

*Menschen – Bilder – Eine Welt. Menschenbilder in Missionszeitschriften aus der Zeit des Kaiserreichs.*

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While recent research has pointed to the great importance of the media for the making of the transnational missionary movement. For instance, see Felicity Jensz / Hanna Acke (ed.), *Missions and Media. The Politics of Missionary Periodicals in the Long Nineteenth Century*, Stuttgart 2013. , little attention has been paid to the visual dimension of missionary publishing. The guiding thesis of the international symposium “Menschen – Bilder – Eine Welt. Menschenbilder in Missionszeitschriften aus der Zeit des Kaiserreichs” was that the 19th century Christian missionary enterprise was saturated by images. Since early modern times, missionaries in Africa, Asia and the Americas had been extensively engaged in image-making. They sent engravings and later photographs to their home institutions in Europe, where these images were interpreted, reproduced, re-distributed, and put to various use (including for fundraising, propaganda purposes and the recruitment of new members). With the advance in visual technologies (e.g. in photography and print), images from different parts of the world already became a standard feature in several missionary periodicals in the last decades of the 19th century. The symposium, which was funded by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, sought to analyze this visual dimension of missionary periodicals from an interdisciplinary perspective. Gathering scholars from different geographic and

disciplinary backgrounds, it examined the creation of a human imagery by discussing the workings, functioning and performance of depictions of humans in German missionary periodicals.

The first section of the symposium, entitled “Media and Media Genres”, discussed missionary images and particularly photographs as visual objects that moved across social and political borders and gained significance in certain cultural, social, and communicative contexts. The papers paid close attention to the creation of photographic genres and the reproduction of specific images in different forms and settings. The first paper by CHRISTRAUD GEARY (Boston) took photographing practices in the Cameroon Grassfields and particularly the Bamum kingdom under German colonial rule as a starting point. Tracing the biographies of individual photographs from colonial Cameroon, Geary discussed the ambivalent histories of these images in the context of the German colonial Empire between 1903 and 1916. Geary not only highlighted a complex set of motivations and political agendas that connected both missionaries and Bamum kings to the use of photographic technologies, but also showed that these “local” motivations and agendas were not necessarily transported into publishing contexts in Europe. Instead, in Europe many photographs were invested with new meaning, for it was often the ideas, interpretations and motivations of suppli-

ers, owners and/or editors that came to determine publishing contexts. Hence, photographs from colonial Cameroon became embedded in missionary and/or colonial narratives of the encounter between Africans and Europeans in the Grasslands.

In a similar vein, ANKE SCHÜRER-RIES (Basel), working on the collection of photographs made by Fritz Ramseyer, a missionary and prolific photographer from Basel who worked in the British colony of Gold Coast for many decades, examined the various layers of meanings that Ramseyer's photographs have acquired due to different uses and interpretations in Europe. Exploring the biographies of two individual photographs from the archive to their reproduction in the *Evangelische Heidenbote*, Schürer-Ries emphasized both the distinct quality of photographs as media objects and their constant reinterpretation and appropriation by the various actors involved in their production, circulation and use. Her talk thus also raised important methodological issues and inspired a lively discussion with regard to the relationship between image content and meaning as well as material approaches to historical photographs.

The paper by historian HINNERK ONKEN (Köln) shifted the focus to another geographic, social and political context of missionary image-making, in its discussion of the contributions of Catholic missionaries to the visual construction of South American people(s) in the German Empire. Onken argued that colonial visual standards and missionary notions of success nonetheless determined most missionary photographs from South America published in Germany. Yet, he also pointed to the great importance that the photographic works of individual missionary photographers such as Martin Gusinde (1886–1969) acquired in the fields of ethnography and art.

The blurred boundaries between Catholic missionary propaganda and ethnographic interest also constituted a theme in the next paper. Dis-

cussing the photographic practices of German-speaking missionaries in South Africa, visual anthropologist CHRISTOPH RIPPE (Leiden) showed how and why photography became a major concern for a community of Trappist monks in Mariannhill, a monastery established in Natal in 1882. Focusing particularly on the first heyday of photography in Mariannhill between 1890 and 1914, Rippe argued that photography gradually became an everyday feature of local missionary life. Pointing to the dense presence of various missionizing groups and confessions in this part of Southern Africa, Rippe explained that it was particularly the fierce competition between these groups that fueled the rapid expansion and professionalization of photography in Mariannhill. Around 1900, South Africa became one of the places most photographed by missionaries and it was here that mission photographers developed genres, visual propaganda and ethnographic styles that were received in Europe within and beyond missionizing circles.

The question of confessional aspects in missionary visual culture was subsequently taken up by CHRISTOPH NEBGEN (Mainz), who systematically compared the use of images in two popular missionary periodicals in the German Empire. Nebgen argued that a particular confessional print culture determined the visual construction of Others in the Catholic *Katholische Missionen* published by Herder and the *Evangelische Missionen* published by Bertelsmann.

The second section of the symposium examined the creation and challenging of (e.g. racial, cultural and religious) stereotypes and visual orders in missionary periodicals. Taking a serial-iconographic approach, LIZE KRIEL (Pretoria) provided an analysis of the “reading African” as an important visual trope in the missionary imagination of South Africa. Examining the visual representation of reading in the Protestant periodical “Der Missionsfreund” in the early 20th century, Kriel argued that it was particularly the different

meanings of reading in the South African missionary contexts that contributed to the popularity of this visual trope. The “reading African” was at once empowered and subjected in “Der Missionsfreund”, which is why the trope remained closely related to Christianity, yet was also taken up by indigenous art.

The next paper by KOKOU AZAMEDE (Lomé) likewise pointed to a basic ambivalence that characterized the use of images in the periodicals of the *Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft* (NMG), which acted on the West African coast since the middle of the 19th century. Providing a close reading of the graphic artwork on the title page of the “Monatsblatt”, Azamede traced a shift in the perspective of editors, inasmuch as racial markers gained prominence during German colonial times. And yet, Azamede suggested, images and particularly photographs were also used in the periodical in order to document what the editors understood as successful missionary activity and the transformation from “heathendom” to “Christianity”.

This ambivalence between a visual emphasis on human difference and sameness also constituted a key aspect in the next talk by JUDITH BECKER (Mainz). Examining the visual construction of different religious communities in two well-known Protestant periodicals, the “Evangelische Heidenbote” and the “Barmer Missionsblatt”, she argued that even though certain attributes were repeatedly ascribed to some religious groups and peoples, in the very same periodicals these attributes were also questioned. She thus concluded that the visualization of religious difference defied any easy characterization. Visual clarification only existed in the differentiation between “Christians” and “Heathendom”, an observation that Becker explained by the basic motivations of editors, who first and foremost aimed to support the missionary venture.

The Basel-published “Evangelische Heidenbote” also served as a main source for MRINALINI

SEBASTIAN (Philadelphia), who emphasized the key importance of images in the making of the Basel mission as a faith-based community between India and Europe. As Sebastian argued, starting in the 1890s, the “Heidenbote”, rather than visually emphasizing Otherness, printed images showing the expanding Christian infrastructure and growth of the native Christian community in India.

The last section of the symposium focused on the workings of ideas of humanity and human sameness in missionary image-making. The papers particularly asked whether and how missionary institutions used images with the goal of advancing philanthropic or humanitarian projects. The section therefore also inquired into continuities and changes between the visual practices of Christian missionaries and later (secular) humanitarian campaigns. One interesting aspect in this context concerned the place of images of children in mobilizing campaigns. Analyzing images of children and families in turn-of-the century Protestant missionary publishing, FELICITY JENSZ (Münster) argued that missionary publishers particularly utilized images of non-European children in order to engage readers emotionally. Referencing Marianne Gullestad’s pioneer work on missionary photography Marianne Gullestad, *Picturing Pity: Pitfalls and Pleasures in Cross-Cultural Communication. Word and Image in a North Cameroon Mission*, Oxford 2007. , Jensz investigated the political implications of these visual strategies by pointing to the (de)personalizing effects of emotional responses to distant need between pity and compassion.

Likewise exploring the political dimension of missionary image-making, historian ARMIN OWZAR (Paris) examined the visualization of difference and social hierarchies in photographs from German East Africa published in the “Evangelisch-Lutherisches Missionsblatt”. Focusing on the period of German colonialism, Owzar detected a significant shift towards a new emphasis on civ-

ilizing progress in visual politics around 1900, for it was then that images of schooling and education started to take a key role in the periodical.

Missionary image-making also focused to a considerable extent on the Middle East. As the papers by ANDREAS FRINGS (Mainz) and KARÈNE SANCHEZ (Leiden) showed, both Armenia and Palestine not only constituted densely photographed settings since the late 19th century, but also occupied a firm place in Imperial Germany's visual imagination. Consequently, religious endeavors and humanitarian concerns became entangled. While, according to Frings, traditional representations of Armenia in popular Catholic missionary periodicals constructed the country and its people as a unique place and culture, later images also witnessed the emergence of a specific humanitarian gaze in missionary periodicals since the massacres of the mid-1890s. By focusing on Catholic and Protestant representations of the Holy Land in Imperial Germany, Karène Sanchez pointed out how photographs in general and photographs of Christian social initiatives in particular were used by different missionary institutions as important tools to foster competing claims on this highly contested site. Images of successful philanthropic work and relief performed by Christian missionaries also constituted a major theme in the last paper.

Examining the use and function of images in specific periodicals mainly used for fundraising, KATHARINA STORNIG (Giessen) argued that Christian fundraising associations developed media-based forms of communication with donors that for the first time enabled the massive expansion of transnational aid.

The three thematic sections of the symposium were framed by an inspiring keynote by art historian MONICA JUNEJA (Heidelberg) on the global movement of Christian icons as well as by a roundtable discussion that addressed ethical issues faced by scholars, curators, archivists and activists when using images produced and moved

under colonial conditions of racism and inequality. Altogether, the symposium inspired fruitful discussions connected to pressing issues, such as the agency of images, the (implicit and explicit) claim of photography with regard to modernity and the emergence of powerful visual metaphors of modernity, development and human progress in missionary publishing. The papers and discussions stressed the need to examine even further the contributions of circulating missionary images to 19th century European interpretations of difference and the making and unmaking of particular ideas of culture, race and gender. Christian print media, with its global (visual) coverage, emerged as a particularly promising source in this context, for it not only connected European Christians to the larger world in specific ways but also led to the merging of European and other "image worlds". See Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity. A Visual Economy of the Andean Images World*, Princeton 1997. For future analysis, it might be useful to critically reflect on the analytical value of a conceptual vocabulary that operates with terms such as missionary periodicals or missionary photography, and to think about other possibilities to systematize the workings and function of these visual materials.

#### **Conference Overview:**

Judith Becker (Mainz), Christoph Nebgen (Mainz), Katharina Stornig (Giessen): Introduction

#### *I. Medien und mediale Genres*

Chairs: Irene Dingel (Mainz), Sabine Hübner (Oldenburg)

Christraud Geary (Boston): Providing images to missionary journals: Photographers and the selection of their pictures

Hinnerk Onken (Köln): Missionsfotografische Bilder aus Südamerika im Deutschen Reich im späten 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert

Christoph Rippe (Leiden): „Ein Spaziergang mit der Kamera“: Bilder aus der Mission Mari-

annhill in Natal zwischen Katholischer Propaganda, Genrefotografie und Ethnologie

Christoph Nebgen (Mainz): Das konfessionelle Profil von Missionszeitschriften. Über den Zusammenhang von Konfessionskulturen und der Darstellung außereuropäischer Kulturen

*Keynote Lecture:*

Monika Juneja (Heidelberg): Das letzte Abendmahl in der roten Wüste – über das Nachleben christlicher Ikonen auf Weltreise

*II. Stereotype und visuelle Ordnungen*

Chairs: Stefanie Michels (Düsseldorf), Bernhard Gißibl (Mainz)

Anke Schürer-Ries (Basel): Lichtblicke auf der Goldküste – Fritz Ramseyers Darstellung von Missionsarbeit und Begegnung im „Evangelischen Heidenboten“ der Basler Missionsgesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert

Lize Kriel (Pretoria): The “reading African” in the hierarchy of others as visualised in the periodical “Der Missionsfreund”, early 20th century.

Kokou Azamede (Lomé): Vom “Heidentum” zum Christentum. Missionierung in Bildern im westafrikanischen Missionsgebiet des Ewelandes, 1884-1914

Judith Becker (Mainz): Christen, Muslime und “Heiden”: Die Darstellung eigener und fremder Religion im Basler „Evangelischen Heidenboten“ und „Barmer Missionsblatt“

*III. Humanität und religiöser Humanitarismus*

Chairs: Nic Leonhardt (Köln), Gerhard Kruip (Mainz), Esther Möller (Mainz)

Mrinalini Sebastian (Philadelphia): Visual representation of difference. On the representation of India in Basel Mission pictures

Felicity Jensz (Münster): Images of children and families in German missionary periodicals

*Roundtable “Das Zeigen der ‘Anderen’”*

Chair: Judith Becker (Mainz)

Participants: Anna-Maria Brandstetter (Mainz), Anja Lempges (Mainz), Alice Pawlik (Frankfurt), Christoph Schwab (Wuppertal), Christian Tauchner (St. Augustin)

Armin Owzar (Paris): Die langen Schatten des Kulturkampfes auf Deutsch-Ostafrika. Rasse, Religion und Sprache auf Menschen-Bildern christlicher Missionare

Andreas Frings (Mainz): Von Armenien zu den Armeniern: Wandel im Bild des Armeniers in Missionszeitschriften vor 1914

Karène Sanchez (Leiden): For God and the Kaiser? German missions’ images, humanitarianism and European competition in the Holy Land (1880-1920)

Katharina Stornig (Giessen): Humanitäre Bildpraktiken? Zur Visualisierung von menschlichem Leid, Not und Hilfe in Missionszeitschriften

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