comment to her brother after her death that they had “seldom if ever had a missionary of such real scholarly ability.” A grant from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg enabled Earthy to complete her enquiries, while her enforced return to England may well have helped facilitate the publication in 1933 of her monograph on Valenge women, under the auspices of the International African Institute.

The book garnered some good reviews, notably from up-and-coming Cambridge-trained anthropologist, Monica Hunter. Yet, despite constituting a rare, if not unique, figure at the time as a female missionary anthropologist, and further standing out for her gender-specific focus on girls and women, Dora Earthy still did not make the lasting impact on anthropological scholarship of professional South African female contemporaries of the 1930s like Hunter, Hilda Kuper, Eileen Krige or even Earthy’s mentor, Winifred Hoernlé. Being outside the academy (unlike these other women) cut Dora off from the chance of influencing, training and mentoring others in the interwar years, despite the depth and detail of her fieldwork. Working in a non-British territory, under Portuguese control, further exacerbated the unfamiliarity of her data. She was not a forceful personality and may have lacked confidence as a public speaker outside the African setting. Above all, Earthy had the misfortune to be published just as the gifted amateur was being superseded by the professional anthropologist. Talk of a university post possibly being found for her in South Africa came to nothing.

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12 USPG, Dossier 2640, Women Candidates’ Secretary to G. Earthy [Dora’s brother], 19 August 1960.
15 See details in Gaitskell. “Female Faith.” 74.
16 For “the emergence and decline of missionary contributions to anthropology” (p. 238), see Harries, Patrick. ”Anthropology.” In Missions and Empire, ed. Etherington. 238–260.
Thus Dora Earthy’s involvement with SCF arguably represented an alternative strategy for keeping her African links alive, once both the mission and academic routes had seemingly been exhausted. From the SCF’s point of view, though, Dora was a rare find – at a time when younger women were just beginning to acquire university training in anthropology and contemplate research projects, Earthy had been recording data in the field for over a decade as a serving missionary and was finalising its writing up. Unusually, too, her book would have a uniquely female focus. Articles published in several journals had already demonstrated her analytical and organisational skills – and she was home from Africa, seemingly permanently, available to help the NGO with its expanding remit.

SCF and the Conference on African Children

Nevertheless, it is still not absolutely clear quite how Dora Earthy ended up in Geneva in June 1931, meeting on “four perfect summer days in succession”17 along with 200 others at this pioneering but still unjustly neglected event. The International Conference on African Children had been organised by the Save the Children International Union (SCIU) to focus on issues of infant mortality, child labour and education. Female networking within the globalising Anglican Church seems the likely source of the idea, now that Dora was back in England in a retirement not of her choosing, of using her scholarly skills to coordinate scientific and social data from South Africa for one of the reports to the conference, though elevated London social and church circles in the Jebb and Buxton family orbit, taking an interest in African welfare, may also have come up with her name.18

Why was SCF interested in Africa? Set up after the First World War, SCF had achieved its initial goal of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child by 1924. Wanting to turn its attention to non-European children, it was partly under missionary influence that its focus fell especially on Africa as an arena in which to implement the Declaration’s universality. There was a complex mutual need and reciprocal relationship at work.

As Marshall notes, SCF’s International Union had been keen to establish its independence from over-close Protestant links – and yet honoured missionary contributions to and precedents for its work. It was missionaries who responded most enthusiastically to SCF’s conference invitation – Marshall lists 47 missionary bodies (both Protestant and Catholic) and 23 additional individuals with religious affiliations with whom SCF was in touch concerning the 1931 gathering.

But why, in turn, did missionaries want to work with SCF on African children’s rights at the turn of the 1930s? The three reasons Marshall suggests seem to relate particularly to missions’ social appeal, changing theology and political aspirations. The public popularity of work with children, visible in the contemporary proliferation of photographs of African infants and toddlers, appeared to offer missions a guaranteed basis for international collaboration towards peace via working with a lay humanitarian agency recognised for the education and protection of children. Then, in an era becoming lukewarm about proselytising and conversion, welfare work, especially in healthcare, appealed to some as more impartial and scientific than old-style evangelism. Finally, tackling children’s situation as a good route to changing society offered missions a political lever to nudge colonial governments to wake up and do more.

In SCF’s concern for the scientific collection of information on children, missionary closeness to African life made them better placed to get accurate statistics. Copying the recent international missionary conference in Jerusalem (1928), SCF sent out 895 lengthy questionnaires, with 84% of the 358 replies from workers in the field coming from missionaries. Then SCF sent the responses to experts to summarise and comment on the answers in their conference presentations, to facilitate discussion. For Southern Africa (as one of the four regions), and on infant mortality (one of the three themes), this was the task that fell to Dora Earthy, whom Marshall singles out as a rapporteur with professional qualifications. But Earthy, self-taught anthropologist, was not a

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19 Ibid., 275.
20 Ibid., 313–318.
23 Ibid. 305, n. 49 (though p. 283 says they were sent to 1,500 people).
24 Ibid. 286.
university graduate (few female missionaries of her era were, apart from the doctors) and had never worked in a medical mission. By contrast, Anglican colleagues had set up a small hospital in Sophiatown, well after Dora's time in Johannesburg, and other missions on the Rand likewise ran baby clinics and agonised about high infant mortality, the very issue on which Dora reported.  

Although race relations and seemingly sacred tribal customs “threatened to provide material for misunderstanding and friction” in Geneva, and discussion occasionally became heated and the atmosphere tense, it soon emerged, claimed sympathetic observer Evelyn Sharp, that the conference as a whole “refused to admit the existence of a colour bar or of the inferiority of one people to another.” She conjured up how rare moments of relaxation and socialising in gracious surroundings produced enlightening and pleasurable encounters in Geneva. The picturesque lakeside setting and the warm interactions among the diverse delegates might well have been a welcome and stimulating experience for Dora, after the isolation of both rural Mozambique and deepest Cornwall.

Earthy produced two printed documents for the conference. The first was a 25-page summary of the responses from some 60 sources in Southern Africa (from whom she often quoted directly), on the causes of infant mortality. The four provinces of South Africa itself had provided 37 of these, while Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland sent in 12 responses altogether, South West Africa 4 and Southern Rhodesia 7. She drew on the most frequently suggested origins of the problem from those on the ground, but also referenced published work now more easily available to her back in England, while interweaving

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29 Earthy. “Conference Report.” 1–25. (This provided the basis for her published journal article. Earthy. “Still Birth and Infantile Mortality.”) Her fascinating introduction merits more attention than is possible here.


31 She quotes from *Africa* and the *South African Journal of Science*, plus missionary authors like Junod, Willoughby and Phillips, anthropologists Schapera and Hoernlé, and Fabian socialist and academic, Mabel Palmer.
personal experiences from her own missionary past. Earthy organised these causes under four headings (also providing diagrammatic tables): social diseases (syphilis, tuberculosis, alcoholism); economic conditions; superstition; and ignorance. In her final summary as actually presented, however, she combined the two latter as one, and added as a cause of mortality, the lack of proper medical aid, especially in rural areas.32

Suggested measures to combat the high death rate put missions and conversion to Christianity strongly to the fore. Indeed, Dora’s stance typified the criticism of the conference voiced by Lucie Schmidt, in her report to her employers, the International Labour Office – perhaps representing a wider constituency which saw “mission by other means” as an unacceptable approach to international child welfare. Schmidt deplored the dominating nature of “the Protestant missionary tendency”, whose conference “interventions amounted to a demand more or less direct for the Christianization of the Native.”33 A great forward movement was needed, Dora argued (following her sources), in at least five areas: lengthy, patient effort “in Christian education and against superstition, with intensive ethnological study” to understand African needs better; encouragement of Christian missions, “always…the pioneers of both medical and moral advance”; more hospital-building, increased European staff, training for African doctors, nurses and midwives, and vernacular mothercraft instruction; a government scheme to coordinate activities; and – her additional personal suggestion – a series of social surveys and rural life studies to diagnose community needs.34

Like some others at the conference, Dora used the questionnaire results to critique colonialism, putting maternal and infant disease in a social and occupational context, where poverty, overcrowding, life on the mines and sparse medical provision all contributed to worryingly high mortality figures. She recognised Africans’ “inherent moral force” (which could be harnessed to combat venereal disease) and warned against glib talk of maternal ignorance and superstition behind infant mortality. To Marshall, her more open attitude exemplified something

33 Quoted in Marshall. “Children's Rights.” 298. Nevertheless, the popular account of the conference abounds in Christian and religious references, such as Sharp. African Child. 84.
like the “process of mutual learning” advocated by today’s human rights philosophers. Mutual empathy was needed to overcome suspicion. Earthy went further, averring (with biblical echoes of 1 Corinthians 13) that, while there was still “so very much” which they in the West did not understand, “knowledge without love is of no avail”. This was in the published conference report, which carried only a three-page summary statement from Earthy, although the chairman, in thanking her, described her report as “remarkable not only for the valuable observations it contained, but for the logical manner in which they were set out.”

Somewhat at odds with the bulk of Dora Earthy’s full report, however, with its empirical accumulation of stern data, is the final paragraph of her generally more freely written introduction, which intermittently adopts an almost poetic and exhortatory style. Here, before turning to the questionnaire responses, she consciously – and most unusually, as explored further below – declaims with missionary pity the call of the needy African baby, in terms which to a modern eye perhaps verge on the infantilising and sentimentalising, though she undoubtedly means well and is not untypical of her time. She also draws a bold parallel between the African child and the Christ Child:

African babies are calling! – babies of a hundred different types, from the little brown-wax model rolling about in a bee-hive hut in Zululand, to the coloured baby with a bonnet, in Johannesburg, proudly imitating its European sister; from the S. Rhodesian baby, half-suffocated in the goatskin on its mother’s back, to the poor little ailing mite in a tin shanty in a location. African babies are calling! Unfathomable brown eyes are peeping at an unknown world from the shelter of the mother’s back. And there are those who see in the face of an African baby, the face of the Christ Child.

This gave a foretaste of the way in which Dora’s relationship with SCF would work out in the future: a multi-centred, more personalised,
though not usually as openly emotive, portrayal of the lives and needs of young Africans, with possible Christian input or implications generally less to the fore than in this quote, in favour of vivid description and helpful current information.

But it was Dora’s evocative quote about the African babies calling which opened the chapter on infant mortality in Evelyn Sharp’s popular account of the conference.41 Indeed, Dora and the two other female paper-presenters at the conference seem to have been given a slightly higher profile than their sixteen male counterparts in Sharp’s reporting. In paying tribute to the practical knowledge of the conference experts, furthermore, Sharp added that when “their vocations overlapped as in the case of Miss E.D. Earthy”, who was both a missionary and “an anthropologist of distinction,” then “the report produced was of extraordinary value”.42 It was Dora’s summary classification of the causes of infant mortality which Sharp detailed numerically and took as representative, commenting that it might “serve as a fairly typical statement of what [was] happening more or less elsewhere”, being corroborated in general terms by the seven remaining papers in that section.43 So Earthy seems to have impressed Sharp at the conference and earned her respect and attention.

This is noteworthy because Sharp was, after all, not merely a popular author of fairy tales and children’s stories, but also a feminist journalist and former suffragette (who had twice been imprisoned). Her 1920s investigative newspaper articles on educational and welfare provision for children had led to books on The London Child (1927) and The Child Grows Up (1929), which “helped to cement [her] reputation as a lay authority on the subject.” In addition, the large Buxton family, so central to SCF, were close friends.44 Evelyn had also, as a pacifist and international humanitarian, worked with Quakers in ravaged post-war Germany and in famine-devastated Russia, so drawing her in to produce an “accessible” account of SCF deliberations made sense. Had Sharp not, furthermore, in one of her Manchester Guardian columns,

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41 Each of the chapters on the four conference themes began with up to five quotes from relevant conference papers on the page opposite, ideally encompassing each region each time.
43 Ibid. 26–7.
stressed the importance of “internationalising the child”?\textsuperscript{45} This was precisely what the conference set out to do.

\textit{Conference Outcomes: Earthy’s West African Trip}

Sharp reflected on how “The closing session of a conference is often the least important – a matter, perhaps, of passing omnibus resolutions and catching trains.” Yet the Geneva delegates “worked seriously to the very end” on their draft conclusions – which Sharp summarised and recast for the book under “objects” and “methods” each time, in a way which sharpened the three issues and foregrounded African involvement.\textsuperscript{46} Thus, for example, regarding the enquiry to which Dora Earthy contributed, with the object of discovering the causes of Africa’s high infant mortality, close investigation was urged, “in co-operation with trained Africans, and along anthropological, medical, sociological, and economic lines,” into the following:

(a) Certain anti-moral, anti-hygienic, or superstitious practices widespread in Africa.
(b) The so-called social diseases which are the causes of still-births and infant mortality.
(c) The nutritive value of local food-stuffs for infants and their parents with a view to improving the existing crops.
(d) The therapeutic value of African drugs.
(e) The effects of abuses arising out of industrialization.\textsuperscript{47}

The methods proposed had four aspects: more voluntary associations in welfare work to exert a moral influence and extend mothers’ education; government cooperation in better supply of medical personnel; pooled information to frame a medical policy for Africa applied to various customs and diseases of different areas; coordination by medical staff and teachers to popularise knowledge of hygiene. The investigative objects

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ibid.} 176. For a conference on African children to be written up as one on “the African child” not only echoed Sharp’s earlier book titles in a deliberate equivalence which universalised infant needs, but also perhaps risked an essentialism which might obscure complexity and variety.

\textsuperscript{46} Sharp, \textit{African Child}. 85.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Ibid.} 86. Conference deliberations on education and child labour have been omitted for this paper.
round cultural practices, social diseases and nutrition, as in (a) to (c) above, were what Earthy subsequently took up on a modest scale in West Africa, while also publicising the welfare and medical efforts of voluntary (mission) associations, but she left wider continental educational and medical policy-making to others.

As for what SCIU should do next, apart from encouraging more conferences, the delegates agreed it should continue its work on behalf of the children of Africa and also “form a permanent unofficial centre for documentary research, for the exchange of information and experiences,” and to link “private organizations” with more “social and scientific” institutions, both national and international. In the event, SCIU opened the relatively modest Eglantyne Jebb Centre in Geneva for documentation and advocacy on African children, directed at national governments and the League of Nations; it published a regular bulletin over the next ten years. London SCF set up a Child Protection Committee which met for the next decade to take care of “non-European” children. It organised public debates and some campaigns targeting the British government. Dora Earthy was on this committee until 1936.

Another conference outcome was the sponsorship by both SCIU and SCF committees of a six-month trip by Earthy to West Africa, continuing the theme of her report (and, incidentally, taking up her closing personal suggestion there that more social research should be carried out.) She was to enquire into the conditions of child life, especially in relation to infant mortality. Three different medical missionary institutions provided her with a base. From October 1932-February 1933, she was at St Joseph’s Hospital at Bolahun, Liberia, run by the American Episcopalian Order of the Holy Cross. She spent only 12 days at the Methodist Segbwema Hospital in Sierra Leone, but nine weeks at Princess Christian Hospital in the capital, Freetown. Although Dora demonstrated her unfailing interest in languages by also recording what she could of Kru and Kisi, it was social and medical observations and findings from this trip that provided the bulk of her later published writing for SCF.

Five years after the conference, but again continuing this same strand of concern, SCIU set up a small station for maternal health in Addis Ababa. However, by the end of 1936, the charity had relocated to a

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48 Ibid. 90.
50 Ibid. 308, n. 92, citing dates of relevant committee minutes.
51 See her vocabulary notes in Rhodes House, X1172 and X1177.
camp in British Somaliland to help Ethiopian refugees from the Italian invasion. So Earthy’s investigative venture stands alongside the Ethiopian project, it would seem, as the twin, regrettably modest, Africa-based outcomes of the 1931 conference. As Sharp’s biographer lamented, after reiterating that Evelyn “had been part of a seminal and exciting debate” in Geneva, “[s]adly, though, the rise of European fascism forced attention elsewhere. The energy harnessed in 1931 and the potential for the future that she witnessed and suggested at the end of her book proved to be short-lived.”

_Earthy and SCF Popular Journalism: Engaging Portrayals of African Children_

Earthy’s intermittent journalism for SCF over the half-decade following the 1931 conference is impressive not only in its regularity but also for the way it was being fitted in around both her anthropological work and the six months spent in West Africa. Snippets and longer contributions appeared in two different SCF periodicals in October and November 1931, December 1932, June, August, September and December 1933, October 1934 and October 1936. They fall naturally into two groups, corresponding with the two different journals.

Within a few months of the Geneva conference, Earthy published a couple of short, popular, illustrated articles in SCF’s monthly periodical, _The World’s Children_, about village life in Mozambique. She angled her established interest in folk-tales round an engaging two-part account of the twelve-year-old Chopi girl, Misaveni, visiting her grandmother for an evening of lively and varied story-telling, with typical audience participation and interaction from other children. Not only is the detail of the hut-interior by night vividly conveyed, but the human dimension and atmosphere are affectionately recreated. That Earthy was recollecting an

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53 John. _Evelyn Sharp_. 177.
54 She was not only preparing her monograph for publication, but also published six short academic pieces in _Bantu Studies_ and _Africa_ between June 1930 and mid-1935, mostly drawn from a second Mozambican research trip among the Ndau. See details in Gaitskell, Deborah. “Dora Earthy and the Early Years.” 16.
actual personal experience is suggested by the passing reference to “a woman missionary lying on a camp-bed in the corner of the hut, with an attack of malaria,” sitting up “interestedly, thinking what a racy three-volumed novel” the adventures of the chameleon would make, as the old lady sustains her uncanny impersonation for an hour, “the recital being punctuated by bursts of merriment from the audience,” yet with such “keen observation” that it was “worthy of publication in a zoological journal.”56

While the adult world of male migrant labour to industrial Johannesburg is also conjured up in the initial scene-setting, alongside the familiar issue of disputed bridewealth transactions, children are the overriding conscious focus, in view of the outlet in which Earthy’s writing was appearing – a periodical showcasing the world’s children. Thus the singing children off to a moonlit dance with whom the first piece opens return at the end of the second article, surging “with whoops and cries” through the kraal (or homestead). “Hopping, skipping, jumping, chatting, singing, quarrelling,” writes Earthy, “the girls dancing, the boys playing Shangaan harps, the gay little crowd moved homewards.” 57

To gauge the place and weight of Africa as a whole in The World’s Children in the 1930s, and Earthy’s part within it, would require a more systematic analysis of the journal’s balance of international coverage, but she was obviously able to contribute as an eye-witness and very recent participant in African life from two contrasting parts of the continent in which SCF was so determinedly interesting itself in the 1930s. Moreover, Dora was clearly keen to keep writing and publishing, and, having lost her automatic right to appear in the literature produced by serving missionaries for the SPG, pursued this new institutional connection assiduously, turning from Mozambique to reporting on her West African SCF work. In June 1933, though, a longer than usual editorial introduction seemed to mark a significant change of status in describing her as “anthropologist and ex-missionary”.58 Presumably Dora was realising that she would now definitely not make it back to Africa in her former spiritual role.

Nevertheless, Earthy’s four subsequent short items on West Africa in The World’s Children, generally a couple of pages long each, echoed the

57 Ibid., 21.
personal, observational and conversational tone of the earlier contributions, which in turn sustain the vein in which she had written for *The Mission Field*, the SPG monthly. It is through “an old granny of the Mendi tribe”, herself a native midwife, that we learn about precautionary herbal medicines customarily taken by expectant mothers in Sierra Leone. Via the sister at Segbwema mission hospital, further examples are shared of the harmful impact of groundless fears and practices in pregnancy. The rather abrupt end to the article, though, means it barely constitutes the “intimate glimpse” promised by the title. Its anecdotal observations about customs remain fairly lightweight, and it does not yet have large-scale, encouraging maternal attendances to report either, since “very few cases” had “come into the hospital yet.”

Aided by dialogue and more detailed physical description, Dora achieved a more intimate tone in a piece published three months later, describing a baby welfare clinic at Princess Christian Memorial Hospital, Freetown. Over 150 cases were dealt with on the day of her visit; the annual total exceeded 17,000, the staff told her. Earthy noted methods adopted for record-keeping, baby-weighing and medical examination, “strangely like a ‘welfare’ at home in the general outline of its procedure, yet how different in the material dealt with and the manner of approach which is necessary!” At the dispensary where prescribed medicines could be picked up free in bottles brought from home, half the mothers had to be sent away to wash them quite clean. Here, comical interchanges in pidgin English between the (English) Sister and “Mammy” were inserted (though modern readers might deem the humour slightly inappropriate or objectifying).

The Hospital presented “a very animated appearance on the days when King Baby [took] the front of stage.” In her fondness for infants and her relish in recollecting the colourful diversity of the Creole women “dressed in gaily-coloured print with voluminous skirts, many barbaric ornaments, and brightly-coloured woollen carpet slippers”, Earthy nevertheless took care to incorporate a list of a dozen ethnic groups present and observation of material objects like the “pretty circular ‘bli’ baskets” which served “as suitcases, baby baskets, and marketing baskets”.

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59 *Ibid.*: 136
The article ends (again somewhat abruptly) with affectionate descriptions of individual infants:

A fat baby, Bhobo Kamara, wants to play with the metal of the lever [for the weighing basket] and looks astonished at Miss Macaulay\(^{62}\) when she restrains him…One baby has a fuzzy crown of hair, on which is perched at a jaunty angle a saucy little sailor-hat lined with pink. A little girl named Watta, aged a year and a month, comes trotting up to me as I sit in the dispensary, and puts her hands confidently on my lap. Her hair is neatly done in numerous tiny plaits which end in tufts. Her skin shines with cleanliness and she has little patent shoes (great refinement), a clean mauve print frock, white embroidered petticoat, a yellow bead necklace, and metal bangles.

Creole mothers take a great delight in dressing up their children. Babies of other tribes are often naked, save for charms, medicines, and “sacrifices”; and sometimes a little woollen cap of bright colours.\(^{63}\)

This is surprising stuff for those familiar with her mission reports. Such foregrounding of small children is encountered only very occasionally in Dora’s mission correspondence,\(^{64}\) the point being that her work was, for two decades, by and large among adult women. It was also never medical or even educational work, but always dubbed “evangelistic” (unless she was filling in for an absent colleague linked with the school). Dora ran church classes and women’s meetings, preparing women for baptism or confirmation or guiding their corporate devotional gatherings. She also established a pioneering “order” for Christian widows, to allow them to resist enforced remarriage and instead live a pious independent life on the mission station. By contrast, and not unexpectedly, such affectionate, baby-centred writing is absolutely typical of the warm letters from Ruth Cowles, American Board mission nurse in

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\(^{62}\) The African health assistant (who weighed the babies).


\(^{64}\) See for instance USPG, Series E - Original Missionary Reports, Dora Earthy, 11 November 1929, which refers fondly to the keen crowds of “tiny tots” at sewing classes in Mozambique, “many with babies nearly as big as themselves, on their backs. They try to hush a crying infant, and hem a little bit of rag, at the same time, with the most intense interest.” Likewise, an earlier report on the Potchefstroom Christian women did include a paragraph on the “dear” young girls, who needed “a great deal of care”; looking “so fresh and pretty” in their white headscarves and “clean dresses”, they were “not a little vain.” There was also a fond reference to (and photograph of) the child who rang the bell for all the classes, Benjamin Klamen, “a sturdy little fellow who can just reach the rope and is often carried off his feet by the weight of the bell” but considered himself “very important in his office of bell-ringer.” Earthy, D. “African Women and Girls.” The Mission Field (April 1917): 68–9. The adult women form the core of this latter article, however.
Johannesburg, describing encounters with mothers and babies in the Alexandra clinic in the 1930s. What we are seeing with Dora Earthy, in her post-missionary phase, is a change of focus, from women to children, and a selection or recasting of observations and research to highlight matters of health, family and nutrition. (To be fair, her anthropological research had also, with its concern for the full female life cycle, encouraged her to observe and richly document the process of girls growing up in rural Mozambique.)

A year later, for instance, another brief, barely contextualised item appeared, where the prime point of interest seemed to be the way small groups of Mandingo children, seated round large bowls or "enormous gourds or calabashes", perhaps "in Granny’s hut with their mothers", were eating chopped up coco-yams or rice, communally and with their hands. Earthy’s affection and careful observation mingled with some concern that they were “stuffing it into their mouths as fast as they could and bolting it without masticating”, though “they took care to scour the dish to the last grain, licking their little fingers with enjoyment.”

What appears to have been Dora Earthy’s last item published in The World’s Children represented a return to more sober, impersonal anthropological reporting. The unnamed author was summarising and quoting from Earthy’s paper on “The Social Structure of a Gbande Town, Liberia”, read at an SCF gathering. No dialogue or fond scene-setting around engaging individuals features. Instead, the local economy, key products cultivated, sex and age in the division of labour and endemic diseases are set out. Again, though, Earthy almost luxuriates in describing the physical appearance, dress and elaborate ornaments of the “often pretty” young women and girls. Straightforward descriptions of engagement and marriage preparations follow, alongside bridewealth procedure, with unusual examples of wife inheritance then singled out.

The news item ends with Earthy’s suggestion that the study of social anthropology, “both interesting and important, since it gives results of practical utility”, be taken up in school. If taught “in its elementary stages,” perhaps as an essential part of geography, it “would help to foster

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65 See, for example, the American Board’s Missionary Herald (September 1930): 351.
68 Ibid.: 8.
69 Ibid.: 9.
vocations for foreign service.” School museums might also “aim at collecting ethnological specimens to stimulate interest.” She thus appears to be promoting social anthropology explicitly as encouraging a wider perspective and fostering a calling to international philanthropy and development – “vocations for foreign service” – again, arguably, mission by other means.

Earthy and SCIU: Evaluating Indigenous Education and Mission Medicine

By contrast, the reports which Dora Earthy had published in the mimeographed supplements to the SCF International Union’s Nouvelles de l’U.I.S.E. in 1932–3, while not without typical personal and anecdotal touches, were far more objective, informative and semi-academic, clearly the product of field research and some analytical reflection and organisation. They were also unillustrated, longer and more substantial (nine, five and thirteen pages respectively) than the popular journalism, and with more of an advocacy role or underlying message.

The first of these reports came from a talk Dora gave in the south of France to the New Education Fellowship (NEF) in the late summer of 1932 on the indigenous “definite system of education” which young Lenge girls received at home from their mothers and others - material due to appear in another form in her monograph the following year. Her approach was generous and inclusive, seeking to make African mothers comparable with mothers everywhere, racking their brains over the “problem of the education of their daughters” and giving their children “the very best” they could to enable them to adjust “or adapt themselves, continuously, to their environment at the various stages of their development.” She took care to stress the “great social value” of an African

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70 Ibid.


72 “L’enfance africaine”: 1.
girl to her people, hence the need for ritual to protect her safely through the phases of her life, adding (against the flow of some mission assumptions) that it was generally a mistake to suppose that an African woman was invariably “down-trodden and of low status”. She then went on to consider the typical training of the African girl from four points of view: “the social and moral; the mental or psychological; the economic and manual; and the physical”.73

While calling for a “sympathetic study” of sexual behaviour and attitudes, she was forthright in her assertion that “the spiritual training of Bantu pagan children is practically nil,” seeing this as opening the way for evangelism, about which she was equally unabashed:

Children are taught to revere their ancestors, yet it is in a vague kind of way, and no girl is allowed to offer a sacrifice unless both of her parents are dead, and there is no brother to offer it for her. Hence the missionaries have unique opportunities of presenting the Message of Him Who said:—“I am come that they may have Life, and may have it more abundantly”.74

Just as she tried, in the international mission setting, to show what religious heritage church instructors could build on in indigenous beliefs, so she pointed to the resources in traditional education for broader modern learning. Incorporating interesting detail on the counting games used for teaching mental arithmetic, she set out what was learnt from games, toys, string-figures, folk-tales and proverbs, also finding precursors of writing in Lenge body tattoos or notches in tree-bark. Earthy relished the richness of a Lenge girl’s rural musical heritage, where, at “the harvest dances of her tribe”, she heard “a magnificent orchestra of drums and xylophones; till the whole world seems to be going round with a galloping rhythm and a blaze of sound.” After this, it made one weep, she lamented, “to hear a native girl trying five finger exercises” on a harmonium in Johannesburg, and “yet the desire to exercise her musical faculty” was there.75 She expatiated on girls’ extensive, detailed, and often surprisingly accurate knowledge of plants and animals, especially their “absorbing interest” in the life-history of their “own-food-plants and the insects which prevent their growth”. Perhaps her own Royal Society heritage prompted her plea that “Every African with such a natural bias towards botany and zoology should have full

73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.: 2.
75 Ibid.: 6.
opportunities for the more scientific study of natural phenomena, in any scheme of education imposed from without."76

Manual training was closely observed and fondly described (with sundry references to little gourds and tiny pots), as small girls emulated their mothers in collecting firewood, drawing water and pounding maize. To pass on training in mothercraft, little girls practised carrying improvised dolls on their backs and learnt to be nursemaids with real babies. Again, alongside earlier references to educationalist Thomas Jesse Jones and anthropologist Malinowski, Earthy sought to fit her findings into a wider scholarly debate, commenting:

Hence, a Lenge mother is unconsciously following Dr. Decroly's method of representing learning through living. The Lenge child's learning centres round the everyday activities of the kraal and her natural surroundings; on first hand experience and natural interests developed in turn at successive age-periods.77

Interestingly, under “physical training,” Earthy first includes the role of dance, noting that most instruction “is accompanied by singing and rhythmic action.” This is eloquently conveyed:

A child will sing as she stamps her grain, keeping time with her pestle. She will copy her mother in singing haunting little melodies and refrains as she gathers her vegetables. She joins the oft-repeated chorus sung during a recital of fairy stories...A baby dances her way to childhood, and from childhood she dances into adolescence. Dancing is essentially religious in origin. We must not take away from the African girl her love of rhythm & dancing, though in time some objectionable elements of African dancing might be eliminated.78

In terms of “the actual operation” taking place at female initiation, she argues that, while “undue emphasis” was “often placed [on it] by ethnologists and others”, this was not as important to the people as “the occasion” itself in its religious and psychological sense. Sex instruction was also given by means of carved wooden figures. She avoids any explicit genital references.79

Her overall purpose becomes clear in the closing page, when she regrets having been able “only to hint at the possibilities which await

76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.: 7.
78 Ibid.: 8.
79 Ibid.
women teachers in Africa.” She asserted that there was “a universal need for instruction in mothercraft, handicrafts, cooking, needlework, as well as hygiene and elementary biology,” and “numberless openings” for women who were “trained psychologists in child life to study their charges in their home life and to improve or adapt existing methods.” She herself had “quite often” taught a sewing-class “not in the school-room, but in the kraal,” showing the women and girls “how to mend their garments and put on patches,” which she found was “extremely popular.” So she seems to be seeking respect and recognition for indigenous education as well as hoping to encourage Westerners to go and impart their own modern brand of learning, but with openness and sensitivity.

Her other two pieces in the UISE News report on the West African trip. First, in describing the treatment options she saw at St Joseph’s Hospital, Liberia, run by an American religious order, she stresses its location near the border with French Guinea and the Sierra Leone Protectorate, “a strategic point in the tactics of the war against tropical disease and suffering in the West African Hinterland.” There was room there for important and useful bacteriological research into obscure maladies, in addition, as she puts it, “to the old enemies of elephantiasis, small-pox, leprosy, hook worm, malaria, tropical sores, yaws and crab-craw.” She stresses how busy the hospital is and how hard everyone works, regretting the retrenchment of a doctor and a technician owing to the world economic depression. She carefully observes the skilful teamwork of the “admirable staff” of African dressers treating a stream of patients with painful sores from yaws, or administering the requisite injection at the doctor’s behest (34,015 given in the last six months of 1931, for instance). While waiting, patients sang local songs “to the rhythmical accompaniment of hand-clapping and feet stamping” at the doctor’s suggestion, “to enliven the proceedings.”

She sets out the range of buildings and the varied tribal and national origins of patients. The “Sick Town,” with its 60 or so mud huts for

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80 Ibid.: 9.
81 Earthy. “St. Joseph’s Hospital”: 36.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.: 39. She comments on one or two individuals - a mother, an old woman, a young girl - making the overall reflection (p. 38) that a “more pitiful picture of diseased humanity” than that “long stream of people affected with yaws” would be difficult to find.
out-patients coming for injections, particularly struck her as “animated and picturesque,” its inhabitants, despite their suffering, “very cheerful” and taking “a keen interest in life.” Activities like mat and basket-making, cooking, small-scale selling and hairdressing were “vigorously pursued in the open air,” with a “great deal of talking” going on. She ended with an appeal to her readers to be concerned at these medical challenges as the world was interconnected. In urging what we might today dub a globalised mentality, she quoted from a recent letter to NEF members which warned that, having made the world “one living organism,” modern humanity “must become world-minded or perish.”

Four months later, a longer report in French reprised some of this hospital information (with fuller tribal statistics), alongside more detailed presentation of the physical environment and Dora’s investigations into the extent and causes of infant mortality. In her three months there, she had also studied the “semi-bantu” language of the “Kessi.” The report then moved on to the other two medical centres visited. At Segbwema in the Sierra Leone Protectorate, she did a small investigation among 20 mothers, where 45 of the 97 children to whom they had given birth were still living - with 6–9 months after birth emerging as the most dangerous time, when infant death was most likely to occur. The Methodist hospital was training local nurses and doing successful village visits for health education, though women were slow to come to the hospital to give birth. Again, some of the details from the more popular article in English resurfaced, as did comments about diet. Initiation rites were briefly assessed, and medical services in the Protectorate as a whole overviewed.

For Freetown, where Earthy spent nine weeks at the Princess Christian Memorial Hospital, again education and slavery were investigated. She visited a number of schools, and highlighted their urgent need for a government or missionary doctor, while she thought the widespread practice of adoption required proper registration of the children. She made her own observations about the health of the 283 children who turned up for two clinics, tallying their ailments. Again, some of the earlier feedback on the baby welfare clinic was summarised or repeated, while full figures were given of hospital attendances: 1,435 ante-natal

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84 Ibid.: 40.
86 Ibid.: 54.
consultations as against 9,096 medical-social cases in 1932 and 7,438 medical and surgical.

Conclusion

How does one assess the importance of all this? Getting back to Africa for research mattered to Dora; it is harder to weigh up how much it mattered to SCF. Her trip certainly demonstrated the seriousness of the organisation’s wish, in the aftermath of the 1931 conference, to engage with challenges to infant health in Africa, although no real strategy emerged for further follow-up. SCF tried without success to find a publisher for Earthy’s report, “Children of the Liberian Hinterland”; she went on using the material at academic gatherings and in articles over the next two decades. Her Mozambican anthropological monograph was published the year before Dora turned 60; two years after that milestone, her last item surfaced in an SCF periodical. It appears that, for whatever reason, what both sides had hoped for from her trip did not fully materialise and SCF put its African effort into Ethiopia instead. Choosing to work in that ancient kingdom which was fighting off Italian aggression made SCF more newsworthy and internationally renowned. Even then, the project lasted only a few months before Save the Children turned its attention towards another war, in Spain, not resuming work in Africa until the beginning of the 1950s.

Nevertheless, what remains notable is the way in which a competent researcher and writer of missionary background was taken up for some years by a growing international children’s charity, even though her original work and expertise was not directly with and on children. Of course, she had the additional draw-card of an anthropological monograph going to press with the respected International African Institute, and that research had been structured round the life-course of girls as well as women. Thus Dora Earthy’s two decades of spiritual endeavour with adult women gave way to the prioritising of educational and

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87 See Rhodes House, X1177.
medical investigations into infant mortality and child health for SCF, because these were issues around which significant Western benevolence was coalescing in the interwar years. The affectionate portrayal of engaging African children was intended to awaken wider British and European concern to redress the continent’s educational and medical needs. Interestingly, too, just as female missionary colleagues in interwar Johannesburg were increasingly working with children and young people rather than adult women, Dora’s trajectory mirrored the way in which in Britain in these years, ever more unmarried women “moved into philanthropic and voluntary work with the principal aims of rescuing children and monitoring their welfare,” developments related to the impact of both the First World War and Freudian “sublimation” psychology.

Having been drawn into the NGO world via the question of children’s rights, Dora Earthy provided a relatively short-term, dependent and contingent example of mission input into the goal-setting and evolution of humanitarian discourse. True, her coordination of mission findings at the 1931 conference enabled her to offer coherent social and economic explanations for high infant mortality among black South Africans, on the strength of which her observational and reporting skills were subsidised for a trip to West Africa on behalf of the international charity. But, like her six-month venture into anthropological fieldwork in the late 1920s, fact-finding for a pioneering NGO in the early 1930s did not lead to a permanent new direction in paid employment for Dora. SCF did not have long-term work for her; family politics might well have ruled it out; her age probably counted against her also.

Thus, especially as the 1930s sped by and her sixties loomed, Dora Earthy was less and less in a position of much power and initiative. She was increasingly, perhaps, more of a supplicant, grateful for funding to travel and research in her “beloved” Africa, where she felt she was doing something useful and intellectually challenging as well as still potentially within the mission ambit – mission by other means. For she had not surrendered her evangelistic assumptions. 1933 saw the publication

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90 See coverage of Frances Chilton and Dorothy Maud in Gaitskell. “Female Faith,” 76–83.
91 Holden. Shadow of Marriage. 189.
92 Ibid. 190.
93 Returning from furlough in the UK to her new posting in Mozambique, Dora exclaimed, on reaching Cape Town, “Oh! It is so delightful to be back again in beloved Africa!” USPG, Dossier 2640, Earthy to Miss Saunders, 17 July 1917.
of her article in the *International Review of Missions* portraying God ("the Master Architect and Builder") as the only one able to bridge the cavernous gulf between "African paganism" and Christianity. Yet God's helpers could work alongside, finding the materials within tribal culture to build the bridge and span the gulf.94 Dora offered a very positive and inclusive assertion of the potential for adapting Valenge ritual to the detailed progress believers made through the catechumenate, baptism and Christian marriage. She was sure from her own long experience among the Lenge of their deep understanding and acceptance of notions of sin, the practice of confession, the ceremony of confirmation, Christ's atoning sacrifice, and remembrance of the dead.95 Her framework of faith remained intact.

As seen in the 1931 SCIU conference and subsequent research trip, Dora Earthy's investigations into the origins and reduction of high infant mortality were rooted in both Southern and West Africa in actual examples of the Christian provision of healthcare via mission hospitals and clinics. Though writing in SCF publications about mission education and medicine as beneficial in themselves for the welfare and development gains which would accrue to Africans, she still maintained the legitimacy and desirability of seeking personal conversion. Christ would bring life more abundant. Souls as well as bodies needed healing. Earthy's social research and journalistic advocacy work through SCF – and by extension, her anthropological enquiries and scholarship – can all be seen, by and large, as an alternative outworking and enriching amplification of a missionary vocation. The traffic, both ways, between missions and nascent NGOs was more fluid and frequent in the interwar years, anyhow, with the gap between the two not a yawning one, as might be assumed. As already noted, religious language was not eschewed in the Geneva conference, while many missions in the 1930s often highlighted their medical and educational contribution above their evangelistic project. While the difference between mission and NGO might have been huge from the point of view of some linked with NGOs (like the ILO employee who criticised the stress on Christianisation at the 1931 conference), the contrast was perhaps much less stark from

the mission point of view, which may in turn explain why and how the missions could easily transform in this field, and why Dora was at ease in her fact-finding for SCF.

We return, finally, to the questions posed in the opening paragraphs, as to how exactly missionaries helped pioneer international philanthropy, and how, in turn, international aid in the interwar period related to or drew on the mission inheritance, with its religious and cultural insights, in particular instances. This personalised exploration has shown how Save the Children, in its desire to “internationalise” the needs and rights of the child in the 1930s, relied deeply on missionary expertise, both in its pioneering 1931 conference and then subsequently in the follow-up investigation of infant health services in two West African countries in 1932–3. Dora Earthy had stood out in Geneva for her fact-finding and analytical skills, based on her rare (possibly unique) combination, as a woman, of missionary service and anthropological expertise. She was available for research because she had been drawn back to Europe to care for a family member – as was so frequently expected of spinsters in that era – but was keen, on however temporary a basis, to return to Africa, even if no longer directly for the church, and only via the newly popular cause of infant and children’s welfare. Hence, the particular individual circumstances, hopes and competencies of one woman, at the micro-level, intertwined with the changing orientation, at the macro-level, of an expanding charitable organisation. In a mutually beneficial partnership, SCF perceived what missionaries like Dora Earthy, with their on-the-ground knowledge and networks in Africa, could offer to help take forward Save the Children’s international campaign to improve the health and welfare of children worldwide.
CHAPTER TWELVE

WHEN MISSIONS BECAME DEVELOPMENT:
IRONIES OF ‘NGOIZATION’ IN MAINSTREAM
CANADIAN CHURCHES IN THE 1960S*

Ruth Compton Brouwer

In the small high school that I attended in Atlantic Canada my friendly competitor for good grades was a girl very different from my self-absorbed teenage self, someone whose all-round seriousness and involvement with church work led some of us to understand that, like her Uncle Roy, she would become a United Church of Canada missionary. Instead, in 1966, after graduating from Mount Allison University with arts and education degrees and teaching for a year in Labrador, my friend joined CUSO. Originally called Canadian University Service Overseas, CUSO was established in 1961, the same year as the Peace Corps. The first distinctively Canadian non-governmental organization (NGO) to undertake development work from a secular stance and in post-colonial and decolonizing contexts, CUSO sent volunteers to some forty countries during its first decade.¹ In my friend’s case, the destination was Kenya.

Had she joined CUSO out of frustration with a church hidebound by missionary traditionalism and out of touch with the mood of the times? Almost certainly not.² During the 1960s, the United Nations Development Decade,³ Canada’s mainstream churches made a significant break with their missionary past, espousing numerous causes that fit comfortably under the rubric of development. The shift was most

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¹ Bill McWhinney and Dave Godfrey, eds., Man Deserves Man: CUSO in Developing Countries (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1968), and Ian Smillie, The Land of Lost Content: A History of CUSO (Toronto: Deneau, 1985) are valuable insider accounts.
² My friend died before I began the research on cuso that led to this article. Her family provided generous access to her letters and diaries.
pronounced in the United Church of Canada, the largest and most liberal of Canada's Protestant denominations, founded in 1925. This article highlights changes in organization, discourse, and practice that characterized the missions-to-development trajectory in the United Church during the 1960s and some of the ironies that arose from those changes. Despite the church's decidedly non-evangelistic approach to missions in this decade, globally minded young Canadians were not won over: they overwhelmingly chose to express their interest in development work through secular organizations like CUSO, even when, like my friend, they had had a traditional church upbringing and sometimes youthful dreams of a missionary career. Yet, even if it had won their loyalty, the United Church could not have accommodated them, given a decline in the funds available to sponsor mission personnel and the church's new policy of sending its workers to overseas placements only when and where they had been invited. Indeed, when circumstances brought development-minded volunteers their way as would-be missionaries, the church's missions officials frequently referred them to organizations like CUSO, viewing such organizations as acceptable alternatives for expressing a Christian compassion in the developing world. This perspective was not reciprocated. CUSO's organizers were prepared to accept practical, start-up help from the missions community, but like the majority of their volunteers they were anxious to avoid the taint of the M word and the distasteful associations with proselytization and colonialism that it evoked.

Conversely, many conservative Canadian churchgoers in the 1960s favoured a more traditional approach to mission, and to Christianity

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generally, than that promoted by the leadership of the United Church and other mainline churches. In the course of the decade such people increasingly gravitated to more evangelically inclined faith groups. While the overseas outreach of the United Church and of other like-minded mainline Canadian churches survived these and other challenges in the tumultuous 1960s, it was in a greatly changed and attenuated form. In the new world of international development, they had become faith-based NGOs. Though they spoke and acted from a distinctive ethos and a much longer history, in practice their everyday concerns in the developing world often had little to distinguish them from the concerns of their young, secular counterparts.

The transformation of Canada’s historic mission enterprises into faith-based NGOs was part of a larger Western phenomenon. While this shift has so far gone largely unstudied by historians, it seems clear that it reflected some broad and interrelated international patterns. In the Global South, nationalisms, decolonization, race struggles, and the concerns of indigenous churches unleashed myriad demands. In the North, ecumenism, liberation theology, and accelerating secularization on the religious plane paralleled new domestic welfare and international development initiatives by the state. David Maxwell’s point that the historic mission churches ‘ngoized’ in response to postcolonial challenges is apt but only a partial explanation. So far as Canadian scholarship is concerned, neither historical accounts of ‘our’ 1960s nor a recent study of the decade’s new global consciousness addresses this shift even indirectly. Nonetheless, these works provide a useful context for examining what was a historic Canadian religious transition. The United Church

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5 Tim Brodhead and Brent Herbert-Copley with Anne-Marie Lambert, Bridges of Hope? Canadian Voluntary Agencies and the Third World (Ottawa: North-South Institute, 1988). These authors identify faith-based NGOs as having a religious or denominational basis or origin but as doing little in the way of pastoral work or proselytizing. Compare Brian K. Murphy, ‘Canadian NGOs and the Politics of Participation,’ in Conflicts of Interest: Canada and the Third World, ed. Jamie Swift and Brian Tomlinson (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1991), pp. 165, 171, 186–7.


experience illustrates some of the challenges and ironies involved as the churches sought to disengage from missionary colonialism.

**Revisioning and Rebranding Mission in the 1960s**

The most striking irony of ‘ngoization’ in the mainline churches is the timing: CUSO was founded just as they were beginning to make a dramatic break with historic patterns of mission. The change was just one element in a much larger pattern of social upheaval affecting the churches in 1960s Canada. The eclipse of the ‘Liberal Protestant Establishment’ on university campuses was a particularly significant transformation. But across the country analogous changes were taking place as ‘what had been a creeping process of secularization became an avalanche.’ Reflecting this new climate within Canada and responding to needs, attitudes, and aspirations in recently decolonized countries and in those still struggling to throw off colonial rule, the United Church’s missions establishment orchestrated sweeping changes in its understanding and practice of mission.

From its antecedent denominations, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, the church had inherited mission work in India, China, Japan, Korea, the Caribbean, and Angola. The 1960s changes in the church’s approach to work in – and beyond – these inherited ‘fields’ were so far-reaching that one is tempted to speak of a paradigm shift. Such a characterization runs the risk of minimizing the degree

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8 Gidney, *Long Eclipse*.
to which, between the two world wars, much of the United Church's overseas activity already resembled development work and was non-proselytizing, despite accounts for home-base consumption that often suggested otherwise. Nevertheless, from the perspective of liberal missionaries and former missionaries at mid-century who favoured more in the way of service-oriented mission work, or who looked back with regret on the colonialist context of missions and the emphasis on evangelization, the churches still had a long way to go. The liberal perspective was increasingly characteristic of the World Council of Churches (WCC), inaugurated in 1948, and in the United Church, a founding WCC member, it appeared strongest among missionaries who had served in China and whose careers there had ended with the triumph of Communism.

One such missionary was Donald K. Faris, who would later play a crucial if indirect role in the founding of CUSO. Faris served with the church in China from 1925 to 1942. Early in his missionary career he shifted his focus from evangelism to rural development. After the Second World War Faris worked on UN relief and rehabilitation projects in China, and in the 1950s and 1960s he administered UN-sponsored development projects in Korea, Thailand, and India. But in 1950 he still wanted to do development work as a United Church missionary. With the door to that possibility closed in China, he sought similar work in India. His vision of grassroots agricultural initiatives linked to national goals and undertaken in a consultative but unconfining relationship with the United Church's India mission was not supported. Facing this

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reality, Faris concluded that the kind of work he wanted to do and for which his experience had prepared him was ‘something that the church has no machinery or thinking prepared to use. It forces me to a conclusion that … my best contribution to the world now, perhaps is outside the church organization…. The exodus from China and growing sentiment in all countries of the world … make the older concept of mission a complete impossibility.’ In a similar vein, a year later another former United Church China missionary, Katharine Hockin, also reflected on the future – and the past – of her church’s mission work. ‘Where do we go from here …? Does it not mean the whole missionary venture needs re-vamping and a consecrated self-examination?’

The kind of revamping that Hockin perhaps had in mind in 1951 and in which she would play a significant role did not begin for another decade, but when it did, the changes were far-reaching. They began with the restructuring of the United Church’s missions bureaucracy and with new terminology. In 1962, the Board of Overseas Missions became the Board of World Mission (BWM). The new adjective and the dropping of the s, a change already made by the WCC,15 signified that the Board’s sense of responsibility now went beyond its historic mission fields. This change was accompanied by another (and controversial) ‘modernizing’ step, the official end of gender separation in the church’s overseas mission work as the Woman’s Missionary Society (WMS) was folded into the BWM.16 Meanwhile, in the same year that the new BWM came into existence, the church’s Twelfth General Council commissioned ‘an independent and fundamental study of how The United Church of Canada can best share in the World Mission of the Church.’ By the time that the resulting Report of the Commission on World Mission was issued in November 1966 many of its recommendations were already being

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14 Faris to son Ken, 5 Feb. 1951, from Hong Kong, in Donald K. Faris Family Papers, privately held. Hockin’s remarks are in Donna Sinclair, Crossing Worlds: The Story of the Woman’s Missionary Society of the United Church of Canada (Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 1992), 91.

15 Hoekstra, World Council of Churches, 27. Hoekstra sees the change as a regrettable outcome of the integration of the International Missionary Council into the WCC at its historic assembly at New Delhi in 1961. ‘So strong were … [the winds of change] that the “s” was blown right off the word “missions.” … Only later would many realize that much more than a change in spelling was involved.’

16 Some churchwomen believed that this aspect of modernizing hurt both women’s leadership in the church and attentiveness to women’s needs in developing countries; Sinclair, Crossing Worlds, chaps. 7 and 8.
adopted or put into practice by the BWM. These included a call for a broader, more flexible, more ecumenical approach to the church’s ‘task in mission’: ‘technical assistance,’ for instance, and refugee and emergency aid; repentance for ‘all arrogance, whether racial, cultural or ecclesiastical’ in past mission practice; and ‘dialogue with people of other faiths.’ As well as partnerships with autonomous Third World churches, there was to be cooperation with governments and international aid organizations in a mission field now understood to be of global dimensions. Overall, as A.C. Forrest, the editor of the church’s official periodical, the United Church Observer, pointed out, the recommendations signalled a ‘serious and radical departure from what many people still consider “missions”’

With the publication of the commission’s Report, and then, in 1972, with another bureaucratic change, the folding of the Board of World Mission into the new Division of World Outreach (DWO), the United Church of Canada signalled the nature of the changes that were already taking place in the philosophy and practice of its overseas work and its future directions. Not only was the very word mission absent from the new organization’s name; under the heading ‘Responsibilities,’ the DWO constitution contained nothing that could be construed as evangelizing.

Lest it be thought that these were changes that a liberalizing church was forcing on a conservative missionary establishment, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that the leading figures in the BWM/DWO were themselves former missionaries. Likewise, many of those involved in preparing the Report of the Commission on World Mission had direct knowledge of overseas missionary work as former missionaries or ‘mish kids’ (Katharine Hockin was both), or they were young academics with expertise on their church’s history and theology (John Webster Grant

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17 World Mission: Report of the Commission on World Mission ([Toronto]: General Council, United Church of Canada, 1966), 3. For the organizational changes described in this paragraph, see p. 68.
20 Roy E. Webster to ‘Dear Friends,’ 20 June 1972, writing for BWM, with attached DWO constitution, in file 11, Agenda, BWM, 1972, box 3, BWM, United Church of Canada (UCC), United Church of Canada Archives (UCA). As well as the former BWM, the DWO included the Committee on Overseas Relief and Inter-Church Aid and the Committee on World Development and Relief.
and Douglas Jay), or, as in the case of Wilfrid Cantwell Smith, himself briefly a missionary, internationally recognized authorities on other world religions. Ruth Taylor, the cosmopolitan head of the WMS, was one of four women on the commission, and there were two future moderators. When the most conservative figure on the commission, its chairman, Donald Fleming, a former minister in the Diefenbaker government, tried to argue that the Report did not represent a departure from the church's traditional evangelical emphasis or ‘my name would not have been attached to … [it],’ Al Forrest was quick to challenge his claim.21 Though he did not say so, Forrest may well have wondered privately whether Fleming had even read the Report. Meanwhile, so far as overseas missionaries were concerned, there were certainly still those who shared Fleming’s view that the church should stand fast for evangelism. Among this group were several women missionaries in India who continued to call for such strategies as revivals. But they were not influential figures in the church’s missions community, and in the course of the decade they would become increasingly marginal.22

New Partnerships and Post-Colonial Soul-Searching

Whether undertaken overseas or within Canada, many of the specific changes sought during this decade by the United Church’s core group of mission reformers were interrelated. They were also fraught with challenges and internal contradictions. The church’s struggle to work out a new relationship with the Christian community in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh, India, provides a vivid example of the challenges. Malwa’s Christian community dated from the 1870s when Canadian Presbyterians had begun work in the city of Indore.23 In the decade following India’s independence, the United Church had increasingly devolved responsibility for Christian work in the region to the Malwa Presbytery (later Council), beginning with evangelistic work. But it could not so easily devolve financial responsibility to that tiny and

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21 Forrest, ‘Radical Change in Mission,’ p. 10.
22 Annual reports for 1963, file 10, box 4, BWM-Records relating to the India Mission Work, UCC, UCA. Some of these missionaries joined evangelical churches when they later retired to Canada.
23 Ruth Compton Brouwer, New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876–1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), chap. 4.
impoverished Christian community. India remained by a wide margin the single largest recipient country for BWM dollars in the mid-1960s. While some of this money went to institutional activities in other parts of India, the work in Malwa was the single biggest cost.\textsuperscript{24} In addition to evangelism, the financial burdens included extensive educational and medical undertakings dating back to the nineteenth century as well as some more recent forms of community development.

By the mid-1960s, the BWM had largely disengaged from direct evangelism in Malwa. Ordained Canadian missionaries and lay workers who still functioned in some sense under the rubric of ‘evangelistic’ workers did so on request in seminaries or colleges or within select indigenous Christian communities. Even in educational work, the BWM seemed eager to reduce its direct ties and obligations to the Malwa Church Council in order to free up funds for work not under the council’s control.\textsuperscript{25} In 1956 the BWM’s predecessor had set a timeline for reducing its then-current levels of funding to the council: five years for evangelistic work, and ten years for educational and medical work. In practice, the legacy of almost a century of dependence on Western funding proved difficult to escape, with administrators in the council continuing to press for rescue from financial dilemmas over which the BWM had no control and over which it felt intense frustration.\textsuperscript{26}

The issue was not simply that of a Western church seeking to cut its ties and obligations now that it was no longer in charge. Nor were the Malwa Council’s dilemmas simply those resulting from local poverty and the small size of the Christian community. They were also the product of the mission’s history and the kind of Christian community it had

\textsuperscript{24} World Mission, 62, 78–85. For 1966 the BWM’s total financial commitment for programs in fourteen areas of the world was just under three million dollars, of which $794,341 was earmarked for India (85). The Malwa Council was part of the United Church of Northern India (UCNI), and while mission boards in various parts of the world supported the UCNI, the BWM was evidently the only external agency supporting the work in Malwa.

\textsuperscript{25} Executive Committee Minutes, 9 June 1967, pp. 299–300, file 2, box 2, Minutes of Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Executive Committee meetings, BWM, UCC, UCA.

\textsuperscript{26} See Introduction, ‘Records of the Area Secretary Relating to India,’ Division of World Outreach, United Church of Canada, series 8, Finding Aid 321, UCA, for an overview of the changes under consideration and the proposed timeline. BWM executive members Floyd Honey and Wilna Thomas provided lengthy reports on visits to India; file 21, box 5 and file 15, box 7, BWM-Records Relating to the India Mission Work, UCC, UCA. Thomas regarded the ecumenical UCNI as a more reliable partner than the Malwa Council itself.
brought into existence. Many of the early converts had been among the most vulnerable and marginal members of society. Over the years, many of their descendants had come to look upon the local church and its institutions as a kind of employment or welfare agency on which they and their families had particular claims. At the same time, many of those in charge of these Christian institutions appeared to be motivated by cronyism rather than stewardship and to lack leadership skills. Even Indore Christian College, an institution that had once been a source of considerable mission pride, was now a site of embarrassment, given its low standards and internal strife.27 The Malwa Christian community was by no means the only Christian community in India struggling during these years with the challenges of poverty and marginalization and with the legacy, and spoils, of mission colonialism.28 But Malwa was, perhaps, a particularly egregious example. Thus, for the United Church’s BWM, ‘partnership’ with this particular indigenous Christian community was proving to be, in every sense, a problematic concept.

In these circumstances, the Board thought it prudent to facilitate closer relationships with the ecumenical United Church of Northern India, of which the Malwa Church Council was a part. It also sought to channel more of its resources into the Malwa Economic Development Society (MEDS, 1963) and Action for Food Production (AFPRO, 1966), agencies that, while still having links to the Malwa Council, were at one remove. Though neither would prove to be an entirely satisfactory vehicle for delivering aid efficiently, each seemed to represent a step forward. AFPRO arose as an ecumenical response to a local famine, and because of its cooperative approach and its outreach ‘without regard for race, class, community or creed,’ it won support from local secular agencies and from the government of India.29 Meanwhile in 1968 Canada’s federal government began using the United Church and MEDS as non-government conduits for directing funds into development work in

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29 ‘Food for India,’ Observer, 1 Sept. 1966, 10; ‘Preventive Medical Secretary’s Notes,’ CMAI Journal, March 1969, p. 155 (for quotation).
India, the single largest recipient country at this time of Canadian government-to-government aid.30 A MEDS project for manufacturing water-drilling rigs was chosen to receive a total of $100,000 from the Canadian government via the United Church, with the church itself providing a technician to operate one such rig.31

In 1968 the federal government formalized and expanded its use of voluntary agencies, including faith groups, to facilitate its development work in India and elsewhere. Canada’s External Aid Office was reborn as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Maurice Strong, CIDA’s first president, believed in providing robust support to NGOs and to that end established a special NGO division within CIDA.32 Cooperation between the federal government and the United Church on international relief and development work had certainly taken place prior to this CIDA initiative but seemingly just on an ad hoc basis.33 From 1968 onward, there would be more funding and increasing areas of development work in which the church and the federal government would have overlapping interests and cooperative relationships. These relationships, as well as less congenial church–state relations, will be considered below.

Meanwhile, for the United Church, ecumenism was another expression of partnership and, as noted, it received strong emphasis in the Report of the Commission on World Mission. The ecumenical concept in mission was certainly not, in itself, a new phenomenon.34 What was distinctive in the 1960s was the geographic and denominational reach of

31 Joint meeting of Executive Committee and Policy and Strategy Committee, 21 June 1968, 115, and of Interim Executive Committee, 20 Sept. 1968, 145, file 3, box 2, Executive Committee and agm Minutes, 1968, BWM, UCC, UCA. The AGM minutes, 72, in ibid., refer to an enquiry from Ottawa to the Canadian Council of Churches ‘regarding possible participation in new external aid projects by mission boards’ and commend the federal government for its increased support for international development. See also ‘Well-digger to India,’ Observer, 15 Feb. 1966, p. 35, and ‘More Water for India, Observer, 1 July 1967, p. 21.
32 Morrison, Aid and Ebb Tide, 21, pp. 68–70.
33 See, for example, ‘The Norman MacKenzie War on Poverty,’ Observer, 1 Feb. 1968, 12–15, 40; minutes of Interim Executive Committee, 18 Jan. 1962, p. 27, and 14 Dec. 1962, 200, in file 1, box 1, Minutes, BWM, UCC, UCA. MacKenzie, on furlough from his missionary work in India, had been funded by the External Aid office in 1961 as an agricultural advisor in Nigeria. In 1962 Ottawa and the church also cooperated to get powdered milk into targeted areas of Africa.
34 Brouwer, ‘Canadian Protestant Overseas Missions.’
the new ecumenism and the kinds of tasks that it undertook. Now, too, a good deal of ecumenical work involving mainstream Protestant denominations was being initiated or orchestrated through the Geneva-based WCC. The United Church was a committed and enthusiastic partner. In 1961 it endorsed the WCC’s call in New Delhi for ‘Joint Action for Mission.’ Following a 1963 WCC gathering in Mexico City, the BWM publicized and supported its recommendation that member churches and their missionary societies should become increasingly ‘international, inter-racial and interdenominational.’ Reflecting this spirit, former BWM secretary Floyd Honey was relocated to New York in 1965 to join the WCC as its secretary for mission and service. In Toronto, Katherine Hockin became dean of studies of the Ecumenical Institute of Canada, formerly the Canadian School of Missions.35

In the past, the ecumenical dimension had not extended to Protestant–Catholic cooperation. But especially in light of strong encouragement from the WCC to move in this direction and the new openness signalled by the Second Vatican Council, mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic missions began cooperating on a number of fronts. BWM files reflect the new mood. One of the key figures in reaching across what had historically been an acrimonious Canadian divide was Garth Legge. Legge had served in Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) from 1959, where he had contributed to the establishment of the United Church of Zambia and been chair of the Board of Governors of the highly regarded Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation. When a vision problem brought him back to Canada permanently in 1965, Legge became associate secretary of the BWM with particular responsibility for Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa.36 Work in Latin America was relatively new for the United Church and involved it closely with Catholic communities. At the end of 1968, back from a meeting with colleagues in the US, Legge reported positive responses to the recent convocation of Latin American Catholic bishops at Medellín, Colombia. This was the historic gathering at which Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutiérrez had emerged as the leading figure in

the deliberations that came to be associated with liberation theology. Within the next few years Gutiérrez’s *Theology of Liberation* with its acknowledgement of the reality of class struggle and its dominant theme of privileging the needs of the world’s dispossessed would find its way into the international discourse of liberal Protestants as well as liberal Catholics. Meanwhile, instances of Protestant–Catholic cooperation related to facets of mission endeavour were taking place well beyond Latin America. With the WCC’s Christian Medical Commission an important catalyst, there were even new co-operative relationships between the mainly Protestant Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI) and the Catholic Hospitals Association of India. That such medical ecumenism could develop in 1960s India seems especially noteworthy, given the fact that during this decade, under United Church medical missionary Bob McClure’s leadership, the CMAI established a high-profile family planning project.

The BWM’s increasing involvement in projects such as drilling for water, agricultural training, and family planning and its co-operation in secular and ecumenical aid and development work was accompanied by a range of critiques of colonialism. An early and frequent target was the Portuguese colony of Angola, where the United Church at the time of union had inherited Canadian Congregationalists’ mission work, dating back to the 1880s. The BWM was at first only mildly critical of the Portuguese government for its handling of recent uprisings and politely urged it to move towards granting the colony self-government. Despite its initially moderate tone, several of its missionaries were denied visas to return to Angola after furloughs or subjected to delays as a result of their comments about the Portuguese regime. In 1963 BWM associate secretary Roy Webster met with Canada’s External Affairs minister to

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exchange information and discuss ‘our mutual concern regarding the situation in Angola.’

By the late 1960s the BWM and some of its most prominent Angola missionaries had become far more critical of Portuguese policy in the colony and had come to believe that by continuing to work there they appeared to condone the colonial regime and its brutal treatment of freedom fighters or, if they were known for their criticisms of the regime, put African associates at risk. The most vocal critic was veteran medical missionary Sidney Gilchrist, who opted to relocate to a base in the Congo where he could be part of “a team to train front-line fighters for a healthier Africa.” Back in Canada in 1970, a woman missionary who had served in Angola from 1941 reflected that she had perhaps made the wrong decision by opting to stay silent in order to remain working in the colony: was she any different, she asked herself, from Christians who had stayed silent in Hitler’s Germany.

As a non-British colony and one in which Canada had few if any economic or strategic interests, Angola was a region on which the church and the government generally could confer with little likelihood of conflicting agendas. Increasingly, however, in the late 1960s and early 1970s the federal government became the target of Board criticism and advice on matters related to several other regions struggling against direct or indirect forms of colonialism and racism. These regions included Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), South Africa, Vietnam, and Brazil, though it was only in the last country that the United Church had its own mission personnel. A telegram signed by Board Secretaries Roy Webster and Garth Legge at the time of the Board’s 1968 General Meeting was typical of the tone generally adopted. The telegram urged

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39 Minutes of Executive Committee meeting, 8 June 1962, including ‘Draft Statement on Angola,’ pp. 145–6, file 1, box 1, and, regarding Webster’s meeting with Paul Martin Senior, minutes of Executive Committee meeting, 7 Nov. 1963, p. 422, file 2, BWM, UCC, UCA.


42 Still, in one of his many statements on Angola in 1968, Dr Gilchrist was sharply critical of the Canadian government for abstaining from voting at the UN, even when ‘votes of censure against Portugal for its colonial policy are passed by tremendous majorities; ‘The Truth about Angola,’ Observer, 15 Feb. 1968, pp. 3–4. Canadian policy is discussed in Robin O. Matthews, ‘Canada and Anglophone Africa,’ in Canada and the Third World, ed. Peyton V. Lyon and Tareq Y. Ismael (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976), pp. 67–71.
the government to make further efforts through the Commonwealth to end the Smith regime in Rhodesia. The situation there, they wrote, should be recognized as ‘fundamentally part of the wider issue constituted by a ring of white minority-dominated states around the southern end of the African continent.’ A year later the BWM was more specific, but still polite, in its recommendation: if all else failed to end the Smith regime in Rhodesia, ‘Canada should support the use of necessary police action under the United Nations.’ To the question that doubtless occurred to many Canadians, whether any of this position-taking mattered in the lands that were the targets of church criticisms, the Observer’s Al Forrest reported in the course of his tour of southern Africa that the church’s position was in fact known and resented by government officials in both Rhodesia and South Africa.

But what about the impact of such verbal position-taking within Canada? In his conclusion to a collection of essays on Canadian churches and foreign policy published in 1990, political scientist Robert Matthews observed that while the churches’ tactics had become ‘increasingly sophisticated’ over the years, their actual influence on government policy remained ‘marginal.’ His colleague Cranford Pratt, dealing more broadly with ‘humane internationalism,’ concurred. So far as the United Church was concerned, clearly, some of its recommendations to the federal government in the 1960s, such as one from the BWM in 1969 urging it to double its aid and development budget, stood no chance of being implemented. Nonetheless, as the largest and most mainstream Protestant denomination in Canada, one whose official periodical had

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43 At the same meeting the Board asked the church’s General Council to press the federal government on the subject of Vietnam and urge it to call on the us government to halt its bombing campaign; minutes of General Meeting beginning 18 Mar. 1968, pp. 37–9, 45–6, file 3, box 2, Executive Committee Minutes, BWM, UCC, UCA.


an estimated readership of close to one million people and was widely cited in other media,\textsuperscript{47} the United Church certainly had the potential to raise Canadians’ consciousness on development issues and through that means to put pressure on government, especially when it lobbied in concert with other organizations.\textsuperscript{48} Meanwhile, while it was typically the BWM or the United Church’s General Council that made official representations to Canada’s government on matters related to aid and development, there were also individuals – missionaries, former missionaries, the Observer editor, and others – who raised such issues, for instance during speaking tours and in published articles and letters to the editor. When they did so, it was often in language less temperate than that used in official representations. And their targets could also include Canadian businesses with investments abroad and even ordinary citizens who were accused of salving their consciences by donating to overseas charities.\textsuperscript{49}

Mission concerns about colonialism’s misdeeds were not new. From the late nineteenth century onward such concerns had periodically been expressed by individual missionaries and even by mission board secretaries. But usually their unease had been conveyed privately or unofficially.\textsuperscript{50} Now the concerns were routinely a part of official Board statements, an aspect of its new understanding of mission. Political stances were also expressed in financial aid to like-minded organizations, as with a small donation in 1969 to the Canadian Committee for Zimbabwe. More controversially, in 1971 the Board decided to fund a WCC initiative that channelled aid to anti-racist groups in southern Africa, notwithstanding the acknowledged reality that some of the aid

\textsuperscript{47} Observer, July 1970, back cover, citing information from Magazine Advertising Bureau of Canada, and page 5, for the current circulation figure of pp. 302, 396.

\textsuperscript{48} Canada’s tendency to take a moralizing tone in foreign policy pronouncements even if it did not follow through with corresponding actions perhaps owed something to the church’s position-taking. See Norman Hilmer and J.L. Granatstein, Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World into the Twenty-First Century (Toronto: Thomas Nelson, 2008), p. 347, for the tart observation cited there that Canada ‘all too often sounded like the United Church at the United Nations.’


might wind up supporting guerrilla organizations. The new approach to critiquing colonialism extended to more generalized criticisms of the West’s ongoing negative impact in the developing world, through industrial pollution, for instance, and exploitation of its resources. Newly elected moderator A.B.B. Moore referred to both issues in a 1970 address in the context of calling for a new sense of what mission and evangelism should mean in the new era.

Inevitably, critiques of colonialism and neo-colonialism turned inward. The BWM’s engagement in critical reflection about past and contemporary mission practices included inviting speakers and publicizing books designed to further the self-critical process. The series of three devotional talks given to the 1969 General Meeting by Vernon Wishart is illustrative. An ordained Canadian working with the Student Christian Movement (SCM) in Bangalore, India, Wishart cited such works as Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* as he explained why some indigenous critics and some former missionaries were now seeing in Marxism rather than Christianity the main source of community and hope for the poor. From such a perspective, Wishart explained, ‘it is in the revolutionary movements, and not in the church, that [one] experiences the deepest community of human concern.’ In the second of his talks he suggested that far from regretting the passing of ‘the days when the missionary and the Church had a much more central position and place of privilege,’ mission constituencies should welcome the opportunity to be ‘on the frontier of God’s mission today’ and ‘in a unique position to become the Church of the Poor.’ Certainly the BWM should continue some of its ‘traditional ways of service to countries going through rapid social change,’ by providing ‘doctors, nurses, educationalists, etc.’ But more was required: ‘As we increasingly take our stance as the Church of the Poor we will begin to ask such questions as, “Are we standing in solidarity with the poor unless we send medical supplies to the Viet Cong, unless we provide nurses, doctors and teachers for those who are seeking to overthrow the racist regimes in Rhodesia and South Africa?”’

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52 Addresses on ‘Mission in the 70s’ in minutes of Annual Meeting beginning 23 Nov. 1970, file 5, box 2, Minutes, BWM, UCC, UCA.

53 Ibid., file 4, box 2, for minutes of AGM beginning 21 Apr. 1969, p. 121, including summary of Wishart’s first talk and first quotation, and page 10 of appended copy of his Talk II for the later quotations.
Far from thinking that Wishart had gone too far with his version of liberation theology, the Executive Committee of the Board discussed the possibility of distributing his addresses across the United Church and to other media.\textsuperscript{54} Doing so was consistent with its decision, noted above, to fund WCC work in southern Africa, even in the knowledge that it included possible aid for guerrilla groups. It was also in keeping with the church’s decision to sell its stock in a bank that made loans to South Africa ‘in order to communicate to the world the church’s stand on the apartheid policy of South Africa.’\textsuperscript{55}

Recruiting – and Redirecting – Would-be Missionaries

Not surprisingly, recruiting and appointing missionaries in this tumultuous decade was in every sense a problematic endeavour, commencing with the very word \textit{missionary}.\textsuperscript{56} How was the United Church to reach out to idealistic young people who were interested in the developing world but disengaged from traditional church language? Norman MacKenzie, who had become BWM secretary for personnel recruitment after missionary service in China and India, raised this question at the Board’s 1968 General Meeting in the context of reporting on changes in the format for World Mission Night, the annual service at which the church introduced its new missionaries. There were still many church youth, he believed, wanting to ‘give their lives in dedicated Christian service,’ but unable to ‘describe their inner convictions in words … traditionally accepted by the Church.’ The Board followed up on MacKenzie’s question in two ways. Missionary applicants, it declared, need not use the traditional language of the Handbook, but they must have ‘a Christian faith that is real and a relationship with Christ that is alive.’ This appeared to mean that while their motivation was to come from personal faith, they were under no obligation to present Christianity as inherently superior to other faith traditions. The distinction, however, was not made perfectly clear. The Board also decided to appoint a study committee on recruitment and to ask the General Council for advice.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., minutes of 25 June 1969, Executive Committee meeting.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{World Mission}, 99.
\textsuperscript{57} Minutes of AGM beginning 18 Mar. 1968, pp. 21–2, file 3, box 2, BWM, UCC, UCA. The personal and professional qualifications required of missionaries in the
The resulting document, ‘Some Reflections on Recruiting Personnel for the Board of World Mission,’ made pertinent observations about dilemmas facing the Board and raised questions about future directions. It was agreed that the policy of recruiting ‘only in response to requests from overseas organizations’ had to be maintained. And yet how was the Board to deal with such challenges as the fact that while increased food production was clearly an essential need in the developing world, not a single agriculturalist had been requested during the preceding year? And how should the Board respond to ongoing requests for teachers of academic subjects when it knew that in India and some other countries there were numerous unemployed young people with arts or other degrees? Given frequent requests from volunteers for short-term appointments, often three to five years, and the Board’s increasing inability to offer longer-term appointments, was there even a future for career missionaries? Moreover, weren’t there now plenty of other opportunities for Canadian Christians to serve in the developing world? This question seemed so pertinent that it was formulated in several different ways: ‘Has the time come when we should encourage the young to join CUSO, the middle-aged to join External Aid, and the older to join Canadian Executive Service Overseas? … Should the Board of World Mission be finding more outlets for its staff in service with secular agencies such as local national governments? … With the increasing number of government and private agencies becoming involved in development programs overseas, does the Board of World Mission have a distinct role to play or should it encourage Christians to become involved in these secular organizations?’

To the extent that the Board answered its own questions, it continued both to send out its own short-term missionaries on request and to encourage and support women and men with an interest in serving overseas under secular agencies such as CUSO. As an Observer editorial put it, ‘The idea is you don’t have to wear a church label, let alone a denominational label, to witness effectively to your faith in the neediest parts of the world.’

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Handbook were reprinted in World Mission, pp. 95–6. The first two personal qualifications did seem to require some form of evangelistic outreach, hence the Board’s readiness in 1968 to distance itself from the language of the Handbook.


59 Editorial, Observer, 1 May 1968, 10. References to CUSO as an alternative way to serve one’s ‘fellow men in developing countries’ became something of a refrain in the
The men and women being appointed as missionaries in this period were typically young adults with professional or technical qualifications. Gary Van Loon, a chemist appointed to a teaching position at the Allahabad Agricultural Institute in India, was the poster missionary for World Mission Night, 1967. The photograph on the leaflet for the service showed a handsome, youthful Van Loon at work in a laboratory under the caption ‘A Christian missionary at work.’ The leaflet for the same kind of service in 1969 again showed men and women being sent to placements in education, medicine, and agriculture and in ‘specialized ministries’ such as well-drilling and business administration. In 1968 the Observer had reported that there was ‘only one [clerical] collar’ among missionary appointees. Two years later, of twenty-seven newly appointed missionaries, most were under thirty years of age, some were not from United Church backgrounds, and not one was a clerical appointment.

A lack of volunteers was not the foremost recruitment and appointment challenge facing the church in the mid-to late 1960s. Indeed, the idealism of the time and the new global consciousness made opportunities for travel and service in the developing world enormously appealing to young Westerners. Within the church, Norman MacKenzie attracted a record number of young people to overseas service, effectively reversing the recruitment ‘crisis’ of the early sixties. The church, however, did not have the funds to appoint all qualified applicants, even supposing there had been requests for all of them from indigenous churches. And there were some countries, such as Angola and India, where, though indigenous church partners might still want Canadian personnel, increasing national restrictions were being put in place.

There was a further, ironic, dilemma. What if some overseas churches still wanted missionaries with a traditional understanding of the Christian faith and a willingness to commit to their creeds? This was evidently the case with the United Church of Christ in Japan, the
Kyodan. In 1969 the Kyodan made known to the BWM its dissatisfaction with some recent Canadian appointees. Although qualified in terms of professional skills, they seemed unwilling to commit to its creed or to serious language study and to regard their appointments mainly as opportunities for attractive career and travel experiences. The most obvious response to this particular challenge might have been simply to cease sending personnel to the Kyodan, especially since the tiny Christian population in Japan seemed to need less assistance in meeting practical community needs than many parts of the developing world. Yet despite the church’s stated position that it now regarded the entire world as its mission field, in reality it still seemed inextricably committed to ongoing relationships with the Christian communities that its founding denominations had called into being almost a century earlier. As late as 1971 Japan was second only to India as a recipient of funds from the BWM.

These were particular dilemmas, overseas, confronting a liberal mission board. Meanwhile, on the home front, there was a larger, more general, dilemma. Throughout the 1960s, the BWM had struggled to tutor its Canadian constituency into a new understanding of mission. Yet as it entered the new decade, Board spokesmen experienced a sense of frustration that their message was not being heard. As Board chairman in 1971, C.W.M. Service, a practising surgeon in Lindsay, Ontario, and a former China medical missionary, gave an address on ‘The Changing Face of Mission.’ In it he declared that the ‘man in the pew’ was ‘still generally living with a Nineteenth Century concept of Mission.’ Even the clergy seemed unaware of ‘what this Board is doing and what it stands for in the 70’s. The Communication Gap is colossal.’ To illustrate his message, Service presented a ‘Then’ and ‘Now’ list: a list of the ways that missionaries, and understandings of mission, had changed in the course of a century.

Service’s exasperation was palpable: despite a decade of effort, it appeared that neither the United Church’s ‘man in the pew’ nor many of its clergy was attuned to ‘the changing face of mission.’ It should thus

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64 Minutes of joint meeting of BWM Executive Committee and Strategy Committee, 12 Dec. 1969, appendix D, containing ‘Extracts from Statements of the United Church of Christ in Japan regarding Qualifications for Missionaries,’ and BWM memo to ‘Related Churches and Institutions’ on ‘Basic Qualifications of Missionaries,’ file 4, box 2, BWM, UCC, UCA.


66 ‘Board of World Mission / Chairman’s Report / November 1971,’ with agenda for AGM beginning 1 Nov. 1971, file 10, box 3, BWM, UCC, UCA.
come as no surprise that neither those organizing CUSO in 1961 nor many of the young adults who became its volunteers were able to see beyond outdated stereotypes. CUSO was determined to create something fresh and new, an organization for overseas service free of mission associations and the odious taint of colonialism. That, at least, was the goal. In reality, there would be significant links as well as tensions between this new secular NGO and the mainline Protestant and Catholic churches.
By the time CUSO was officially established during the June 1961 meeting of the National Conference of Canadian Universities and Colleges, there were already nascent student-initiated development organizations at three Canadian universities. The first and most solid of these groups, Canadian Overseas Volunteers (COV), was based at the University of Toronto. Before merging with CUSO at the end of 1962, COV sent two cohorts of volunteers to Asia. COV’s founder, Keith Spicer, a doctoral student researching Canada’s role in the Colombo Plan, had been motivated by reading Donald Faris’s 1958 study, *To Plow with Hope*. Inspired by a brief passage in which Faris had called on educated young Westerners to get involved in development, Spicer and a handful of supporters approached service clubs, businesses, and churches for funding. They also turned to the churches for help with such matters as orientation for would-be volunteers.

Unlike Spicer and COV, CUSO’s organizers initially wanted to keep the churches and the missions establishment entirely out of their plans. No representatives of missionary societies were invited either to CUSO’s June founding meeting or to an earlier consultative meeting in March. However, the mission groups did have a pipeline to the March consultation in the person of Donald Wilson, attending as a representative of the national SCM. Wilson also represented the SCM in the missionary department of the Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), an ecumenical organization of mainly liberal Protestant denominations. Following the March meeting, he reported back to the CCC that there had been ‘a general air of not wishing to accept anything from the churches, apart from money, and the rather obvious feeling on the part of some members present that the whole movement must be kept clear of any

67 McWhinney, Introduction, in *Man Deserves Man*; Smillie, *Land of Lost Content*, chap. 2. The major repository for CUSO records to the early 1980s, including those of COV, is Canadian University Service Overseas, I 323, MG28, Library and Archives Canada.


69 Donald Wilson to John Conway, 22 Mar. 1961, containing copy of Wilson’s confidential memo “To members of the D.O.M. [Department of Overseas Missions], Subcommittee on ‘Volunteer Service,’” in file 1, box 22, Canadian University Service Overseas, John S. Conway fonds, University of British Columbia Archives (UBC Archives).
religious implications. Several months later, following a recruitment tour of western Canadian universities for CUSO, on whose first executive he served, Wilson reported a climate of distaste for anything associated with the churches’ missionary work. University students, he wrote, would consider it to be ‘a compromise of their integrity’ to ‘go overseas under church auspices.’ Though most volunteers going out under CUSO had come from Christian homes, many of them were ‘deliberately choosing a secular channel rather than the church.’ Nor was the negative attitude to missions confined to students. ‘By and large,’ Wilson reported, ‘the university community has a complete emotional and intellectual bloc to the word “missionary” as they understand it.

The antipathy, then, was both clear and widespread. Yet within Canada at this period it was only the churches’ missions establishments that had extensive direct knowledge and long-term experience of life in the developing world. Given this reality, CUSO soon found itself turning to those very churches for early guidance as well as financial assistance. In the autumn of 1962, CUSO’s first full-time executive director, formerly with COV, asked the CCC’s Department of Overseas Missions for assistance with such matters as orientation for newly selected volunteers. During the next few years, Protestant and Catholic church personnel were also involved with CUSO’s recruitment and selection activities and overseas placements. A young Presbyterian missionary, for instance, coordinated CUSO’s first years of work in Nigeria, while a Roman Catholic priest with decades of experience as a missionary educator in southern Africa remained a leading figure in CUSO’s recruitment, selection, and orientation programs well into the 1970s. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, there would be numerous placements for volunteers in educational and medical institutions founded by missionaries from all parts of the Western world.

In 1965 CUSO began receiving financial assistance from the federal government. By the end of the decade it was obtaining by far the largest

70 Donald Wilson, ‘Volunteers for Overseas Service,’ presented as part of CCC’s Department of Overseas Missions Report of Annual Meeting, pp. 21–2 Feb. 1962, file 6, box 4, BWm, subseries 1, Canadian Council of Churches, Department of Overseas Missions (hereafter CCC/DOM), BWm, UCC, UCA.
71 The CUSO request is discussed in R.M. Bennett to Dear Friends, 19 Oct. 1962, in ibid., file 4, box 4, Correspondence. Bennett, a veteran Baptist missionary, had initially been wary of COV/CUSO.
part of its revenue from CIDA’s NGO Division. By the mid-sixties, CUSO also had a sizable pool of returned volunteers (RVs) to whom it could turn for expertise following their two-year term abroad. RVs served on recruitment and selection committees; some became CUSO administrators in Ottawa or field staff officers abroad. Although in these circumstances the organization outgrew many of its early links with the mainline churches, it continued to seek even small sums from them and from service organizations and businesses as a way of avoiding total dependence on the state.

Furthermore, other links with the mainline churches emerged by the late 1960s – links based not on dependency but rather on strategic considerations and a desire to influence government policy and public opinion. As the United Church and CUSO itself became more politicized, they increasingly interpreted the problems of the developing world as outcomes of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and racism rather than as temporary difficulties that could be resolved with large doses of Western-style modernization. Thus, as well as turning their critical gaze on themselves for their own past failures or naïveté, they joined in criticizing shortcomings in the Canadian government’s development and foreign policies. The Black Paper: An Alternative Policy for Canada towards Southern Africa, published in 1970, was a striking example. BWM secretary Garth Legge and University of Toronto political science professor Cranford Pratt were the lead authors of this pamphlet, but two CUSO RVs were contributors. All four had experience working in eastern or southern Africa. The Black Paper provided a critical analysis of the Trudeau government’s proposed policies on southern Africa as set out in its recently released white paper on foreign policy before making proposals for alternative policies. Canada, it urged, should take a more critical, activist, clearly anti-racist approach to the region, including non-military aid to liberation movements (aid such as Sweden and some NGOs were already said to be providing), and it should cease trading with South Africa.

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73 Smillie, Lost Content, pp. 264–5; see also Murphy’s ‘Politics of Participation,’ 173–4.
74 As Dominique Clément observes in Canada’s Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937–82 (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), by the 1970s many civil society organizations were being funded by the state without experiencing significant constraints on their activities. CUSO, however, remained wary, anxious not to become an overseas version of the Company of Young Canadians.
75 The Black Paper, first published in the September 1970 issue of Behind the Headlines, was later made available as a pamphlet by the Canadian Institute of International Affairs.
In the 1970s more such ad hoc coalitions would follow, involving other secular NGOs and other Protestant and Catholic church groups. Some of their initiatives, such as support for projects to aid refugees who had fled from Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) to Zambia, would engender sharper criticism. Critics in the media and elsewhere suggested that, even if only indirectly, such projects made use of Canadian government funds to assist terrorist or Communist-front groups. Such disapproval notwithstanding, activities of this kind demonstrated just how much understandings of mission, and even development itself, had changed in Canada in the course of the 1960s.

**Faith in Development and Faith-Based Rifts**

During the 1960s the United Church of Canada was able to move further than other Canadian denominations in its advocacy and practice of an expansive concept of development. As church historian John Webster Grant observed, this uniquely ecumenical church had a ‘tradition of untraditionalism’ and a ‘centralized polity’ and could thus more easily contemplate and orchestrate change. Other mainline Protestant denominations and liberal Catholic groups were also moving in this direction, however, and increasingly forming coalitions. In doing so, they were reflecting or participating in larger patterns of international activism on development.

To speak of a missions-to-development trajectory and a process of ‘ngoization’ in the churches is by no means to suggest that for those orchestrating the changes their Christian faith had become irrelevant. Sources as different as the files of the CCC’s Department of Overseas Missions and late-twentieth-century essay collections on the church coalitions written by scholars and practitioners testify to the concern

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66 The most extreme criticism would be made in Branka Lapajne’s *CUSO and Radicalism* (Toronto: Citizens for Foreign Aid Reform, 1983). While specifically targeting CUSO, this work depicted various Protestant and Roman Catholic groups as fellow travellers in a ‘terrorist-support network’ (Introduction).

77 Grant, *Church in the Canadian Era*, 186 (for quoted phrases); also Grant, *Voices and Visions*, p. 135.

of the men and women involved to witness to their Christian faith in a relevant way in a rapidly changing world. Certainly, within the United Church itself liberal missionaries and mission officials were at pains to portray the church’s new directions in mission as (still) faith-based initiatives rather than outcomes of secularization and modernization. The Observer was an important vehicle in their attempt to present this perspective to the church’s broad constituency. In 1971, the year before the BWM disappeared into the new Division of World Outreach, the Observer gave the Board secretaries a platform to explain their understanding of mission in interview format. Garth Legge did not disavow the value of what he called ‘primary evangelism,’ though this was, he declared, no longer the task of Western churches. Nor did he see the role of missions and missionaries as simply development: ‘Sure, there’s a direct relationship between mission and development,’ he wrote, ‘but when the church is involved in development, it is doing so as an expression of God’s concern for the totality of life.’ Legge’s colleague Walter Tonge made a similar point during the interview: although demonstrating a sense of ‘Christian responsibility’ for the underdeveloped world could certainly be done through CUSO or a CIDA appointment, serving through the church put that responsibility ‘into sharper focus.’

Nonetheless, a common theme stands out in trends across the mainline Canadian churches by the end of the 1960s: the churches’ social activism had become ‘unhitched’ from its original mandate to further the evangelizing of the wayward at home and to win overseas souls for Christ. The downplaying of evangelism had been a slow and uneven process until the 1960s, even in the ultra-liberal United Church, but by the end of that decade, as one senior churchman observed, evangelism had become a word likely to ‘turn people off’; he ‘felt he almost had to apologize for bringing it up at all.’ Significantly, for the first time in its history in 1968 the United Church chose a layman, Bob McClure, as its moderator. McClure’s exuberant showmanship on behalf of the

79 ‘World Mission Begins at Home,’ Observer, Feb. 1971, p. 24 (for Legge), p. 25 (for Tonge); also ‘Norman MacKenzie War on Poverty,’ 40. I am most grateful to Professor Marilyn Legge for a helpful conversation (15 July 2008) about the role of faith in Garth Legge’s understanding of mission and the theological basis for his concern about justice in the developing world.

80 Grant, Modern Era, p. 242.

church’s development work following a high-profile career in China and India made him excellent copy in mainstream media as well as the church press. Two years earlier when the CBC was preparing for its first colour telecast, it sent a documentary crew to India to profile McClure’s ‘war on leprosy, polio, TB, and the population explosion.’ Following his term as moderator, the now-retired McClure undertook a survey of family planning needs in Southeast Asia for Oxfam, at the same time looking for a hospital where he could do further volunteer work. Like Legge and Tonge, McClure had a personal faith life that was important to him, but it was his quotable challenges to traditional Christian theology and his medical activism in the developing world (‘he would rather preach family planning than salvation,’ wrote his biographer) that made him such an appropriate ambassador for the new face of mission.  

When CIDA began funding overseas projects of faith-based groups as well as secular NGOs in a systematic way from 1968 onward through its NGO Division, it was presumably doing so because External Affairs, the department responsible for CIDA, regarded such projects as broadly compatible with its own aid and development goals. In 1963, as head of External Affairs in the new Liberal government, Paul Martin Sr had reportedly expressed some concern that assisting church work in the developing world would, in effect, be financing conversion efforts.  

Now, however, such concerns appeared to be a thing of the past. It was, of course, yet another irony of ‘NGOization’ that government financing for faith-based and secular NGOs was established systematically and securely at the very time that these organizations were becoming increasingly vocal in their criticism of federal aid and development policies.

By the beginning of the 1970s, then, Canada’s mainline Protestant churches could frequently make common cause in their overseas work with the federal government and secular NGOs as well as with

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84 Brodhead and Pratt comment briefly on this in ‘Paying the Piper: CIDA and Canadian NGOs,’ in Canadian International Development Assistance Policies, ed. Pratt, pp. 92–3.
like-minded Catholic groups. Meanwhile, however, the mainline denominations’ new approach to their role in the developing world had been evoking a negative reaction among conservative Christians. The response of conservatives to the waning of the evangelical character of missions was part of a larger response to what was perceived as excessive liberalization on a broad range of social and moral issues in contemporary Canada. One outcome was the formation in 1966 within the Anglican and United churches of conservative subgroups: the Anglican Evangelical Fellowship and the United Church Renewal Fellowship. Members of the Renewal Fellowship were, among other things, ‘zealous supporters of foreign missions,’ and, for them, the church’s emphasis on social issues

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85 Miedema, *For Canada’s Sake*, p. 60. Quoted statements about the Renewal Fellowship are from Grant’s ‘What’s Past Is Prologue,’ in *Voices and Visions*, p. 141.
was ‘a diversion from its main business of converting individuals.’

Many like-minded Christians defected altogether from the United Church and from other mainline denominations. Within Canada, conservative Christian groups never became as numerous, as politically influential, or as single-mindedly opposed to liberal ideologies and
practices as they became in the United States in the late twentieth century. Nevertheless, by the early 1960s Canadian Protestants who took a strong interest in overseas missions were already showing their preference for an approach that continued to give primacy to evangelization. A 1962 survey conducted by the CCC revealed that by far the largest number of Canadian Protestant missionaries was serving with conservative Canadian mission boards (i.e., boards not affiliated with either the CCC or the WCC), or with congenial US mission boards. Observer articles at the beginning of the 1970s confirmed the trend and acknowledged that the gulf ‘between the liberal social action churches and the conservative evangelicals’ was growing all across North America.

Conclusion

The ngoization of the mainline Protestant churches in the 1960s resulted in a progressive bleeding of support to evangelically oriented missionary organizations while failing to capture the imagination and hold the allegiance of young, development-minded, church-raised Christians like my high-school friend. The BWM’s complaint that the average churchgoer still thought about missions in terms of Victorian-era stereotypes is particularly unlikely to have been true of my friend, whose missionary uncle had become the BWM’s general secretary by the time she joined CUSO. Many other volunteers who joined CUSO in the 1960s had also come out of church-going families, many of them United Church families. However, as interviews with some fifty RVs from this era have revealed, by the time they attended university and became CUSO volunteers, many of them were opting out of the religious observances and moral codes of their parents’ generation and drawn to the

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87 Minutes, including ‘Report of Survey on the Canadian Missionary Overseas’, 19 Nov. 1962, file 6, box 4, BWM, subseries 1, CCC/DOM, UCC, UCA.
new zeitgeist. The very notion of mission, even in NGOized form, simply did not capture their enthusiasm or speak to their idealism in the way that the new organization did. Thus, while CUSO entered the 1970s with more than 1,300 volunteers serving in more than forty countries, the United Church, the largest of the mainline Protestant mission-sending agencies, had just 232 personnel, including wives, serving in twenty-four countries.89

Given the defections from the mainline Canadian churches in the 1960s to secular NGOs like CUSO, on the one hand, and to conservative mission organizations, on the other, it might appear that insofar as those mainline churches were concerned a more apt title for this article might have been ‘When Missions Became Irrelevant.’ Yet churches like the United Church of Canada did not simply give up on the idea of mission in the tumultuous 1960s. Rather, they sought to reshape it as a mission of service to the developing world in partnership with indigenous churches and in collaboration with inter-church coalitions, secular NGOs, and government agencies like CIDA. Inevitably, there were challenges and ironies aplenty as they sought to escape the legacies of missionary colonialism. To the men and women on the receiving end of interventions by Canadian NGOs, it was perhaps neither important nor easy to determine whether assistance was coming from a secular or a faith-based organization. But within Canada the shift that occurred in the 1960s in the country’s historic engagement with non-Western societies was unquestionably significant: the mainline churches that for close

89 ‘CUSO Facts and Figures,’ leaflet in file 11, box 6, CUSO, Conway fonds, UBC Archives; United Church of Canada Year Book [1972], 2 p. 200. In this article I have done no more than touch on the gendered dimensions of ‘NGOization.’ Given the fact that the majority of missionaries had traditionally been women and that women were proportionately overrepresented in CUSO, the shift in their loyalties warrants further investigation. It may well reflect an element of what Collum Brown, writing of 1960s Britain, calls ‘the end of evangelical femininity and piety,’ for him a crucial factor in the ‘death’ of ‘Christian Britain’ (Death of Christian Britain, 196). Certainly, the lure of development work for women came much earlier than Barbara Heron suggests in Desire for Development: Whiteness, Gender, and the Helping Imperative (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), p. 159n21 and, I suspect, for more complex reasons.

I presented earlier versions of this article at conferences in Vancouver and Bergen in 2008 and at a stimulating research seminar at King’s University College in 2009. Richard Allen, Ramsay Cook, Bruce Douville, Karen Dubinsky, and Marguerite Van Die commented insightfully on a later version, as did the editors of this journal and their anonymous reviewers. I thank all of these people for helping to improve this article while taking full responsibility for remaining errors and omissions.
to a century had offered humanitarian aid as part of an evangelistic package had reinvented themselves as faith-based NGOs and given way in numbers and importance to secular development agencies like CUSO. It was a particularly telling example of the extent to which, during this transformative decade, the dual forces of secularization and a new global consciousness reshaped Canadian society.
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

RE-IMAGINING ‘METROPOLE’ AND ‘PERIPHERY’
IN MISSION HISTORY

Michael Marten

Introduction

This essay was originally written for a conference in Bergen under the title ‘Protestant Missions – Local Communities: Regional and International Dimensions of Missionary Encounters’. The call for papers, linking these concepts of ‘encounter’, ‘local’, ‘regional’, ‘international’ and ‘communities’, outlined the need to pay ‘more attention to the ways in which the construction of the European ‘Other’ was vital for the construction of the European ‘Self”’, since there has been a great deal of work in recent times on ‘the consequences of the Western presence for local societies overseas’. Participants were requested to pay particular attention to the need to ‘address how colony and metropole were constitutive of each other’.

In response, this essay is an attempt at an articulation of a very specific problematisation, that of locating the colony (or periphery, as it will tend to be described here) and metropole in mission history. As is often the case, this seems at first to be very straightforward, but I will argue that it is far more complex than most of our models and understandings allow for. I will begin by problematising the use of the language of metropole and periphery, and then suggest a possible way of re-examining

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1 Related reflections were presented in a very early form at a May 2008 ‘Translating Christianity’ colloquium held at the School of Languages, Cultures and Religions, Stirling University, and then in fuller form in Bergen, August 2008.

As well as the many helpful discussions with conference participants, especially in Bergen, I particularly want to thank John Bradley, Timothy Fitzgerald, and Christine Lindner for comments on various draft versions of this paper; that I have not heeded all the advice given is my responsibility, not theirs. Hilde Nielssen and Karina Skeie have gone beyond what any author can reasonably expect from their editors, both in terms of helpful comments and feedback, but also patience beyond measure; I am extremely grateful to them.
what we might think of in relation to metropole and periphery by using Michel Foucault’s concept of heterotopias. In conclusion I will offer some thoughts on how these ideas might be used further.

The examples that I will be using derive primarily, though not exclusively, from my own work on Scottish missions to Palestine in the 19th and early 20th century, a period often regarded as the great missionary era, when global missionary outreach from Europe and North America went hand-in-hand with the colonial enterprise and the global entrenchment of multi-nationalist capitalism. Using secondary sources in this way allows reference to a substantial body of primary source material that has already been set into an historical context. On the basis of the work of numerous other scholars, some them writing in this volume, I am certain that much of what I describe can equally apply in other geographic and imagined contexts, whether these be Scottish missions outwith the Middle East, or other mission societies’ global work.

Problematising Metropoles and Peripheries

The notion of centres – or metropoles – and peripheries is one that has long driven much of colonial and postcolonial scholarship. The idea that there was an imperial centre that reached out to the colonial possessions has long been taken for granted, and only with the growth of postcolonial scholarship has this perception been questioned, as the former peripheries interrogate the centre-periphery dynamic, and particularly the direction of that dynamic (which is also part of the theme of the essays in this volume). That the colonial metropole and periphery were in a complex and nuanced relationship to one another has been highlighted by the work of Simon Gikandi, Robert Young and many others. At the latest since Edward Said’s *Orientalism,* the idea that conceptualising ‘Europe’ was and is only possible through the creation of an ‘Other’, has become widely accepted.

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2 My first encounter with using Foucault’s ideas on heterotopias to conceive of spaces beyond the local-global dichotomy was in the context of a seminar at Stirling University on 21.4.08. Prof. Gen Doy of De Montfort University used the concept in her paper on ‘Migration and Displacement’. I immediately began to see ways in which this could relate to missions; this essay is the first result of these reflections.


Much recent work has also focussed on the way in which the peripheries were not quite as marginal as the word 'periphery' implies, and also on the way in which these very categories were subverted. A recent study in this regard is Ann Laura Stoler’s *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, which pursues questions related to, amongst other things, the place of children born of colonial and indigenous parents – where did they belong, to the metropole or the periphery? Were they, for example, European, Javanese, something in between, or perhaps something altogether beyond such categorisation? A series of colonial categories emerge that sometimes cross these boundaries, sometimes solidify them, as outlined in a chapter she entitles ‘Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: Cultural Competence and the Dangers of Métissage’. This brings to mind Benedict Anderson’s description of Macaulayism as a ‘mental miscegenation’; and connects very directly to thoughts on identity as a transitory and changing phenomenon in colonial settings. In other contexts, Simon Gikandi has sought to understand the impact of the periphery on the centre, and in the field of missions in the Middle East, for example, this has been further developed by several of the scholars involved in this volume. Questions of polycentricity and entangled histories are central here – clear pointers to the complexity of writing history and processes of historiography in such a field.

In thinking about metropoles/centres and peripheries it is perhaps helpful to clarify how I am using the terms ‘spaces’ and ‘places’ and the differences I perceive between them, for they are each used very deliberately. For the most part, I use the word ‘spaces’ rather than ‘places’, and by this I mean that whilst ‘spaces’ can be places, they are not necessarily geographically fixed localities, for which I use the term ‘places’. Indeed, spaces often have a significance for individuals and groups on multiple levels beyond anything a geographically fixed location might entail.

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6 Stoler: 79–111.
9 This distinction is a common one that I cannot explore in further detail here. Edward Casey has reflected on these themes in some details; see, for example, *Representing place: landscape painting and maps*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002: 51ff.
For example, these can be one or more of: geographical, historical, cultural, emotional, sexual, theological, personal etc. – and such a statement can be made and is valid almost regardless of the precise meanings we give each of these category terms. Therefore, in thinking about spaces, we are pointing to very specific and identifiable, though not necessarily conventionally-mapable, locations. Mapping such spaces can perhaps be done using particular kinds of maps, but these would need to be maps that show different kinds of contours and boundaries to a 'normal' geographical map; such maps might not even be identifiable as maps in any normative sense. That is not the primary concern in this essay, but perhaps what is argued here could also make a contribution towards the ways in which some of these maps might be drawn.¹⁰

Mission centres

Thinking about 19th century missionary work then, it seems to follow that there was a missionary ‘centre’ (or organisation) of some kind – based in the west – which supplied human and material resources to the missions that were working in the peripheries. Whether these were actual colonies or not is barely relevant here, because it is generally safe to say that some form of generalised European colonial mindset dominated the mode of thought of many of the missionaries, regardless of their origins or their destinations.

Many of these mission stations were also called mission centres, and they are, in many senses, the real centres of missionary work – for the areas they were in, they represented, more than anything else, the physical and imaginative core of missionary activity in a particular region. Certainly the target audience would be unlikely to encounter the Church of Scotland, say, anywhere near Scotland itself: for them the Church of Scotland was located in the mission station. Virtually none of the (putative) converts would ever travel to Scotland, and indeed, the very idea of an entity that was ‘Scotland’ that this particular Church was a part of, would, for most of the new converts and local observers, have been only a distant concept with marginal relevance to their encounter with the faith tradition represented by the Church as they encountered it. Their ‘Church of Scotland’ undoubtedly had some kind of Scottish parentage, but it was very clearly something that existed in a specific local context

in their neighbourhood. We can therefore argue that even if the Europeans did not necessarily see it in this way, these mission centres were at least partially indigenised almost from the moment they first opened their doors to the local population.

Of course, centres and peripheries can only exist in relation to one another, and both change in relation to one another – and this also applies in the mission context. Districts and towns grew or declined in significance, perhaps because of, perhaps in spite of missionary connections, and this changed the focus of the mission centre – which could grow or be shut down as deemed appropriate by those who controlled the mission. For example, in the first half of the 19th century, the Scottish churches in the Middle East opened and closed (or passed on to others) mission stations in Beirut, Damascus and Aleppo. Such changes took place in part because of the impact of the periphery on the centres, though we should note that it often did not seem that way to the missionaries themselves who were working in these centres. Peripheries by definition are spatial or imaginary territories that cannot be completely controlled by the centre: to varying degrees they change and develop independently of the centre, and act in ways that necessitate the centre occasionally needing to re-gain or re-assert its position as the centre. For example, although many mission stations operated a ‘star’ model of mission work – being based in one location missionaries would work partly by travelling to nearby areas and there conducting services and engaging in social care activities, and then always returning to the mission station – the peripheries, although they seemed to be fixed places the missionaries went to from a centre, were always in flux. This is because, not least, these peripheries were only peripheries to the missions, but they were often significant centres in one way or another for those who lived there, and these people in turn would therefore have

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11 For example, the United Presbyterian Church mission in Aleppo was closed with great reluctance, but it took a long time for there to be even a hint of recognition that the external circumstances had played a substantial role in ‘defeating’ the missionaries; Marten, 2006: 45–60.

12 There is a great deal of evidence to show how this happened in colonial military and political contexts: it becomes increasingly difficult over time for the centre to hold (one is reminded here of WB Yeats), with ever more repressive measures needed to preserve the centre’s superior position. I am not aware of much in the field of mission history that clearly describes this phenomenon for mission stations, but it seems reasonable to surmise that this would also be the case in such contexts; clearly, however, the verisimilitude of this assertion would benefit from more focused verification using primary sources.
had their own peripheries, and *their* circumstances might change as a result of yet other centres impinging upon these peripheries.\textsuperscript{13} Sometimes the periphery seems to have just walked away, as we can perhaps infer from an attempted mission to a nomadic Bedouin tribe from a Scottish mission based in Damascus in about 1859.\textsuperscript{14}

Although metropoles and peripheries are transitory and subject to constant change, it is possible, of course, to locate them, as I’ve described. Equally, as I’ve just outlined, metropoles and peripheries can be both in different circumstances – there is a fluidity and simultaneity to the meaning we give these terms, and it is important that we hold on to this tension. We find this in other models, such as ‘world systems theory’, which seeks to explain global economic relationships (especially from the colonial era), pointing not to only centres of peripheries, but also centres on peripheries, with each of the latter having its own peripheries that indirectly inform interactions with the primary centre. That missions were often intimately connected to colonial trading posts and capitalist centres only serves to dramatise the metropole-periphery axis.

However, my thinking on these issues is coloured by the reflection that even though the designation of certain spatial or imaginative territories as metropole or periphery is an integral part of what we might term ‘postcolonial discourse’, it is also a form of colonial or colonial-style (re-)interpretation and (mis-)representation, not least since it creates a set of binaries that resist attempts to introduce nuance.\textsuperscript{15} For example, following patterns set by Gikandi, Stoler and others, I have just pointed to changes in the location of the centre (Edinburgh, or the Damascus and Tiberias mission stations in the Middle East) – but the peripheries have stayed as peripheries! And herein lies a significant problem: it often seems that locating metropoles and peripheries in postcolonial scholarship, whether in the context of mission or wider

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\textsuperscript{13} On a number of occasions, Scottish missionaries changed their plans as a result of the interaction with societies such as the London Jews Society. In Safad, there was an explicit desire to avoid impinging on the LJS mission; friction and competition arose nonetheless.

\textsuperscript{14} Since first writing about this (Marten, 2006: 48), it has been plausibly suggested to me, based on other sources, that one reason for the mission in Jadif never being discussed again is that the target population had moved on. Some further work on sources is required here to confirm this, but it is a distinct possibility.

\textsuperscript{15} Hélène Gill, ‘Hegemony and Ambiguity: Discourses, Counter-Discourses and Hidden Meanings in French Depiction of the Conquest and Settlement of Algeria,’ in *Modern and Contemporary France*, 14/2, 157–172: 171.
colonial interests, tends towards pointing to the metropoles, even if we attempt to interpret or understand the peripheries by ‘allowing’ the subaltern to speak, to use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s famous phrase. And even when we seek to follow Spivak, in reality allowing the subaltern to speak often entails the ‘authentication’ of the subaltern’s identity and voice by western academic discourse, and especially by white, middle-class, western males – such as myself.

Is there a way to move beyond this? This essay suggests that there is, but before thinking about how that might be done, I want to note that there are, of course, good reasons for holding onto the periphery-metropole trope, as I will show towards the end of this essay: I am not abandoning the model altogether.

Michel Foucault’s Heterotopias

However, I also want to suggest that mission stations are often also neither centre nor periphery, but something else entirely – so I want to move away from the binary opposition that this kind of Cartesian model implies, even if we hold the two elements in tension to one another. In thinking about this, I want to pick up on Michel Foucault’s term ‘heterotopia’, and I want to argue that whilst we can see mission stations in terms of metropoles and peripheries, thinking of them as heterotopias offers a different and helpful way to reflect on their significance. Conceptualising heterotopias in the context of mission work can not only change our understandings of mission stations and what they were trying to do, but also has the potential to change how we perceive the peripheries, and that is primarily what I want to try and point to in this essay.

Foucault’s 1967 essay ‘Des espaces autres’ (published in 1986 in English as ‘Of Other Spaces’) discusses ways of understanding what we might term ‘complex spaces’. Foucault begins with a discussion of the ‘desanctification of space’ that Galileo initiated by positing infinite, rather than finite space. In contrast to what he calls ‘roughly’ medieval time, a thing’s place ‘was no longer anything but a point in its movement, just as the stability of a thing was only its movement indefinitely.

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16 Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, in Diacritics, 16/1, 1986, 22–27.
slowed down.\textsuperscript{17} In this infinite space, things are not placed for us, we place or identify them, and we do this in a set of relations: we do not live in a void but in a heterogeneous space, ‘inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.’\textsuperscript{18} He gives the example of a train in thinking about the multiplicity of relations: ‘it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is also something that goes by.’\textsuperscript{19} It has multiple potentially simultaneous but not overlapping relationships to multiple sites. The spaces that Foucault moves on to describe are in relation to all other sites, ‘but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relationships that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect’\textsuperscript{20} – it should immediately be clear why this is an attractive form of thinking in relation to the questions raised earlier.

Foucault argues there are two kinds of spaces that do this, the first is the unreal, ideal or inverted space that we think of as utopia. In terms of real spaces, he discusses counter-sites,

\begin{quote}
\begin{small}
\begin{itemize}
\item a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which… all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{itemize}
\end{small}
\end{quote}

These he calls heterotopias: they are different to the sites they reflect and speak about, but contrast also to the unreality of utopias. Foucault describes six principles that underpin heterotopias, which are, however, by their very nature, varied. I will list these here, and then explore each in turn, relating them to specific contexts of mission history\textsuperscript{22} in order to clarify the connections that can be made:

\textsuperscript{17} Foucault, 1986: 23. Although it is clearly intimately connected, beyond the one principle related to time that Foucault discusses in ‘Of Other Spaces’, I will not be engaging here in any detail with the wider implications for our understanding of time that emerge here, though this would be a profitable pursuit. An interesting starting point might be Edward Casey’s \textit{Getting back into place: toward a renewed understanding of the place-world}, series: \textit{Studies in Continental thought}, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993; concepts such as ‘implacement’ and ‘displacement’ (p34) are relevant to the discussion here.

\textsuperscript{18} Foucault, 1986: 23.

\textsuperscript{19} Foucault, 1986: 24.

\textsuperscript{20} Foucault, 1986: 24.

\textsuperscript{21} Foucault, 1986: 24.

\textsuperscript{22} These examples will focus especially, though not exclusively, on Scots in the Middle East.
there are ‘heterotopias of crisis’, now being replaced by ‘heterotopias of deviation’ – Foucault gives the example of prisons, rest homes and psychiatric hospitals.

2. heterotopias can change in function as a society’s history unfolds, according to specific needs and demands – cemeteries, for example, moved in the 18th and 19th centuries from the centres of towns (where all had a connection to the dead) into the suburbs: further out and out of the way, distant from life, because death came to represent the opposite of life rather than its continuation – after resurrection – in another form; the very obvious connection everyone still had to the dead had changed in nature.

3. heterotopias are ‘capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible’ – Foucault cites theatres, cinemas and gardens as typical of this heterotopic principle.

4. heterotopias are linked to slices in time – heterochronies, as Foucault calls them. The cemetery is an example of a connection to time, albeit the transformation of one kind of time to another. Museums and libraries (as they came to be in the 19th century) represent ‘heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time’ – rather than simply being eclectic collections of ephemera based on an individual’s taste, they claimed an ability to contain all times and spaces within their walls. The counterpart to this, he says are the links to fleeting, passing time, such as fairgrounds and the like.

5. heterotopias involve ‘a system of opening and closing that both isolates and makes them penetrable… Either entry is compulsory… or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications’ – ritual purification before worship in many religious traditions, or even hygienic purification in the context of a sauna, represent examples of this principle.

6. heterotopias have a function in relation to all the space that remains, either creating illusory spaces that expose real spaces as still
more illusory (Foucault uses the example of a brothel here), or that regulate another real space in opposition to the messy space we occupy.

Foucault notes that ships are in many ways perfect examples of heterotopias. I want to argue that mission stations also fit this model well, thereby opening up new ways of interpreting the metropole-periphery dynamic. Looking at each of the six principles in turn and illustrating how they connect to mission examples will help to show what I mean.

*An examination of the six principles*

It seems almost trivial to think about heterotopias of crisis or deviation in the mission context: by definition, the very process of conversion (Latin: conversio, translated from Greek μετάνοια, literally, ‘after thinking’, i.e. a change of mind) results in deviation from the normative experience of the (putative) convert’s immediate environment. That the mission stations ostensibly sought to offer conversion, whilst also providing education and healthcare, automatically made them spaces of deviance. Even without conversion, deviance was an integral part of what the mission stations were about: parents sending their children to the mission schools, for example, were regularly admonished by the religious leaders of their communities for doing so. They often interpreted this as a form of ‘betrayal’ of communal values – but until the communities concerned created their own schools, many parents continued to send their children to missionary institutions.28 Foucault suggests that these kinds of heterotopias are spaces in which people are ‘placed’, in other words, actions are performed on them against their will, though his inclusion of (or understanding of?) retirement homes might be questioned in this context. I would maintain that apart from, arguably, the children sent to the mission schools, ‘being placed’ is not necessarily how most people saw themselves as coming to the missions, but nevertheless these were, to use Foucault’s language, spaces for ‘individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm.’29

The changing function of a heterotopia, Foucault’s second principle, relates very directly to missions, and draws attention to the frequent disjuncture between ostensible aims and realisable practice. Mission

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29 Foucault, 1986: 25.
societies often argued that their purpose remained unchanged over many years: that regardless of circumstances, they only sought to further the ultimate aim of the mission, in other words, the winning of souls to their own faith position. That the reality of this was quite different has been explored in numerous contexts: missionaries’ methods changed continually, adapting, in perfect heterotopic fashion, to the needs around them. Particularly the development of education and medicine can be mentioned here, which often almost seemed to become purposes in and of themselves. For example, there is little to suggest that Alexander Paterson, the senior missionary doctor at the Scottish hospital in Hebron in the early 20th century, felt the need to engage in much more than his medical work at the hospital: there is no significant evidence of any conversions, or even of any concentrated effort on his part to convert his patients or anyone else. His primary focus was very clearly on his patients in the city and its environs, and less on programmatic efforts to bring about the conversion of local Palestinians to his understanding of the Christian faith.

The changing of missionary methods as the missionaries adapted their work to better suit local circumstances incorporates two further elements. Mission stations were often founded with a particular understanding of what the local target community was in need of, but this understanding was equally often found to be in some measure inaccurate or even misleading, resulting early on in the life of the mission in changes in missionary practice. In addition, the transformative effects of missions on local communities can be noted here: in many circumstances mission stations impacted significantly on local communities. This might happen in various ways, such as education and healthcare, or the influence of incoming trade and finances etc. In these situations, the mission stations impacted local communities in ways that neither the missionaries nor the local population could always foresee – and, in turn, the changes in these communities impacted in unexpected ways.

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32 Of course, in some circumstances, mission stations ‘failed’ and were closed down, limiting their effect.
upon the missions. This process of reculturation is reflected in the missionaries’ appearance (e.g. clothing), behaviour, language usage, and many other areas.\textsuperscript{33}

Turning to the third principle – the juxtaposition of incompatible spaces in a single space – I would argue that this is exactly how a mission station such as the Scots’ largest site in Palestine, at Tiberias, can be understood. For example, in 1887 the senior missionary, David Torrance, recorded that his (mostly Palestinian) congregation had been singing ‘What a friend we have in Jesus’ and other hymns – in Arabic, and in 1898, he noted ‘I need thee every hour’\textsuperscript{34} was ‘rendered into Arabic, and set to the same tune to which it is set in Sankey’s collection’, Sankey being one half of the revivalist evangelical American duo Dwight L. Moody and Ira David Sankey.\textsuperscript{35} Moody and Sankey in Arabic on the shore of Lake Galilee is an intriguing thought, to say the least – but obviously, clearly possible. In these circumstances, the term ‘heteroglossia’ would seem to represent an appropriate counterpart to heterotopia. On another language-related issue: the hospital was described in a book about the mission published by the Church in 1895 as ‘a real Bethel’, i.e. ‘house of God’, referring to Genesis 35:15.\textsuperscript{36} This is clearly a claim to divine sanction, but it is also a connection to a religious text that at least

\begin{quote}
I need thee every hour,  
most gracious Lord;  
no tender voice but thine  
can peace afford.  

\begin{verbatim}
I need thee, oh, I need thee,  
every hour I need thee;  
O bless me now, my Saviour,  
I come to thee.
\end{verbatim}

I need thee every hour,  
in joy or pain;  
come quickly and abide,  
or life is vain.

\begin{verbatim}
I need thee, oh, I need thee,  
every hour I need thee;  
O bless me now, my Saviour,  
I come to thee.
\end{verbatim}

I need thee every hour,  
stay though near by;  
temptations lose their power  
when thou art nigh.

This communicates an intensely intimate and personal connection to the divine that was a prominent hallmark of western Protestantism.

\textsuperscript{33} I have discussed this in regard to the Scottish missions in Palestine in considerable detail: cf. chapters 5 and 6 in Marten, 2006.


\begin{quote}
I need thee every hour,  
most gracious Lord;  
no tender voice but thine  
can peace afford.  

\begin{verbatim}
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\textsuperscript{35} Marten, 2006: 239, n. 124.

\textsuperscript{36} Marten, 2006: 79, 156.
some of the people using these facilities would have known. In other instances, reluctance on the part of Muslim and Jewish locals to send their children to attend the Christian schools was almost always overcome so that increasing numbers attended over time (a pattern replicated by other missions such as the London Jews Society missions). So here we have a place where medicine is practiced, a school caters for children’s education, direct evangelistic efforts are pursued – and all this in at least English and Arabic, with Jews, Muslims and Christians making use of the various services offered, representing a juxtaposition of different spaces and realms that would never normally have encountered one another in this way. This connects to understandings of liminality: incorporating boundaries that required some form of access ritual (see the fifth principle below), mission stations were also ‘in-between’ spaces – contact zones, perhaps, between the (European) metropole and the (colonial) periphery. Although the difference between metropole and periphery was maintained, within these ‘in-between’ spaces, an imagined community of sorts was formed, reflected in the juxtaposition of otherwise incompatible spaces.37

Missionary buildings (and the design and construction of mission stations more generally) offer another avenue for reflection on such themes. Foucault discusses mission villages towards the end of his article (as noted below), and in recent times several mission historians have worked explicitly on such themes, often using Pierre Bourdieu. For example, Karina Hestad Skeie, in discussing a Norwegian missionary home in Madagascar, notes that: ‘There is nothing in this living room to indicate that it is a room in a house in Madagascar. Norway is present through portraits and pieces of furniture as well as through the basic values and decorative taste.’38 In her conclusion, Skeie notes that,

37 This can be related to Victor Turner’s work, and Homi Bhabha’s ‘discursive liminal space’. This connection is further alluded to at the end of this essay, but more work needs to be done here.

38 Karina Hestad Skeie, ‘Building God’s Kingdom: The Importance of the House to Nineteenth Century Norwegian Missionaries in Madagascar’, in Karen Middleton (ed.), Ancestors, power, and history in Madagascar, series: Studies on religion in Africa, vol. 20, Leiden: Brill, 1999, 71–101: 86. Although I have not yet had time to read it in detail, Christine Beth Lindner’s recent PhD thesis also addresses similar issues in another missionary context, using, as does Skeie, Pierre Bourdieu’s work to discuss the meaning of buildings etc.; see e.g. p93ff in Negotiating the Field: American Protestant Missionaries in Ottoman Syria, 1823 to 1860, University of Edinburgh, 2009.
… the Norwegian culture created on and between these stations was not simply a mirror image of Norwegian culture in Norway. The missionaries always referred to Norway as ‘home’ and to Madagascar as ‘out here’. Yet, after a while they had to create their ‘Norwegianness’ from a collective nostalgia for a beloved and distant homeland. Creating and maintaining a ‘Norwegian’ environment required considerable effort, and this was effort invested in material things (furniture, decoration, dress and food). Moreover, Norwegian culture recreated on the mission stations in Madagascar came to mean something different than it did in Norway, because … the meaning and values of the mission station were created partly through a dynamic interaction between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’. This explains how missionaries might well return to Norway as strangers, despite having lived like ‘Norwegians’ in Madagascar for one or more decades.39

Skeie also discusses cleanliness in the Madagascan missionary context – a theme that Western missionaries frequently adopted to represent spiritual redemption. This notion, especially in conjunction with the cleanliness of European buildings,40 along with the ordered European-style housing and buildings in general, offered a space that was ‘civilised’, in contrast to the ‘wildness’ or ‘darkness’ of the heathen population – emphasising again the contrasting nature of the incompatible spaces.41 The nostalgia and conservative nature of much of the missionaries’ physical context contrasted sharply with both the desire for the radical transformation of local lives that they ostensibly aimed to achieve, as well as the changes that were taking place in their ‘home’ societies.42 Furthermore, whilst such themes are often characterised and indeed represented by gender as well as spatial differences, they also form a basis for supporting racial superiority, as Ann Laura Stoler has shown.43 It is also worth noting that this ‘juxtaposition of incompatible spaces in a single space’ can be identified in nineteenth century Europe itself, as

39 Skeie: 96.
40 Skeie: 88ff; Marten, 2006: 79.
41 see for example Marten, 2006: 161.
42 The ever-increasing distance from ‘home’ is a topic that I have discussed in relation to other themes; Marten, 2006: 134. The late Andrew Ross’ coruscating biography of David Livingstone discusses the implications for Livingstone’s writing in the light of such developments; David Livingstone. Mission and Empire, London/New York: Hambledon and London, 2002: 116ff.
David Richards has shown in highlighting the comparisons by Walter Scott and others of Scottish Highland clan chiefs with the ‘savages’, ‘primitive(s)’, and ‘Arab chief(s)’ (etc.) found elsewhere in the world – of course, these were peoples that missionaries encountered all the time.\(^{44}\) Richards does not use Foucault in this context, but clear connections to the concept of ‘incompatible spaces’ can be made when he picks up on ‘stadial development’ as a marker of difference:

Adam Smith fixed history into a drama with four acts: ... the savage epoch..., barbarism..., agricultural..., civilisation proper... Since the European ‘past’ could be seen in the lives of contemporary primitives who lived nonetheless in a ‘previous’ epoch of human development, travel to those peoples involved not only a geographical journey, but a voyage in time.\(^{45}\)

Foucault addresses the spatial connection to time explicitly in his fourth principle – heterochronies, the ‘slices in time’. He gives the example of museums attempting to encompass eternity, and ‘time in the mode of the festival’: ‘time in its most fleeting, transitory, precarious aspect’ (in general these represent ‘a sort of absolute break with their traditional time’).\(^{46}\) Missions would appear to offer both these aspects simultaneously: a connection to the eternal, primarily, of course, through the modus of conversion, and the fleeting, transitory moment, primarily through participation in the worship and social services on offer; these are clearly a break with the putative convert’s ‘traditional time’. The afore-mentioned description of the hospital as ‘a real Bethel’ makes this connection vividly: there is the ostensible connection to the eternity of ‘the house of God’, and the transitory nature of involvement as a patient in the hospital, which will ideally result in the celebration of physical health restored. There is a further aspect to this, however, which connects to the ‘eternity’ element: the accumulation of time was not simply in relation to eternity of the life to come, but was also focused on the

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\(^{44}\) This is given considerably nuance by Scott, which Richards picks up on; *Masks of Difference. Cultural Representations in Literature, Anthropology and Art*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: 128ff.

\(^{45}\) Richards: 125.

\(^{46}\) Foucault, 1986: 26. The ‘cabinets of curiosities’ that emerged in Europe from the Renaissance onwards (also known by the German term Wunderkammer, i.e. chamber of wonders) are emblematic of this heterochronic and heterotopic concept. A number of museums emerged from such collections; notable examples include Dresden’s Grünes Gewölbe, London’s British Museum and Oxford’s Pitt Rivers Museum.
history of events long passed. In this particular instance, the location of the mission institutions in Palestine with its historical connections to the faith of the missionaries gave additional religious legitimacy to the work being done; Lester Vogel’s term ‘geopiety’ is an apt descriptor here.47 David Torrance, in Tiberias, claimed in 1894 that the ‘ears of the people are opened and opportunities are had of preaching the gospel of Christ, which for hundreds of years was never heard by the inhabitants around these sacred shores, or the regions around, until the establishment of our medical mission.’48 So not only was future eternity on offer in the mission station, but the connection to the historical past and the heritage of divine involvement in the region was being claimed in such a statement – this is a truly vast conception of Foucault’s ‘encompassing eternity’.

Examining the fifth principle, accessibility, we can see that the medical services at Tiberias or Hebron, for instance, were largely free of financial cost, but as was often the case in other similar settings, making use of these services for Palestinians entailed an access-ritual to begin the day: prior to any treatment, a short service by the medical missionary or his assistant would be held, with an exposition of the Christian message to the patients. On Sundays, patients who were well enough would be taken to the church for worship. Missions in many contexts operated in similar ways, and we can argue, therefore, that access to the medical services offered was only available to those willing to ‘pay the price’ of participating in, or at least being present during, Christian worship. Other social services, such as schools, had similar access-rites associated with them – for example, at Tabeetha school in Jaffa, all children, Christian, Jewish and Muslim, were obliged to participate in the school’s Christian worship, whilst holy days such as the Sabbath were ignored altogether.49

There are a number of further issues related to access rituals, which are in part very nuanced in their application and interpretation. For example, conversion brought with it the opening into the (western) Christian community – but often only to a limited extent. Skeie notes that the ‘Norwegian’ living spaces were almost always off-limits to

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48 Taken from a Jewish Mission Committee minute of 1894, cited in Marten, 2006: 80.
Malagasy converts, and for converts of the Scottish mission in Palestine, we can note the stern warnings against sending converts either to Scotland, or to other mission stations. The opening and closing is therefore more complex than it at first seems, partially since for some conversion did result in further incorporation into the missionary fold: for example, James Cohen converted, was ordained and then worked for the mission – clearly a more advanced stage of inclusion than some other converts will have experienced.

Such exceptions make the boundaries and access rituals more complex and nuanced than they at first appear to be.

The existence of boundaries that can only be crossed at a cost also invites transgression. The numerous accounts of Muslim and Jewish children (in particular) who were sent to Scottish missionary schools in Palestine despite the bans pronounced against them demonstrate the possibility and even the desirability of transgression – in such circumstances, the boundary is erected less by the missionaries than by the local communities. In the very act of defying their communities' leaders the parents were engaging in what we might call a 'grey zone', that on the one hand 'rewarded' them with western education for their children, but also brought with it the possibility of 'punishment' by their community elders – and often they would not know whether punishment would take place or not, or whether it would be particularly severe. We can point to concepts of liminality here – a theme that will be returned to below.

Finally, Foucault relates the sixth principle to 'all the space that remains', which, similar to the idea of heterochronies in the fourth principle, exists in two parts. Heterotopias have a function in relation to either one or the other:

[they] create a space of illusion that exposes every real space... as still more illusory... [or, on the contrary, they] create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be the

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50 Marten, 2006: for example, 87, 156f. Note that the failure to accommodate converts' physical needs (accommodation, employment etc.) was often cited as a major factor in the small numbers that came forward for conversion.

51 Marten, 2006: 87 etc.

52 Few precise records exist, but admonishments and temporary exclusion appear to have been the primary form of punishment. Even so, there is scant evidence to show that such punishments achieved their desired aim in more than perhaps a handful of cases.
heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation… absolutely perfect other places.53

It is interesting in the context of this essay to note that Foucault makes reference in this section to Jesuit colonies in South America as embodying an instance of the latter type of these heterotopias. I would argue that in different contexts mission stations offer the historian both aspects of this heterotopic pairing: in evangelical thought, there was only to be any hope of redemption (all these essential terms being defined, of course, only by the missionaries) through (a) a clear rejection of past beliefs and illusions of how to effect salvation, and (b) acceptance of the new message and perfect life that the missionaries proclaimed. The following exchange between the Tiberias mission’s Biblewoman and a Bedouin woman points to the illusion of space on the one hand (the real state of the Bedouin’s soul, to use the language of the missionaries), and the prospect of what might be, though here that is only alluded to:

“Are you a sinner?” – “No,” indignantly, “I am not a sinner.”
“Do you tell lies?” – “Sometimes.”
“Do you curse?” – “Yes, many times.”
“Swear?” – “Very often.”
“Hate? quarrel?” – “Oh yes, very often.”
“Well, all that is sin.” – “That is sin?”
“Yes; now are you not a sinner?” – “God knows!”54

No context to this conversation is given, but one might well wonder what this Bedouin made of the new awareness that her understanding of the real was illusory: having thought she was not a sinner, the missionary explained that in fact, this ‘real space’ of self-awareness was an illusion. The closing exclamation suggests that relatively little of this thinking meant much to her.

This sixth principle is also connected to elements mentioned in the third: as already noted, the creation of a ‘perfect’ Norwegian home in Madagascar, for example, points to an imagined space that represented an attempt to create a ‘civilised’ order in what the missionaries perceived to be an ‘uncivilised’ and disorder context. Equally, (missionary) medical care can be seen as an attempt to bring order and control over

53 Foucault, 1986: 27.
54 This account was published in 1923. For a fuller exposition of this vignette, see Marten, 2006: 148–9.
nature – the domination of human will and skill over the capriciousness of illness and infection in a context marked by civilised cleanliness rather than uncivilised filth.\(^{55}\) Of course, such binary oppositions only function so distinctly and clearly in the imagination of the missionaries – the reality, even for the missionaries, was more complex. For example, Skeie notes that the ‘Norwegian’ homes in Madagascar included living quarters for the Malagasy servants (the ‘kitchen house’)\(^{56}\), and in Palestine Scottish education and medical care was subject to regular bans from religious authorities (of varying effectiveness).\(^{57}\) It is therefore possible to argue that these physical buildings and social services were illusions of perfect missionary endeavour: in the missionary imagination they were something \textit{more} than they actually were – a little piece of Norway (\textit{if} the servants’ quarters could be ignored), Christian education and medical care (\textit{if} the local religious leaders were to allow it). ‘This illusory quality adds to the potency of these spaces because they tap into the imagination’,\(^{58}\) making them a powerful tool of both representation and identification.

Foucault does not explicitly state that all six principles need to be matched for a heterotopia to exist – indeed, it could be argued that such a requirement would make a nonsense of the very idea of a heterotopia – though he does posit them collectively as ‘a sort of systematic description’,\(^{59}\) and there will be sites and spaces that all six principles apply to. It is worth noting that whereas a space can be regarded as heterotopic on the basis of less than the full complement of six,\(^{60}\) many mission stations, including the Scots’ Palestine stations can be seen to fulfil all of them. This is in itself, perhaps, a tangential argument for the use of this model in mission historiography.

\(^{55}\) Richards’ discussion of stadial development is again useful here.

\(^{56}\) Interestingly, Skeie points out that the marking of social strata represented in such an arrangement did not manifest itself in Norway until later; 82–3.

\(^{57}\) e.g. Marten, 2006: 70, 154.

\(^{58}\) This phrase is quoted from a communication Hilde Nielssen sent me; I particularly want to thank her for helping me to develop these reflections.

\(^{59}\) Foucault, 1986: 24.

\(^{60}\) I am grateful to Bill Marshall for pointing out to me a usage he made of Foucault’s heterotopias in a very different context: in discussing André Téchiné’s film output, he writes about the closing scenes in \textit{Les Roseaux sauvages} as constituting a heterotopic space, but centred primarily on the fifth principle; André Téchiné, series, \textit{French Film Directors}, series eds. Diana Holmes/Robert Ingram, Manchester: Manchester University Press: 2007: 91–94.
Developing the Use of Heterotopias in Mission Studies

Referring back to the original problematisation I outlined at the beginning of this paper – the consistent marginalisation of the peripheries and the effect this has on understanding the metropoles – does the concept of mission stations as heterotopic spaces actually help to interpret these contexts in a different, perhaps even in a better way? I can offer some pointers towards answering this question, but the real test for this comes in the application of this interpretation to multiple and diverse contexts, which may then more obviously indicate advantages and disadvantages of the concept of heterotopias.

It is undoubtedly the case that interpreting mission stations as heterotopias points to an easier way of holding, or ‘reading’ the mix of images, facets and people we encounter in connection with the mission stations. This is not about essentialising anyone or reifying anything, but about welcoming, embracing, and holding in tension cross-culturalism and hybridity in complex spaces, spaces that defy adequate description in binary terms and in which conceptualising heterotopias can form an interpretative model that can perhaps open up ‘more authentic’ Spivakian understandings of the periphery, of the subaltern. Raymond Young notes that, ‘[i]t was never the case that the subaltern could not speak: rather that the dominant would not listen.’61 Thinking of mission stations as heterotopias at the very least removes any excuse for not listening. And we can note in passing that this perfectly fits Edward Said’s explicitly anti-essentialist theories in relation to Orientalism.62

In addition, heterotopias restore agency to the periphery in ways that have so far not been explicitly outlined, and which can only be touched upon here. The metropole-periphery trope represents an established hierarchy in that the metropole encompasses the periphery, in a sense by being both over it as well as being dependent upon it. Although we can theoretically allow for a series of relativities to be created within this trope by thinking of every periphery as also a centre and every centre as also a periphery (à la world systems theory), conceptualising these spaces as heterotopias allows a space for individuals to encounter each other in a juxtaposition that would not normally exist, but which allows

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62 Gill: 158.
for a more human encounter, one that subverts, to some extent at least, the existing hierarchies, and which finds its expression in the clinics, schools and churches of the mission.

Another area relates to the avenues offered by the heterotopias model for exploring the gendered understanding of missions in terms of postmodern and postcolonial feminist thought (in fact, various aspects of third wave feminism can be read into this model). For example, Chandra Mohanty made three main criticisms of western feminism in her 1986 essay examining western women’s self-representation and the representation of Third World women. She argues that these representations tend towards a binary opposition, a pattern that we can observe in the ways in which western missionary women portrayed and related to Middle Eastern women in the 19th and 20th centuries, especially if viewed through the metropole-periphery trope. Mohanty closes her essay as follows:

In other words, only in so far as “Woman/Women” and “the East” are defined as Others, or as peripheral, that (Western) Man/Humanism can represent him/itself as the center. It is not the center that determines the periphery, but the periphery that, in its boundedness, determines the center.

As discussed at the beginning of this essay, this inverts – to a certain extent, at least – the presumed direction of the binary trope from metropole to periphery, but there is also more than this happening here. Mohanty is pointing in her essay to a more lived interaction between western and Third World feminists, in ways that could surely be understood, at least in part, as heterotopic.63

So in thinking of the initial invitation for this paper, which requested reflection on ‘how colony and metropole were constitutive of each other’, connecting this to ‘missionary practice and representation of religion and beliefs’, we can point to the intimacy and oddness of the connection between metropole and periphery – the ‘local’, ‘regional’ and ‘international’ encounters took place not just on a metropole-periphery axis, but also in a space that can perhaps best be described as heterotopic.

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It remains to make two final comments:

1. To be absolutely clear: I am *not* suggesting that the concept of mission stations as heterotopias should replace or supersede the metropole-periphery trope. Although as I have said above, heterotopias can in some senses offer a way of seeing relationships beyond or outwith power-differentials, that is also a problem: heterotopias say little about the inherent power relationships that determine the context in which they come into being. Discerning power relationships is something that thinking about metropoles and peripheries enables, and so if for no other reason, we need to retain this trope as a tool of analysis. But it is lacking something, and heterotopias offer us a way in towards thinking about that ‘something’. Holding on, therefore, to the tension of the contradiction, fluidity and simultaneity of the periphery-metropole model, whilst also employing the heterotopic model, is essential; this is, of course, not an easy tension to maintain.

2. Looking in this context also to ‘missionary practice and the representation of religion and beliefs’, an unaddressed category question around the terms ‘religion’ and ‘belief’ arises: whether in Palestine, Madagascar or anywhere else in the world, it is almost banal to say that whatever the missionaries’ conception of ‘religion’ was, it was undoubtedly different to that of the local populations they were encountering. How, for example, can the evangelically-oriented singing of American Protestant revivalist hymnody be connected to the notion of even Christianity as most Palestinian Christians would have known it, never mind thinking about wider religious understandings amongst Jews and Muslims? Although if we are to reconcile these divergent understandings we need to engage in a process of identifying their commonalities and differences by describing and connecting these traditions, I want to posit that they can, at least, be more intimately linked. The metropole-periphery trope creates binary oppositions here, but there clearly *was* something that local adherents to the new western-oriented faith could relate to, and in the unique space of the mission station, *both metropole and periphery*, and *neither metropole nor periphery*, this kind of hybridity had its space, a multi-faceted counter-site, a juxtaposition of apparently irreconcilable spaces, which the concept of heterotopias helps us to understand more readily. In so doing, we move away from the essentialisation that the binary trope tends towards, and allow both the missionaries and their target-Other, or the putative converts and
their missionary-Other, to meet and interact on their own terms. We can be reminded here of Homi Bhabha’s intercultural ‘Third Spaces’, which offer a related way to understand the appropriation of culture in all directions:

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew.64

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