

Mission 21 and the archives of the mission

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In 2001, the Basel Mission merged with other missionary organisations to form Mission 21, the Protestant mission of Basel, which continues the work of the Basel Mission in partnership with churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America, with an emphasis on development cooperation, education, health and interreligious dialogue.¹

The archives of the Basel Mission, preserved by Mission 21 in Basel, are one of the most important sources for the history of West Africa, southern India and southern China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They contain the correspondence of the missionaries, reports, diaries, maps, dictionaries, and a photographic collection of tens of thousands of images, which document the societies in which the missionaries worked. Researchers from Ghana, India, Cameroon, China and many other countries use the archives, which have been partly digitised.²

The archives also allow a critical examination of the role of the mission in the colonial period. The missionaries shared many of the prejudices of their time, regarded African and Indian cultures as inferior, cooperated with colonial authorities and contributed to the transformation of societies they did not fully understand. At the same time, they founded schools, recorded languages, cared for the sick and defended the interests of local communities against abuses of colonial power in some cases. The history of the Basel Mission is thus a history of ambivalence, which the institutions of Basel and their partners in the former mission fields continue to discuss.

1 Notes

1. On Mission 21, formed in 2001 by the Basel Mission and other mission organisations, see the publications of Mission 21. To be verified. ↩

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2. On the archives of the Basel Mission (Mission 21 archives), including the photographic collection, see the publications of Mission 21 and the online database of the Basel Mission archive. To be verified. ↩

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