GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: ROUTES AND ROOTS – 13

The Basel Mission between Switzerland, Germany and South India

Entangled Histories from Conversion to Commerce

Edited by
MUKESH KUMAR, AMAL SHAHID
& ELLA DAISY MÜLLER

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The Basel Mission between Switzerland, Germany and South India

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Edited by
mukesh kumar, amal shahid & ella daisy müller

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The Three Musketeers

Mukesh, Amal, and Ella

PART 1

Mission and Its Historiography

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: The Basel Mission in Nineteenth Century South India

Amal Shahid, Ella Daisy Müller, Mukesh Kumar

The Basel Mission originated in the context of the German Christianity Society in Basel and was founded as a seminary for the education and training of missionaries in 1815.[1] It aimed to educate young men as missionaries with specialised knowledge in bible studies, geography and linguistics. The origins of the Basel Mission can be traced back to the broader German evangelical awakening, particularly influenced by the pietist movements, which sought to revive personal faith and piety in a time of perceived spiritual decline.[2] Württemberg Pietism, a movement that significantly shaped the ethos of the Basel Mission, arose from the pietist tradition within the Lutheran Church in the southern German Kingdom of Württemberg.[3] Pietism itself emerged in the late 17th century, reacting against what its followers saw as the formalism and lack of personal devotion within established Protestant churches. It stressed personal spiritual renewal, Bible study, and a deeply felt and lived Christian life marked by moral purity and charitable works.[4] The pietists of Württemberg were particularly known for their missionary zeal and sense of community, which led them to establish networks of pious Christians devoted to spreading their faith. This movement

instilled a sense of duty to evangelise and serve, which deeply influenced the Basel Mission.

Therefore, many of the Basel Mission's early missionaries and leaders were either directly or indirectly shaped by Württemberg pietism, aiming to adopt an ethos of hard work, simplicity, and commitment to spreading Christianity in foreign lands.[5] The mission was likewise tightly enmeshed with the local bourgeois elite population of Basel, such as businessmen or politicians, but continued to have close ties to Württemberg. Therefore, the leading bureaucrats of the Basel Mission up to 1939 were from Württemberg, and more than fifty percent of the Basel Mission's overseas missionaries originated in Württemberg.[6] This is why the mission was called the Basel German Evangelical Mission, being often described as a German mission society despite having its seat in Basel.

The spiritual fervour and practical approach of Württemberg pietism played a crucial role in the development of the Basel Mission's global efforts, while the impetus to preach in foreign lands was accompanied by economic connections of Basel's wealthy elite serving on the mission's committee. The mission house initially gave young male missionaries basic training so that they could join other mission societies with global links, such as the British or the Dutch. The East India Company, governing the Indian subcontinent at the time, allowed foreign mission societies to proselytise only in 1813 with a license, removing this condition in 1833. For this reason, Germanophone missionaries trained in Basel joined the British Church Mission Society (CMS) or the London Missionary Society (LMS) and travelled to India with one of those institutions.[7] Later, it became especially influential in regions like the Gold Coast (now Ghana), southern India, and parts of China, where its work left a lasting impact on local cultures and religious practices.

The mission's primary focus was to spread Protestant Christianity by preaching the Gospel to the so-called 'heathens'. After an unsuccessful mission in the Caucasus, the first overseas mission station was established in the Gold Coast in 1828. This was followed

by the establishment of Basel Mission stations in southern India on the west coast in 1834, immediately after the East India Company removed the requirement of a license for missionary societies to preach on the subcontinent upon the renewal of its charter. In accordance with the CMS, the Basel Mission chose Mangalore as the first mission station, where three missionaries were sent after an initial preparation in London. The establishment of other mission stations such as Dharwar in 1838, Mulki in 1842, or Honavar in 1845 followed. The Basel Mission emphasised practical Christian service, and its missionaries often included artisans and tradespeople who helped build communities while preaching.

The mission went on to establish schools, medical centres, and economic enterprises in its stations. In 1836 a Canarese boys' school was established, a school for Brahmins, as well as the "seminary", an establishment for British soldiers' children where they were to be taught in English.[8] Throughout these attempts, the mission received varied levels of support from other local missionaries as well as British administrators, showing a deep entanglement between the Europeans in India from the beginning of the Basel Mission's activities in India. In the following sections, we give an overview of the existing corpus of work on the history of the Basel Mission in India, simultaneously situating the contributions of this volume within this literature. We examine the Basel Mission's entanglement with British colonialism within the larger debates about the role of Switzerland in colonialism followed by discussions on gender, caste and materiality vis-à-vis the Basel Mission.

Colonial Entanglements

The British Empire's own lack of expertise in certain fields made it possible for 'external parties' to take part in various activities in its colonies, ranging from scientific endeavours to religious conversions. These actors belonged to various nations, including Switzerland and pre-colonial Germany which did not have an empire per se at the

time but had significant presence in colonies of other empires.[9] David Arnold has asserted that while such actors had only limited political influence, the empire would have been less complete and effective without them. Moreover, by not challenging imperial supremacy, these actors shared the civilising mission of the empire and created different modes of power that nevertheless impacted indigenous societies.[10] Such actors included missionaries or scientists in various fields, among others, not necessarily confined to the empire's metropole but drawn from various continental European regions.

The Basel Mission has attracted increased attention recently from both academics and the general public, driven by the growing discourse on Germany and Switzerland's colonial ties. Not only does this historiography challenge the national narrative of the countries having had, in the case of Switzerland, no colonial legacies by way of never formally colonising, it also opens up ways of rethinking historical spaces as not bound by national boundaries but rather ongoing exchange of ideas. In Switzerland, recent work has shown how the country, although it never formally had an empire, was nevertheless highly integrated into the larger processes of imperial expansion, termed "colonialism without colonies."[11] Purtschert, Falk and Lüthi have shown how Swiss 'colonial complicity' was a result of the nation being the 'third country that benefited' without officially colonising as a nation or having its own empire.[12] Moreover, Swiss commodity racism normalised racist colonial imagery at home, legacies of which can still be felt today.[13] Therefore, the Basel Mission presents a peculiar case study representing both Swiss-German entanglement with British imperialism as well as the ways in which a missionary society furthered colonial governance and civilising mission in the Indian subcontinent.

Switzerland, or Swiss individuals and their families benefitted from European imperialism by being involved in various occupational capacities, such as mercenaries, scientists, entrepreneurs or as missionaries. The case of Swiss mercenaries in the Dutch armies has been well examined.[14] In fact, Switzerland was a mercenary state

for France and other monarchs from the 16th century.[15] Swiss patricians also owned plantations in Brazil, traded in commodities within and beyond empires as established businesses, or were involved in knowledge creation of the tropics through scientific endeavours.[16] Schär's research on Swiss naturalists has reaffirmed the privileged position of the Basel elites in engaging in imperial networks, some of whom were donors or even part of the committee of the Basel Mission. Moreover, missionaries accompanied and relied on imperial powers' support; their mission stations have been termed "sites for the colonisation of consciousness" by Harries.[17] Furthermore, Swiss businesses accompanied the imperial powers to conquer overseas markets, if not territories.[18] Drawing on recent secondary literature, Eichenberger has shown that Switzerland became an important player in global capitalism through its imperial entanglements, among other factors.[19] Switzerland made its imperialist stance known on more than one occasion; it was one of the first to recognise Italy's domination of Ethiopia and the Francoist regime and denounced international boycotts against South Africa's apartheid regime.[20]

Historiography on German colonial history has taken a slightly different path, not least because the German 'Reich' was, if only briefly from 1884 to 1915, in fact an imperial power, holding colonies in Africa and the Pacific. Germany's violent colonial past has received more attention in the last years with some historians highlighting Germany's Nazi history to colonialism.[21] However, scholars have been pushing towards "rethinking German colonialism",[22] with similar approaches to the history of Swiss links to colonialism, ascertaining how even before Germany had its own colonies, private individuals or organisations were involved in and profited from the imperial project in various ways.[23]

Within this context, the case of the Basel Mission is atypical. According to Jon Miller, while colonialism and missionary movements arose out of the same cultural background, there was never a complete convergence between them as one focused on religion and

the other on economic and geopolitical gain.[24] At the same time, their relationship was symbiotic as missionaries could prepare the 'natives' for colonial enterprises and hegemony while colonialism opened up new areas for the missionaries to preach. But because Switzerland had no formal colonies, nor did Germany until the late nineteenth century, they had to rely on the fields opened up by other colonial powers. The Basel Mission maintained good relations with the colonial administrations of their mission fields, as the latter not only allowed them to proselytise but also provided legal and economic support. For this reason, the Basel Mission and the *Basler Handelsgesellschaft/Basel Trading Company* (BHG hereafter) actively supported and were supported by the British colonial administration in India. The British colonial administration was one of the main buyers of the goods produced by Basel Mission industries, and the BHG relied on several British firms based in the main cities of India for sale of its goods.[25]

The issue of collaboration between the colonial administration and the Basel Mission is pertinent, because the BHG and the Basel Mission's industrial mission was key to its involvement in deriving gains from colonial capitalism. Historians of South Asia and the British Empire have analysed the Basel Mission's activities in India in the broader context of the British 'moral' Empire, racial discourse, and regional economy.[26] The imposition of Protestantism and industriousness by the Basel Mission is discussed by Bernhard Schär in this volume. In his chapter, Schär examines the reliance of the Basel Mission on global economic networks for donations, facilitated by the elite in the Basel Mission Committee. Adopting a transnational perspective, he shows the Basel Mission shaped the socio-cultural landscape, both in Europe as in India.

The focus on India in fact presents a novel addition to the existing literature on the Basel Mission. Historians from Switzerland and Germany have mostly focused on the Basel Mission's activities in West Africa, and those on India have concentrated on the period of the First World War and the Interwar period.[27] For the latter, Bornet's work has provided new insights. In his contribution to this

volume, Bornet examines the history of the Kanarese Evangelical Mission (KEM hereafter) during the interwar period in regions of current Karnataka where the Basel Mission had been present. Given the weak governance of the KEM, he traces the society's position in India in the interwar period, within the context of rising nationalist sentiments. He also explores encounters between Jains and Lingayats in the field of proselytism and education vis à vis KEM.

Another example of collaboration between Germanophone missionaries and British colonialism was in their approach to education in India. Parinitha Shetty has previously discussed the pedagogy and education under the Basel Mission and argues that not only did the conflation of Christianity with civilisational progress allow the Basel Mission schools and initiatives to flourish alongside colonial rule, but also for the pupils, "the missionary school provided training in the skills and knowledge required for them to fit into the lower-rung positions offered to Indians within colonial administrative institutions".[28] In this manner, one may argue that the Basel Mission educational efforts contributed to both the aspirations of the converts and the sustenance of colonial rule and ideology.[29] Moreover, such educational and industrial practices also shaped gender roles in Indian society and entrenched caste divisions.

Gender

The notion of gender both shaped the functioning of the Basel Mission and was shaped by the Basel missionaries through their practices and rules in India. Female missionaries played an important role in the everyday lives of preaching, conversion, and education in colonies. Yet, very little is known about their engagements with the mission societies. This is despite the fact that the majority of missionaries in the nineteenth century were female.[30] There has been much research on the role of missionary brides in various mission societies in India, as well as the *'zenanas'* that preached to

and taught Indian women in seclusion, which we need not outline here. Suffice to say that Swiss-German women brought their skills and outlook when they travelled to India with the Basel Mission. Their role in education, management of 'feminine' work such as stitching or embroidery, as well as preaching was significant. At the same time, their own position and ideas reinforced divisions of labour within converted communities.

At its establishment in 1815, the Basel Mission school was only open for men who could be sent abroad as missionaries, which has thus dominated the mission's historiography. However, those missionaries, once having established themselves at the mission stations, were permitted to marry, for which case the Basel Mission committee would select a suitable wife who would be sent to India to join her husband to be. Germanophone historiographies have been unearthing the role of such women in the Basel Mission, being either the wives of missionaries, or, at later stages, themselves female missionaries who worked at the mission schools.[31] Dagmar Konrad's work *Missionsbräute* sheds light on the role of missionary brides under the Basel Mission. This crucial work highlights the level of regulation that missionaries underwent in getting married, from obtaining marriage permits to searching for a 'suitable' bride. Konrad also points out how many brides were married against their will, at times to men they had never seen. Tracing the journey of a woman from her home to the Basel Mission house in Basel, and then the journey to the mission station in the colonies, Konrad's work sheds light on the intimacies of conjugal life of missionaries through the voice of mission-brides. Hence, a major way to include the role of gender in the history of the Basel Mission has been to use the analytic of 'families' including mission-children.[32]

More recent historiographies have also turned their eye to gender dynamics at the mission stations, studying the reinforcement of the missionaries' ideas of gender roles at the Basel Mission's boys' and girls' schools in India, but also the Basel Mission's appropriation of the colonial discourse on the protection of Indian women.[33] Thus, for example, the Basel Mission aligned itself with the British colonial

discourse that positioned colonialism as the liberator of women oppressed by "Hindu Patriarchy", publicly assigning the abolishment of *sati* to Christian missions.[34] In this regard, Parinitha Shetty's paper is an important contribution to how matrilineal structures were reinterpreted by the Basel Mission, which printed a central text on this topic. Analysing this text and tracing the history of matrilineal societal practices in the Kanara region, Shetty argues that the text could be interpreted as a 'site' where power dynamics came into play to redefine caste, kinship, gender and property from the point of view of the 'modernity' as per the Basel Mission.

There has also been a focus on the role of female missionaries and their role in running orphanages and hospitals for the Basel Mission in South India.[35] In fact, the way that morality was imposed on women was evident in the way that female boarding schools were managed. Girls in these boarding schools were forbidden from interacting with 'morally questionable' women.[36] Female missionaries reinforced ideas of class, sexuality, conjugality, and their own position in society vis-a-vis men. In general, orphanages and boarding schools became sites of strict Protestant lifestyle and coercion among children that the missionaries expected adult converts to follow in mission stations. In this sense, the history of gender and children is often analysed together.

Besides education, Swiss-German female missionaries made significant contributions to the economy and finances under the Basel Mission. A string of research has been directing attention to the women running the "Halbbatzenkollekte" (collection of coin equivalent to 5 centimes/Rappen) in Germany and Switzerland and thus supporting the Basel Mission from Europe.[37] In fact, women played an integral role in fundraising activities in Switzerland and Europe. They were part of committees that would organise fairs and festivals, or sell home-made products which would raise money for the Basel Mission. Women were also active as 'day labourers' that would spread information, collect money, and aid in gathering members for auxiliary societies.[38] Thus, far from being passive

donors, women even took the lead in supporting the Basel Mission financially.

Women's role and position appears sporadically in studies that deal with the history of the BHG.[39] So far, there has been even more limited effort in exploring the role of gender within the industrial mission. Women within the mission performed domestic tasks or tasks considered more feminine such as weaving, threshing or lace-making, increasing the gender divide in household tasks and duties as well as in the labour market. Jennifer Jenkins has attempted to sketch out the ways in which converted women were assigned gendered tasks of lace-making, teaching or weaving.[40] An in-depth analysis of how the Basel Mission pursued its economic goals in deeply gendered ways in South India is, however, still missing. As is the case with the exploration and conceptualisation of child labour in mission industries and companies, which has been examined for West Africa but not so far for South India. In fact, the Basel Mission inculcated gendered division of labour and tasks in converted children from a young age as the latter represented the future of the mission.[41]

In general, there has been a conspicuous absence of indigenous women in research on the history of female missionaries in India. Sandra Langhop's contribution in the book nevertheless attempts to break new ground in this regard. Langhop's chapter explores the role of Indian Bible Women in proselytism under the Basel Mission, as well as the impact of European female missionaries in encouraging or restricting them in the field, providing insights into the training practice of Bible Women. Her contribution brings to light how inequalities would manifest within gender, thereby pointing to the importance of intersectionality in mission studies. While race figures quite evidently within these intersectionalities, more attention is required to the inequalities of caste within dynamics of racial differences.

Caste

Within Protestant missionary circles, debates over how to approach the caste system in India emerged as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century.[42] Protestant mission societies in India generally viewed caste as a major obstacle to Christian conversion and a hindrance to the social progress of the Protestant community.[43] However, the missionary view on caste was often limited to the religious sphere, primarily associating it with Hindu doctrinal ideology rather than understanding it as a socio-economic problem.[44] Therefore, instead of addressing the economic inequalities and unequal labour relations rooted in caste structures, the missionaries framed caste primarily as a religious issue.[45] In this process, Christianity did not simply abolish caste distinctions among converts but rather transformed and sometimes reinforced them in new ways.

Caste posed significant challenges to the proselytisation work of the Basel missionaries, which conflicted with their Pietistic belief in the spiritual equality of all individuals.[46] While they often promoted ideals of equality and sought to challenge the caste system, the reality of their impact was more complicated. As the Basel Mission expanded beyond Mangalore into other regions of Karnataka and Kerala, it brought various socio-religious groups, including, Billavas, Brahmins, Tiyyas, Mogaveeras, Kodavas, and Lingayats among others, into direct contact with its activities.[47] Unlike Catholics and some British and American Protestant missions who partly tolerated caste, the Basel Mission took a firm stance against caste segregation.[48] They advocated for the elimination of caste distinctions among converts and worked actively to integrate individuals from different castes into a unified Christian community. To reinforce this, Basel missionaries organised communal meals, arranged inter-caste marriages among converts, and ensured that schoolchildren from various castes sat together.[49] In missionary logic, caste was to be abolished for its corrupting influence on Christianity by representing a Hindu past. As a result, converts' names were Europeanised after Baptism. For example, a common Billava surname 'Amin' was often Europeanised as Amann or Amanna

with first names like Samuel or Benedict. While the intention was to diminish caste-based differences, such actions also erased and reinvented identities.

Despite disadvantaged groups being most numerous among the converts, the Basel Mission's religious reforms were shaped by the intricate interplay of caste, class, and sectarianism within local society. They showed a preference for converting Brahmins, valuing their literary abilities and viewing them as 'ideal' converts.[50] In contrast, they often regarded 'lower' castes like the Billavas, Tiyyas and others as less capable of receiving Christian teachings due to their non-literate background. This dual attitude was marked by the mix of a respectful yet condescending tone towards Brahmins, and often disdainful remarks towards lower castes.[51]

The missionaries aimed to establish inclusive institutions, such as schools, accessible to all castes. However, implementing this vision was challenging due to deep-seated caste-based segregation. The majority of Basel Mission converts came from the Billava and Tiyya communities, who saw education as a means of social mobility.[52] For them and other marginalised communities, material progress was also intertwined with social reform and an improvement in their caste status.[53] Following the 1833 Charter Act, which allowed Indians to be hired in lower echelons of the colonial bureaucracy, the Mission opened many schools in English and Kannada.[54] These schools also admitted children from 'low' caste communities, offering them opportunities to compete for government jobs. This led to resistance from Brahmins, who often opposed the admission of 'lower' caste children to schools. Ensuring free interaction among children from various castes in these institutions proved difficult, as 'higher' caste students often refused to attend schools alongside 'lower' caste peers. The hiring of a Billava convert as a teacher in a Mangalore school, for example, incited strong opposition from local Brahmins.[55] Although some 'lower' caste individuals benefitted from missionary efforts, the broader social structure remained largely unchanged.

Caste was also closely linked to occupational identities, which were gradually altered through the employment of converts in Basel Mission institutions, schools, industries and factories. Some of these jobs, previously inaccessible to 'lower' castes, included roles in teaching, nursing, and clerical work. Raghaviah's contribution suggests that these shifts in occupational identities were integral to the missionary endeavour of 'social engineering' aimed at eradicating caste among converts. Conversion often provided access to new forms of education, employment, and community support that were otherwise inaccessible within the social structures of Hindu caste society.

To the so-called 'lower' castes, Christianity offered creative avenues for self-transformation, such as adopting dignified lifestyles, giving up alcohol, and embracing literacy and Bible reading, which fostered civic virtues and important life skills.[56] The missionaries promoted new dressing habits, hygiene, cleanliness, and orderliness of homes as Christian values to distinguish converts from their 'lower' caste origins. These changes were often captured in Basel Mission photographs, which serve as valuable historical records preserved in the Mission 21 Archive. As discussed by Chinjumol in this volume, these photographs not only depicted caste markers but also highlighted the transformations brought about by the Mission's influence on the everyday lives of converts. Photographs are among various forms of materialities and objects brought back to Europe by the Basel Mission which served to influence mentalities among Europeans in the nineteenth century and continue to evidence Switzerland's colonial connections today.

Materiality

The opening of the new mission house in 1860 was also the inauguration of the Basel Mission's museum. The objects exhibited came from a donation by Swabian theologian Christian Gottlob Barth as well as from an already existing collection from the committee

room, showing how various missionaries had been sending ethnographic objects back to Basel from their mission stations.[57] The catalogue for the mission's collection was published two years later and lists objects from the Gold Coast Colony, Cameroon, India, China and beyond.

The Basel Mission hosted regular exhibitions, such as the 1908 exhibition to present its rich collection.[58] Those collections served different purposes, among others, the justification of its mission enterprise by highlighting the presumed 'backwardness' and 'heathenness' of other extra-European societies. Thus, many religious, but also daily objects were transferred from various mission stations to Basel and exhibited there for educational purposes, furthering European ideas of cultural superiority.[59]

In 1981, large parts of those collections were transferred to the *Museum der Kulturen Basel*, where they remain until this day. The museum commissioned scholarly studies by Dagmar Konrad and Isabella Bozsa which were published in 2019 and 2020 to further provenance research on its collections.[60] Their close scrutiny of the objects' history and the museum's archives shows how the collection houses different types of objects; some stemming from individually collecting missionaries, whilst some missionaries followed the mission's call to acquire objects by buying objects locally, oftentimes sending back pieces which were specifically created for European collectors.[61] In her contribution to this volume, Isabella Bozsa further develops her work as she studies the colonial implications of the Indian objects in the Basel Mission Collections focusing on the motivations for collectors, interactions with the local population and their own agency.[62]

The material collections assembled by the Basel Mission are not limited to only that museum in Basel. On the contrary, ethnographic objects collected by the Basel Mission can be found across the world, stemming from the diverse set of collectors and collecting enterprises. As the Basel Mission asked the missionaries to return ethnographic objects to Basel to locally support and justify their mission cause, different missionaries followed this cause, such as

Hermann Gundert but some also adapted the task to their own interest.[63] Thus, the tailor Karl Merkel collected fabrics in India, Paul Hunziker working at the printing press created 'naturelike' prints of plants and some missionaries such as Gustav Peter sold their collections individually and privately.[64] To collectors and traders, such missionaries were interesting intermediary actors as they knew the area of their mission stations much better than a collector who would only visit briefly. They also had much more direct access to local communities and knowledge. Being far away from the mission committee in Basel, missionaries could also profit from the delays in communication and use it for their own purpose and privacy in such endeavours.[65] However, the exact relations of collecting between mission committee and missionaries remain to be uncovered.

Research on the Basel Mission has been dominated by German and Swiss scholars who frequently study the Basel Mission within their respective national frameworks and focus on the activities of German and Swiss missionaries. More recently, attention has been slowly turning towards local agency and knowledge and thus also the colonial and local entanglements of the Basel Mission. Through an increasing exchange with scholars from India, more fruitful collaborations are bringing forward a deeper understanding of not only the participation of local converts or workers in the collection of objects, but also their role in the making of knowledge and the Basel Mission industries.

The Basel Mission lastingly impacted the local economies and material cultures through their introduction of printing presses, tile factories and weaving workshops in the domain of its mission industries.[66] Those workshops did not only follow the purpose of 'educating' the converts towards an industrious lifestyle and sustaining them after conversion, but also created additional revenue which would serve the mission and its finances and were thus considered an integral part of Basel's religious mission enterprise.

Therefore, from the 1840s onwards, the printing press was in action creating bibles, schoolbooks and maps and from 1865

onwards the renowned Basel Mission Tiles were being produced in Mangalore.[67] Those industrially produced tiles have made a lasting impact on the region's architecture and to this day they are more commercially known as "Mangalore tiles" or "Basel Mission tiles". With the establishment of the Basel Mission trading company (BHG) in 1859 and the further growth and expansion of the Basel Mission industries, the Basel Mission soon came to be one of the most important employers in the region. Scholars have been turning away from the Eurocentric narrative of the Basel Mission bringing industrialisation and 'advanced' knowledge to the region of Malabar, and increasing attention is being paid to the local knowledge which the missionaries in charge used to set up their factories. Thus, the skills and knowledge of local workers in India or the role of Indian master potters in the making of the first Basel Mission tile-making oven are being given more attention, paving the way for a more balanced history of the Basel Mission.[68] In her contribution, Priya Joseph takes an architectural approach towards the history of the Basel Mission, studying the interaction of European and Indian expertise in the making of tiles and the process of standardisation which the Basel Mission started in the area with the introduction of machine-made manufacturing. Likewise, approaches such as Linda Ratschiller's method of employing commodity culture to counter the hegemonic dominance of missionaries in written sources and study the agency of local actors can be employed for the Indian context. As Ratschiller argues for the case of West Africa, such new approaches will enable the study of the Basel Mission's entanglements and also contribute to a comparative understanding of colonialism.[69]

Scope of the Book

After various exchanges between the editors and contributors at different points in time, we concluded that, despite the variety of

work being produced on the topic of the Basel Mission in India, there is no single volume that collates key sub-fields and arguments. Thus, the idea of the present book was shaped. The book addresses major scholarly gaps in the understanding of the Basel Mission's activities in India, like topics of caste, gender, indigenous laws and the position of the Basel Mission in the interwar period. Notably, as mentioned earlier, the Mission's presence in India has also received less attention compared to its work in Africa, despite the Basel Mission's base in India being the largest both numerically and financially.[70]

An important objective of the conference, as of the book, was to go beyond the research produced in Europe and therefore to include researchers from India. The main archive of the Mission is based in Basel, with sources in German, many of which in German *Kurrentschrift.* It is thus no surprise that much of the research on the Basel Mission in India has been reliant on and produced by German-speaking scholars in Germany and Switzerland. Rarely have the sources in South Indian indigenous languages figured into the otherwise well-researched existing works. In India, scholars have relied on the English-language annual reports, complemented by other material produced by the British colonial administration. Their access to German records has been restricted not only by language but also by practical issues of travel, visa regimes and expenses. However, scholars based in India in the region of Malabar and South-Kanara have access both to surviving vernacular material as well as the rich field of the remnants of the Basel Mission which still stand strong today, such as the tile factories, orphanages, mission schools, and so on. Therefore, bringing together scholars from the two regions brought not only different perspectives from sources and approaches, but also ideas and methodologies.

Hence, the motivation of this book is twofold: firstly, it takes an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on various academic areas such as history, anthropology, religious studies and sociology to analyse the Basel Mission's activities. It not only examines the missionary objectives and theological aspects but also delves into the social,

economic, and political impacts of the mission's work, highlighting its multifaceted role in shaping societies. Secondly, by emphasising the transnational activities and exchanges facilitated by the Basel Mission between Europe and India, the book provides a nuanced understanding of global interactions during the colonial period. It explores how products, ideas, and beliefs were exchanged and how these interactions influenced social and cultural landscapes in Switzerland, Germany, India, and beyond. Certain topics have already been well studied, such as the contribution of the Basel missionaries in linguistics, producing dictionaries for Kannada, Malayalam and Tulu. Also, the industries of tile and weaving and their functioning have also received attention. Nevertheless, much needs to be explored on social themes of caste, conjugality, racial difference, as well as cultural, ideological and economic exchanges. By focusing on these overlooked aspects, the book not only advances the understanding of the Basel Mission's history in the world, but also contributes to broader discussions on British colonialism, German Protestantism, historical debates in Switzerland and Germany on their countries' own respective links to colonialism as well as global interactions, offering new insights and challenging existing narratives.

Despite its ambitious aims, the book could cover only limited ground, selecting certain themes over others. The conference and this volume made evident that there are further avenues of research to be explored. For instance, the position of the Basel Mission in relation both to the British colonial state and to other mission societies remains unexplored territory.[71] Additionally, child labour and the history of children under the Basel Mission is much less examined for India than its African counterpart. Divya Kannan's work attempts to fill this gap.[72] Another topic is a systematic history of the Basel Mission Trading Company's financial and social history. The chapters in this volume could only touch upon the economic activities of the Basel Mission, an aspect peculiar to this mission society that engaged openly in industries and trade. Both these themes open up the question of financing and maintenance of the

mission's activities. A research group based at the University of Lausanne, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (no. 194512), has a subproject on the Basel Mission studied by Amal Shahid. She traces the Basel Mission's financial history through its donations and fundraising efforts by auxiliary societies, as well as welfarism measures in India as part of financial management by Germanophone missionaries. The entanglements of the Basel Mission in both colonial and trade-networks are also the subject of Ella Müller's doctoral project on the collection and exchange of naturalist specimens by Basel Missionaries. Similarly, Mukesh Kumar's work examines the historical and ethnographic impact of the Basel Mission. Additionally, his research looks at the significance of gardens and gardening, as spaces that influenced the material and aesthetic aspects of both missionary and convert lives.

As more records are uncovered in the archives, further possibilities of topics will open up, especially interdisciplinary in nature. Nevertheless, this volume is a humble attempt to outline current and pressing work related to the Basel Mission. The book is organised in five sections which reflect the themes discussed in this introduction. The first section explores existing historiographies; while this introduction examines historiographies specific to the Basel Mission, the next chapter by Felicity Jensz outlines the major trends in missionary historiography in general. This helps situate the position of the Basel Mission in the broader histories of Christian missionaries in the colonial context.

The second section then places the Basel Mission in a relational context, with Bernhard Schär's chapter contextualising the Basel Mission in Europe as a way to explain its activities in India. Similarly, Philippe Bornet's contribution places the Basel Mission's successor organisation, the KEM, in relation to other indigenous religions. In the third section on caste, Jaiprakash Raghaviah gives an overview of social engineering practices by the Basel Mission which resulted in shifting meanings of caste, and Chinju KR examines changes in caste practices through photographic evidence. The fourth section then turns the focus to gender, with Parinitha Shetty's chapter highlighting indigenous matrilineal practices in the South Kanara region through

a Kannada text, and how it was reinterpreted and used by the Basel Mission. Sandra Langhop's contribution in this section then shifts the focus to indigenous Bible Women and racial hierarchies between them and European missionaries. The final section of this volume comprises Isabella Bozsa's chapter examining the objects in Basel today. Priya Joseph then turns attention to the tiles produced on the south-west coast of India. These two chapters of the last section together serve to explore the material aspect of the Basel Mission concluding the volume with contributions which illuminate our understanding of the Basel Mission's legacies today. In addition to these two chapters, an afterword by Linda Maria Ratschiller Nasim summarises the key findings of the book, weaving together various themes from across the chapters.

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[1] The "Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft" was founded in Basel in 1780.
[2] Jenkins, "Villagers as Missionaries," pp. 425–426.
[3] Ibid., pp. 425–432.
[4] Strom, "Pietist Experiences and Narratives of Conversion".
[5] See: Jenkins, "Villagers as Missionaries".
[6] Ibid., pp. 425–432.
[7] Jenkins, "Die Basler Mission im Kolonialen Spannungsfeld Indien," p. 49.

[8] Schlatter, *Geschichte der Basler Mission 1815–1915. vol. 2,* pp. 8, 19–20.

[9] This claim is true beyond the case of Switzerland, see Riall, "Hidden Spaces of Empire".

[10] Arnold, "Globalization and Contingent Colonialism".

[11] Purtschert and Fischer-Tiné, *Colonial Switzerland*; Schär, "Bauern und Hirten Reconsidered"; Schär, "Global und Intersektional"; Schär, *Tropenliebe*; Schär, "Philanthropie Postkolonial; Schär, "Rösti und Revolutionen".

[12] Purtschert, Falk and Lüthi, "Switzerland and 'Colonialism without Colonies'".

[13] Ibid. See also: Harries, "Missionary Endeavor".

[14] See: Krauer, "Colonial Mercenaries"; Krauer and Schär, "Welfare for War Veterans".

[15] Schär, "Switzerland, Borneo and the Dutch Indies".

[16] Dejung, *Commodity Trading*; Haller, *Transithandel*. Schär, *Tropenliebe*; Ratschiller, "Material Matters".

[17] Harries, *Butterflies & Barbarians.*

[18] Behrendt, *Die Schweiz und der Imperialismus;* Stucki, *Das heimliche Imperium;* Lucas, *Un imperialisme electrique.* Quoted in: Eichenberger, "Swiss Capitalism".

[19] See also: Ruffieux, "Die Schweiz des Freisinns (1848–1914)". He suggests that in the nineteenth century, Switzerland's development of financial trading instruments in the context of imperialism shows its complicity in international capitalism borne out of colonialism.

[20] Eichenberger, "Swiss Capitalism," p. 217.

[21] For a selection of more recent works on German colonialism, see Conrad, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte*; Conrad and Osterhammel, eds., *Das Kaiserreich transnational*; Hiery, ed. *Die Deutsche Südsee 1884–1914*; Naranch and Eley, eds., *German Colonialism in a Global Age*; Smith, *The German Colonial Empire*; Speitkamp, *Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte*; Zimmerer and Mellor-Stapelberg, *German Rule, African Subjects*.

[22] Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies.*

[23] Conrad, "Rethinking German Colonialism in a Global Age". For a selection of works on South Asia, see: Brescius, German Science; Tzoref-Ashkenazi, *German Soldiers in Colonial India*; Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement*.

[24] Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control,* pp. 18–19.

[25] Shahid, "The Basel Mission Weaving Establishment in Malabar".

[26] Philip, *Civilising Natures;* Raghaviah, *Faith and Industrial Reformation;* Shetty, "Medical Mission and the Interpretation of Pain"; Stenzl, *The Basel Mission Industries*; Prabhakar, "The Basel Mission in South Kanara 1834 to 1947"; Wittwer, "The Basel Mission Factories in Malabar and South Kanara".

[27] Bornet has focused on the successor of the BM after the mission society was expelled from the British Empire. See: Bornet, "A 'Purely Swiss' Missionary

Society in Colonial Karnataka". Feigk has written about the Basel Mission's position around WWI with a cross-border cooperation perspective. He argues that missionaries were mediators of overseas knowledge in Europe, and international conferences, including those of mission societies, were cooperation across national boundaries. He calls the Basel Mission 'binational' however the claim he makes is before national boundaries were created formally in Europe. See: Feigk, "Von Edinburgh nach oegstgeest".

[28] Shetty, "Missionary Pedagogy and Christianisation of the Heathens," p. 515.

[29] A Master's thesis examines Swiss colonial connections through the topic of education by the Basel Mission in India: De Martin, "Von der 'Kolonialfreiheit' zur 'Allianz mit der Regierung'".

[30] Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines,* p. 5.

[31] Becker, "Frauen in der Mission und Mädchenschulen"; Konrad, *Missionsbräute*; Miethke, *Erika Wuttke;* Prodolliet, *Wider die Schamlosigkeit*, p. 13. See also Haas, *Erlitten und Erstritten*; Haas and Pang, *Missionsgeschichte*; Haas, Gewecke and Oduyoye, *Frauen tragen mehr als die Hälfte*.

[32] Maß, "Constructing Global Missionary Families"; Konrad, "Schweizer Missionskinder des 19. Jahrhunderts".

[33] Ibid.

[34] Shetty, "Missionary Pedagogy and Christianisation of the Heathens," p. 530.

[35] Konrad, "Schweizer Missionskinder des 19. Jahrhunderts"; Kannan, "Missionary Encounters"; Prodolliet, *Wider die Schamlosigkeit*; Shetty, "Missionary Pedagogy and Christianisation of the Heathens".

[36] Kannan, *Contested Childhoods.*

[37] Schürer-Ries, "Die Sammlerinnen und Sammler für die Basler Mission".

[38] Schlatter, *Geschichte Der Basler Mission 1815–1915. Vol. 1*.

[39] Fischer, *Die Basler Missionsindustrie; Danker, Profit for the Lord*; Wittwer, "The Basel Mission Factories in Malabar and South Kanara"; Stenzl, *The Basel Mission Industries in India*.

[40] Jenkins, "Lace-making in the Basel Mission in India, 1839–1914".

[41] Koonar, "Christianity, Commerce and Civilization".

[42] Wetjen, "The Middle Things".

[43] Bugge, "Christianity and Caste in XIXth Century South India".

[44] Forrester, *Caste and Christianity.*

[45] Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem.*

[46] Strom, "Introduction: Pietism in Two Worlds in Pietist Experiences and Narratives of Conversion".

[47] Basu, "Intertwining Christian Mission". Billava and Tiyya were classified as toddy-tapping castes, Mogaveer as fishermen and lingayats as a sectarian assortment of largely peasant groups. Kodagas were identified in the colonial discourse as an indigenous 'tribe'.

[48] oddie, "Protestant Missions, Caste and Social Change in India, 1850–1914".
[49] This issue is captured in various annual reports of the Basel Mission.
[50] Kumar, "From Heart to Mind".
[51] Missionary reports and letters are full of such descriptions.
[52] oddie, "Christianity and Social Mobility in South India 1840–1920".
[53] Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India.*
[54] See: Shetty, "Missionary Pedagogy and Christianisation of the Heathens".
[55] Koudur, "Languages, Castes and Hierarchy".
[56] Mosse, "Caste and Christianity".
[57] Pistorius, *Die Schildkröte im Schwarzwald*, p. 6.
[58] Konrad, *Entfernte Dinge*, p. 48.
[59] Ibid., p. 11.
[60] Bozsa, *Geschenkt, gekauft, erbeutet*; Konrad, *Entfernte Dinge*.
[61] Konrad, *Entfernte Dinge*, p. 53.
[62] Sammlung Basler Mission (English: Basel Mission Collections).
[63] Bozsa, *Geschenkt, gekauft, erbeutet*, p. 12.
[64] For Karl Merkel, see: Konrad, *Entfernte Dinge*, p. 22; for Hunziker, see: Frey and Badenberg, "Die Pflanzenwelt Südindiens"; Sebastian, "Localised Cosmopolitanism and Globalised Faith"; and for Peter, see: Bozsa, *Geschenkt, gekauft, erbeutet*, p. 11
[65] Konrad, *Entfernte Dinge*, p. 52.
[66] Raghaviah, *Faith and Industrial Reformation*.
[67] Ibid., pp. 30–33; Tripati Sundaresh, Gudigar, Bandodker, "Exploration of Basel Mission Company Shipwreck Remains at St George's Reef off Goa, West Coast of India".
[68] Hueglin, Joseph and Tripati, "From Basel Mission to Mangalore Tiles," pp. 13–14.
[69] Ratschiller, "Material Matters".
[70] Shahid, "The Basel Mission Weaving Establishment in Malabar".
[71] For an exception, see: Jenkins, "The Church Missionary Society and the Basel Mission"; Jenkins, "Die Basler Mission im Kolonialen Spannungsfeld Indien".
[72] Kannnan, *Contested Childhoods.*

CHAPTER 2

Interconnected and Multifaceted Approaches to Protestant Mission Histories

Felicity Jensz

Abstract
Once a specialist topic of religious historians or members of particular missionary societies, interest in Christian missions in the non-European world has spread in the last decades well beyond these groups to provide insights into a diverse array of academic areas including histories of colonialism and postcolonial societies, linguistics, anthropology, ethnology, botany, and metrology. The study of Christian missions goes well beyond questions of conversion to encompass topics such as cross-cultural contacts, entanglements and disentanglements, knowledge transfer, economic systems, challenges to authority, and the establishment of new forms of colonial and missionary modernities. This chapter will provide an overview of the historiography in mission studies and some of the theoretical and methodological influences on these writings. In doing so, it will examine the ways in which Christian missions have been conceptualised and explore some uses for texts and material objects stemming from Christian missions beyond mission studies. The chapter will highlight the interconnected and multifaceted roles Christian missions played in social, economic, scientific, educational, religious, and commercial exchange between and within the nodes of empires and argue the importance of mission centrality to the spread of empires. It also provides a number of research areas to which the histories of missions could be fruitfully applied in the future.

Keywords: historiography; transimperial networks; economics of mission; local peoples; gender; children; environment; entanglements; knowledge; media.

From the early 1700s, Protestant missionary societies were increasingly established with the aim of bringing the Christian message to peoples that had previously not been in contact with Christianity.[1] This chapter will provide an overview of the historiography in Protestant mission studies and some of the theoretical and methodological influences on these writings. Focusing on German and English scholarship, it will sketch the ways in which Christian missions have been conceptualised over time and will examine some uses for texts and material objects stemming from Christian missions beyond mission studies. The chapter does not make claims of comprehensibility, rather it will provide some insights into a few selected topics including empire, economics of mission, local peoples, gender, children and global networks.[2] The chapter will illuminate the complex and interwoven impacts of Christian missionary activities on the social, economic, scientific, educational, religious, and commercial interactions both within and between imperial centres and their peripheries.

By establishing missions in competition or in parallel to Catholic missions in non-European spaces, Protestant missionary societies were in need of material, personnel, financial and religious support. One means of garnering support was through the publication and dissemination of material related to Christian missions that remain a primary source for the writing of mission histories. Besides published material, missionary archives are full of unpublished writings that document the daily lives of mission stations, relationships with governments, mission boards, other denominations and confessions as well as insights into the lives and activities of people associated with the mission. Added to such written documents are material objects such as ethnographic objects as well as images, drawings, photographs and films that document the activities on and around mission stations. In the last decades, the broad range of material, textual and visual objects connected to the mission has been increasingly used beyond religious historians or members of

particular missionary societies' interest in Christian missions in the non-European world, to provide insights into a diverse array of academic areas including histories of colonialism and postcolonial societies, linguistics, anthropology, ethnology, botany, and metrology. The study of Christian missions has spread well beyond questions of conversion to encompass topics such as cross-cultural contacts, entanglements and disentanglements, knowledge transfer, economic systems, challenges to authority, and the establishment of new forms of colonial and missionary modernities.

To highlight the changing engagement with missionary sources and history, the chapter will begin with the case of David Cranz's 1765 *Historie von Grönland*, one of the first monographs to be published that focused on Protestant missionary work to exemplify some of the changes in the uses and perceptions of missionary since the eighteenth century. From this initial point of departure, the chapter is structured in four sections. The first section provides a short historical overview of the growth of the Protestant missionary movement in order to contextualise the developments. In a second section, the chapter explores some of the traditional sources and ways that mission histories have been written. The third section examines some of the ways in which scholars have used missionary sources beyond religious and mission studies to shed light on histories of colonialism and postcolonial societies, as well as contributing to studies of empire, gender, childhoods, as well as economic, scientific and religious entanglements, to name a few areas. The concluding fourth section discusses broader developments in the reception as well as methodological and theoretical engagement with Protestant mission histories and points to new areas of research.

David Cranz's Book, "Historie von Grönland"

In 1765, the Historie von Grönland (The History of Greenland) appeared in Germany.[3] It was the result of over a year of data

collection by David Cranz (1723–1777) in Greenland amongst the missionaries of the Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine, known in English as the Moravian Church.[4] The Moravian mission in Greenland had been established in the early 1730s some three decades before Cranz's arrival. The reason why it took so long to write a book on the Greenland mission was connected to Moravian sensibilities as to what information they wished to have disseminated about them. In the 1740s, a scandal centring on Moravian devotional printed material had resulted in the Church Elders deciding that publication of any works – including material describing the work on mission stations – needed to be censored for fear of any more public ridicule.[5] With the death of the leader of the Moravian Church, Count Nikolas von Zinzendorf (1700–1760), in 1760 some of the decisions relating to publications were reconsidered. David Cranz had already been commissioned to travel to Greenland to collect material about the mission before the count's death. In publishing the book, the Moravians were aware of the importance of positive self-representation in printed form. The book, which was originally printed in German, was quickly translated in English, Dutch in 1767, and subsequently into Swedish (1769), and Hungarian (1810), with abridged versions also published in German and English, demonstrating the wide audiences that read the book.[6]

In the introduction to the book, Cranz listed three potential audiences.[7] The most important audience was anticipated to be members of the Moravian Church and their descendants, who would be interested in detailed accounts of the mission in Greenland, and perhaps were personally connected to the missionaries there. A second audience, according to him, were the dispersed members of the Church who lived outside of Moravian settlements in Germany, Britain and North America, and thus had less access to Moravian information networks.[8] The third, and smallest, audience he envisaged were interested Christians not connected to the Moravian Church, yet interested in the spread of evangelical Christianity.[9] In Cranz's time, the book was read by audiences beyond the three that he envisaged, including scientific and political audiences that used

his texts to justify scientific theories, or to help facilitate further imperial expansions into Arctic territories. Amongst the secular reviewers of the book, many people found Cranz's descriptions of exotic places and people, like other travel literature of the day, fascinating as they provided unique insights into cultures, landscapes and animals not known by many Europeans, or detailed in many other publications of the day.

Together with colleagues from theology, history, ethnology, meteorology, and folklore studies, I have worked to shed light on the various ways in which Cranz's book was, can and may still be read containing as it does the ethnography, theology, history, ichthyology, geography, oceanography, meteorology, botany, geology, and zoology of Greenland among other topics.[10] The way in which Cranz was written, read and reinterpreted makes the broader point – that mission societies and their writings have not been contained within religious, spatial, or thematic categories, rather have been read beyond these categories and have thus contributed to broader social, economic, political, and religious discussions beyond the context in which they were created.

Historical Overview

Cranz's book was part of a longer legacy of writing about Christian missions. European Christian missions to the non-European world have a long history, with European Catholics sending missionaries to Africa from the mid-fifteenth century. By the time of the Reformation in the early sixteenth century through Martin Luther and his contemporaries, there were Catholic missions to Indigenous people in many parts of the non-European world including the Indian subcontinent, Africa, South and North America and the Caribbean. The establishment of the Protestant Missionary movement from the late seventeenth century was, as with the Catholic mission, closely connected to imperial projects. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), established in 1698, for example, was

established by Thomas Bray (ca. 1656–1730) to combat societal immorality, with a particular focus on Christians working in the British colonies of North America.[11] In 1709, the SPCK sent a printing press to Tranquebar (Tharangambadi, Tamil Nadu, India), at the time a Danish colony, to support the efforts of the Halle-Danish mission.[12] This Danish-Halle (later Danish-Halle-British) mission itself had been established in 1706 under the influences of the Pietist Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705) and August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) at the University of Halle. They trained missionaries Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1683–1719) and Heinrich Plütschau (1678–1747), who went to establish the mission at Tranquebar, India, amongst the Tamil people. Material stemming from this mission was translated into English and published in Britain, providing some detailed material about the working of Protestant Christian missions amongst non-Christians.[13] Whilst on furlough, the missionaries spent time in Halle, where the young Count von Zinzendorf, who would later lead the Moravians, was inspired by their discussion and descriptions of missionary work. These examples from the early Protestant missionary work demonstrate the entangled relationships between people of various states and cultural backgrounds that worked within various imperial spaces in order to convert non-European people to Christianity.

The writings of people connected to the missionary movement, such as William Carey (1761–1834) who was a missionary in British India, influenced and inspired other people to engage in missionary activity. Carey's contribution to the missionary movement is evident in his well-known publication *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792) which became the "charter" for Protestant missions and was the source of inspiration for the establishment of the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792.[14] Soon thereafter came a wave of new missionary societies, all inspired to do better, differently, or within other social settings than the existing missionary societies, including: The London Missionary Society (LMS, 1795), the Scottish Missionary Society (1796), the Netherlands Missionary Society (1797), and the

Church Mission Society (CMS, 1799). The majority of these new missionary societies were autonomous societies, not connected to a single denomination, supported through voluntary contributions, with the exception being the CMS, which was organised by Anglican evangelicals. On continental Europe, other missionary societies were established that were usually organised around geographical locations such as the Basel (1815), Berlin (1824) or Leipzig (1836) missionary societies. over the course of the nineteenth century, the number of missionary societies continued to grow mostly, according to the histories of these missions, inspired and led by European men.

The dates, places and people mentioned in this section mirror that of early mission histories; that is, it is a very Euro-centric approach, providing the names and places within a European timeframe that are important to Europeans. Given that mission fields were intense sites of cultural contact between people of different cultures, genders, professions, and social backgrounds, it is noteworthy to indicate that the majority of histories written of these societies place a focus on institutional history and the role of European men. The dates and places presented in this section do not foreground the local communities, the local men, women, children or the members of other religious groups that were drawn into the spheres of influence established by Protestant Christian missions, reflecting the *Zeitgeist* that privileged master narratives of men and nations. This list of dates and places also overshadows the influence that European women had on the growth of the Protestant missionary movement, or the collaborations within and between imperial networks. That is, the entangled nature of mission history was not emphasised in nineteenth century accounts of mission histories. In broadening the study of missions beyond that of the European men who wrote these initial histories, we uncover rich insights into people, processes, actions and agendas that informed, shaped and complicated the social, economic and religious entanglements over time and space. Before this point on entangled histories is examined in more detail in the third section, it is important to note the textual sources used to write mission history

and how they have traditionally been used to understand how the historiography of missions has changed over the centuries.

Traditional Sources and Histories

Mission histories, exemplified by Cranz, were often written with specific audiences in mind – mostly for the missionary society itself. These official histories of missionary societies were often produced to celebrate centenaries or other jubilees, as well as significant events. The larger missionary societies produced official histories as multi-volume sets. An example is the four-volume history of the CMS produced by Eugene Stock and published in 1899.[15] The Basel Mission produced a five volume *Geschichte der Basler Mission*, which detailed the history of the society from its establishment in 1815 to the 1940s.[16] As these examples indicate, throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the focus on mission history was a self-centred affair. Similar to national histories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, missionary histories were written to present a particular image of the society that was focused on success and the legitimation of missionary work. Generally speaking, such histories were based on the concept of progressivism, with a teleological belief that Christian missions would help 'raise' so-called primitive races and were mostly focused on the deeds of the heroic white missionary. Some of these texts are close to hagiographical. Most are grandiloquent in their descriptions of the feats of Christian missions and are heavily religious in their tone. Moreover, these earlier texts are often insular and do not look outside their own institutional framework. Cranz, for example, only briefly mentions the Lutheran missionaries from the Danish Church who worked parallel to the Moravians in Greenland, despite the fact that the Danish Lutherans had a longer presence in Greenland. The Danish mission histories of the same time completely write out the German Moravians in order, in some ways, to centre their own mission

society as the focal point of the history.[17] Indeed, nineteenth centuries histories of mission societies and also of specific mission fields can be read without obtaining significant information about any other missionary societies in the area other than those who wrote the history.

In order to write such overviews, missionary societies in the nineteenth century often relied upon printed texts such as periodicals, but also on minutes of mission bodies, official letters to and from headquarters, circulars, station reports, minutes of missionary conferences, and financial statements, and less so on station diaries, private letters, and miscellaneous correspondence. All these types of sources have their own methodological issues, including the overly Eurocentric-focus and the biased view of mission history that focuses solely on progress and improvement, neglecting the complexities and darker aspects of historical events. Many of these sources are formulaic, structured, and sparse without personal reflection. As the next section will indicate, from the late twentieth century, scholars using missionary sources have had to overcome some of the limitations of eighteenth and nineteenth century missionary sources by reading against the grain in order to use these sources in more nuanced ways. Through reading against the grain, or through focusing on the gaps in the literature, one can also disrupt official narratives and examine ways in which more complex mission histories can be written. Yet, despite the limitations of official nineteenth century missionary histories, they are still useful to consult in order to gain insights into the broader historical narratives as well as significant historical figures (both European and non-European) and events as a starting point to deeper historical research.

New(ish) Directions and Methods

Although people had been working on mission histories in religious and church studies for centuries, it was in the twentieth century that

other disciplines started being interested in mission sources, pushing mission studies into new territories and impacting the way in which missions were written about outside of church history.[18] Influences such as the 'cultural turn' and the 'post-colonial turn' in history, which focused on themes such as cultural exchanges, new cultural forms and dissent, provided new ways to engage with histories of Christian mission stations. Some of the first major works in the area of post-colonial theory were written by the French-speaking theorist Franz Fanon in the 1950s.[19] His work criticised the politics of colonialism and power imbalances and the inherent violence of colonialism. It examines how racism and colonialism have profoundly affected the identities of colonised peoples. These and broader themes were taken up by postcolonial scholars in relation to Christian missions in the 1980s, particularly after the publication of Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism*.[20] Said's book began another wave of post-colonial literature that questioned power structures embedded in colonialism. These included significant writings from the subaltern school including the influential 1988 essay *from* Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak?". other important texts include the 1992 book from Mary Louis Pratt – *Imperial Eyes* – on travel writing and the European gaze, and Homi Bhabhas's 1994 book *Location of Culture*.[21] These are just three examples of the many influential writings that informed and influenced new trends in mission history. These, and other writings, encouraged scholars to focus on power imbalances, to search for voices that were not evident in the archival masses, to look for new forms of cultural production that occurred in missionary encounters and to keep in mind the broader cultural prepositions in which missionary writings were seeped.

These shifts in emphasis led scholars to focus more on actors and cultural change, with gender, subaltern voices and cultural practices being placed in the foreground rather than institutional histories. A particularly influential example of how mission sources were used to create alternative views on history came through the work of the Chicago-based anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff.

Their two volumes *Of Revelation and Revolution*, the first published in 1991 with the subtitle of "Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa", the second in 1997 with the subtitle of "The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier", placed mission sources in a new light.[22] As anthropologists, the Comaroffs were interested in exploring the cultural backgrounds of both the London Missionary Society, as well as the Tswana peoples of the South African Frontier. Their focus on pre-missionary lives of the Tswana was not revolutionary, as in many histories of missions there was often a section on pre-encounter lives of the indigenous. However, what was different in the Comaroffs analysis was a sustained attempt to understand how the cultural encounters between British missionaries and the Tswana changed the thinking of both groups as well as uncovered how colonised peoples resisted or appropriated aspects of colonisation. As such, the Comaroffs were interested in placing mission work in the broader context of colonialism, imperialism, power imbalances, resistance and new forms of cultural production. Thus, their work, which drew heavily on missionary sources, was also a contribution to broader studies of imperialism, going well beyond the missionary/church history field. The Comaroffs' focus on cultural interaction and the rise of new cultural practices, new patterns of production and consumption, new aesthetic ideas and new cultural and political identities amidst cultural, political and social upheaval ensured the colonial encounter was taken up by many other scholars – both secular and religious – working on missions. These approaches remain critical and central to understanding the interactions between European missionaries and the indigenous. Since the 1990s, scholars have added further theoretical approaches and methods to their 'toolbox' when examining mission sources. For example, influences from literary scholarship from the 1990s informed new ways of reading missionary sources, such as periodicals.[23] Such developments were advanced by an increased interest in the topics of analysis beyond institutions and cultural contact to new topics, a number of which will be examined below.

Empire

From the 1990s, there was a new approach to imperial history called 'New Imperial History', which focuses on reevaluating the relationships between colonies and their ruling metropoles. This approach emphasises the interconnectedness of imperial and domestic histories, as well as the social, cultural, and economic aspects of imperialism. Influenced by cultural history and post-colonial theory, the approach examines complex societies and multilayered diversity within the context of imperialism. One of the leading examples of this area of scholarship was Catharine Hall's 2002 *Civilising Subjects*, which focused simultaneously on the British West Indies examining abolition, missionary work and the colonial governance that helped construct British ideologies of superiority, racial hierarchies and gendered notions of civilisation.[24] As Hall's work demonstrated, missions are excellent objects of analysis with this approach, and many people used them to understand how Christian missions collaborated with, or opposed, imperial expansion and what this meant for various actors. For example, Brian Stanley's 1992 book *The Bible and the Flag* concluded that missionaries were not mere tools of empire.[25] The book was in some ways an attempt to provide a more nuanced view of missionaries as either only "godly martyrs" or "arrogant and rapacious imperialists", the two predominant ways that missionaries had been described in the preceding literature.[26] Stanley's work demonstrated that missionaries played a more complex role in the context of British imperialism, challenging the traditional view of missionaries as mere agents of colonialism, yet demonstrating that they were at times complicit. Stanley's book is considered a turning point in the historiography of global missions and has had a significant impact on the understanding of the relationship between Protestant missions and British imperialism. Yet, it has also been read as providing a too positive image of missionary work. Andrew Porter's 2004 book, *Religion Versus Empire? British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914*, highlighted the interactions of mission and

imperialism, taking into account both the domestic British context and missionaries' theological commitments.[27] He noted that the growth of the British Empire was accompanied by an equally extensive Protestant missionary movement that facilitated the expansion of Christian missions throughout the empire, and at the time preceded formal colonial administration. His work played a significant role in the reintroduction of the subject of religion into the analysis of British imperialism at a time when many historians were more often focused on secular dynamics.

These books, whilst very influential, engaged mostly with British missionary societies. Yet, as the example of the Basel Mission in India indicates, there were many non-British missionaries working in the British Empire. This historical fact led scholars such as Patrick Harries to explore what the concept of empire meant for citizens of nations that did not have their own colonies, such as German and Swiss missionaries.[28] other examples include the work of Finnish missionaries working under the flags of other empires.[29] Indeed, scholars have long noted that missionary work was often engaged over national and imperial borders with people from various European nations working within the empires of other countries.[30] The administrative units of colonies commonly did not consider pre-colonial ethnic boundaries, leading to another strand of cultural entanglement, particularly upon mission stations in settler colonial spaces in which peoples of various linguistic groups were brought together as they were pushed off their ancestral lands by aggressive colonisation. A focus on colonialism without colonies, such as the Swiss or the Finnish, provides insights into how imperial structures affected the work and lives of missionaries and converts and complicates understandings of religion, politics and cultural interactions within and beyond the boundaries of Empire.[31] Through framing mission history as an aspect of entangled histories of empires, new understandings of the social, political, and religious aspects of (trans)imperialism will be uncovered.

Economics of Missions

Another topic that has only cursorily been addressed is the economies of Christian missions. Missions were an expensive undertaking. Money was needed to train missionaries, build training schools to train missionaries, staff them, kit out missionaries, provide them travel expenses, build the infrastructure of the mission, pay for medicine, schoolbooks, build schools, provide wages for teachers and so forth. Not always were these costs covered by the missionary society, with missionaries often complaining that their wages did not cover their basic needs. Funds were raised in Europe as well as in mission stations; the latter through the sale of products made by people living at or attached to the missions, or through unpaid labour for the mission, such as gardening.

Despite the huge amounts of money needed and sent from different corners of the world to support the mission, economics has not featured prominently in scholarship on Christian missions. In 2009, Andrew Porter published an important article in the *Historical Journal* entitled "'Commerce and Christianity': The Rise and Fall of a Nineteenth-Century Missionary Slogan", which examined the connection between these two concepts and encouraged other scholars to include commerce in their analysis of mission histories.[32] This article has been cited 160 times, indicating the importance of the matter.[33] The economics of missions was also facilitated through mission-trading houses, which were established in the nineteenth century to support mission work. Some of these have been the focus of important studies.[34]

Besides being traders, mission societies were also producers of raw goods from colonial spaces, with plantations being purchased and run with the labour of converts and in some cases slaves. Christina Petterson has demonstrated how the profits of the slave plantations in the Danish West Indies owned by the Moravian Church were put into supporting the mission in Greenland, thus demonstrating the entangled ways in which economics supported

the system of slavery whilst subsidising other mission fields.[35] Such examples demonstrate the complicated relationship between the secular and religious activities of missions and the grey area of free labour. Indeed, the relationship between slavery, mission and commerce is one that deserves more sustained scholarship, particularly with insights gained from postcolonial and cultural history and in light of the Black Lives Matter movement of the early 2020s and the critical reflection that the Church of England is applying to its own history and connection to slavery.[36] Through including insights from economic histories, newer histories of missions can provide crucial insights into imperial networks, labour supplies and commercial entanglements, as well as what this reveals about colonisation or moral and religious ideals of the period.

Local People

From the 1960s, there was a changing focus within the broader historiography from institutions, major events and famous men to the lives and hardships of ordinary people. The focus on social relations, work, leisure, attitudes, beliefs and practices of 'normal' people became known as 'history from below'.[37] This change of focus combined with the shift in the 1990s to a postcolonial and cultural history framework for analysing missions, expanded the focus of people engaged with mission work beyond the white male missionary. The dominance of the white male missionary in historiography was connected to European ideas of cultural and religious superiority that were prevalent throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, with these ideas legitimising colonialism. With the increasing political decolonisation of many parts of the world from the 1960s, there was a slow, but noticeable trend in the scholarship to shift the focus of mission histories away from institutions and individual male missionaries to focus on local people and their experiences of Christian missions.

The focus on local people is not an invention of the twentieth century. In older missionary writings local people were also described, often either as a group of unnamed, uncovered individuals or as significant converts. The former groups were described in terms of the pre-conversion state and thus often in terminology that today is recognised as derogatory or racist. This was in contrast to the descriptions of individual converts, who were presented as shining examples of the Christian future of a colony or a mission. Names such as the Native American Samson occom (1732–1792); the Nigerian Samuel Ajayi Crowther, first black African Bishop of the Anglican Church, or Aron the first convert of the Danish-Halle mission in Tranquebar (1707) are names that were, and are, present in mission history as examples to follow.[38] These reports mostly presented a very positive account of the person, erasing any ambiguities. From the early 2000s, scholarship, such as that of Peggy Brock or Edward Andrews, complicated simple narratives in their analysis of mission converts through focusing on indigenous agency.[39] Emma Wild Wood has recently noted that the focus of scholarship has often been on "white missionaries and black evangelists", thus creating categories which themselves are infused with cultural and religious assumptions, one being that black evangelists were "little more than stooges of imperial influence".[40] These simple binaries do not capture the complexity of the situation and often assume only material and social benefits of conversion, and overlook spiritual benefits. Since the late twentieth century and under the influence of cultural history, scholarship on missionary history has included the perceptions, experiences and reactions of local people to European forms of Christianity. In order to uncover these voices from the margins, new methods and other sources have been used, including material, visual and oral sources from cultural history and postcolonial theory. Yet more patently, formerly colonised people began writing their own versions of church and mission histories in the aftermath of decolonisation, thus providing a further perspective to the role of Christian missions in the shaping of colonial and post-colonial society.[41]

Gender

Through the ideological shifts of second wave feminism (1960s to 1980s) and third wave feminism (1990s and 2000s), there was an increased focus on gender as a category of analysis, and particularly the role of females, in mission history. Although women's studies had emerged as a discipline already in the early 1970s, it took until the late 1980s for gender to be a sustained category of analysis.[42] In 1989, Patricia Grimshaw published *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii.* This work was one of the first to consider wives of missionaries as active participants in the colonisation process.[43] In the context of the Basel Mission, Dagmar Konrad's work on 'missionary brides' placed the focus on gender and the role of European women in missionary work.[44] The attention to women is important given, as Jeff Cox has noted, by the end of the nineteenth century there were more female European missionaries than males.[45] Within the metropole, white women supported the work of missions to non-European women through specific causes as well as through women's auxiliary missionary societies. This involved many activities that European women in Europe engaged in to support the mission, which also disseminated a particular image of the non-European 'other'.[46] Despite the varied ways in which European women were engaged in the missionary enterprise, women often are underrepresented in official accounts and in mission history in general.[47] Thus, the sustained effort to put women back into histories of missions is important and necessary to reflect historical realities. From the focus on European women there has been a movement to examine the role of non-European women in the missionary work, with studies shedding light on the complicated and entangled nature of gender, race and class in the colonial mission setting and beyond.[48] The transformation of gender ideals and practices was also, as Parinitha Shetty has argued, textual practice that was deeply embedded in uneven power structures within missionary and broader colonial contexts.[49]

Children

Another group that scholars of mission history have recently turned their focus to are children and childhoods. The field of childhood studies has been established for more than 30 years,[50] but it is only in the last decade that scholars of Christian mission histories have taken children and childhoods into account. Often children have been portrayed as vulnerable or malleable, holding the potential for the next generation. The interdisciplinary field of childhood studies encourages scholars to examine the social constructions of childhood. Through an examination of children, scholars are alerted to broader issues of imagined futures and repercussions for deviance from these norms. Scholarship of the last ten years has focused on European children as carriers of missionary ideals as exemplified through the work of Hugh Morrison.[51] Dagmar Konrad has provided in her 2023 book *Missionskinder* yet further focus on children in connection to the mission in her examination of the experiences of children of missionaries in the colonies and their dislocation to their homes and their parents in Europe.[52] Children were both products as well as subjects of missions and the way in which they were conceptualised in various spaces also provides insights into broader historical processes.[53]

In this way, Karen Vallgårda's compelling study on *Imperial Childhoods and Christian Mission* broadens the frame to examine how Indian and European children were conceptualised in missionary spaces through her focus on emotional responses.[54] Children were also one of the major targets of missionary practices in the colonies and non-European spaces, particularly through mission schools. There is a large amount of literature on this topic, as education was a means of shaping a new generation of subjects in political as well as religious communities. Through institutions targeting children, such as orphanages, boarding schools and health clinics, children were trained to replicate societal norms and expectations. The Christian education of non-Europeans was one of the major areas in

which missionary groups contributed to the construction of the colonial subject.[55] Missionary societies worked alongside and at times in opposition to colonial governments in the provision of western education. Local people both cooperated and hindered the provision of missionary education for their children. Through a better understanding of the nuances of such processes and situations, more complex histories of missions can be written that give attention to the role of children within broader ideological and educational developments.

Global Networks

Studies of Christian missions are embedded in broader geographical contexts than the particular spatiality of the mission, creating communities beyond the confines of a mission station. Indeed, Christian missions undertook converting the world to a certain type of global Christian modernity through conversion to Christianity.[56] As with trends in colonial and imperial studies, there has been a movement from examining missions through the focus on connections between the metropole and the periphery to scholarship that examines the transregional, transnational, and increasingly the transimperial entanglements of the mission. In 1983, Benedict Anderson published his influential work on imagined communities, which demonstrated how printed texts contributed to the creation of communities beyond personal connections.[57] His ideas have been fruitfully applied to mission and religious groups, such as the role of missionary writings in community buildings and knowledge networks,[58] in the conceptualisation of missions as global networks,[59] the concept of transnationalism in missions,[60] or studies that place the Christian mission firmly within scientific networks.[61] The collecting habits of missionaries shed light on global networks of knowledge and how emerging sciences such as botany in Europe were shaped by missionary practices, with collections of non-

European plants for the benefit of science, but also the mission.[62] Such scholarship encourages us to think about how global networks facilitated the transfer and transformation of knowledge botany, and science in general, and how this had profound impacts on local converts.

New Sources and Methodologies

As Emma Wild Wood has recently suggested, in order to write mission history: "A painstaking triangulation of sources is required: sources by Africans are scarce, scattered and often brief; the reading of missionary and colonial sources requires careful attention in order to perceive shared interests beyond their inherent biases; and anthropological sources have historically shied away from points of religious encounter."[63] The same is true for other settings. Beyond the 'traditional' sources that we have read about above, other sources have become more important in creating nuanced mission histories. Here I will name just three: firstly, film, an invention of the twentieth century, provides novel insights into people, relationships and embodied movements.[64] Secondly, drawings by children can provide insights into constructed childhoods.[65] And thirdly, photographs. These are not a new source for examination. Paul Jenkins has been working on photographs as mission history since the 1980s, yet they are becoming more central to analysis and not just presented as illustrative.[66]

Every new turn or focus encourages us to rethink the material at hand, to query the archives, to look beyond them, to integrate the religious archival material with other secular sources and to give more weight to locally produced sources – particularly those in non-European languages, rather than focusing on 'official' reports.[67] New methodologies for engaging with non-traditional sources are being refined in many other disciplines and many of these may be particularly fruitful for scholarship engaging in mission history.[68] In

thinking about all the new methods, theories, sources and approaches to mission history, many of which have come from cultural, social, gender, and intellectual history and other interdisciplinary approaches, we should not forget one thing: missions were at the core of religious undertakings. We must, as David Bebbington reminded scholars many decades ago, take religion as seriously as the missionaries did.[69] This is not to say that we all must be theologians; however, it does mean that we need to take Christian dogma and theology seriously in writing mission histories and thereby keep in mind how transformations of faith and practice affected social and political realities. Given the rich histories of Protestant mission sites, encounters, ideologies and practices over more than three centuries, this overview has not intended to capture all of the nuances of the historiography of mission; rather, it aims to point to some of the areas in which broad developments can be read in relation to developments in other fields of scholarship. The chapter concludes by noting three directions in which missionary history might explore further areas of emerging scholarship.

Future Directions

After this very selective and brief overview of two hundred years of mission history and knowledge production, the question is: Where to now? The chapter offers three points about the direction of mission studies. Given the environmental emergency that we are currently faced with, I believe that mission studies can produce scholarship that examines environmental change and also uncover sources of alternative ways to engage with environmental problems. This could mean a reading of the sources for environmental disasters, their frequencies and local responses to it. A second line of research would be to examine in a more sustained way the connections between mission fields, such as between India and West Africa. Such comparisons as well as connections would further our understanding of how missions contributed to the making of global identities that

need not be centred on Europe. A third area that still needs more research is the entanglements and disentanglements of missions in the decolonisation process. It is important to ask how new relationships connected to missions were crafted and expressed after political upheavals, civil unrest and even physical violence. The scholarship on missions is rich, diverse and entangled. The chapter in this volume, as well as the work being done all over the globe has the potential to help push the scholarship to think of new ways to use mission sources and history to read audiences beyond that of which missionaries ever envisaged.

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[2] The non-exhaustive list of the following journals and book series are a good place to view contemporary mission history studies. They include: *International Bulletin of Mission Research* (IBMR, since 1950); *International Review of Mission* (IRM, since 1912); *Missionalia* (since the 1970s); *Social Sciences and Mission*

(since 2007); Brill's series "Study in Christian Mission"; Eerdmans series "Studies in the History of Christian Mission"; Franz Steiner Verlag's series "Missionsgeschichtliches Archiv"; Leuven University Press' series "Mission and Modernity".

[3] Cranz, *Historie von Grönland*.

[4] For the history of the Moravian mission see: Beck, *Brüder in Vielen Völkern*. For Cranz and Moravian historiography see: Noller, *Kirchliche Historiographie*.

[5] Peucker, *A Time of Sifting*.

[6] For information of the genesis of the book see the introduction in: Cranz, *Historie von Grönland*.

[7] This argument I have previously made in the introduction to: Jensz and Petterson, *Legacies of David Cranz's 'Historie von Grönland' (1765).*

[8] For an overview of Moravian settlements in Germany, Britain and North America as well as communities in the Netherlands and Denmark see: Mettele, *Weltbürgertum oder Gottesreich*; Hamilton and Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*.

[9] Cranz, *Historie von Grönland*. p. x.

[10] Jensz and Petterson, *Legacies of David Cranz's 'Historie von Grönland' (1765)*.

[11] Allen and McClure, *Two Hundred Years.*

[12] Lehmann, *Es begann in Tranquebar*; Fenger, *History of the Tranquebar Mission.*

[13] Ziegenbalg and Plütscho, *Propagation of the Gospel in the East.*

[14] Cox, *History of the English Baptist Missionary Society.*

[15] Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society.*

[16] See, for example: Schlatter, *Geschichte der Basler Mission.*

[17] McLisky, "Cranz Revisited: Greenland in Greenland".

[18] Bickers and Seton, *Missionary Encounters*.

[19] See, for example: Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

[20] Said, *Orientalism*.

[21] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"; Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

[22] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 1; Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, Vol. 2.

[23] Barringer, "What Mrs Jellyby Might Have Read"; Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire*; Becker and Storning, *Menschen – Bilder – Eine Welt*.

[24] Hall, *Civilising Subjects*.

[25] Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag.*

[26] Andrews, "Christian Mission and Colonial Empires Reconsidered," pp. 663–664.

[27] Porter, *Religion versus Empire?*

[28] Harries, *Butterflies & Barbarians.*

[29] See, for example: Shiweda, "Photography and the Religious Encounter".

[30] See, for example: Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise Since 1700*; The Moravian Church, for example, was from its beginnings multi-ethnic, with people from various European states and Empires. See: Mettele, *Weltbürgertum oder Gottesreich*.

[31] Andersson and Lahti, *Finnish Settler Colonialism in North America*; Merivirta, *Finnish Colonial Encounters*.

[32] Porter, "'Commerce and Christianity'".

[33] The number of citations (160) was current as of May 2024 in a Google Scholar analysis.

[34] See, for example: Braun, *Die Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft und der Missionshandel im 19. Jahrhundert*; Kokel, *"Kredit bei aller Welt"*; Gannon, "The Basle Mission Trading Company and British Colonial Policy in the Gold Coast".

[35] Petterson, *Early Capitalism in Colonial Missions.*

[36] See, for example: Glasson, *Mastering Christianity*; Dunkley, *Agency of the Enslaved*: Kinghorn, "The Rev. John Stainsby and the 'Diffusion of Gospel Truth'"; Higman, *Proslavery Priest*; Kinghorn and Carey, "The History of James Curtin".

[37] Port, "History from Below, the History of Everyday Life, and Microhistory".

[38] See, for example: Page, *The Black Bishop*; Korschorke, "When Is India to Have Her Own Native Bishops?", Elrod, "I Did Not Make Myself So…"; Cyranka and Wenzel, "Das Eigentliche Portrait des Seligen Aarons"; Wild-Wood, "Modern African Missionaries".

[39] Andrews, *Native Apostles*; Brock, "New Christians as Evangelists"; Brock, *Indigenous Peoples and Religious Change*; Grimshaw and May, eds., *Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Exchange*; Sherlock, "Missions, Colonialism and the Politics of Agency".

[40] Wild-Wood, "Modern African Missionaries," p. 275.

[41] Important names for Africa can be found in the Dictionary of African Christian Biography (https://dacb.org/); for Asia, see the Dictionary of Christian Biography in Asia (https://dcbasia.org/) and for China see China Historical Christian Database (https://chcdatabase.com/). See also: Munro and Thornley, eds, *The Covenant Makers*.

[42] *Women's Study* journal published first in 1972. See: Martin, "Why Women's Studies?".

[43] Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty.*

[44] Konrad, *Missionsbräute*.

[45] Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise Since 1700*, p. 219.

[46] Burton, "The White Woman's Burden"; Rowbotham, "Hear an Indian Sister's Plea".

[47] Grimshaw and Sherlock, "Women and Cultural Exchange"; Ganter and Grimshaw, "Introduction: Reading the Lives of White Mission Women".

[48] An early study to focus on local women's response to Christian missionaries is: Ardener and Bowie, eds, *Women and Missions*.

[49] Shetty, "Christianity, Reform, and the Reconstitution of Gender".

[50] Tesar, "Childhood Studies, An overview of". The work of Ariès is a significant factor in the establishment of this field. See: Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*.

[51] Morrison, *Protestant Missionary Children's Lives*.

[52] Konrad, *Missionskinder*.

[53] Monteiro and Wesseling, "Child Separation".

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[55] See, for example: Holmes, ed., *Educational Policy and the Mission Schools*; Bellenoit, *Missionary Education and Empire*; Kallaway and Swartz, *Empire and Education in Africa*. Gerster and Jensz, *Global Perspectives on Boarding Schools in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*; Jensz, "Missionaries and Indigenous Education in the 19th-Century British Empire, Part I"; Webster Grant, *Moon of Wintertime*; Kallaway, "Education, Health and Social Welfare in the Late Colonial Context".

[56] van der Veer, ed, *Conversions to Modernities*.

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[58] Mettele, *Weltbürgertum oder Gottesreich*; Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire*.

[59] Habermas and Hölzl, *Mission Global.*

[60] See: Gewurtz and Jalagin, "Introduction. Transnationalism and Mission History".

[61] Sivasundaram, *Nature and the Godly Empire*. See also: Samson, "Ethnology and Theology".

[62] Ruhland, *Pietistische Konkurrenz und Naturgeschichte*.

[63] Wild-Wood, "Modern African Missionaries," p. 288.

[64] Kaczmarek and Wulff, "Missionsfilme"; Hock, Jahnel and Kaiser, *Mission in Film und Literatur*.

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[67] Bickers and Seton, *Missionary Encounters.*

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PART 2

The Basel Mission in India and Europe

CHAPTER 3

Christianity for Industry and Industry for Christianity: The Basel Mission in Europe and India, c. 1850–1900

Bernhard C. Schär

Abstract

The Basel Mission was a transimperial evangelical organisation active in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. This chapter focuses on India to examine how the Basel Mission combined religion and industry to integrate both European workers and Indian converts into a Protestant ideal of work and family. The chapter shows how the mission mobilised economic networks and donations from several countries and relied on a European and colonial public. It examines how this organisation shaped the cultural and social landscape and operated in a broad, transimperial network. The mission's dual strategy aimed to 'uplift' European workers and rural populations while integrating converted Indians into a culture of colonial paternalism.

Keywords: Philanthropy; Civilising Mission; Empire; Switzerland; Germany; England; Protestantism; Conservativism; Anglophilia; Social housing.

The Basel Mission was well known for its industrial enterprises in both India and Europe in the nineteenth century, as a way of providing for the converts who lost their employment upon conversion. However, its 1856 yearly report on the Industry

Commission did not start with an account on the Mission's weaving factories on the Malabar coast. Rather, it took readers on an imaginary journey to the foot of the snow-covered Bernese Alps in Switzerland. There,

> we see a lively group of boys with their teachers and supervisors working hard in the fields with hoes and tills. Health, inner and outer cheerfulness shine from the eyes of these little ploughmen […]. And when we are told that these boys, aged 10–16, are selected from the lowest and most dreadful classes of our people, […] that their parents' and guardians' education has become powerless against the condition of these boys, or that crime and debauchery exclude them from school and society, we are justly amazed at the success achieved in this institution.[1]

This Swiss institution's key to success, according to the Basel Mission's report, was simple: "ora et labora" – praying to "our lord and saviour", leading through example. Thereby not only is the land cultivated, but also the formerly 'depraved boys' as Christian work ethics are instilled in them. Given the success of this boys' institution in alpine Switzerland, is it not legitimate "to hope and strive" for the success of the same strategy among "childishly thinking heathens, spoilt by climate and natural abundance' in far away lands?", the report asked rhetorically.

The rest of the report informed about the Basel Mission's particular proselytising strategy it had adopted a few years earlier on the Malabar coast: it aimed to convert "Hindus" not only through preaching the gospel but also by offering them work in factories supervised by specialised European "industry brothers" who led their workers in prayer in the mornings and tried to teach them protestant work values during working hours, as well as making them attend mass on Sundays.

The subtle asymmetry in this comparison between impoverished Swiss boys and grown-up non-European "child humans" (*Menschenkinder*) serves as an entry point for this chapter to shed some light on the world view as well as the civilising discourses and practices of the Basel Mission's leadership.[2] As this chapter will argue, the Basel Mission should not be mistaken for a local or

national Swiss organisation. Rather, it was one of the largest evangelical mission societies that operated across national borders within Europe and imperial and continental boundaries on a global level. Through this organisation, the Basel Mission's leadership was able to pursue its ambitions in vast spaces across Europe, Asia, and Africa. Thus, the Basel Mission aimed to "civilise" impoverished European families in the context of industrial development in mostly German-speaking regions of Europe, and – simultaneously – to proselytise "heathens" in British colonies.

This chapter examines how the Basel Mission connected impoverished European families and Indian 'heathens' within a vast transimperial space: How did they compare and connect the fate of impoverished European working-class and rural families and Indian "heathens" in their imagination? Through which organisations and with which strategies did they try to "civilise" Europeans and Indians? And how did they thereby connect the historical experiences of these two groups with each other without them necessarily being fully aware of this?

This argument contributes to and intervenes in two historiographies. It firstly benefits from classic studies by Catherine Hall, Susan Thorne, Ann Laura Stoler, Albert Schrauwers and others on how British, Dutch, and French imperialism "overseas" continuously shaped social policies and cultures in the metropoles "at home" – not least through the works of mission societies.[3] While these groundbreaking studies prompted many historians to study colonies and metropoles in a single analytical frame, they nevertheless took national empires – be it the British, French, Dutch or others – as an implicitly natural entity. This chapter goes a step further. The remarkably long and consequential presence of German-speaking missionaries in British India can have no national explanation. It ought rather to be understood as an outcome of protestant and economic networks that structurally integrated large parts of protestant continental Europe and the US into the realms of the British Empire. This chapter, therefore, adopts a transimperial perspective, arguing that taking not the nation but multinational

organisations (*avant la lettre*) like the Basel Mission Society as an analytical point of departure allows us to uncover the pan-European dimensions of empire that remain underexposed in nation-centred "new imperial histories".[4]

Secondly, this chapter benefits from a large body of innovative new studies on British and continental European – Basel in particular – mission societies and on religious internationalism in recent years. They have highlighted the significant cultural impact of mission societies beyond the realms of religion and have underscored how they served as conduits for European women to loosen the grip of patriarchal dominance, and how colonised converts appropriated the gospel for their own anticolonial purposes.[5] While historians of British missions have so far overlooked how "their" societies operated not in isolation, but in many ways as admired role models and in close collaboration with their "brethren" on the continent,[6] historians of French, German, Swiss and other mission societies tended to portray them as supposedly national institutions. Historians of religion have tended to isolate their field of inquiry from surrounding economic contexts. As this contribution argues, although located in a Swiss town, the ambitions of the Basel Mission's leadership, employees and donors were far less German or Swiss than they were evangelical, imperial and global. Their religious practices, moreover, were hardly separated from money and work.

A Global Evangelical Movement Centred around Britain

As all evangelical mission societies, the Basel Mission too was an outcome of the evangelical revival movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century northern transatlantic world.[7] It had multiple centres and thinkers. But it was united by a shared scepticism towards government funded churches and the belief that true piousness ought not only be declared in churches but rather

enacted in all aspects of daily life, not only "at home" but all over the world referring to the declaration in the book of Matthew (28: 19–20): "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations". While Danish and German evangelists had launched a first mission society in the 17th century, the process of institutionalisation took off in the 1790s in the rest of Europe and the American East coast.[8] This coincided with the rise of Britain as the leading imperial power at the turn of the century, which put the London-based societies at the centre of this newly emerging global evangelical mission movement. The London Baptist Society (founded in 1792), the London Mission Society (1795) and the Church Mission Society (1799) employed many missionaries from across Europe and continuously interacted with several additional societies on the continent and in the US. Those were initially set up as auxiliary societies with the purpose of collecting donations and training missionaries for the London societies.[9]

One of the earliest continental European missionary societies was the one in Basel, established in 1815. It had grown out of an older society "for the promotion of Christian truth and godliness", which, from 1783 onwards, served as the intellectual centre of the evangelical revival movement in German speaking Europe (*Erweckungsbewegung*). It was called the "Christianity Society" in short and included in its network pietist monarchs and wealthy merchant families with close economic and spiritual ties throughout German-speaking Europe, Denmark, Russia, Sweden, and the American East Coast. However, the links to the growing imperial metropole in London would become the most important. Hence, in 1801, Carl Friedrich Steinkopf (1773–1859) from Württemberg, the secretary of the Basel-based Christianity Society, moved to London to set up a Church for German-speaking migrants and joined the London Mission Society's board of directors and became a member of the Church Mission Society. During his tenure in London, he remained in close contact with the Basel Christianity Society, which started collecting donations for the London societies. Steinkopf also collaborated with the Berlin Missionary Society which trained

missionaries for the London missions. In Basel, Steinkopf urged his friends to set up their own missionary society to support their "brothers in Christ" in London and Rotterdam. This project was realised shortly after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in the same year of the reordering of Europe during the congresses of Vienna and Paris in 1815. While the London Missionary Society offered to cover the first director's salary and supported the founding of the Basel Mission with an additional 200 Louis d'or, most Basel-trained missionaries would serve for the Church Mission Society – 30 out of 37 until 1833. The others went to the Rotterdam Mission Society to be deployed in the Dutch southeast Asian colonies.[10]

The 1830s saw great changes, but they only amplified the role of the British mission societies for the global evangelical mission movement. In 1833, the British East India Company allowed foreign continental European and American mission societies to proselytise in their colonies. In consultation with their "brethren" societies in London, the Basel Mission leadership decided to open their own mission stations in the Mangalore region on the Malabar coast where no evangelical mission societies had previously been present.[11]

The Basel Mission's key financier was a Saxon monarch, count Otto Viktor von Schönburg-Waldenburg (1785–1859), highlighting the importance of German connections. He lived in Rochlitz, a small place south of Leipzig in what is today north-eastern Germany. His family's estate was incorporated into the kingdom of Saxony in 1835, which compensated Count Viktor with eleven million marks. This allowed him to increase philanthropic outreach towards not only his subjects in Saxony, but also in his support for the Basel Mission, which he had anonymously financed since 1819. In 1833, count Viktor and the Basel Mission leadership set up an anonymous foundation to manage his donations, which would cover up to 50 per cent of the expenses for the Basel Mission's schools and later the Theological College in Mangalore, today's Karnataka Theological College.[12] This Swiss-Württemberg-Saxon-English evangelical partnership in British India continued throughout the nineteenth century. In the 1850s, however, the economic crisis forced the Basel

Mission leadership to adjust. This brings us to the Industry Commission's 1856 report quoted at the beginning of this article.

The Basel Mission's International Donor Base

The industry commission was one of two measures adopted to increase the Basel Mission's income. The second one was a so-called half-coin collection (*Halbbatzenkollekte*) designed to collect donations from low-income families. I will explain these initiatives further down. Since historians of evangelical mission societies rarely examine mission finances and because they allow for a good understanding of these organisations' inherently multinational and transimperial structures, it is worth looking at the Basel Mission's finances in 1856. It is from this year that we have the first report with details about the Mission's finances.

Simply put, the Basel Mission – like most mission societies – had two main sources of revenue: individual donations from "friends" such as Count Viktor in Rochlitz, and collective donations that were collected by so-called auxiliary societies throughout the year. If we look at the origin and sums of the Basel Mission's individual donations in 1855 in Table 3.1, we get a good first indication of this organisation's global nature.[13]

Table 3.1: Provenance of individual donations 1855

Provenance	**Swiss Francs**	**%**
Switzerland	65.149	36,07
English 'friends' in India (including one Indian 'convert')	49.242	27,27
Germany (Württemberg, Bavaria, Prussia, Hessen etc.)	36.142	20,01
Russia	13.194	7,31

Provenance	Swiss Francs	%
Austria	3.977	2,20
France	3.624	2,01
England	3.413	1,89
North America	2.785	1,54
Other countries	1.393	0,77
Holland and Belgium	699	0,39
A missionary in Africa	625	0,35
Poland	336	0,19
Total	**180.597**	**100**

Roughly four-fifths of donations in 1855 came from Switzerland, English colonial officers in India, and the German public. The last fifth came from Russia, Austria, France, England and the United States. In other words: from the point of view of donors, the Basel Mission was neither a national nor a linguistically delimited organisation. It was rather an organisation carrying out an ambition shared by European protestants in multiple countries, speaking multiple languages in Europe, America and colonial Asia.

If we look at donations collected by auxiliary societies in Table 3.2, a similar picture emerges. More than half of the donations came from Germany with protestant Württemberg, Baden, catholic Bavaria and the city of Frankfurt a/M. being the most generous contributing regions. Swiss auxiliary societies contributed a third, while those in Sweden, North America and the London based Church Mission Society accounted for another 10 per cent.

Table 3.2: Provenance of collective donations 1855.

Provenance	Swiss Francs	%
Germany	108.301	55,66

Provenance	Swiss Francs	%
Switzerland	65.253	33,53
Sweden	8.331	4,28
London (Church Mission Society)	8.032	4,13
North America	3.829	1,97
Denmark	843	0,43
Total	**194.589**	**100**

The third important revenue stream – the above-mentioned half-coin collection (*Halbbatzenkollekte*) – fits into the picture. Beatrice Tschudi-Barbatti calculated in her unpublished master's thesis that most of these donations came from Switzerland only in the first year when it was launched in 1855. After that, up to 80 per cent of all half-coin donations came from Germany and other countries. This collection regularly accounted for between one-fourth to one-third of the Basel Mission's yearly revenue.[14] Already in its first year of existence, the *Halbbatzenkollekte* managed to collect small donations from 40,000 people who together contributed around 68,600 francs to the cause.[15]

The Basel Mission's total revenue for 1855 was 481,316 francs. If we consider that a top daily wage for a weaver, who belonged to the qualified workers in one of Basel's many silk factories, was around four francs,[16] which amounts to a yearly salary of around 1,200 francs, then the Basel Mission's yearly budget was the equivalent of more than 400 yearly salaries of well-earning factory workers. The Basel Mission financial records do not allow us to discern how much individual donors gave to the mission. We only have aggregated numbers. We know, however, from the closely related Paris Evangelical Mission Society, that the vast majority of donations ranged from 50 cents to about 100 francs, with some notable exceptions of 1,000 francs and more.[17] Against this background, it seems safe to assume that in addition to the 40,000 half-coin donors, who contributed ca. 14 per cent of the 1856 budget, there

were between 4,000 and 10,000 additional small, middle and some large donors. They lived throughout Switzerland, Germany, Scandinavia, the Low Countries, Britain and British India, as well as Russia, Austria, France and the United States of America and they donated not only once, but annually and thereby kept the Basel Mission's activities in British colonies afloat.

Hence, the Basel Mission through its fundraising connected the lives of tens of thousands of low- and middle-income families across protestant Europe, and the US with the fate of thousands of Indian families on the Malabar Coast and South Canara they sought to convert. How did the Mission theorise and understand these relationships? To answer this question, we need to take a closer look at the Basel Mission leadership and their networks and worldviews in imperial Europe.

Imperial Anglophilia, Industry and Philanthropy

The leadership of the Basel Mission was literally and figuratively a marriage between evangelical Christianity and capitalism. The Mission's daily business was managed by a director, who had a theological education and usually hailed from Württemberg in Southern Germany. In 1856 this was Joseph Friedrich Josenhans (1812–1884). All strategic and financial questions, however, were managed by a so-called committee, the members of which were mostly from Basel's closely intermarried religious and economic elites. Hence, in 1856 we see Adolf Christ-Sarasin (1807–1877) serving as president. He owned large textile factories, had previously served as judge, was a member of Basel's city government and was married to Carolina Sarasin, the daughter of Basel's mayor. Carolina's father, Felix Sarasin, was the brother of Carl Sarasin-Sauvain (1815–1886), who was an equally influential member of the Basel Mission's committee as Adolf Christ-Sarasin. Carl Sarasin-Sauvain served

together with Mission director Josenhans as co-president of the industry commission and oversaw all the industrial activities in India. Together they had co-authored the yearly report of 1856 mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Sarasin too was the owner of several large textile factories, member of Basel's city government and one of the most influential politicians in the realms of industry and welfare throughout Switzerland. He had also introduced the above-mentioned half-coin collection, which – together with the Industry Commission – secured the mission's finances. other members of the committee in 1859 carry similarly ringing Basel names: Pastor Adolph Sarasin, Pastor F. Burckhardt, Pastor La Roche – they were all members of Basel's industrial and political elites.[18] By the mid-nineteenth century, these families had turned the entire Basel region with its border regions in Alsace and Württemberg into one of the most industrialised regions in Europe with 7,250 ribbon looms, which produced roughly twenty million francs worth of luxury silk textiles annually to be exported worldwide. These looms were concentrated in the hands of seventy-eight factory owners and employers who thereby controlled the livelihood of one-third of Basel's 30,000-strong population that depended on the silk industry.[19]

In other words: while the Basel Mission's donor base was truly international and included extremely wealthy individuals like count Viktor, as well as thousands of anonymous small donors from rural and working classes, the managing director was usually a pietist from Württemberg, while the board was controlled by Basel's wealthy and pious-conservative patrician families – a 'self-perpetuating circle of men', as Linda Ratschiller aptly describes it.[20] The British Empire became particularly important to these men in the nineteenth century as a closer look at one of the most remarkable figures from this Basel elite reveals: Carl Sarasin-Sauvain. Several useful biographies have already painted a good picture of this man.[21] None of them has, however, looked at his imperial Anglophilia and they treat his role in the Basel Mission's Industry Commission only peripherally, if at all. Both, I believe, are

key to understanding his legacy in Basel, Switzerland, India, and beyond.

Shortly after the foundation of the modern Swiss Federal State in 1848, London announced that it would host a "Great exhibition of the works of industry of all nations" in 1851. The Swiss Federal Government appointed Carl Sarasin along with seven other Swiss manufacturers, academics and politicians to a commission tasked with organising Switzerland's participation in the planned world exhibition.[22] The event was a grandiose showcasing of Britain's economic might. British producers exhibited their goods in one of two main buildings, while products from India and all other British colonies could be seen on each side of the main avenue. All other industrial nations were seen in the second main building.[23] In relation to the size of their country, Swiss producers were highly overrepresented and proud to win multiple awards for their wine, chocolate, Cuban Cigars, kitchen appliances, watches and – most prominently – their cotton and silk textiles. Carl Sarasin-Sauvain, for example, went home with a medal for his luxury Silk ribbons.[24]

The London world exhibition left a deep and lasting impression on European industrialists like Sarasin. This becomes clear in handwritten notes he made for several talks he gave during his preparation for and after his return from London in 1850 and 1851 (1851 was also the year Sarasin joined the Basel Mission committee). Admiring the vast display of products from the colonies at the exhibition, Sarasin was impressed by the empire's "enormous possessions of North America, Canada, the West Indies, the East Indies, Australia and the [Pacific] islands" and the incredible wealth it created.[25] He observed this wealth in grand estates in the countryside as well as palaces and imperial buildings in London. But what made Britain really great, according to Sarasin, was not trade, commerce and world dominance alone, but rather its Christian spirit and charity in two respects. Firstly, in its colonial and missionary dimension:

> It is also a great good fortune [for the 'uncivilized', bcs]… because these Englishmen govern these peoples well. And the great East Indies have never had such happy times as under English rule. [… w]e must say there is a divine purpose here & as 1800 years ago the Roman Empire was necessary for the development of Christianity so also the English government seems called that under it the mission, the preaching of the Gospel to the heathen should grow & spread.

What impressed Sarasin even more, however, was the extent to which this Christian philanthropy was also visible in London and other centres of British industrial production. Echoing his contemporary English evangelical friends who painted their work in the industrial slums of 'darkest England' in the same terms as their proselytising efforts in 'darkest India',[26] Sarasin explained to his audience in Basel:

> I mention […] first of all the London City Mission. 447 employed men roam the streets of the city daily from morning till night to seek out the needy, to bring help to the needy & worthy of help, strength to the numb, courage & trust in God to the desperate, love to the forsaken. They are the true friends of the people, seeking healing for the sick, food … and spiritual strength to the weakened. They do not shy away from … the most squalid neighborhoods where misery of all kinds, … [and] crimes have their seat.[27]

Last, but not least, Sarasin admired the efficiency and the way of life of English industrial workers. They did not live cramped together in residential barracks, he told his audience in Basel, but often in two-storey houses, although only two to three metres wide, but well designed with a kitchen and a dining room on the ground floor, and bedrooms and a living room upstairs. "This has to do with the English people's sense of freedom and independence, which we only encounter in a few places on the continent, especially in Basel," he claimed.[28]

Sarasin's perception was of course one-sided and elitist, to say the least. In fact, the poverty in London and other centres was overwhelming, which was also noticed by many European commentators. And only a few years later, in 1857, the rebellion in India would herald the end of the East India Company and put

British colonial rule in South Asia to a serious test. It is important to note, however, that this conservative Protestant Swiss manufacturer, politician and mission administrator saw an ideal in the British combination of Christian philanthropy and mission on the one hand and liberal capitalism, which opened up colonial markets for European traders like himself, on the other. He imported raw silk from British Shanghai for his factories at home and exported the products to the USA.[29] Thus, this is how he envisioned a harmonious social development – free trade and Christian charity for the European poor and the colonised "heathens", ideally without state intervention. This deep admiration for British imperial rule, economic wealth and Christian spirit inspired many equally conservative manufacturers in Switzerland and Germany. They sought to realise this British ideal through various Christian and philanthropic associations in those European regions they governed and – through the Basel Mission Society – in India.

"Christian Love" and Patriarchal Housing for Industrial Workers

Simply put, Swiss and European elites more broadly addressed rural and urban poverty from the eighteenth century through initiatives like worker housing and moral education. These initiatives were shaped by fear of uprising of the "masses" during the French Revolution and during consequent revolutions in the 1830s and 1840s instilled considerable anxiety in large sections of the ruling elites. This turned the so-called "social question" (*Soziale Frage*), namely, how to fight poverty and simultaneously protect the social order from the threat of revolution, into one of the most intensely debated among the different factions of the liberal and conservative bourgeois or aristocratic elites.[30] In Switzerland and the German speaking countries more broadly, these debates took place in private associations. They commissioned surveys to study the "social

question" empirically and served as think tanks (*avant la lettre*) to discuss and influence social and welfare policies in governments and parliaments.[31]

The most important association in Switzerland was the *Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft* (non-profit organisation) established in 1810, which debated the pros and cons of mass emigration overseas, agricultural improvement, industrial development, poorhouses as well as private health, widow, and old-age insurances, schools and government regulations as means of poverty relief and prevention.[32] Carl Sarasin had joined the society in the 1840s, where he was put in charge of a commission tasked with managing studies and debates on the work and living conditions of factory workers. His thinking was, as we shall see, shaped heavily by his visit to London in 1851. In this society, Sarasin most likely met another illustrious factory owner and merchant from the small eastern Swiss canton of Appenzell-Ausserrhoden – Johann Ulrich Zellweger (1804–1871).[33] Zellweger had built a remarkable business empire including spinning mills in his native Switzerland, partnership in slave plantations in Cuba, trading companies in London, and a private bank in Paris. Zellweger is relevant to our story because he initiated, within the *Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft*, the establishment of the institution mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, picturesquely located outside of Bern in a hamlet named Bächtelen, for "morally dilapidated and depraved young criminals."[34] The institution was launched in 1840, and Carl Sarasin became one of the members of the board of directors, which is probably why he included it in the mentioned report for the Basel Mission Industry Commission in 1856.[35] His friendship with Zellweger is relevant here also because the cotton merchant and manufacturer was similarly as pious as Sarasin and other Basel pietists. In 1859, Zellweger was invited to join the Basel Mission steering committee and to set up and manage the Basel Mission Trading Company that was to supply industries in India and West Africa with raw materials and export their goods. This is one example of how poverty relief work in Europe and proselytisation in industries in India were linked.

Another one was Sarasin's involvement in Basel's own City Mission. Established in 1859, this charitable organisation adapted measures that Sarasin and other European visitors had seen in London. Reacting to the growing influx of migrant workers from Germany, the Alsace, and Italy – many of which were catholic – the city mission opened a hostel for workers and journeymen with affordable accommodation and food, as well as a reading room and a library. Additionally, the City Mission employed a missionary who visited workers in Basel and some of the neighbouring communes at home with copies of the bible. The overarching goal was to make immigrating workers get used to "an orderly Christian family life."[36]

Just as the Basel Mission's proselytising efforts in India were embedded in a transnational evangelical movement, so too was the city mission part of larger European networks engaged in what they called the 'inner mission' (*Innere Mission*). These efforts remain poorly studied.[37] The Inner Missions held yearly congresses and, in 1869, several pious employers and large factory owners from Germany, the Alsace and Switzerland decided to start organising themselves. They were united in the conviction that neither state laws nor liberal and socialist theories could truly solve the so-called workers question, which had led to growing "bitterness" and "discord" in their countries. "Social democratic agitation" had unleashed "class hatred and class struggle, which should endanger our civic freedom and destroy our culture."[38] Unlike their liberal counterparts, often referred to as "Manchester liberals" who believed in an "invisible hand" that would eventually create a "complete and just" balance between employers' and workers' self-interests, the conservative manufacturers believed that it was the employers' responsibility to actively find a solution. For them:

> [t]he core question lies in the moral position we employers have to adopt towards our workers and in the spirit in which we work among them and for them. This position and this spirit also determine the healing of the threatened peace of society. The worker must not be regarded by us as a living machine, created for our benefit, which must be kept in a state of dependence by the employer in order to be able to work for him, until it is thrown aside when it is

> exhausted; but the workers are our brothers, called with us to the same moral aims in life.[39]

The spiritual source for this "brotherhood" between employers and workers according to these conservative capitalists, "can only have its deepest foundation in Christianity".[40] This was Carl Sarasin's core conviction too: "All activity directed towards the individual must arise from free love, but this can only arise from Christianity."[41] To discuss these matters, ninety-one conservative factory owners, mining managers, merchants and some scholars from across Germany, the Alsace and Switzerland met in Bonn for a conference in 1870. There they agreed that Christian "love" and "brotherhood" between employers and workers could not be between true equals, but rather that workers needed a guiding, paternalistic hand. This conviction was echoed in three papers and subsequent discussions on invalidity insurance for workers, schooling and education for workers' children, and in a paper, delivered by Carl Sarasin, on workers' housing explained below.

In it, Sarasin presented reflections on his experiences as a member of Basel's city government responsible for welfare questions and initiator of the city's first social housing project. It is worth dwelling on this a bit, because it was also part of the Basel Mission's civilising efforts in India as the next section will show. Sarasin's social housing policies were essentially an adaptation of workers' housing philosophies of the "practical English" that he had seen during his visit in 1851.[42] He was particularly inspired by Henry Roberts, England's leading architect in the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes. Sarasin's main idea was to build similar houses for continental-European workers, which he referred to as "Cottagen" – a Germanised adaptation of the English word cottages. While poor housing for workers, according to Roberts and Sarasin, were the main cause for poverty, ill health and bitterness among workers, "cottages" were one of the main keys to solving all these problems. As an expression of paternalistic "love" they would incentivise workers to fundamentally change their entire worldview

and way of life in accordance with the needs of industrial capitalism and a patriarchal understanding of the gospel.

To illustrate his argument, Sarasin reminded his fellow policy makers that over 80 per cent of cholera deaths in London in 1849 were workers dwelling in poor housing. Bad living conditions had an even more negative effect, however, on workers' morals and Christian civilisation per se. Sarasin urged his fellow employers to use their imagination.

> Is it any wonder that a man coming in tired from work does not feel well in the damp, foul-smelling air of a room barely warmed by a bad stove, that he then seeks to forget his joyless life in the pub, only to return even more unsatisfied with wasted wages and to belittle his wife with reproaches?
> Is it to be wondered at if the exhausted housemother, on whom the burden of the household falls most heavily, gradually loses her sense of order, of cleanliness, of making the home pleasant, if she is forced, let us say, to carry the water for cooking, washing and cleaning up 5 and 6 flights of stairs, if there is […] no drain for washing-up water, etc., or if the uninhabitability of a dark, damp cellar room deprives her of all love and desire for domesticity? Is it not all the more understandable, indeed excusable, to have unhappiness, quarrels and bad child-rearing when the hard-won income is barely sufficient? [43]

As this quote illustrates, not only the problem, but also the solution to the ills of industrial society for Sarasin and his friends were deeply gendered and called for special measures for men and women. The male workers were to be targeted as heads of their families and their family income. It was therefore important that male workers could not only rent but preferably buy their own houses with affordable mortgages. Transforming migrant workers into:

> a settled citizen, from a proletarian [into] a master of his own; to turn a man who feels alien and dependent into a man who, even if in the most modest measure, knows himself to be a co-owner of the earth's surface – that brings about a kind of revolution in the whole train of thought and consciousness, a transformation of man and his individual world view.[44]

This "revolution" would occur on multiple levels. Firstly, in the domestic sphere: instead of spending his hard-earned money in the

pub, this "man" would come home after work into a house he could call "my home is my castle" – Sarasin quoted this saying in English. This modest castle would not only be "a place to stay, but to truly live with wife and child at the sacred hearth of fire in a union that is not only legal but also moral and factual, so that the principle and spirit of the family, this foundation of human society, can come to the fore unabridged."[45] The "revolution" would, secondly, also have important political implications: "Converting non-owners into [cottage] owners" would elevate them into the small bourgeoisie and, therefore, turn them "into allies" of their employers who lived in grand mansions in town and large estates in the countryside in summer.

In keeping with the patriarchal gender order, Sarasin's housing policy was also designed to support women in their supposedly natural and Christian domestic duties. In contrast to his English counterparts, however, Sarasin was not a fan of the idea of rooms on two separate floors. His houses in Basel had kitchens, closets, dining rooms, living rooms and bedrooms all located on the ground floor, "so that while the hearth requires [the woman's] presence, she can attend to the children through the open door, or conversely, when she is at work in her room, she can watch the entrance to the house and the sleeping youngsters by light."[46]

It is important to add that Sarasin and other industrialists' patriarchal concerns for working class women was limited by economic considerations. Mothers and wives were to perform these duties not instead of, but rather in addition to working eleven-hour days (ten on Saturdays) in factories.[47] The first Swiss factory law from 1877 prescribed an additional half-hour lunch break for women so that they could prepare food for their families at home.

So, although a lot of Sarasin's social housing policies, inspired by imperial Britain, were rhetoric, it is important to understand what he and his conservative friends thought they were doing. They saw social housing and the other measures mentioned in this subchapter – workhouses for "criminal poor boys" or the city mission – as tools to protect and create not just any civilisation, but rather a

conservative, evangelical Christian civilisation built around a patriarchal family with the working man as breadwinner and his wife as homemaker with their kids around the holy "hearth" of their modest house and garden. It is with this tough "Christian love" that Sarasin and other conservative capitalists hoped to cure the ills of industrial society. All this was by no means separated from the Basel Mission's struggle to collect donations throughout Europe and its use of industry as a proselytising instrument in India. It was connected on multiple levels, as the rest of this chapter will sketch out.

Performing 'civility' in Europe

By the 1850s, the Basel Mission was running stations in China, West Africa, the United States of America and India, with India as the largest and costliest mission.[48] It employed sixty-seven European missionaries and other staff, mostly from German countries and Switzerland, one Indian missionary, and ninety-nine Indian auxiliaries as teachers and caretakers in mission schools. Together, they oversaw 2,706 pupils in Mission schools and 2,247 converted members in Basel Mission churches, many of whom worked in the Basel Mission industries. In comparison, the African stations employed thirty Europeans and twenty-six African auxiliaries, who oversaw 276 pupils in Mission schools and an additional 385 converts in Basel Mission churches.[49]

This relation was reflected in the Basel Mission communication. To keep donations coming in, the Basel Mission – like all missions – managed a continuous flow of information designed to inform and motivate different audiences. Yearly reports in German, English and French were distributed for free among mission friends in India, Britain, the United States, Switzerland, France, and the German countries. Additionally, German readers could subscribe either to a popular monthly illustrated journal called the "heathen's messenger" (*Heidenbote*) or a mission magazine tailored to more educated donors. Schools and children could buy illustrated story books, maps

and life stories of famous missionaries or converts in English, French, or German. These publications were distributed via pastors, bookshops or trading companies between Berrysburg near Philadelphia in the West, Moscow in the East, Trieste in the South and Hamburg and St. Petersburg in the North. Most sellers were in Germanophone Europe, which at the time included the Prussian trading cities of Danzig in current Poland and Riga in Latvia.[50] In this continuous flow of Mission publications, the Indian Mission with its schools and industries received by far the most coverage for decades. Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi and Moritz von Brescius have pointed out how German mercenaries and scientists in British India popularised images of colonial India in German territories.[51] In addition to these military and elite scientific circles, the Basel Mission's vast network of donors and auxiliary societies ought also to be understood as a main channel through which ideas about colonial India circulated across multiple countries in German and French speaking Europe. This Europe was undergoing deep changes, struggling with economic inequalities, growing demands for more democratic representation in newly emerging nation states and deep cultural transformations through growing literacy and popular publications. How the overlapping geographies of the Basel Mission's multinational fundraising campaigns and proselytising efforts in British India shaped social and political change in Europe, particularly the so-called 'social' and 'workers questions', has hardly been studied thus far. The Basel Mission affords us a good opportunity to examine some of these connections.

As mentioned, the vast majority of European people who donated to the Basel Mission seemed to have been small donors – half a coin for the *Halbbatzenkollekte* or other smaller amounts as donors in one of the many auxiliary societies or as direct individual donors. The Basel Mission archives give us little indication of who these donors were. We only know that their numbers went into the tens of thousands. They were most likely part of these dense evangelical networks that Carl Sarasin and other elite members of the Basel Mission leadership built around their City Missions or

"Inner Missions" and auxiliary societies across evangelical Europe and even among protestant minorities in catholic regions like Bavaria. It was through these networks that the Basel Mission leadership could reach working and rural families, which they sought to "uplift" into truly civilised petit bourgeois Christians, and offer them the opportunity to show some "Christian love" themselves. Through donating half a coin for the cause of converting "Hindu-Christians" or not yet converted "heathens", small donors in Europe could enact their belonging to Christianity and civility. The 1856 yearly report, for example, quotes a letter from an unnamed pastor:

> I am hereby sending you 2 francs as contribution to the Mission. An 11-year-old poor orphan, to whom so much was gradually given by generous benefactors, and who passed away blessedly not too long ago, bequeathed her entire savings to the poor heathens she loved to hear about and for whom she also prayed, a few days before her death.

In the same report, an aunt shared a story about her niece who, after hearing stories about the mission, had started a collection among her siblings and friends and donated the sum of one guilder.[52]

Beatrice Tschudi-Barbatti has rightfully warned against taking these stories at face value.[53] They were part of the mission propaganda designed to touch their readers' hearts and open their wallets just as much as they represented social reality, if not more. But as Tschudi-Barbatti also shows, the Mission had the means – and was itself under considerable financial stress – to morally pressure working and rural individuals and families who often depended economically on the good will of conservative employers into donating. They had a large and experienced network of collectors who managed to collect increasing amounts of money. Toward the end of the century, small half-coin donors contributed more than one million francs annually to the mission.[54] Given the mission's deeply patriarchal culture, it should come as no surprise that doing the tedious work of collecting small donations relied to a considerable degree on unpaid female labour. Celebrating the half-

coin-collection's fifty-year anniversary, the "heathen messenger" (*Heidenbote*) wrote:

> And who can name them all, … tens of thousands of faithful collectors in town and country, some of whom for decades … tirelessly made their rounds, in the country often in deep snow for hours from farm to farm, to then bring the collected mite to the collector, beaming with joy! Poor girls, who often lacked even the bare necessities, have raised hundreds of francs for the mission over the years.[55]

Performing "Christian Civility" in India

As previous studies have shown, to carry out the actual proselytising work in the Basel Mission's schools, factories and churches in India, the Basel Mission leadership recruited men from rural and low-income families mostly in Southern Germany and Switzerland. They grew up in an environment shaped culturally by the mission's numerous auxiliary societies and *Missionsvereine* led by pastors and Mission "friends", as well as among pious trading establishments. They could point young men in pursuit of adventure and a purpose toward the Basel Mission's "Swabian barracks", as the mission training college was called.[56] It prepared its graduates for the "battlefield" with often humiliating training, as the mission leaders called their stations "in the heathen world" overseas. The missionary, according to an internal mission letter from 1886,

> must venture into the dark country and pitch his tent in an unknown, hostile place. He must first move hearts through the preaching of Christ; he must bring the rough stones and beams for the building of the house of God and erect them in the sweat of his brow. Only then … can the women come and decorate the house with a tender hand, setting up the lamp of discipline and order and the little lights of grace and kindness.[57]

As this quotation indicates, housing and a patriarchal division of labour around the homely "hearth" that the Basel Mission's leadership used to "civilise" European working and rural families was

key also to the proselytising strategies in India. The Christian house was to serve as an example "for the heathens and Mohammedans […] to see the image … of Christian family life before them".[58] Female missionaries, moreover, sought to instruct Indian women how to provide a "a cosy home"[59] for their families and "… to utilise what they have learned in their household, and through order and cleanliness, of which the Hindu otherwise has his own concepts, to make the house he builds from his earnings into a home for the man."[60]

Shaping migrant Europeans or Asian "Hindu-Christians" into home-owning industrial worker families was far from easy. In Europe, strikes, organised labour movements, and socialist and social democratic political parties challenged employers and their policies from the 1840s onwards and played an increasingly strong role in co-determining patriarchal welfare policies and workers' rights.[61] On the Malabar coast and South Canara, missionaries benefitted from British colonial rule, which excluded colonised Indians from any direct say in organising labour relations or welfare policies. This gave "industry brothers" as European factory managers were called, considerable power, which however never remained unchallenged. This is the impression given by their very detailed reports they were expected to send regularly to Basel.

One of the first and therefore most prestigious Basel Mission factories was the weaving mill in Mangalore. There, in 1882, a single European mission manager supervised 102 Indian workers, about half of whom were women who did the winding and twisting for the men who did the main weaving. Earlier that year, the weavers – thirty-three men – went on strike to protest having to attend early morning mass before work. However, their strike failed after the "industry brother" threatened to fire them. A similar fate befell 112 workers at a weaving mill in Calicut. In 1884, the "industry brother" there expected his married and female workers to attend mass on Sundays. He expected his unmarried male workers to attend both Sunday services. When some of the workers questioned the manager's right to force them to attend church instead of leaving it

up to the individual, the manager threatened to fire them too. This seemed to silence the criticism.[62] As Rudolf Fischer has shown, workers' protest in the form of absenteeism or quitting work remained comparatively moderate until the twentieth century.[63]

The mission factory managers' control over their workers did not stop at the factory gates or the church doors. Workers were made to buy their rice from the Basel Mission Trading Company that claimed to offer a lower rate than others. Profits from these sales were used to buy infrastructure for the community church. Through loans from savings banks into which workers had to pay and that were managed by the Basel Mission Trading Company, factory managers created additional economic dependencies. These loans were given to help workers fulfil Carl Sarasin and the other Basel leadership's anglophile visions of 'civilising' through cottages. In Jeppo, for example, close to Mangalore, the Mission ran a tile factory with almost 200 workers in 1884. Like their counterparts in Basel, the Jeppo tile workers too had become small house owners in "a nice little Christian village", the "industry brother" reported diligently to his superiors in Basel. The houses were surrounded by "profitable gardens". The workers had planted trees and received an additional loan from the mission to dig their own well for fresh water supply.[64] Converted workers saving enough money to build their own house and garden was the ultimate success story told by mission managers from all the Mission's weaving mills, tile factories and other industries along the Malabar coast.

With a population of over six million people in the late nineteenth century, the Basel Mission's proselytising success rate on the Malabar coast and South Canara was very modest. In 1896, their converted community counted 12,331 people.[65] Yet, as Jaiprakrash Raghaviah's work allows us to understand, the Mission's industries played a significant role in the industrial development of the region. Despite the missionaries' quasi totalitarian demands, small groups from low caste communities managed to use these factories to break free from caste-restrictions and eventually not only gain economic, but

also cultural independence and to play a significant role in the region's economic development.

Conclusion

The Basel Mission affords a unique opportunity to bring histories and historiographies into dialogue that often remain disconnected. Through its fundraising operations, it connected societies and cultures far beyond the boundaries of Britain and to empire-building in India. These religious and financial networks were embedded, moreover, in equally wide-spread economic networks as the example of Carl Sarasin or Johan Ulrich Zellweger showed. Zooming in on these elites allows us to see an influential faction of economically liberal and culturally conservative capitalists who admired British imperial power not only for its economic opportunities but equally for its Christian spirit.

The Basel Mission combined "ora et labora" – industrial capitalism and proselytisation – in unique ways in Europe and on the Malabar Coast and South Canara. By subjecting impoverished rural and urban Europeans to civilising discourses and practices that included continuous missionary fundraising efforts to protect conservative bourgeois culture from the perils of industrial change, and by using industries as proselytising tools on the Malabar Coast and South Canara, the Basel Mission connected historical experiences from colonised, impoverished, middle class and wealthy men, women and children that transgressed multiple continental, national, imperial, religious and linguistic boundaries. These historical experiences were vastly different depending on where and how people served or were targeted by the Basel Mission. But their memories have been muted by Eurocentric historiographies fragmented into national narratives of supposedly separate British, German, French, Swiss, Indian and other histories. It is high time this transimperial history was recovered. Examining the discourses and practices of organisations such as the Basel Mission that saw its *raison d'être* in transgressing

all boundaries to disrupt non-Christian spiritualities in the service of protestant proselytising seems a promising way of doing so.

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[1] Vierter Jahresbericht der Industrie-Kommission der Evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft in Basel, Basel 1856, pp. 3–4. All translations from German by the author with a little help from DeepL.

[2] osterhammel, "'The Great Work of Uplifting Mankind'. Zivilisierungsmission und Moderne".

[3] Hall, *Civilising Subjects*; Hall and Rose, *At Home with the Empire*; Stoler, *Duress*; Schrauwers, *Merchant Kings*.

[4] This argument is developed more extensively in Schär, "Switzerland, Borneo and the Dutch Indies"; Schär and Toivanen, "Expansion alongside Integration: A New History of Imperial Europe".

[5] Etherington, *Missions and Empire*; Hölzl, *Gläubige Imperialisten*; Harries, *Butterflies & Barbarians*; Becker, *Conversio im Wandel*; Fabre, *Protestantisme et Colonisation*; Christ, *Zwischen Religion und Geschäft*; Green and Viaene, *Religious Internationals in the Modern World.*

[6] A notable exception is Philip, *Civilising Natures*.

[7] Clark and Ledger-Thomas, "The Protestant International," pp. 23–52.

[8] Walls, "The Eighteenth-Century Protestant Missionary Awakening in Its European Context"; Stunt, *From Awakening to Secession*; Stewart, *Restoring the Reformation*.

[9] Clark and Ledger-Thomas, "The Protestant International," p. 29.

[10] Schlatter, *Geschichte Der Basler Mission 1815–1915*, 1, pp. 1–27; Jenkins, "The Church Missionary Society and the Basel Mission". Additionally, the Basel Mission opened its first Mission stations in Armenia in 1820 and Liberia in 1827.

[11] See the introduction to this volume.

[12] Crabäsch, "Fürst otto Viktor von Schönburg-Waldenburg (1785–1859)".

[13] Calculations based on the financial report for 1855 published in Einundvierzigster Jahresbericht der evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft zu Basel, Basel 1856, pp. 127–142.

[14] Tschudi-Barbatti, "Die Halbbatzen-Kollekte," pp. 112–122.

[15] Schlatter, *Geschichte Der Basler Mission 1815–1915*, 1, p. 224.

[16] Kinkelin, "Die Bandweberei in Basel," p. 11.

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[18] Schär, *Tropenliebe*; Labhardt, *Kapital Und Moral*; Stettler, Haenger, and Labhardt, *Baumwolle, Sklaven und Kredite*; Sarasin, "Stadt der Bürger: bürgerliche Macht und städtische Gesellschaft".

[19] Kinkelin, "Die Bandweberei in Basel," pp. 10–13.

[20] Ratschiller Nasim, *Medical Missionaries*, p. 56; Miller, *Missionary Zeal and Institutional Control*.

[21] Köppli, *Protestantische Unternehmer in der Schweiz des 19. Jahrhunderts*, pp. 111–157; Mooser, "Der 'christliche Unternehmer' Karl Sarasin".

[22] StABS, PA 212, R14, Verhandlungen der eidgenössischen Expertenkommission für die 1851 in London abgehaltene Gewerbeausstellung.

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[25] StABS, PA 212, R 29.1, Vorträge über England 1850/1851, handwritten manuscript, p. II–III.

[26] Fischer-Tiné, "Reclaiming Savages in 'Darkest England' and 'Darkest India'".

[27] StABS, PA 212, R 29.1, Vorträge über England 1850/1851, handwritten manuscript, p. vi–vii.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Mooser, "Der 'christliche Unternehmer'," pp. 76–77.

[30] David and Schaufelbuehl, "Protestantische Wohltätigkeit und der Wohlfahrtsstaat in der Schweiz, 1850–1914".

[31] The best analysis of bourgeois attempts to fight against industrial poverty in Switzerland is still Braun, *Sozialer und kultureller Wandel in einem ländlichen Industriegebiet*, pp. 109–184.

[32] Arlettaz., "L'élite Nationale et l'élaboration d'un ordre Social"; Schumacher and Degen, *Freiwillig Verpflichtet*.

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[48] Jahresbericht der evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft zu Basel, Basel 1859, pp. 137–144.

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[52] Jahresbericht der evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft zu Basel, Basel 1856, pp. 118–119.

[53] Tschudi-Barbatti, "Die Halbbatzen-Kollekte".

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[55] Das Jubiläum der Halbbatzenkollekte, in: Der evangelische Heidenbote, 2, 1905, p. 1.

[56] Konrad, *Missionsbräute*, p. 41.

[57] Prodolliet, *Wider die Schamlosigkeit und das Elend der heidnischen Weiber*, p. 30.

[58] Quote from the mission inspector in 1938 in Ibid., p. 40.

[59] Quoted in Ibid., p. 36.

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[61] Schaffner, *Die Basler Arbeiterbevölkerung im 19. Jahrhundert*.

[62] Bericht der Handlungs- und Industriekommission der evangelischen Missionsgesellschaft zu Basel, Basel 1885, pp. 7 and 17.

[63] Fischer, Die Basler Missionsindustrie, pp. 162–222.

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CHAPTER 4

A 'Terrain of Exchange': The Kanarese Evangelical Mission in the Interwar Years (1918–1928)[1]

Philippe Bornet

Abstract

This contribution deals with the history of the Kanarese Evangelical Mission (KEM) in the interwar period in regions of present-day Karnataka that were formerly part of the fieldwork of the Basel Mission. After sketching the political context of the period, marked in particular by the development of Indian nationalism and social reform, the chapter analyses the emergence of groups of "Indian Christians" within the mission church in the 1920s. We then look at some cases of encounters between missionaries and other religious groups in the field of proselytism, especially Jains. We also discuss the question of education and the complicated issue of imparting religious knowledge through missionary schools in this period. What were the results of these encounters? How did the specificity of this missionary organisation encourage (or not) the development of a locally governed church? More generally, what does it tell us about the evolution of missionary societies in India in the interwar period?

Keywords: Mission Exchanges; Interwar period; Indian Christians; Proselytism; Education.

Christian Missions as "Terrains of Exchange"?

Nile Green, the historian of Islam, in his book *Terrains of Exchange* (2014) challenges the idea that evangelical missions in South Asia were instruments through which Christianity spread from the centre to the periphery, along with colonial power.[2] Green emphasises that many of the projects undertaken by missionary societies allowed for the development of initiatives that were at odds with, and sometimes even antithetical to, missionary ambitions. For example, looking at the translation of the Bible into Urdu and other South Asian languages in the early twentieth century, Green shows that it often required collaboration between European scholars and local specialists in the target language. These specialists often appropriated knowledge, practices and technologies learned in the missionary context and then used them in the service of their own interests. Some went on working for other competing organisations, or even founded their own religious society and developed it along the lines of a missionary society, as in the case of Aḥmadiyya Islam. Green also adopts a perspective borrowed from the sociology of religions, using the notion of "rational choice" to describe the situation of competition in which "religious firms" found themselves in late modern colonial South Asia. While the "rational choice" approach may be a bit too simplistic to account for the complexities of different historical and social situations, the various examples Green examines show how projects born out of the conviction that Christianity is the only true religion have opened up unexpected opportunities.[3]

In this chapter, I explore selected areas of activity of a Swiss missionary society active in Karnataka from 1918 to 1927, the Kanarese Evangelical Mission (KEM[4]), as it came into contact with the complex socio-political realities of the field. After sketching the general context in which it operated, I analyse a few examples of encounters that took place during this period. First, we focus on the community itself: did the circumstances of the time allow for the expression of interests that did not coincide with those of the

missionaries? Was the ecclesial component of the mission an area in which different perspectives came into conflict? Second, what happened in the encounters between the missionaries and other religious groups, such as Jains and Hindus? Was there "exchange", competition, or mutual ignorance? Finally, we focus on the extra-religious activities of the mission, especially the administration of schools staffed by both Christians and non-Christians. Does Green's notion of missions as "terrains of exchange" apply to this particular case?

Swiss by Necessity: The Kanarese Evangelical Mission (1918–1927)

First of all, and since it has been little researched – except for a chapter in a book by Norman Sargant and an article by Paul Jenkins – a few words about the Kanarese Evangelical Mission are in order.[5] With the First World War, and following the attack on Madras by the German ship "Emden" in September 1914, all German societies in British India were declared "of enemy concern". The German missionaries of the Basel Mission were then either interned in camps or repatriated back to Europe.[6] To support the remaining Swiss staff of the mission – about seventeen missionaries – a special committee composed entirely of Swiss delegates was formed in 1916, with the support of the Basel Mission. In 1918, the British government demanded that all ties with German institutions be suppressed, and the special committee was disbanded. However, a new plan was designed to continue the activities in South India: the creation of a new missionary society based in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, under the impetus of a certain Pierre de Benoît (1884–1963), a graduate of the medical faculty of Zurich and a fervent advocate for evangelism. With the help of high-ranking diplomats and philanthropists from the French-speaking part of Switzerland, the Kanarese Evangelical Mission was founded in Lausanne in 1918.[7]

The British government, however, insisted that its centre be in India, under the supervision of a British committee called the "German Missions Committee". As Zimmermann puts it: "the management of the work was left entirely to the members of the two district committees (South Canara and South Mahratta), who simply sent a copy of their minutes to the German Missions Committee and the 'Swiss Mission Relief Committee in Lausanne'".[8] Nevertheless, the new organisation developed an impressive propaganda activity with the publication of two periodicals: *Mission aux Indes: Bulletin du comité suisse de secours* (1918–1928) and *Mitteilungen der kanaresischen Mission in Indien* (1919–1927). It also published books and organised events such as Sadhu Sundar Singh's tour of Europe (including Switzerland) in 1922.[9] In 1927, when German missionaries were again allowed to work in India, it was merged back into the Basel Mission after complex and acrimonious negotiations.

In India, the KEM retained much of the structure left by the Basel Mission, with two districts: one around Dharwad and Hubli ("South Mahratta") and one around Mangalore ("South Canara"). It operated with reduced financial resources, as the profitable industries of the Basel Mission had been placed under British control and their contribution to the missionary work was drastically reduced.[10] The missionaries arrived rather unprepared, often lacking knowledge of the region's rich and complex culture and linguistic skills in the local languages (Kannada and Tulu). Importantly, the Swiss employees of the mission (about 50) were largely outnumbered by their Indian collaborators (about 500). This is significant, because the period of the KEM coincides not only with the beginning of the Non-Cooperation movement (launched by Gandhi in 1920),[11] but also with the development of several movements demanding the recognition of the social and linguistic specificities of the region.[12] Despite the popular notion that Indian Christians were "denationalised", it is clear that these movements also affected people associated with the mission: church members, staff and the people the mission was trying to evangelise.

The KEM is a unique case: it was specifically designed as a "Swiss society" for strategic and diplomatic purposes and its formation involved high-level diplomatic negotiations with Great Britain and various authorities in India and Switzerland. It aspired to be a neutral actor mediating between the imperialist agenda of Britain and the independentist velleities of Indian Christian communities, transcending politics and promoting social and religious causes beyond conflicting national interests.

Transformations within the Church

In this general context, the first question to be considered is the extent to which the growing nationalist sentiments and, in particular, the emergence of an Indian Christian identity impacted the activities of the mission. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, a national consciousness did indeed develop within the Indian Christian communities, as evidenced by the case of the publication of the *Christian Patriot* from Madras from 1890 onwards and the founding of the Indian Missionary Society by Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah (1874–1945) in 1903.[13] How did this phenomenon manifest itself in the main locations of the mission, and to what extent was the KEM period remarkable in this respect?

The Indianisation of missionary Christianity

At the beginning of the twentieth century, an Indian Christian from Mangalore, a certain Thomas Roberts (dates alive unknown), submitted a formal complaint to the Basel Mission's headquarters regarding the unequal treatment of Indian Christians. He espoused the concept of an Indian Church, as put forth by the *Christian Patriot*, and proceeded to launch his own magazine, the *Indian Christian Journal* (1905–1906), published from Mangalore and outside of the Basel Mission's press. In this publication, he articulated a compelling critique of the missionaries' reluctance to

permit Indians to assume prominent roles within the church. Additionally, he condemned the mission's industries, which he deemed to be driven by profit and exploitative of the inexpensive labour of Indian Christians. One article, presumably authored by Roberts, explicitly contended that "in the Basel Mission, God and Mammon are yoked together and Mammon is getting the upper hand".[14] It is not possible to ascertain the extent of success Roberts achieved in this endeavour. Nevertheless, it is evident that by this point in time at least, there were voices within the Indian Christian Protestant community advocating for independence from Western missionaries. In 1917, Pierre de Benoît observed during a tour of various mission stations: "A small, but influential minority of our Christians are trying their best to drive the Swiss Mission out of the country, hoping to gain all sorts of material advantages in this case. Others are contaminated by the general cry for the quick establishment of HoME RULE, etc. …"[15]

One indication of this transformation was the implementation of a revised constitution in 1922, drafted by William Tomlinson (1897–1944), the Wesleyan missionary responsible for overseeing the KEM. This new constitution sought to empower local actors by vesting them with greater autonomy. The text stipulated that Swiss and Indian delegates were to be afforded equal participation in the main committees, namely the District Church Board (church affairs) and the District Committee (mission affairs). A noteworthy section of this constitution addresses the obligations of Indian Christians towards their neighbours, with a specific focus on the matter of political convictions and preferences:

> Christians are not only members of the body of Christ, they are members of the great human race, and they are citizens of India, their native land, and brothers of all other Indians. By becoming Christians they are not denationalised. Just as Paul was supremely a patriot, so love of country should reign in the heart of every Indian Christian. Members of the Christian Church should be ready to serve their country by joining Municipal, Taluk, and District Boards, and the other and greater Government Councils, as opportunity may open to them.[16]

This rhetoric of equality had practical limits, however, as we see in the comparison of salaries between Western and Indian workers and in the organisation of special meetings from which Indian workers were sometimes excluded.[17] This inequality contributed to the emergence of more "independentist" sentiments among members of the local congregations, to the extent that the Swiss missionaries soon found themselves struggling to control their own congregations. A speech delivered at a meeting convened in Bern in 1926 with delegates from the Kanarese Mission and the Basel Mission illustrates the predicament of Swiss missionaries situated on the periphery of the institution they sought to oversee: "[T]he situation is irreparable: Abner Soans, who has the most influence, is entirely in the hands of Herbert. […] Can we allow the natives to do as they please with the missions?"[18]

This passage is an allusion to the emergence of dissident groups within the Basel Mission Christians. In Mangalore, the "Union Church Party" was created in response to the indictment of an Indian colleague, George Herbert (dates alive unknown), by a former Swiss employee of the Basel Mission, a certain oskar Wüthrich (1885–1945).[19] The journal of this group, *Satyavrata* ("The truthful", monthly from 1925 to 1928), published polemical texts reflecting the opinions of the lay members, in Kannada and English.[20] It was printed on a press that also produced a number of non-Christian works, including those of the renowned Swami Ram Das / Vittal Rao (1884–1963).[21] The movement ceased to exist in 1928; however, similar initiatives emerged in the main centres where the KEM was active, particularly in Dharwad, the Nilgiris, and Hubli. In the latter place, a former Indian doctor who had worked for the military, C. J. Prabhakar, was disillusioned by the lack of complete independence from the Western missionaries that the new constitution would afford to Indian Christians. He proceeded to establish a new community, called the "Small party", comprising an autonomous organisation and distinct liturgical practices. The relationship between missionaries and the community became so strained that some disputes were taken to the civil courts.[22]

Concurrently, Indian Christians of diverse denominations, encompassing both Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions, initiated efforts to protect the interests of Indian Christians in regional politics. One illustrative example is the foundation of the "Kanara Indian Christian Civic League" in Mangalore in January 1925, in which Protestants and Catholics collaborated, a partnership that had earlier been regarded as potentially contentious by the missionaries.[23]

Thus, while the Basel Mission's communication and control mechanisms were designed to maintain order within its communities, the KEM period was characterised by a notable decline in governance efficacy and overall control. Local committees were primarily responsible for decision-making, the number of Western missionaries in the field was limited, there was no "inspector" to report on the local situation to the headquarters, and financial issues imposed constant restrictions. These circumstances created favourable conditions for the emancipation of the local communities from Western missionaries, as Prabhakar also observes: "By removing the Basel Missionaries from the scene the Government unwittingly removed the control over the native Christians and allow[ed] them to join the national movement."[24] In the other direction, the situation encouraged Swiss theologians and thinkers not only to emphasise the "providential" role of a Swiss mission during this period, but also to think about peace and religion in new ways – with ideas found both in the Bible and in the discourses of anti-colonial leaders such as Gandhi.[25]

In this context, a number of local figures emerged as new leaders, with varying degrees of association with the missionary institution and its resources.

The emergence of local leaders

A first example is a convert from a Brahmin Saraswat family born in Karkala, Mark Sanjiva Rao (1883–1955)[26] a cousin of Vittal Rao / Swami Ramdas (1884–1963), a renowned spiritual master and an

alumnus of the Basel Mission high school in Mangalore.[27] Sanjiva Rao received his education at the Mangalore Missionary high school, subsequently attending a professional school, and commenced his career in forestry in Uppinangady, situated next to Puttur. He converted in 1902 under the influence of the German missionary Gottlieb Fischer (1868–1940). Although he does not describe any difficulties in the process, there is no reason to believe that his experience was any easier or smoother than that of earlier Brahmin converts such as Anandarao / Herrmann August Kaundinya (1867–1943).[28] For many years, he occupied the role of district treasurer, undertaking a monthly journey to all the stations in the South Kanara district to disburse salaries to the personnel of the mission.[29] In 1919, following the establishment of the KEM, he requested appointment as a full missionary. His initial request was rejected on the grounds that it would incite "opposition […] among the natives."[30] The situation subsequently evolved, and in the same year, he was appointed as the first "Indian missionary" of the KEM, with a posting in Kasaragod.[31] In 1938, he married Pauline Müller, a nurse employed at the Udupi hospital. This was one of the few instances of a European member of the Basel Mission marrying an Indian colleague.[32] He was subsequently reassigned to a new post, assuming the role of head of the Sumaddi (Guledgudd) mission, where his wife was responsible for the management of the local orphanage. Following his retirement in 1950, the couple relocated to Switzerland, settling in the Aarau region.

Sanjiva Rao developed an original theological approach, informed by Western theologians and scholars of religion, yet firmly anchored in the Indian cultural context. In a text published in the journal of the Indian YMCA, *Young Men of India*, "God, the Great Reality"[33], he proposed a reading of Christian cosmology through a Vedāntic lens. In 1931, he delivered lectures at the United Theological College in Bangalore, which were later published as "Types of Religious Consciousness, Hindu and Christian".[34] This text demonstrates his familiarity with contemporary comparative religious studies, esotericism (particularly the work *Death and its Mystery* by Camille

Flammarion, 1920–1922), and Western theology, including the writings of Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt (1842–1919).[35] The text concludes with a recommendation for the development of an "ashram-based religious consciousness" as a Christian soteriological perspective for an independent India.[36]

Another noteworthy case is that of Krishna Raya Karunakara (1888–1965). A Brahmin by birth, he underwent a conversion experience initiated by the missionary Alphons Schosser (1869–1950). Subsequently, he was appointed as an "Indian missionary" in 1921, during the KEM period. In the same year, he was dispatched to Bangalore to pursue his studies at the United Theological College, an institution renowned for its liberal approach to theological matters. He encountered a Danish theologian, Lars Peter Larsen (1862–1940), and was then employed by the same institution as a teacher in 1925. In a letter to Schosser dated 1927, he stated that "one problem of the Indian Church, a problem which is likely to become more urgent as days go by, is the development of a suitable *Vernacular Theological literature*, in all its aspects, and we there in Bangalore are trying our best to meet this need as far as Kanarese is concerned."[37] Following the reopening of the Seminary in Mangalore in 1929, Karunakara was hired as a church historian and subsequently assumed leadership of the college until his death in 1965.

A third case is that of Channappa Uttangi (1881–1962). He was born to Christian parents in the Bellary region and received his education at the local Basel Mission School. He learned English and Sanskrit in Dharwad from the missionary Hermann Risch (1863–1928), after which he joined the Dharwad high school of the Basel Mission. At the age of 21, and encouraged by his pious mother, he commenced study in theology at the Mangalore Seminary. During this period, he got interested in European authors, including Voltaire, Thomas Paine and the agnostic thinker Robert Ingersoll, and became a member of the London-based "Rationalist Press Association" in secret. At the school, he began to question the efficacy of the prevailing pedagogical methods. As he himself states, he was unable

to "tolerate the old traditions of teaching which included a curriculum that had not changed for the past 20 years, the use of scarce textbooks and thin library resources and the medium of German-Kannada, which contained very stylized words."[38] He successfully completed his final examinations in 1908 and subsequently joined the Basel Mission, initially serving as an evangelist and later as a teacher at the Mission high school in Dharwad, which was under the auspices of the KEM.[39] In 1919, he delivered a speech comparing Hinduism to Christianity to a gathering of Brahmins in Varanasi.[40] The text sought to evaluate the validity of Christian theology in the light of an Indian conceptual framework, discussing for example the *guṇas* of Jesus or the question of his past lives. Ultimately, Jesus was regarded as a more credible path to salvation than other Hindu figures, such as Rama. As noted by the editor of Uttangi's biography, "when the Kanarese Evangelical Mission had taken over, their Missionaries were considerably liberal as to accept Uttangi's 'Bethlehem Beckons Banares'."[41] During his tenure in Dharwad, Uttangi had the opportunity to engage with both Lingayat authorities and a corpus of Lingayat literature. He authored numerous books on the Lingayat tradition and its contemporary relevance. These include a work on the Anubhava Mantapa, a gathering of Lingayat saints who exchanged views on the tradition and are known for their *vacanas* (utterances); another on the founder of the Lingayat tradition and his concern for the outcasts, Basava; and a third on "Basaveshwara and the progress of Karnataka." Additionally, Uttangi was linked to Shri Hanagal Kumaraswamy (1867–1930), a Lingayat monk who had set up the Veerasaiva Mahasabha in 1904 and amassed a collection of palm leaf manuscripts of Lingayat *vacanas*. In close collaboration with the KEM missionary Jakob Urner (1883–1961), Channappa Uttangi became a distinguished scholar of Lingayat literature, with a particular focus on a sixteenth-century *vacanakara*, Sarvajña. He developed an original inclusivist perspective, seeking to reconcile Christianity, the Lingayat tradition, and his political activism.[42]

In conclusion, it is striking that the KEM period coincides with the emergence of local figures, who were able to assume significant roles: the leadership of dissident congregations (as evidenced in the cases of George Herbert and C. J. Prabhakar), major responsibilities within the mission (as seen in the cases of Mark Sanjiva Rao and K. R. Karunakara), or the pursuit of their own intellectual interests and "syncretistic" worldviews (as exemplified by Channappa Uttangi).

Proselytism and Encounters with Other Religions

General context

A look at the official British census of 1922 gives a general picture of the religious landscape as seen from outside missionary propaganda. Christians (all denominations included) were a small minority in South Kanara: 78.6 per cent of the population declared their religion as "Hindu", 12.1 per cent as "Muslim" and about 8.5 per cent as Christian (an absolute number of 106,354). In the South Mahratta region, an average of 86 per cent (between the districts of Kanara, Dharwad and Bijapur) identified as Hindu, 10.8 per cent as Muslim, 0.56 per cent as Jain and 1.61 per cent as Christian (an absolute number of 23,820 people).[43] Christians were then a small but significant minority, and among them, Protestant Christians were an even smaller minority compared to Catholics and Syrian Christians.

Hidden behind the generic category of "Hindus" in the census, the two main communities with which the missionaries interacted were the Billavas (around Mangalore) and the Lingayats (in the north). In addition, some stations were located in major religious centres, such as Udupi (home to a famous Vaishnava temple complex tracing its history back to Madhva) or Karkala (a major Jain pilgrimage site), and there were major Muslim communities in all of the coastal towns and cities. The modalities of contact with each community changed over time, ranging from open hostility to more

benevolent sentiments. In Udupi, for example, the swamis of the Maṭh had burnt down the missionary compound in 1856, but their attitude seems to have softened over time – perhaps because they realised that the missionaries were not in a position to seriously threaten their activities, or because they resorted to more official means of countering the missionary presence (as in the case of the "conscience clause", see below).[44]

Encounters with Jainism

While the propaganda material usually showed a missionary's or an evangelist's sermon being listened to attentively by an interested audience (Fig. 4.1), several cases from the field show a different picture, with a reluctant audience ready to oppose the missionaries with counter-arguments or humour.

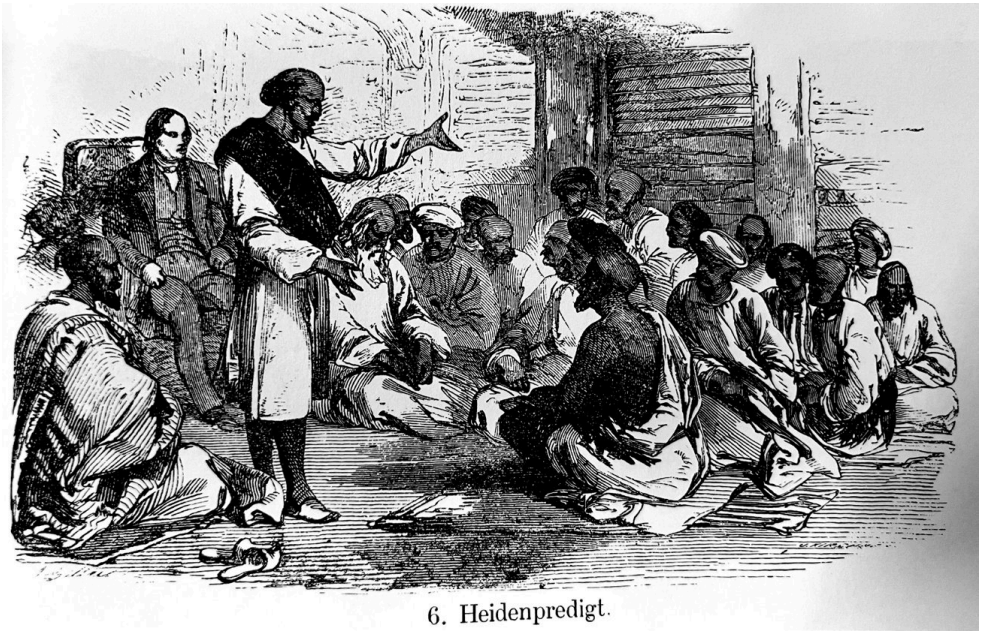

Figure 4.1: "The Preaching to the Heathen", *Calwer Historisches Bilderbuch der Welt*, 1883, Tafel 69.

For example, while preaching to two elderly men in the small village of Kuntadi, the missionary of the Kanarese Mission, Gaston Rosselet (1887–1968, Fig. 4.2), received the following response:

"Does not one get bored when always alone? – Certainly! – Then, you see, you announce your Swami with such an ardor that I fear that the devil will stay all alone; I want to be with him so he is not alone."[45]

The journal *Mitteilungen der Kanaresischen Mission* takes the answer literally and not *cum grano salis*, as Rosselet's interlocutor evidently intended.[46] Other examples show interlocutors who were willing to debate on the basis of elaborate theological arguments.

To illustrate the challenges faced in proselytising during the period under review, let us take the case of the Jains, a small but powerful minority in the socio-religious landscape in which the KEM was active. As John Cort has shown, by 1900 there was already a strong anti-Christian rhetoric in the context of polemics between Christians and Jains in Gujarat.[47] For example, in response to the proselytism of the Irish Presbyterian Church Mission, a prominent monk and scholar from the region, Atmaran (1837–1896), wrote a tract entitled *Īsāī Mat Samīkṣā* (*An Evaluation of the Religion of Jesus*), published in 1900, in which he made several arguments against the Christian religion.[48] Among other things, he criticised the conception of God as a creator *ex nihilo* (as opposed to the Jain conception of God as a perfect soul); the soteriological conception of a judging God as opposed to the doctrine of karma; the interested character of conversions to Christianity (young people eager to drink alcohol, for example). Such arguments were probably circulated and adopted by Jain monks outside Gujarat, and we find similar arguments described by missionaries in Karnataka when trying to reach this group.

With only a superficial knowledge of Jainism, the Swiss missionaries were ill-prepared to defend their position in controversies. Stationed in Karkala – the site of a major Jain festival every twelve years, the *Māhābhiṣekam*, which took place in 1918 – Rosselet was aware of the high socio-economic status of this group. However, he experienced frustrating encounters that made him question his own position, as in the following exchange:

> The young man who wanted to discuss with me was pretending that his religion was superior to ours, because it was forbidding killing, commanding on the contrary to respect life under all its forms. "I never committed sin, he told me, because I never killed, not even an insect, as little as it might be." This was said in such an arrogant tone that I almost wanted to answer sharply, but retained myself and remarked: "You say that you respect life and that you strive to protect it?
> – Yes, absolutely, this is our law and our practice. You, Christians, you are so faithful to your religion, you would follow the commandment: 'Thou shalt not kill'. But you translated it in Tulu by 'Thou shalt not kill another human.'

This first argument concerns the Tulu translation of the Bible:[49] the Jain interlocutor recognises the validity of the Judeo-Christian imperative "not to kill", but suggests that the translator has inappropriately altered the text's meaning by specifying that it only applies to human beings. This recalls Homi Bhabha's comment on the ambiguous nature of Bible translations as emblematic of a process of translation that "opens up contested political and cultural sites at the heart of colonial representation".[50] The Bible is not dismissed as fundamentally false, but Western missionaries are accused of falsifying it and failing to live up to its standards – a more devastating argument. The exchange continued:

> Let us leave aside for a while Christian law and let us return to your allegations on the respect of life. Is it true that you sell rice for more than four times its ordinary price, that you benefit from dearth to get richer, while your workers look like walking skeletons; where is your respect for life? God will ask you to account for your harshness and you will not dare answering him in such an arrogant way 'I did not sin'. You say that you did not even kill an insect, but when I invite you to come to the laboratory in the Udupi school to examine a sifted drop of water under a microscope, you decline the offer.[51] Thus, to your avidity, to your relentless harshness towards your workers, you add disloyalty. Is it thus to be without sin?" Irritated, my interlocutor argued:
> "It is easy, he said, to speak as you do; you are well paid for doing it. Come to see our Swamis, they do not receive any salary."
> – "Did you attend the last Jain procession, in Karkala?" Upon his affirmative answer, I continued: "If you compare the turbans, the silk shawls and the jewels of your priests with the dress of my co-workers and myself, it is not difficult to see who is enjoying a better financial situation. We just receive the bare necessary and are content about it.

– But do you only live from faith?
– How so?
– You receive a regular salary.
– Yes but this salary only comes from voluntary gifts!
– This does not make any difference: you do not live from faith, and as I told you, you falsified the Bible!"
on this accusation, the Jain went away. Was I too aggressive? It is so difficult to perfectly control oneself.[52]

Rosselet then abruptly changed the subject to return to the issue of the socio-economic status of Jains. His argument is based on the observation that Jains seem to benefit from cheap labour and therefore cause suffering and death. The Jain interlocutor replied that missionaries are paid a fixed salary, which casts doubt on their sincerity in professing their religion – unlike a Jain *ācārya* who lives exclusively on donations. Rosselet struggled to make a valid counter-argument, and the exchange ends in his complete defeat.

Adjustments

In this context, it is not surprising that the methods of evangelisation underwent great changes. The same Rosselet, for example, wrote in his diary: "My wish is to be a Hindu to the Hindus, so that I can lead them to Jesus in greater numbers".[53] This is an echo of Roberto Nobili's formula ("Indum inter Indos esse") and then of Paul ("Jew among Jews").[54] Specifically, it meant using Indian cultural idioms, such as dress but also and especially music, to communicate the Christian message.

In the summer of 1917, an association that was promoting the use of music for evangelisation organised a two-month summer course in Madras (Chennai). The students were mostly Indian catechists belonging to various missionary associations.[55] During the camp, the participants learned not only the basics of Carnatic music, but also how to rewrite biblical stories along the lines of Purāṇa (appropriating the "genre" of *kathakālakṣepam*) and how to perform their stories as itinerant *bāgavatar*s, touring the countryside with

small orchestras (*sarangi*, *tambūr*, *mṛdangam*, cymbals…).[56] In contrast with the Basel Mission's overcautious stance towards Indian music,[57] the KEM's official journal insisted that "the mission will accomplish its work of conquest only through music, and this especially in the Indies, where the population has a certain musical education [sic]. This would have, however, to be Indian music."[58] The same article reproduced the following quotation from a paper by the missionary H. A. Popley (1879–1960) of the London Mission:

Figure 4.2: Gaston Rosselet, cover page of *Un semeur*, 1929.

> There is on the Southwest coast of India a community that learned to sing exquisitely German chorales in four parts. But this music has no role to play in the evangelization of the country. It will not be possible either to open Indian hearts with a supposedly indigenous music that violates all its rules. It is necessary to actually understand it.[59]

The comment here is directed to the Basel Mission, which had succeeded in getting an Indian choir to sing German tunes for its

congregation in Mangalore.

This general atmosphere made the Swiss missionaries doubt the very need of their presence. Another article from the KEM magazine bluntly asked: "Are we needed, yes or no?", beginning with the following observation:

> To the risk of seeming to harm the mission, we have shown with facts that it is incorrect to represent India calling for us, thirsty for a new revelation and repeating the Macedonian's call: "Come to help us". It would rather tell us, as Amatzia to Amos (7: 9), "Man with a vision, go away, seek refuge in the land of Juda, eat your bread and prophetize there."[60]

However, the article ends on a paternalistic note, arguing that the presence of missionaries was still necessary, "because Indians do not know what they really needed". The very fact that the question could be asked so openly was a sign of changing times, and another missionary, Jonas Meyer (1867–1955), concluded that missionaries should henceforth adopt an Indian ascetic attitude, and aspire to become "Christian sadhus":

> We should become, to fulfill the Indian national ideal of a preacher, Christian sadhus or Sannasi, after the model of Sadhu Sundar Singh. This is however not possible for us. We ask ourselves, then: can we not make what is exemplary in the character and the work of a true sadhu our own, at least to a certain extent?[61]

Missionary Schools

Like the Basel Mission before it, the KEM was active in a variety of educational areas. In total, it supervised some 50 primary schools and three high schools: in Dharwad, Udupi and Mangalore.[62] The former colleges established by the Basel Mission in Mangalore (1847, Basel Evangelical Mission Seminary) and Kozhikode (1908, Basel German Mission College) were either closed (Mangalore) or handed over to other societies (Kozhikode, to the Malabar Christian College

of the Scottish Church). As a result, pastors or evangelists were sent to other institutions, either to Bangalore (United Theological Seminary) or Tumkur (Union Kanarese Seminary).

During the period under review, the mission schools faced several major problems: Firstly, the mission had to appoint both Christian and non-Christian teachers, and in any case could not efficiently control what was taught. Secondly, there was the development of government schools, national schools, or schools for specific castes that competed with the mission schools. Thirdly, at least in urban centres such as Mangalore or Dharwad, families saw the schools as hand in glove with the British government and boycotted them when called upon to do so by the national movement. Finally, the British government became increasingly strict about not subsidising schools whose programme included compulsory religious education.[63]

Untrustworthy teachers

Teachers, especially non-Christian teachers, were often regarded as not entirely reliable or knowledgeable enough. A telling example is the case of a school visited by G. Rosselet on 10 January 1920. of the 68 children enrolled, only 33 were present that day. According to Rosselet's description of the event, some of the other pupils were attending a festival in a neighbouring town, some were mourning the death of a member of their extended family, and some were reluctant to go past a house where someone was suffering from cholera. Rosselet then attended a lesson on biblical history:

> Mr. Amanna comments on the commandment: "You shalt not make graven images" and begins: "Shantappa, did you already worship an idol? – Yes, Mister! – What did God say? – That we should not do it! – And despite this you do it! It is a sin and God will punish you…" "And you Rama, do you have an idol at home? – Yes Mister! – Do you worship it? – Mister, our father worships it with us. – But don't you know what God said?" I stop Mr. Amanna and ask him to tell a biblical story. When he is done, I attempt to share my thoughts with him. One should, I tell him, awake the awareness and it is then from it that the commandment "You shalt not make graven images" should come. But Mr.

> Amanna does not understand and repeats: "One shall obey God's commandments".[64]

Rosselet describes the teacher, Mr. Amanna, as a man of limited understanding, and criticises his simplistic and literal interpretation of the biblical text. However, the scene could also be read as a case of the teacher assuming a special role, appropriate to the situation of a school inspection, and doing what he thinks is expected of him. In another village, Kedinje, Rosselet describes a situation in which the mission school had three teachers, two of whom were Hindus. Since the government had just opened a new school nearby, the hiring of two Hindu teachers was a measure to "gain the confidence of the people" and keep attendance at a reasonable level.[65] In addition, some teachers decided to resign for political reasons, both in the governmental schools and in the mission schools.[66]

Competition with other schools and the "conscience clause"

In the period we are studying, the hostility towards mission schools could take different forms. At times, it could take the shape of rumours spread about Christian schools, so as to discourage parents from enrolling their children.[67] In other circumstances, rival groups developed their own educational institutions, taking the public away from mission schools. In Dharwad, for example, a school was started for sweepers, which was joined by children from the buffalo shearers and by mendicants, reducing the number of students from the mission school.[68] The Dharwad Mission high school was losing its attendance (from 300 students in 1918 to 140 in 1922) because of the competition of four other high schools that were attracting other groups of different or higher rank.

From the late nineteenth century on, the colonial government began to insist on the religious neutrality of government-funded schools, a policy that was strongly criticised by the Basel Mission. Until then, mission schools had generally been approved and subsidised by the government and received a subsidy, but critical

voices began to be heard from 1920s onwards.[69] This was the issue of the so-called "conscience clause", which was advocated in nationalist circles. While some noted that a compulsory hour of "religion" could not have such a great impact and that the continued presence of mission-funded schools was more important, others argued that Christian education had a negative impact on the fight for independence.[70] In any case, government funding was an important part of the schools' budgets and from 1921 on, it became difficult to have compulsory partisan religious instruction in these schools.[71]

For example, in the Dharwad Mission high school, under the direction of the missionary Jules Rochat-Wohlers (dates alive unknown),[72] religion was clearly part of the curriculum, with a five-minute daily ceremony and two or three religion classes a week.[73] At the Udupi Mission high school,[74] the KEM missionaries Jonas Meyer and Paul Eduard Burckhardt (1884–1976) had to deal with several crises by the end of 1920. The school received a subsidy from the government, but there were discussions about whether this money should be made conditional on the students being able to skip religious instruction.[75] From January to March 1921, 100 out of the school's 450 students did not attend the classes anymore. In the same year, a rival school was opened, intensifying the boycott of the mission school – a boycott encouraged by local Hindu priests. To top it all, the local mission schools had a majority of Konkani teachers who were non-cooperationist and clearly defined themselves as pro-Gandhi. This made it particularly difficult to continue a partisan religious education there, not only for administrative or institutional reasons, but also because the students themselves were in a position not to take the missionary's words for granted and to offer counter-arguments. For example:

> Are these six or seven thousands of expense justified? Should we not spend it on direct evangelization? To this, Mrs Meyer replied: "As long as the freedom to teach religion is granted, it is an opportunity to do missionary work that can lead young men to the Gospel in a methodical way, and these expenses are fully justified". Unfortunately, this freedom to teach religion has been greatly

> diminished by the attitude of the students. Pupils' questions had always been allowed and even encouraged. However, since the spread of Gandhi's ideas, these questions have become an occasion for disorder. Here are a few examples: "Is not God everywhere? Then He is also in the wood, in the stones, and therefore in the idols. It should not be forbidden to worship them". Another: "Is not God omniscient and omnipotent? If He were, He would have known when He created the first man that he would fall into sin. Why did He not remove sin? Why did he not create them in such a way that they could not sin? So part of the responsibility for sin is to be laid at God's door…" Yet another: "Aren't our shastras as good as the Bible, our temples as good as churches?" Etc. etc. "Each of us, writes Mrs Meyer, would not go to the Bible lesson without having prayed deeply, knowing that without the special help of the Lord one would be reduced to impotence. In spite of all these difficulties, I dare to believe that this work will not be in vain for the Lord".[76]

In order to cope with the situation, and even if there is some uncertainty about the extent to which schools actually eliminated compulsory religious education, the emphasis was shifted to social spaces other than the school. The residences for high-school students, for example, became a favourite place for this, since it is where "our future teachers, catechists and pastors are recruited" and that was not violating any governmental regulations.[77] There were such "homes" in Mangalore, Udupi and Dharwad, run by Swiss and Indian women, among others: Marie Staehlin, Berthe Martin and Louise Saladin (Fig. 4.3).[78]

Figure 4.3: The Dharwad "home", in "Le home pour élèves institutrices à Dharwar", 1921, *Mission aux Indes: Bulletin du comité suisse de secours* 5 / 1923, p. 65.

Another strategy copied from the European context was the organisation of "Sunday schools" in the time left free by the "secular" school. The Sunday school became an important instrument for the transmission of partisan religious knowledge, which went hand in hand with the secularisation of education.[79]

In the end, schools remained a controversial issue when the Basel Mission took over from the KEM in 1927. In 1931, the (British) head of education in the Malabar region declared that Basel Mission schools were not engaging in proselytism.[80] The Basel Mission committee continued to express doubts about the relationship between schools and the mission, noting a "tension between the goal of evangelical education and the educational ideal of secular education".[81] In 1939, all the Basel Mission high schools of Malabar and South Kanara, as well as the Mangalore Seminary – including buildings – were transferred to Indian hands under the management of the newly formed "Christian Education Society".

Other Initiatives

Before concluding, it is worth mentioning two other initiatives that were started during the KEM period and which had a lasting impact. The first is the establishment of a hospital in Udupi in 1923, which was directed for a long time (1923–1954) by the Geneva-born doctor, Eva Lombard (1890–1978).[82] In addition, another Swiss French doctor from the Neuchâtel region, Elisabeth Petitpierre (1893–1983), took over and developed the mission hospital in Betageri where she stayed from 1929 to 1954. In both cases, it is striking that it was during the KEM administration that women were able to take a leading role in these medical institutions – perhaps a reflection of the relatively liberal context that existed in Switzerland at the time for women who wished to study medicine.[83] These medical institutions did everything they could to oppose traditional healing methods associated with local belief systems and to promote a Western type of medicine, while still conveying a Christian message. As such, they are rather disappointing "terrains of exchange" for those interested in combining Western and local forms of medicine. However, the principle of bringing Western medical practices into these hospitals was tempered in several ways by the imperatives of practice – for example, the impossibility of imposing a central kitchen for patients belonging to different castes and groups.[84]

The second initiative is the creation of a mission farm in Mudabidri, in 1926, between Mangalore and Karkala, including the plantation of 2000 coconut trees. Led by a prominent member of the community, Alfred Soans – himself a graduate of Allahabad Agricultural University – it was partly subsidised by the Department of Agriculture. Employing members of the congregation, the farm also functioned as an agricultural school from 1930 on, and was experimenting with new agricultural techniques.[85]

Conclusion: A Transformative Time

From a purely missionary point of view, crippled with tensions in Switzerland and overwhelmed by political, social and religious movements in India, the KEM was certainly not a great success. However, its activities and the documents it produced, despite their idiosyncrasies and their limited scope, reflect a larger process of church indigenisation. In this context, and to return to Nile Green's concept of "terrains of exchange", the main characteristic of this period is not so much "exchanges" as a radical *transformation* of the missionary setting into new communities better suited to the challenges of the time. This had implications for both local actors and for Swiss missionaries. The development of an "Indian Christian" identity, the discourse of political leaders such as Gandhi about non-cooperation and Christian missions, and the competition with other religious movements explain the emergence of local leaders who developed original perspectives. The KEM period also allowed the churches to become independent of the mission: this was officially achieved in 1932, with the establishment of the "United Basel Mission Church in India".

Evangelisation, for its part, could no longer be carried out in a frontal manner, pitting the true religion against the false. While this was certainly true before our time, it became more so in the 1920s. Indeed, missionaries often encountered people who were more "cosmopolitan" than themselves, familiar with religious apologetics and contemporary discussions in the study of religions. The study of local forms of religion became more important than ever, leading, for example, to Christian interpretations of Lingayat texts. The situation forced the missionaries to seriously rethink their role, and this was an important context for the emergence of an "international ecumenism" which developed further in the 1940s and 1950s and which found in Switzerland a suitable space for the coordination of transnational projects.

The context of the schools was particularly interesting: although funded by the mission, they increasingly struggled to convey a

Christian message. Indeed, non-Christian teachers were not eager to impart Christian knowledge; non-cooperation and boycott initiatives spread to missionary schools; and the government's "clause of conscience" made compulsory religious education potentially financially challenging. The schools seem to have produced individuals who were able to effectively break free from both the colonial framework and the Western missionaries.

In sum, the period under study is similar to that of the early encounters between missionaries and Indian cultures (for example, the Jesuits), characterised by power imbalances that were not favourable to the missionaries and required constant negotiation. Thus, while the present case does not present a large panel of "exchanges" between evangelical Christianity and other groups, in the strict sense, it does reveal the internal dynamics of a particular group and the various mechanisms by which a Western mission was being transformed into a local Christian community, both institutionally and theologically. Finally, on a methodological and historiographical level, the documents left behind by the KEM provide valuable insights into the different and important roles played by Indian Christians in the mission. This can indirectly shed light on the earlier period, for while there was certainly a similar dynamic at work, the documentation – such as the annual reports of the Basel Mission – is more controlled and tends to focus more on the achievements of the European missionaries.

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[1] I would like to thank warmly Paul Jenkins, who drew my attention to Ch. Uttangi and J. Urner, as well as the helpful archivists at the Basel Mission Archives and the Karnataka Theological College in Mangalore.

[2] Green, *Terrains of Exchange,* 2014.

[3] Green, *Terrains of Exchange*. For a review, see Bornet, *Missionaries and Sufi Masters*.

[4] Not to be confused with the acronym of the "Kooperation evangelischer Kirchen und Missionen" (also KEM), co-founded by the Basel Mission in 1970.

[5] Sargant, *From Missions to Church*, pp. 109–128 and Jenkins, *Die Basler Mission im kolonialen Spannungsfeld Indien*.

[6] Zimmermann, *La mission canaraise évangélique*, pp. 20; 38. Indirect ways were found to maintain a relationship between the Basel Mission and South India, such as the sending of the former Basel missionary Paul Sengle (1870–1932) to Kerala as early as 1924, under the auspices of the London Missionary Society. Sengle was sending reports to both the LMS and the president of the Basel Mission (see Bornet, Conversion Narratives).

[7] Zimmermann, *La mission canaraise évangélique*, pp. 29–30.

[8] Zimmermann, *La mission canaraise évangélique*, p. 34.

[9] on which see Bornet, "A 'Christian Hindu Apostle?'"

[10] See the KEM's budget for 1926, which shows a large deficit (about Rs. 12,000 in the District Church Fund, South Kanara) in BMA, CC-3,3, "Various documents, estimates".

[11] Farias, *The Christian Impact in South*, p. 248. Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948) went to Mangalore in 1920, to Betageri in 1923, and again to Mangalore in November 1927 to attend a Congress conference.

[12] See Kamath, *A Concise History*, pp. 288–311.

[13] on the *Christian Patriot*, see Koschorke, "Owned and Conducted entirely by the Native Christian Community"; on Azariah, see Harper, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*.

[14] "The Basel Mission" (*Indian Christian Journal*), p. 40.

[15] WCC, 26.14.06/05, De Benoît, "Letter of September 7, 1917".

[16] Kanarese Evangelical Mission, *Constitution*, p. 53.

[17] Bornet, "A 'Purely Swiss' Missionary Society," p. 126 (salaries) and 129 (the so-called "European sessions").

[18] BMA, CC-1, 1, "Indische Kommission," p. 2.

[19] Sargant, *From Missions to Church*, pp. 118, 120, and 158. His name is also spelled "Wütherich" in the Basel Mission archives.

[20] For more on *Satyavrata*, as mirroring an "Indian Christian" perspective, see Fernandes, "Towards the Formation of an Independent Indian Church," and Bornet, "'Magazines Are the Face of a People and a Society'".

[21] It was the so-called Saraswati Printing Works. It printed, among others, Swami Ram Das' *In Quest of God*, 1924, which was later republished by the Mangalore Basel Mission Press.

[22] Zimmermann, *La mission canaraise évangélique*, p. 50 and Sargant *From Missions to Church*, p. 120.

[23] Farias, *The Christian Impact in South Kanara*, p. 248, referring to the journal *Kraista hītavādi*, l1.05.1925: "The Kanara Indian Christian Civic League was founded on 27th January 1925, the first Indian Christian Council. The main objectives of the League were to bring about the upliftment of the Backward Christians and to protect the rights and liberties of the Christians. Membership was given to those who resided in South Kanara and were above 21 years of age. The first Committee comprised 25 members of which 17 were Roman Catholics and its first President was Dr. L. P Fernandes, Vice-Presidents were Mr. A. J. Lobo, a Catholic and Sir Abner Soans, a Basel Mission Christian".

[24] Prabhakar, *The Basel Mission in South Kanara*, p. 308.

[25] Examples include a book by the Swiss theologian and pacifist Willi Kobe on Gandhi (Kobe, *Mahatma Gandhi*), with an explicit reference to his main source: the missionary Jonas Meyer of the KEM. See Jurgensmeyer, "Saint Gandhi" for Christian interpretations of Gandhi.

[26] See Sargant, *From Missions to Church*, pp. 132–133 and Subrahmanyam and Rao, *Theophilus Subrahmanyam*, for short (auto-)biographical notes.

[27] on the relations between Mark Sanjiva Rao and Vittal Rao / Swami Ramdas, see Chandrasekhar, *Passage to Divinity*, pp. 52–53: "occasionally his cousin, Mark Sanjivarao, would drop in for a friendly chat. Sanjivarao, who was a convert to Christianity and a sincere and zealous missionary at that, would try to best impress Vittal Rao with the superiority of his own faith. But Vittal Rao, always eager for an intellectual bout, would vehemently argue for the other side and the discussion would at times drag on for hours; in the end, they would part just as good friends as ever, but each unconvinced of the other's point of view as at the start of their discussion and neither any the wiser!"

[28] on Kaundinya's case, see Frenz, "Truth by Narration" and Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, pp. 89–98.

[29] Schaetti, "Ein offener Brief," p. 55.

[30] BMA, CC-1,4, Rosselet, "M. Gaston Rosselet à Monsieur le Pasteur G. Secrétan". He adds: "I do not think he will ever be a missionary. A missionary is a kind of worker who will have to disappear as the indigenous Church is formed and developed."

[31] KTC, KEM File 77. A section of the minutes of the "General Conference of the Kanarese Evangelical Mission", 1924 explains the intended functioning of this special status, particularly the fact that "Indian missionaries" were to report solely to the local committees.

[32] Sargant, *From Missions to Church*, p. 132.

[33] Rao, "God, the Great Reality".

[34] Rao, *Types of Religious Consciousness*.

[35] on Blumhardt, see the remarks of Becker, "Liberated by Christ," p. 70: "All humans, according to Blumhardt, had the same origin and the same goal, the *imago Dei*. Although they thought of themselves as strict Lutherans, these awakened Christians of the early nineteenth century modified Lutheran theology in one important point: They held the opinion that people could decide whether they wanted to serve God or the Devil."

[36] For example, one of the concluding statements of Rao, *Types of Religious Consciousness*, p. 64: "When the centre of attention of Bharata Mata has ceased to be herself, when her centre of interest is altogether the Lord Jesus, then only will India truly become a Punnia Bhumi [a land where merit can be accrued]".

[37] Karunakara, "Letter to Schosser" (author's emphasis).

[38] Uttangi, "Athma Charithre," p. 8.

[39] Gunjal, *Reverend Channappa Uttangi*, p. 12.

[40] Uttangi, "Bethlehem Beckons Banaras".

[41] Uttangi, "Athma Charithre," p. 11. The discourse was delivered in 1918, in front of high caste Hindus at Ranebennur.

[42] on Urner and Uttangi, see Bornet, "A Swiss Missionary orientalist and his Indian Guru"; on Uttangi see Sebastian, "Chennappa Uttangi".

[43] Boag, *Census of India, 1921*, pp. 65–66 and Sedgwick, *Census of India, 1921*, pp. 76–77.

[44] Prabhakar, *The Basel Mission in South Kanara*, pp. 91–94.

[45] Rosselet, *Un semeur*, p. 35.

[46] "Der arme Teufel," 1920, p. 8: "Poor heathen! There's probably not much danger of the devil lacking company!"

[47] Cort, "Defending Jainism," p. 231: "The Jains were not silent recipients of the attacks upon their religious tradition. Jain monks and laymen responded vigorously in kind, giving as good as they got. Much of the voluminous literature of these debates, however, consisted of small tracts printed locally on low-quality, highly fugitive paper, or else articles in religious and community newspapers and periodicals."

[48] Cort, "Defending Jainism," p. 240.

[49] The Bible had been translated in Tulu for the first time in 1847 by the Swiss missionary Johann Jakob Amman (1816–1864).

[50] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 32–33.

[51] Rosselet's argument is empty, because Jains traditionally recognise the existence of micro-organisms in the air and water, and attribute this knowledge back to Mahavira. See Long, *Jainism*, p. 181.

[52] Rosselet, *Un semeur*, pp. 15–16 (the encounter is dated october 1919).

[53] Entry dated from 22 August 1921, Bailur. Rosselet, *Ein Missionstagebuch aus Indien*, p. 100 / Rosselet, *Un semeur*, p. 122.

[54] Rosselet, *Ein Missionstagebuch aus Indien*, pp. 10–13. The biblical reference is to 1 Corinthians 9, 19–23.

[55] Secrétan, "La musique chrétienne aux Indes," p. 46–47.

[56] Secrétan, "La musique chrétienne aux Indes," p. 45. See also Sargant, *From Missions to Church*, p. 115, on Tomlinson's initiative to introduce Indian music for "outdoor preaching", in particular among the Lingayat Chalavadis.

[57] Hocke, "Songs and Music," p. 265 about the rejection by the Basel Mission committee of Kittel's proposal to indigenise Christian music.

[58] Secrétan, "La musique chrétienne aux Indes," p. 44.

[59] Popley, "The Musical Heritage of India," p. 224.

[60] Subilia, "L'effort de l'Inde," p. 43.

[61] Meyer, *Die Nationale Bewegung in Indien*, p. 51.

[62] Zimmermann, *La mission canaraise évangélique*, p. 57. The missionaries E. Schwab and P. E. Burckhardt opened schools for Chalavadis in Udupi and Betageri respectively.

[63] For an analysis of the development of mission schools in that period, "from dominance to compromise", see Mathew, *Christian Missions*.

[64] Rosselet, *Un semeur*, pp. 33–34.

[65] Rosselet, *Un semeur*, p. 50.

[66] See the example given by Prabhakar, *The Basel Mission in South Kanara*, p. 303: "Satyamitra [Bangera], a native of Udupi, started his career as a teacher in the Basel Mission Primary School at Mulki. Inspired by the visit of Mahatma Gandhi to the District in 1920, he resigned his post of teacher and spent the rest of his life in the national movement."

[67] For example Zimmermann, *La mission canaraise évangélique*, p. 58: "Alongside the indifference of parents, the school meets with hostility from priests who see it as a dangerous rival. One priest, for example, declared that a flu epidemic, which killed five million people and a few missionary schoolchildren, was a punishment from the gods."

[68] To counter this, the missionaries E. Schwab and P. E. Burckhardt opened schools for Chalavadis in Udupi and Betageri respectively (Zimmermann, La mission canaraise évangélique, p. 57-58).

[69] on the generally good relations between the Basel Mission and the government in the domain of education before the War, see Schlatter and Witschi, *Geschichte der Basel Mission*, p. 37

[70] See "Christian Missions and Government Grants" and oldham, "The Question of a Conscience Clause in India".

[71] For example, the accounts of the Mangalore High School, 1919, showed revenues of Rs 5388 in school fees, Rs 3419 in "teaching grant" (government

funding) and Rs 3364 as a charge for the mission (BMA, CC-1,4, "Report on the working of the Mission High School", p. 5).

[72] Rochat was a graduate of the University of Lausanne. After a stay in Dharwad, he came to Mangalore in 1922 to run the high school. Through him, the missionary high school became the only educational institution in Mangalore to teach French, a peculiarity that attracted students from the Parsi community. See Burckhardt, "Dans les écoles de la mission", p. 60.

[73] Burckhardt, "Dans les écoles de la mission," p. 61, in which it is specified that the ceremony begins at 11.20 am "because lustrations and religious ceremonies performed in the families prevent an earlier hour."

[74] The high school was counting 538 students in 1920 (of which only 81 were identifying as Christian).

[75] Comité Suisse de Secours pour la Mission en Inde, *Troisième rapport général*, pp. 24–25 (the "clause of conscience").

[76] Comité Suisse de Secours pour la Mission en Inde, *Troisième rapport général*, pp. 26–27. See also BMA, CC-1,4, Schaetti, "Nouvelles politiques de l'Inde".

[77] Burckhardt, "Dans les écoles de la mission," p. 61.

[78] See "Le home pour élèves institutrices à Dharwad" and Zimmermann, *La mission canaraise évangélique*, p. 62.

[79] Harries, *Butterflies & Barbarians*, p. 8, for the Swiss background of Sunday schools.

[80] Witschi, *Geschichte der Basel Mission*, p. 288.

[81] Witschi, *Geschichte der Basel Mission*, p. 289.

[82] on Lombard and Petitpierre, see Bornet, "Two Swiss Female Doctors in Karnataka".

[83] See Bonner, *To the Ends of the Earth*.

[84] Bornet, "Two Swiss Female Doctors in Karnataka," p. 158.

[85] Sargant, *From Missions to Church*, p. 121. The farm still exists today and is flourishing.

PART 3

The Basel Mission and Caste

CHAPTER 5

Social Engineering in the Praxis of the Basel Mission

Jaiprakash Raghaviah

Abstract

European Christian missionary groups working in India had to engage with longstanding local belief systems and social structures prevalent in the 19th century. Although the missionaries aimed to promote Christian values and reshape society accordingly, their reactions ranged from acceptance to opposition. Of the European missionary groups that worked in India during the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, the Basel Mission stands out as a unique one. This missionary group had predominantly worked in the districts of Malabar and South Canara[1] of the erstwhile Madras Presidency in India from 1834. Interestingly, the Basel Mission achieved remarkable success in its social engineering efforts to create a new social order among its converts. Simultaneously, the Basel Mission combined its evangelisation endeavours with activities in the fields of education and industry. This chapter explores the ideological orientation of the Basel Mission, the socio-economic and political environment where the mission worked, and the social engineering practices that it implemented, resulting in the creation of a group of Christian converts whose belief systems were transformed after conversion.

Keywords: Caste; Conversion; Social transformation; Social engineering; Malabar; South Canara; Christian village community; Mission compound.

The term Social Engineering (SE)[2] is used in this chapter to mean top-down efforts, from the Basel Mission to its converts, aimed to generate particular social attitudes and behaviour on a large scale. It is most often used by governments, but also carried on by the media, academia, or private groups to produce certain desired effects in a targeted population. From the earliest of times, SE has been applied in various forms: rulers, politicians, administrators, businessmen and even common people have used manipulation and manoeuvring practices to accomplish their tasks efficiently. Thus, there is always an agenda involved in SE whether political or religious in nature. SE can be viewed as a purposeful and structured process through which the intentions and goals of shaping a new social order are gradually brought to life. It is necessary here to distinguish SE from social disciplining. SE focuses on manipulating individuals for achieving certain defined objectives while social disciplining centres around the establishment and enforcement of societal norms and rules to maintain order and control. Social disciplining relies on legal and institutional mechanisms to guide behaviour within a society or a group while SE aims to bring desired socio-religious and behavioural changes through ideological means. It plays a pivotal role in driving social change through activist movements, community organising, and advocacy groups to engineer social change by challenging existing power structures and promoting inclusivity, equality, and justice. The Basel Mission also practiced SE to replace the already imbibed values of converts with Christian values.

In this chapter, the concept of SE is used to examine the activities of the Basel Mission in South India. This study looks at the districts of Malabar and South Canara in the erstwhile Madras Presidency during the years 1834–1914. The Basel Mission started working in these districts from 1834. The Mission had also conducted its activities in several other regions beyond the Malabar and South Canara districts like the Nilgiris district of Madras Presidency, and also in places like Hubli, Dharwar and Gadag in the South Mahratta district of the Bombay Presidency. The industrial activities of the

Mission however were primarily concentrated in the Malabar and South Canara districts located on the South-west coast of India. These two districts are contiguous and share similar agro-climatic features while at the same time there are vast differences in social organisation, land relations and cultural features. Before we move ahead, it is important to understand these two regions socially, politically and economically.

Malabar and South Canara: Economy and Society

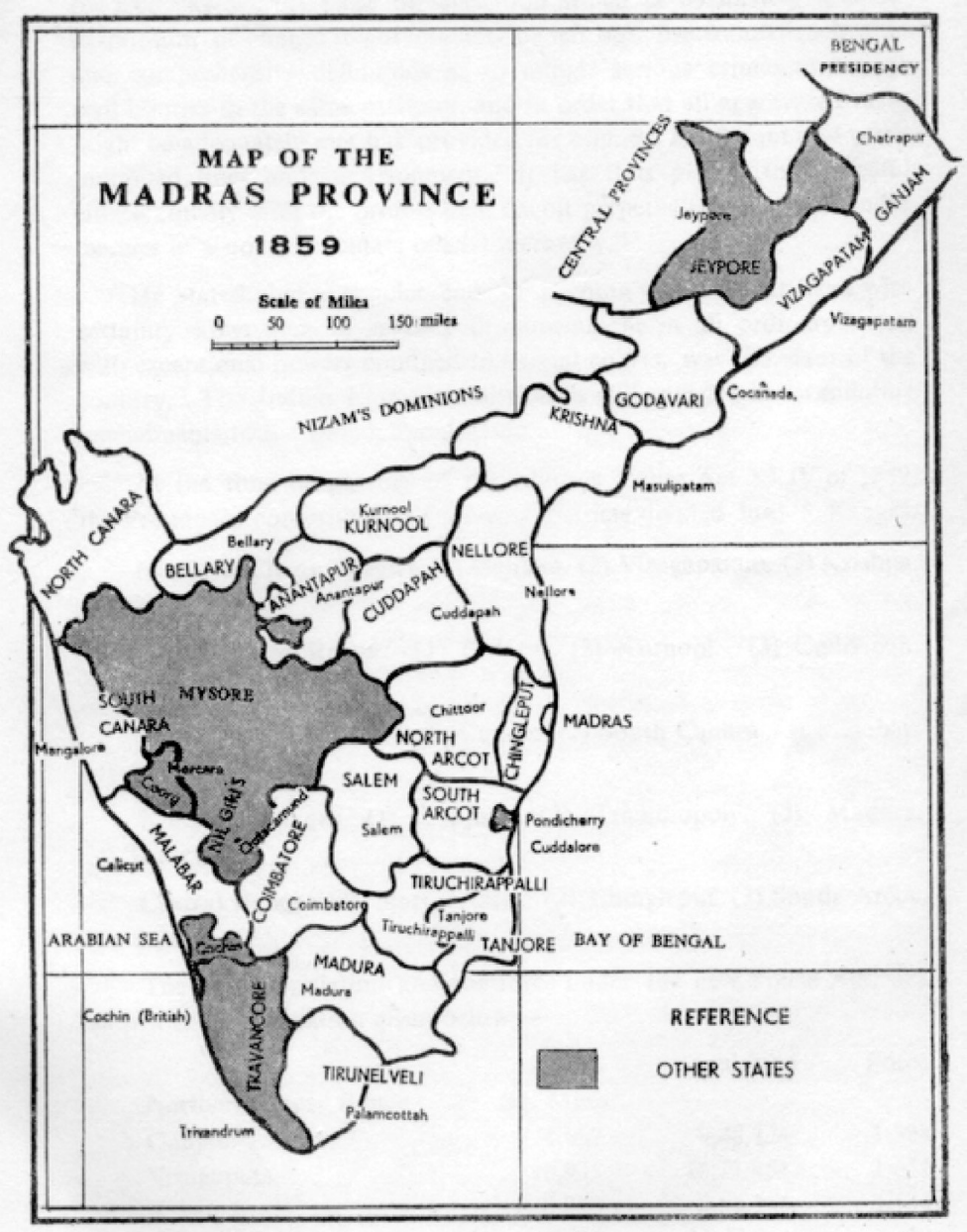
Malabar district was formed in 1792 after the British East India Company defeated Tipu Sultan in the Third Anglo-Mysore War. The British amalgamated thirty-two small principalities and chieftaincies in the northern part of Kerala, which had been under the two kings Zamorin and Kolathiri and made these territories a district under the Bombay Presidency.[3] In 1800, this district was transferred to the Madras Presidency. The British again defeated Tipu Sultan in 1799 in the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War. The territories taken over from Tipu were made into a district named Canara and were placed under the Bombay Presidency. In 1859, the southern part of the Canara district was bifurcated. Territories coming under the Mangalore (now Mangaluru), and Udupi districts of the present Karnataka State and parts of the Kasaragod district which is now part of Kerala State were amalgamated into a separate district called South Canara and transferred to the Madras Presidency. Calicut (Kozhikode) was the headquarters of the Malabar district and Mangalore was the headquarters of South Canara district. Both the cities are port towns and have a long history of trading.

There are several commonalities as well as differences between these two contiguous districts. The land area of Malabar is 14,931 square kms. (5765 square miles) while for South Canara it is 10,106 square kms. (3902 square miles).[4] For the Malabar district, the

population in 1881 was 2,365,035 and for South Canara, it was 959,514.[5] In both the districts, rice was the major crop. Though the two districts shared similar agro-climatic conditions, South Canara district was a rice-exporting region while Malabar district was a rice-importing region. This could be due to the significant differences in the land tenure patterns between the two districts.[6]

The language spoken in the Malabar district is Malayalam while in South Canara as many as seven languages are spoken. Apart from Kannada, Tulu (often referred as 'language island') is spoken by a large section of the people. Konkani is spoken by the Gowda Saraswat Brahmins and the Roman Catholic communities. A section of the population close to Kerala speaks Malayalam, and coastal people speak a language called Beary which is a mixture of Kannada, Tulu, and Malayalam. There is a small population, originally immigrants from Maharashtra who retain their language – Marathi.

During the nineteenth century, British administrators used to refer to the South Canara district as a forest district because a large part of it contiguous to the Western Ghats was covered with forests.[7] Pepper grew wild in the forests in the district. Malabar and South Canara districts have had a long trading history. However, after the advent of the Portuguese in the 15th century, trading in these districts suffered. Traders were mainly from the Muslim community. The Portuguese navy controlled the Arabian Sea through a string of trading posts along the coast and thus wrested control of sea-borne trade from the Muslim traders.



Map 5.1: Madras Province: Source: District Administration Report, 1859.

At the time of the annexation of these districts by the British, the marginal economies that existed here consumed almost all that they produced. Exchange was limited to some of the most essential commodities that were not readily available. Coastal trade continued. Following the annexation of these districts, the British East India Company stopped all its trading activities and focused on appropriating the agricultural surplus through tax farming. With this

purpose in mind, the British re-interpreted the land tenure system that prevailed in the district.[8] The implementation of land tax by the British and the progressive increase in tax rates resulted in the impoverishment of the economies of these districts.

The Basel Mission began its work in the socio-economic and political landscape of the aforementioned districts in 1834. over the subsequent decades, the Mission steadily expanded its activities, continuing until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. During this period, the Mission played a transformative role in multiple sectors of society. One of its most notable contributions was in the field of education. The Basel Mission established a wide network of schools that were remarkably inclusive for their time, offering admission to students regardless of caste or community – a progressive step in a deeply hierarchical social structure. In the industrial sector, the Mission pioneered the development of modern industries in the region. It set up some of the first factories specialising in handloom weaving and tile manufacturing, laying the foundation for what would become significant local industries. These enterprises not only provided employment but also introduced new methods of production and business practices. The Basel Mission was also active in the literary and cultural fields, promoting local languages and literature through printing presses and publications. Their contributions helped preserve and disseminate regional knowledge and culture. In terms of health care, the Mission made a significant impact by establishing a dedicated hospital for the treatment of leprosy – an often-neglected area of public health at the time. This initiative reflected their broader commitment to social welfare and care for the marginalised. Additionally, at one stage, the Basel Mission also attempted to settle converts in agriculture by buying large tracts of paddy fields and leasing them out to converts.[9] This agricultural settlement initiative was part of a broader effort to ensure economic stability and self-sufficiency for converts who were often ostracised from their traditional communities.

Caste in a Missionary Context

The societies of Malabar and South Canara were marked by several distinct caste practices and untouchability. There were three types of caste-related defilement: first, tactile or defilement by touch; second, proxemic or polluting distance; and third, defilement by sight. Lower castes were supposed to maintain physical distance from upper castes depending on their status on the social ladder. There was rigorous punishment for violating these norms. One extreme case of defilement was associated with a community called *nayadis.* Members of this community were not to be seen in the open. They had to hide themselves and live in far flung places.[10] It is interesting that it was this community that formed the core of the Codacal Parish when it was established in 1857.[11] It is to the credit of the Basel missionaries that converts from this community were integrated with other converts from the beginning.

In Malabar and South Canara, the position of an individual in the social hierarchy generally corresponded with his position in ownership or possession of land. All lands belonged either to temples or *dewaswams* or to Brahmin families referred to as *brahmaswams* which were joint families of mainly Brahmins, but also some aristocratic Nairs. Ownership and possession were separated. The owner of land was *janmi* in Malabar and *moolevargdar* in South Canara.[12] All land in this sense belonged either to temples, or to joint families of Brahmins, rajas or local chieftains, aristocratic Nair families as *janmom* or Bunt joint families as *moolevarg*. In Malabar the *janmis* almost never cultivated their land directly and it was leased or mortgaged under a tenancy called *kanom* in Malabar and *moolegani* in South Canara. In Malabar *kanom* holders almost never cultivated their land directly and it was sub-leased as tenancy-at-will. The fourth group of players was the agricultural labourers who laboured in the wetlands as bonded labour. They were considered as part of the land and sold along with the land. In actual practice,

there were substantial differences in the implementation of tenurial practices between Malabar and South Canara.[13]

European encounters with Asian countries like India made Europeans scholars theorise on the institution of caste. It was the Indologist Max Muller who developed his views on caste at the beginning of the 19th century. According to Max Muller, in the ancient societies priests and nobility were distinguished from common people. Then arose the classical four state *varna.* According to Louis Dumont, the caste system divides the whole society into a large number of hereditary groups distinguished from one another and connected to each other by three characteristics: separation in matters of marriage and contact whether direct or indirect (food), division of labour, each group having by theory or by tradition a profession from which its members depart only within its limits, and financial hierarchy which makes the groups relatively superior or inferior to one another.[14] American anthropologist Kroeber views caste as a class which is conscious of itself as distinct and which has closed in upon itself.[15] A significant facet of caste is its hierarchy. According to Nesfield,[16] the hierarchical order corresponds inversely to the order in which corresponding specialisations emerged, the most important specialisation being the last. He gives an example of the priestly class and contrasts it with the caste of blacksmiths. The question as to whether caste in its essence is religious or simply social has constantly arisen and is still debated.

Christian missions – both Catholic and Protestant – were deeply intertwined with the expansion of European colonial empires. Often operating under the aegis of imperial authority, missions aligned themselves with their respective national interest and carried out their evangelical work primarily in territories colonised by their home countries. Their efforts were not only religious but also political and cultural, contributing to their broader civilising mission that justified and reinforced colonial domination. As part of their colonial endeavour, these nations took upon themselves the mission of 'civilising' the people in the newly colonised lands.[17] The presumption was that European civilisation was superior to other

civilisations because it had the knowledge of Christ, and therefore, 'heathens living in darkness' needed to be shown the light through the teachings of Christianity.

The Roman Catholic missionaries were the first to start working in India. The first Jesuit missionary in India was St Francis Xavier who landed in India on May 6, 1542, as part of the Portuguese Petroado mission system and carried out his activities in Madurai in Tamil Nadu, South India.[18] The Portuguese, meanwhile, were active along the West coast of India, and Goa and Kochi (Cochin) were two important Portuguese settlements. The missionaries who came to work in these settlements were part of the Portuguese colonial ecclesiastic administration and mostly were from the Jesuit order. These missionaries also took up conversion of the local people from the coastal regions. For example, they converted *en masse* fishermen from the *paravar* community living along the coast of Kanyakumari in the present day Tamilnadu, the southernmost tip of India.[19]

The first Protestant mission to work in India was the Danish Mission, a personal enterprise of King Frederick IV of the Kingdom of Denmark. The first missionaries, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and his assistant Heinrich Plütschau sent by the Danish Mission landed in Tranquebar (now Tharagambadi in the state of Tamil Nadu) near the Danish trading centre on the Coromandel Coast in 1706. When the mission built its first church, the New Jerusalem Church in Tranquebar, the missionaries encountered a peculiar problem of caste and the interrelated aspects of it. The higher caste converts were not willing to share the space with the lower caste converts for fear of being defiled. Missionaries solved this problem by arranging separate rows of seats for the higher and lower caste converts.[20]

Other missionary societies faced the same issues regarding caste. During the nineteenth century, two important missionary groups were working in Kerala – the London Missionary Society (LMS)[21] which started working in south Tiruvitamkur (Travancore) in 1806, and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in central Tiruvitamkur from 1814 respectively. The London Missionary Society (LMS) had its

headquarters at Nagercoil. The converts were mainly from the *Nadar* and *Cheruma* castes. The traditional occupation of the *Nadar* community was the tapping of palmyra trees for drawing toddy, a mildly intoxicant beverage. Tapped toddy was not only a drinking spirit but was also used for making jaggery, a type of brown-coloured sugar.[22] The traditional activity of the *Cheruma* caste meanwhile was agricultural labour and they were placed lower than the *Nadars* in the caste hierarchy. Here again, the *Nadar* converts maintained caste hierarchies with lower caste converts.[23] To circumvent the issue of caste pollution, in some areas, missionaries established separate congregations for upper and lower caste converts. This shows that the attempt of the missionaries to create a homogenous group of converts into its fold did not bring in desired results. It also shows that caste had multiple dimensions and would not be erased easily. As Rupa Viswanath argues, the missionaries often adapted to caste norms despite their good humanitarian intentions to end caste.[24] Sometimes they tried to maintain social stability and gained converts by perpetuating caste exclusions even within Christian communities.

The case of CMS, a missionary organisation that came from within the Church of England or the Anglican Church, was not much different either. The CMS worked in central Kerala from 1814 with Kottayam as its headquarters.[25] The CMS initially attempted to bring into its fold the Syrian Christian community which had a long history in Kerala and claimed to have been originally converted by St. Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus Christ. The efforts of the CMS missionaries to bring the Syrian Christians under their fold brought them into conflict with the hierarchy of the Orthodox Syrian Christian Church, following which, the CMS changed its strategy and focused on converting members of the *pulaya* and *cheruma* communities of agricultural labourers in Central Tiruvitamkur (Travancore). Here again, the Syrian Christian converts to CMS refused to intermingle with the *pulaya* and *cheruma* converts. The CMS was forced to establish separate congregations for them. Later, the CMS focused on evangelisation among a hill tribe called *mala arayans* and this

proved successful.[26] Congregations established by the CMS are presently under the Central Kerala Diocese of the Church of South India. Even now, the Central Kerala Diocese continues to struggle with caste issues. For example, members of backward castes have been demanding a proportionate representation in the Pastorate Committees and Diocesan Councils.[27]

The failure of these missionary societies in dealing with the issues relating to caste among their converts became a contentious issue for discussion in missionary conferences.[28] The issue was whether caste was compatible with Christianity. Duncan B. Forrester notes that by the 1850s, most of the Protestant missionary groups had arrived at a general view of caste as "one of the greatest obstacles to the progress of the gospel in India, radically opposed to Christian principles and not to be tolerated in the churches."[29] However, the issue of eradicating caste was difficult. From within the groups of converts there was also reaction to this situation. The most important response to the prevalence of caste among the converts came from a socio-religious movement called Pratyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) started by Poykayil Yohannan.[30] Yohannan was a church worker of the CMS who had turned into a critic of Christianity. He exhorted his followers to leave Christianity as he felt that conversion had done little to liberate the converted Christians from social bondages and practices like caste discrimination. At present, the PRDS is an active socio-religious organisation working mainly in south-central Kerala for the progress of depressed classes of society.

Among the missionary groups that worked in India during the nineteenth century, only one group, the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society (referred to as the Basel Mission)[31] achieved a certain measure of success in dealing with the issue of caste segregation. Basel Mission converts did not and could not retain their former social identities and former lifestyles. This was the result of the SE practices that the Basel Mission appears to have initiated. In the process of their conversion activities, the Basel Mission tried to introduce new industrial crafts to settle the converts in some gainful

occupation. The efforts of the mission eventually led to the establishment of the first modern industries along the lines of weaving and manufacture of ceramic products. These industrial activities were undertaken in a planned and deliberate manner. No other missionary group that worked in India had taken up industrial activities in such a manner as the Basel Mission. The weaving and ceramic industries established by the Basel Mission were the first modern industries in the Malabar and South Canara districts and the Basel Mission was the most important industrial entrepreneur in the Malabar and South Canara district during the nineteenth century. The Basel Mission also established schools of different types in which admission was given to students from all caste communities and religions.[32] The Mission is also credited with the establishment of some of the first modern hospitals such as Mission Hospital in Calicut in 1882, and the first Kannada language newspaper called *Mangalura Samachara* in Malabar and South Canara.[33] Missionaries sent by the Basel Mission also contributed to the development of local languages in this region. The first Malayalam – English, and Kannada – English dictionaries were compiled by the Basel missionaries.[34]

The creation of a group of converts who did not carry their caste identities is a significant achievement as caste was an age-old, deep-rooted institutional system. The Basel Mission did not tolerate caste due to its adherence to German Pietistic values. Pietists believed in spiritual equality of all believers before God, regardless of class, race or caste.[35] The Basel Mission adopted this somewhat radical vision of equality in practice more than other missionary societies. Therefore, it is pertinent here to explore the ideology and praxis of the Basel Mission.[36]

The Basel Mission: Dominant Theology and World View

The Basel Mission's (established 1816) roots are generally traced to a Pietistic society called *Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft* (German Christian Society) that was in existence from 1780. The movement is usually referred to as Württemberg Pietism.[37] The members of the society came mainly from the class of artisans, small traders, and farmers. They possessed relative economic independence and were part of local congregations despite the hostility from the church hierarchy; they functioned as a source of spiritual revival within their congregations. The society had a professed view of Christian restructuring of the world. The economically successful but politically conservative Pietist business community of Basel provided Württemberg Pietism with a link to the colonial world and prospects for missionary endeavour.

Though declared as a non-denominational Christian missionary society since its inception, the Basel Mission had an orientation towards economic activities. After experimenting with various traditional and modern crafts to rehabilitate the converts in gainful work, the Basel Mission established large factory-type production units in the lines of modern handloom weaving and tile manufacture. The Basel Mission became the biggest industrial entrepreneur in Malabar and South Canara during the nineteenth century. Even well into the twentieth century, the lines of manufacture, handloom weaving, and tile manufacture remained the dominant lines of industrial activity in this region.[38]

The Basel Mission and Conversion

The Basel Mission did not take up mass conversion because the Mission considered conversion to Christianity as a slow and intense process primarily because each convert was judged on pietistic standards and underwent a prolonged phase of training before baptism.[39] Those who showed interest in conversion were referred to as 'inquirers' by the missionaries. Most of them heard about the

Christian religion from the street preachers. often the inquirers were sent to factories. As missionary Frohnmeyer stated: "These factories give us an opportunity to test the sincerity of converts."[40] He reinforced his arguments by quoting another missionary colleague and noted: "As my friend Lechler always say 'Hypocrites seldom like to work'".[41] After all, a good worker had to be a good Christian. The period of probation and inquiry may last as long as a year. Finally, when a convert is baptised, he or she entered into a new community and assumed a new social identity. The converts went through a process of 'ritual neutralisation'. Such neutralisation became visible in the manner a convert dressed, the way he addressed others, his social interfaces and his non maintenance of polluting distance. Even his hairstyle had certain significance. In Malabar and South Canara, men used to have long hair, and this used to be tied with a knot according to the specifications of the caste to which the person belonged. The Basel Mission formally forbade this.[42]

Conversion to Christianity demanded external markers of ritual neutralisation. Most important was the dress. *Tiyya*, *cheruma/pulaya* castes constituted the bulk of converts. In some parts of mission areas, men and women of these castes did not cover the upper part of their bodies. Basel missionaries designed a new dress code. The dress worn for the baptism/confirmation by men and women symbolised the dress code. For their converts, the missionaries adopted a dress pattern that was an amalgam of western and local dress. For men, it was a shirt or jacket, and a waist cloth called *mundu* in local parlance. For women, it was a jacket or a blouse and a *saree* (six yards of cloth worn around the body) – all in white. Through the newly introduced dress, the converts were showing mutual rejection. They were showing rejection of the castes and communities from which they had been 'outcasted'.

Church Constitution as a Tool of Social Engineering

The Basel Mission believed that the causes of Christianity and Christian civilisation were best served if the community of converts had a sharp break with the past not only in occupation and social behaviour but in all other spheres of life as well. In the 'Constitution for the Basel Mission Christian Congregations' (adopted in 1859) the principles of the 'counter society' were clearly laid down. The provisions of the constitution, 160 paragraphs in all, consisted of a full-fledged code of civil law, regulating almost every sphere of Christian life.[43] This was strictly enforced by the missionaries and proved to be the most important tool of SE as a result; after the adoption of new regulations, the Basel Mission Christians underwent the most radical social change. It provided a clear framework for how congregations were to be organised and governed. No longer would church life be entirely directed by missionaries; instead, the new system encouraged local participation and shared leadership. Each congregation would now have its own elders' council, composed of trusted members from within the community. These councils were responsible for overseeing the moral and spiritual life of the congregation, maintaining discipline, and guiding worship. This shift marked a turning point. The Constitution emphasised the importance of training and appointing local leaders – catechists, deacons, and elders – who could lead the church from within. It gave church members a sense of ownership over their spiritual communities and fostered a deeper connection between faith and everyday life. While the missionaries continued to provide oversight, the Constitution ensured that the local congregations had a voice and a structure that reflected their own cultural and social realities. Missionaries considered this as an outstanding achievement. We will examine the activities that the Basel Mission initiated in the line of SE to create a new community of converts who held values very different from the society to which they belonged. It is here that the experiment of communal living practiced by one of the first missionaries, Samuel Hebich in 1840, acquires significance.

Social integration: Samuel Hebich's experiment in Kannur

Samuel Hebich belonged to the first batch of three missionaries sent by the Basel Mission to India and started working in the cantonment town of Kannur from 1840. Hebich was successful in his mission of attracting local people to Christianity. He, however, faced a difficult problem. A number of his converts were thrown out of their homes and fields of activity consequent to their conversion. They were from different caste backgrounds. As they had nowhere to go, Hebich welcomed them to his bungalow. The converts who moved into Hebich's residence had held on to their traditional habits of maintaining the tactic and proxemic defilement routine before their moving in. When their number increased to more than a hundred, Hebich started a commune in his bungalow and the surrounding areas. The commune had a common kitchen and every member participated in the activities of the commune. A new, nascent social order was taking shape. The day began with a prayer in which everyone participated. The day ended with a common prayer. Births, deaths, and even marriages took place in this commune.[44] Hebich's commune was the first experiment in SE. All the caste taboos were broken openly. Members took up jobs outside their caste fold. Hebich's commune, though a short-lived experiment, demonstrated to the local community that a different type of life was possible.

Mission Compounds and the Concept of Christian Village Community

In all important centres of their work, the Basel Mission purchased large tracts of land and had all their institutions located in these locations which are even now referred to as Mission Compounds. At the centre of this compound was a church, the size of which varied according to the size of the congregation. Attached to the church there were primary schools, widow's quarters, youth fellowship rooms, and usually some centres of economic activities like agricultural fields, weaving units or tile factories. Mission Compounds

were usually gated communities. In many centres, the gates of these compounds used to be closed at a specified time. Mission Compounds, in the Foucauldian sense, were examples of disciplinary institutions like schools, prisons, and orphanages.[45] A large number of converts lived in these compounds. They were farm or factory workers, teachers, clerks, or Bible Women. They lived under the watchful eyes of the missionaries and local pastors. Every family was watched for strict observance of Christian practices. At sunset, lights would be lit in the homes and the families were expected to participate in the evening worship which included singing hymns, reading from the Bible, and prayer. For the converts, non-participation in church-related activities could lead to expulsion from the factory, likewise likewise, misconducts in factories could lead to expulsion from the church. Creating gated habitats served another purpose. Many converts had their relatives living nearby. Keeping contact with these relatives who belonged to another religion could lead to re-connecting with their past socio-cultural life like participation in temple festivals, weddings, or other functions. Gated habitats ensured that a watchful eye was kept over such intermixing.

Within the gated walls of the Mission Compounds, most people were literate and could read and write Malayalam.[46] At the turn of the twentieth century, when the literacy rate was low in Kerala, these enclaves had a fully literate population. It is said that the local people used to approach households in Mission Compounds to seek help in drafting letters and petitions. In this sense, the Basel Mission community was more literate compared to the population outside. Despite the very high levels of literacy of its residents, Mission Compounds generally remained isolated from the population outside. Even much later, at the beginning of the twentieth century, when winds of the Indian independence movement and related socio-political movements were blowing all over, the Basel Mission converts were generally not part of it. The Basel Mission community produced very few socially or politically active persons and few members of this community entered the political mainstream. The one exception was Samuel Aaron who was the owner of the largest

textile factory in Malabar. He was elected to the Legislative Council in 1937.[47]

Personal Cleanliness, Dress and Home Décor

In Malabar and South Canara, the concept of personal cleanliness varied from caste to caste. Higher castes used to have tanks attached to their *tarawadus* or joint family homes. It was common for members to have frequent ablutions and dipping into the tanks. They could have their clothes washed by the members of the washer man caste. However, this was not the case with the *pulaya or cheruma* castes of agricultural labourers. They used to be wetland labourers and they did not have the benefit of tanks near their houses. They were not allowed to wash themselves in the tanks owned by upper castes. Within the Mission Compounds, it was easy for missionaries to insist on personal cleanliness as part of communal hygiene.

The homes of Basel Mission converts became distinct from the houses of other communities. Western influence could be visible in the layout of the interiors of these houses. There used to be a drawing room to which guests, irrespective of their background, were received. There was a separation of the drawing room from the dining room and bedroom based on functionality. The windows of these houses had half curtains. Most houses had a small flower garden in front. In Kerala and South Canara where greenery was all around and a piece of land would get converted into a forest if kept unattended for some years, the garden culture was something new.[48] This was also a part of Social Engineering.

The Basel Mission community in Malabar and South Canara was intimately connected to the industrial establishment of the Mission. Factories established by the Basel Mission played an important role in social engineering. In the factories, the Christian and the non-Christian worked together depending on the nature of the work. Proximal pollution practice based on caste-based social distinctions

could not be preserved within the factory setting in which physical contact between workers was unavoidable. The non-Christian workers who adhered to such practices outside their workplace were compelled to abandon them within the factory premises. Similarly, converts who had previously engaged in these customs were unable to practice their traditional practices in the new context. The factory environment regardless of the caste background transformed the workers' interactions leading to a re-consideration of their understanding of pollution and defiling distances. The rigid boundaries that once governed social interactions based on caste were disrupted, reshaping workers' perceptions and behaviour. Another factor was the entry of women into the labour force. Weaving and tile manufacturing units and other institutions like schools and hospitals employed a large number of women in various capacities. Entry of women into the public sphere[49] was very different from the entry of women as workers in the traditional cottage industries which were family-based. Factories also provided space for inter-gender association and togetherness.

Schools and the Spread of Literacy

The basic objective of the Basel Mission in spreading literacy was that every convert ought to be able to read the Bible. For this purpose, the Mission established various types of schools in the Malabar and South Canara districts. Such schools opened the door for the lower sections of the society to get educated. These were not only primary schools, but also middle schools, high schools, girls' schools, and schools attached to orphanages. There were vernacular schools and Anglo–vernacular schools, the difference being that in Anglo-vernacular schools, English was also taught as a language.[50] In a few instances, the Mission started night schools for imparting basic literacy to a group of converts. The Mission established a technical school at its Mechanical Establishment in Mangalore. The objective of such a school was to impart some theoretical knowledge

on engineering subjects to the employees who were already performing engineering duties. This technical school can be compared to modern polytechnics or industrial training institutes. Similarly, the Mission established an agricultural school attached to its orphanage at Parapperi in Malabar.[51] Here, the students were given practical training in tending garden crops.

It was much later, in 1909, that the Basel Mission established the Basel German Mission College (now the Malabar Christian College) in Calicut, a premier institution of higher learning in the Malabar region. These schools as well as the Malabar Christian College opened their doors to students from all castes and creeds. These institutions did not allow untouchability of any type to be practiced within its portals. Students of all social groups sat together, studied together, and played together.[52] It has been noted that members of the *Tiyya* caste benefitted the most from the educational institutions of the Basel Mission.[53] To sum up this section, the schools fell into different categories and addressed region-specific requirements. The schools played an important part in the social engineering efforts of the Mission. Within the schools, there were no defiling or polluting distances to be maintained. Students shared the same facilities and ate from the same lunch rooms. The schools did not maintain any caste or community records.

Orphanages

The Basel Mission had established separate orphanages for boys and girls. The policy of the Mission was to have for each district one orphanage for boys and one for girls. Besides these large orphanages there were two smaller orphanages, one in the Nilgiris and one in Coorg. For the year 1912, there were 305 boys and 280 girls in these orphanages.[54] The residents of orphanages were usually children with single parents. The single parent usually worked in factories of the mission and the child was placed in the

orphanage. The child saw the parent only during vacations. From the point of SE, orphanages were the means through which a new generation was raised without a consciousness of the past. An inmate of the orphanage knew very little about his or her social, cultural, and religious background. Orphanages and Mission Compounds were examples of institutions in a disciplinary society. They lived highly controlled and regulated lives under the guidance and control of the missionary, leading to a diverse set of difficulties and problems for both orphans and missionaries.[55]

Role of Hospitals in Social Engineering

The Basel Mission started its medical mission much later. The first hospital was founded in 1887 in Calicut and the first medical missionary was Eugene Liebendorfer. In 1908, this hospital was shifted to a new dedicated building complete with an Operation Theatre. Qualified nurses were sent from Switzerland and Germany to assist the doctors and by 1910 the hospital had in-patients facilities. The health care system that had existed in Malabar and South Canara was caste-based. The traditional medical system of Ayurveda was practiced by those from a few castes – both higher and lower like *nambudiris*, *Billavas* and *Tiyyas*. There were several limitations. Among the higher castes like *nambudiri brahmins,* women were not allowed to be touched by a male doctor and even the pulse could not be checked. The unavailability of women doctors in handling maternity cases can be seen as a reason for the high rate of mortality during child births. Members belonging to the lowest castes did not have access to the medical practitioners and depended on the experience of some of their members on medical matters and if the malady worsened, the patients just died. The Mission Hospital played a role in the social engineering efforts of the Basel Mission. First was the demonstration effect. This hospital received patients from all castes and communities. They shared the same room. Medical practice was separated from occult and similar

local curative practices. The practice of therapeutic medicine started being seen as an empirical science.

At the outset of this chapter, it was discussed that SE can be understood philosophically as a deterministic process where the objectives and intentions of those who design a new social order are ultimately realised. In the following section we will examine how the new social order manifested and took shape. It is important to highlight that the foundation of the new social order was deeply rooted in Calvinist theology which provided both the ideological framework and moral justification for the transformation that occurred. The influence of Calvinism on the SE process was not merely incidental but fundamental, shaping ethical, economic and social structures that emerged. By exploring this theological undercurrent, we can gain a deeper understanding of how the architects of the new social order, the missionaries, sought to align their vision with the moral and spiritual imperatives of the time.

Name as Identity

In traditional societies of Malabar and South Canara, a person's caste identity could be guessed through his name. Members of the upper castes were usually given (*tatsama*) names of gods; for example, Raman, Krishnan, and Narayanan for men and Lakshmi, Parvati, and Saraswati for women. Lower caste members could have the same name with some differences (*tatbhava* forms). For example, when the name Krishnan was given to a member of the *Tiyya* caste, it became Kittan and for women a name like Sridevi became Chirutha. Members of the agricultural labour class used to have Dravidian names of quite different nomenclature. In any case, names gave a clue to the social origins of individuals. As part of moving away from their former identities, Basel missionaries gave different names to the converts. Many of these names were either Biblical or German derivations of such names; for example, names such as Gottlieb (German version of the name Theophilus) and

Wilhelmina. Even names like Reinhardt were given to converts. Later, the missionaries started thinking that it was all right to give local or hybrid names to converts and a gradual change started taking place in the pattern of giving names to converts. Missionaries also started coining 'local' names that had not existed in Malabar and South Canara. These names given to converts were reflective of Christian values. In Malabar, names like Supriyan (the loved person), Sugunan (a virtuous person) for men, and for women names like Sushili (a person of good conduct) and Snehi (a person full of love). In South Canara names like Suvarthappa (one who spreads good news or gospel) and Jesupriya (loved by Jesus) are examples of names for men. For women, the missionaries coined names like Karunakshi (a person full of mercy) and Gunamati (a person full of virtues).[56] There could be hybrid names like Samuel Sreedharan, Gunamati Elizabeth and Johanna Viswanathan. These names did not have any caste connotations.

Contradictory World Views

The world views of Basel missionaries were often in contradiction with the world views of the population of regions where they worked. There is a risk of viewing the contradictions in binaries. Contradictions have several shades. While trying to avoid such reductionist binary perceptions, an attempt is made here to examine some of the difference in perspectives that appear in missionary literature. As an example, we first discuss the differing perceptions in the concept of time. Concept of time is multi-dimensional. The concept of time held by missionaries was obviously influenced by the Calvinist perception of time as a resource to be used judiciously and fruitfully for the glory of God. Time is therefore measured, in this context, by the use of watches and clocks. When the Basel Mission started establishing workshops and factories the concept of time acquired greater precision. The work of men and machines had to be synchronised. In factories there was an employee designated as

'time-keeper'. Traditional societies of Malabar and South Canara also had a concept of time. For example, in paddy cultivation, labourers had to work in unison during sowing, transplanting, de-weeding and harvesting operations. But, that concept of time was different from what the missionaries understood and measured with their clocks.

Another facet relates to work and leisure. In factories, hospitals, schools, orphanages and other establishments established by the Basel Mission, work and leisure was clearly defined. That was not the case with the traditional societies in Malabar and South Canara. There were breaks between different types of farming operations, like sowing to transplanting, transplanting to de-weeding, and often these breaks lasted for days. During this period, labourers often did nothing. Seeing these breaks, the missionaries often described the local population as 'lazy' and 'indolent'.

We also briefly refer to attitude to work. In Calvinist theology, work is seen as a means of self-actualisation of a man of calling *(berufmann)*. Ability to do hard and honest work is an external manifestation of a man who is chosen for salvation by the grace of God. Missionaries found that the local population, including converts, viewed work as something to be done only as much as it was needed. The Basel Mission attempted to resolve these contradictions to some degree using factories and other institutions established by them as a tool of SE. Work in factories began and ended at specific times. Well-defined lunch breaks and other breaks indicated that work and leisure was clearly demarcated. Work in factories started and ended with a short prayer by the manager or supervisor indicating a sacrosanct Calvinist view that work is worship.

Conclusion

These factors mentioned above which dictated the perspectives and manner of life in South India, motivated the Basel Mission to attempt to deal with these problems through their policies that can be viewed as SE. Thus, SE essentially involved coping with and tackling

the social and domestic issues of the converts that originated from their former caste values. The Basel Mission viewed caste as a threat to the emergence of an ideal Christian community and so they dealt with this very methodically and systematically. The report of the Basel Mission for the year 1915 states: "from the beginning of our work in India to the present day, we have never allowed this monster of caste to raise its head in our churches and our strict loyalty to the principle of love in this respect has been crowned with success."[57] They brought into practice a system of life that was in tune with the Calvinistic concept of orderly, routinised life and so created a system of social existence where all institutions like orphanages, work environments and educational systems were conducive to the abolition of converts' older habits and their adoption of the intended objectives. They were also aware of the issues relating to social transformation that was essential among the converts. The other missionary groups like the Tranquebar Mission, the LMS and the CMS were aware of the caste issues that had cropped up among the converts. But their approach was to circumvent it through different means that did not involve any SE. The Basel Mission could view the caste issues as theologically unacceptable to Christianity and so confront it with the means they had at their disposal. The main factor that could be attributed to the success of Basel missionaries in eradicating caste and all the belief systems and socio–cultural practices relating to their former life of converts could be that the Mission had control of all aspects of the lives of their converts. Orphanages, schools, factories, and life in a Mission Compound under the watchful eyes of missionaries ensured this. This was not the case for the LMS and CMS whose converts continued in their previous professions even after conversion. Nonetheless, some converts who managed to get a good education through the educational institutions run by the missions got employment in the missionary institutions or in government service as teachers, clerks, etc.[58] The LMS and the CMS being British missionary societies had the patronage of the government.

Institutions run by the Basel Mission like schools, orphanages, hospitals and factories were SE tools in the hands of the Basel Mission for creating a new community with caste identities being relegated to the past. This community had some special characteristics. They had basic literacy; they were attuned to the new industrial skills, and they had rejected the caste system which had resulted in them being treated as 'outcasts'. Living in Mission Compounds and under the umbrella of the Church Constitution gave this group of converts an endogamous character and they almost emerged like another *jati* or caste, a closed group. This community of converts had certain internal and external markers. Internal markers were subjective factors like commonness in the values, attitudes, ideologies and belief systems about important social issues, and mutual awareness of each other as being in the same objective conditions that differ from those of other strata. External markers such as education, property, prestige, power, commonality in lifestyles, modes of dressing, marital relations and decorating homes indicated progress after conversion. It may be pertinent to know how the wider society viewed this group. Such an enquiry provides an important direction for future research. At the time when the Protestant missionary organisations like the Lutheran Mission, CMS and LMS were attempting to accommodate caste practices or compromise with the institution of caste among their converts, the Basel Mission saw caste as something inimical to the Christian values of love and brotherhood and so successfully implemented SE in a manner under these unique circumstances. The measure of success was that the new society of converts did not have their former caste identities.

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[1] South Canara is also spelt South Kanara. The British administration consistently used the spelling 'Canara'.

[2] The term *socialeingenieurs* (social engineers) was first used by Dutch industrialist Jacob Cornelis Van Marken in 1894. He used it to describe specialist assistance which would be needed by modern employers to handle *human* challenges, similar to the technical expertise necessary for non-human challenges (materials, machines, processes). The term gained new meaning with Edwin Lee Earp's *The Social Engineer* (1911). Since then, 'Social engineering' has generally been understood as a technical engineering-based approach to social relations which understands them similarly as a machine would be understood.

[3] Logan*, Malabar Manual,* pp. 477–590, Sturrock*, Madras District Manuals*, p. 3.

[4] Presidency of Madras, *Imperial Census of 1881*, p. 2.

[5] Ibid.

[6] It has been noted that there are substantial differences between the land tenure patterns in Malabar and South Canara districts. There was greater security of tenure for tenants in the South Canara district which prevented rack renting and enabled the tenants to make investment in land. See Kurup, *Land Monopoly*.

[7] Sturrock, *Madras District Manuals*, p. 15*.*

[8] According to the prevailing custom in Kerala society during the nineteenth century, the holder of an inferior tenancy right could not be evicted as long as he paid his dues to his superior. The British colonial administration made two changes. Firstly, the period of lease or mortgage came to be restricted to 12 years, and secondly after this period rents could be raised. The British administration was also simultaneously raising land revenue. The increasing burden of tax fell on the mortgagees, lease holders and was passed on to tenants-at-will. Thus, security of

tenure was lost and the Malabar district became one of the most rack rented districts in the Madras Presidency. Security of tenure was also lost and tenants hesitated to take up any investment on land. These issues are discussed in detail in: Varghese*, Agrarian Changes*, p. 29.

[9] This happened in Bolma, Uchilla in South Canara and Codacal and Chovva in Malabar.

[10] Panikkar. *Malabar and Its Folk*.

[11] How this community remained outside the caste system considering this community was desecrating others by sight is not known. Since it was found that the members of this community were indulging in petty thefts, the government of the Madras Presidency attempted to capture them and put them inside a fence in a place called Codacal. At this time Basel Missionaries intervened and established a station at Codacal and attempted to train the members of this community in agriculture. The attempt was partly successful, but the members of this community got integrated with other converts very easily. Thomssen, *Samuel Hebich*, p. 123.

[12] For a detailed discussion on the land tenure system of South Canara see, Bhat, *South Canara*.

[13] T. C. Varghese in his path-breaking book "*Agrarian Changes and Economic Consequences*" has explored in detail the land tenure pattern in Malabar and South Canara and the resultant crisis created by re-interpretation of the traditional practices by the British administration. The land tenure system in South Canara district had some parallels with that of the contiguous district of Malabar. There were also differences. On the whole, the tenurial system in the South Canara district offered greater security of tenure. See: Varghese, *Agrarian Change*, and also Kurup, *Land Monopoly*, and Raghaviah, pp. 83–104.

[14] Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, p. 21.

[15] Ibid., p. 26.

[16] Ibid., p. 26.

[17] Fischer-Tine and Mann, eds., *Colonialism as Civilizing Mission*.

[18] St. Francis Xavier (1506–1552) was a Spanish Jesuit missionary and co-founder of the Society of Jesus. He played a crucial role in the spread of Christianity in Asia during the 16th century, particularly in India, Southeast Asia, and Japan. Arriving in Goa in 1542, he is credited with extensive missionary work along the Indian west coast and is considered one of the most influential Christian missionaries in history.

[19] Forrester, *Caste and Christianity, p.* 69.

[20] Ibid., p. 33.

[21] The London Missionary Society was established in 1795 and was essentially a non-denominational Christian missionary organisation. See also Kooiman, *Conversion*.

[22] Hardgrave. *The Nadars of Tamilnad*.

[23] Forrester, *Caste and Christianity,* p. 85.

[24] Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem.*

[25] Kulakkat, *Trade, Politics and Religion,* pp. 277–292.

[26] Jose Peter argues that Henry Baker Jr, a missionary from the CMS started schools for the Mala Arayan community at the request from the elders of the community for education. The CMS established schools in the region and also carried on evangelisation along with it. Jose argues that religious conversion of Mala Arayans was obviously a by-product. See: Peter, *Kalahikunna Charithram*, pp. 68–80.

[27] Ninan Koshy has discussed the issue of caste in Kerala churches in his book, *Caste in the Kerala Churches*.

[28] This consensus was summed up in a Minute of the Madras Missionary Conference of 1850 to which Kolkata and Bombay missionary conferences also adhered. Forrester, p. 71.

[29] Forrester, *Caste and Christianity*, p. 71.

[30] Mohan, "Religion"; Channa and Mencher, *Life as a Dalit.*

[31] This society changed its name in English-language publications several times as revealed in the Annual Reports hereunder:1846: "German Evangelical Society", 1866: "Basel Evangelical Missionary Society", 1869: "Basel German Evangelical Society". Here, we will be referring to it as the Basel Mission or BM.

[32] Shetty, "Missionary Pedagogy and Christianization of the Heathens".

[33] The first modern hospital established by the BM was the Mission Hospital Calicut (1882). Another well-known hospital called Lombard Memorial Hospital, Udipi, which is still operative, was established in the 1920s.

[34] Dr. Hermann Gundert started working for the Basel Mission in 1838. He was a missionary, a scholar, a linguist and an educationist. He published 13 books in Malayalam. He brought out the first newspaper in Malayalam, titled *Paschimodayam* meaning 'Rising from the West'. Gundert is best known for his Malayalam-English Dictionary which was published by Calw in Germany after he returned to Germany. See: Kurup and John, *Legacy;* Frensch, *Hermann Gundert*.

[35] Kumar, "Missionary Paths".

[36] For a detailed account of the activities of the Basel Mission in Malabar and South Canara see: Raghaviah, *Faith and Industrial Reformation*, pp. 43–69.

[37] Jenkins, "Villagers as Missionaries".

[38] Even now, roofing tiles are referred to as 'Mangalore Tiles'. See: Chirayath, *A Study of Tile Industry.*

[39] Kumar, "From Heart to Mind".

[40] Frohnmeyer, *Industrial Mission*, p. 11.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Fischer, "Christianisation".

[43] BMA, Q-09.25, Indien Verordnungen, Gemeindeordnungen und Dubletten.

[44] *Malayala Basel Mission Sabhayude Charithra Samshepam* (Malayalam), pp. 43–93.

[45] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish.*

[46] It was the policy of the Basel Mission that every member should be able to read and write Malayalam. This was intended to facilitate converts to read the Bible.

[47] Samuel Aaron was the son of Choorakkadan Aaron, who was the most important pioneering entrepreneur from the Basel Mission community. Samuel Aaron has documented his political life in his autobiography written in Malayalam. See: Aaron, *Jeevithasmaranakal* (Malayalam).

[48] Kumar, "Gardening the Community."

[49] Public space is a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate and discuss matters of mutual interest and, when possible, reach a common judgement about them. Jurgen Habermas identified three characteristics of the public sphere. These are, firstly, entry disregarding one's status; secondly, domain of common concern, and, thirdly, inclusivity. See: Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, pp. 36–37.

[50] Shetty, "Missionary Pedagogy and the Christianization of Heathens".

[51] The author's grandfather was an inmate of this orphanage during 1880s. He has shared vivid accounts of the training that he received in planting coconuts. More interesting was that the missionaries had composed songs about planting of coconuts. About the orphanages that the BM proposed to open at Kundapur in South Canara and Parapperi in Malabar, the BM report for 1878 notes: "It is intended to put them on simpler footings laying also more stress on agriculture and leaving the supervision of them to a greater extent in the hands of the natives than has been done in the old orphanages." Basel Mission, *Thirty-ninth Report*, p. 43.

[52] Koudur, "Languages, Castes and Hierarchy."

[53] It is difficult to prove this through policy documents. The author is a student of educational institutions founded by the Basel Mission and also served as faculty of the Malabar Christian College and later as manager. The watchword of the college was 'education without discrimination'.

[54] Basel Mission, *Seventy–third Report*, p. 48.

[55] Divya Kannan discusses the problems that the Basel Mission faced in running their orphanages: Kannan, *Contested Childhoods*, pp. 133–139. Divya Kannan argues that the missionaries were viewing the inmates of these orphanages as the western stereotype of lazy, unproductive and cunning Asians and hence tried to impart disciplinary and moral training. The inmates often rebelled against the regimentation and corporal punishments practiced in these orphanages.

[56] See for example: Baptism Register No 4 of CSI Cathedral, Calicut, Serial No 3393 (date 9.3.1905). A name given to a girl is Betseba Damayanthi. Here,

Damayanthi is a typical Hindu name. See also Baptism Register No 5 (entry No 1398), date of baptism 4. 5.1893, a lady with a former name Pappamma is baptised as Snehi. The name 'Snehi' meaning 'a loving person' (perhaps a person loved by Christ) did not exist in traditional society. It was an introduction by the missionaries.

[57] Basel Mission, *Seventy–fifth Report*, p. 22

[58] Martin, *Kolonialfreiheit*, pp. 37–39.

CHAPTER 6

A Photographic Perspective on Recasting the Caste Individuals: An Exploration of the Basel Mission's Industries in Malabar

Chinjumol KR

Abstract

This chapter evaluates the depiction of lower-caste individuals, specifically *Cheruma* and *Tiyya* of Malabar, in the photographs from the Basel Mission's digital archives. The primary objective of this study is to examine the transformation and dissolution of caste-linked bodily identity into a more unified concept of labourer identity by analysing two categories of photographs. The first category is more ethnographic in nature, revealing the traditional caste markers through images. In contrast, the second category focuses on the portrayals of labourers in diverse industries associated with the Basel Mission.

Keywords: Lower caste; Photographs; Bodily identity; Cheruma; Kerala; Labour representation; Social mobility; Tiyya; Visual history.

The caste system in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Kerala continues to exhibit the unique amalgamation of two distinct but interrelated facets: untouchability and unapproachability. This rigid form of stratification system consigns specific individuals to the nadir of the caste hierarchy, branding them as impure and polluted.[1]

Consequently, these individuals are subjected to a plethora of socio-political and economic restrictions, effectively segregating them from mainstream society.[2] The notion of caste pollution transcends the confines of human physicality and extends into the realm of the material and natural environment of everyday life. Food, garments, residences, places of worship, and water bodies were also subjected to 'defilement' if they came into contact with members of the low caste.[3] Moreover, the idea of 'unapproachability' adds a nuanced dimension to the complexity of the caste system in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Kerala, as it considers even the visual contact with individuals belonging to the lower castes as having a polluting impact.[4]

The deeply entrenched nature of the caste system in Kerala during the colonial period was extensively documented by both the colonial administrators and various Christian missionaries.[5] While the missionary accounts are characterised by their rich tapestry of personal narratives emphasising the transformative nature of missionary engagement with the lower-caste people, the colonial administrative reports were primarily focused on establishing an objective understanding of the caste, driven by the imperatives of governance and control.[6] Scholars have effectively harnessed the wealth of information contained in these archives to illuminate the intricacies of the caste system and the transformation experienced by the lower caste populations in response to the influence of colonial modernity.[7] Such efforts were highly focused on reconstructing and reinterpreting this social history in the wider context of caste and religious conversion, mainly supported by written accounts and oral testimonies. There have not been many studies that consult systematically or rely exclusively on other archival materials, such as photographs and drawings. Visual sources from colonial Kerala are primarily integrated into academic works as supplementary aids or supportive evidence for the main textual narrative, rather than constituting an integral part of the analytical discourse. This is surprising considering the abundance of untapped visual documentations in archives, including missionary and colonial

administrative photographs. Although efforts have been made by scholars, such as Sujith Parayil, to explore colonial modernity through the lens of family photographs, the extensive trove of missionary and ethnographic photographs related to colonial Kerala remains largely unexplored.[8]

The family photographs during the colonial period in Kerala were predominantly taken by those who could afford it, particularly the royal family and other affluent members of society. This was because, in its nascent stages, photography was a costly endeavour. People from the upper echelons of the socio-economic spectrum utilised photography as a medium for self-expression, demonstrations of power, and commemorative markers to document family and significant events. Conversely, lower caste individuals were initially unable to engage with photography in the same manner due to their marginalised societal status and the material disadvantages inherent in the pervasive caste system. However, photographs taken by colonial administrators, travellers, and missionaries played a pivotal role in giving expression to and providing visibility for lower caste individuals. These images offered a visual record of the lives and conditions of marginalised communities, presenting a counter-narrative to the dominant representations controlled by the affluent, thereby highlighting their existence and contributing to the broader socio-cultural and economic discourse. Within the corpus of such photographic collections, those amassed by the Basel Mission occupy a singular and noteworthy place. In line with the arguments presented in this research chapter, these photographs serve as visual representations of both the visibility of caste identity and the dissolution of caste barriers. They defy traditional practices of 'untouchability' and 'unapproachability,' aligning with the Basel Mission's ideological stance and their efforts to improve the circumstances of lower-caste communities.

The Basel Mission archive is a notable repository of photographic materials of Malabar, significant for its diverse array of subjects, including depictions of the region's landscape, the mission's activities

among the indigenous population, the various institutions administered by the mission, as well as portrayals of the industrial endeavours. The production and circulation of these photographs were significant as they captured the essence of the 'heathen world' where the mission was primarily engaged, as well as serving as evidence of mission activities to the friends and supporters of the Basel Mission. Some sceptics argue that the Basel Mission's photographs were primarily taken to support fundraising efforts at home.[9] They imply that missionary societies had a clear editorial policy to maximise support rather than communicating knowledge or experiences from abroad. However, there are indications that suggest various motivations for Basel missionaries when taking photographs. Some found non-Western cultures fascinating, and their photography reflects a greater freedom to explore this interest than their verbal reports conveyed to their superiors at home.[10] Other missionaries developed close relationships with their non-Christian neighbours, resulting in photographs of exceptional intimacy and anthropological accuracy, even in the face of racial and cultural barriers created by the colonial context. Such photographs thereby incorporate some 'exotic' elements invariably associated with the perception of the 'East' and the 'non-Christian world.'

The recurring theme evident in the Basel Mission photographs from Malabar revolves around the portrayal of various castes and tribes with whom the missionaries engaged. The significance of such photographic representations can be viewed through the lens of Charles Sanders Peirce's concept of the index, wherein an index establishes a direct and tangible connection with its subject through a physical causal link.[11] In this context, mission photographs function as empirical sources that draw attention to the lived experiences and challenges confronted by the lower-caste communities of the region. The academic import of these Basel Mission photographs becomes particularly pronounced when analysed in conjunction with the mission's industrial undertakings and their deliberate opposition to the prevailing caste hierarchies entrenched in the Malabar region.

At the heart of this scholarly inquiry lies the manifestation of several compelling ideas. By visually documenting the portraits of indigenous castes and their engagement of many in various economic activities associated with the Basel Mission, the missionary photographs sought to serve two purposes. They demonstrate the markers of caste identities in individuals from Malabar while also highlighting the transformations brought about by the Mission's influence in the everyday lives of these traditional caste individuals, especially among the lower caste people. The second aspect is underlined by the Christian notion that all individuals share equal worth in the eyes of the divine entity. An in-depth examination of these two aspects in photographs is essential for comprehending the transformative effects of caste groups as they transcended traditional caste symbols, amalgamating into a cohesive identity under the pervasive influence of the Basel Mission's industrial endeavours. Jaiprakash Raghaviah, who has extensively studied the impact of the Basel Mission Industries in Malabar and South Canara, provides valuable insights into how the Basel Mission's economic activities have contributed to the emancipation and shedding of caste among lower caste people, a process he has termed 're-engineering of the self' through 'industrial Mission'.[12] Even though Raghavaiah has thoughtfully included a selection of these photographs in his scholarly work, it is essential to acknowledge that they only serve a supplementary role in relation to his primary textual content.

This chapter utilises two distinctive types of photographs found in the Basel Mission's visual archive.[13] The first category bears a resemblance to ethnographic photographs of the contemporary period, enabling the 'objective understanding' of traditional caste identity. Portrait photographs of this kind tend to correlate traditional caste attributes, such as caste occupation and material life, with the individual's collective caste identity. Like many colonial photographs, these images lack recognition of the subjects with their unique individual identities, as they do not mention names or provide context for taking the photographs, etc. However, such photographs

are valuable for gaining a better understanding of different layers of caste identities, as evidenced through the posture, materiality, and traditional adornments of the individuals depicted etc.

The second category of photographs holds great importance as it provides evidence of the dissolution of caste barriers, in line with the ideology of the Basel Mission. These photographs depict the working conditions and labourers involved in various industrial and commercial activities of the Basel Mission. The analysis of these photographs is largely based on the historical information gathered from the Basel Mission's annual reports. The majority of the population engaged in the Mission's industrial endeavours in Malabar came from lower-caste backgrounds, particularly *cherumas* and *ezhavas*, along with various other caste groups, including higher-caste *nairs* and artisanal castes. These labourers worked under the same roof, sitting or standing in close proximity, transcending the traditional caste attributes of 'untouchability' and 'unapproachability' practiced among various castes and subcastes. Visual cues in photographs that resonate with such aspects can be understood in relation to the notions of 'equality' and the missionary efforts to 'humanise' and transform the lives of lower-caste people. A discernible trend towards homogeneity and the shedding of caste affiliations can be observed in numerous other photographs, extending to those featuring mission schools and orphanages, but such images are not included as part of the current study.

Caste as a Marker in Basel Mission Photographs

Photographs depicting caste markers in Malabar, available at the Basel Mission archives, have been selectively employed in the present study. However, certain photographs from the Basel Mission digital archive could not be included due to ongoing copyright restrictions.[14] As photographs taken post-1914 remain under

copyright protection, and despite extensive efforts to trace the copyright holder, the author was unable to secure the necessary permissions. Consequently, these photographs have been cited rather than reproduced, as their visual analysis is critical for understanding how caste markers – particularly cultural and occupational signifiers – have shaped subsequent social transformations. Therefore, the following sections will engage in a detailed analysis informed by these visual sources.

The *cheruma* caste, historically regarded as one of the most subordinate groups within the social hierarchy of the Malabar region, has long been subjected to profound socio-economic marginalisation. Photographic representations of this community, available within the Basel Mission archives, offer an invaluable resource for scholarly inquiry. A detailed analysis of such photographs is crucial for deepening our understanding of the cultural identity and lived experiences of the *cheruma* caste.

The first photograph for analysis captioned as *Tscheruma girl inland from Malabar*[15] (BMA QC-34.048.0002) is attributed to an unidentified photographer. Historically, the *cheruma* caste comprised various subdivisions.[16] In the southern regions of Malabar, they were commonly referred to as *cherumans*, whereas in the northern regions they were known as *pulayans*.[17] The referred photograph is particularly notable for its alignment with the broader ethnographic-administrative trend of documenting individuals from the *cheruma* caste, exemplifying a pattern recurrent in the visual representation of this community in colonial Malabar.

The composition of this photograph positions the young *cheruma* girl in the central frame. This serves to direct the spectators' attention to her bodily identity, especially the necklace adorning her bare chest. Her hair, tied back, highlights this aspect by accentuating her femininity, giving more exposure to her neck, shoulders, and chest. The girl is portrayed as resting her right hand on a tree branch and looking away from the camera into some unknown distance. Other than these generic visual aspects retrieved from this photograph, what elements align with the photographic caption

'*cheruma girl in Malabar*'? How does this image symbolise the caste identity and regional specificity of the *cheruma* in Malabar?

The *cheruma*, positioned as one of the most marginalised untouchable castes in Malabar, faced severe caste-based discriminations. They were denied the right to wear upper garments and access to gold or silver ornaments, which were reserved for the upper castes. The *cheruma*'s status as agricultural labourers, struggling to attain even the most basic subsistence, limits them to near-absolute poverty.[18] Therefore, the bare-chested posture of the *cheruma* girl in this photograph has symbolic significance as it is a signifier of the prevailing caste norms in the region during the time. This is consistent with the concept of symbolic violence,[19] which refers to the subtle and invisible forms of domination and oppression exercised through culture and ideology of dominant groups.[20] The upper castes imposed their norms and values on the lower castes and made them accept their inferiority as natural and inevitable. This was manifested in various aspects of everyday life, such as language, materiality, gestures, and bodily adornments. The exposure of women's breasts among the lower castes can be seen as a social compulsion, as it marked their bodies and choices as different and subordinate. The upper caste women, on the other hand, could cover their breasts and assert their dignity and honour. Therefore, the absence of upper cloth became a symbol of the underprivileged, as well as a means of controlling and regulating the bodies and sexuality of lower caste women. Thus, the photograph under analysis is capable of exposing the symbolic violence of the dominant caste groups, thereby creating a space for dialogue between the spectator and the subject photographed.[21]

Another important aspect in this photograph is the neck ornament adorned by the girl. It serves as the *pièce de résistance* and possibly a *punctum,*[22] engaging the viewer and drawing them into the image. The *cheruma* women had a strong inclination for necklaces, particularly the ostentatious strings of beads. Such ornaments were made accessible to even the most economically disadvantaged individuals of the time.[23] In addition to their

numerous bead necklaces, they adorned themselves with a long cord embellished with a multitude of strombus rings, known as *chanku modiram* believed to be made from chank-shell. While neck adornments made of beads and shells are prevalent among other lower caste individuals, the distinctive patterns followed by *cheruma* women stand out. These bead necklaces were typically wrapped multiple times around their necks, creating a rugged collar that often extended up to their chin. *Mukkuvans*, *tiyyans*, and certain *mappillas* in the Malabar region adorn their children of 3 to 4 years old with such strombus rings.[24] These necklaces were typically composed of no more than twelve rings each. However, they discontinue wearing such necklaces in adulthood and thereby retain their own caste identity. This underscores the importance of such neck adornments as a distinctive symbol of *cheruma* caste identity within the Malabar region.[25]

However, it is worth noting that regional variations do exist. Within the *Tanur bazaar* in Malabar, another intriguing variant of this necklace was reportedly used

by *kalladi cheruman* – a subsect of *cheruma*.[26] In this case, a relatively small number of rings, totalling just twenty, were used in the necklace's composition. Between each pair of rings, a couple of glass beads in distinct colours were thoughtfully strung, adding a touch of vibrancy to the design. Each ring was spaced about an inch apart from its neighbouring ring on either side, creating a unique visual effect. In contrast to the single loop typically used to attach rings to the common cord, this necklace employed two separate loops for each ring. This innovative approach allowed the necklace to rest flat against the wearer's skin, contributing to its distinctive appearance. This variant of neck ornaments is used by *kalladi cheruman* women as a marker to distinguish themselves from the *Paliya* and other sects with which they may not intermarry.[27]

Another significant observation in this photograph pertains to the presence of an amulet on the upper right arm of the *cheruma* girl. It is worth noting the practice of wearing such amulets by indigenous people has been documented in numerous studies, including

anthropological[28] and census reports. The *cherumas* held the belief that such amulets would offer protection against evil spirits, malevolent gazes, and specific ailments.[29] In a similar vein, the amulet worn by the girl in this photograph brings visibility to such cultural practices and beliefs, often perceived as symbols of primitiveness from a Eurocentric perspective. In short, these bodily attributes of the *cheruma* girl in the photograph, including her bare chest, necklace, and other adornments, act as a 'social skin', visually representing her identity and positioning her within the closer realm of her collective caste identity.[30]

Figure 6.1: Hindu ploughing [German: Hindu am Pflug Indien], Basel Mission Archive, Reference: BMA C-30.65.005, Creator: Unknown, Date: before 05.1902 www.bmarchives.org/items/show/54346, Accessed on May 16, 2023.

Another noteworthy photograph from the Basel Mission archives, represented as Figure 6.1, provides valuable insight into the everyday life experiences of lower-caste individuals. This image, along with another photograph found in the Basel Mission photographic repository depicts agricultural labourers.[31] The image captioned as *Working in the fields in Malabar* (BMA C-30.65.015),

contributes to our understanding of the socio-economic roles occupied by lower castes in the agrarian landscape of colonial Malabar. Both depict scenes from the Malabar region, where men are actively engaged in agricultural labour. In the socio-economic background of Malabar, the primary participants in agricultural activities were the *pulaya/ cheruma* people, who predominantly serve as agricultural serfs. In Figure 6.1, we observe a man attired in a *mundu*, a traditional garment wrapped around the waist and extending down to the knees. In this portrayal, the man is engrossed in the conventional method of ploughing agricultural land, employing a pair of bullocks to pull a wooden plough across the field. The plough comprises two primary components: the body, a lengthy and weighty wooden structure trailing behind the bullocks, and the share, a sharply pointed element affixed to the front of the plough, responsible for cutting into the soil. The pair of bullocks are harnessed to the plough, and the man, positioned nearby, grasps the handles, seemingly encouraging the bullocks to initiate movement. The photograph captures the traces left behind in the field as the bullocks draw the plough through the soil, causing the share to penetrate the ground and subsequently turn over the soil. This image thereby encapsulates the labour-intensive nature of agricultural work.

More importantly, Figure 6.1 offers a striking contrast to the second photograph captioned *Working in the fields in Malabar* (BMA C-30.65.015), as it depicts individuals who are notably under-clothed in their working environment. *Pulaya/cheruma* people, engaged in fieldwork, commonly wore inadequate attire, sometimes just a few green leaves, primarily from the plantain tree, tied around their waists. Additionally, they adorned distinctive cone-shaped caps made from plantain leaves on their heads, and some used handle-less umbrellas crafted from palm leaves. In both photographs, the men wear these head caps to shield themselves from the intense sun rays. The scanty clothing underscores the stark material deprivation experienced by this impoverished labouring group and the harsh conditions they endured.[32]

These two images contradict most of the anthropological and ethnographic photographs of the time, as the latter tend to depict agricultural labouring castes standing in a particular alignment and demonstrating their traditional occupational tools, thereby typifying them as 'specimens' to be objectively understood by the spectator. Many of such photographs had an artificial nature, as the occupational castes were taken out of their *in-situ* realms. However, BMA C-30.65.015 and Figure 6.1 from the Basel Mission archives are placed in the natural occupational terrain where the men are depicted in action. Therefore, the experiential dimension and the severe working conditions, along with the labour-intensive agricultural processes, are effectively conveyed to the spectator.

The harsh working conditions depicted in these photographs can be read in conjunction with the severity of the caste system and exploitative nature of agrarian slave labour that existed in Malabar during the time. The *pulaya/ cheruma* caste constitutes the majority of agricultural labourers, who were regarded as little more than agricultural instruments in the service of the landlords, who provided them with basic necessities for their mere subsistence.[33] These people were assigned with various agricultural tasks, including ploughing, drawing water from wells, and essentially overseeing the entire cultivation process. In return, they would receive a daily allotment of paddy (unhusked rice) as wages. The *cheruma* would allocate a portion of this paddy for the acquisition of essential items such as salt, chillies, toddy, tobacco, or dried fish, while the remaining portion was reserved for sustenance.[34]

Subjecting them to a meagre subsistence was an exploitative strategy, designed to extract their physical labour for an indefinite period and perpetuate their dependence on the benevolence of the landlord. From food to clothing, they were entirely dependent on their master. Male slaves received a modest allowance (maybe once in a year) of seven cubits of cloth, sufficient for the crafting of two *mundus*, while female slaves were allocated fourteen cubits, suitable for making two *muris*.[35] These individuals received minimal compassion during periods of illness, as they were largely left to rely

on their own resources. They often descended into poverty and abandonment in their old age, lacking any form of property or possessions. The act of killing a *cheruma* slave was scarcely considered a crime, with many deeds of transfer including the ominous clause, 'You may sell or kill him or her.' The *cherumas*, being born into slavery themselves, passed on this status to their offspring, and virtually every landlord possessed a significant number of them in their service considering the significance of the agrarian economy in Malabar. Their familial bonds were seldom considered and were treated as inferior to animals.

The photographs in Figure 6.1 and BMA C-30.65.015 vividly depict the challenging and dehumanising circumstances faced by agricultural labourers of the time, offering insights into the harsh working conditions and material deprivation imposed upon them by the exploitative caste system.

Figure 6.2 features photograph that offers insight into the *tiyyas,*[36] another caste that was considered to be significantly polluting in the Malabar region. While the accompanying caption does not explicitly mention the caste, contemporary literature attests to the toddy tapping or palm farmer's caste identity as *tiyyas*.[37] This is corroborated by numerous accounts of colonial ethnographers, as toddy tapping was considered a hereditary occupation of the *tiyyas*. They held limited authority, primarily overseeing the artisan castes and the untouchable washer-launderer caste. Despite being absent from medieval documents upon which fragmentary histories rely, there is a clear tradition indicating that some artisan castes were under the control of the *tiyyas*. Therefore, they occupied a unique position within the caste system, bridging the gap between the upper castes and the lower castes.

Figure 6.2: Men from the caste of palm-farmers [sic] [German: Männer aus der Palmbauerkaste], Basel Mission Archive, Reference: C-30.65.013, Creator: Kühner-Frohnmeyer, Heinrich, Date: 01 Jan. 1896–31 Dec. 1908, https://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/54354, Accessed July 21, 2023.

The photograph under discussion is attributed to Heinrich Kühner-Frohnmeyer and shares a striking resemblance with numerous other ethnographic or colonial photographs of the time. The latter frequently exhibits a tendency to link an individual's traditional occupation with their caste identity. Consequently, such photographic representations often oversimplify the complexities of the *ezhavas or tiyyas*' livelihood experiences, given that these caste groups engaged in a diverse array of occupations, including activities such as quarrying and agricultural labour.

Following similar tenets, photographic representation, both visually and textually, tends to pigeonhole these individuals into specific occupational roles (Figure 6.2), constructing a narrative that essentially tells the viewer, '*look, this is what the palm farmer caste or toddy tapping caste looks like*.' Such visual narrative aims to confine the observer's perception to the image itself, diverting attention from the nuances and disruptions in the actual lived experiences of these individuals. In essence, such images serve as

evidence to reinforce caste attributes, relying on visual cues that link individuals to specific caste identities.

In this image, three men are depicted wearing their traditional attire and equipped with customary tools for their work. Each of them is dressed in a knee-length *mundu* and a turban. The central figure assumes a prominent frontal stance, directly facing the camera, serving as the main focus within the composition. The two other men are positioned in a manner that draws the spectator's attention to the tools and equipment associated with toddy tapping, thereby effectively conveying the occupational context. This image is thus actively involved in the process of knowledge production, at the same time shedding light on the practices and tools associated with the toddy tapping occupation.

The tools are meticulously arranged around the waists of these three toddy tappers, displaying remarkable uniformity in their placement. This attributes relative significance to the tools rather than to the individuals subjected to this photographic process, as the individuals' identity is imbibed into the collective caste identity, by means of the occupational tools they carry.[38]

One important tool in this photograph is the *karuvi*, tied to the front, crafted from the leg bone of either a buffalo, deer, or *mlaw* (sambar deer). The *karuvi* serves as a crucial implement for toddy tapping and is filled with ghee. The ghee used in *karuvi* is believed to possess medicinal properties, as it is produced by blending around 41 different herbs. After 60 days, this ghee is replaced with fresh ghee. Locally, it is believed that the medicinal properties of this ghee help alleviate asthma. Furthermore, the ghee not only enhances the flavour of toddy but also preserves the integrity and functionality of the *karuvi* over an extended period.

The photograph also features prominently a set of knives securely fastened to the right side of the workers' waists with a rope. This set consists of two types, the broader *cheth kathi* and the thinner *olakaththi*. The *cheth kathi* assumes a central role in the toddy tapping process, being essential for harvesting the inflorescence of the coconut palm. This knife is characterised by its

substantial size, sharpness, and smoothness. Maintaining the cleanliness of this knife, free from stains and scratches, is crucial as it directly affects the quality of toddy tapping. The sharpness of the tapping knife is pivotal in ensuring the efficient extraction of toddy from coconut inflorescences. A smooth cut is imperative to facilitate the unimpeded flow of toddy. Conversely, a dull tapping knife results in a rough cut, hindering the flow of toddy and potentially leading to losses and damage to the inflorescence. Therefore, regular sharpening is necessary to preserve the functionality of the tapping knife. The second knife, known as the *ola katti*, serves another distinct purpose. It is a compact and sharp knife specifically designed for cutting the leaves of the coconut tree and chopping them into smaller pieces. This tool is vital for various tasks, including the preparation of *mattathangu* and *nakkola* during the process of toddy tapping.

Another vital component is *chetthu mannu* or tapping clay. In the photograph, a small pot-like structure is visible, hanging adjacent to the knife pairs, which serves as a container for *chetthu mannu*. The *chetthu mannu* is used for sealing any gaps that may appear in the inflorescence following the tapping process. Failure to seal these gaps can result in the leakage and loss of toddy. Workers use their fingers to apply *chetthu mannu* to the gaps in the inflorescence, effectively preventing any such leakage.

The presence of a rope in the hands of the individuals depicted in the photographs is another crucial element in the toddy tapping process. These ropes are vital aids for climbing coconut or palm trees. Regional variations exist in the use of these ropes. In areas where coconut or palm trees are closely spaced, the rope is employed to establish a connecting link with nearby trees, thus avoiding the need for additional physical effort in climbing up from the bottom. In regions where the trees are more sparsely distributed, the length of the climbing rope is relatively shorter, allowing for climbing on each individual tree.

In this photograph, the traditional tools worn by these three individuals acted as a caste marker. The underlying aspect with such visual representations is that one person is interchangeable with

another in the same caste group. Their individual identity is removed from time, place, or context and, in most cases, unified with the symbols of markers of traditional caste occupation. The subjective experiences of the persons involved in the toddy tapping process, the human attributes and the deep relationship between the toddy tapper and the tree are often overlooked when attempting to understand the photograph, as it tends to emphasise only the 'caste-confined' attributes of the subjects being photographed.

In the photographs discussed above, the material aspects of visual documentation were analysed in parallel with the expressive identity of the 'caste' individuals. The restrictions imposed on individuals regarding their wearables and relative occupational immobility were identified as caste markers in such photographs. This holds true for many other non-missionary photographs, including those in the archival collections of Egon Freiherr von Eickstedt and L.A. Marwart. Consequently, these photographs make caste 'visually identifiable' in many respects.

Another genre of photographs, showcasing the symbolic realm of the everyday caste experiences of the lower-caste people, is also kept in the Basel Mission archive. A relevant illustration of this can be found in Figure 6.3, crediting Klein & Peyerl, wherein the image depicts women engaging in the weaving of mats from palm leaves. What enables them to recognise their social status as lower castes is the distinct sitting posture adopted by both the women and men depicted in the photograph. A significant number of photographs within the Basel Mission archives portraying lower caste people consistently features them adopting similar postures, whether they are depicted partaking in communal meals or actively involved in various daily tasks. This visual parallelism bears a noteworthy resemblance to certain ethnographic photographs, particularly exemplified by the collection of photographs taken by Edgar Thurston, preserved within the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford. Of particular relevance is an annotation by the museum's inaugural curator, Henry Balfour, found on the mount board of one such photograph, which reads as follows: '*Iluvans Shivans eating rice kneeling (sitting at meals forbidden) Circa 1900'*. This annotation

underscores the prohibition associated with sitting positions among lower caste people, as they are banned from adopting any cross-legged posture, thus adding depth to the comparative analysis of such poses depicted in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3: Women weaving mats from palm leaves (Malabar) [German: Frauen b. Flechten von Matten aus Palmblättern (Malabar)], Basel Mission Archive, Reference: C-30.82.149, Creator: Klein & Peyerl, Madras, Date: 01.09.1926–31.12.1933, https://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/54819a, Accessed August 17, 2023.

The bare-chested appearance of the young women, coupled with the depiction of their modest housing conditions and simple utensils, further underline their low material status. In contrast, many photographs in the Basel Mission repository portray higher caste individuals, such as the *Nairs* and *Namboothiris*, in confident postures stressing their higher material conditions.[39] Most of these higher caste individuals are represented as sitting on chairs or in a cross-legged position, which conveys a sense of authority, agency and privilege. Additionally, the women from higher castes are often seen covering their upper body with neatly draped clothing, such as the *mundu* and sometimes *neriyath*. Their ornamentation is mostly

more elaborate, incorporating precious metals and stones, reflecting not only their economic status but also the social sanction in enjoying high material prospects. Caste marks or symbols are easily drawn from these photographs as *Namboothiri Brahmins* are often represented wearing the sacred thread and holding religious texts, emphasising their roles as priests and religious teachers. These visual cues reinforce their elevated status within the caste hierarchy, highlighting the stark contrast in social and economic standing between individuals from lower and higher castes in the Malabar region, as captured in the photographic record.

Recasting Caste Individuals in Basel Mission Industries

The people from lower castes in Malabar experienced significant shifts in how their caste identities were outwardly expressed as they continued to evolve through the interaction with various industries and institutions established by the Basel Mission. The Mission's economic and educational activities in Malabar left an indelible mark on the lives of lower-caste individuals.[40] A significant number of those who converted to Christianity under the Basel Mission belonged to the *cheruma/ pulaya* and *tiyya* castes.[41] The adoption of a new faith and way of life by converts met with opposition from higher caste Hindus, leading to the abandonment of traditional caste-based occupations by many. This transformation is corroborated by the numerous annual reports of the Basel Mission. Consequently, the mission had to integrate these converts into various economic ventures to ensure their livelihoods. This encompassed a wide range of initiatives, from agricultural enterprises to weaving and tile industries.

Within these mission-run establishments, individuals from diverse caste backgrounds came together. The training provided by the mission in both industrial labour and the Christian way of life,

coupled with mechanisation, fostered a shedding of traditional caste markers and barriers for many. Skills were traditionally passed down from the elder to younger generation within the framework of caste norms. This transmission of knowledge underwent a transformation during the Basel Mission era, fostering occupational mobility. The learning of occupations through training created opportunities for many lower-caste individuals who had lost their jobs due to their adherence to the Basel Mission. Also, the concept of equality began to infiltrate into the lives of individuals from various lower caste groups. Such social changes were facilitated by education, instruction imparted in securing occupational skills, and paid job opportunities in the Basel Mission Industries.

Figure 6.4: Brickworks employees in Putiarkall [German: Ziegelei-Angestellte in Putiarakall], Basel Mission Archive, Reference: QC-30.119.0060, Creator: unknown, Date: 01 Jan. 1896–31 Dec. 1914, https://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/68782, Accessed August 3, 2023.

Another significant facet of this transformation was the abandonment of the various taboos and restrictions historically linked to different caste groups. For instance, certain artisanal castes

adhered to the concept of *desam*, which determined the geographical area where their labour was concentrated. Straying beyond their designated *desam* boundaries could result in social stigmatisation and, consequently, the forfeiture of one's traditional occupation.[42] These entrenched beliefs underwent a gradual dilution with the introduction of mechanised industries in different regions. The implementation of comprehensive training in various trades played a pivotal role in shaping a skilled workforce distinct from the traditional caste labourers. This resulted in the dissociation of a 'labourer' from their caste identity to more homogenised 'wage labourer' identity.

Figure 6.4 offers a glimpse into the brickwork labourers in *Puthiyara*, Malabar. The tile making and brickwork were traditionally carried out in Malabar by potter castes named *kumbhāran/kusavans,*[43] as a subset of pottery. This was practiced as cottage industries, where everyone in the family unit, including women and children, played a role in the production process. The close-knit caste system under which this industry was carried out also imposed 'spatial restrictions' on various subgroups. For instance, the *āndūr nāir*, a subcaste within the *nāir* caste, holds the highest position in the caste hierarchy among all other pottery-practicing groups. They were permitted to reside and sell their products within the village boundaries, whereas the *kumbhāran/kusavans* live in separate settlements outside the village and sell their products beyond the village borders. These entrenched 'caste ties' linked to the traditional practices of pottery or tile making encountered a substantial challenge from the Basel Mission as they integrated tile making into the Mission's industrial pursuits. Diverse caste groups actively participated in mission factories, acquiring the skills of tile making. Even the traditional artisanal castes, including the *kammala*, joined the mission's tile factories. Instances have been documented in various annual reports of the Basel Mission. For instance:

> A number of Kamalers (i.e., copper smiths) have joined in Mission, attracted by the example of those who were baptized in the previous years. They obtained employment in our new Tile-Factory at Feroke, and Mr. Heckelmanx, the

> superintendent, provided a dwelling-place for them, where they have been allowed to put up rent-free ever since. Mr. Timothy, the pastor of the young congregation at Feroke, on the whole, is able to give them a good testimony, with regard to the interest they take in, and the capacity they exhibit for, the Christian truth.[44]

In addition to the intermediary or higher-caste members in the caste hierarchy, even untouchable agrestic slaves found a place within the mission tile industry. Mr. Singer, overseeing the Tile-Works at *Codacal*, shares a captivating account of a young *cheruma*, displaying an exceptional affinity for the art of tile making. Singer emphasised that this individual, *Devadasan*, transcended his traditional caste occupation and evolved into the accomplished craftsman of *Codacal*.[45]

However, caste norms within families imposed restrictions on individuals attempting to join tile factories, particularly from upper castes. Despite this, many individuals representing diverse castes, in defiance of such norms, joined in the mission's tile factory. A noteworthy example is found in the case of *Kunyan Nair* at Feroke, documented in the Sixty-Eighth Report of 1907.[46] Such composition of individuals from various social positions and caste backgrounds can be also read in conjunction with the participation of non-Christian individuals from various regions. However, the makeup of the workforce in the tile factories diverged from the overall distribution of converts in other industries, a discrepancy attributable to the imperative of siting tile factories in areas with access to raw materials and transportation facilities, where labour recruitment was more influenced by the availability of workers rather than a specific preference for converts.[47] The historical insights provided in the narratives recorded in the missionary accounts bear striking parallels to the photograph under discussion (Fig. 6.4). The most noticeable aspect of this image is the tight-knit proximity of the people. Considering the strict observances of traditional caste norms, such closer proximity was practically impossible if the individuals are from various castes or subcastes. The caste individuals in Malabar were influenced by notions of untouchability and unapproachability,

compelling them to adhere to '*pulayappad'* and '*tiyyappad*' distances.[48] In that backdrop, a *cheruman* was required to maintain a distance of 16 feet from a *Tiyyan*, and a *Tiyyan* had to maintain twelve paces from the *Nairs*, reflecting the rigid hierarchies and spatial segregation surrounding different caste groups. However, the composition of Figure 6.6 transcends all such conventionally practiced notions of polluting distances, including the *pollution through touch* and *pollution through sight*. This deviation can be attributed to the Basel Mission's overarching resistance against upholding any caste hierarchies that designate one person as inferior and inhumane. The Mission's opposition to the caste system aligned with their broader stance against caste hierarchies, even as they accepted hierarchies within commercial and industrial society as a result of individual effort. However, hierarchies rooted in an unalterable value system faced strong opposition from the missionaries.[49]

Another noteworthy aspect concerns clothing patterns. Most women in this photograph (Fig. 6.4) cover their upper bodies, displaying a degree of uniformity with some notable variations. Some wear *sarees* with long-sleeved blouses, while others opt for different attire, comprising a *mundu* with an upper *thorthu* draped over the blouse. Among the men, there is a mix of bare-chested individuals, some wearing long upper cloths, and others with *thorthus* draped over their shoulders, often accompanied by hair turbans. These clothing patterns defy the traditional societal prohibition against lower-caste individuals wearing upper cloth. This is also well reflected in numerous photographs depicting female workers in mission industrial units, such as the tile-works in India (Fig. 6.5), and workers in weaving units (Fig. 6.7), among others. Clothing, in this context, was utilised to create a more 'dignified body' thereby superseding the imposition of upper-caste power over lower-caste bodies. Additionally, it paved the way for many lower-caste individuals to integrate themselves into a more egalitarian realm.

Figure 6.5: Female workers in a mission tile-works in India [German: Arbeiterinnen einer indischen Missions-Ziegelei.], Basel Mission Archive, Reference: C-30.61.056, Creator: unknown, Date: unknown, https://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/54113, Accessed August 31, 2023.

An exception to the general clothing pattern is obvious in the woman standing bare-chested in the photograph (Fig. 6.4), with a neck ornament that strikingly mirrors the one seen in BMA QC-34.048.0002, presumably belonging to the *cheruma* caste. This individual may be part of the 'non-converts' recruited to the industry to meet the labour requirements. However, this photograph, in general, depicts her in close proximity to other members, emphasising her significance as 'labourer' rather than 'othering' the person by the lower-caste identity.

Figure 6.6: A weaving hall in Cannanore [German: Ein Websaal in Cannanore.], Basel Mission Archive, Reference: BMA QU-30.016.0040, Creator: unknown, Date: unknown, https://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/84621, Accessed October 12, 2023.

Figure 6.7: The hall for spinning and reeling in the weaving works in Cannanore. [German: Zwirn- & Spul-Saal der Weberei in Cannanore.], Basel Mission Archive,

Reference: QU-30.016.0041, Creator: unknown, Date: unknown, https://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/84622, Accessed October 12, 2023.

The transition from a traditional caste-based identity to an 'industrial labourer' identity is evident in other photographs including those depicting weaving establishments as well. This is quite expressive in Figures 6.5, 6.6, and 6.7. These photographs encapsulate the laborious engagement of workers within their respective fields. A salient aspect of these images lies in the perceptible attenuation of caste identities, resulting in a discernible semblance of uniformity. Moreover, this visual homogeneity extends to elements such as attire, transcending traditional caste norms, to a more model Christian appearance. Regardless of their possible caste affiliations, be it *chaliya, pulaya/cheruma,* or *tiyya*, the individuals depicted in these images appear indistinguishable from their caste background. This marks a noteworthy transformation in the identity of those who once adhered to specific traditional occupations, now seamlessly integrated as 'workers' in diverse industrial settings. The diminishing significance of caste in these photographs becomes particularly evident when contrasting earlier mission photographs mentioned in the first section, which accentuated caste distinctions. This observable shift and dilution of caste identities align with the broader social engineering efforts spearheaded by the Basel Mission. In essence, these photographs bear witness to the evolving social landscape and the gradual erosion of caste delineations.

Conclusion

This chapter utilised photographs as a primary source of study, considering them as historic artifacts with multiple layers of meaning, to decipher the dilution of traditional caste identities and experiences with the incorporation of lower-caste individuals into the Basel Mission Industries. This is achieved by examining two categories of photographs from the Basel Mission digital archive. The

first category delves into the nuanced understanding of traditional caste markers in both material and experiential realms. In contrast, the second category focuses on the portrayal of workers within the diverse industries associated with the Basel Mission. The initial set of photographs provides visibility to the caste. However, this visibility is conspicuously absent in the second category.

It can be argued that integration with the Basel Mission's industrial establishments provided the untouchable castes an opportunity to exhibit a new identity that was more humane and dignified. It also granted them access to a new social space and a new 'social imaginary', as such specialised realms were denied by traditional caste society.[50] The upward mobility of lower castes into these spaces was hindered, as these spaces were conceived and controlled by the upper caste, limiting the lower castes to labour-intensive manual work in confinement. This highly exploitative system was managed through the imposition of coercive power and corporal punishments. Slave castes like *cheruma* were compelled to continue as agricultural serfs under such a system, receiving irregularly paid 'handfuls of paddy' as their wages.

Industrial labour served as a catalyst for profound transformations within the caste system, contributing to the re-casting of individuals. Simultaneously, Christian teachings played a pivotal role in shaping new Christian individuals. The amalgamation of industrial experiences and Christian values contributed significantly to shaping a distinct identity for those embracing both facets, fostering a convergence of socio-economic and religious influences in their personal development. The mission report of 1841 affirms that individuals belonging to lower castes often exhibit greater receptivity to the gospel compared to their counterparts in higher castes. These individuals, experiencing discrimination and oppression from the higher castes, find solace and liberation in the gospel message, which promises hope and freedom from the constraints of their social and economic bondage.[51]

Diverging from the harsh and exploitative norms of agrarian slavery and caste-bound occupations, mission industries introduced

a paradigm shift by offering regular wages, employment benefits, and material advancement for their workforce. This positive transformation is evident in the establishment of relief funds and the regulation of working hours, among other initiatives. The inclusive approach of the Basel Mission, integrating familial affinities with the workforce, sharply contrasts with the caste-bound labour extraction practices, wherein every family member was treated as a 'saleable commodity' disregarding their family ties. An example to this progressive approach was the establishment of a nursery in the tile-works at *Pudiarakal*. Three elderly women oversaw this initiative, creating an environment where mothers could actively participate in work while ensuring that their children received proper care and were not neglected. This reflects the mission's commitment to fostering a workplace that valued the well-being of its employees and acknowledged the importance of family dynamics in the overall welfare of the community.

The mission provided workshops and farms as a means for converts to earn their livelihood. This was likely part of their efforts to support the community and ensure their well-being. It also could have served as a way to encourage self-sufficiency and independence among the converts. This approach is often seen in many mission activities where the focus is not just on spiritual growth but also on improving the overall quality of life of the individuals involved. This enabled many lower caste individuals to shed their socially assigned and identifiable markers of a traditional caste body to a more homogenised and dignified individual identity.

The extent to which Basel Mission photographs portray historical reality is limited by several inherent biases and contextual factors. Many of these photographs were staged, presenting a constructed version of reality. The subjects were often posed in ways that highlighted specific attributes or activities aligned with the mission's narrative, meaning that spontaneous or candid moments of everyday life were likely omitted. These photographs, prominently featured in the Basel Mission annual reports from the 1900s onwards, aimed to present the mission in a positive light. Emphasising themes of progress, transformation, moral upliftment, and architectural

features of the church, industry, and residents, they served the mission's goals of fundraising and showcasing success of missionary efforts. This selective portrayal cannot completely express the historical reality and experiential aspects of people engaged with the Basel Mission. However, these photographs are historically significant because of their inclusivity in the visual narrative of the time, particularly regarding the lower castes and those actively engaged in the mission's industrial works. While the visual details in the missionary ethnographic photographs are capable of invoking a cultural sensibility of caste through the visual narrative, they align more with the 'exotic' aspects of the dominant colonial narratives of the time, thereby failing to provide a holistic view of the indigenous culture and the complexities rooted in it. Most of the photographs related to the mission industry are unpublished. Many of the images depicting the transformation of individuals through the mission's influence possibly downplay the challenges and resistance within the experiential realm. However, they effectively address the values of modernity imbued by the 'workers' associated with the mission's industries. These images capture the shift from the traditional body of a caste-bound traditional labourer to new roles and identities shaped by the mission's influence into a more 'modern' version of bodily identity. The proximity of people in their workspaces and the depiction of worker bodies free from caste-bound markers in the photographs demonstrate the dilution of rigid sensory perceptions of caste cues, signalling a reshaping of the 'sense of self' in visual representation.

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[1] Bhaskaranunni, *Pathonpatham Nootanadila Keralam*; Mateer, *Native Life in Travancore*; Miller, "Caste and Territory in Malabar,"; Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*; Osella and Osella, *Social Mobility in Kerala*.

[2] Kusuman, *Slavery in Travancore*; Saradamoni, *Emergence of a Slave Caste*.

[3] Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*; Olcott, *The Caste System of India*; Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India*; Zelliot, *From Untouchable to Dalit*.

[4] Hutton, *Caste in India*, p. 82; Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, p. 51.

[5] Hacker, *A Hundred Years in Travancore*; Hunt, *India's Outcasts*; Logan, *Malabar Manual*.

[6] Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics*; Cohn, *Colonialism*; Dirks, *Castes of Mind*.

[7] Gladstone, *Protestant Christianity*; Kooiman, "Conversion from Slavery"; Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*; Oommen, "Dalit Conversion"; Raghaviah, *Faith and Industrial Reformation*; Viswanath, *The Pariah Problem*; Webster, *The Dalit Christians*.

[8] Parayil, "Photography".

[9] Jenkins, "on Using Historical Missionary Photographs," p. 256.

[10] Ibid., p. 256.

[11] Peirce, *Collected Papers*, p. 196.

[12] Raghaviah, *Faith and Industrial Reformation*, pp. 193–215.

[13] These photographs were sourced from the Basel Mission Archives. The high-quality images (BMA, C-30.65.005, C-30.65.013, QC-30.119.0060, C-30.61.056, BMA, QU-30.016.0040, QU-30.016.0041) were shared with the author by Andrea Rhyn and Patrick Moser (Archivist, Historian, Basel Mission 21).

[14] I was unable to identify the copyright holders for some of the images referenced in this article (QC-34.048.0002, C-30.65.015, and C-30.82.149). Consequently, some of these images could not be reproduced in this publication. However, low-resolution versions of these images can be accessed for reference purposes at www.bmarchives.org.

[15] Unknown. *Tscheruma girl inland from Malabar* [German: *Tscheruma-Mädchen. Inland von Malabar*]. Basel Mission Archive. Reference: BMA, QC-34.048.0002. Date unknown. Accessed June 11, 2023. www.bmarchives.org/items/show/69673.

[16] Notable sub-divisions include *Kanakkan, Pula Cheruman, Erālan, Kūdān*, and *Rōlan*. *Kanakkan* and *Pula Cheruman* are prevalent across all the southern taluks, with *Kūdān* predominantly concentrated in Walluvanad, and *Erālan* primarily present in Palghat and Walluvanad. Subsequent to the Census Report of 1901, the sub-castes *Ālan* (slave) and *Paramban* were recognised as being associated with the *Cheruman* caste.

[17] Stuart, *The Report on the Census*, p. 259.

[18] Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, p. 91; Panikkar, *Malabar and Its Folk*, p. 153; Thurston and Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, pp. 53–54.

[19] Bourdieu discusses symbolic violence as a mode of power imposition by dominant classes that is often internalised by both dominant and non-dominant groups, a dynamic which is found in many social contexts. Bourdieu, *Distinction,* p. 511. See also Burawoy, *Symbolic Violence*.

[20] Bourdieu and Passeron, *Reproduction in Education*, pp. 4–5.

[21] This assumption is based on the theoretical insights drawn from both Susan Sontag, *On Photography* and Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract*.

[22] Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 27.

[23] Hornell, *Report to the Government of Baroda on the Marine Zoology of Okhamandal in Kattiawar*, p. 38.

[24] *Mukkuvans* are fishers who claim descent from the *Chera* kings. *Tiyyans* are traditional toddy-drawers. *Mappillas* are Muslims who trace their origin to Arab traders and local converts.

[25] The neck adornments of this kind were also traditionally worn by sections of the *Cheruman* caste and the *Hill Vedans* of Travancore as caste marks.

[26] Hornell, *Report to the Government of Baroda on the Marine Zoology of Okhamandal in Kattiawar*, p. 38.

[27] Ibid, p. 39

[28] Thurston and Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, p. 46.

[29] Hornell, *Report to the Government of Baroda*, p. 36.

[30] Turner, "The Social Skin," pp. 486–504.

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[32] The agricultural workers, excluded from free labour markets, were considered the property of landlords. Buchanan observed that rice field workers (mostly *cheruma*) lived in extreme deprivation, with hearts scarcely better than large baskets, receiving an annual grant of a mere seven cubits of cloth per person. Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, pp. 87-94.

[33] Panikkar, *Malabar and Its Folk,* p. 153.

[34] Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, p. 54.

[35] Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, p. 91.

[36] In north Travancore and Cochin, these caste groups were known as *Chogans* or *Chovans*. In British Malabar, they were called *Tiyyans*, *Tiyyas*, *Thiyyas* or *Tiyyas*. *Ezhava*, *Irava* or *Erhava, Izhava*, *Elava*, or *Ilava* are also recognised as variations in name.

[37] Their livelihoods encompassed a diverse range of occupations, including labour in palm groves, engagement in quarrying sectors, and service as agricultural labourers. (See: Logan, *Malabar Manual,* p. 191.)

[38] In order to gain a thorough understanding of the various occupational tools used by the toddy tappers' caste in Malabar, as described in the following paragraphs, I conducted personal interviews with several individuals who possess extensive experience in toddy tapping, having practiced the occupation for over four decades.

[39] See photographs in Basel Mission digital archive: *Nayermädchen Malabar* (QC-34.041.0001), *Brahmanen-Familie in Malabar* (QC-30.038.0013), *Nayer-Mädchen aus Malabar* (QC-30.012.0092).

[40] Raghaviah, *Faith and Industrial Reformation*, p. 167.

[41] Ibid., p. 167.

[42] Sunandan, *Caste, Knowledge, and Power*, pp. 71–74.

[43] Potters in the region traditionally followed a method that entailed using a cylindrical die positioned at the centre of a potter's wheel. Clay was then moulded around this die in a circular shape, without a bottom. Once this circular structure was set, it was removed from the wheel and cut into four identical curved tiles. Subsequently, these freshly cut tiles were left to dry and then subjected to a firing process. Given their petite and thin composition, these tiles were commonly stacked in layers of three or four for practicality. Women frequently assisted the men in the pottery work, particularly when precision and delicacy of execution were essential.

[44] Basel Mission, *The Sixty-Eighth Report*, pp. 60–61.

[45] Basel Mission, *The Sixty-Third Report*, p. 34.

[46] Basel Mission*, The Sixty-Eighth Report*, p. 61.

[47] Kumar, "The Basel Mission".

[48] This refers to the social distances to be maintained from polluting castes such as *pulaya/ cheruma* and *tiyya*, respectively.

[49] Raghaviah, *Faith and Industrial Reformation*, p. 65.

[50] Mohan, *Modernity of Slavery*, pp. 91–92.

[51] *Report of the German Mission in the Southern Maratha, Canara, and Malabar Provinces*, 1841, p. 6.

PART 4

Gender and the Basel Mission

CHAPTER 7

Translating Matriliny through the Interpretative Structures of Colonial/Missionary Patriarchy

Parinitha Shetty

Abstract

Under the impact of colonialism, nineteenth century India saw the transformation of historically fluid, regionally variant and community-specific, customary practices. The *re-formation* of *aberrant* indigenous kinship structures along Brahminic/Christian patriarchal lines received increased emphasis from both Christian missionaries and the colonial rulers. This chapter attempts to trace the complex history of these changes in the latter part of the nineteenth century with specific reference to the matrilineal communities in the Canarese region located along the south-west coast of India. Focusing on the printing of a Kannada text titled *Bhuthala Pandyana Aliyasanthaanada Kattu Kattale* in the year 1857 by the Basel Mission Press, that supposedly collated and compiled the matrilineal customs and rules that existed in the Canarese region, the chapter explores the transformations in a geo-socially specific practice of matriliny. The chapter argues that the *discovery* and textualisation of the codes of Bhˆtâlapândya, was part of larger historical processes of transformation in the region in which different groups of people had different interests and over which they had changing degrees of control and interpretative authority. The chapter argues that the text itself became the site on which different orders of power, organised in shifting hierarchies, came together in a dissonant collaboration through

which a particular organisation of caste, kinship, gender and property was sought to be established and normalised.

Keywords: Matrilineal Structures; Basel Mission; Canarese region; Colonial law.

Textualising *Aliyasnatana*[1]

In the year 1857, the Basel Mission Press printed a Kannada text titled *Bhûtâlapândyapandyana Aliyasanthanada Kattu Kattale*, roughly translated as *Bhˆtˆlapˆndya's Law of Aliyasanthana (BLA).*[2] The text listed the rules of inheritance and marriage that had supposedly governed the matrilineal communities of the Canarese region from A.D. 77.[3] The text provided a genealogical narrative of the origin of these laws. It concluded by briefly detailing the missionary perspective on the story of *Bhûtâlapândya* and the system of *Aliyasantana.*

The printing of this text by the Basel Mission stands at the crux of several historical changes that were taking place in the Canarese region and participates in very significant ways in shaping, interpreting and authorising these transformations.[4] The *discovery* and textualisation[5] of the codes of *Bhûtâlapândya* was part of larger historical processes of transformation in the region.[6] The project of codifying historically fluid, regionally variant, and community specific, customary practices into a homogeneous legal code under the rubric of *Hindu law* and the re-formation of *aberrant* indigenous kinship structures along Brahminic/Christian patriarchal lines received increased emphasis in the nineteenth century.[7] The colonial production of *Hindu law* was also in the service of homogenising Brahmanic patriarchy as *Hindu* patriarchy. The important legislations that were passed in the nineteenth century, ostensibly to ameliorate the condition of the *Hindu* woman, were in essence related to the marriage and familial practices of the upper caste woman. Sometimes, these legislations introduced new constraints on the

sexual lives of lower caste women and did away with some of the legal and social entitlements that these women had enjoyed prior to the introduction of the legislation. One such act, The Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act of 1856, introduced the penalty clause whereby if a widow remarried, she would forfeit any rights to her dead husband's property. This was debilitating for widows who belonged to communities which had permitted widow remarriage and allowed the widow to inherit and retain her rights over her husband's property even when she remarried.[8] Uma Chakravarti writes that when the colonial government, supported by the upper caste reformers, introduced legislation like the Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act, " it tended to extend the biases and the ideology of textual Hindu law to apply to those who had been either outside or on the margins of such customs earlier."[9] In her work on the legislative history of *sati*, Lata Mani writes that the arguments of colonial officials in favour of or against the banning of *sati* were "developed within the ambit of Brahminic scriptures."[10] According to her, "the official discourse on *sati* was grounded on three interrelated British colonial assumptions about Indian society: the hegemony of brahmanic scriptures, unreflective indigenous obedience to these texts, and the religious nature of *sati*.[11]

Customary practices that could not be traced back to the *Hindu Shastras* were accepted within the colonial legal system but made legible within the framework of European patriarchy and law. Praveena Kodoth writes that in the case of matrilineal communities of Malabar and South Kanara "colonial judges and jurists interpreted matrilineal customs in terms of a theory of matrilineal law, which they shaped in the process of interpretation, rather than on the basis of existing practices."[12] According to her, the principles which framed the legibility of this 'theory' "were defined externally with reference to modern patrilineal frameworks of interpretation, i.e., informed by comparative legal and nineteenth century anthropological theories from Europe and North America."[13] Discussing the place of custom within colonial law, Kamala Visweswaran argues that, even as precepts of Hindu customs were being reinterpreted "through *sastric*

texts and challenged by emerging statutory law" hence, resulting in actual customary practices being displaced and reified at these two levels of the law, "the realm of custom remained relatively intact in local power structures."[14] She writes that the repercussion of this for women, as instantiated by the introduction of the colonial legislation on infanticide, namely, the Female Infanticide Prevention Act of 1870, was, "Therefore, not only was custom reified through the gradual codification of the law but also it was reified by local patriarchal practices which systematically enabled men's agency at the expense of women's freedoms."[15]

Malavika Kasturi's study on the implications of a fundamental premise of Anglo-Hindu law, namely, that sexuality hence kinship was not a part of ascetic orders and their mode of living, discusses the matter of succession within certain ascetic orders between 1860 and 1940. Kasturi writes that "Ascetic orders were especially troubling for jurists for they did not fit into the normative framework provided by the conservative, patriarchal and upper caste codified law."[16] She goes on to say that Anglo-Hindu law on succession by premising that kinship was specifically related to secular modes of living, allowed certain ascetic orders to appropriate a legal understanding of asceticism in order to efface unwanted members from their order especially women and children.[17] According to her, "through Anglo-Hindu law, *gosain sampradayas* variously utilised the legal discomfort exhibited towards ascetic sexuality to marginalise members who had female companions, as well as *gosain* women and their children."[18]

Missionary Colonial Collaborations

During the early years of its administration, the tenuousness of its rule had made the East India Company wary of tampering with the religious beliefs of its subjects and, hence, refrain from and, for a long time, disallow any kind of evangelical activity within its

territories. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Christian evangelists lobbied strongly in the British Parliament for the evangelisation of the British colonies in India. By this time the East India Company had greatly consolidated its powers in India. These factors led to a change in its religious policy in India and according to the charter of 1833, Christian missionaries could enter British territories in India without the need of licenses.[19] However, the Company policy was to maintain a neutral stand with regard to missionary activities as long as it did not imperil its rule, even though individual officers very often were sympathetic to the evangelical enterprise and supported the missionaries actively, both in an official and personal capacity.

The Basel Mission was the first Protestant Mission to come to Mangalore. The Basel Mission reports (BMR) tell us that relations between the missionaries and the colonial officers were extremely cordial and many of the District Collectors helped the missionaries in their evangelical enterprise.[20] Thus, when the missionaries first came to Mangalore, the then British District Collector, Findley Anderson gave them a warm welcome. In 1840, the Balmatta Hill was presented to the missionaries by the then District Collector H. M. Blair, in order to establish their missionary settlement.[21] Maintaining cordial relationships with the local British officials was important for the German missionaries; antagonising them meant forfeiture of economic and political patronage so important at the early stage of the mission's stay in India. The colonial government in India, according to the mission, had the great responsibility of civilising and evangelising its heathen subjects, since God had entrusted it with the governance of the Indian people. Appealing to its British readers and patrons for funds, the second BMR gives the rationale of the British presence in India as follows:

> For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. God has exalted you above many nations, and entrusted you with the Government of India. To the lord of Lords you owe all your prosperity and all your glory. He has by his name and word raised your own nation from superstitions as miserable, and from bondage as cruel, as that is, under which we see the

> millions of this vast land groaning, and from which there is no deliverance, but by the Gospel of Jesus our Saviour. Recommending you to his grace and protection, we remain, Christian Friends.[22]

Though the colonial government was opposed to active missionary proselytism, fearing that it might jeopardise its rule, its conflation of Christianity with civilisational progress made missionary institutions like schools attractive as adjuncts to the colonial enterprise.[23]

Missionary Ethnography, Translation, and Print Technology

The colonial/ missionary context in which the BLA was printed makes it impossible to read the event of its printing as purely an instance of the Basel Mission's ethnographic interest in the people among whom it had settled. Missionary ethnography, like colonial ethnography, was part of a process of imposing new legibilities on colonised and missionised communities.[24] On colonial ethnography Kamalesh Mohan writes,

> Fully convinced of the benefits of applying scientific concepts, to the construction of a coherent picture of multi-ethnic British society, professional anthropologists, founders of the statistical movement in early Victorian British and colonial administrators tried to link 'scientific' ethnography with colonial practice. They hoped to link this ethnographic knowledge to the formation of administrative policies, legislation and for political control in the colony.[25]

If, for the colonial dispensation, ethnography was a mode of control that contributed to increasing profits and efficient rule, missionary ethnography was simultaneously a mode of evaluation as well as a way of negotiating with the heathen alterity of the convert community and the indigenous society.[26] The anonymous indigenous participants of this ethnographic project who functioned as translators, interpreters and locators of manuscripts were largely Brahmin *munshis.*[27] The project of missionary ethnography was

shaped within this network of associations and interests and these linkages in turn shaped the structuring of its ethnography.[28] The arrival of print technology with the early Portuguese missionaries in the sixteenth century also enabled this process. The first printing press in India was set up by the missionaries of the Society of Jesus at the College of Saint Paul in Goa in 1556.[29] In its early phase, missionary printing was in the service of proselytising. *Doctrina Christam, Tampiran Vanakkam* (Worship of the Lord) a book written by the Jesuit priest Henri Henriques printed in 1577 was the first book to be printed with Indian types and the first non-roman metallic types anywhere in the world.[30] Stuart Blackburn writes that collaborative work between Tamil pundits and European missionaries led to translations into Tamil, revision of orthography, preparation of grammars and dictionaries, the standardisation of spelling and the fashioning of modern Tamil prose. The consequence of this was a changed attitude to language among the Tamil people. "Tamils began to view language from a new angle, not just as familiar speech and written verse, but as an object to be acquired, manipulated and improved, for definite purposes – for religious, social and political reform. No longer simply a register of change, language was itself seen as an instrument of change."[31]

Print technology enabled the authorisation and standardisation of a single version of a text constituted through the collation and translation of multiple manuscript and oral variants of it that existed at a particular historical moment. In his historical analysis of the transition in the system of dissemination of English lyric poetry, in the seventeenth century, from manuscript to print, Francis Moretti writes that in the seventeenth century writing lyric poetry was a form of social communication and "factors of class, gender, patronage, kinship, friendship, political partisanship, and religious allegiance were inseparable from aesthetic issues in such works".[32] He says that, in the manuscript form, lyric poetry bore the traces of its social embeddedness and the social condition of its production and transmission. Print culture resulted in the erasure of these social traces in the text and transformed it into *literature*, a self-enclosed

form of writing, shorn of those social contingencies that had affected its composition, transmission and reception.[33]

The possibility of mechanically and infinitely reproducing a text without the entry of scribal errors, that made one manuscript copy of a text different from another, and eliminating the social context within which manuscripts were embedded and of which they bore the traces, gave the printed text an aura of ahistorical stable continuity which was insidiously transposed from the form of the text to its content to produce for it a truth effect. As stated in the BLA, the text was the first printed version of the *Aliyasanthana* laws.[34] The collators of the printed text state that, "We have printed the Aliyasantâna rules made by Bhûtâlapândya together with an account of their origin, on the authority of two copies; although they have been reconciled as far as practicable, but it is possible that from the want of a sufficient number of copies of the Original, slight errors may still exist."[35]

Here, the printing of the text is described as an inaugural moment in the history of the project for retrieving the original text through a process of collating and correcting the errors in variant manuscript versions of the text.[36] In the case of the BLA, neither the manuscripts on which the Basel Mission text had purportedly been based, nor other manuscript variants of the codes of *Bhûtâlapândya* were to be found.[37] However, maintaining a gap between an original, yet to be discovered, more authentic, manuscript version of the codes of *Bhûtâlapândya*, and the printed version of it, gave different interested groups in contemporary society the licence to interpret, and in some cases enforce, the codes in ways that were materially, socially and politically advantageous to them. Describing the process by which the customary practices of *Aliyasantana* were coded by the colonial legal system as law, Ishii Miho writes,

> In the mid-nineteenth century, British judges began to codify the aliyasantāna kattu, at first by referring to Bhuthala Pandya's kattu as the "code," and then by reviewing the precedents in the courts. In this process, stare decisis in the courts was definitively important; in other words, the precedents themselves constituted the law, and at the same time, they influenced subsequent

> decisions as well as people's practice. Through this reflexive interrelation between the law and practice, customary aliyasantāna kattu. was transformed into the Aliyasantana Law.[38]

The BLA was a translation of contemporary practices of matrilineal communities in the Canarese region through a Brahmin /Christian patriarchal framework for legibilising, naturalising and organising kinship and sexual relations.[39] According to Praveena Kodoth,

> Family customs as well as land relations came up for arbitration increasingly in the second half of the nineteenth century; a time when the importance of control over property and other resources was becoming clear. Besides, matriliny was coming under increasing moral censure for the 'non-conformative' sexual and property practices that it sanctioned. It is not unlikely then that the information collected was skewed against such practices, both consolidating patriarchal hold over property and resisting the censure of Victorian morality.[40]

The text was to shape future re-formations of the community. However, the BLA is unable to gloss over or erase the alterity of matrilineal practices of the region which appears as a residual, stubborn epistemological illegibility throughout the text. It also appears as a continual disruption of the logical consistency of the text which the text is unable to and does not attempt to resolve. It is at and through these appearances of epistemological illegibility and logical *inconsistency* that we are able to retrieve the alterity of both the historical and contemporary practices of matriliny in the region, historicise the event of its technological and ethnographic translation and tease out the historical process which made such a translation possible as well as urgently necessary.

The Story of Bhutala Pāṇḍya

The story of Bhutala Pāṇḍya goes as follows: when the maternal uncle of Dēva-Pāṇḍya wanted to launch his newly constructed ships with valuable cargo in them, Kundōdara, king of demons, demanded

a human sacrifice. Déva-Pāṇḍya asked his wife's permission to offer one of his sons but she refused, while his sister, Satyāvati, offered her son Jaya-Pandya, for the purpose. Kundōdara, discovering in the child signs of future greatness, waived the sacrifice and permitted the ships to sail. He then took the child, restored to him his father's kingdom of Jayantikā, and gave him the name Bhūtāḷa-Pāṇḍya. Subsequently, when some of the ships brought immense wealth, the demon again appeared and demanded of Dēva-Pāṇḍya another human sacrifice. He again consulted his wife, she refused to comply with the request and publicly renounced her title and that of her children to the valuable property brought in the ships. Kundādara then demanded Deva-Pāṇḍya to disinherit his sons of the wealth which had been brought in those ships, as also of the kingdom and to bestow all on his sister's son the above-named Jaya-Pāṇḍya or Bhūtāla-Pāṇḍya. This was accordingly done. And as this prince inherited his kingdom from his maternal uncle and not from his father, he ruled that his own examples must be followed by his subjects and it was, thus, that the aliya-santāna system was established on the 3rd Māgha śudha of the year 1 of the era of Sālivāhana called Išvara about A.D.77. This Bhūtāḷa-Pandya, it is said, ruled for 75 years.[41]

Aliyasantana Practices and Rules for Organising Sexuality

The second segment of the BLA lists the 14 *Kattus* and 16 *Kattales*[42] prescribed for the three classes of people other than Brahmins. It is in this segment that contesting epistemologies and practices of social and sexual organisation confront each other without any one of them assuming epistemological control or authority.[43] The Brahmin/Christian patriarchal perspectival location from which the *Aliyasantana* customary practices are codified is also split within itself. According to the BLA, though *Aliyasantana* marriages were

regulated by caste endogamy, intra-kinship exogamy[44] and rules governing cross cousin marriages, marriages could be dissolved and remarriages could take place under a whole range of circumstances. There were no interdictions on widow marriages, marriages were usually post pubertal and pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relationships were not met with extreme punitive measures as was the practice among the upper castes. Members of a woman's family could recall her from her husband and get her remarried in the case of abuse and ill treatment on his part. However, marriage was the institutional means of regulating and maintaining the hierarchies and distinctions of caste. Though women were central to such maintenance, their alternative erotic unions did not bring upon them social opprobrium or severe social punishment that was meted out to the upper caste woman in a similar situation.[45] For example according to the sixth *kattale* of *Bhûtâlapândya's* law,

> If a girl shall arrive at puberty and become pregnant before marriage, such girl as well as the persons that caused such pregnancy should be fined, and the girl may be placed in his keeping if he be of a superior caste. She may be married to him if of the same caste; or abandoned if he be of an inferior caste.[46]

Though polygamy was allowed for men, if the wife was ill-treated consequent to the husband setting up a sexual relationship with another woman, her relatives could recall her from her husband and get her remarried. A wife's extra-marital relationship, in the event of a prolonged absence of her husband, went without punishment and was socially accepted unless the man was lower in caste. Hence according to the third Kattale of *Bhûtâlapândya*,

> If a husband, leaves his wife and goes to a foreign country, Bhˆtâlapândya declares that she may, after the expiration of five years, be joined to another person with a gift of udigé (cloth). He further says that if she become (becomes??) pregnant in the absence of her husband, she may be placed in the keeping of her paramour with a gift of ornaments provided he be of superior caste; if of the same caste, with a gift of clothes; and if of an inferior caste, she may be abandoned, fined and joined to such caste.[47]

Bhˆtâlapândya's sixteen kattales hence show a relative degree of flexibility with regard to the control of women's sexuality even as its importance in the maintenance of caste distinctions and hierarchies is upheld. It hints at the existence of erotic unions, which to be understood within their historically specific cultures of intelligibility, have to be decoupled from the new normalities of the family into which they were being shaped through the process of colonial/missionary reform and legislation. These erotic unions not only slip through the Brahminic organisations of caste and sexuality but also imply the existence of communities which accommodated the autonomy and plurality of erotic ontologies with greater flexibility and without moral condemnation.

In the *Madras District Manual* on South Canara, published in 1894, Sturrock lists the castes of South Canara on the basis of occupations and the rituals practised by each caste especially the rituals that accompanied marriage and death. These castes can broadly be divided into the category of Brahmins and Shudras. The Brahmins are divided into various sects on the basis of mother tongue, region, the god worshipped by the sect, the spiritual head and caste-based occupation. The subsects of Brahmins are the Shivalli, Koteshwar, Havika or Haiga, Kota, Saklapuri. Kandavara, Deshasht, Karadi, Chitpavan, Padia, Gauda, Konkani, Saraswat and Sthanika. What is common to the upper caste is the practice of prepubertal marriage, the interdiction on widow remarriage and divorce, and the dietary restriction on meat except in the case of Gaud Saraswat Brahmins who eat fish.[48]

The non-Brahmins are also divided on the basis of caste occupations and include Devadigas, Moyilis, Sappaligas, Rajapuris, Bants, Gaudas, Mogeras, Billavas and others.[49] The subcategories of Shudras are hierarchically organised. Billavas were not allowed to enter temples. To quote Sturrock, "The Billavas also worship two deified members of their own caste, named Koti Baidya and Chennaiya Baidya, to whom numerous temples are erected. They are not allowed to enter Hindu temples and when they wish to make offerings to these deities, they hand them to Bants who hand them

on to the Brahmin Priests."[50] What is common to almost all of these castes are the regulations binding marriage. Regarding the marriage practices of the Bants Sturrock writes,

> Infant marriages are not prohibited, but it is not common, and both men and women are usually married after they have reached maturity. There are two forms of marriage, one, called *kai dhare*, for marriages between virgins and bachelors, and the other, called *budu-dhare*, for the marriage of widows.[51] Widows are married with much less formality. The ceremony consists simply of joining the hands of the couple, but strange to say, a screen is placed between them. All widows are allowed to marry again; but it is, as a rule, only the young women who actually do so. If a widow becomes pregnant she must marry or suffer loss of caste.[52]

On the marriage practices of the Billavas Sturrock writes,

> Girls are usually married after puberty. Sexual license before marriage within the caste is tolerated, but a woman who commits it is married by a different ceremony from that used for virgins. She is first married to a plantain tree and then the joining of hands ceremony takes place, but the pouring of water is omitted. Divorce is freely permitted, the only formality being the making of three cuts on a tree with a bill-hook and pronouncing the word *barapande* in the presence of the caste headman. Widows may marry, but a widow who has children seldom does so.[53]

The non-Brahmin castes are hierarchically placed on the basis of ownership of land. Hence, Bants were the most powerful among these castes as they were the major landholders of the region. Billavas, although not allowed to enter the temples, were the priests of the Bhuta rituals and possessed Bhuta *sthanas* of their own and some of them did possess land. The Holeyas, Koragas, Pambadas, Nalkes, Paravas etc were outside the caste system. Pambadas, Nalkes and Paravas were performers in the Bhutha ritual while Koragas were a forest tribe. All of them were landless.

The Basel Mission and the Heathenism of Matriliny

Christianity stigmatised non-marital, adulterous and non-reproductive sexuality, the stigma and punishment being especially intense for women. The Bible also privileged man as the crown of God's creation and naturalised his position and entitlements as the head of the patriarchal family. Given the above and Christianity's normalisation of the patriarchal conjugal and kin unit and its affective bonds, matriliny seemed an especially deviant instantiation of the aberrations of heathenism for the Basel Mission.

The presence of matrilineal communities, the absence of *sati*, the acceptance of widow remarriage and the prevalence of post pubertal marriages, among most of the communities in the region, did not allow the Basel Mission to use the cognitive grids of the colonial reform debate to make local practices of patriarchy intelligible. Its educational agenda for girls was not so much to rescue them from the excesses of Hindu patriarchy as to instil in them 'the spirit of Christianity'. Christianisation was a means to gender heathen women into a specific ideal of femininity which was as much German as it was Christian. According to Ulrike Sill, the emergence of "gender-character (*Geschlechtscharakter)* in German-speaking discourse as an essentialised definition first of what a 'woman' was and later also of what a 'man' was," can be situated in the context of the advent of modernism in late eighteenth century Germany.[54] She writes,

> Under its (modernity's) auspices the concept of femininity which gained most recognition, also in the missionary movement, for which the Basel Mission is a case in point, was that of the emerging middle-class. It saw woman's true vocation as a companionate spouse to her husband, as a devoted mother to, and an able educator of, her children and as the person responsible for, and in charge of, the household. This space was increasingly conceptualised as domesticity, characterised as the private as opposed to the public sphere, and thus became a sphere for informal interaction.[55]

Social organisations of sexuality in the indigenous society were not only embedded in caste but also regulated entitlements to familial and social resources. Thus, with regard to its converts from matrilineal communities, the Basel Mission had to face the practical problem of having to socialise them into a Christian practice and

ideal of family without forfeiting their entitlements to the resources that accrued to them as members of their relinquished castes and communities. The civic status and the kinship identity and the consequent entitlements of the convert became illegible and opaque after his/ her conversion. By the time the Mission had printed the BLA the Lex Loci Act or the Caste Disabilities Removal Act (XXI of 1850), which protected the civil rights of converts, had been passed.[56]

The Basel Mission printed text of the BLA appends a criticism of the *Aliyasantana* rules, at the conclusion, especially those pertaining to inheritance and kinship. It is difficult to place the social location of this criticism as it is discursively constituted through a dissonant collaboration of multiple sites of social and political power that existed in contemporary society. If there was a historically available subject position that could accommodate these multiple articulations of power, it would be that of the Brahmin *munshi.* The *munshi* was employed as translator and interpreter within both the colonial and missionary institutions for his privileged access to the upper caste male spheres of sacral knowledge, his knowledge of languages and his education within colonial missionary institutions of learning. He would inherit in himself the privileges of belonging to the upper caste and the ways of seeing that were structured through these privileges. His long association with his colonial and missionary employers familiarised him with the functioning of the new regimes of power and enabled him to translate cultures across power regimes and institutions and speak the multiple voices of power simultaneously. The concluding segment of the BLA thus sustains the dissonance of multiple epistemologies while also translating them into new institutional legibilities. Thus, the narrator does not question the veracity of Kundodara's historical existence, as according to him, *bhuta raajas* and *Pisachis* do exist in the world.[57] Rather, he questions the veracity of Deva Pandya's ships being mired in slush in a dark snow-covered island towards the south of his kingdom as according to him people at that time had no knowledge of geography and geographically speaking snow-covered islands

cannot exist to the south of Bhˆtâlapândya's kingdom. Thus, two discrepant epistemologies are placed alongside each other, that which is inherent to the story of origins and the kinship system mandated by Bhˆtâlapândya and that of the narrator who stands outside it and frames it through his perspective on it, without either one of them displacing the other or being privileged over the other.

The Ab-normalisation of Matriliny

The structural similarities between upper caste Brahmin and European Christian patriarchy allow the narrator to constitute the *aberration* of the matrilineal family against the *normality* of the Brahmin/Christian patriarchal family.[58] Since, according to him it is natural for parents to love their children more than their nephews, the Bhˆtâlapândya rules of inheritance and kinship result in litigations within the family, alienation of family property due to debts incurred by *ejamans*, and quarrels among the matrilineal kin.[59] He goes on to say that it is the inferior intelligence and timidity of the people belonging to the three lower varnas of Kshathriya, Vaishya and Shudra that allowed Bhˆtâlapândya to impose the *Aliyasantana* rules on them which he found impossible to enforce on the more intelligent, educated and skilled Brahmins. Interestingly, the disruptions resulting from matrilineal kinship are seen to play out within the colonial judiciary and the beneficiaries of these litigations are shown to be the lawyers, false witnesses, peons and *munshis*. Finally, the narrator suggests that since Aliyasantana goes against the laws of nature and leads to untold difficulties, injustice and poverty, those governed by the *Aliyasantana* rules should take recourse to the legislative council in Calcutta, whose functioning, according to him, is governed by principles of justice and has the authority to institute new laws, and petition for the repeal of *Aliyasantana* and its replacement by *makkalasantana* (inheritance in the line of sons) just as the intelligent people of Calcutta appealed to the legislative council and succeeded in repealing the interdiction on

widow remarriage and granting their children rights to the family property.

At the heart of this criticism is the normalisation of a particular organisation of the patriarchal family through a specific deployment of affective bonds, duties and entitlements among its members. The conjugal pair of the husband and wife united in a legally validated monogamous companionate marriage, the generational hierarchy of parents and children structured through the obligations of filial respect and obedience on the part of children and the responsibility of socialisation and nurture on the part of parents, the authority of the father and the gendered privileges of males over females, were the basic components of this patriarchal family.[60] Matrilineal kinship and its organisation of sexual relations was not only abnormalised morally and sexually but also diagnosed as the cause for litigation within the family, alienation of property and duplicity of the *ejaman*. If this was the ideological dimension of the normalisation of the patriarchal family, its legal legitimisation was carried out within the framework of Anglo-Indian laws as they were being framed and instituted within the colonial judiciary.[61] In fact, the abnormalisation of the *Aliyasantana* family was causally prior to its judicially initiated, organised and legitimised fragmentation and the alienation of its landed property.

While there were several points at which the upper caste[62] and the Christian European organisation and ideology of family intersected, they also differed from each other, the most significant of these differences being the structural dimension of caste in the indigenous organisations of family. The significance of the son in the upper caste family and his entitlement to the family property was based on his right and duty to perform the funeral rites of his father and release him from the hell called *Put.* Both the upper caste patriarchal family and the matrilineal family were seen as requiring the intervention of a colonial institution like the legislative council to legislate morally superior variants of the upper caste family and legislate the incorrigibly immoral matrilineal family out of existence.

Matrilineal Marriage as a State of Concubinage

The BLA concludes with the suggestion that just as in *Aliyasantana* communities both nieces and nephews have an equal right to the family property; in a similar manner, if new rules of *makkalasantana* were to be instituted both sons and daughters should be given an equal share in the family property. To historicise this seemingly egalitarian ideal of family and understand it in the context of its historical embeddedness one has to go to other, explicitly missionary, texts of the Basel Mission. Of these, two papers on the *Aliyasantana* rules written by a convert Benjamin Ponon and a missionary Keppler in 1885 are the most important. In 1872 BLA was translated into English by B. Ramaswamy Naidu who was employed as "Canarese and Telugu interpreter on the appellate side of the High court."[63] Explaining the need for such a translation Naidu writes,

> The want of an English translation of the only Text on the Alyasantâna system of Law by Bhˆtâlapândya, having been long and frequently felt by the Bench and the Bar of the High Court of Madras, when questions regarding the right of property and succession in Canara, arose for adjudication, this task was cheerfully undertaken to supply the desideratum.[64]

Although the authenticity of the text was to be disputed on several occasions by members of the colonial judiciary, it was also to be consulted as the authentic and authoritative codification of the rules of inheritance and marriage governing the matrilineal communities of the Canarese region, by the court. The text printed by the Basel Mission was also considered as the only available and accurate version of the code of Bhˆtâlapândya.[65] Nineteenth century debates and petitions for change in the *Aliyasantana* system, legislations and judicial adjudications on *Aliyasantana* marriage and property were to constantly return to the BLA as a fixed point of reference and accept its discursive construction of the *Aliyasantana* community as a description of its immemorial and unchanging mode of social existence. By the time the BLA had been translated into English a judicial process of legally invalidating the marriage practices of the

community had been set in motion. In a judicial ruling of 1866, in a case involving a suit for maintenance,[66] the Madras High Court declared that the *Aliyasantana* marriage was no marriage at all but a form of concubinage: "Under the *Aliyasantana* system the union of man and woman (says the High Court) is in truth not marriage, but a state of concubinage into which the woman enters of her own choice and is at liberty to change when and as often as she pleases (Mad. H. C. Rep., Vol. IV., 203.)".[67] This judicial interpretation of the *Aliyasantana* marriage was to be cited and reaffirmed in several other cases. According to Praveena Kodoth, in the context of the matrilineal communities in Kerala, the non-recognition of the *Sambandham* as marriage in the civil courts was because it did not establish property rights, "the assumption being that the establishment of (patrilineal) property rights was a defining incident of marriage."[68] Naidu himself explains the origins of the *Aliyasantana* rules of inheritance in the following manner,

> The promiscuous and licensed intercourse which previously ailed that part of the country, among all classes except Brahmins, rendering it almost impossible to point to any particular persons as the father of a child, was the more probable cause of this unnatural system of law. In support of the above consideration, I have only to ask the reader to glance through what are called in the Text the sixteen Cattalê or rules. The amount of liberty allowed to women in former times to consort with males of all classes not inferior to theirs, as appears from the rules, is something appalling; and a remnant of it is still to be found among the people of Malabar and Travancore, where a similar system of law prevails.[69]

This was a peculiarly European Christian/missionary perspective of *Aliyasantana* matrilineal practices buttressed by the adjudications of the colonial judiciary. Matriliny was seen as a social organisation that had been arrested at a primitive stage in the evolutionary development of the institution of the family[70] whose developed form was to be seen in Patriliny. For certain segments of the educated *Aliyasantana* community this sexual morality provided the critical filter through which they looked at themselves as a community and felt impelled to petition for the legislative transformation of *Aliya*

Santana into *Makkalasantana*. However, considerations of sexual morality were not solely responsible for the transformations of the system.

In her study of the historical transformations in the *tharavadu*[71] and matriliny in Kerala, G. Arunima writes that colonial rule resulted in "the recognition of the eldest male within the household, on the grounds of age and gender, as the individual responsible for managing its economy and making revenue payments."[72] That a similar shift had been taking place in the Canarese region and had become the accepted practice and common sense of the community, by the latter half of the nineteenth century, is indicated in the memorials and letters written by members of the *Aliyasanatana* community.[73] In his preface to his translation of BLA, Naidu writes,

> I conclude that the right (right to inheritance) vests in the female in preference to the male. Although the female is the heir, a male member has always been associated with the female; the Revenue records invariably contain the name of the male member as the Wurgdar or Proprietor; and obligations in the nature of Bonds, &c have generally been entered into by him, he being called the Yejman or Manager.[74]

The superimposition of the gendered hierarchies of patriliny on the kinship structures of matriliny through the investment of managerial and transactional powers on the eldest male member of the matrilineal family resulted in intergenerational conflicts among men and the eroding of the powers of women. The conflicts resulting from this slow transformation of matriliny were played out in the colonial courts which is repeatedly mentioned in all the textual re-constructions of *Aliyasantana* in the nineteenth century, beginning with the BLA. The BLA's attribution of these conflicts to the unnaturalness of the affective bonds, through which the system of *Aliyasantana* kinship is structured, was to become the explanatory trope in all later criticisms of the *Aliyasanatana* system. Thus, in his reply to the Malabar Marriage Council, Ramaya Punja, who belonged to the *Aliyasanatana* community, writes,

> The Aliyasantana Law runs counter to the natural feelings and promptings of a man. An Aliyasantana man is a human being, and, like the rest of the human race, he has affection towards his wife and children and a desire to enrich them, which no human law can suppress. The Aliyasantana Law enjoins that a man's properties should go to his sister and her children. But there are numerous instances in which a man has given to his wife and children, by way of gift or otherwise, not only his self-acquired property, but, some portion of his family property as well. The latter is given clandestinely. The manager gives, though secretly,* much of the family income to his wife and children, and the matter often comes before Civil Courts for decision. He is like a man with his legs in two boats, which he has to row side by side. On the one hand he has to discharge an onerous trust and administer the family estate for the benefit of the whole family; on the other hand he has an eager but natural desire to benefit his wife and children as much as he could. From this one can see in what a false position he is. The above state of things has led to much litigation. The cohabitation does not constitute such a marriage as those intended in those sections of the Penal Code which provide for the punishment of offences against the marriage right (I. L. R., Vol. VI., 379) and thus conduct which under the ordinary law would be punishable as bigamy, adultery, or enticing away a married woman, escapes with impunity.[75]

How did the presence of the Basel Mission shape the transformation of matriliny in the Canarese region? Given the fact that most of the matrilineal Billawa converts to the Basel Mission came from the class of agricultural labourers and peasant tenantry, how did the colonial attempts to codify *Aliyasantana* rules of inheritance impinge on the lives of the Mission's converts? How was a modern institutional site of colonial and missionary critique of indigenous practices of being, structured through the Basel Mission? I will try to answer these questions in what follows.

The Basel Mission and the Transformation of Matriliny

In 1857 the convert community of the Basel Mission was still very small and in the Canarese region the largest segment of this convert community consisted of Billawas who were a matrilineal caste.[76] The

matrilineal kinship structures and marriage practices were not only strange to the missionaries but also deviantly heathen. Since descent among the matrilineal communities was traced through the female line and children belonged to the kin group of the mother and derived their entitlement to the material and social resources of the kinship group, as well as their kinship identity through their mother, husbands and fathers did not hold the importance and wield the power that they did in patrilineal families. Women's ties to their matrilineal kin group were permanent and not broken by marriage. Hence, the conjugal unit could be dissolved easily while the fraternal ties between sisters and brothers were firmly and permanently established through the rights to landed property. In the *Aliyasantana* family the conjugal unit of husband and wife was a part, and often a less important part, of a larger set of relationships in which fraternal relationships, especially between the female kin was most important. Patterns of residence for women after marriage could be either virilocal or matrilocal or neolocal and women were free to move between their matrilineal homes and their post-marriage locations of residence. Thus, in contrast to the Christian marriage the *Aliyasantana* marriage did not confer any right to property on children nor did it bring wives under the economic or sexual control of the husband. Even though in the Canarese region post marital residence for women was generally virilocal, they could visit their natal homes frequently and stay there for long periods. Women went to their natal homes for their confinement. This custom which the *Aliyasantana* converts carried into their Christian life came especially under the critical scrutiny of the missionaries. In a paper written on the *Aliyasantana* customs, the missionary Keppler writes that because of this custom "the man is therefore only about half the time with his wife and also the wife with the husband and it is understandable if on both sides neither much affection nor trust develops and much shameful behaviour takes place."[77] The 1930 regulations of the Mission includes the following,

> Christian couples should not imitate the bad practice that is followed by others, namely living away from each other for many days (for example the wife

> visiting her natal home or her relatives for long periods of time). Always keeping in mind that they are tied to each other Christian couples should not remain apart for long periods of time without an important reason (My translation from Kannada).[78]

The organisation of the converts into the patriarchal nuclear family was central to the mission's attempt to socialise its new converts into the Christian fold and keep them away from the contaminating influence of the surrounding heathenism. Like the sequestered spatial enclosure of the Mission Compound, the nuclear family allowed for the construction of a sequestered kinship enclosure which was directly under the control of the Mission and the patriarchal head of the family. When convert women reclaimed their prerogatives to their matrilineal home, through returning to it for their confinement, it re-established their relinquished heathen kinship ties and the protection that came with it and, from the missionary point of view, weakened the hold of both the Mission and their husbands on them. In addition to this, patriliny by concentrating patriarchal power on the male head of the household provided a structural means of regulating gender and gender relations in keeping with a patriarchal missionary Christian norm of family. Thus, *being tied together*, as the mission phrases the conjugal bond, while at one level, could be interpreted as signifying the mutuality and strength of the affective bonds that could develop between husband and wife within a companionate marriage, at another level also conveys the sense of patriarchal coercions and controls which keep such a marriage in place.

The emphasis on female chastity and the control and regulation of female sexuality in the maintenance of caste purity by upper caste patrilineal communities, through the practice of child marriage, prepubertal marriage and permanent widowhood was absent in the matrilineal communities of the region. Matriliny in the case of women belonging to landed families provided economic security through their rights to the economic resources of the family and to a certain extent made them independent of the economic control and power of male members of the family. In some cases, it also vested

senior women with matriarchal power. Establishing the connection between patrilineal descent and female chastity in South Asian patrilineal communities, Leela Dube writes, "Since placement in groups is essentially a function of paternity in South Asia, women's sexuality needs to be rigidly controlled."[79]

Though the Basel Mission inherited a missionary/colonial European criticism of what were termed the barbaric excesses of Hindu patriarchy as manifested in the practices of child marriage, *sati*, the interdiction on widow remarriage, the exercise of patriarchal control over female sexuality which was at the basis of all these practices, would have been normal and morally acceptable to them. The regulation of women's sexuality among the *Aliyasantana* community, according to the BLA, was in the service of maintaining the caste hierarchy and the social distinctions between caste clusters, rather than for guarding the sanctity of the monogamous marital union based on sexual fidelity and marital chastity. When women entered into pre-marital or extra-marital erotic unions with men outside their caste, these unions were not recognised within the legal order of sexual unions that guaranteed wives and children the civil, economic and social entitlements peculiar to each caste, though such unions had a social place and were accommodated within the range of sexual normalities of that world. Among a collection of Tulu manuscripts compiled by the Basel Mission from 1886 onwards there is one titled "Marrying the Dead."[80] This essay describes how, if a young virgin girl died before she reached the age of ten and prior to being married, she would return to her family as a ghost called Berme *Rakkase*. This ghost would trouble the family members especially newborn babies, even causing their deaths. One way of getting rid of this ghost was by marrying it to the ghost of a young virgin boy who had also died before he could be married. Such a marriage ceremony had to follow all the customs that were followed in the marriage of living persons, like ascertaining the age and *bali*[81] of the bride and the bridegroom prior to the marriage and performing the rituals that constituted a marriage ceremony. Pictures were drawn of the bride and the groom which stood in the place of

the dead persons. Among the matrilineal communities of this region ancestor worship was practiced and the living communicated with the dead through several ritual ceremonies. The spirits of some men and women who died under extraordinary conditions were believed to have been transformed into *Bhutas.*[82]

The annual cycle of household rituals included one in which the living members of the family communicated with the spirits of the dead ancestors who were invited to an elaborate meal and their blessing was invoked and pardon asked for any non-performance of duties due to the dead. The above-mentioned practice of marrying ghosts suggests a cultural world in which sexuality was legible as an in-dissociable and powerful dimension of corporeal being whose corporeal experience if unfulfilled or frustrated in a living person would lead to the return of such a person in the form of a troubled ghost who would disturb the household and threaten the very basis of its continuity and procreative sources. The organisation of sexuality in such a world would not be legible or amenable to the ethnographic gaze or moral evaluation of the Christian missionary and the European coloniser. For the missionaries, the matrilineal organisation of sexuality was an instantiation of heathen immorality and sexual depravity.

The Basel Mission tried to impress Christianity on its convert community through the institution of the Christian family. Its success was uneven and met with much opposition. The nuclear family, economic release from the feudal landed economy and virilocal residence, together, contributed to the structuring of the convert Christian family. When converts were dependent on the mission for their livelihood it allowed the Mission extensive disciplinary control over their convert community. However, the alienation of the nuclear family from the larger kin groups also allowed for new experiments in conjugality and family when the convert family was outside the direct control of the Mission. The companionate marriage had the greatest chance of being put into practice within such a nuclear family. Conversion gradually alienated the matrilineal convert from his matrilineal family with its many ties to the feudal agricultural

world organised through intersecting hierarchies of labour, land and caste. Conversion was transforming him into the head of the patriarchal nuclear family without completely severing his ties with his relinquished social world. The matrilineal converts were schooled into the new pattern of family through several mission locations, the most important being the mission schools and industries. The patriarchal family maintained its economic, sexual and generational hierarchies, and its cohesion and continuity by vesting economic and patriarchal power in the male head of the family. The subjectivation of the members of this patriarchal family and their willing submission to it was achieved through the ideology and practice of the companionate marriage with its expectations of reciprocal and mutual obligations, affections and responsibilities between members of the family. Several missionary texts were printed by the Basel Mission on this subject.[83] Changing material conditions of residence and work, brought about by colonialism made this pattern of family appealing and necessary for the larger non-Christian community as well.

In the process of transforming matriliny into patriliny, women lost some of the privileges accruing to them within older systems of kinship and property, but they gained the skills to participate in and the mobility to enter a changing social world. New social modes of being were opened to them which became sites of critique and provided them with the tools to reconstruct their worlds. In the forty-second annual report of the Basel Mission there is a detailed description of the convert Christian family and married life.

> In the morals of the *married life* there is a marked progress. The Gospel in combination with Christian education raises the woman both in the eyes of her own and that of the sterner sex. A woman among Christians is becoming less and less regarded as a mere commodity to be disposed of according to the whims and freaks of parents and relations; her inclinations are consulted, and so are those of the young man. Thus much misery is avoided. True esteem, affection and matrimonial fidelity adorn most homes; and it is a pleasure to see the reflex of this happiness in the rising generation. Only a parent striving after moral perfection and amenable to correction, has also the courage to submit

his child to discipline. Such children are regular attendants at School and at the House of God, and are generally well behaved.[84]

Conclusion

The education of women made the putting into practice of the companionate marriage easier. The Basel Mission was providing new visibility to women within the family. In the process of Protestantising the converted Christian family, it was claiming for women a moral equality within the domestic sphere and a spiritual equality in the eyes of God. The labouring class women who formed a large part of the matrilineal Billawa convert community had always worked outside the domestic sphere and had shared the burden economically supporting the family. But the educated and trained women of the Basel Mission were entering a modern economic sphere which they shared with the males of their community. This was the economic sphere of the new professions, specifically in education and health care for women. The first generation of converted women worked within the Mission institutions like the Mission schools and hospitals. Their public presence in these spaces not only created a new social visuality for women but also made these spaces more accommodative of women in general.

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[1] *Aliyasantana* (Aliya = sister's son, Santana = line or family) is a system of inheritance to the family property in which succession is traced in the female line. Gangolli Krishna Rao, in his nineteenth century text on the matrilineal systems that existed in the Canarese region, terms *Aliyasantana* as a system of customary law, in contrast to Hindu Law, which governed only certain communities of the Canara District. Krishna Rao's treatise is written from the perspective of the colonial legal system according to which Patrilineality was the normative framework of *Hindu Law*. KTC, Gangolli Krishna Rao, *Aliya Santana Law and Usage*, p. 1.

[2] The first available copy of this text is the one printed by the Basel Mission and my research is based on this text. According to the story of *Bhûtâlapândya, Aliyasantana* was introduced in 77AD by suppressing *Makkalasantana* or patriliny which had existed till then. Hereafter, this text will be referred to as BLA.

[3] In the English translation of the book, henceforth referred to as BLA (Trans), the year in which Bhûtâlapândya enforced the *Aliyasantana* laws is given as 'the first year of the Era of Sâlivâhana' which corresponds to A.D 77. B Ramasawmy Naidu, *Translation of Bhûtâlapândya's Law of Aliyasantana*, p. 2.

[4] This is the region along the south-west coast of India. As an administrative unit or District under the Madras Presidency, Canara included the present-day South Kanara, North Kanara, Kasargod and Udupi. In 1859 Canara was divided into South Canara and North Canara and North Canara was made part of the Bombay Presidency. Consequent to this bifurcation the Basel Mission made a distinction between its stations in Canara (South Canara) and South Mahratta (North Canara). Geographically, the Mission mapped Canara with Kasargod as its southern border and Honore as its northern border. In the initial years of the Basel Mission's settlement in India, the Mission established its stations in and around Mangalore. Later it spread along the coast and by 1900 the Mission's stations in South Canara were located in Mangalore, Mulki, Udupi, Karkal, Basrur, Kasargod and Puttur. For the purpose of this chapter, I have focused on three stations of Canara, namely, Mangalore, Mulki and Udupi.

[5] By 'textualisation' I mean the process by which dense and fluid congeries of practices and customs, regulating the social existence of different communities and localities of people, came to be standardised and immobilised through the

instruments of administration and the mechanisms of recording, peculiar to print technology, in the service of a particular regime of power.

[6] Gangolli Krishna Rao writes that the law of Bhʾtâlapândya "first attracted the notice of Courts in 1843 and formed the basis of the decision in Appeal Suit 82 of 1843 by Mr Findley Anderson, Civil Judge of Mangalore." Gangolli Krishna Rao, *A Treatise,* p. 14.

[7] For a detailed study of the colonial context in which these legislations were introduced, read Chakravarti, "Whatever happened to the Vedic Dasi?," pp. 27–87.

[8] See Carroll, "Law, Custom, and Statutory Social Reform: The Hindu Widows".

[9] Chakravarti, *Rewriting History,* p. 124.

[10] Mani, *Contentious Traditions*, p. 29.

[11] Ibid., p. 29.

[12] Kodoth, "Framing Custom," p. 4.

[13] ibid., p. 7.

[14] Visweswaran, "'My words were not cared for'," p. 162.

[15] Visweswaran, "'My words were not cared for'," p. 162.

[16] Kasturi, "'Asceticising' Monastic Families," p. 1070.

[17] Ibid., p. 1070.

[18] Ibid., p. 1070.

[19] Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, pp. 24–28.

[20] District collectors were officers who were in charge of collecting the revenue and keeping the peace of the district in colonial India.

[21] BMA, C-1.2, Gebietsakten Indien, Canara 1834–41. Handwritten annual report for the year 1840, p. 20 gives the following information, "In September 1840 a large piece of ground, a hill half a mile to the east of Mangalore, containing an extensive garden and the ruins of public buildings destroyed by the Korg insurgents in 1837 was ordered by government to be put up for public sale. K. M. Blair Esquire principal Collector of Canara, to whose kindness and liberality the mission has been previously much indebted and who was well acquainted with our circumstances and peculiar wants, took the opportunity of purchasing for a considerable sum those grounds and presented them to the mission, a gift, the importance and value of which will be more felt and appreciated in proportion as the work of our mission will be extended among the lower casts of the natives."

[22] *The Second Report of the German Mission*, pp. 23–24. Henceforth referred to as BMR.

[23] Refer to Shetty, "Missionary Pedagogy and the Christianisation of the Heathens," pp. 509–551.

[24] Dirks writes that the latter half of the nineteenth century saw several major transformations in the colonial state in India. Dirks writes that after the revolt of 1857 the political loyalty of its subjects became more important for the colonial state than their landed status and the form of knowledge most appropriate to

assess matters of loyalty was ethnography. According to Dirks, "To put the matter in bold relief, after 1857, anthropology supplanted history as the principal colonial modality of knowledge and rule. By the late nineteenth century, as I will go on to show, the colonial state in India can be characterized as the ethnographic state." Dirks, "The Ethnographic State," p. 70.

[25] Mohan, *The Colonial Ethnography*, p. 831.

[26] Some of the influential works of colonial ethnography are: Risely, *The Study of Ethnology in India*, pp. 235–263; Crooke, *Rural and Agricultural Glossary;* Wise, *Notes on the Races, Castes and Trades of Eastern Bengal*.

[27] A *munshi* was a clerical assistant to Indian lawyers. They were also translators and scribes and used by both missionaries and colonial officials. A *munshi* could also be a language teacher.

[28] Foucault writes, "Relations of power-knowledge are not static forms of distribution, they are 'matrices of transformations', Foucault, *History of Sexuality-Volume I*, p. 99.

[29] Blackburn, *Print, Folklore, and Nationalism*, p. 31.

[30] Blackburn, *Print, Folklore*, p. 34.

[31] Blackburn, *Print, Folklore*, p. 39.

[32] Aurthur F, *Manuscript, Print and the Social History of the Lyric*, p. 52.

[33] Moretti, *Manuscript, Print,* p. 74.

[34] The pamphlet first attracted the notice of the courts in 1843 and formed the basis of the decision in Appeal Suit (A.S.) 82 of 1843. Ishii. "Traces of Reflexive Imagination," p. 112.

[35] B Ramasawmy Naidu, BLA (trans), Preface, p. 5.

[36] According to Gangolli Krishna Rao, even before the 1857 printed version of the BLA appeared, a small pamphlet in Canarese containing the rules to be observed by the Aliyasantana people under the name of Bhutal Pandya's Kattu Kattalegalu had existed. He goes on to say that, "It first attracted the notice of the Courts in 1843 and formed the basis of the decision in Appeal Suit 82 of 1843 by Mr Findley Anderson, Civil Judge of Mangalore." Gangolly Krishna Rao, *A Treatise,* p. 14.

[37] In his preface to the translation of BLA Naidu writes, "That the edition of the German Mission, of which this is a translation, is the best that could be procured, is exemplified by the fact that during the argument of a certain appeal from Mangalore the High Court granted a long adjournment to enable the Pleader who disputed the accuracy of a certain passage in the Text of Bhutalapandya to produce any other copy that contained a different version; but the pleader who placed himself in communication with his client at Mangalore, was obliged ultimately to admit his inability to produce one." B Ramasawmy Naidu, BLA (trans), p. 5.

[38] Ishii, "Traces of Reflexive Imagination," p. 112.

[39] In a chapter titled "Cultural Translations in British Social Anthropology", Asad writes that "the process of cultural translation is inevitably enmeshed in conditions of power – professional, national, international. And among these conditions is the authority of ethnographers (a) to present the coherence of culturally distinctive discourses as the integration of self-contained social systems, and (b) to uncover the implicit meanings of subordinated cultural discourses. Given that this is so, the interesting question is not whether, and if so to what extent, anthropologists should be relativists or rationalists, critical or charitable, toward other cultures, but how power enters into the process of cultural translation, seen both as a discursive and as a non-discursive practice". Asad. *Genealogies of Religion,* p. 198.

[40] Kodoth, "Framing Custom," pp. 10–11.

[41] B Ramasawmy Naidu, BLA (trans), pp. 9–12.

[42] These terms could be roughly translated as rules and commandments respectively.

[43] Describing this segment of the text, Gangolli Krishna Rao writes, "These customs are divided into 14 Kattus or rules and 16 Kattales or commandments. The Kattus or rules relate to the social position of each of the particular Balis or tribes, intermarriages between those Balis, the classes of people who ought to follow the Aliya Santana Law, the management of the family property, the ceremonies to be observed by relations on occasions of births and deaths, and lastly to the perpetuation of lineage in the family on failure of heirs by adoption &c. The 16 Kattales or commandments concern themselves mostly with the marriage customs and contain elaborate rules as to the mode of treatment to be accorded by the community to women who go astray in the observance of their caste rules" – Gangolli Krishna Rao, *A Treatise,* p. 17.

[44] Marriages between members of the same *bali* or descendants of a common ancestress and between the children of two sisters were not permitted since sisters were considered to belong to the same *bali*. According to different texts these *balis* ranged from 16 to 20 in number (for a more detailed explanation refer to Gangolli Krishna Rao, *A Treatise,* pp. 28–32).

[45] I deliberately use the term 'erotic union' to denote sexual unions which while never completely outside the contemporary legibilities of socially regulated organisations of sexuality, also slip through them and elude them and force themselves to be recognised as an instance of corporeal excess that cannot be culturally contained.

[46] BLA (Trans), p. 21.

[47] BLA (Trans), pp. 20–21.

[48] *Madras District Manuals*, p. 134.

[49] Ibid., p. 134.

[50] Ibid., p. 172.

[51] Ibid., p. 160.

[52] Ibid., p. 161.

[53] Ibid., p. 173.

[54] Sill, *Encounters in Quest of Christian Womanhood,* p. 17.

[55] Ibid., p. 17.

[56] The Lex Loci Act of 1850 allowed a Hindu who had converted to a different faith to inherit his ancestral property. To quote Act XXI of 1850, "So much of any law or usage now in force within the territories subject to the government of the East India Company as inflicts on any person forfeiture of rights or property, or may be held in any way to impair or affect any right of inheritance, by reason of his or her renouncing, or having been excluded from the communion of, any religion, or being deprived of caste, shall cease to be enforced as law in the Courts of the East India Company, and in the Courts established by Royal Charter within the said territories". Government of India Legislative Department, The Unrepealed General Acts of the Governor General in Council: With Chronological Table, from 1834 to 1867, both inclusive, Vol I, Third Edition, Calcutta: office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1898 (Google archives, downloaded on 31-08-2022) p. 73.

[57] *Pisachis* are one among the several kinds of ghosts. It is believed that if a person died without having fulfilled a particularly intense desire, then the person would return as a ghost after death and haunt the living.

[58] Sturrock refers to the publishing of the BLA at the Basel Mission press as "A brahminized account of the Bhutala pandya was published in the Basel Mission press." *Madras District Manuals*, p. 143.

[59] Roughly translated '*ejaman*' would mean the manager cum head of the *Aliyasantana* family. However, this translation cannot accommodate the dense cultural texture and connotative fullness that is generated by the word when deployed within its own linguistic/cultural context.

[60] KTC, *Basel Evangelical Mission in India-Constitution and Rules of Mission and Church*, p. 48. This rule is also found in the 1903 edition of the Mission Constitution. Vaid, Ideologies on Women in Nineteenth Century, pp. WS63-WS67; Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class.*

[61] Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold.* Nandini Chatterjee, *English Law, Brahmo Marriage, and the Problem of Religious Difference: Civil Marriage Laws in Britain and India*.

[62] In volume II of the Madras District Manual on South Kanara, Harold A Stuart lists the various castes in South Kanara returned at the census of 1891. The most important sub sects among Brahmins are listed as sarasvats, Shivallis, Havigs and Kotas. The non-Brahmins are the Billawas, Bunts, Nadavas. Gaudas, Mogers Kumbaras, Marathis. Tiyyans, Kammalas, Halepaiks, Devadigas, Nairs, Kudubis, Ganigas and Kolayans. The Koragas are placed lowest in the caste structure. *Madras District Manual, South Canara*, Compiled by Harold A Stuart, Vol II Madras, 1895, pp. 15–16.

[63] B Ramasawmy Naidu, BLA (trans), Preface, p. 2.

[64] B Ramasawmy Naidu, BLA (trans), Preface, p. 5.

[65] In the preface to the English translation of 1872 Naidu states, "That the edition of the German Mission, of which this is a translation, is the best that could be procured, is exemplified by the fact that during the argument of a certain appeal from Mangalore the High Court granted a long adjournment to enable the Pleader who disputed the accuracy of a certain passage in the Text of Bh ṭâlapândya to produce any other copy that contained a different version; but the Pleader who placed himself in communication with his client-at Mangalore, was obliged ultimately to admit his inability to produce one. B Ramasawmy Naidu, BLA (trans), p. 5.

[66] Gangolly Krishna Rao gives further details of this case, " In Subbu Hegade vs. Tongu which was a suit for maintenance by a female from the family property and wherein it was contended that the husband was bound to provide the Plaintiff during their coverture according to the usage, the High Court while disallowing the Plaintiff's right to separate maintenance from the family property, observed "that the relation between a wife and her husband is in truth, not marriage but a state of concubinage into which the woman enters of her own choice and is at liberty to change when and as often as she pleases. From its very nature, it might be inferred as probable that the woman remained with her family and was visited by the man of her choice. Though women in Canara do, it seems in some instances, live with their husbands, still there is no doubt that they do so of their own free-will and that they may at any time rejoin their own families." Gangolly Krishna Rao, *A Treatise,* p. 26.

[67] Letter from the members of the commission appointed by G.o., dated 4th May 1891, No .25. Legislative, to the Chief Secretary to Government, in *Report of the Malabar Marriage Commission with Appendices and Enclosures*, (Madras: Madras Lawrence Asylum Press, 1891), p. 25. (p. 27 of the document as it appears on Google archives)

[68] Kodoth, "Framing Custom," pp. 29–30.

[69] BLA (Trans), Preface, p. 6.

[70] Gangolli Krishna Rao, *A Treatise,* pp. 10–11.

[71] The extended landowning household that resided in a common ancestral residence in Kerala.

[72] Arunima, *There Comes Papa*, p. 36.

[73] Two such examples are the memorial presented by some members of the *Aliyasantana* community to the colonial government in 1868 seeking for the replacement of *Aliyasantana* by makkalasantana and the letter written to the Malabar Marriage Commission by A Ramaya Punja in 1891.

[74] B Ramasawmy Naidu, BLA (trans), Preface, p. 7.

[75] *Report of the Malabar Marriage Commission with Appendices and Enclosures*, p. 4.

[76] The Eighteenth Report of the Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society gives the number as 4295.

[77] BMA, C-01.088, Keppler, Vol 88, Kanara, 1885, pp. 2–16.

[78] KTC, *Basel Evangelical Mission in India-Constitution and Rules of Mission and Church*, p. 48. This rule is also found in the 1903 edition of the Mission Constitution.

[79] Leela Dube, *Kinship and Gender in South and Southeast Asia,* p. 8.

[80] KTC, *Basel Missionary Tulu Tippanigalu*. p. 85.

[81] *Bali* means the descent line. In these caste communities, marriages cannot take place between members of the same descent line.

[82] *Bhuta* worship is a worship tradition peculiar to the region called Tulunadu. It is non Brahminical and is associated with the agricultural cycles and the feudal system based on ownership of land.

[83] KTC, The Family Instructor, Grihadharmaanushaasana; BMA, C.315, Hoffmann, *Erziehung*.

[84] *The Forty-Second Report of the Basel German Evangelical Missionary Society 1881*, pp. 36–37.

CHAPTER 8

"So Much Depends on the Proper Preparation of the Bible Women"[85]: The Training Practice of Bible Women of the Basel (Women's) Mission between 1880–1940 in South India

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Abstract

This chapter discusses the so-called Bible Women as indigenous helpers within the missionary practice. Using the example of the Bible Women's Mission of the Basel Mission, the term mission is described as a bundle of practices that led to Christian female subjectivation connected with different power relations. Here, the focus lies on the construction of gender and femininity, as well as the practices which shaped the emerging subject-form Bible Woman, whereby the chapter gives some insights into the training practices of the Bible Women's Mission of the Basel Mission. The aim is to show how these training practices contributed to a subjectification of the Bible Women as well as codified specific gender roles in the missionary field.

Keywords: Female Missionaries; Preaching tours; Gender; Feminist discourse; Intersectionality; Subaltern subjects

In a short study on the experiences of resident women in Chennai's Christian churches, Herbert summarises, "that […] [these] did not match the academic discourse about Indian women."[86] This observation can be extended to the missionary discourse in India, insofar as the focus of scholarly research in the context of German-speaking missionary societies is still predominantly based on the analysis of European missionaries and their perspectives.[87] The role of the so-called Bible Women (BW hereon) as indigenous helpers in the Protestant missionary landscape proved to be essential for the spread of the Gospel in the hitherto 'foreign world',[88] as Tucker states: "[W]ithout Bible Women, female missionaries would have been at a loss."[89] This statement in particular shows how important the missionary work of these indigenous women was, although they only feature marginally in scientific studies. The following chapter therefore takes a targeted look at the *subject-form*[90] BW, as well as explicitly the training *practices* of these women, in order to shed light on the practices that contributed to female subjecthood in the missionary context of the Basel (Women's) Mission (BM hereon).[91]

Under the premise that gender as a social construct manifests itself in the respective cultural spaces and the discourses prevailing therein, the characteristics and tasks attributed to women and men can be typified as gender roles. Each of these gender roles depends on the cultural and social conditions in which they are established. Accordingly, femininity is viewed and defined differently both within practices as well as in their respective situational and contextual manifestations (the *praxis*). Religious systems exert an immense influence on various human realities worldwide and thus contribute significantly to the interpretation and internalisation of certain gender roles. Here, gender manifests itself as a structuring and arranging framework that is interactively produced by the respective social and cultural communities. Based on categorisational practices of gender, a different determination of power relations between the agents takes place. With this in mind, it is essential to emphasise that *epistemic*[92] practices can be identified in the construction and description of Indian femininity within the reports of European

missionaries as well as the publication organs of the BM. Hence, the power relations reflected in this meant the suppression of indigenous femininity and the imposition of European colonial concepts. With Spivak, it should therefore be pointed out that indigenous women were often not recognised as fully-fledged subjects,[93] insofar as they were not granted their own voice (sometimes until well into the twentieth century).[94] Subaltern subjects experienced intersectional oppression, whereby the concept of caste proves to be essential for the Indian context.[95]

In nineteenth century mission theology, the belief developed that the missionary activity of women could reach broader population sections.[96] An essential reason for this assumption was the fact that male missionaries in India did not have access to the 'sheltered' world of women:[97] Women belonging to 'respectable castes' lived in so-called *zenanas*, a separate area in the houses where only women resided and which could only be entered by other women.[98] Out of this 'need', the Anglo-Saxon Baptist Missionary Society founded a Baptist Zenana Mission in India (1854), which specifically sent single women to the mission areas.[99] It was also the first missionary society to use the term BW for indigenous female helpers overseas.[100] Due to wide-ranging, international cooperation between various mission societies, such mission practices spread beyond the Anglo-Saxon region into the German-speaking world.[101] As a then supranational and interdenominational city, Basel was particularly suited to adopt missionary impulses from the Anglo-Saxon region, while at the same time taking fruitful advantage of them for its own efforts. Here, the BM took a pioneering role among the other German-speaking missionary societies, especially with regard to the field of BW's work.[102]

In light of the alleged cultural situation(s) of women in the Indian mission areas and the belief that only European women could specifically proselytise indigenous women, there was a demand for the establishment of a separate women's mission. At the same time, the idea prevailed that indigenous women would exert a great

influence on their husbands, making it possible to win larger social strata for the Christian faith.[103] In the course of time, this led to the development of different areas and structures in which (European and indigenous) women could be active in the mission field. This also gave rise to the Bible Women's Mission (BWM hereon) of the BM.[104]

In 1880, the BM's Committee received a request from the Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society to "pay the salaries of several Bible Women if we want to propose, employ, supervise & report on them."[105] However, as the Committee came to the conclusion that "it would not be very easy to find suitable women,"[106] the inclusion of this new branch of the mission initially came to nothing. It was not until another request from the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1884 that a new branch of mission was established.[107] Taking this into consideration, the following questions emerge: Who were these BW and to what extent were the BW of the BM recognised as female Christian subjects as part of their training, which was carried out by *white* European missionaries? What implications arise from the training practices regarding the construction of gender and what power relations appeared therein?

Mission as a Practice of Becoming[108] a Christian Female Subject: Methodological Approaches

Since history and tradition are fundamental to the Christian religion and promote the identity and subjectivity of human beings,[109] a mission can be described as a practice of subjectification. With regard to this, the practices of Christian subjectivation formulated by Link-Wieczorek can be transferred to the missionary discourse: a. The elementary practice of talking about God which, among other things, also includes exegetical procedures (e. g. text interpretation of concrete life experiences); b. Practices of Assurance, as sacramental actions, traditions and ways of life of the faithful (e. g.

prayers); c. Practices of ratification, which in turn can be circumscribed by the socioethical components of shaping life and the world, but also by evangelisation practices.[110] This perspective enables the observation that processes of subjectification point in two directions: a. People form themselves as specific subjects to the extent that they carry out and incorporate practices; b. This process implies the formation of capacities for reflection, creativity and critique, which can lead to changes in social and cultural orders and the corresponding subject-forms. Here, mission can be understood as contingent concatenation of specific practices in a practice formation.[111] The framing of mission as a bundle of practices for becoming a Christian female subject is formed in light of the missionary self-image as well as the image of womanhood with which the missionaries entered the 'foreign world'. Here in particular, power relations can be identified, which staged the indigenous women as subordinate and inferior.[112] This is a direct reference to the claim of Christianity's potential for subjectivation: from the missionaries perspective, other religions were not able to produce female subjects due to their alleged 'backwardness',[113] so that it was seen as the task of Protestant Christianity to spread the "light of the Gospel" to enlighten 'pagan'[114] women.[115]

The European export of Christianity encountered a cultural plurality and diversity in the Outer Mission that was often not reflected in the reports of the European missionaries.[116] Mission and the practices associated with it always presented themselves as a confrontational experience between tradition and situation, which together point to the future dimension of life. Here, various practices emerged and took place in the process.[117] In this sense, the relationship of Christian missions to nineteenth century colonialism and their role in European expansion is assessed ambivalently from today's perspective.[118] Regarding this, the missionary discourse and the Protestant practices operated within a field of tension. Not only were constructions of femininity evident here, but the assertion was made that Christianity helped indigenous women to become subjects.[119]

In this respect, BWM can be understood as a framework of the process of subjectification. Hereby, the practices carried out by the missionaries and the BW as well as the way these practices are 'made' in everyday actions, can be emphasised.

European Constructions of Femininity within the Patriarchal Structured BM

In the nineteenth century, there was an increasing openness towards women's activities within missions and the evangelisation associated with it, which was accompanied by a differentiation of numerous possibilities for women's work. Nevertheless, there was a binary gender dualism that was maintained within Protestant Pietist circles – partially until the middle of the twentieth century.[120] There is no need for long debates about the patriarchal character of the Christian missionary movement. Men not only held the monopoly of leadership but also established a hierarchical structure that entrenched the subordination of women.[121]

The BM, whose roots lie in Württemberg Pietism and the revival movement in the broader sense, followed the guiding principle: God is "a God of order."[122] The order of the BM was seen as God-willed and thus legitimised. Accordingly, the male-centred power structure of the BM was system-immanent and constant.[123] The spirituality associated with this was understood as initiated by God. It was the common assumption that without God's preserving grace and the gift of His Spirit, the mission would not reach its goals.[124] At the same time, the foundation of an 'eschatological attitude'[125] was reflected in the guidelines of the BM and shaped the self-image of the missionaries. Therefore, it was a central concern to promote the spread of the Gospel by lay people.[126]

The revival movement in the early nineteenth century in particular modified the "relations between women and men".[127] With the rising prosperity of the *bourgeoisie*, new spheres of action

opened up for middle-class women. They were predominantly based on male experiences, which had framed the public sphere (employment; politics) as having male connotations and the private, domestic sphere as having female connotations.[128] Consequently, the *bourgeois* gender order, which conceived the relationship between men and women as a complementary hierarchical relationship, was also found within Christian discourses. Here, various gender orders were justified through religious terms.[129] Since the expansion of possibilities for female labour in the public sphere emerged, it mostly remained attached to the traditional Christian images of women including 'service' and 'humility'.[130] Pietism was indeed strongly influenced by female actors, yet predominantly in the background.[131] This resulted in a connection between the religious, social and gender order.[132] Following the religious order, two perspectives emerged as (Christian) role models for women – whereby these had been quite multifaceted within the contextualised praxis: The female role within the patriarchal family on one hand, and female asceticism on the other. This also opened up possibilities for single women to enter the 'public sphere'.[133] These constructions of femininity have been claimed to be universally valid. They were supposed to apply not only to European women but also to female European and non-European Christians as well as Indian women in the mission field.[134] Therefore, colonies did not function exclusively as a negative foil for the ideal of white, *bourgeois* gender relations; they were also directed at controlling non-white gender relations.[135] Here, India turned out to be of central importance for the Western idea of the Other.[136]

However, the descriptions of Indian womanhood – from the BM's point of view – can be summed up in a few attributes: Indigenous women were regarded by the missionaries as 'property' and 'objects'[137] of their men, from whose captivity they had to break out.[138] Hence, the 'pagan' women were initially denied subjecthood. This construction of Indian femininity was not least due to the European description of Hindu and Muslim zenanas, as an article

from a missionary magazine from 1902 states: "[In] Asia, the male world considers the woman unworthy of all trust and capable of all wickedness and has therefore banished her behind high walls [zenanas]."[139] The term 'paganism' stood for all the social 'evils' of Hinduism claiming to oppress indigenous women: "Hatred, envy, sensuality, greed and malice. There is no telling what polygamy, […] the diabolical hatred, the emptiness and dullness of life make of these women […]."[140] In addition, there was the conviction that indigenous women were subjected to an unworthy fate through hard labour, burning of widows, killing of female infants and abandonment of girls by degrading them to 'slaves' of their husbands.[141] This picture can be seen throughout the ages.[142] It was believed that only missionary work could remedy this situation. In this regard, a tertial report of 1937 stated: "Influenced by English education, European culture and the Gospel […], she [the Indian woman] moves more freely in the circle of family and acquaintances, as well as in public life. […] The awakening of the Indian people and their desire for freedom and equality has especially shaken women […] from their slumber."[143]

In this way, missionary writings convey generalised and stereotyped social, cultural and gender-specific characteristics, without taking socio-cultural parameters into account. By attempting to construct a (systematic) 'form of femininity' in India, the European missionaries inevitably redefined their own gender roles and identities.[144] This created the impression that European women occupied a 'higher position', which their Western upbringing and their Christian faith gave them.[145] The dominant image of the (Christian European) woman as equal to the (Christian European) man was diametrically opposed to the Indian woman dominated and oppressed by her husband.[146] Over the decades, dominant constructions of femi-

ninity and perspectives on the 'pagan' Other were perpetuated to legitimise the mission(s).[147] By proclaiming the Gospel and its message of freedom, the missionaries' goal was to enhance the living conditions of indigenous women.

The subsequent preaching of the Gospel by BW, who were formerly 'pagans' themselves, provided them with the chance to engage actively in the mission field. Here, one of the biggest challenges was caste.[148] Caste with its respective discursive structures influenced the everyday lives of Indian men and women.[149] The social conditions associated with its system made it difficult to reach certain sections of the population. As a woman from a higher caste, social relegation was a major reason for non-identification with Christianity. Due to this, missionaries in particular reached the lower castes.[150] This also explains the fact that mainly women from these castes were called to be BW, who were described as "coming from a low caste, modest in demeanour […] understanding their task despite their lack of education."[151] The mission gave them the opportunity to work, enabling them to support their families and themselves by placing them outside the caste system and giving them greater social recognition – at least in the Christian communities.[152] Nonetheless, there were constant calls for more training for BW, who were considered too 'uneducated' for their ministry. The missionaries were conceived that BW needed control of their work as well as accompaniment by female European missionaries. In view of the time-consuming occupations, the accompaniment of BW could not be pursued as a part-time branch.[153] Therefore, the reestablishment of the Basel Women's Missionary Association in 1901 seemed indispensable[154] as Dorothee Sarasin states: "The […] Bible Women's work, […], required better development. This required single sisters […]."[155] That had an impact on the BWM because it was closely linked to the Women's Mission; and in turn to the male-dominated committees. This fits into the patriarchal structure of the BM, also manifested in the indigenous communities. Here, BW were selected by the male presbytery but not by the missionary wives who initially worked with them.[156]

Altogether, BW were described as "native Christian women who visit pagan women under the leadership of a missionary woman" carrying out "direct evangelisation work among the pagan women",

which summarises the significance and tasks allotted to these women.[157] Mainly widows became such BW[158] under the condition that they did not have any overly time-consuming commitments in their own homes preventing them from their work, including travelling service.[159] Moreover, it was expected as a prerequisite for the election as BW, that former 'native' women, who converted to Christianity through missionary work, lead an exemplary Christian lifestyle and adapt to the requirements of the BM.[160] The regulations for the congregations of the BM in the East Indies and West Africa from 1900 describe that "women and virgins of godly mind and blameless character […] if they have the necessary gifts and powers, [may] be called to the service of the church."[161] BW needed such a character and ideally a God-fearing mind. In a pietist way, this could be solemnly formed through the *praxis pietatis*.[162] In this way they could have barely been considered 'Bible-' and not 'Name-Christians'.[163] The required powers and gifts were indicative of a divine calling into the service of the church.[164] Thus, the Holy Spirit was portrayed as the power that took hold of people, bringing about their existential transformation (towards Christ).[165] Insofar as the BW were considered 'called' for the service of their 'pagan' sisters, they were integrated into the Christian understanding of mission.[166] In light of this, Christian character formation proved to be crucial for missionary work of the BM: "Only insofar as we […] become a Christian character, only insofar will missionary effects emanate from us […]."[167] For that reason, BW had to learn particular practices, fulfil certain criteria, internalise and incorporate specific practical knowledge including general cultural codes in order to be recognised as a Christian subject in the mission field. This is where the training practices of the BM became operative.

On Becoming a Christian Female Subject: Training Practice of the BM

In 1901, the BM had "training centres for native-born [male] workers in all its mission areas"[168]; at the same time, the training for BW's work had still not been conclusively clarified. With regard to South Maharatta, it is stated that the "annual course requested in 1903 for their [the BW's] training was carried out".[169] However, it is not further specified in what form. From 1903, BW also had to complete a (minimum) one-year course.[170] The requirements for them increased in order to avoid the dilemma of finding suitable candidates instead of women in need of support, as Schlatter mentions: "The General Conference […] specified the demands […] [of] 1903: thorough training of Bible Women."[171] Initially, the missionary wives were entrusted (on a voluntary basis) with the training and supervision – but not the selection – of BW. Later, single missionary 'sisters' took over this task. They introduced special courses to prepare the BW for their ministry among 'pagan' women.[172] Wuttke (1874–1963), who worked as a single 'sister' in South India, described the orientation of her courses as follows:

> For the further training of the Bible Women, I have set up small, annually recurring courses for the three northern stations of Malabar, in which other missionary brothers and sisters also participate with lessons. […] Among other things, I also made it a point to always deal with a topic that […] should inspire new zeal. […] And the Bible Women were keen: many a tract, many a Bible passage ended up in Mapla's hands; […]. But high, high walls still surround this fortress.[173]

Accordingly, BW were taught in annually recurring courses, in which "other missionary brothers and sisters" also took part. In most cases, an overarching theme was chosen, which was orientated towards the local needs (e. g. missionising 'Mapla' women) and to inspire new zeal for the BW's work. The emphasis on stimulating new zeal seems significant with regard to the missionaries' description of the 'pagan' women as 'empty and dull', insofar as the BW themselves were previously indigenous, non-Christian women. In line with the Pietist claim, the courses were then to offer "edifying, instructive or sociable hours", which were to promote the

intrinsic motivation of the BW and to impart necessary practical knowledge.[174]

Thus, BW's work included the training of indigenous Indian women to Christian evangelists in a process of subjectification.[175] Hereby, BW from different mission stations were taught in joint courses.[176] In addition to regular (bi-)weekly or monthly meetings, these courses took place about once a year.[177] Later on, they were extended to weekly BW's preparation, which in turn were expanded to a weekly prayer hour.[178] In the course of time, the participation from BW grew within the courses, even allowing them to give speeches on their own. An annual report states: "At our annual Bible Women's Course held this year in Chombala, [the BW] Juanna Paul, […] gave a stimulating, edifying and reporting talk on children's mission […]."[179] As the attributed competences of BW increased, they were also given more room for (self) development within the mission. The Bible studies (and circles) supported the need for exchange of spiritual experiences[180] and, therefore, the strengthening of the congregation. In the sense of learning by example BW adopted the practices of the European missionaries, internalised their wording as well as their language style, so that they learned how to implement all this into their own work.[181] Through this imitation of missionary practices as an iterative process, a Christian subject becomes intelligible in the mission field. In understanding the human being as reproductive and receptive, the 'awakened' model provides an orientation point for further awakenings. BW as 'awakened Christians' were thus supposed to serve as a model for indigenous (not yet Christian) women, which is also reflected within the topics dealt with in the training practices. The topics of the courses were integrated into the Christian missionary practices, which can be exemplified in an annual report from 1909: "Each woman had 10 questions to ask about difficulties in the work, difficulties in understanding the Bible […]. The answers gave an opportunity to remove various wrong views and ambiguities. This happened especially because the praises, Mr. Missionary Ernst,

did not answer the questions immediately, but made the women answer by asking counter-questions."[182]

It is difficult to identify individual BW in sources regarding their training because there are rarely any names mentioned. By only them being asked to formulate questions related to their service indicates that the European missionaries considered themselves already well established in their faith and hence would not make any mistakes in the proclamation work. In this context, the male ward praeses acted as a (superior) knowledge authority who pointed out the women's mistakes; although not directly but through counter-questions, whereby the women themselves were guided to answer (as a reflexive thinking) – a method that was later adopted by the BW.[183] The questions focused on the personal experiences of the BW. However, these were not further differentiated, so that no actual individual experience was addressed, but rather an identification template was created. In the 1909 report, the discussion of the questions posed was followed by:

> a Bible discussion by Mrs Ernst. We dealt with the Epistle of James, which, although simple, is very instructive. The women of course helped with the explanation and everything concluded with free prayer. On the last day of the conference, Mrs Ernst gathered the women together for a farewell tea, where it was quite cosy and where we could tell each other all kinds of things.[184]

The theme of the Bible discussion was the Epistle of James, inasmuch as it was "simple", but "very instructive". This passage might have reflected the situation of the BW, which can be reconstructed by naming the core contents of James: it deals with the right conduct of Christians in situations of temptation (Jam 1:2–18), which are described as tests of faith. At the same time, the readers are admonished not only to hear the word, but subsequently – especially in the community – to act on it. This also includes that the congregation should not make any distinctions of status (Jam 1:27). That particular circumstance could be applied to the Indian caste system as described by the European missionaries: BW (from lower castes) could have understood themselves as the 'poor'

receiving divine benevolence, whereas the 'rich' (higher castes) were portrayed as those who would succumb to judgement due to their antisocial behaviour (Jam 2:13; 5:1–6). This is followed by the idea that faith alone can save. Consequently, BW were categorised as 'saved' through their Christian faith, which was meant to serve as an inner edification. However, at that time BW were still considered too 'uneducated' to deal with more complex theological topics. For this reason, the missionaries had the idea to first deal with 'simpler topics' in order to make them receptive to the message of the Gospel.

The discussion and the explanation of James (where the BW helped) was followed by a free prayer. In Pietist manner the prayer was characterised by its personal and communicative component: God was experienced as a close, personal God with whom one could enter into a dialogue.[185] The act of prayer was combined with striving to strengthen one's own will and to turn towards good (as expression of living piety). Through the free prayer, spontaneous response could be practised (e.g. for pastoral care). In this way, free prayers placed a different demand on the participating actors, rather than memorising and reciting biblical verses.[186] Led by a European missionary, the BW probably echoed the prayer to strengthen the believers internally[187] – as a practice of assurance. Since then, BW are said to have gained new courage and joy in their work through having been together with so many co-workers, whereby "the false opinion that one was doing enough by regularly visiting the houses every day was thoroughly shaken."[188] Hence, the discussion of James should possibly point the BW to their own 'false' teachings and led to an inner strengthening (and personal change):

> So much depends on the proper preparation of the Bible Women. Many still have a great lack of Bible knowledge. Missionary Ernst tried to remedy this by exhorting the women to devote themselves to Bible study, not only during the morning blessing at home, but to read the Bible quietly every day. Next year he wanted to ask where the most important stories were written. Thus, the Bible Women have been given their task, and they are happy about it.[189]

Through intensive study of biblical themes, which had been selected by the missionaries and interpreted according to the situation of the BW, they were to be properly prepared for their ministry. Furthermore, they were admonished by (male) Missionary Ernst to engage in self-study and thereby to constantly assure themselves. To monitor this, he wanted to quiz the BW the following year, giving them an extrinsic motivation to read the Bible and study more deeply. Hence, BW were supposed to steadily remind themselves of what they were doing for what reasons.[190]

This missionary branch of the BWM continued to expand in the following years. In this way, the work of the BW continued to develop, but remained without any external representation or a say on the part of both European and indigenous women themselves.[191] Yet, the First World War brought deep cuts. The war situation not only led to a stagnation in the recruitment of women, but also to a change in international cooperation. Missionary work could only be continued without interruption in China. At the same time, however, this also led to greater independence for the missionary congregations, which resulted not least in the desire to found an indigenous church with its own character.[192] In India, leadership responsibility was handed over to the remaining Swiss missionaries in 1916 and in 1918, to the Indian National Missionary Council. At the same time – with the help of British diplomats – the Swiss Canarese Evangelical Mission was formed, which took over the work of the BM in Karnataka and continued it during the war.[193]

In 1928, the Canarese Evangelical Mission was reintegrated into BM, which led to a revival of the BWM after the war. Towards the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, the BWM thus reached its peak, insofar as the work declined continuously in the following years.[194] As the number of BW increased, the larger missionary societies began to set up special committees to look after and train them.[195] This only became relevant in the BM in later years with the beginning of the discussion about whether a joint ecumenically oriented training centre for BW should be established.[196]

> The issue of training Bible Women has become a burning one throughout the Canary language area. The Methodist Bible School in Tumkur, where most missions used to send their women for training, has been closed for several years. Since then, there is no longer a place where women can be trained for evangelistic ministry. In June two years ago, a meeting of the Regional Christian Council was held in Bangalore, at which the issue of Bible training for women was also discussed. The question was raised whether it would not be possible to organise joint courses for the women of all missions. This idea was very much welcomed and a small committee was elected to study this question thoroughly. […].[197]

From 1940 onwards, the training of BW increasingly became a cooperative concern of various missionary societies. This was intended to impart basic (ecumenical) contents for all BW. However, the BM continued to insist on its own courses, probably due to the special character of Württemberg Pietism, which – in contrast to other missionary societies – maintained the patriarchal framework for a long time. Regarding this, Bliss describes her observation that the importance of simply trained BW diminished as the opportunity for higher education for women increased.[198] This tendency was also expressed in the development on the mission field: over time, former BW went into the deaconess ministry and their children were also trained as deaconesses – no longer as BW.[199]

As was shown, the BW's courses have been expanded and extended over the years.[200] This reflects the growing demands on BW,[201] whose training was first and foremost about constantly practicing the (European) Christian faith as well as learning the underlying theological backgrounds and its shaping in the ministry. The courses served the purpose of inner edification (practices of assurance) and the promotion of general Christian competences (practices of ratification) by talking about biblical stories (practices of talking about God). If Christianity is constituted as a community of memory and narrative with practical intent, narrativity within the mission context proves to be a category of 'saving' (and spreading) religious identity.[202] In the sense of subjectification, the regularly repeated Bible lessons and courses contributed to the BW becoming Christian female subjects and experiencing increasing recognition as

such. Consequently, the (subject-form) BW took on a role model function with regard to a 'correct', Christian way of life for women who had not been converted yet.

Categories of Difference: European and Indigenous (Female) Missionary Agents

Although BW were increasingly recognised as Christian female subjects in the course of the missionary work in India, certain markers of difference nevertheless emerged that could be described as epistemic practices. This is exemplified in an oration by missionary Frohnmeyer: "The main thing, however, is and remains the example that our Christian women in India set against the pagan women. And thank God, there is quite a big gap. of course, in all kinds of outward appearances and trivialities, pagan leaven is still often evident."[203]

BW were recognised by the European missionaries as Christians who stood opposite indigenous women ("there is quite a big gap"). At the same time, a clear marker of difference to the European missionaries was evident by emphasising 'pagan' habits ("leaven"). The BW were thus subordinated to the European missionaries in their alleged 'blameless' Christian way of life. Here, the missionaries' fear that a true revival of the converts had not taken place becomes repeatedly apparent over time. In order to counter this fear, various documentation and control practices were introduced that showed to what extent a subject could be recognised as fully Christian. In the training practice of the BWM, for example, this took the form of tests or specific questioning, where BW had to demonstrate their knowledge and skills – as pointed out in the previous chapter. The hierarchy established here is also found in later sources. In order to protect themselves from the "viciousness of paganism", as a missionary wrote in 1938, the missionaries believed that the BW needed daily (self-)edification and assurance of their faith, which

was intended and controlled by European missionaries.[204] In view of this, the task of single female European missionaries was legitimised, which was "to accompany the Bible Woman on her walks, to guide her and to observe the "quite ramified work" as well as organising "weekly Bible discussion meetings with them."[205] Here, certain monitoring practices show a clear hierarchy which fits directly into the patriarchal framework of the BM: European missionaries checked how the work of the BW was being done and later reported on this in quarterly and annual reports. These reports went to the mission committee in Basel, which determined how the mission should proceed as well as decided on the publication in the mission's own organs in order to generate money for the mission, thereby shaping the Western idea of the other. These monitoring (epistemic) practices have been evident since the establishment of the BWM.[206] Likewise, the public image of BW seems to have changed little over the years. A report from 1935 states:

> Our Bible Women come from the lower classes and are already despised as women among their people. Most of them have only attended primary school and their education is the most basic imaginable. Many are widows and have gone through a difficult school of suffering. […] But through it all, they are carried by the 'exuberant power of God' they experience in faith.[207]

Even in 1935, BW were described as coming from "lower classes" (castes) experiencing little education. In this sense, caste was also a marker of difference in the missionary discourse closely linked to the demand for education. This allowed European missionaries to present themselves as the more educated women, revealing a certain level of hierarchy. The proclaimed 'lack of education' of BW repeatedly served as a reason for the need for control and supervision. At the same time, it is described that BW had a difficult path of suffering behind them, thus establishing a direct analogy to the suffering of Christ. With a notation on the "'exuberant power of God' they experienced in faith", BW were recognised as Christian subjects. Hence, their work was legitimised by the missionaries. Nonetheless, BW found themselves in a field of tension between

independence and autonomy. It was only when the communities became independent and indigenised that this tension was resolved, as the BW were no longer under the control of European missionaries and therefore could develop their own subjectivity.[208]

Bible Women as "True" Christians: Some Concluding Reflections

The fact that this missionary work did not take place in a power-free space but on the basis of asymmetrical networks of relationships became clear at various points in the BM's training practice of BW. On the mission field, similar social structures appeared as in the European homeland: the (male) authority was considered unquestionable and the European gender relations were maintained for a long time with the various role attributions for women.

By means of some examples from the training practices of BW in the BM, it showed that Christian practices of subjectification manifested themselves within the missionary praxis: the elementary practice of talking about God, practices of assurance, practices of ratification. Through the imitation of European missionaries as well as the repeated practices of Christian faith, BW were subjectivised as Christians. The mission presented itself as a good prospect for widows who were outcasts in Indian society. Through it, they were given the chance to work, which enabled them to support their families and themselves. In doing so, they were emancipated as they placed themselves outside the caste system and immediately gained higher social recognition; at least in the Christian community. Over the years, not only did the education of BW became more complex, but the esteem in which they were held also increased. Moreover, BW increasingly participated actively in their own courses.

Nevertheless, BW were only partially recognised and valued as *true* Christians, in as much as relapses were described, in which the relationship appears clearly hierarchically coded. Here, the BW

seemed to need the guidance of European missionaries (monitoring practices). This reflects the fear of the European missionaries that indigenous helpers were not 'true' Christians (but 'Name-Christians'), which would also perpetuate 'pagan' education. Thereby, the relevance of a 'right' European training was set.

Even if the monitoring practices weakened over time, there were still European co-workers accompanying and guiding the BW in later years. At the same time, they increasingly acted independently – as did the congregations in which they were active. Inequality factors of caste, race and gender were also reduced over time. This becomes evident in particular by the language used in the missionary reports, which changed over time into more positive forms of expression towards BW. However, categories of difference still remained as observed in the last chapter. Regarding this, BW were recognised as neither thoroughly Christian, entirely Hindu, completely Indian (due to European influences), nor (at all) European. BW were thus always crossing borders between cultural circles.

Through their activities, BW represented the central decisive link between European missionaries and the indigenous people for decades by crossing boundaries and hence created emancipatory spaces; for example through their training as female evangelists which enabled them to enter into the public sphere. In that way, the training practices of the BW demonstrated one possibility of becoming a Christian female subject.

In conclusion, it is important to note that Protestant Christianity in India would probably not have spread the way it did without the BW. The interactions between BW, European missionaries and indigenous women, on the one hand, influenced the way these women understood themselves and how the European missionaries, on the other hand, constructed their counterpart – the 'pagan' other. Here, the ambivalent character of the mission as a whole becomes apparent. The European missionaries had the claim to 'elevate' Indian women, but precisely because of this they became 'objects' of Western benefactory spirit: under the guise of a 'good' Christian

claim, colonial practices of domination were reconstructed and transferred to missionary action.

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[85] BMA, Z.5, 1909, Stähelin, "Berichte," p. 66; Please note that German sources have been translated into English to ensure the understanding of the statements – for the original German quotations, see the corresponding references.

[86] Herbert, "Tamil Christian Women," p. 611.

[87] There are few works and articles that focus in particular on Bible Women's work in the Anglo-American missionary contexts such as e.g. Tucker, "Role," pp. 133–146; Kent, "Bible Women," pp. 117–149. For the German-speaking missionary context, Jathanna can be named, who turned to the area of the Hermannsburger Mission; See e.g. Jathanna, *Mode of Mutuality*. Regarding the Basel Mission there has only been a marginal consideration of the Bible Women's Mission (BWM) but a few references within research that rather focus on European femininities; see e.g. Prodolliet, *Schamlosigkeit*; Konrad, *Missionsbräute*; Keim, *Frauenmission*; Miethke, *Erika Wuttke*. Therefore, my dissertation project is dedicated to this desideratum in detail by looking at the BWM of the Basel Women's Mission in an ecumenical context of its origin.

[88] In order to draw attention to problematic natures of some of the written terms, this chapter uses single inverted commas.

[89] Tucker, "Role," p. 134.

[90] Subject-Forms describe the ways in which individuals become intelligible to others as well as to themselves as subjects. They are comparable to enclosed zones that must be inhabited by an individual in a (socially) recognised way in order for him or her to gain social acceptance (and play along) as a subject. The individual must publicly display the normative expectations associated with these zones in order to establish themselves as a subject. However, these expectations do not remain bound to external representation (as a concept of social roles) but are practically acquired in the process of subjectification, recognisably embodied and internalised, e. g. through practice, repetition, etc. The subjects emerging from the respective praxis can be historically reconstructed as subject-forms with reference to various primary sources. Concrete individuals (who find themselves in the praxis as acting agents) are referred to these points of reference in order to assume a position-specific function in the field (not as a stringent event, but as a process that entails breaks and deviant behaviour). Ego-documents provide information about the self-formation processes of specific subjects. This makes it possible to reconstruct subject-forms that are constituted along the already existing subject positions of the social field into recognisable subject-forms of their own (Alkemeyer, Budde and Freist, "Einleitung," pp. 19–20). The fact that there are hardly any Ego-documents of Bible Women poses a number of challenges for research, therefore the subject-form must be predominantly analysed from a European perspective.

[91] Practices are understood from a historical-praxeological perspective as culturally formed, recurring patterns of action that become observable as identifiable units and an interplay of interaction and (re)addressing (see Haasis and Rieske, "Praxeologie," pp. 15–16) – consisting of linguistic and non-linguistic activities. In contrast to this, the praxis proves to be a present, contingent event that can only be reconstructed retrospectively by an observer. Consequently, praxis describes the general action or the application of thoughts, ideas and theories in a

specific context, in which various agents (as bodies, spaces, objects, etc.) enter into a figurative relationship in an ongoing process of mutually initiating, imitating and embodied actions. Practices are thus formed in the situational dynamics of the praxis (Ibid., pp. 34–37).

[92] The term epistemic is understood here in relation to existing knowledge systems and categories as well as referring to Spivak as the (re)production of knowledge as the interpretative power of 'Western' intellectuals, which refers to the performative production of reality through language (Nandi, "Sprachgewalt," pp. 121–124). This form of violence is extremely difficult to grasp and therefore all the more effective. Mentioning Said's concept of *Orientalism*, epistemic violence points to a power imbalance between the construction of 'Orient' and 'Occident' as fundamental categories of difference. This is constituted by the supposed hegemony of European superiority in contrast to Oriental 'backwardness' and thus maintained and passed on uncritically and indirectly via language. Here, the concept of *Othering* becomes relevant, which describes processes of hierarchical production of differences (Purtschert, *Kolonialität*, p. 14). These categories of difference become particularly apparent within colonial everyday contexts as colonial epistemes (re)produced as racialised attribution as (supposedly) modern knowledge (Ibid., p. 22).

[93] Regarding post-structuralist deconstruction of the subject and subject-theoretical concepts, the subject is not understood as a sovereign, creative and autonomous being, but as a product from the outside that is subjectivized and constituted in the course of a performative, context-bound praxis within social interactions (see e.g. Alkemeyer, Budde and Freist, "Einleitung," p. 9).

[94] Spivak, *Subaltern*.

[95] Heller, "Hindu-Religionen," p. 105.

[96] This concept is also evident in European contexts. The preservation of the nation was attributed to the female subject of bourgeois modernity, whereby a transfer of European constructions to the Indian missionary context took place (see Prodolliet, *Schamlosigkeit*).

[97] According to the missionaries, there was no education in the zenanas, "those girls forgot everything they had learnt as soon as they were locked up in their senana as married women […]" (M.H. (BMA, Z.11; 1909), "Frauenmission," p. 7).

[98] The Persian term zenana describes both women as well as a separate area in the house where only women resided; foreign men and strangers were not allowed to enter (Dutta, "Memsahibs' Gaze," pp. 120–136).

[99] Interestingly, the term single was defined differently in various socio-cultural contexts; thanks to Jaiprakash Raghaviah for this note. While for European women this meant a celibate life without a husband and children, a different standard applied to the indigenous helpers, who were either widows or had grown-up children (Brennecke, "Bibelfrauen," p. 1156).

[100] Keim, *Frauenmission*, p. 140.

[101] Ratschiller and Wetjen, "Missionen," pp. 9–24. Sources suggest there was a connection through the British and Foreign Bible Society, which will be further investigated within my dissertation project.

[102] Keim mentions the prominent role that the BWM played in the BM and sees it as a pioneer for the ordination of women but does not elaborate on this any further (Keim, *Frauenmission*, pp. 42; 101–102).

[103] See e. g. Meyer (BMA, Y.1; 1935), "Arbeit," p. 68. Here, various socio-cultural circumstances of Indian women were often ignored, resulting in a unified description of Indian femininity (see "European Constructions of femininity within the patriarchal structured BM" in this chapter).

[104] Schlatter, *Geschichte* (vol.2), p. 171; BMA, C-9.1 (15), p. 3.

[105] Graeter (BMA, C-09.1.063; 1880), "Mitteilung," p. 1.

[106] Ibid.

[107] See Preiswerk (BMA, Z.5; 1885), "Berichterstattung," p. 10.

[108] It should be noted that the subjectivisation of BW took place in a field of tension between a self-choice for baptism and work within the mission and the influence of external forces (such as missionary work through teaching and preaching). Various internal and external factors led to the conversion of indigenous women, who in turn could become BW after their conversion and thus became actively involved in missionary work (as work for the kingdom of God ["Reich-Gottes-Arbeit"]; for "Reich-Gottes-Arbeit" see Csukás, *Topographie*). Insofar as the BM emphasised voluntary inner conversion and explicitly turned away from mass conversions, the term 'becoming' is used here (e.g. see Wuttke [BMA, C-11.02; 1913], "Jahresbericht," p. 3).

[109] Lindner, *Kirchengeschichte*, p. 203.

[110] Link-Wieczorek, "Lebensgestaltung," pp. 296–298.

[111] Hillebrandt, "Religion," pp. 131–139.

[112] See BMA, C.315, Hoffmann, *Erziehung*, p. 1.

[113] Here, 'backwardness' is understood as the devaluation of religious practices differentiated from a Western Christian context.

[114] From a Christian perspective, 'pagans' are those who are religiously different. It is an identity-securing term used to distinguish between members of one's own group and outsiders on the basis of religious criteria (Funkschmidt, "Heidentum"). The term 'pagan' therefore points to a hierarchical divide, as it demeans other forms of religious life that deviated from a European-Christian perspective. Clear power relations are evident here, as will be illustrated later for the training practice of the BW of BM.

[115] BMA, C-01.173 (44), p. 1.

[116] Here, missionary liminal experiences are evident and cultural alterity becomes visible. In particular, the discourse framework and a postcolonial

perspective reveal the multi-layered and complex nature of missionary practice. This took place in a colonial contact-zone in which resistance, collaboration, role attributions and identity formations were transformed over time through European and non-European agents (Gruber, *Theologie*, pp. 19–21). Within missionary endeavours, it can be observed that encounters between people from different cultural backgrounds modified everyday life and world views on both sides (Mann, "'Torchbearers'," p. 20).

117 Hillebrandt, "Religion," p. 137.

118 Gruber, *Theologie*, p. 19.

119 It becomes clear that in the interplay between the perception of others and oneself, the field of tension of subjectivisation spreads – hand in hand with practices of power and hierarchy. The mission field as a social field provided certain – complementary, agonal, hierarchical or egalitarian interrelated – subjects positions (e.g. missionary and missionised) (Link-Wieczorek, "Lebensgestaltung," pp. 296–298). Individuals as agents in a concrete praxis are referred to these points of reference in order to assume a position-specific function and to form themselves as (specific) subjects – but not necessarily successfully (Reckwitz, *Subjekt*, p. 140).

120 Kuhn, "Religion," pp. 253; 284.

121 Hebeisen, "Genealogisch," pp. 67–84.

122 "Hausordnung," (BMA, Q-9.31 Nr. 1; 1818). on Württemberg Pietism see Lehmann, *Pietismus*.

123 Miethke, *Erika Wuttke*, p. 34.

124 Dahlgrün, *Spiritualität*, p. 297.

125 Ibid., p. 297.

126 Jenkins, "Basler Mission," pp. 1159–1161.

127 Taylor Huber and Lutkehaus, "Introduction," p. 2.

128 Treusch, "Mitarbeiter," p. 95.

129 This ideal borrows from the understanding of the Protestant parsonage established by Luther (Treusch, "Mitarbeiter," p. 97).

130 Sammet, "Religion," p. 54.

131 Gause, *Kirchengeschichte*, p. 26.

132 Sammet, "Religion," p. 59.

133 Predelli and Miller, "Piety," pp. 71–72.

134 Prodolliet, *Schamlosigkeit*, p. 52.

135 Winkel, "Postkolonialismus," p. 297.

136 Dutta, *British Women*, pp. 6–7.

137 The term object is understood here as fundamentally opposed to the subject (de Beauvoir, *Das andere Geschlecht*, p. 11). In this sense, the opposites subject-object describe the field of tension of othering-processes, which grasps the foreign as fundamentally other.

[138] Bishop (BMA, Z.5; 1902), "Erniedrigung," p. 2.
[139] Ibid., p. 2.
[140] Ibid., pp. 3–4.
[141] Keim, *Frauenmission*, p. 14.
[142] "The girl has no rights, she must work, obey and suffer. She must regard her husband as God and serve him like a slave." (Meyer (BMA, Y.1; 1935), "Arbeit," p. 68).
[143] Meyer (BMA, C-4-3,8; 1936–1940), "Stellung," p. 3.
[144] Dutta, "British Women," p. 154.
[145] Keim, *Frauenmission*, pp. 38–39.
[146] Dutta, "British Women," p. 139.
[147] Frank, "Diskurs," p. 41.
[148] Caste-system intensified under British colonial rule (Mann, "'Torchbearers'," pp. 22–23) and influenced today's understanding of caste (Sen, "Caste," p. 19).
[149] For further explanation see Schumann, Götter, 33f.
[150] Pittl, "Globalisierung," pp. 10–11.
[151] Wuttke (BMA, C-11.02; 1914), "(Jahres-)Bericht," pp. 2–3.
[152] Liebau, "Agendas," p. 226.
[153] BMA, KP (Grundsätze).
[154] Schlatter, *Geschichte* (vol. 2), p. 235.
[155] Sarasin (BMA, Y.6; 1942), "Frauenmission," p. 179.
[156] BMA, C-9.1 (19), p. 2; Schlatter, *Geschichte* (vol.2), pp. 236–237. There are hardly any Ego-documents of the BW (only in later years), which makes it difficult to point out an internal perspective of these women. Therefore, this analysis is mostly a reconstruction from the missionaries' reports without mentioning any self-formation processes.
[157] Hoch (BMA, Z.5; 1888), "Ansprache," p. 25
[158] Schlatter, *Geschichte* (vol.2), p. 172.
[159] BMA, SV-82 VII (08).
[160] BMA, C-9.1 (19), p. 2.
[161] BMA, Q-9.21 (20), 8. This was later expanded to the Malabar district, West Africa and all communities located there (BMA, Q-9.21 [20.4]).
[162] *Praxis Pietatis* describes the endeavour to be sanctified by carrying out certain Christian practices such as praying (assurance of salvation), reading the Bible (guideline for good, righteous action), Christian instruction and exercises (making the soul receptive to the Holy Spirit); see Dahlgrün, *Spiritualität*, p. 281.
[163] For example, see Goetz (BMA, C-01,173; 1909), "Quartal Bericht," p. 1.
[164] BMA, Q-9.21 (20), 8.
[165] Dahlgrün, *Spiritualität*, p. 297.
[166] See anonymous (BMA, Y.1; 1903), "Grund," p. 82.

[167] BMA, QF-1,11 (121), p. 7.

[168] oehler (BMA, Y.1; 1901), "Wende," p. 2.

[169] Schlatter, *Geschichte* (vol.2), p. 237.

[170] Kaundinya (BMA, Z.5; 1903), "Missionskonferenz," p. 52.

[171] Schlatter, *Geschichte* (vol.2), p. 238. Later nearly every missionary society employing BW had their own seminaries which took place every second year (Brennecke, "Bibelfrauen," p. 1156).

[172] Sarasin (BMA, Y.6; 1942), "Frauenmission," p. 179.

[173] BMA, SV-82 VII (08). For a definition of the term Mappilas / Mapla e. g. see Frenz, "Berichte," pp. 386–387.

[174] BMA, SV-82 VII (08).

[175] on the concept of "women evangelists", e. g. see Keim, *Frauenmission*, p. 136.

[176] Wuttke (BMA, C-01,179; 1910), "Quartalbericht," p. 1.

[177] BMA, C-135 (61), p. 5.

[178] Stähelin (BMA, Z.5; 1916), "Bericht," p. 98.

[179] Wuttke (BMA, C-11.02; 1914), "(Jahres-)Bericht," p. 8.

[180] Denissenko, "Erbauungsliteratur," p. 203.

[181] Ehrensperger, cit. in: Schlatter, *Geschichte* (vol.2), p. 237.

[182] Stähelin (BMA, Z.5, 1909), "Berichte," p. 65.

[183] Meyer (BMA, Y.1; 1935), "Arbeit," p. 68.

[184] Stähelin (BMA, Z.5, 1909), "Berichte," pp. 65–66.

[185] Immink, "Analysis," pp. 133–136.

[186] Ibid., pp. 134–135.

[187] See also Wuttke (BMA, C-11.02; 1910), "Bibelfrauenkurs," p. 2.

[188] Stähelin (BMA, Z.5, 1909), "Berichte," p. 66.

[189] Ibid., p. 66.

[190] Wuttke (BMA, C-11.02; 1910), "Bibelfrauenkurs," p. 1.

[191] Keim. *Frauenmission*, p. 65. However, the development of women's missionary work was primarily driven by practical reasons, not theological considerations, which caused various problems in the practical realisation of this branch of missionary work (see Ibid., p. 147).

[192] Christ-von Wedel and Kuhn, *Basler Mission*, p. 168.

[193] Ibid., p. 199. As early as 1910, there were lively discussions about the independence of the congregations which strengthened the desire of the mission churches to join other church formations in India (Schlatter, *Geschichte* [vol. 2], pp. 261–263).

[194] BMA, Z.2 1928–1940.

[195] Keim, *Frauenmission*, p. 139.

[196] Whether the plan was implemented and how cannot be answered here due to the scarcity of sources; it requires further research.

[197] Götz (BMA, Z.5; 1944), "Der Herr," p. 103.

[198] Bliss, cit. in: Keim, *Frauenmission*, p. 139.

[199] See anonymous (BMA, Z.5; 1941), "Diakonie," p. 6.

[200] Stähelin (BMA, Z.5; 1916), "Bericht," p. 98.

[201] For example, through exams (see ibid., p. 98). In 1938, these lessons already covered a broader range of topics than the initial Bible courses themselves; see Meyer (BMA, Z.5; 1938), "Bibelfrauenarbeit," p. 138.

[202] Lindner, *Kirchengeschichte*, p. 206.

[203] Frohnmeyer (BMA, Z.5; 1886), "Ansprache," p. 18.

[204] Meyer (BMA, Z.5; 1938), "Bibelfrauenarbeit," pp. 137–138.

[205] BMA, SV-82 VII (08).

[206] Preiswerk (BMA, Z.5; 1885), "Berichterstattung," pp. 9–10.

[207] Meyer (BMA, Y.1; 1935), "Arbeit," p. 68.

[208] This can be seen, for example, in the fact that BW sat on church and mission committees and started writing their own reports in the course of indigenisation processes (UTC, B45 / A KCD / XXVIII 5–11).

PART 5

The Materialities of the Basel Mission

CHAPTER 9

The Basel Mission Collection from India: Colonial Entanglements, Missionary Interpretation and Local Agency[1]

Isabella Bozsa

Abstract

This chapter is about the ethnographic collection of the Basel Mission from India, which today is kept at the Museum der Kulturen Basel. In the 1830s, missionaries handed over the first artefacts from India to the mission house, where, in 1860, the mission established a museum. Through provenance research, I explore the colonial implications of the Basel Mission collection. How and under what circumstances did the missionaries obtain artefacts for the collection in India, which was then under British colonial rule? The location of the missionary collection in Switzerland sharpens the focus on indirect colonial connections. I argue that the missionaries' practices ranged from accepting gifts to purchasing or stealing the artefacts they wished to possess or supply to the mission museum. Biographies of individual artefacts provide deeper insights into the motives and the agency of the actors involved. In addition to the relationships between missionaries and Indian actors, the mission's claim to religious and cultural supremacy, which it mediated with the aid of the collection, also surfaces. As "trophies of Christianity", the Basel Mission incorporated the artefacts into its pietistic propaganda, which went hand in hand with the devaluation of non-Christian religions and non-European cultures. With a nuanced look on the Basel Mission's India collection, my aim is to contribute to the history of

Switzerland's colonial entanglements as well as to the debate on collections from colonial contexts.

Keywords: Missionary collection; Ethnographic museums; Collections from colonial context; Provenance research; Missionary propaganda; ethnographic collections from India; Mission exhibition; colonial imaginations; Model figures.

Trigger warning: The chapter contains pejorative terms in some of the quotations from missionary sources that may be perceived as racist. I use historical terminology in those passages where I feel it is necessary in order to understand the context and the missionary perspective.

The Museum der Kulturen Basel (MKB) houses the ethnographic collection of the Basel Mission, which was established in the mission house in the nineteenth century. The Mission initially gave the collection to the MKB on permanent loan in the 1980s, which in 2015 was turned into a donation. Today, the Basel Mission's collection comprises over 7,000 objects from Ghana, India, China, Cameroon and Indonesia. In this chapter, I will focus on examples from the India holding, which comprises about 1,500 objects.[2] These include sculptures and images of deities, jewellery, everyday objects, utensils and models. The missionaries delivered most of the artefacts to the Basel Mission before World War I, at a high point of European expansion and colonialism. Referring to post-colonial and global-historical approaches on mission history, I understand mission as part of imperial colonialism.[3] In recent years, numerous studies have pointed to the interdependencies between mission history and colonialism.[4] The objects in the collection bear witness to the Basel Mission's networking with the European colonial powers and non-European mission territories, which were also colonies. The collection reflects global entanglements and exchange relationships between actors from different geographical, social and political areas. An actor-based approach from biographical research and cultural studies focuses on the motives and lifeworld contexts of missionaries and missionised people.[5] Studies on material culture and ethnographic collections sharpen the focus both on the various

levels of meaning of the artefacts themselves and on their representative functions.[6] Missionary collections have received increased attention with the ongoing debate on "how to deal with collections from colonial contexts", provenance research and restitution.[7] The case of a missionary collection in Switzerland and the associated "colonialism without colonies" offers the potential for a differentiated contribution to the debate.[8] The history of the Basel Mission collection reveals grey areas and indirect colonial connections.

In this chapter, I pursue questions of provenance research in the context of historical research on the Basel Mission's collection from India: Who were the suppliers of the objects in the collection? Where and how did the missionaries obtain the artefacts? Did they receive gifts? Did they buy, exchange or loot? How did the colonial context in the British Empire influence the changes of ownership and what role did the motives of individual actors play? The documentation of the Basel Mission collection in the Museum der Kulturen Basel and in the Mission 21 archive serve as the main sources. Of major importance are the published catalogues of the ethnographic collection in the Basel Mission house from the years 1862 and 1888. They draw attention to the interpretation of the artefacts from a missionary perspective: What functions did they fulfil in the Basel Mission collection? How did missionary and colonial ideas shape the collection and its presentation? Moreover, I relate the objects in the MKB to diary entries by missionaries, their personal files in the Mission 21 archive, and articles in the mission magazine *Der evangelische Heidenbote* (EHB). Using specific cases, I show how the supply of objects for the Basel Mission collection, their interpretation and circulation were linked to missionary and colonial structures. Biographies of individual artefacts illustrate the diversity of missionary acquisition and appropriation practices as well as the embedding of the collection in missionary patterns of interpretation, which were interconnected with Eurocentric ideas and colonial claims to supremacy. Above this, the examples reveal the complexity of the history of the collection, breaking down

dichotomous narratives of missionaries and the 'missionised,' and suggesting a more differentiated approach.

The Basel Mission collection from India, as a case study, bears witness to the interaction between missionary actors from Europe and the local population in the mission area. Unequal power relations and European claims to cultural and religious hegemony as well as exchange relationships and the mutual influence of missionaries and the Indian population become apparent. The chapter is structured according to the different ways in which missionaries acquired or appropriated objects. Using specific examples, I show the range of possibilities for missionaries to obtain objects for the Basel Mission collection in India. These ranged from individual thefts to gifts and purchases.

Burning Religious Artefacts or Supplying Them to Ethnographic Collections as Missionary Practice

In 1832, the Basel Mission magazine published an extract from a letter by missionary Paul Schaffter (1801–1861), in which he reported on his missionary successes in India. Although Schaffter completed his training at the Basel Mission house, he went to India on behalf of the Church Missionary Society, as missionary work in British India was initially reserved for British missionary societies. It was only with the revision of the charter of the East India Company (EIC) in 1833 that the Basel Mission could send missionaries directly and was able to set up the first mission stations in what are now the states of Karnataka and Kerala.[9] As an expression of successful conversion as understood at the time, Schaffter described how some converts burnt their shrines and images of their deities as proof of their renunciation of the Hindu faith.[10] The burning of religious artefacts was a common practice in the early phase of the mission to combat the non-Christian belief systems they wished to destroy and

it also served as a public demonstration of power.[11] Contrary to the idea of destroying non-Christian artefacts, missionaries sometimes used burnings to appropriate individual artefacts to themselves or to later pass them on to missionary collections, as I will show later.

In the 1840s, missionaries delivered individual artefacts to the Basel Mission, as well as to the mission promoter Christian Gottlob Barth (1799–1862), who was assembling an ethnographic collection himself. One of Barth's suppliers was Hermann Gundert (1814–1893), who, like many missionaries of the Basel Mission as well as Barth, came from Southern Germany. Gundert worked for the Basel Mission in South India from 1839–1859, especially in Mangalore and Thalassery (formerly Tellicherry). During a visit to Germany, Gundert gave Barth some sculptures of deities for his collection.[12]

Shortly before his death, Barth donated the collection of around 650 natural history and ethnographic objects to the Basel Mission to mark the recent establishment of a mission museum in the Basel Mission house. The objects in the mission museum were supposed to teach prospective missionaries about religion and culture in the mission territories.[13]

For Gundert and other missionaries active in the colonies, the handing over of non-Christian religious artefacts to the mission museum or Barth could correspond with their proselytising task. According to the pietistic view, such artefacts possessed diabolical powers. However, the missionaries believed that the spiritual powers could be removed from the artefacts, when the material representations of non-Christian belief systems were removed from their original context, sent to Europe and categorised in collections. Consequently, the artefacts gained a new function and significance as part of an ethnographic collection in the mission house. In this respect, the Christian sense of mission and the preservation of Indian artefacts in collections could complement missionary convictions. Gundert justified his contributions to the collection in terms of mission and pietism: "If I can find the opportunity to send something home […], I would perhaps remove one more idol from India – I would be happy if it were also eradicated from people's

hearts."[14] The quote points to Gundert's experiences to the contrary and testifies to the limits of his missionary task. He seems to have realised that a mere physical separation of the materialised deities from their believers did not always lead to the abandonment of their non-Christian beliefs, as he had hoped.

The following case of a ritual sword illustrates that missionaries continued the practice of burning as well as the removal of religious artefacts from India to Europe as both of them were strategies to weaken non-Christian religions in the missionaries' belief. The case also provides an insight into a missionary's religious doubts after he burnt a place of worship in India and, in the process, appropriated ritual artefacts.

Gustav Peter (1857–1938), the son of a village schoolteacher from Zurich, worked at various mission stations of the Basel Mission in South India between 1885 and 1913, the longest residence being in Kannur (formerly Cannanore). During a visit home in 1904, he handed over a sword and forty-four other artefacts from the Malabar Coast to the mission museum in Basel.[15] An entry in the inventory book of the Basel Mission collection reveals how Peter had obtained two of the ritual artefacts. The missionary view of non-Christian religions is reflected in the descriptions and the terminology used in the documentation of the collection: "1 hand – made of wood, comes from the house temple of a devil priest, which Miss. Peter burned down; 1 sword – curved like a sickle, with bell-shaped and heart-shaped appendages, coated with holy white earth. (Chalk) – It is said to give divine power – comes from the house temple of a devil priest."[16] According to this, Peter set fire to a temple, but before that, he removed a wood-carved hand and a sword. Both objects are now in the collection of the MKB.[17] Traces of the chalky earth are still visible on the sword, and the label from the mission museum is still in place. The sword has the typical shape of a *Bhuta sword,* with a blade that curves upwards (see Figure 9.1). A particularly characteristic feature is the square on the handle, with which it can be placed on a shrine (*Ujall*) in the temple and is used for worship along with a water bowl and oil lamp. *Bhuta* is the

sanskritised and anglicised form of the Tulu word *Buta*, which can be translated as *spirit being* or *deity*. It refers to local divine or deified beings, most of whom can be traced back to oral traditions

(*Paddana*), in contrast to Hindu deities of the Vedic scriptures or the Puranas (such as Vishnu or Shiva), who are referred to as *Deva* in Sanskrit.[18] With the pejorative term "devil priest" of the Christian perspective, Gustav presumably meant the *Daiva Pathri,* who looked after the artefacts in the temple and was responsible for the annual sacrificial ritual.[19] Since the Daiva Pathri had an influential position among the *Bhuta* followers, the missionaries obviously hoped that other believers would follow his example if they convinced him to convert. Most *Bhuta* devotees belonged to the community of the *Billava*, which ranked among the lowest stratum of Indian society. The Billava community made up one of the largest conversion groups of the Basel Mission in South India. The *Bhuta* ritual *Nema* or *Kola*, which lasts several days, is still celebrated at various places in Kerala. In this performance, the person who embodies a *Bhuta* uses a sword as an attribute that resembles the sword in the Basel Mission collection. It symbolises the power and patronage of the deity towards the devotees, and the medium uses it to bless them.[20]

Figure 9.1: *Bhuta sword* with chalk markings and label of the Basel Mission museum. Tulunadu, Kerala, India; before 1904; iron, chalk; missionary Gustav Peter, Basel Mission collection; IIa 9796 © Museum der Kulturen Basel, Photo: Omar Lemke, 2024.

Peter's diaries do not reveal whether he succeeded in converting the Daiva Pathri. However, notes he made shortly before his death confirm that he had set fire to a temple and stolen some ritual artefacts: in 1935, he wrote that in the course of burning a temple where the "wooden hand and a rusty sword [was] kept and a sacred tree cut down […] he had taken home a spirit dwelling."[21] What is interesting here is that Peter retrospectively described his actions as a disrespect of a sanctuary.[22] Did he end up questioning his behaviour as a Christian missionary? Another one of his notes suggests that he related his actions to a painful personal experience. It says: "Consequences: Idali sunstroke", which presumably referred to the death of his youngest daughter, who died in India in 1899 of sunstroke.[23] Peter's note can be interpreted to indicate that he was considering the death of his daughter because of his offences at religious sites. Maybe he attributed more power to the Indian deities than he admitted in his official reports to the missionary board.

Another missionary who, in retrospect, had doubts about his way of seizing religious artefacts in India for the missionary collection is the aforementioned Hermann Gundert. In a letter to his wife Julie Gundert, born Dubois (1809–1885), he described how he had taken a wooden figure of the wrathful female deity *Bhagavathi*[24] from a temple together with some offerings that had been made to her.[25] A devotee who witnessed Gundert's endeavour warned him of the negative consequences of such an act. Gundert tried to bribe him with some money and convince him that he wanted to bring some of the deity's power to Europe. According to Gundert, the devotee laughed and gave in. Gundert also took some other offerings, which he described as heads made of clay. This, however, went unnoticed. In the letter to his wife, Gundert was left unsure whether he should describe this as an act of taking, robbery or buying: "I took, robbed

or bought a wooden statue of a god from an uncovered Bhagavati temple this morning."[26] In retrospect, he had doubts about the legitimacy of his actions or even a guilty conscience. Perhaps he ultimately preferred to leave the judgement of his actions to his wife or the Christian God.

Missionary Propaganda Based on the Ethnographic Collection

In the 1862 catalogue of the ethnographic collection in the mission house in Basel, which lists 1,558 objects, there are references as to how individual objects came into the collection. In some cases, previous owners are even named. In addition, descriptions and terminology reveal the missionary interpretation of the artefacts as well as their function in the Basel Mission collection. Some of the bronze figures of Hindu deities are described as "household idols of the former Brahmin, now missionary, Hermann Kaundinja"[27]. The missionary magazine, the EHB, presented Hermann Anandrao (also Anandraja) Kaundinya (1825–1893) as an example of successful missionary work in India. The EHB was part of the mission's public relations and advertising work, which served to inform supporters about the work of the Basel Mission and to motivate them to make donations with success stories. Brahmins belonged to the highest Indian social class and were one of the most important target groups for the Basel Mission, as they appeared to the mission to be more "civilised" than lower classes of the population, due to their high status and scripture-based scholarship. However, the hoped-for influx of Brahmins to the mission did not occur; instead, there were recurrent riots and sometimes even physical attacks on missionaries during public sermons.[28] From the point of view of many Brahmins, the Basel Mission's principle of equality called into question their high status and privileges in Indian society, and economic considerations were no motivation for them to convert.[29] Therefore,

there was even more reason for members and supporters of the Basel Mission to celebrate Kaundinya's baptism and that of two other Brahmins in 1844 as a special success.[30] At the baptism, Kaundinya was given the name "Hermann" after his mentor Hermann Mögling (1811–1881).

Kaundinya's life served as a prime example of a conversion according to the Pietists' point of view, because he completely turned away from his former life. Contrary to the wishes and expectations of his family and the Sarasvat Brahmin community, Kaundinya did not pursue the career of a lawyer like his father but decided to attend the Basel Mission school and become a missionary himself.[31] Kaundinya's conversion caused horror in the Brahmin community and had negative consequences, especially for his wife Lakshmi (?–1853). She could not understand how "a man of divine lineage […] could lay himself at the feet of a crucified god and humiliate himself to the impure caste of the Europeans."[32] Kaundinya described the relationship between him and his first wife as problematic. His decision to convert to Christianity also made a dramatic impact on his wife's status in the Brahmin community. Due to Kaundinya's decision to leave the Brahmin community, she experienced marginalisation within Brahmin society. However, living together with her husband in the Christian community was also difficult, as she did want to give up her faith in Rama and Brahma. However, not only Lakshmi, but also the converted Kaundinya himself experienced marginalisation within the Basel Mission, which initially refused him a career as a missionary. Until then, training as a missionary had been reserved for *white* men; the admission of an Indian upset the mission's categories of difference, claims of supremacy and highlighted tensions between the Basel Mission's claims of Christian unity and racialised ideas alongside the mission agenda. Ultimately, with the help of his mentor, missionary Hermann Mögling, Kaundinya was able to prevail against the internal resistance of the Basel Mission, so that he was the first Indian pupil to complete his training as a missionary at the mission house in Basel. During his stay in Switzerland, in 1846, Kaundinya visited

Gottlob Barth in neighbouring Germany. On this occasion, he gave the missionary enthusiast, as proof of his renunciation of the Hindu faith, some bronze figures of the Hindu deities Vishnu and Krishna for his collection.[33] As mentioned before, Barth later donated them to the Basel Mission along with the rest of his collection.

Figure 9.2: Sculpture of Krishna as a child with a ball of butter. Karnataka, India; before 1846; bronze, wood; missionary Hermann Anandarao Kaundinya, Basel Mission collection; IIa 9250 © Museum der Kulturen Basel, Photo: Omar Lemke, 2019.

In the collection at the MKB today, I identified a Krishna figurine that goes back to Kaundinya. It shows Krishna as a baby with a ball

of butter in his right hand, which he had stolen from his foster mother Yashoda while she was churning cream.

The story of the artefacts' journey into the missionary collection as a "gift from converts", which missionary Friedrich Ziegler (1832–1906) articulated in the two catalogues for the ethnographic collection of the Basel Mission, became a powerful narrative for the Basel Mission. It entered the catalogue that accompanied the Basel Mission exhibition, which opened for the first time in Basel in 1908. In the exhibition catalogue, the provenance of objects from India given by converts to missionaries served as missionary propaganda: "The idol temple contains original idols, most of which have a history and were given to the missionaries by heathens when they converted to Christianity. They are therefore […] victory symbols of Christianity and the mission."[34] This devalued Indian deities and beliefs. At the same time, it reclassified the artefacts as Christian trophies in connection with the narration of their delivery to the missionaries by converts.

Due to its success, the Basel Mission exhibition toured to more than forty locations in Switzerland and neighbouring countries over the next few years.[35] The exhibition served to promote and spread the missionary idea. A key element of this was the construction of a negative image of non-Christian religions with the help of the objects in the missionary collection. In line with the quote from the catalogue, the mission presented non-Christian artefacts as a negative foil for Christianity, which contributed to a positive sense of community and superiority among Christians. It devalued non-Christians as "heathens" and claimed their salvation. Additionally, the exhibition had an economic function and provided financial support for the Basel Mission which mainly supported itself through donations and global trade.[36]

The sculptures of Indian deities, such as Kaundinya's Krishna figure, were exhibited as evidence of Christian conversion and thus served the mission as ideological mediators of its successes in the mission areas. This understanding of non-European objects in the mission exhibition continued, as a review of the exhibition from 1928

demonstrates.[37] Their display as trophies of Christianity reflected colonial claims to cultural hegemony in the mission territories. At the same time, the exhibition promoted the mission in Europe by pointing out the ongoing need to Christianise many parts of the world. Mission magazines supported the interpretation of the collection objects as "evidences of conversion." The missionary interpretation patterns were rooted in "postmillennial ideas" and the pietistic view that Christianisation would lead to a moral improvement of the individual and thus bring about a solution for all grievances.[38]

Conservative biblicism, which was based on a sharp dualism between "light" and "darkness", also had a major influence on the Basel Mission. At the turn of the nineteenth century, this Christian dualistic understanding of the world went hand in hand with colonial and racialised discourses, which were based on notions of cultural difference. The Eurocentric concepts underpinned the argumentation in the mission magazines as well as in the message of the mission exhibition, even if they contrasted with the everyday life of the missionaries in the mission territories. The strict separation between missionaries and converts could hardly be maintained in India; instead, everyday missionary life was characterised by translation processes – linguistically and culturally. Missionaries depended on local actors who translated for them and taught them the language; further, conversions also broke down strict divisions between missionaries and the converted. The role of Indian catechists as cultural mediators cannot be underestimated; they stepped in during many conversion attempts when the missionaries reached the limits of their linguistic skills, as Gustav Peter, for example, describes in his diary.[39] Further, Kaundinya's career as a missionary shows impressively how the missionary encounter could challenge racist European concepts.

Production for Europeans and Colonial Imagination: India in Miniature – Models and Model Figures

In addition to objects from religious and ritual contexts, the Basel Mission's India collection contains many nineteenth-century handicrafts which were intended to be sold to Europeans. These include model figures, house and temple models and paintings. Many of them were available for purchase by missionaries as early tourist art. The artisans in India responded to the demand for models as private souvenirs or for exhibitions in Europe and orientated their production towards European preferences. The European demand for Indian handicrafts also created new room for creativity, and artefacts entered European collections that bear witness to both local and global designs and aesthetic ideas.[40]

The collection comprises over 150 models of temples, everyday scenes and tools. There are also 185 model figures, which are stereotypical representations of various population groups in India, organised according to gender, caste, profession, and ethnic and religious affiliation. According to Jenni, such model figures are a materialised expression of the British colonial government's inventory project, which aimed to record all groups living in British India.[41] The colonial administration's attempts not only to record but to thereby also structure Indian society, emphasised and codified differences, including the "caste system".[42] The model figures thus represent the colonial gaze rather than the complex Indian population of the time. Socio-economically, the mass production of model figures was a reaction of local artists to the trade relations between India and the British Empire: under the influence of the East India Company, Indian artists and craftspeople produced these model figures, which "flying traders" sold as souvenirs at railway stations.[43] Due to the intertwining of the development of arts and crafts with the EIC, it got the label "company art" and is considered as early Indian tourist art. The places where modelled figures were

produced are Krishnagar (West Bengal), Lakhnau (Uttar Pradesh), Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Pune (Maharashtra).[44]

In the mission museum, the models and model figures served to illustrate everyday life in the mission area and, as I have shown above, to prepare the missionaries for their future life in India.[45] Karl Friedrich Käser (1854–1926), whom the missionaries called "Hausvater Käser,"[46] was responsible for the collection in the mission museum from 1882 to 1924 and taught ethnography at the mission house in addition to theology.[47] Missionary Karl Epting-Baumann (1875–1955) also taught prospective missionaries ethnography, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.[48] The collection today still contains models of entire mission stations with individual buildings, such as an infirmary of the Basel Mission in Udupi. Beyond its teaching functions for prospective missionaries, the ethnographic collection of the Basel Mission addressed its supporters and served the following objective: "to give missionary friends a picture as true as possible of the condition, especially the religious condition, of the peoples with whom the mission has to deal, and thereby help to keep their participation in the mission alive."[49]

As the Basel Mission was dependent on donations to finance its immense costs, it had to keep in line a wide network of supporters by promotional work.[50] The central players in this advertising activity were so-called missionary or travelling preachers, who gave lectures and training courses at aid associations and other institutions, promoted the Basel Mission and collected donations. At the same time, these lectures served the "inner mission" in Germany and Switzerland.[51] The board of the Basel Mission assigned this task primarily to the missionaries who had returned from the mission territories and needed a new task. With their presentations, these travelling preachers fuelled the imagination of their audiences, to whom they reported on non-Christian cultures and religions of distant countries. To illustrate their stories, they used an arsenal of educational material and artefacts that the mission provided in "missionary suitcases" especially for this purpose.[52] These "missionary suitcases" functioned like mini-exhibitions or "mobile

museums."[53] The mission also called the suitcases "mission museums in miniature."[54] While researching the archives of Mission 21, I found several inventories of mission suitcases that refer to objects in the Basel Mission collection at the MKB. The inventories for India each list about 100 objects, including Christian writings such as prayers and extracts from the Bible in various local languages, "pupils' work,"[55] natural history objects, models of tools, implements and images of gods to illustrate non-Christian beliefs and practices.[56] The missionary suitcases varied in size; there were small and large ones – presumably depending on the occasion; later, there were also "museum boxes" and "reserve missionary suitcases." The fact that the models in today's collection at the MKB served to equip missionary suitcases explains their large number as well as the fact that there are duplicate versions of the same motif. A note from 1905 in the documents on the missionary suitcases shows that they were so popular that the Basel Mission had to increase their number.[57] The popularity of the suitcases and the lectures by travelling preachers rose in relation to the growing interest in exoticism, non-Christian religions and distant lands in Europe around 1900. As travelling was not yet possible for large parts of the population, ethnological knowledge became popular and events such as human zoos, world, colonial or missionary exhibitions served as entertainment.

The catalogue of the Basel Mission's collection from 1862 lists the first fourteen model figures which missionary Huber had donated to the mission house. As up to five missionaries of the Basel Mission bearing the surname "Huber" were positioned in India at the end of the nineteenth century, it is difficult to identify the right person. In 1888, the collection already contained thirty-six model figures. Their supplier was presumably Johann Jakob Huber (1814–1881), who was one of the first missionaries stationed in India from 1842 onwards. After his return to Switzerland in 1855, Huber worked as a travelling preacher in Switzerland and Alsace. He also gave numerous popular lectures on religious and astronomical topics, which he combined with the preaching of Christianity.[58] Indian

model figures are not mentioned in descriptions of his lectures. In 1907, another missionary Huber donated nine model figures to the mission museum. This was presumably Johannes Huber (1834–1904), who had died three years earlier, and the model figures came to the mission museum as part of his estate. Johannes Huber joined the Basel Mission in 1852 and, after the compulsory six years of training at the mission house, he worked as a missionary for ten years in India. According to notes on index cards of the Basel Mission collection and in the inventory books, Huber supplied fifty-eight figures to the mission museum. The places of origin of most of the figures are Mangalore and Kozhikode (formerly Calicut), where the Basel Mission had established its first stations. These locations correlate with the biographical data of Jakob Huber, who stayed in both places. However, neither the documentation of the Basel Mission collection nor the biographical research shed any light on how the missionaries Johannes and Jakob Huber obtained the model figures.

Another missionary who provided model figures and other artefacts from India to the mission museum was Philippe Charles Piton (1835–1905). He joined the Basel Mission in 1859 and after his training, the missionary board deployed him to China. After his return, this educated merchant lived in Neuchâtel, Switzerland. According to the inventory book of the Basel Mission collection, in 1905 he handed over fifty-one model figures together with sixty-three further artefacts from India to the mission museum.[59] The note "Mission preacher" under his name in the inventory book refers to his function after his return from the mission area and corresponds to the information in the personnel files of the Basel Mission.[60] Presumably, the Indian objects were part of his equipment as a missionary preacher. However, as he had never been in India himself, he may have received the artefacts from other missionaries. In the same year that Piton died, 1905, his private collection came to the mission house as a bequest. other suppliers of models were Hermann Mögling, the aforementioned mentor of Kaundinya, and the missionary inspector Hans Anstein (1863–1940). Anstein

provided model figures from Lakhnau (North India) and the Victoria Technical Institute in Chennai (formerly Madras). The institute opened under British colonial rule in India in 1889 and received its name in honour of Queen Victoria. It promoted the commodification and trade of Indian handicrafts. Labels with prices on the base of some model figures in today's collection indicate that their suppliers purchased them from the Victoria Technical Institute. The institute still exists; it sells Indian handicrafts and bears witness to the post-colonial links between Indian designs and global trade.

Figure 9.3: Model depicting the extraction of palm wine originating from the Victoria Technical Institute. Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India; before 1920; wood, paper; Basel Mission collection; IIa 8302 © Museum der Kulturen Basel, Photo: Derek Li Wan Po, 2015.

Among the models in the Basel Mission collection, two temple models stand out due to their material and fine carvings.[61] They are made of palm pith, a soft and light material. Both temple models are true-to-scale replicas of existing temples, as is usual with architectural models. They depict two Hindu temples in the city of Tiruchirappalli (formerly Trichinopoly). In a typescript for the collection in the mission museum, the missionary author – possibly Ziegler, who had also written the catalogues for the collection – highlighted the Indian architecture: "The model conveys an impression of the highly developed architecture of the Hindus, as does the […] temple model from Palmmark."[62] This positive notion of Indian culture still went in line with evolutionist and primitivist doctrines circulating in ethnology at the turn of the century. The mission assigned Asian religions and cultures a higher level of development than African ones but placed Christianity and European culture at the forefront of civilisation. One of the two temple models depicts a historical fortress and temple complex, which is called Rock Fort because it is built on and inside a rock.[63] To reach the main temples of the deities Shiva and Ganesha at a height of around 83 metres, the visitor has to climb 400 steps. In the mission museum, the model received a label with information about the temple and the sacrificial rituals which, according to the mission, were mainly performed by women. The label on the model says:

> Shiwa temple, has the shape of a sleeping elephant. over 300 steps lead up to the uppermost sanctuary, to which the women carry the large brass vessels with holy water, a difficult task. Once the idols have been washed, the remaining water is poured down from the rocks, where it quickly evaporates, but the women are pleased that their water offering has been accepted. The elephant is a sacred animal. That is why there are many elephants in this temple.[64]

From a missionary perspective, visitors to the mission museum thus obtained an insight into the Indian temple and the religious ideas and practices associated with it. The mission emphasised those aspects that were less familiar to Europeans, such as the shape of a temple as an elephant or sacred animal, or the arduousness of Hindu practices. In this way, the missionary interpretation of the temple model served exotic projections onto unknown religions in India and above this, encouraged a Eurocentric point of view through the infantilisation of Hindu practices.

Already in the nineteenth century, the Rock Fort temple complex in Tiruchirappalli was a place of pilgrimage for devotees of the deity Shiva. At the same time, it was an attraction for European travellers and colonial officials. As the model is listed in the second printed catalogue of the Basel Mission's collection, it must have been made and brought to Basel before 1888.[65] A label on the bottom of the models originates from the manufacturing company in India, "T.S. Nagirathinam Pillai & Brothers" in Tiruchirappalli, which contains a self-description of the Indian company: "Makers in pith models of Hindu Temples and other objects of curiosities, best workmanship; also dealer of Talak Pictures of Birds, Beasts, Insects, Flowers, and several castes of Hindus; and of Ivory and Glass Broaches. Silver and golden jewels of Indian made, required for Europeans and Eurasians."[66] The label testifies to the variety of goods offered by the Indian traders, which ranged from palm marrow models to paintings and pins. The English language of the label and the addition "for Europeans and Eurasians" indicate the target group of the traders. The term "Eurasians" was widespread for "anglo-Indian" people in the British Empire. It was used within colonial racialised discourse and had a pejorative meaning. Moreover, a demand for Indian arts and crafts for European collections developed as early as the eighteenth century and Indian artisans catered to this market.[67] They used their skills from various professions to produce carvings and paintings as "curiosities" from India, whose materials and motifs served and fuelled European fantasies of India or an even more diffuse "Orient".[68] The usage of the word "Eurasians" in the label of

the Indian company seems like an appropriation of the racialised term and illustrates once again the colonial entanglements.

Testimony to the sale of Indian arts and crafts in Tiruchirappalli is given not only by missionary sources but also from travelogues from Basel's upper classes. Georges Passavant-Fichter (1862–1952), for example, who came from a wealthy Basel family, travelled around the world at the end of the nineteenth century. Tiruchirappalli was a favourite destination for Europeans who could afford to travel, and it was on Passavant-Fichter's itinerary as well. In 1889, he stayed in Tiruchirappalli and noted that he visited some stores that offered handicrafts for sale.[69]

As many of the European buyers in Tiruchirappalli were colonial civil servants, it makes sense to compare the objects in the Basel Mission collection with those in British collections. There is, for example, a model made from palm pith in the Victoria & Albert Museum that represents the same temple of Tiruchirappalli as one of the models in the Basel Mission collection.[70] The striking similarity of the two temple models suggests the same manufacturer or even a serial production. Is it possible that the supplier of the temple model to the Basel Mission and the previous owner of the temple model in the V&A, "Mrs Willink," purchased the models from the same dealers in Tiruchirappalli?[71]

Picturesque Paintings as Souvenirs

In addition to the model figures, watercolours and gouache paintings on mica, compiled as albums in the Basel Mission collection, are like the model and model figures, part of "Company Art".[72] Mika, or mica, is the layered silicate of a mineral that was extracted in the East Indies. It resembles very thin Perspex, which makes the applied gouache colours particularly luminous. In pre-colonial India, paintings on mica served as parts of jewellery and accessories and as decorations for wedding or processional lanterns.[73] The Basel

Mission collection contains four albums with mica paintings showing Indian subjects in the format of postcards.[74] The subjects are the Hindu pantheon, Indian flora and fauna, everyday scenes and stereotypical depictions of various professions and population groups, similar to the model figures. With their idealised depictions of a "picturesque India", the mica paintings appealed to European taste and their manufacturers or local dealers sold them as souvenirs to employees of the East India Company, colonial officials and European travellers.[75] The paintings were available for purchase in studios or at transport hubs. However, with the advent of photography in the 1840s, the production of mica paintings declined, as European buyers preferred photographs as souvenirs.[76]

Figure 9.4: Berli subtitled the painting "Maha Wishnu. The Preserver" and "Mahā=great". Tamil Nadu, India; before 1919; gouache on mika; missionary David Berli, Basel Mission collection; IIa 8590.06 © Museum der Kulturen Basel, Photo: Derek Li Wan Po, 2015.

The items from the mission museum collection most likely originated from various missionaries and Käser's handwriting indicates that it was him who put them together. The green and black marbled bookbinding with ribbon ties also points to Käser's

work at the mission museum, as he used the same binding for the card catalogue as well as for pictures in missionary suitcases.[77] His inscriptions under the mica paintings testify to his attempts to systematise the pictures and arrange the South Indian deities by name. Some of the album pages also contain the names of deities in the South Indian language Malayalam in transliterated form in addition to the Sanskrit designation. If Käser was not sure which deity the mica paintings depicted, he added question marks or wrote several possible names under the pictures. Due to the size of the Hindu pantheon and the diversity of its iconographic representations with local variations, a systematisation also posed a challenge for Käser because of the varying names of the deities in different Indian languages, none of which he was able to speak.

The style, choice of colours and motifs of most of the mica paintings in the collection point to their production around 1870 and to Tiruchirappalli as their place of origin.[78] A painting tradition with its own style developed in Tiruchirappalli in the nineteenth century. Once again, a comparison of the Basel Mission collection and the collection in the Victoria & Albert Museum is revealing, as both collections contain four series of mica paintings in the same style and with the same images. The series were on display under the name "Trichinopoly Exports" at the first world exhibition, the "Great Exhibition" in London in 1851. Examples of the previously discussed temple models from Tiruchirappalli were also among the exhibits at the world exhibitions in 1873 and 1886.[79] A comparison of the collections shows that part of the inventory of the Basel Mission collection overlapped with that of British world exhibitions at the turn of the century. This leads to the assumption that both missionaries and British colonial officials bought mica paintings and models in the same places, possibly even from the same manufacturers or dealers. Here, too, the agency of Indian actors becomes clear, as they had a say in determining what ended up in European collections and what image of India was conveyed in the process. At the same time, their production reflected European and

colonial imaginations, which Indian producers adopted in order to meet demand and maintain their sales market.

For two further picture albums in the Basel Mission collection, I could identify the missionaries who brought the paintings from India to Basel. Both albums reflect the interests and preferences of the two personalities in the selection of the pictures: the album compiled by missionary Johann Jakob Hunziker (1831–1923) contains the aforementioned depictions of various professions and population groups, but above all images of Indian flora and fauna.[80] Hunziker came from Bern and was a trained printer. In 1856, the board of the Basel Mission sent him to Mangalore to work in the missionary printing press, which had grown into a large and influential business by the middle of the nineteenth century. Hunziker was fascinated by the Indian flora and developed a process by which he printed the coloured leaves directly onto paper. He described this as an "exact" and "authentic" natural print.[81] In the two-volume work "Mangalore Botanautography", which he later handed over to the mission museum, he compiled a collection of Indian plants based on an encyclopaedic model. The botanical work gives an impression of the Eurocentric understanding of the mission's educational mandate: one aim was to convey an inventory of India as a foreign country in compact form for the mission museum; secondly, it taught Indian pupils in the mission schools about the characteristics of their own country by using a European lens.[82]

The album compiled by missionary David Berli (1855–1944) contains a number of watercolours and newspaper cuttings as well as, predominantly, mica paintings in the Company style and stands out among other missionary depictions of India.[83] The Basel Mission exhibition in particular conveyed a negative image of Indian religions and cultures in order to legitimise the missionary work, which also understood itself as a "civilising mission," claiming colonial superiority. The mission's publication accompanying the exhibition, therefore, emphasised practices which, in Europe, were associated with backwardness, such as violence against women, e.g. in the burning of widows or forced marriages, but also in religious practices

such as hook swinging.[84] In contrast, missionary Berli compiled everything he found interesting or remarkable under the title "Indian Imagination and Art": from the Hindu pantheon and Indian buildings to intellectuals, poets and natural scientists from India. Particularly impressive is his careful combination of depictions of Hindu deities with the corresponding stories, which he quoted and translated from various Hindu scriptures, such as the Puranas, the Bhagavadgita and the heroic epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. This compilation shows Berli's intensive engagement with the Hindu pantheon, as well as his profound knowledge of the language. For their sermons, the missionaries endeavoured to learn the local languages, such as Malayalam, Kannada or Tulu, but not Sanskrit, the language of the sacred Indian scriptures, which Berli used for his album. The meticulous design of the album, which comprises over a hundred pages, also testifies to his fascination with the religious culture that he witnessed in South India. The album came into the collection of the Basel Mission with Berli's estate. Only after his death did his daughter-in-law pass it on to the mission museum. It is possible that Berli used the album to illustrate his lectures as a travelling preacher and, therefore, still needed it in his lifetime. Alternatively, it is possible that he did not intend to share his positive perspective on the Indian religions with the board of the Basel Mission and did not pass the album to the mission museum but rather kept it for himself as a personal memento of his experiences in India. Maybe Berli feared becoming criticised by the missionary board for challenging the official mission's depictions of India with his album? After their return from the mission territories, the missionaries were not financially secure and were still dependent on the Basel Mission as travelling preachers, as was Berli.

Conclusion

In the Basel Mission's public relations, its ethnographic collection was framed as consisting of artefacts, which were gifted to missionaries

by converts and thus were a sign of the converts' pietistic self-transformation. Therefore, in the missionary propaganda, the story of "gifts from converts" served to demonstrate power as well as to advertise and legitimise the missionary work. In contrast to the public image, I could reveal a variety of additional ways in which artefacts from India entered the collection at the mission house by historical research, challenging the Basel Mission's narrative. It became clear that the missionaries not only received gifts but also obtained artefacts while destroying temples or shrines. Moreover, some illegitimate and questionable appropriations in the colonial context became apparent, additionally to purchases missionaries made from local traders. Trade relations, economic interests, artisanship and creativity characterised these kinds of acquisitions by the missionaries in India: models, paintings and carvings were local responses to European demands for exotic artefacts and objects for ethnographic collections. Indian artisans utilised this demand for themselves and their own innovations. Production was not only orientated towards European tastes, it also fuelled the emergence of new markets in colonial and mission areas, for example at places of interest such as the temple complex in Tiruchirappali.

In addition to administrative and economic links of the Basel Mission with the British colonial power, colonial entanglements of the Basel Mission's India collection also became evident on an epistemological level. Based on the postcolonial assumption that a colonial discourse and the resulting cultural dispositions made colonial expansion and domination possible in the first place, the collection is intertwined with colonial knowledge, its production and circulation. Missionary terminology and object classifications combined the devaluation of non-Christian belief systems with ideological doctrines of justification based on colonial convictions of one's own cultural superiority. Stereotypical depictions of everyday Indian scenes in models, population groups in model figures or as paintings popularised the notions of cultural difference and spread them further. As places of colonial imagination, the missionary exhibition, publications and lectures by missionaries contributed to the image of India in Europe and at the same time served to

construct European and Christian self-images based on processes of othering. Similar objects in the collection of the Basel Mission and British Museum collections, as well as world exhibitions, bear witness to the circulation of colonial ideas and images of non-European cultures in European representation spaces during nineteenth-century imperialism.

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[1] This text is based on the section of the Basel Mission's India collection in the research report "Geschenkt, gekauft, erbeutet - Missionarisches Sammeln in Kamerun und Indien". I wrote it in the framework of a fellowship at the Museum der Kulturen Basel in 2019 and it is available online: https://www.mkb.ch/de/museum/forschung/fellowship.html.

[2] The figures vary depending on how you count in the database. The figure of 7,000 and the following one refer to individual objects and therefore include objects consisting of several parts. This means that it does not include sub-numbers, i.e. if a picture album has 120 pages and therefore 120 sub-numbers; they are not taken into account here. Moreover, I speak of "objects" when I refer to the ontological status of things in a museum collection. I prefer the term "artefacts" when referring to a broader understanding of things that include multiple meanings.

[3] Purtschert and Fischer-Tiné, *Colonial Switzerland*; Purtschert, Falk and Lüthi, *Postkoloniale Schweiz*; Conrad and Randeria, *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus*; Barringer and Flynn, *Colonialism and the Object*.

[4] For example: Kreis, *Blicke auf die Koloniale Schweiz*; Ratschiller and Wetjen, *Verflochtene Mission*; Becker, *Conversio*; Habermas and Hölzl, *Mission Global*; Museum der Kulturen Basel, *Mission Possible?*; Grimshaw and May, *Missionaries*; Harries, *Butterflies*.

[5] Egger, *Transnationale Biographien*; Altena, *Ein Häuflein Christen*; Nehring, *Orientalismus und Mission*.

[6] Hoffmann and Mayer, *Objekt, Bild und Performance*; Kazeem, Martinz-Turek and Sternfeld, *Das Unbehagen im Museum*; Karp and Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures*.

[7] Krüger and Radermacher, *Missionsgeschichtliche Sammlungen*; LVR-Fachbereich Regionale Kulturarbeit/Museumsberatung Köln and LWL Museumsamt für Wesfalen Münster, *Missionsgeschichtliche Sammlungen heute*. At the German Lost Art Foundation, the department for cultural goods and collections from

colonial contexts supports several research projects on missionary collections. In the project "Religious Matters in an Entangled World" at Utrecht University, several research projects are focussing on missionary collections.

[8] Purtschert and Fischer-Tiné, *Colonial Switzerland*.

[9] Schmid, "Hindernisse," p. 145.

[10] N.A., Heidenbote 1932 (9), p. 36.

[11] Nehring, *Orientalismus*, p. 30.

[12] Pistorius, *Schildkröte*, p. 88.

[13] Ziegler, *Katalog und Beschreibung*, p. 3.

[14] Frenz, *Hermann Gundert*, p. 206, translation by the author.

[15] MKB, "Zuwachsbuch" Part 1, pp. 88–92. Based on the information given in the inventory book of the Basel Mission collection and on some of the index cards, I identified seven of these objects in the MKB: IIa 9063, 9064, 9071, 9209, 9226, 9796, 9828.

[16] MKB, "Zuwachsbuch" Part 1, p. 91, translation by the author.

[17] The hand has the inventory number: IIa 9202, the sword: IIa 9796.

[18] Brückner, "Kult," p. 143. Deva is not to be confused with the Tulu term Daiva, which is a polite form for Buta.

[19] He is also called *Maani* in Tulu and is comparable to the *Pujari* in Hindu temples, who is responsible for the temple ritual.

[20] Brückner, "Gods," p. 226.

[21] BMA, C-10.54a, transcript of Peter's diaries, translation by the author. Here also the following quotations.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Leuchtmann, "Arbeitsalltag," p. 105.

[24] A specific form of the deity *Sarasvati*, the deity of learning and science.

[25] Julie Gundert was one of the first female missionaries in the Basel Mission. In 1839, the missionary board sent her to India, where she married Hermann Gundert three years later. Together with her husband, she set up a mission station in Thalassery, where she became responsible for the girls' school and missionary work with women (see Jenkins, "Vorbereitung," p. 93). She was born in Neuchâtel, which had been famous since the 17th century for the production of bobbin lace, which was traded as expensive luxury goods. Julie Gundert passed on these skills in fine needlework, which at the time was considered to be "higher female handwork" (Jenkins, "Lacemaking," p. 43) as opposed to housework and care work, to her students in India.

[26] online Archive of Albrecht Frenz, H. Gundert to J. Gundert dated 16 october 1841, translation by the author.

[27] Ziegler, *Katalog über die Sammlung*, p. 46, translation by the author.

[28] Schmid, "Hindernisse," p. 150.

[29] Algodi, "Basel Mission," p. 143.

[30] Becker, *Conversio*, p. 162.

[31] The Sarasvat Brahmins are a subgroup of the Brahmins and refer to Saraswati, the deity of learning and science. They also use the Konkani language to distinguish themselves from other groups.

[32] Private estate Schmid, booklet 1, p. 6, translation by the author.

[33] Pistorius, *Schildkröte*, p. 89.

[34] BMA, Erläuterungen Missionsausstellung, p. 13, translation by the author.

[35] Jenni, "Indische Modellfiguren," p. 160.

[36] The Mission Trading Company contributed to the financing of the mission from the 1850s onwards. This included mission industries in South India, such as the textile industries in Mangalore, Kannur, Kozhikode and Thalassery.

[37] BMA, QH-20.2, p. 4.

[38] Klein, "Missionsgesellschaften," p. 80, translation by the author.

[39] Schmid, "Alltag," p. 166.

[40] Schwab, "Ethnographische Sammlung," p. 116.

[41] Jenni, "Indische Modellfiguren," pp. 159–160; Falk and Jenni, "Indien im Blick," p. 381.

[42] See Appadurai, "Putting Hierarchy," pp. 34–47.

[43] Haas, "Modellfiguren," n.p.

[44] Mukharji, "Art-Manufactures," pp. 59–61.

[45] BMA, "Museumskiste. Unterricht Indien".

[46] Straub, *Indienfahrer*, p. 6.

[47] BMA, PA Käser L 214.

[48] BMA, "Museumskiste. Unterricht Indien".

[49] Ziegler, *Katalog und Beschreibung*, p. 3, translation by the author.

[50] Jenkins and Thomas, weite Welt, p. 99–100.

[51] Ibid., pp. 99–100.

[52] BMA, "Museumskiste. 66680", inventory of missionary suitcases India.

[53] Kittel, "Frühe Werber," p. 58.

[54] BMA, Y.3004 of 1 September 1905, p. 9.

[55] The missionaries referred to textiles or carvings as "pupils' work", which should indicate the learning progress of students at mission schools as samples of their work. In the Basel Mission's propaganda, they served to illustrate the success of the missionary work in the colonial understanding of "civilising" the local population with the help of handicrafts or European carpentry work.

[56] BMA, "Museumskiste. 66680," inventory of missionary suitcases India.

[57] BMA, Y.3004 of 1 September 1905, p. 9.

[58] Gelzer, "Jakob Huber," p. 57.

[59] So far, only 63 objects in today's collection of the MKB can be clearly attributed to Piton.

[60] BMA, BV 565.

[61] The two temple models have the inventory numbers IIa 9843 and IIa 9844.

[62] BMA, "Museumskiste. 66676," catalogue of the museum Asia, translation by the author.

[63] The model described has the number: IIa 9843.

[64] Label on the temple model, IIa 9843, translation by the author.

[65] Ziegler, *Katalog und Beschreibung*, p. 48.

[66] Label on the base of the temple model, IIa 9843.

[67] Archer and Parlett, *Company Paintings*, pp. 193–194.

[68] This also applies to the mika paintings, which belong to early souvenir art as well and will be discussed in the following section.

[69] MKB, DA-08-0025, vol. 3, p. 582.

[70] The temple model in the Basel Mission collection at the MKB has the inventory number: IIa 9844. The temple model in the Victoria & Albert Museum has the inventory number: IS.12-1980. http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/o73928/architectural-model-unknown/, last access 13.07.2024.

[71] The woman's first name is unknown. The only information given is that she lived in Chennai and gave the model to a museum on the island of St Helena in the British overseas Territory in 1897. Ibid.

[72] Haas, "Modellfiguren," n.p.

[73] Archer and Parlett, *Company Paintings*, pp. 193–194.

[74] The albums have the following inventory numbers in the MKB: IIa 8586, IIa 8587, IIa 8588, IIa 8589.

[75] Archer and Parlett, *Company Paintings*, p. 16.

[76] Sadar http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/cpin/hd_cpin.htm, last access 13.01.2016.

[77] For example, IIa 8681.

[78] company paintings – Search Results | V&A Explore the Collections (vam.ac.uk), last access 26.07.2024.

[79] http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/o73928/architectural-model-unknown/, last access 13.07.2024.

[80] The album has the inventory number: IIa 8591.

[81] Frey Näf and Badenberg, "Pflanzenwelt," p. 19.

[82] Ibid., p. 20.

[83] The album has the inventory number: IIa 8590.

[84] For example, Ziegler, *Erläuterungen Missionsausstellung*, p. 7.

CHAPTER 10

Material Manifestations: Basel Mission Terracotta Tiles and Factories of Mangalore

Priya Joseph

Abstract

This chapter elaborates the historical events and trajectory of use of the terracotta tile, the design of which was introduced by the Basel Mission in India. The history of the tile is intermingled with colonial and local motivations, hegemonic and opportunistic intentions and intersection of the handmade and machine-made processes that changed the built landscape of South India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An important case is built through this research to document the tangible and intangible heritage of these material manifestations that have come to being in the form of these tile factories in Mangalore, because of the Basel Mission setting foot on the Malabar coast in the mid-nineteenth century. These material manifestations, in the form of factories, machinery, processes and old and new products form an important history, to understand the past but also the workings of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries of Indian construction and production systems.

Keywords: Terracotta tiles; Mangalore; Heritage; Factories; India; Design.

Introduction

A friend who is an architect once came up to me and said, "I want to use the very vernacular, 'Mangalore tile' for my client's terrace floor roofing in Bengaluru". Bengaluru is about 400 kilometres away from Mangalore in the state of Karnataka in South India. Mangalore has been famous for these terracotta roofing tiles, which are commonly called Mangalore tiles in India (Figure 10.1). These are the same tiles which are known as 'Basel Mission' tiles by scholars studying South Asia, architecture, colonial studies, material culture and more. While the use of the 200-year-old Basel Mission terracotta tile (Mangalore tile) is still prevalent, the statement of the architect though not infrequent, is revelatory in many aspects. The tile has a history of production that is traced back to 1864, first produced by the missionary George Plebst of the Basel Mission.[1] He used a German-Swiss template, which had an earlier origin in France, for its basic design, which interestingly is still in use. The material used to make these tiles was the local soil from the banks of the Netrawati River, rich in its material composition, possessing appropriate attributes for making high quality terracotta.[2] Considering Plebst also collaborated with local master potters (though not acknowledged adequately in the archival records), it becomes an intriguing question if the Basel Mission tile can be really considered vernacular, or rather an intermix of European and Indian expertise which manifested because of the productive tensions of the nineteenth century in colonial India. This chapter elaborates the historical events and trajectory of use of this construction element in the form of the terracotta tile, the design of which was introduced by the Basel Mission in India. The history of the tile is intermingled with colonial and local motivations, hegemonic and opportunistic intentions and intersection of the handmade and machine-made processes that changed the built landscape of South India in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Figure 10.1: Terracotta Basel Mission/Mangalore Tile. Source: Author.[3]

History of the Basel Mission Terracotta Tile

The small, mundane processes of creating various details of architecture are important for understanding the major shifts in architectural techniques, styles, typologies and forms. The gradual shaping of architectural practices due to changes in technology and socio-political conditions has created large shifts in processes. The shift from handcrafted to machine-made architecture has a significant place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the Industrial Revolution's influences were stark around the world in this period. There was a coexistence and overlap of handmade and machine-made techniques and materials in nineteenth-century India. This overlap and intermixing finally facilitated a shift from handcrafted to machine-made elements of architecture. The consequences of the shift are articulated in examples of nineteenth-century architecture.

The nineteenth century presented a forecourt for the intermixing of processes in architecture in the subcontinent. The Industrial

Revolution at its peak fuelled a world moving towards machines, patents and mass production. Combined with European colonial influences in the Indian subcontinent, it resulted in the overlap of handcrafted and machine-made architecture in nineteenth-century India. Extensive mechanisation in Britain and its introduction in processes of architecture by British engineers in India, as well as the influx of missionaries such as the Basel Mission, brought about these overlaps in South India. The making of cylindrical terracotta tiles on the potter's wheel was a common sight in the whole of South India in the eighteenth century (Figure 10.2).

These tiles adorned the roofs of small and big buildings all over the countryside, but this changed with the arrival of the Basel Mission on the coast of South Canara. The history of the Basel Mission and the industries it set up became important as they triggered the production of machine-made tiles and bricks for architecture. This change from handmade potter's tiles to tiles produced by machines in factories brought about changes in production processes, scales and attributes, which changed architecture itself. From 1831 to 1920, the Basel Mission was involved in many industrial and commercial activities in the Malabar and South Canara regions of South India.[4] They started with experiments in traditional crafts like agriculture and weaving, and later switched over to crafts like watchmaking, bookbinding, printing and tile-making. These economic activities were in addition to the obvious and sizable religious and social activities that the mission undertook. These industrial activities came to an end in 1920 when they were taken over by the British government in India under the provisions of the Enemy Trading Act, 1916.

Figure 10.2: Potters tiles made traditionally in Karnataka, South India. Source: Author.[5]

The Basel Mission was unique in its initiative and its forays into industrial endeavours from the time of its founding in India. Products such as cloth, tiles, bricks and printing paper had markets beyond the immediate region. The Basel Mission started its activities in Malabar and South Canara and was mainly active in the coastal belt of Madras Presidency, with a few exceptions in Bombay Presidency. Mangalore was the first place where the mission set up its base in 1834, followed by Mulki, Dharwad and Hubli in 1837, and Kerala in 1841.[6] The mission ventured into agriculture initially but was unsuccessful. Later activities were based on the strength of the local crafts present in the region. During the phase between 1852 and 1882, industrial activities were governed and controlled by the Industrial Commission of the mission, which gave rise to factory-type production and organisation. The Basel Mission established handloom weaving establishments, tile factories, printing presses using the typographical technique, and a mechanical workshop at Mangalore during this period. By 1907, the industries of the mission employed as many as 3,600 people and by 1913 it was the biggest

industrial entrepreneur in South Canara.[7] The products included roofing tiles, ceiling tiles, balusters, drainage pipes, bricks, columns, flooring tiles, decorative ridge tiles, vases and decorative pots (Figure 10.3).

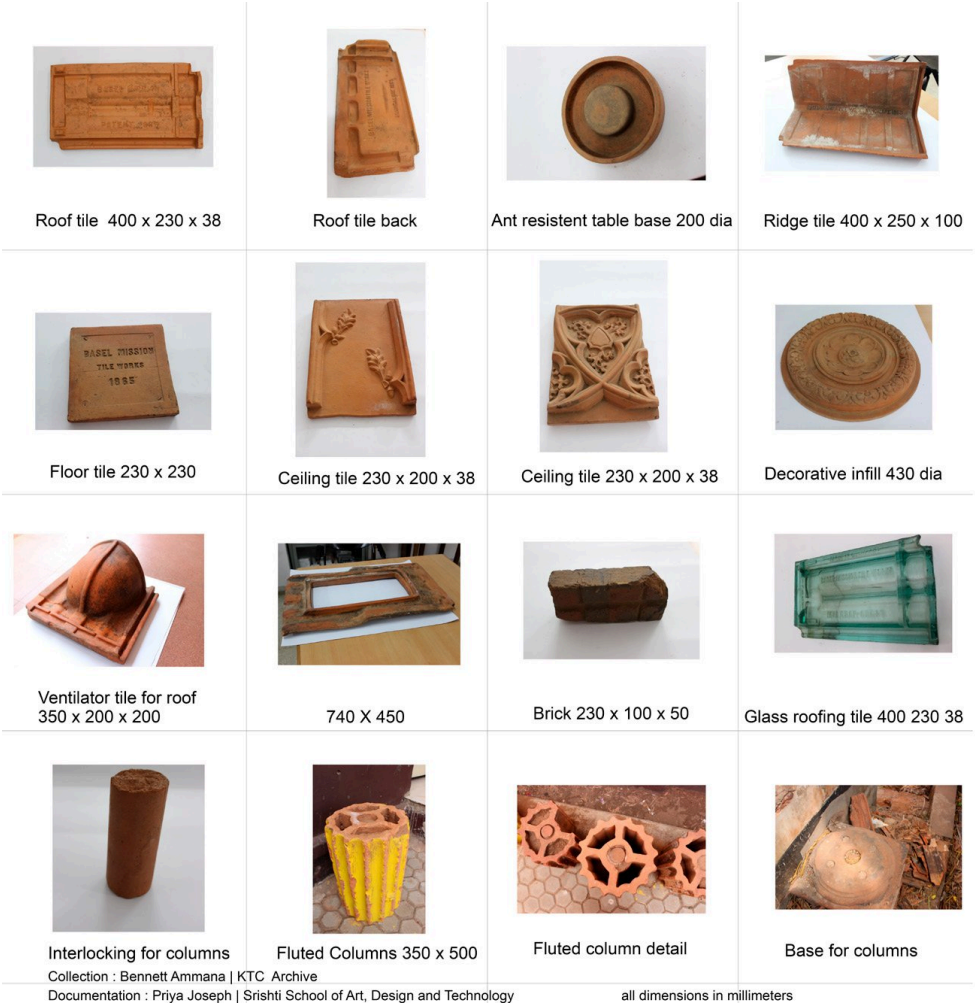


Figure 10.3: Terracotta products of the Basel Mission from the archivist Benet Amanna's collection, housed in Mangalore. Source: Author.[8]

Each of these products was made with local soil from the banks of the Netravati and local skills adapted to the German designs that George Plebst, a mechanic and ceramic expert working with the mission, brought with him.[9] The Mangalore roofing tile was the most popular and widely used machine-made product of the mission. Prior to this machine-made tile, the potters handcrafted each tile on the

wheel or with moulds. Each handmade tile varied slightly from the other in shape and size according to the local soil used and the skill of the craftsperson. The machine-made tile was precise and uniform. The soil was kneaded by hand to a malleable consistency before it was put onto wheels to make cylinders, which were then cut in half to make semi-circular tiles. Basically, the production processes were completely altered by the industrial mass production introduced by the mission in the region.

Tile Industry in Mangalore

The demand for tiles increased manifold in the nineteenth century when buildings for public offices, railways and related purposes were built by the British in South India. The traditional tile-maker was handicapped in exploiting this new demand. The problem with the use of traditional tiles was that it required a heavy superstructure. Thus, the stage was set for the rapid expansion of the Basel Mission's machine-made roofing tiles.[10]

George Plebst was a mechanical engineer from the Basel Mission who started a workshop for tile making in Jeppo, in Mangalore in 1865. Trained in typographic printing, Plebst had landed in India in 1851 to introduce letterpress printing (Figure 10.4) in Kannada and later Malayalam and Tulu.[11]

Plebst had first worked on the conversion of the Mission Press from a lithographic one to a typographic one. Ten years later, when health reasons forced Plebst to return to Europe on leave, he suggested that pottery might be a suitable field for the mission. He had noticed that Indian pottery and tiles were not glazed and asked to learn the necessary skills to make glazed earthenware products. He returned to Germany to study the technique of tile making which included the treatment of clay, the technique of glazing, the construction of the kiln and the baking process. While Plebst was learning some techniques in Germany, there was a constant transfer

of knowledge between Europe and India. The mission sent priests to network for information and business.

> A member of the Basel Mission Industrial committee wrote to Limoges, the centre of fine China in France, to enquire about suitable glazes. The reply said somewhat condescendingly that no suitable information could possibly be found in Limoges, where porcelain, not earthenware, was made and glazed with almost pure quartz. The correspondent did however offer to have samples of Mangalore clay analysed by the best specialist in Sèvres who might be able to help. The exchange of information, knowledge and know-how was constant during these times. The committee in Basel drew on priests and business networks to get information or arrange training for mission people.[12]

On his return to Mangalore in 1864, with the help of a proficient local master potter, Plebst built his own kiln and conducted experiments in tile making, which were successful.[13]

Clay, the raw material for the manufacture of tiles, was found abundantly on the banks of the river Netravati in Mangalore. In 1865, the first tile factory was started at Jeppo, Mangalore, employing two workers and bullock power, producing 360 tiles daily. The factory was known as the Basel Mission Tile Works (Figure 10.5). The workshop was soon expanded, employing 60 workers by 1871 and 131 in 1880.[14] The factory made 209,000 tiles a year by 1870. By 1873, the tile factory had paid back its entire investment. The experiments by George Plebst produced tiles that were lighter and more waterproof compared to the local tiles. The tile works were to become the largest and most rapidly developing mission industry. Due to the demand and the scaling up of the manufacturing unit, improvements and expansion continued, and in 1880, just before steam power replaced the bullocks, production in Jeppo near Mangalore had reached a million tiles per year. In 1907, the Mission Trading Company employed 3,644 persons in trade and industry in India. By 1913, it was the biggest industrial entrepreneur in South Canara and Malabar. The profit covered about a quarter of the mission's yearly expenses in India. In 1881, bullock power was replaced by steam power. The mechanisation of processes through steam power and gas kilns allowed for uniformly fired earth

products, which were mass produced. Conversion of the existing kiln to a gas firing kiln helped obtain a uniform temperature for producing other ceramic articles like salt-glazed tiles and terracotta ware. While other units of the Basel Mission specialised in mass-produced articles, the Jeppo factory continued to manufacture specialised products and remained an experimental centre for product development (Figures 10.6 and 10.7).[15] While talking about the mechanisation of the tile industry in Mangalore it is also important to point out the suppression and obliteration. As mentioned before, Plebst was acknowledged but the contribution of the local mason who worked with him was specifically not named. This instance of suppression and erasure is important to note, as the Basel Mission authorities refer to the contribution of the potter without their name in contrast to the acknowledgement of the name and work of George Plebst, the European counterpart.

Figure 10.4: Roman print type block for letter pressing, Basel Mission Printing Press, Mangalore. Source: Author.[16]

Figure 10.5: Archival picture of Jeppo factory, from the later nineteenth century. Source: Basel Mission Archives, Basel.[17]

Initially, the factories produced flat tiles different from the curved and grooved types which are presently being used for roofing. Subsequently, the factories manufactured ridge tiles, both plain and ornamental skylights and ventilators, ridge and hip terminals, finials of various kinds, grooved sphere tiles, hanging wall tiles, ceiling tiles of many different designs, hourdis or ceiling slabs, common and ornamental clay flooring tiles, chimney bricks, salt glazed stone and earthenware, drainage pipes, terracotta vases and flowerpots. The market for tiles covered the entire British Empire, and the mission made extensive use of the trade channels that existed within the empire (Figure 10.8).[18] This was the time when the handmade half-cylindrical shaped country tiles were replaced by the variety of flat tiles produced in the Jeppo factory and subsequently elsewhere.

The influence of industrialisation on local know-how changed the form of materials and processes of making and subsequently changed the way buildings were made, or techniques were used. The Basel Mission Printing Press building, and the Basel Evangelical

School are two buildings from the nineteenth century that stand even today, with several components of historical importance, as elaborated in the next section.[19] Technology and the process used did not purely develop in a specific region but was an amalgamation of the knowledge pools of different cultures, drawing its identity from Mangalore but having a more complex set of influences and origins.

Figure 10.6: Jeppo Tile Factory photographed in 2023. Source: Author.

Figure 10.7: Jeppo tile factory exterior now seen as Commonwealth Factory, photographed in 2023. Source: Author.

The Basel Mission Printing Press

The Basel Mission printing press building stands as a representation of many buildings of the time as it displays the repetitive ensemble of machine-made building components into a large building (Figures 10.9 and 10.10). Every component of the building is made of mass-produced smaller units, like the roof is made of machine-made tiles, the walls of bricks, and the floor of terracotta tiles. These elements of the building give it a very different character than a building that may have used handcrafted components, say potter's tiles and cob walls. Potter's tiles or cob walls were not standardised and could take variations in the frame that they sat on. Similarly cob walls or wattle and daub walls could have variations in angles, widths and

shapes, which brick walls made at factories could not. The slope ratio of the roofs started to change with the use of this newer interlocking tile and, thus, changed the built landscape in much of South India.[20] The tectonic working of the new machine-made design of the tile brought about this change in the slope ratio of the roof.

Figure 10.8: All tiles exhibition photograph from the early twentieth century. Source: Basel Mission Archives, Basel.[21]

The printing press, which was earlier used as a weaving unit, is located in Balmatta, Mangalore. It was built in 1907 and has a rectangular plan of 32.5 by 16.2 metres and a maximum height of 9 metres. The building uses Mangalore tiles of 400 x 230 x 38 millimetres for its roof, and its exterior piers and bearing walls are made with bricks also produced by the Basel Mission. Its three-bay roof is supported by scissor trusses of a 5.5-metre span, with north lights inserted in each bay. Each truss is built to a high level of precision, with wooden rafter members connected by scarf joints in some places and nailed connections in others. The rafters themselves are of very small sections (50 x 150 millimetres), and the

trusses are spaced at precisely 700 millimetres, centre to centre. The fact that most elements of the building (including roofing tiles, bearing wall bricks, and terracotta flooring tiles) were factory produced to standard sizes encouraged the use of modular, rectangular geometries in all aspects of its construction.[22] The repetitive, uniform module of the roofing tile thus required that the entire roof structure take the form of a precisely built grid. The consistent shape of each tile meant that the battens supporting them had to be placed a consistent distance from one another, and the rafters supporting the battens had to maintain a consistent span. The tectonic making of this building indicates how a machine-made component such as the Basel Mission tile did not just fit the system but led to machine-made products being used progressively and aggressively.

Figure 10.9: Printing press at Mangalore drawing showing the making of the building with the use of Mangalore Tiles. Source: Author.

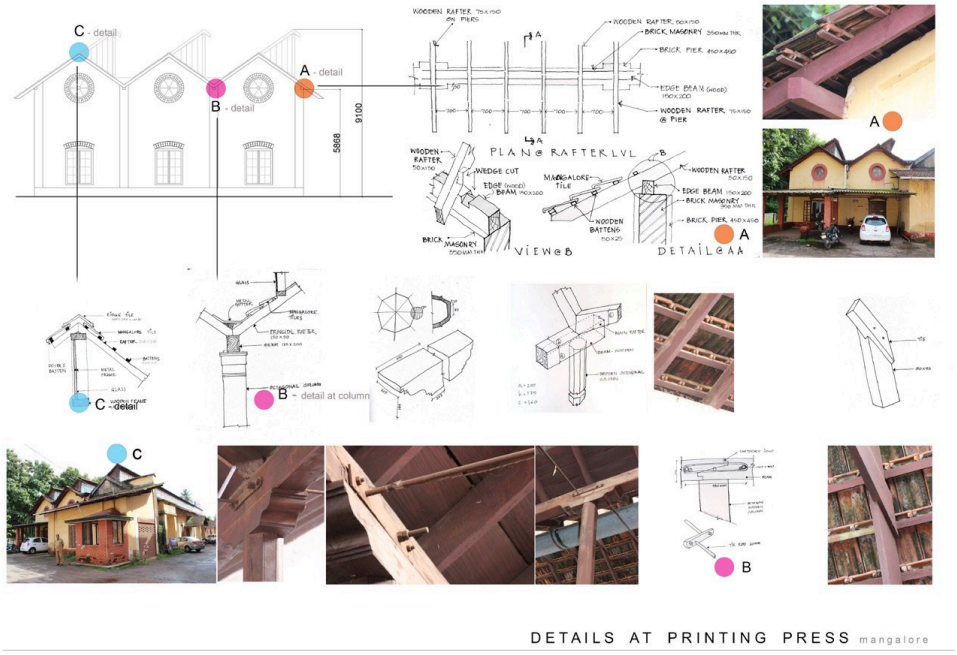


Figure 10.10: Printing press photo from 2017. Details drawn by Deepak Godhi.

Other Terracotta Tiles

In the mid-nineteenth century, the use of the half-cylindrical country tile was already dwindling and being replaced by many versions of factory-produced tiles that were produced by the colonisers, including British military engineers, missionaries and others. A few decades before the Basel Mission tile had gained popularity, British engineers were designing and propagating other formats of terracotta tiles. Some of them were new, tweaked design variations and some were new designs that could be used in combination with the existing country tiles. There are evident overlaps in the use and production of indigenous and European types of tiles and need a mention here to understand the tectonic intersection. The Goodwyn tiles first manufactured in 1850, the Basel Mission terracotta tiles manufactured first in 1864 and the Atkinson tile laying all represent the start of mechanised processes in tile making. These tiles were later standardised through the PWD (Public Works Department)

manuals from 1850 onwards. The British engineers had a bias towards standardised formats of elements of architecture, and tiles were no different. J. N. Sharp, a British military engineer working in India, wrote in his paper on the Goodwyn tiles in 1863–64 that the country tiles made by local potters were uneven, imperfect, and were made in small sizes and frames of bamboo that were non-standard and pervious.[23] Evenness and uniformity were attributes that the British engineers associated with good tiles. The standardisation of architectural elements was thus seen as a progressive interchange in the history of technology. This also meant that standardised architectural elements, such as roofing tiles, plasters and even brick sizes were normalised in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The standardisation of the tiles and bricks also meant standardisation of other elements of architecture that were required to form the tectonics of the structure. Bricks of a standard size made rooms modular, and consequently doors, furniture layouts, etc., also became standard. In the case of Goodwyn tiles (Figure 10.11), Sharp describes the frames on which the tiles rest as being of a prescribed, predetermined size:

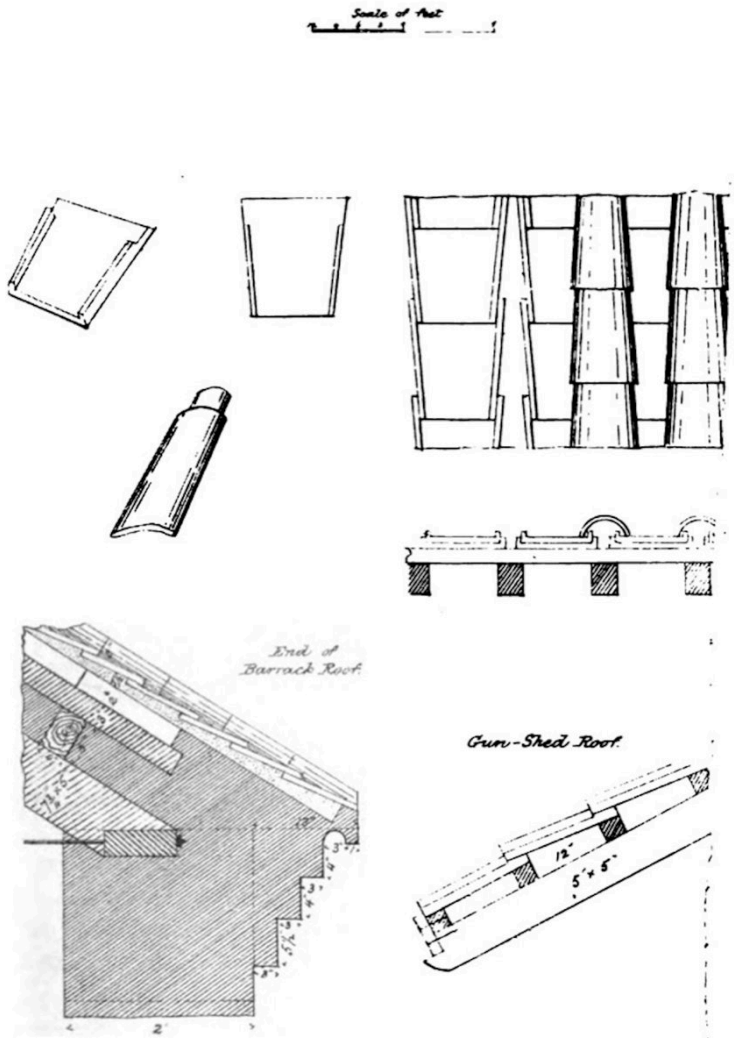
> Deodar battens 3″ × 2″ are nailed on the purlins at twelve inches from center to center, on which are laid twelve inch square tiles, two inches thick, well fitted, cemented at the joints, and pointed underneath; a layer of good mortar about one and a half inches thick is then laid, in which the pan-tiles and over them the round tiles carefully fitted and set. The eaves terminate in a masonry cornice, and the ridges are covered in with round and flat tiles, expressly made for the purpose; gable ends have been adopted as better suited to this description of tiling; the slope of the roof 28 degrees.[24]

Standardisation is given such high importance that the weight of each tile and not just the size is prescribed in the specifications. The terracotta tiles and their laying are another example that enforces the conception of normalisation of architecture through standard practices. In the roofing elements, PWD documents in 1875 mention some of the local tiles called the Belgaum tiles, named after the region:

> Consists of a layer of small flat tiles about 5″ × 5″ × ½″ with edges rubbed to make close joints, and soaked in pure white lime of about the consistency of cream, laid in mortar on sawn teak battens 2″ × ½″ placed 3″ apart; over them a layer of mortar and then a layer of ordinary native semi-cylindrical tiles about 14″ × 5″ is laid, eaves and ridges sot in mortar. Note. – This makes a very nice roof.[25]

Apart from the description of the tiled roof specifications, it is important to note that the author in the description (Peile, 1864) recommends the roofing detail combining the Atkinson tiles which were developed by the British engineers, with the indigenous semi-cylindrical tiles, which were made by the local potters. It is a case of evident intermixing of indigenous and European tile design to form a concoction of practices that preceded twentieth century practices. The transition from the handcrafted, indigenous techniques to a standardised, uniform practice of architecture is laced with such instances of intermixes.

GOODWYN'S TILED ROOFING.



E. Cape. lith.

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Figure 10.11: Goodwyn tiles drawing. Source: Professional Papers on Indian Engineering.[26]

The standardisation of terracotta roofing tiles became a part of the standardised manuals and consequently was added to the PWD manuals. The Atkinson tiling pattern is comprehensively elaborated in the paper by Peile (1864) with diagrams and text, describing the use of the factory-made flat tile and the semi-cylindrical country tile. An account of the Abbottabad Church in Punjab describes the use of terracotta tiles, which were produced as standardised roof covering elements:

> Ventilation, cylindrical and pantile roof. – Atkinson's pattern consists of two layers of tiles, the upper being Italian pantiles, laid in cement over cylindrical tiles. The cylindrical tiles to be 12 inches long, 4 inches external diameter, and half inch thick, fitting one-half inch into each other, with a shoulder and socket joint; a lip, to rest on the timbering, to be raised on at half an inch from the shoulder; two holes, of half inch diameter each, to be pierced through the tile in line with the lip which is on the lower side of the tile. The tiles to be moulded of well tempered clay, thoroughly burnt, sound, and of true shape, without taper.[27]

The building of this church (built in 1864) involved specifications regarding the roofing tiles, which were standard practice at the time. This included the earthwork, stone and fixtures, which had defined specifications. For example, the foundation and plinth were made with hammered dressed *pukka* stone rubble masonry with lime cement in equal parts lime, sand and *soorkhey* (powdered broken burnt brick, locally called *surkhi* today in India, is used as fine aggregate in lime mortar). This was elaborately mentioned in the PWD documents of the time too. There are numerous examples of buildings commissioned by the British government and built by British military engineers in India which use specifications of completely standardised elements of bricks, mortar and more. The Punjab exhibition building, designed by Edwin E. Baines in 1863,[28] the Rangoon Custom House built by Capt. J. M. Williams in 1863,[29] and the Cawnpore Memorial Church designed by Walter Granville in

1861,[30] an engineer, all use standard British sizes of brick, i.e., 23 × 11 × 7.5 cm.

Old Material and New Processes: Basel Mission School, Mangalore

The Basel Mission School was the first formal school in Mangalore established by the missionaries from Basel. The school was moved to the present site of the BEM School in 1838.[31] For about eighty years, the school was headed by one of the missionaries. Later, after the First World War, Indian teachers were appointed as headmasters. All this time, the Basel Mission Board, Switzerland, had provided the finances required to run the various activities of the Basel Mission in India, including educational institutions.

Figure 10.12: Basel Mission school in Mangalore using the Basel Mission tiles for its roofing. Source: Basel Mission Archives, Basel.[32]

The different blocks of the school were built at different times, starting from 1880 to 1950. The master plan shows all the existing buildings, of which two major blocks have been measured and drawn to describe the buildings explicitly. The building uses king trusses covered with Mangalore fired clay tiles as roofing and colonnaded corridors supported by fired clay columns and clay tile flooring. This is particularly interesting as the building uses varied products that came out of the Basel Mission factories. The school building is also repetitive in nature, like the printing press building (Figures 10.12 and 10.13). The plan is an L-shaped building with a hipped roof. The building is modular and could be divided into sections or extended with the same dimensions very simply. Notably, the slope of the roofs employing the Basel Mission flat tiles is different from the indigenous buildings that use potter's tiles. The roofs are steeper with a range between 30 and 45 degrees for most buildings built for the British and the missionaries at the time, while the vernacular buildings have a shallower pitch of 20 to 30 degrees. The flatter Mangalore tile would allow steeper roofs because of interlocking. The structure is built with laterite bricks and wooden trussed roofs covered with terracotta tiles. The roof of the corridor is supported by unusually assembled terracotta columns (columns made with modular elements of burnt earth). The peculiarity of the columns is because of the usage of the relatively conventional material of burnt earth or terracotta in an industrial way. The primary material used to make these columns is burnt clay elements. The column shaft is fluted and circular in shape. The base is a simple cube while the capital is ornate in the same material, i.e., terracotta.[33]

Figure 10.13: Basel Mission school in Mangalore photographed in 2017. Source: Author.

The shaft is made of five to six cylindrical pieces of terracotta with a hole in the centre, moulded, fired and created in a factory and assembled around a cylindrical piece of terracotta rod. Each of the fluted cylindrical pieces of the shaft is encrusted around the cylindrical rod and the terracotta pre-moulded capital placed on top, which finally completed the assembly of the column. This kind of column was traditionally made in stone or burnt brick and chiselled out of a solid block of material. Here in the Basel Mission School, the column is made with modules, which are pre-fabricated in a factory and then assembled on site. This approach is aligned with the mechanisation and industrial production systems that the Industrial Revolution and the European influences had brought about but uses a traditional material like terracotta for its modules.

Similarly, the Basel Mission tiles used for roof covering and the floor tiles are made by burning earth, an age-old technique, but factory produced in large numbers to specific uniform sizes and used as modules to fit in exactly with one another. The precision is obtained through mechanised mass production in factories. The

overlap of conventional material with mechanised systems and industrial means is evident in the example of the Basel Mission School.

Tile Factories as Built Heritage

The increased production of terracotta tiles, first produced by the Basel Mission, brought about many such factories on the banks of the River Netravati and Gurupura. The tile industry was at its peak between the 1880–1950s. However, the number of tiles produced declined as the decades passed due to exploitation of mineral clay, which is essential for making roof tiles, as well as laws which banned the mining of clay (Figure 10.14). This has led to closure of many such factories in the Mangalore area, while today only two out of seventy-five factories are still manufacturing tiles.[34] Two of these three are the Commonwealth Tile Factories, previously known as the Jeppo Tile factory which is at the original site of the factory set up by George Plebst. The Commonwealth Factory no longer produces tiles but has found a future in the production of terracotta hollow blocks, bricks and Hourdi blocks.

While the first Basel Mission tile production started in Jeppo in 1864, as a small unit, later many factories such as the Albuquerque and Sons sprung up by 1868. The tile production surged to more than 200,000 tiles a day from the initial 360 tiles by 1870 and started to be used for important buildings, including the grand old Victoria railway terminus in Bombay. By 1881, the per day production of these tiles had surged to ten million. While the tile production kept growing in the nineteenth century, the twentieth century saw a steady decline of the manufacture and use of these tiles due to various reasons. The Great Depression in the 1930s and the general increase in use of other products of the Industrial Revolution, such as cement and steel, led to an overall decline in terracotta products. The factories in the mid-nineteenth century have become a site of important material heritage as they still have

machinery that was imported from Europe. The nineteenth century system distributes power to the press, roller, conveyer and the elevators, though a belt and pulley system still exists. The same mechanism is used for the weaving unit (which later became the printing press) to distribute power.

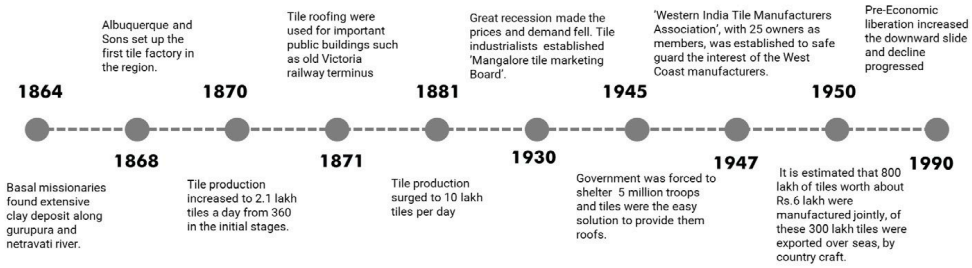

Figure 10.14: Timeline of Basel Mission Tile Manufacture and Use. Source: Naveen Fleming.[35]

Commonwealth Tile Factory, Mangalore

The Commonwealth Tile Factory sits on the original Jeppo factory site, established by George Plebst in 1864. The factory sits on the north bank of the Netravati River, a rich microcosm with two rivers meeting before emptying into the Arabian Sea. In the nineteenth century, this river would have provided both the source of clay and artery for maritime trade of Mangalore tiles, which were exported by sailing ships as far afield as East Africa, Yemen, Aden, Basra, Sumatra, British Borneo and Australia.[36] With the tile industry reducing in size, the Commonwealth factory is currently manufacturing hollow terracotta blocks, which are more marketable. It remarkably still retains the infrastructure and environments of tile production from the nineteenth century, including larger machinery, press machines, conveyor belts and more (Figure 10.17).

The ramping rail is used to bring clay from the mounds outside, through basic carts. Once the clay is in the processing floor, it is sent down to the ground floor to make the clay slabs for extrusion. Historically, the clay tiles were pressed in machines which are now in disuse.[37] The conveyor belts bring the bricks, hollow blocks (and

previously Mangalore tiles) to the level of the drying racks. The bricks/ hollow blocks are then lifted to lose moisture before sending them for firing. The gaps in the timber floor allow heat to rise to the drying racks. The tiles are left to dry on the timber racks, which are braced with diagonal members. The drying process takes approximately two weeks. The tectonics of the factory construction are built in such a way that as one goes from the ground floor to the upper floors, the structure gets lighter. At this level there is a combination of timber and concrete columns. The concrete columns sit atop brick columns and the timber columns sit atop steel I-sections below.[38] The walls of the factory taper, making the load lesser and the structure lighter. The factory is interesting in its construction logic as it is built to accommodate the processes and flow of the manufacturing process of the tiles, making this building an artifact for studying the material culture, history of technology and material in the region.

Figure 10.15: Images of women working in the Albuquerque factory in 2022. Source: Naveen Fleming.[39]

Figure 10.16: Conveyor belts in Albuquerque factory, photographed in 2022. Source: Naveen Fleming.[40]

Figure 10.17: Metal mould of the tile from the Commonwealth tile factory. Source: Priya Joseph.

Albuquerque Tile Factory, Mangalore

The factory was established by A. Albuquerque & Sons in 1868, by Alex Albuquerque Pai . It has since been passed down through the family for four generations of Albuquerque. It was the first tile factory in the region started by an Indian, who borrowed from the working knowledge of the Basel Mission Tile factory at Jeppo (Figure 10.18). It still manufactures terracotta products and is one of the few active tile factories. Since Albuquerque and Sons was established in 1868, it remains the region's largest functioning unit, but it has drastically reduced its production. The factory still has old machinery such as conveyor belts, pressing machines and functions in labour intensive methods (Figures 10.15 and 10.16). The original Basel Mission press mould with double edged line, has interestingly not changed much over the years in design. The country tiles were largely replaced by this Basel Mission tile design because of its scale of production, and because the tiles were inter-lockable and siding of tiles could be avoided, with any angle of the slope of the roof.

The factory itself has a similar logic of construction as the Commonwealth factory (Figures 10.19, 10.20 and 10.21). As one progresses from the ground floor to the first and second floor the walls taper, the structure gets lighter, using wood and steel sections. With the old structure still standing strong on the outside, the inside houses old machinery and newer systems together, making it an important site of research. The structure through its documentation in the form of drawings revealed the construction processes of the time, the local and European opportunistic intersections of processes in construction, material configurations, and knowledge exchange.

Figure 10.18: Old factory machinery in the Jeppo tile factory. Source: Author.

Figure 10.19: Inside the Jeppo tile factory. Source: Author.

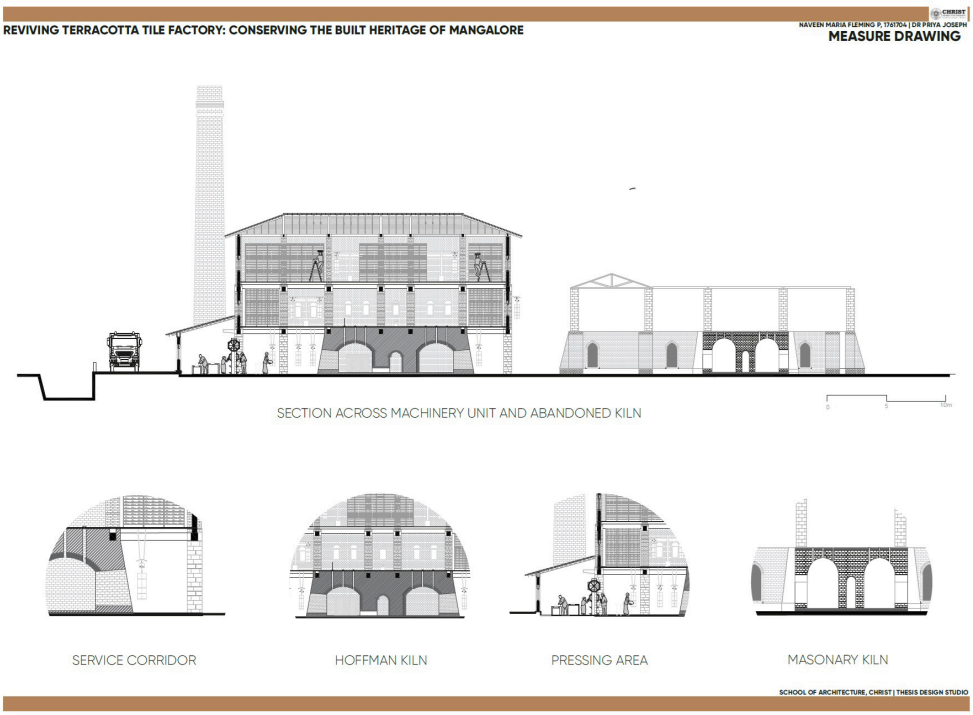

Figure 10.20: The sections of the Albuquerque factory as it exists. Source: Naveen Fleming.[41]

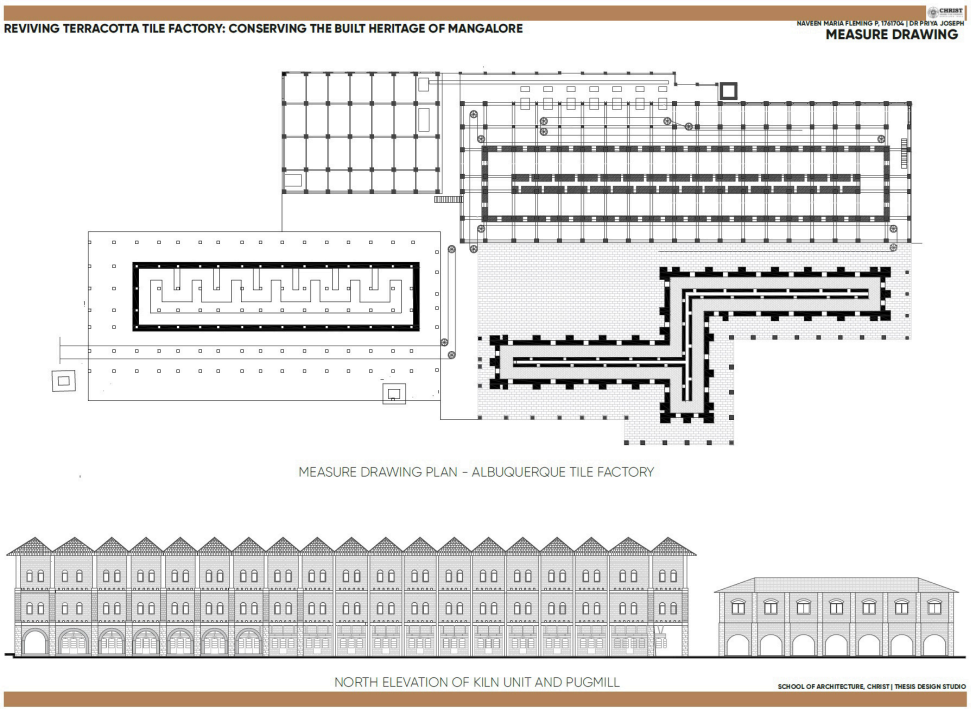

Figure 10.21: Plan and elevation of the Albuquerque factory as it exists. Source: Naveen Fleming.[42]

These factories elaborated above and many other dilapidated ones in the South Canara region of South India are some of the richest built heritage in South India. These buildings house machines, systems of production and material remains of a complex intersection of the missionary work, colonial workings, and opportunistic mixing of local and European knowledge systems of the nineteenth century. This documentation and study of these architectural spaces reveal the material culture of the nineteenth century that changed with the setting up of the base by the Basel Mission, while also exposing the history of technology and its intrusion into the sociological changes of the time. With economic opportunities in the form of tile making opening up, changes in the religious caste structures, the Calvinistic approach of the mission and the simultaneous onset of industrial revolution changed the landscape of Mangalore. Here, through these initial studies, a strong case is built for documentation and research of these material manifestations.

Colonialism and Its Effects on Material Culture

The colonisers in many instances in history have trailed the missionaries and vice versa. The coming of the British East India Company in the eighteenth century in South India, the British Empire establishing its stronghold, the Basel Mission starting its many production units along the Malabar and basing their work on the Calvinistic ideologies, and the aggressive onset of the industrial revolution taking over the region, made for complex productive tensions in South India. The material and processes of construction changed forever, further influencing the material culture in Indian towns and cities. While sociologists and historians point out the social effects because of the establishment of the Basel Mission, the change in material culture, through the study of the old buildings,

such as tile factories presents a very different perspective of the transitions that were happening in this timeline. The machine production and employment in these tile factories changed the economy. Sociological changes related to caste, religion, everyday practise changed and mixed, and a large part of this story deals with the Basel Mission Terracotta tile.

Conclusion

The intermixing of techniques during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in India shaped the practices and methods of construction for the future. The trajectory of how architectural processes were shaped, even in the independent India of the twentieth century, was a result of the nineteenth-century conversations between the missionary groups, trailing colonial powers and the indigenous people. The terracotta roofing tile was a part of this complex story of hegemonic power and opportunistic enterprises. The intentions at the start of the production of these commonly known Mangalore tiles may have been very different in 1864 when the first tiles were produced in Jeppo, Mangalore, but ultimately yielded a change in the built landscape of the region. The arrival of colonial agencies on the Indian subcontinent led to a stark, productive tension between colonial and indigenous processes, causing an overlap in the tradition of architectural making. To understand this overlap fully, however, requires that nineteenth- and twentieth-century architecture in India be interpreted from a decolonial point of view. To decolonise the reading of architectural production thus requires that traditional archives – such as manuals and treatises written by British engineers working for the Indian Public Works Department and articles in the journal *Professional Papers on Indian Engineering* – be read in a way that exposes the biases of race, class and caste that reside heavily within them. Most significantly, a formerly contextual understanding of built form eventually gave way to a standardised system of working, where precision and uniformity

were regarded as high virtues, even when there was no need for them, as in the case of the Mangalore tiles. A decolonial reading of architectural production is necessary to understand the "making" of architecture and its complexities because of the Industrial Revolution, colonial workings, missionary positions and more. This indicates that there were hegemonic power structures but there were also opportunistic mixes that this opened, especially as the industrial revolution was changing the history of technology.

Apart from identifying the complex tensions of the colonial and indigenous worlds, another important case is built here to document the tangible and intangible heritage of these material manifestations that have come to being, because of the Basel Mission setting foot in the Malabar coast in the nineteenth century. These material manifestations, in the form of factories, machinery, processes and old and new products form an important history, to understand not only the past, but also the workings of the twentieth and twenty-first century of the Indian construction and production systems. The preservation of the built and unbuilt heritage of the tile factories and other buildings in the region associated with the technology and material is thus relevant and urgent.

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank the Karnataka Theological College (KTC) archive in Mangalore and the Basel Mission Archives in Basel for generously allowing the use of some of the images as research for this chapter.

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[1] *Basel Mission Annual Report 1871.*

[2] Mani, *Tile Industry in Kerala: Economics, Problems and Prospects.*

[3] Photographed by the author in Mangalore in 2018, at the KTC archive from the tiles collected by the archivist Benet Amanna.

[4] Raghavaiah, *Basel Mission Industries,* p. 28.

[5] Photographed by the author in 2018 at Sural Palace, in Mangalore district of Karnataka in South India. The tiles are made in the traditional techniques, by local potters.

[6] Joseph, *The Interface of the Machine and Architecture.*

[7] Stenzl, *The Basel Mission Industries in India*, p. 7.

[8] The tiles were collected from various sites in Mangalore city and its rural periphery by the archivist Benet Amanna and later measured and photographed by the author in 2018 in Mangalore.

[9] Raghavaiah, *Basel Mission Industries,* p. 28.

[10] Raghavaiah, *Basel Mission Industries*, p. 38.

[11] Stenzl, *The Basel Mission Industries in India,* p. 5.

[12] Stenzl, *The Basel Mission Industries in India*, p. 36.

[13] *Basel Mission Report 7 1860–1864*, p. 11 and *Basel Mission Report 8 on 1866*, p. 9.

[14] Stenzl, *The Basel Mission Industries in India*, p. 7.

[15] Raghavaiah, *Basel Mission Industries,* p. 39.

[16] The photograph is taken in 2017, inside the Balmatta printing press building which is currently used as a printing press but was built to be a weaving unit.

[17] BMA, QU-30.016.0073, *Mangalore tile works at new Jeppo under construction.*

[18] Raghavaiah, *Basel Mission Industries*, p. 40.

[19] The two buildings were documented by measuring and making architectural drawings of the same with tectonic details as the focus by the author and architect Deepak Godhi R.

[20] Joseph, *Intersection of Vernacular and Colonial Processes.*

[21] BMA, QU-30.016.0082, *Tile-work products.*

[22] The building was measured by the author and architect Deepak Godhi R. in 2018. The drawings of the same were drawn by hand drafting the details.

[23] Sharp, *Goodwyn's Tiled Roofing*, pp. 132–138.

[24] Ibid.*,* p. 134.

[25] Marryat*, Handbook Bombay,* p. 16.

[26] Sharp, *Goodwyn's Tiled Roofing,* pp. 132–138.

[27] Blair, *Abbottabad Church, Punjab,* p. 221.

[28] Baines, "Punjab Exhibition Building," p. 309.

[29] Williams, "Plans and Estimates," p. 460.

[30] Granville, "Memorial Church, Cawnpur," p. 310.

[31] https://www.bemschool.org/history/

[32] BMA, QC-30.033.0005, *Mission High School in Mangalore.*

[33] The school was measured and drawn with emphasis on tectonic details of its architecture in 2018 by the author and Deepak Godhi R.

[34] Sumra and Chatterjee, *Basel Mission Industries.*

[35] Fleming, *Reviving Terracotta Tile Factory.*

[36] Giriappa, *Rural Industrialisation in Backward Areas.*

[37] Sumra and Chatterjee, "Basel Mission Industries and The Balmatta Printing Press".

[38] Ibid.

[39] Photograph taken by Naveen Fleming at the Albuquerque factory in 2021.

[40] Photograph taken by Naveen Fleming at the Albuquerque factory in 2022.

[41] Fleming, *Reviving Terracotta Tile Factory,* p. 4.

[42] Ibid., p. 6.

Afterword: Entangling Histories, Unsettling Legacies

Linda Maria Ratschiller Nasim

This volume presents a rich tapestry of essays that significantly contribute to the repositioning of mission history within broader historical debates in academia and beyond. It situates the Basel Mission at the core of economic, social, cultural, and religious change, demonstrating that mission history is not a marginal field but a crucial lens for understanding global interactions. The chapters collectively challenge simplistic binaries of missionary benevolence or colonial oppression, instead revealing a landscape of negotiation, resistance, and mutual transformation. The Basel Mission emerges in these chapters as an institution deeply entangled in the infrastructures of global capitalism, the reconfiguration of caste and gender hierarchies, and the production of knowledge both in India and in Europe.

By offering an interdisciplinary and collaborative account of the Basel Mission's history with India, this volume not only deepens our understanding of the Basel Mission but also points the way forward for mission studies more broadly. Firstly, the editors emphasise the concept of entanglement and the chapters propose different methodological tools such as transnational or transimperial networks to break through established spatial categories of analysis. The Basel Mission cannot be grasped through national or institutional histories

alone; it operated within a web of relationships linking German pietism, Swiss philanthropy, British imperial authority, and South Indian communities. By attending to entanglements of people, objects, ideas, and economies, the volume challenges us to rethink the legacies of global Christianity and to recognise that the history of missions is far from over.

Secondly, the volume marks an important step towards intensifying collaboration between scholars from different geographical and disciplinary backgrounds, promising important insights into the operations and shortcomings of missions around the globe. Through the integration of South Indian sources and perspectives alongside missionary archives and viewpoints, it succeeds in decentring European agency. This important and long overdue methodological and theoretical shift is supported by the use of photographs, ethnographic collections, and architectural analysis. By integrating interdisciplinary methodologies and examining textual, visual and material sources, the book thus expands the analytical repertoire of mission studies.

This afterword seeks to build and reflect on these two points by drawing out the thematic and analytical connections between the chapters, proposing to rethink mission history through spatial categories, and considering how these insights contribute to the broader historiography of missions and their postcolonial legacies.

Thematic Ties and Cross-Cutting Insights

The chapters in this volume cover a broad range of themes and methods with regards to the Basel Mission's entangled history with India. They do not propose an institutional history, nor are they united by a common thematic focus or methodological approach; instead, they demonstrate a wide range of possibilities in the study of missions. They address the Basel Mission's industrial enterprises, situating missions firmly within the history of global capitalism and integrating them into economic history. Simultaneously, they

examine the role of caste, gender and materiality to reveal the complexities of the "civilising mission". Collectively, these essays show that the Basel Mission's seemingly disparate operations in economic, social and religious fields were intimately related. Mission history thus appears as a promising field of investigation to apply and further expand intersectional approaches.

The First Part establishes an analytical framework that underpins the entire volume by situating the Basel Mission within the larger historiography of Protestant mission studies. In their Introduction, Amal Shahid, Ella Müller, and Mukesh Kumar provide a detailed historical overview of the Basel Mission's origins in Württemberg Pietism, emphasising its moral rigor, ethos of industriousness, and focus on practical service. They argue convincingly that the Basel Mission was both a product of, and a contributor to, transnational Protestant networks, facilitated by British colonial permissions, and Swiss and German economic elites. Their overview underscores how missions functioned as multilayered actors, simultaneously Protestant in ethos, bourgeois in funding structures, and colonial in practice.

Felicity Jensz's chapter expands on this by arguing for a historiography that moves beyond theological or institutional narratives to view missions as sites of knowledge production, social transformation, and global exchange. These historiographical reflections are crucial for understanding why the Basel Mission – often considered a German or Swiss institution – was, in reality, a node in a global network. By foregrounding the circulation of texts, ethnographic objects, and economic practices, Jensz clearly situates missions in the context of imperial expansion. This analytical framing resonates across the subsequent chapters, offering a multifaceted portrait of the Basel Mission and encouraging readers to interpret each case study as part of a larger web of connections.

The Second Part of the book focuses on the Basel Mission's entanglement with colonial economies and its dual role as a religious and commercial actor. Bernhard C. Schär adopts a transimperial approach to show how the Basel Mission connected societies and cultures far beyond the boundaries of Britain to empire-building in

India through its fundraising operations. He demonstrates that the Basel Mission's theological ideals of industriousness dovetailed with colonial capitalist imperatives. Tile factories, weaving workshops, and other industrial enterprises were justified as providing livelihoods for converts, yet they were also integral to global economic networks, supported by Basel's bourgeois elite. Schär's chapter underscores the Basel Mission's pragmatism in that theology and commerce were not separate spheres but mutually reinforcing, blurring the lines between philanthropy and profit-making.

Philippe Bornet's exploration of the Kanarese Evangelical Mission (KEM) takes the narrative into the interwar years by focusing on a Swiss missionary organisation that succeeded the Basel Mission after its expulsion in 1914. He shows how missionary institutions operated in increasingly contested spaces amid rising anti-colonial sentiment and nationalist movements. His attention to the KEM's encounters with Jain and Lingayat communities reveals how missions became arenas of religious competition and political negotiation rather than unidirectional instruments of colonial power. Where Schär exposes the mission's complicity in colonial capitalism, Bornet shows its vulnerability to local contestation, underscoring the dynamism of missionary operations in changing political contexts. Both chapters challenge the oversimplified narratives of missionaries as naïve idealists, presenting them instead as pragmatic actors navigating complex colonial terrains.

The Third Part of the volume addresses caste, arguably one of the most contested arenas of missionary intervention. Jaiprakash Raghaviah's chapter provides a detailed account of how the Basel Mission attempted a form of social engineering through education, occupational reform, and moral discipline. Practices such as communal dining, inter-caste marriages, and Europeanised Christian names were intended to abolish caste distinctions. Yet, Raghaviah's analysis reveals a deep ambivalence. While promoting spiritual equality, missionaries privileged Brahmin converts for their perceived intellectual and moral refinement, perpetuating new forms of hierarchy even as they sought to dismantle old ones. This ambivalence reflects a broader tension in missionary history– a

theological commitment to spiritual equality coexisted uneasily with entrenched colonial and racial hierarchies.

Chinjumol KR's chapter uses two categories of photographs as historical sources to examine how the Basel Mission visually represented caste transformation. The first category of lower-caste individuals, specifically Cheruma and Tiyya of Malabar, depicted traditional caste markers while the second category included portrayals of labourers in diverse industries associated with the Basel Mission. Visually enacting the Basel Mission's ideal of moral and social transformation, these images functioned as instruments of both documentation and propaganda, projecting a narrative of successful "civilising" while erasing established markers of identity. Together, these chapters demonstrate that caste reform under the Basel Mission was less a simple story of liberation than a complex negotiation of social mobility, cultural reinvention, and colonial constraints.

The Fourth Part of the book turns to gender and adds an important aspect to mission historiography by incorporating Indian perspectives. Parinitha Shetty's analysis of the Basel Mission's reinterpretation of matrilineal practices in South Kanara demonstrates how missions imposed patriarchal norms under the guise of Christian modernity. By translating and reframing existing kinship structures as morally deficient, the missionaries legitimised their interventions in family structures. The Basel Mission thus contributed to reshaping property relations and gender roles into a colonial legal framework, aligning gender reform with their broader "civilising mission". Shetty's critical reading of a key missionary text shows how gender, caste, and colonial legal discourses intersected in missionary thinking.

Sandra Langhop's focus on the training of Bible Women between 1880 and 1940 provides a rare glimpse into Indian female agency within missionary networks. Her chapter reveals how these women carved out limited spaces of authority within their communities, shaping local evangelisation in ways that did not always conform to European expectations. They were not simply agents of colonial patriarchy but skilfully navigated racial and gender hierarchies.

Together, these chapters expand the scope of mission studies by moving beyond the well-documented experiences of European missionary wives to foreground the intersectionality of race, caste, and gender among Indian Christian women. Faced with patriarchal reform, these Indian women navigated the colonial structures with varying degrees of accommodation and resistance.

The Final Section turns to the material legacies of the Basel Mission and reminds us that beyond their religious, social and economic agendas, mission societies also offered far-flung networks through which objects, practices, technologies and ideas circulated that continue to influence societies in India and Europe to this day. Isabella Bozsa's chapter examines the ethnographic objects collected by missionaries in India and later displayed in Basel. She reveals how missionary collecting practices simultaneously served to justify evangelisation and shaped European imaginaries of "heathen" cultures. Her attention to Indian agency, such as craftsmen producing objects specifically for European collectors, is crucial in showing that Indian artisans actively engaged in this knowledge economy. Her chapter thus complicates the narrative of passive colonial subjects or unilateral cultural appropriation.

Priya Joseph's architectural study of Basel Mission tiles shows how missionary industries not only reshaped labour practices in coastal South India, but also the built environment, leaving tangible imprints of the missionaries' interventions in everyday life. This enduring visibility of "Mangalore tiles" testifies to the Basel Mission's long-term economic and cultural impact. Together, these chapters highlight that mission studies must take non-written sources into account if they want to break through established narratives and offer new perspectives on the colonial period. Precisely because many missionary societies such as the Basel Mission have objects, maps, drawings, photographs, sound recordings and films in their collections, they are ideal objects of study to reveal aspects of colonial history that remain underexposed.

Rethinking Mission History Through Spatial Categories

The volume encourages reflection on spatial categories of analysis and emphasises once again that analytical flexibility is key to unearthing new perspectives in mission history. While it is indisputable that mission societies have played a key role in the increasing interdependence of the world since the 16th century, historians must be wary of reproducing missionary categories that juxtapose global missionaries to local converts. The terms "global" and "local" are not purely analytical lenses but have been historically imbued with value and conflated with meanings such as "modern" and "traditional". Yet as Bornet's contribution shows, "missionaries often encountered people who were more 'cosmopolitan' than themselves."[1]

Therefore, it is necessary to rethink the simplifying juxtaposition between missionaries as modern, global protagonists and the seemingly traditional, local actors in India. An actor-based approach has proven particularly fruitful in this regard because it allows the reconstruction of the broader social frameworks and historical contexts in which both missionaries and the people they wished to convert were socialised. Mission archives not only store institutional reports and publications, but also private letters and ego documents, exposing missionaries as complex and contradictory individuals. These types of sources make it possible to break through heroic metanarratives and uncover social interactions and individual insecurities as well as structural processes and institutional failures.

At the same time, mission archives only hold a limited number of first-person documents from the perspective of the people in the mission areas. One approach to countering this weakness is to examine missions as transregional projects and to include the expertise of researchers and studies from the regions where mission societies operated.[2] While missionaries undoubtedly contributed to global forms of modernity in economic and cultural terms, their fields

of action were always confined to particular regions both abroad and at home, which shaped their interventions and the knowledge they produced. This volume clearly demonstrates that examining and combining two regions as equally important historical entities yields new insights not only into mission history, but also economic, colonial and social history.

Networks have proven to be a suitable instrument for combining different spatial levels of investigation, ranging from the regional to the national to the imperial level. They allow one to retrace how people, ideas, practices, money and commodities travelled across the world and the change they brought on a global scale. Missionaries operated in multiple networks that transcended geographical boundaries (evangelical, economic, scientific), often simultaneously, as the essays in this volume show. They adapted their social behaviour, cultural codes and cognitive models to the different networks in which they circulated. Sources on or by missionaries can be found in wide-ranging publications (from popular and colonial magazines to scientific journals) and diverse archives (from colonial records and economic archives to anthropological collections).

While these networks are useful analytical tools to visualise the numerous entanglements of missionaries and add an important external perspective to question their influence, they are only of limited use when examining historical contexts, causalities and motivations. Networks are not meaningful subjects of historical narratives. Moreover, they tend to visualise and emphasise mobility, often obscuring immobility and disjuncture. Therefore, while missionaries must be viewed as actors who worked for specific institutions and participated in manifold networks, they were always embedded in spatial entities, such as regions, nations, continents, colonies and empires. Missionaries had to come to terms with political authorities and regional rulers, negotiate with local employees, students and churchgoers, and compete with rival religious organisations and institutions, both in India and in Europe.

The missionaries' unique position as supposedly apolitical and benevolent agents of colonialism made them particularly interactive

and mobile actors in the age of empire. The Basel Mission generated and circulated knowledge across the globe, increased transregional connectivity and promoted globalised concepts of belonging through its diverse media. Yet it is crucial to keep in mind that a whole string of people, some of them almost invisible, contributed to the laborious fashioning of global narratives.[3] A multilayered spatial perspective not only challenges the universal claim of the evangelical missionary movement, but redirects our attention to the fact that globalisation is a much more complex and contradictory process than is often assumed.[4]

Missionary Legacies and Unfinished Histories

An overarching theme running across the volume is the Basel Mission's ambivalent relationship with colonial power. The mission could not have operated without the legal and economic support of the British Empire, and in many respects, it reinforced colonial ideologies – through industrial capitalism (Schär, Joseph), social engineering (Raghaviah), patriarchal family reforms (Shetty), and visual and material publicity (Chinjumol, Bozsa). Yet, as Bornet and Langhop show, missionaries sometimes also acted as intermediaries or advocates for local communities, and Indian actors shaped mission policies in ways not fully anticipated by European authorities. This ambivalence underscores a crucial historiographical point: missionary societies were neither mere agents of empire nor independent actors. They inhabited a grey zone of colonial modernity, simultaneously complicit in and occasionally critical of imperial structures.

Moreover, the Basel Mission's legacies are not confined to history books. In South India, its tile factories, schools, and churches continue to shape the material and mental landscapes, while its challenges to caste and gender norms have contributed to both empowerment and new forms of inequality. In postcolonial Europe, the Basel Mission's collections raise ongoing questions about

provenance, restitution, and the colonial gaze. Post-migrant societies demand new frames of reference, narratives and ways of dealing with the past. Bozsa's and Joseph's chapters suggest that confronting these legacies requires acknowledging the entanglement of philanthropy, faith, and imperial exploitation.

Fundamentally, the Basel Mission's history challenges us to rethink present-day relations between India and Europe, and more broadly the so-called Global South and Global North. For contemporary humanitarian causes and development organisations, this history offers important lessons. Mission societies linked ideas of development to ideas of religious progress, which still inform humanitarian actions today, even if most of the Christian vocabulary has been replaced by secular terms. The anthropologist of religion Anton van Harskamp has pleaded for a critical assessment of the concept of development by pointing to its religious roots in the following words: "The point is: when we realise that development is some kind of a substitute for the progressive, linear (and liberal) concept of history, we simply must become suspicious! In particular, when we reckon with the well-known interpretation that this concept is ultimately a secularised version of a Judeo-Christian idea – that the course of history is continuously moving forward to salvation."[5]

Mission societies belonged to the first and most important humanitarian organisations engaged in large-scale development projects around the world from the 19th century. There are several reasons for this. For one, they were driving forces in the abolitionist movement and facilitated imperial expansion by campaigning for the protection and supervision of people. Furthermore, they were the first European institutions to operate globally, providing awareness of the suffering of people around the world, and offering resources and infrastructure to alleviate it. Finally, they became indispensable partners in the "civilising mission" when the European colonial powers began to take an interest in colonial populations.

Post decolonisation, most development projects tried to distance themselves from their colonial heritage. Many former missionary organisations evolved into secular NGOs, but the legacies of

colonialism persist. They inherited the humanitarian, and ultimately Christian, rhetoric of global human progress, alongside the structural resources of the established Christian missions and charities. While humanitarian organisations have provided vital aid, their origins and operations are deeply entangled with colonial histories, raising questions about power, representation, and global justice. Philanthropic endeavours conceived in the Global North often clash with existing norms and structures in the Global South, echoing past missionary interventions.

This volume is a timely and necessary intervention. As mission studies continue to evolve, it stands as an example for how to write histories that overcome Eurocentric, patriarchal and monothematic perspectives. By foregrounding Indian and female agency, highlighting transimperial networks, and interrogating the intersections of religion, economy, and knowledge production, this volume substantially reshapes our understanding of colonialism and its legacies. It not only enriches the historiography of the Basel Mission but also invites us to rethink the roles of missions in global history. Such works are essential for moving toward a more nuanced understanding of how entangled histories shaped – and continue to shape – the world we live in.

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[1] Chapter 4 in this volume.

[2] Middell, ed., *The Routledge Handbook*; Jenkins, "Württemberg"; Freitag and von oppen, eds., *Translocality*.

[3] Richard Hölzl has introduced the concept of "imperial communication work" to analyse the complex processes through which missionary narratives were created. See Hölzl, "Imperiale Kommunikationsarbeit".

[4] Ulrike Freitag and Achim von oppen have put forward the concept of translocality to account for the diversity of Asian and African experiences and agency in the transformatory process often subsumed under the blanket term of globalisation. Translocality very consciously attempts to transcend the elitist focus of much of global history. Freitag and von oppen, "Introduction".

[5] Anton van Harskamp, "Introduction," p. 2.

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