

Cameroon and China

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The Basel Mission extended its work beyond the Gold Coast and India. In 1847, it began work in southern China, in the Hakka-speaking regions of Guangdong province, where it founded churches, schools and hospitals. The Hakka church founded by the Basel Mission survived the upheavals of the Chinese revolution in various forms. Those of its members who emigrated to Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and other countries founded churches that maintain the tradition. In Hong Kong, the Tsung Tsin Mission, founded by the Basel Mission, remains an active Protestant church of the Hakka community.¹

The China mission connects Basel with the Chinese world in a way that is little known. The Basel missionaries studied the Hakka language, wrote grammars and dictionaries, and translated the Bible into Hakka. They documented the society of southern China in reports and photographs that are preserved in the archives of Mission 21. And they trained Chinese pastors, teachers and physicians, some of whom played a role in the modernisation of China. The author of this book, who lived for fifteen years in Singapore and Hong Kong, has encountered the traces of this history in the Hakka communities of Southeast Asia.

In 1886, after Cameroon had become a German colony, the Basel Mission took over the work of a British Baptist mission in the colony, at the request of the German government, which preferred a German-speaking mission. The Basel Mission in Cameroon founded churches and schools. After the First World War, when Cameroon was divided between France and Britain, it continued its work in the British-administered part. The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, founded by the Basel Mission, is today one of the main churches of the anglophone regions of the country.²

The work of the Basel Mission in Cameroon took place in the context of German colonial rule, under which the relationship between the mission and the colonial authorities was close. This relationship has been the

subject of critical research, which has examined the role of the mission in the colonial order, its attitudes to the indigenous population and its responses to colonial violence. The involvement of a Swiss mission in German colonialism shows how Swiss institutions, without a colonial state of their own, participated in the colonial projects of other states.

1 Notes

1. On the Basel Mission in China (from 1847, among the Hakka of Guangdong) and the Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong, see the literature on the history of the Basel Mission in China. To be verified. ↩
2. On the Basel Mission in Cameroon (from 1886) and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, see the literature on the Basel Mission. To be verified. ↩

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