

The Role of the Religious and Secular Black Press in the Forging of the Transatlantic Black Community at the Turn of the 20th Century

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Within three years the East and the West have met each other in the African Orthodox Church. Without any missionary agency, the glad tidings have bridged the Atlantic through the press, and especially through the columns of 'The Negro World' to which paper we acknowledge our thanks, and our brethren in Motherland have declared themselves freemen in the Church of the Living God.¹

Bishop George A. McGuire of the *African Orthodox Church*, New York, 1924

1. Introduction

In a certain way, the history of transatlantic communication has been as long as the history of transatlantic slavery. Before the end of the 19th century this communication occurred only along the lines of European colonialism. As such, it was primarily intended to serve the hegemonic goals of the colonial powers. Every type of discourse, including religious, political, economic and scientific, was shaped to fulfil this requirement. This monopoly was gradually dissolved through the emerging emancipatory ideas which can be conceptualised as *Ethiopianism*. This was the most important concept which nourished the idea of emancipation on both shores of the Atlantic. Its spread took some time and was carried out by transatlantic voyagers. Personalities such as Edward Wilmot Blyden and Alexander Crummell were decisive for the shaping of a transatlantic black identity. Most of the time they were very popular in Africa among the native elite and white liberals, but less relevant for the large number of the native grass roots people. The end of the 19th century brought an increasing participation of a larger number of natives in the western colonial system. Forced urbanisation or labour conditions such as on the South African farms and mines long before 1900 confronted natives with social problems and made them receptive for new themes. At the same time, a native press arose or developed in different territories of Africa and a public of readers and listeners emerged in what may be called an 'indigenous public sphere'². The purpose of these journals was not only to circulate local news, but to connect the natives to the "world beyond their own dwellings", which was emphatically desired on

1 *The Negro Churchman* II/12, December, 1924, p. 2.

2 Cf. CH. BAYLY, "The Indian Ecumene: An Indigenous Public Sphere", in: ID., *Empire and Information. Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge 1996, p. 180–211).

the side of the indigenous public.³ This local native press was at the beginning indebted to the western information sources, mostly white colonial or metropolitan journals. With time, it became more independent from its former sources, and sought to avoid the colonial monopoly on information. This was one of the ardent desires of its readership. One means to accomplish this desire was the black foreign press, being circulated through subscriptions, brought into the land by visitors, or simply reprinted in the local native newspapers.

The following contribution deals with the transcontinental communication between black communities in Africa, the UK and North America (including the Caribbean) by means of journals around 1900. Before the political emancipation reached the maturity of the early 20th century and emerged in the pan-African movement, it was the religious dimension of Ethiopianism, which contributed to the growing communication between Blacks on the different shores of the Atlantic.

2. The Ethiopian Movement and the Transatlantic Communication Through the Religious Press at the Turn of the 20th Century

Long before a politically articulated pan-African movement came into existence, there was a religious bond linking black people on the both sides of the Atlantic. After the first attempts on the part of the Afro-Americans to become active in Africa (their 'homeland') in the first part of the 19th century, it was mainly through Afro-American missionaries⁴ during the second half of the century that direct information about the people in Africa came to America on a larger scale, beyond the white colonial communication network. Even in this situation of direct contact, most of the accounts furnished a deformed picture of the African way of life and came up with merely sensational and ridiculous stories in order to satisfy the missionary needs, or simply to be in accordance with the widespread patterns on 'savage' and 'primitive' Africa.⁵

The flux of information to and from Liberia and Sierra Leone was much better than to and from other parts of Africa. The direct implication of the *African Methodist Episcopal Church* (AME) in the 1890s in South Africa connected natives of this territory with the still rudimentary communication network of the black people living in Africa and North America, facilitating the direct exchange of information. What helped decisively to increase this exchange were black periodicals circulating in remote territories, or being quoted in the local (native) press. At this stage – before 1900 – the church press represented an important channel, linking North America and Africa. In contrast to personal letters and books, the

3 *The Kaffir Express* I/1, October 1, 1870, p. 1.

4 Cf. S.M. JAKOBS (Ed.), *Black Americans and the Missionary Movement in Africa* (Westport/London 1982); J.M. CHIRENJE, *Ethiopianism and Afro-Americans in Southern Africa, 1883–1916* (London 1987); R.K. BURKETT/R. NEWMANN (Eds.), *Black Apostles. Afro-American Clergy confront the twentieth Century* (Boston 1978); D.W. WILLS/R. NEWMANN (Eds.), *Black Apostles at Home and Abroad. Afro-Americans and the Christian Mission from the Revolution to the Reconstruction* (Boston 1982); W.L. WILLIAMS, *Black Americans and the Evangelisation of Africa, 1877–1900* (Madison 1982); W.C. HARR, "The Negro as an American Protestant Missionary in Africa" (Dissertation, University of Chicago 1945).

5 Cf. S.M. JAKOBS, "The historical role of Afro-Americans in American missionary efforts in Africa", in: ID., *Black Americans* (p. 5–30), p. 18.

press made information and ideas available not only to a small elite group, but to a larger emerging native African public.

The circulation in Africa of the *Voice of Missions*, the press organ of the North American AME, must be seen as a direct consequence of the formal connection between the AME and the South African *Ethiopian Church*, founded in 1893. The first subscriptions from South Africa are documented already in 1895, but it was probably in 1897 that it became widely known as a result of the publicity made by some South African periodicals edited by natives. In this same year it was quoted verifiably for the first time in the South African *Imvo Zabantsundu* of John Tengo Jabavu. *Imvo* was started in 1884 as an English/Xhosa newspaper and represented for a long time the only journal completely in the hand of a black editor. Beginning with 1898 the *Voice of Missions* was quoted also by *The Christian Express* and its successor the *South African Outlook*, both of them edited by gifted natives at the Lovedale station of the Glasgow Missionary Society. The peak of verifiable reception must be seen between September 1899 and December 1900, when almost in every single monthly issue of the *The Christian Express* the *Voice of Missions* was quoted and broadly discussed. *Izwi Labantu* (Xhosa, meaning 'The Voice of the People'), started in 1897 in East London by a group of Africans opposed to J.T. Jabavu and with the financial support of Cecil Rhodes, published in 1901/2 some positive commentaries in Xhosa and English on the AME, referring itself directly to materials or ideas from the *Voice of Missions*.⁶ All these three newspapers represent the emerging indigenous South African press. References to the *Voice of Missions* were included also in white South African journals such as *Cape Telegraph*, *Cape Times*, or *Eastern Province Herald*.⁷

The *Voice of Missions* was present in West Africa even earlier, this region being strongly linked through Sierra Leone and Liberia with Great Britain and the US. *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*⁸ quotes verifiably the *Voice of Missions* already in 1893, followed by *The Lagos Weekly Record*⁹ and *The Sierra Leone Times*¹⁰. With 44 quotations¹¹ in different West and South African, mostly indigenous periodicals between 1893 and 1904, the *Voice of Missions* represents the most influential North American black journal in Africa at the turn of the century. An exemplary insight in its African reception might be taken from *The Christian Express*.

Between August 1898 and December 1904 the *Voice of Missions* was quoted in 18 monthly issues of *The Christian Express*. None of these quotations represents only a marginal reference to it, but ample reprints of materials from the *Voice* and commentaries on those statements. The space allocated consists always of more than a column up to several pages. In a supplement to the regular issue of August 1898, six pages of a total of eight are

6 Cf. *Izwi Labantu*, July 2, 1901, p. 3; August 19, 1902, p. 3; September 16, 1902, p. 2.

7 Cf. C.A. PAGE, "Colonial Reaction to AME Missionaries in South Africa, 1898–1910", in: JAKOBS, *Black Americans* (p. 177–196), p. 187.

8 Cf. *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*, November 25, 1893, p. 2 (98) [double pagination in the original].

9 Cf. *The Lagos Weekly Record*, March 12, 1898.

10 Cf. *The Sierra Leone Times*, April 16, 1898, p. 3.

11 Such figures represent only the tip of the iceberg. In reality, the numbers are certainly more consistent than the mentioned ones. The figures were obtained as a result of a search in the *Readex* database, which offers an amazing tool for scholarly research. On May 3rd, 2012, 67 newspaper titles published in Africa between 1800 and 1920 were available in the ongoing digitalization project (www.readex.com/content/african-newspapers-1800-1922, archived at: <http://www.webcitation.org/6G9N6xrL4>, 25.04.13).

dedicated to a detailed presentation of the visit of Bishop Turner of the AME to South Africa. Almost the whole material was a reprint of reports, letters and commentaries published in the *Voice*. It is astonishing that most of the time the reprinted materials are accompanied only by very short introductions or commentaries. Sometimes the reprinted text is not accompanied by any commentary. The surprising element is that the editor of *The Christian Express* – representing the pro-white native elite from the ranks of the European missions – limits his critique to sarcastic, short commentaries, which can be easily overlooked by the reader, or the critique lacks enough power of conviction to defeat a quite strong rhetoric of the Afro-Americans. Here are some typical examples of such criticism:

These sentences reveal the existence of very curious congregations and curious ministers. [...] The patriotism of the following passages is the kind that the *Voice of Missions* is apt to engender in its readers. [...] These are not extracts from a comedy.¹²

The following appears in the latest number of *The Voice of Missions*, the organ of Bishop Turner and the African Methodist Episcopal Church of America. It contains several curious if contradictory, opinions of a suggestive kind: [here follows the reprint].¹³

[After a nearly one page quotation, the editor concludes at the end with a single sentence:] Comment upon these statements is unnecessary: they interpret themselves.¹⁴

Those are certainly polemical remarks regarding the activity of the AME in South Africa.¹⁵ Almost entirely the materials were based on accounts taken from the *Voice of Missions*. Indirectly or openly the journal was thereby criticised. But besides this critique and sarcastic comments, *The Christian Express* furnished a great deal of information on the activity of the AME in South Africa and the US. Dozens of columns are providing a very deep insight in the plans of the AME mission in South Africa and on the activity of the General Conference at home. That information and news certainly reached a larger number of readers through the pages of the local *Christian Express* than through the *Voice of Mission* itself. The effect of printing those materials might have been in the end contrary to the intended critique of the editor due to the popularity of the anticolonial sentiments. Here are some topics covered in the pages of *The Christian Express*:

A very important issue was the development of the *Ethiopian Church*, sometimes called – with the aim of ridicule – “the Future Native Church of South Africa”¹⁶ or simply “the Native Church”. The reprinted account of Bishop Turner’s missionary journey to South Africa gives the numbers of the congregations with their members and a detailed list of the ordained personnel. All this information helped the readers to visualize the spread of the *Ethiopian Church* in the country and have an exact picture of the plans intended by the AME in South Africa. One of those plans and another important topic was the native education. Organising communities was accompanied by erecting schools. The lack of qualified teaching staff demonstrated the problem of the absence of institutions of higher education for Black people. The only existing one was at Lovedale, operated by the Glasgow Missionary Society. At the only university level institution in South Africa in Cape Town only white students were admitted. To eliminate this monopoly, the AME in-

12 *The Christian Express* XXIX/347, May 1, 1899, p. 66.

13 *The Christian Express* XXIX/351, September 1, 1899, p. 130.

14 *The Christian Express* XXX/357, April 2, 1899, p. 61.

15 *The Christian Express* XXXIV/411, December 1, 1904, p. 177 f.

16 *Supplement to the Christian Express* XXVIII/338, August 1, 1898, p. 129.

tended to found a college after the model of US black colleges. The plans for this institution were discussed in detail.¹⁷ Those articles and some others furnished important information about black colleges in America. The AME was thus presented as the main supporter of such institutions. Regularly it financed and organised the transfer of South Africans for higher education in the US.¹⁸ Unintended, *The Christian Express* gave account of the existence of such institutions and the highly qualified black elite in the US.

Trying to defame the AME, *The Christian Express* presented its view on the ideological background of the AME mission in South Africa. The position of the journal was a pro-White one. From this perspective, the *Voice of Missions* was made the mouthpiece of the “Africa-for-the-Africans-and-drive-the-white-man-into-the-sea sentiments”.¹⁹ Willing to expand its mission field in Africa, an AME conference made plans for replacing the existing White missions. These plans came together with other statements printed in the *Voice of Missions* as follows:

The *Voice of Missions* published in New York [...] advocates the holding of a conference of all Mission Boards with the view to the transference of all their African work to the African M. E. Church. [...] Not such laughable or harmless were some articles in the *Voice* which touched on the South African race question. These spoke of the time when Africans would ‘whip’ the British back to the Thames, as the Afro-Haitians whipped the French; of the time when the white in Africa would be ‘bossed’ by the Kaffirs and of the founding of an African Republic. Such sentiments, published during the war [the second Anglo-Boer, 1899–1902], and widely quoted by the Colonial Press, not only intensified feeling against the independent native movement, but increased local prejudice against missions generally.²⁰

The text reveals first the open attitude of the Afro-Americans on the “race question”, even if the AME was more diplomatic in its official statements. Secondly, it shows the publicity given to these opinions in the South African press. Without this publicity it is very hard to think that these opinions would have reached such a large readership as through the reproduction of the *Voice of Missions* in the local South African press. Despite the critical reflection on Afro-American opinions, a large South African readership was informed on progressive ideas of the US Black elite. This fact is even more significant, since other representatives of the native press such as *Koranta ea Becoana*, the Tswana-English journal of Solomon T. Plaatje, and *The South African Spectator*, the English-Dutch-Xhosa journal of F.Z.S. Peregrino from Cape Town, in the issues from 1902/3 pay no special attention to Afro-American periodicals, even if they refer steadily to other South African newspapers. Before coming to South Africa, Peregrino resided in London and the US and published there another *Spectator*. By coming to South Africa he didn’t suspend his connections, but used those in reporting often about abominable lynch stories and other events, making only selective references to US periodicals.²¹ Important for understanding his connections is his participation at the first pan-African congress in London in 1900. At the same time he was one of the few advocates of the AME mission in South Africa among the Black publishers in the country.

The AME not only circulated its American press organs in South Africa, but with its own *Christian Recorder* appeared as a publisher on the local market in 1903. Established

17 Cf. *Supplement to the Christian Express* XXVIII/338, August 1, 1898, p. 131; *Christian Express* XXIX/352, October 2, 1899, p. 156; XXXI/375, December 1, 1901, p. 184.

18 Cf. *Christian Express* XXXIII/392, May 1, 1903, p. 66.

19 *Christian Express* XXXIV/403, April 1, 1904, p. 51.

20 *Christian Express* XXXIII/397, October 1, 1903, p. 151.

21 Cf. *The South African Spectator* I/30, January 11, 1902, p. 5.

by the Afro-American missionary Carletin M. Tanner, the son of the AME Bishop Benjamin Tanner and close follower of the Afro-American missionary bishop F.J. Coppin in South Africa, the journal was a replica of the same-named AME journal from Philadelphia, USA, edited for a time by Tanner's father.²² The main focus was the AME and its mission in South Africa.

The search for other black periodicals from outside Africa circulating on the continent revealed the names of the *Christian Recorder*²³ from Philadelphia, US – quoted between 1880 and 1903 six times in Liberia, Sierra Leone and southern Africa –, and the *A.M.E. Church Review*²⁴, confirmed six times during 1898/90 only in Sierra Leone. The secular journal *The New York Age*, being read in Sierra Leone²⁵ and South Africa²⁶, should have also been known to an African readership. On the basis of this result it can be stated that the church-published *Voice of Missions* was at the turn of the century the most widely known foreign black journal in Africa. As such, the *Voice* connected the emerging African elite with Blacks in another part of the world and facilitated the spread of emancipatory ideas from the US to Africa.

3. The London Secular Black Press of the Early 20th Century and its Importance in the Transatlantic Context

Another chapter of the transcontinental communication between Blacks started with the first efforts of establishing a pan-African movement. The development of this movement was accompanied by journalistic propaganda. In contrast to the earlier period, this task was accomplished less by papers of a religious character but rather by secular ones, edited by black lobbyists in London, at the centre of British power. Ironically, some of them would have not been permitted to exist in the colonies, but were considered not dangerous in London. Thus, the London black press²⁷ for some decades took a leading role in disseminating anticolonial ideas and publicising information about the situation of black people in different parts of the world, including territories outside the borders of the British Empire. The metropolitan position allowed those journals a circulation by the use of the existing colonial communication means. It was no rarity that black editors from London delivered their publications to subscribers all over the British colonies. Money transfer for such purpose was a quite normal practice. Even 'tendentious' materials could have been sent more easily

from London undiscovered in the flux of the colonial communication.²⁸ There is verifiable evidence that a small library of black writings, including books and collected issues of *The New York Age*²⁹, was organised in the remote Trinidad village of Couva with a branch of the Pan-African Association as early as 1901 for the black readership. Such possibilities should be considered realistic also for other journals.

The beginnings of promoting the pan-African idea as a political theme lie in the years before 1900.³⁰ One of its first promoters was the Trinidad-born London law student Henry Sylvester Williams.³¹ He had contacts to the West Indies, US and Africa, and in 1897 went on tour through England, Scotland and Ireland to establish contacts with Blacks living there. In September 1897 he started together with some other London-based Blacks the 'African Association'. A conference commonly known as the first Pan-African Conference met in London from the 23rd to 25th of July, 1900. Bishop Alexander Walter of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (USA) held the presidency. In a later account about the conference he stated that "it was the fertile brain of Mr H. Sylvester Williams [...] that conceived the idea of a convocation of Negro representatives from all parts of the world".³² At the meeting 32 persons participated, representing Blacks from Africa, North America, the West Indies and the UK. The highest representation was from the West Indies including the Caribbean-born delegates from the US and London. After a tour through the native West Indies and the US from March to July 1901, Williams came back to London and in October started a journal named *The Pan-African*. This should have been the first black press organ in London and the UK. Williams became conscious of the enormous impact of the written

22 Cf. J.T. CAMPBELL, *Songs of Zion* (New York/Oxford 1995), p. 96, 238.

23 Most relevant are the following texts: *The Observer* (Monrovia), April 8, 1880, p. 3; *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*, March 23, 1895, p. 5 (229); *Christian Express* XXX/355, February 1, 1900, p. 23; *Ilanga Lase Natal* (Zulu, meaning *Natal Sun*, Durban), October 22, 1903, p. 8.

24 Until 1905 cf. *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*, September 28, 1889, p. 2; October 19, 1889, p. 2; January 25, 1890, p. 2; *The Liberia Recorder*, September 23, 1905, p. 6.

25 *The Sierra Leone Weekly News*, March 23, 1895, p. 4 (228).

26 Cf. *Koranta ea Bechoana*, April 18, 1903, p. 5.

27 Academic studies on the history of the black press in Britain are few: I. BENJAMIN, *The Black Press in Britain* (Stoke-on-Trent 1995); R.J. MACDONALD, "'The wisers who are far away': The role of London's Black press in the 1930s and 1940s", in: J. GUNDARA/I. DUFFIELD (Eds.), *Essays on the History of Blacks in Britain* (Aldershot 1992, p. 150–172); D. DABYDEEN/J. GILMORE/C. JONES (Eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* (Oxford 2012) contains some entries related to the black press in Britain as well.

28 In the 1920s the banned *Negro World* of Marcus Garvey was smuggled by Black seamen into Nyasaland by binding it together with issues of the harmless *London Times*. In the 1930s issues of the Marxist journal *The Negro Worker*, edited in Hamburg and later in Copenhagen, were bound into religious tracts to pass the police controls; cf. MACDONALD, "'The wisers who are far away'", p. 154 and note 15.

29 Cf. J.R. HOOKER, *Henry Sylvester Williams: Imperial Pan-Africanist* (London 1975), p. 62; O.C. MATHURIAN, *Henry Sylvester Williams and the origins of the Pan-African Movement, 1869–1911* (Westport/London 1976), p. 99.

30 In addition to the classical studies on pan-Africanism: I. GEISS, *Panafrikanismus: Zur Geschichte der Dekolonisation* (Frankfurt a. M. 1968), English translation as *The Pan-African Movement* (London/New York 1974); P. FRYER, *Staying power: Black people in Britain since 1504* (Atlantic Highlands 1984); see also some more recent works: M. SHERWOOD, *Origins of Pan-Africanism: Henry Sylvester Williams, Africa and the African diaspora* (London 2011); D. DABYDEEN/J. GILMORE/C. JONES (Eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* (Oxford, 2007); B.F. BANKIE/K. MCHOMBU (Eds.), *Pan-Africanism African nationalism: strengthening the unity of Africa and its diaspora* (Trenton 2008); J.L. CONYERS (Ed.), *Reevaluating the Pan-Africanism of W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey: escapist fantasy or relevant reality* (Lewiston 2005); C.N. TEMPLE, *Literary Pan-Africanism: history, contexts, and criticism* (Durham 2005); H. ADI/M. SHERWOOD (Eds.), *Pan-African History: Political figures from Africa and the Diaspora since 1787* (London/New York 2003); H. ADI, *West Africans in Britain 1900–1960: nationalism, pan-Africanism and communism* (London 1998); M. MUCHIE (Eds.), *The making of the Africa-nation: Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance* (London 2003); W. ACKAH, *Pan-Africanism: exploring the contradictions; politics, identity and development in Africa and the African diaspora* (Aldershot 1999); O. AGYEMMAN, *Pan-Africanism and its detractors: a response to Harvard's race effacing universalists* (Lewiston 1997); P.O. ESEDEBE, *Pan-Africanism: the idea and movement, 1776–1991* (Washington 1994).

31 Cf. SHERWOOD, *Origins of Pan-Africanism*; MATHURIN, *Henry Sylvester Williams*; HOOKER, *Henry Sylvester Williams*.

32 Ibid., p. 31.

word in lobbying for the interests of the Black people. The monthly paper aimed to present information "concerning the interests of the African and descendants in the British Empire".³³ Outside the UK the paper was read verifiably in Trinidad. Its life seems to have been quite short, the journal ceasing publication only after a few issues, probably in March 1902.

The first long-living and established UK periodical of Africans and other non-Europeans was the *African Times and Orient Review*. It first appeared in 1912 on the initiative of John Eldred Taylor, a Sierra Leone enterpriser, and the Egyptian-born Duse Mohamed Ali. Taylor was interested in an economic publication helping him in his trade interests between West Africa and the UK. Duse offered his services, stipulating that he would not cover only economic matters and would extend the reporting area from West Africa to entire Africa and the Orient. Duse's idea seems to have been inspired by the newly held 'First Universal Races Congress' organised in London in 1911 by Gustav Spiller. The congress brought together more than 2000 delegates from all over the world and Duse was put in charge of the cultural entertainment of the guests. Still under the influence of that extraordinary intercultural and interracial event, Duse shaped his publication as a pan-African and pan-Oriental one, militating for mutual help between Africans and Asians. In the editorial of the first issue Duse stated:

The recent Universal Race Congress [...] clearly demonstrated that there was ample need for a Pan-Oriental, Pan-African journal at the seat of the British Empire which would lay the aims, desires and intentions of the Black, Brown and Yellow Races – within and without the Empire – at the throne of the Caesar.³⁴

As a matter of fact, the journal experienced quite a global spread, being read according to its own figures in Egypt, Gold Coast, Lagos, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Malaysia, Japan, British Guiana, the Caribbean, Paraguay, the US, Australia and Canada.³⁵ Duse managed to acquire the list of names and addresses of the participants at the 'First Universal Races Congress' so that his claim of having 5000 subscribers³⁶ already in the first year could be realistic. After separating himself from Taylor already with the first issue, Duse received the committed assistance of a group of West African intellectuals including Casely Hayford.

Some time after ending the collaboration with Duse on the *African Times and Orient Review*, John Eldred Taylor³⁷ – the son and grandson of native Anglican clergymen in Sierra Leone – started in London in 1914 another journal under the name of the *African Telegraph* with himself as editor. Remaining loyal to Britain during the war, Taylor later adopted a very critical tone, and to promote the interests of black British subjects he organised also the 'Society of Peoples of African Origin' with the *African Telegraph* serving as its official press organ. His criticism regarded the post-war riots against black soldiers and Blacks in different British metropolises starting in Liverpool in 1919, and happenings in the

33 *The Pan-African*, October 1901, p. 4, cf. MATHURIAN, *Henry Sylvester Williams*, p. 107.

34 *African Times and Orient Review* I/1, July, 1912, p. III.

35 Cf. *African Times and Orient Review* II/13, July, 1913, p. III (45); cf. GEISS, *The pan-African movement*, p. 225.

36 *African Times and Orient Review* I/1, July, 1912, p. 20.

37 On J.E. Taylor see I. DUFFIELD, "John Eldred Taylor and West African Opposition to Indirect Rule in Nigeria" (*African Affairs* LXX/280, July, 1971, p. 252–268).

colonies such as the public flogging of two naked women in Nigeria, ordered by a British officer in 1914. Describing the aim of his journal, Taylor stated:

We are here because we ought to be [...] because it can be demonstrated that the African colonies and all that pertains to their social welfare have received scant justice at the hands of journalism. [...] While we shall do everything possible to interest our English readers in the activities of Africa and the West Indies we shall at the same time strive to interest our large circle of African readers in the concerns of Great Britain and the Empire.³⁸

Taylor tried by means of journalism to reach primarily a large mass of Black readers and to activate them for the aims of their own social and political uplift. We possess no information about the circulation of the *African Telegraph*, but it should have been read at least in West African territories and in the Caribbean. After 1918 the second editor of the journal, the Trinidad-born Felix E. M. Hercules, cared for a strong link with the latter region.³⁹ In July 1919 he began a tour in the West Indies, visiting Jamaica, Trinidad and British Guiana, agitating for the aims of the 'Society of Peoples of African Origin' as its general secretary. Both Taylor and Hercules circulated the organ of the Society at least in their native regions, as their propagandistic activity indicates. Losing a law suit in 1919 and with a total debt of some £ 3000, Taylor was forced to close his journal and transfer his businesses to West Africa.

Even though all these black publications in London had to end their activity without a very long history, the idea of a journal at the centre of the Empire as the mouthpiece for the grievances of the black subjects remained alive and passed on into the bodies of the next journalistic experiments. The 1920s and 1930s saw the emergence of *The African Sentinel*, the *WASU* of the 'West African Students' Union', *The Negro Worker*, *The Keys*, *The Black Man*, the *International African Opinion* and later some others.⁴⁰

As a preliminary conclusion it may be stated that these journals and their parallel associations can be seen as a pool of individuals with African ancestry, living in London and coming from the different British colonies to study or for economic interests. The main territories represented were West Africa and the West Indies, but intensive contacts and exchange linked the London Blacks with the Afro-American context. After the firm installation of an intolerant colonial regime in the South African Union by 1910, the liberal spirit of the late 19th century Cape Colony was repelled and the contacts of Africans with the emerging Pan-African Movement hindered, but not totally capped. Beyond the travelling of an important number of black British subjects and Afro-Americans, we consider the black press as the main means of communication for an increasing black readership. Not only the elite had a share in the exchange of information and ideas, but a larger number of people of different classes and conditions. The black press from London often functioned as an information platform for this readership spread out across the entire British Empire and beyond. Usually, information and articles of those publications were mediated through the local black press, without running the risk of being distorted by pro-colonial publishers with their specific interests. In this phase of black history, there were mainly secular press organs doing this job. But generally, this secular press still had a strong religious element. Most of its

38 J.E. Taylor quoted in: BENJAMIN, *The Black press in Britain*, p. 12.

39 On Felix E.M. Hercules see D. KILLINGRAY, "Hercules, Felix Eugene Michael", in: *The Oxford Companion to Black British History* (Oxford, 2007, p. 207); W.F. ELKINS, "Hercules and the Society of Peoples of African Origin" (*Caribbean Studies* 11/4, 1972, p. 47–59).

40 Cf. MACDONALD, "The wisers who are far away".

actors were educated in church (mostly missionary) institutions and knew very well the role of the Church in the life of the black society. Regularly, the black press circulated information on church life and inserted religious themes. The following case study provides an excellent example on the role of the Afro-American secular press in this regard.

4. *The Afro-American Secular Press⁴¹ and its Role in the Transatlantic Religious Field: The Founding of the African Orthodox Church as an Intercontinental Community*

In 1921 the *African Orthodox Church* (AOC) emerged in New York among activists of the *Universal Negro Improvement Association* (UNIA) of Marcus Garvey. The *spiritus rector* of this Afro-American church was a certain George Alexander McGuire, a former Moravian and Anglican cleric. At the beginning, McGuire and Garvey dissented on the creation of the new church and the former chose to abandon the ranks of the UNIA and his office as *General-Chaplain*, and went to work for establishing his ecclesiastical organisation as its first bishop. In 1923/24 McGuire and Garvey settled their differences and McGuire became once more politically active for the UNIA and Garvey.

In 1924, at the UNIA's general conference, archbishop McGuire took a prominent role by opening the conference with a religious service and delivering the sermon on this occasion. The text⁴² was published in the pages of the *Negro World*, the press organ of the UNIA, on August 9th together with other materials regarding the conference. Due to the attention accorded to the conference, this issue circulated very quickly and one month later was also read in South Africa by Daniel William Alexander, a clergyman of the independent native *African Church*. Alexander became interested in the AOC not only because of the political program he suspected behind this church, but also as a solid alternative to his actual church, which disappointed him and a large part of his congregation in Beaconsfield near Kimberly.

Meeting for consultations with members of the congregation on September 15th, October 6th, 8th and 12th it was decided already on September 15th "to form the *African Orthodox Church* and register the same with the Union Government [...] and at the same future time [to] seek affiliation with the African Orthodox in other parts of the world and in America".⁴³ Consequently, even before the first letter of the South African Daniel William Alexander left for the US on September 24th and an answer reached Beaconsfield by the

41 Older works on the Afro-American press are: A.S. PRIDE, *A register and history of Negro newspapers in the United States: 1827–1950* (Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1950); and I.G. PENN, *The Afro-American press and its editors* (New York 1969); a recent book is the very useful, general presentation on the topic of C.A. SIMMONS, *The African American press: a history of news coverage during national crises, with special reference to four black newspapers, 1827–1965* (Jefferson/London 2005). Even after Simmons' book, a study is still missing on the reception of African topics in the Afro-American press, beyond the preoccupations around Liberia and the American Colonization Society. Simmons looked for example at the Afro-American press only within the context of US history and regarding themes of Black people in the US.

42 "What is That in Thine Hand?" The road of political destiny, of industrial and commercial achievement, of financial acquisition and of spiritual freedom is in the Negro's hands – the road of the U.N.I.A.", *The Negro World*, August 9, 1924.

43 *Daniel William Alexander Papers*, 3/1, Emory University, Atlanta/Georgia, Resolution of September 15th, 1924.

end of November, the founding of an AOC branch took place in South Africa in September and was confirmed again on October 6th. The only instrument of this transatlantic spread of the AOC was the secular journal *The Negro World*, the press organ of the UNIA. The archbishop of the AOC, George Alexander McGuire, made this point clear in an article for his church magazine in December of the same year:

Within three years the East and the West have met each other in the African Orthodox Church. Without any missionary agency, the glad tidings have bridged the Atlantic through the press, and especially through the columns of 'The Negro World' to which paper we acknowledge our thanks, and our brethren in Motherland have declared themselves freemen in the Church of the Living God.⁴⁴

However curious this story may appear, it wasn't unique. At that time, *The Negro World* was read also in West, East and other parts of Africa. In Uganda, the materials published in *The Negro World* about the AOC were read by a native teacher named Reuben Spartas.⁴⁵ Being responsible as clerk for the depot of the 4th battalion of the *King's African Rifles*, he found *The Negro World* there as a result of colonial actions against the 'Ethiopicist' and pan-African activities. The activities of the UNIA and Garvey were particularly traced by the colonial powers in Africa. After having read the information from the US about the AOC, Spartas decided in 1925 to write to archbishop McGuire in New York and ask him for help in establishing an East African branch of the AOC in Uganda. The answer from New York came only three years later and indicated to Spartas that he will be assisted in his request by the newly ordained bishop of the AOC in South Africa, Daniel William Alexander. Before being ordained, Spartas made public the existence of an AOC branch in Uganda on the 6th of January, 1929. In 1931/32 Daniel William Alexander made a trip to Uganda and remained there for almost a year, organising the new Church province. Once more, the reading of the secular journal *The Negro World* on the African continent led to the establishing of a church without any missionary activity. A similar story can be told about the spread of the AOC in South Rhodesia.⁴⁶

5. *Improving Technologies and Means of Communication in Transcontinental Perspective*

The increasing circulation of journals and periodicals at the end of the 19th century is related to the development of communication and transport means. These were about to reach their first apogee in the years before WWI, the maturity achieved in comparison with the mid-19th century allowing the emergence of a reliable global communication. The British Empire was the most highly networked trans-national realm. Globally, more than half of modern communication means was controlled by the British state or private companies. As an example, in 1894 and 1901 63% of the submarine telegraph cable was British, this figure

44 *The Negro Churchman* II/12, 1924, p. 2.

45 Details about Spartas in his unpublished *Autobiography of Father Spartas Ssebanja Mukasa*; and J.R. KIGONGO, *The Life and Work of Fr Rev Sparta Ssebanja Mukasa* (Makerere University graduating research paper 1969/70, Makerere Africana Library).

46 Cf. M.O. WEST, „Ethiopianism and Colonialism. The African Orthodox Church in Zimbabwe 1924–32“, in: H.B. HANSEN/M. TWADDLE (Eds.), *Christian Missionaries and the State in the Third World* (Oxford/Athens 2002, p. 237–254).

diminishing in 1904 to 60% and in 1908 to 56%.⁴⁷ Furthermore, much of the rest of the world used British-owned facilities. By the end of 1902, a network of underwater British-owned telegraph cables embraced the Empire with the completion of the Pacific cable between New Zealand and Canada. Afterwards, a message between Australia and Canada took less than an hour instead of nearly a day.⁴⁸ By the outbreak of the war in 1914 a chain of stations for wireless telegraphy embraced the Empire as well.

Telegraphy and transport with India and Asia was of much more importance for the Empire, and with the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869 a much better route was created. Communication and transport with Africa reached an acceptable stage only around 1900. The 'Scramble for Africa' gave this development an important impulse in the 1880s. The abandoning of the model of indirect rule and the direct engagement of the British Empire in West Africa (the Ashanti War, 1874), East Africa (the involvement in Buganda in 1888) and South Africa (the annexation of the South African Republic in 1877, culminating in the Boer War 1899–1902) made the improvement of communication and transport strategically necessary. Already in 1856 Alexandria and Suez had British telegraph bureaus. The *West African Telegraph Company* emerged in 1885 as a private British enterprise and served French and Portuguese towns on the west coast as well. After 1877 a reliable telegraph connection with South Africa was requested. The project of a land line from Cape to Cairo remained unrealistic because of the still unreliable knowledge of many territories. In 1878 cable laying started for a connection from Durban through Zanzibar to Aden, which became strategic with the Zulu War of 1879. In 1882 a cable was laid from Egypt to Sudan on the Red Sea. After declaring Nigeria a protectorate in 1885/86 Britain felt the necessity of a direct cable connection with West Africa. The *West African Telegraph Company*, founded in 1885, crossed French and Portuguese territories, which was strategically unacceptable. So the *Eastern Telegraph Company* opened a cable linking Gambia to Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast and Nigeria, avoiding the non-British territories. An extension of this connection reached South Africa. Still during the Boer War, the *Colonial Defence Committee* in 1901 obtained a deep-sea cable from Britain to South Africa via Cap Verde, Ascension, and St. Helena. In the Caribbean the US dominated the cable network. To avoid this monopoly, the cable connection from Halifax to Bermuda, begun in 1889, was extended to Jamaica in 1897.⁴⁹

Even more important for public communication was shipping. In the second half of the 19th century and until WWI, technological and economical development imposed a growing trend in regard to volume and the lowering of shipping rates. The most dynamic sector of this industry was the liner, bound to a regular route and fixed schedule. The different technological innovations in steamship construction – the slow abandonment of sailing for the transitory paddle wheels steamer and the superior technology of the screw propeller, the building of vessels from iron and later steel – and the opening of the Suez Canal in November 1869 forced the colonial actors in Britain and overseas to pay special attention to the liner. The Atlantic, Indian and Far East transportation benefited the most from this trend, but the developed technologies and know-how were applied also to the

47 D.R. HEADRICK, *The Tentacles of Progress. Technology transfer in the age of imperialism, 1850–1940* (Oxford 1988), p. 106.

48 *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*. Vol. 3: *The Empire-Commonwealth, 1870–1919* (Cambridge 1959), p. 474.

49 Cf. HEADRICK, *The Tentacles of Progress*, p. 105–108; ID., *The tools of Empire* (Oxford 1981), p. 159–163.

traffic with Africa. Mail and most of the passengers relied on these improved transportation possibilities. The British Empire invested a great amount of capital in form of yearly subsidies to encourage British companies to maintain such regular liner traffic. In return, the companies were obligated to operate the contracted routes, even if these might have been economically inefficient at certain times. The liners were committed to the requirements of the Admiralty and in a war situation were used for strategic purposes. Parallel to the regular liner system the tramp traffic developed. Tramps were free from a fixed schedule and route and oriented themselves according to the given opportunities. They could stop to load freight when necessary and change the destination en route for greater efficiency. In return, the rates were low and accessible not only for the big trade companies and for the most profitable products, so that diversified commodities could be carried by ships all over the world.

The maritime traffic imposed the development of harbour capacities.⁵⁰ To old docks like Alexandria, Cape Town or Bombay we added new ones like Port Said, Dakar or Durban. The Suez Canal diverted the entire rapid liner traffic to the Orient from the old route around Africa. Only the tramp transports still crossed the South Atlantic on the way to Australia or other destinations in Asia, where the time advantage of using the Suez Canal was counterbalanced by the taxation. In this situation the Canaries, the Cape Verde Islands, Cape Town or Durban developed as major coal bunkering stations for the passing steamers. In comparison, most African harbours remained behind the global growth. Many of them were not deep enough for the bigger steamers. Some major cities without natural harbours like Saint-Louis, Accra, Abidjan or Lome were not attractive as the cargo had to be unloaded at sea and carried to shore on smaller boats. That represented also a break in the development of the hinterland.

In West Africa were some economically attractive destinations. Lagos was a major supplier of palm oil, palm kernels and other oil materials of the best quality. Most of the oil was sent to Britain, some also to Marseilles, Rotterdam and Hamburg. Ground nut was exported from Gambia with almost the entire harvest being sent to France. The Gold Coast and Sierra Leone supplied rubber – largely to Britain – and began the cultivation of cocoa. From Senegal, France extracted gum and resin. Dakar was later developed to an excellent artificial harbour. Instead of raw materials Britain exported a large quantity of cotton and other industrial products and Germany paid mostly with liquor.⁵¹

The first regular steam-shipping service with West Africa was inaugurated in 1852 by the London-based *African Steam Ship Company*. A ten-year mail contract with a governmental subsidy provided, in addition to commercial activities, some £ 21,250 per annum. This contract and the ones following were not so necessary in regard to the comparatively small mail and passenger traffic, but the British government looked upon the matter as a help in the political and economical development of the region. The effect of this development was a long-term increase of the traded volume between Britain and West Africa and a diversification of traded products and transportation services. With the growth of the European presence in the region the demand for European commodities to be supplied also increased, due to the improved shipping service at convenient rates.⁵² Other trad-

50 G.F. DEASY, "The Harbors of Africa" (*Economic Geography* 18/4, 1942, p. 325–342).

51 Cf. *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, p. 210f.

52 Cf. P.N. DAVIES, *The trade makers. Elder Dempster in West Africa, 1852–1972* (London 1973), p. 29ff.

ing and shipping companies disputed with the *African Steam Ship Company* the business monopoly for West Africa. The *British and African Steam Navigation Company* was registered in 1868. After a short period of competition the management of both firms realised that cooperation would be of mutual profit and entered into a long period of collaboration. *Niger* and later *The Royal Niger Company*, formed in 1879, was granted a charter in the Niger area in 1886 after the Berlin Congo-Conference and since 1889 disputed with the *African Association* the commerce in the Niger region, trying to avoid the middlemen from the coastal regions. The *African Association* was a company formed through the collaboration of several smaller trading firms with an interest in West Africa. The *African Steam Ship Company* and the *British and African Steam Navigation Company* together with the *Woermann Line* from Hamburg established in 1895 the monopolistic *West African Shipping Conference*, which in the next decades managed to control the entire shipping business of Great Britain, continental Europe and North America with West Africa, including postal and passenger transport.⁵³

In South Africa⁵⁴, Cape Town and Durban offered the best conditions. Port Elizabeth and East London were of secondary importance. Both Cape Town and Durban became the two major coal bunkering stations on the route to Australia and the Far East. In Cape Town British coal was to be found at a good price. In Durban, Natal coal could be bought, which was cheaper but energetically inferior to British coal.⁵⁵ Cape Town was long seen as the half-way station to India, which had an overwhelming importance for England in comparison with all other colonies. In 1825, the first pioneer vessel fitted with a steam engine stopped at Cape Town on its way to India. Although in different ways, London, Calcutta and Bombay interest groups worked for the common goal of a regular line served by steamships. At that time the necessities of the South African colonies were met by the irregular sailing transports and no effort was made to initiate scheduled service. After the 'overland route' between Great Britain and India via Alexandria and Suez was established in 1830, reducing the passage to 59 days, the Cape traffic diminished. At the middle of the 19th century pressure grew both in London and South Africa for a regular mail connection with the Cape Colony. The first contract was awarded to the *General Screw Steam Shipping Company* at the end of 1850 for a yearly subsidy of £ 30,750. The inefficient paddle wheel technology began to be replaced by screw propellers. The passage contractually had to be made in 38 days. The biggest problem was the enormous coal consumption and it took some time to organise coaling stations. In 1852, the Cape contract was replaced by a new Indian contract for a monthly connection to India via Ascension, St. Helena, Cape Town, Mauritius, Ceylon, Madras and Calcutta on the east coast. This was doubling the time of the Bombay-Aden connection of the west coast. The company organised also a coastal shipping service by steamers between the Cape and Natal colonies. Due to the still large coal consumption and failing to secure contracts for India, the Cape-Calcutta connection was abandoned already in 1854 and in 1856 the Cape service also had to be ended. In 1857, a monthly mail line was started by the *Union Steam Ship Company* for a yearly subsidy of £ 33,000. The Cape public was excited by the new mail contract, which proved the sentiments of the 'Old country' to her dependency, even if at that time all efforts were directed

53 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 107–113.

54 The excursion on South Africa follows the older work of M. MURRAY, *Ships and South Africa. A maritime chronicle of the Cape* (London 1933), chapters I–X, which still remains unmatched.

55 Cf. A.J. SARGENT, *Seaways of the Empire* (London 1918), p. 1–24.

at the suppression of the Indian mutiny. Between 1864 and 1866 the *Diamond Line* entertained a separate mail service between England and Durban on the East South African coast, which was less profitable and had to be abandoned. Beginning with the 1870s the passage time to the Cape was steadily reduced, as the following registered records demonstrate: in 1871 27½ days, in 1872 24 days and 18 hours and so on until the regular passage time at the turn of the century was 16 days and 20 hours. A new mail contract was awarded in 1876 and divided between the older *Union Company* and the relatively new competitor *Donald Currie Company*. Each of them ran a fortnightly passage, and so the first weekly mail connection between the South African colonies and Great Britain came into existence. In the next years several new companies entered the business shipping to South Africa and the year 1883 saw the formation of the first *South Africa Steam Ship Conference*, an instrument created to retain monopolistic positions for the member companies and to protect them against newcomers. The best position was held by the *Union-Castle Line* of Donald Currie. In 1911/12 this company was taken over by a consortium of the *Royal Mail Steam Packet Company*, which controlled the shipping with Latin America, and *Elder Dempster and Company*, which had the monopoly with the West African traffic, thereby creating the biggest shipping concern of the world. In these years the emigrant lines on route to Australia stopped at Cape Town and thousands of foreign people went weekly through the streets of the city. The yearly passenger traffic exclusively between South Africa and Britain in 1912 was 32,000 persons to South Africa and 27,000 to Britain.⁵⁶

From 1883 to 1888, the South African traffic suffered a depression. To otherwise use the existing capacities the *Union Lines* opened in 1883 a route from Liverpool to Newport News in the US, in cooperation with the *Ohio Railway Company*, which transferred the passengers directly to the railway cars. This route proved economically inefficient and was dropped after only few months. Nevertheless, this was perhaps the first regular integrated travel route between South Africa and North America. In 1898, the *Union Line* started a cargo service again between the US and South Africa: the *American-African Line*. Even earlier, in 1893, the *Bucknall Line* established a direct cargo line on the same route and in 1902 between South Africa and Canada and at the same time with Latin America.

In the 1870s, Britain made efforts to suppress the slave traffic in East Africa. In order to intensify commerce, the government awarded two subsidized mail contracts for the region. The first was awarded in 1873 to the *British East India Company* for monthly courses between Aden and Zanzibar. The second was given to the *Union Line* between Durban and Zanzibar. Being economically inefficient, the *Union Line* abandoned the route in 1881. Eventually, the German *Woermann-Linie* and the *Deutsche Ost-Afrika Linie* took advantage of the gap in service and operated through the Suez Canal down to Durban on the East Coast.⁵⁷

The 19th century generally represented an important revolution in the history of postal communication. The system of a uniform postage tax for the same territory was adopted in 1840 in Great Britain with the *Uniform Penny Post* law, similar to the *Deutsch-Österreichische Postverein* for many German territories beginning in 1850. In 1874, the *General Postal Union* was founded for better postal traffic above the national level. All developments related to improving postal traffic had a direct effect also on the circulation of newspapers, since they were from their beginning as 'newsletters' not only carried by the post, but also partly written by postal agents themselves and aimed to keep state institutions

56 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 16.

57 For more details see K. BRACKMANN, *Fünfzig Jahre deutscher Afrikaschiffahrt* (Berlin 1935).

informed. Consequently, such newsletters, the later newspapers, were treated preferentially regarding the postage rate. In Great Britain, after imposing a general tax on newspapers through an act of Parliament in 1819⁵⁸, the licensed papers – the so-called *stamped* newspapers – were mailed in the British Isles at a rate of 4d a sheet, representing for a whole issue less than the rate of a letter. With the new regulation from 1855 the rate was ½d per sheet so that leading London newspapers amounted to 1½d per copy. In 1866, the rate was lowered again to ½d a copy. According to an official statement of the Post Office from 1870 there were some 70,000,000 newspaper issues transported by the post only in Britain.⁵⁹ In 1913, the privilege of this reduced rate was applied also to the colonial newspapers registered in the different colonies.⁶⁰

The newspapers made up a large part of the overseas postage, representing approximately half of the overseas mail traffic by weight.⁶¹ Further, only a few figures can give a very general idea of the amount of the newspaper issues posted from Britain to the colonies: in 1844 some 74,948 letters and 121,979 newspapers were posted from Great Britain to Australia, both to Melbourne and Sidney, through the subsidised company and the opponents; in 1857, the steamer *Celtic* carried on a voyage to South Africa 11,000 letters and 3,600 newspapers.⁶² The postage rate for newspapers was however tiny in comparison to letters. For example, at the beginning of the 1870s a rate of 2s 6d per lb. for letters was applied and only 3d per lb. for newspapers in the mail to Argentina, the rate for letters being as such ten times higher than that for newspapers.⁶³ At the end of the 1870s, the rate for the mail to the US was 4s per lb. for letters and 4d per lb. for newspapers, and as such newspapers were twelve times cheaper to post.

With the founding of the *General Postal Union* in 1874 an instrument emerged to facilitate the growing demand on postal communication across regional or national borders. At a general conference of the *Postal Union* in 1891 the *Subscriptions to Newspapers and Periodicals Agreement* was adopted as an additional service in order to facilitate the growing and varied postal traffic. Until that time the newspapers had been sent as regular letters or at bulk as packages. With this agreement the possibility to subscribe directly in a foreign country to newspapers and periodicals was opened by establishing general regulations.⁶⁴ The money transfer for this purpose was herewith standardised and simplified. In some countries – as in Germany – such subscriptions were received directly by the postal authority, which intermediated the money transfer to the publisher and the delivery to the subscriber. In other countries – as in Britain – the postal authority only organised at a standard price the delivery service. Even if we do not possess figures regarding the volume of this exchange in issues and money, it is imaginable that the pressure of practical need had led to the negotiation of such an agreement first in 1885 at the general conference in Lisbon and a second time in 1891 in Vienna. In the British Empire, the subscriber generally forwarded the amount in advance as a money order, which functioned in Great Britain as a postal service since 1838 and more flexibly and cheaply after its reformation in 1881. In the long term both the subscription agreement and the money order service made it possible for

58 Cf. ALTICK, *The English common reader*, p. 318ff.

59 Cf. SMITH, *Rates of the Postage*, p. 121, 129ff.

60 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 135.

61 Cf. ROBINSON, *Carrying British mails overseas*, p. 254.

62 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 176, 188f.

63 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 241.

64 Cf. G. RAABE, *Der Postzeitungsdienst*, (Berlin 1926), p. 29–31, 101f.

subscribers from West and South Africa to receive foreign periodicals from the US and Europe. Beginning in 1912, the editor of the *African Times and Orient Review* was able to send issues to his globally spread audience. At the beginning of the 1920s, before being banned, *The Negro World*, the official organ of the UNIA, was subscribed to – at least – by West Africans, using the model of direct subscription to the publisher and payment through money order.⁶⁵

Other forms of bringing the press to the public were local advertisers acting by appointment of the editor or independently. It seems that in remote regions such ‘local agents’ were struggling to find subscribers for certain publications. They had forwarded the subscriptions to the editor, being recompensed in kind – for example with a free subscription for an entire year⁶⁶ – or in cash. Other ‘local agents’ were supplied with published materials in bulk and did their best to spread the issues in the territory, receiving a share of the proceeds. Exceptionally, local editors acted as distributors of foreign press, as *The Lagos Weekly Record* did, supplying the *African Sentinel*, “our London counterpart”.⁶⁷ Indirectly, information about same-minded foreign press in local organs led to an increasing interest by the readership for these periodicals. Such information published as press reviews or short notes on already familiar titles included the address of the foreign editor and subscription rates.⁶⁸ Another way to increase their publicity was to supply the liner companies with a number of free exemplars for the passengers on board on different routes, comparable to the present free distribution of press by some airline companies.⁶⁹ The advantage was that in this way a specific public could be reached during long weeks of travel to the destination. This public might have been already won or had to be won as readers, or potential advertisers.

6. The African Native Press and its Audience: A Short Overview

The presented trends in communication and transport took an accelerated development in the years before 1900 and reached a first summit before WWI. After collapsing under the pressure of war conditions, the same volume was only obtained again decades later in the 1960s, after the debacle of the world wars and the economic crises. Although Africa benefited from these growing trends less than other regions, their influence produced significant social, cultural and economical changes on the continent. In 1900, missionary activities covered large parts of sub-Saharan Africa, missionaries being active for almost a century as in some West and South African regions, or only for decades as in East Africa, Congo or Nigeria. ‘Christianity, commerce and civilisation’ created social and cultural mutations.

65 The subscription letter of the paramount chief Samuel Margai of Lower Banta Chiefdom, Sierra Leone from Sept. 22, 1921: “I enclose money order for £1 1s being cost of two copies each week covering one year. In case of my last subscription having expired, please send me back issues dating from August 13, this year, as I cannot afford to miss the proceedings of this year’s [UNIA] convention.” Quoted from: “Samuel Margi to the Negro World”, in: R.A. HILL (Ed.), *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*. Vol. 9: *Africa for the Africans*. June 1921–December 1922 (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1995), p. 217–218.

66 Cf. *The African Times and Orient Review*, July, 1912, p. 20.

67 *The Lagos Weekly Record*, February 14, 1920, p. 5 and with regularity in other issues such as March 6 and 27, April 10, Mai 15, 22, 29 etc.

68 Cf. *The Gold Coast Leader*, August 28, 1915, p. 5; *The Lagos Weekly Record*, June 5, 1920, p. 6.

69 *The African Times and Orient Review* II/13, July, 1913, p. III (45).

One result was the emergence of the so-called 'Afro-Victorians'.⁷⁰ These 'black gentlemen' spent large parts of their lives under the influence of European culture, being educated in missionary schools in Africa or Europe and becoming professionals such as doctors, merchants, barristers, teachers, bureaucrats, technical personnel etc. in their home countries. The most prominent example is the first African bishop in the Anglican Church, Samuel Ajayi Crowther.⁷¹ The 'Afro-Victorians' reached their first golden era before the 'Scramble for Africa'. Hereafter, the European powers tried to exclude them from participation in the benefits of society and to exploit the same for their specific colonial purposes. Through their own power and sometimes in alliance with the white liberals the natives played continue to an important role in African societies.

In this generally changing pattern, in addition to the Europeanised elite, the mine and harbour workers constituted different social milieus, having emerged as a result of the European activities in Africa. The mining industry became important with the exploitations of diamonds (at Kimberley since 1867), gold (in the Barberton area since 1881, around Johannesburg since 1886), and coal from Natal in Southern Africa. Large harbours at Cape Town and Durban were served by a numerous population of African workers. They were directly connected with black seamen who operated in an important number on British and American ships. All three of these social segments represented a steadily increasing audience for publications and organisations with a political and social message.

Around 1900 a quite impressive number of native press organs existed in Africa.⁷² They were both owned and edited by natives, or only edited by them, belonging mostly to western missions. Some of them were financed with the help of white liberals. This native press – far from being homogeneous concerning its political and social opinions – was the mouthpiece of the native community regarding their problems, and sometimes transported ideas which wouldn't have been housed in pro-colonial publications. It remained loyal to Britain, especially in conflict situations such as the 1899–1902 South African Boer War, but criticised openly and severely the politics of the Colonial Office and territorial authorities. The development of such a press – in English and native languages – during the last decades of the 19th century was the product of the increasing literal education of natives and simultaneously contributed fundamentally to the emerging of a native public which asked for information and was eager to debate, like the following anonymous African reader in 1883:

I hear that you plan to publish a small newspaper for Batswana in their language. How happy we will be if you do that! To tell you the truth, we are tired of rumours, because sometimes when we expect news we hear a rumour, which then needs to be verified by the newspapers of the Europeans. We are also tired of continually asking Europeans about the news of other nations. So, editor, it would really

70 Cf. T.H. PARSONS, "African Participation in the British Empire", in P.D. MORGAN/S. HAWKINS (Eds.), *Black Experience and the Empire* (Oxford, 2004, p. 257–285).

71 Klaus Koschorke has emphasized the attention given to bishop Crowther by Christian journalism in Africa and Asia around the end of the 19th century, him serving as the most prominent example for the achievements of native Christians. Cf. K. KOSCHORKE, "When is India to have her own bishops?" *Der schwarzafrikanische Bischof Samuel Ajayi Crowther* (ca. 1806–1891) in der christlichen Publizistik Asiens und Afrikas im 19. Jahrhundert", in: M. DELGADO/M. SIEVERNICH (Eds.), *Mission und Prophetie in Zeiten der Interkulturalität* (Sonderband der Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft 95; St. Ottilien 2011, p. 315–324).

72 An overview of the African press landscape by A. ROBERTS, "African cross-currents", in: *The Cambridge History of Africa* 7 (Cambridge 1992, p. 223–266), p. 232–237.

help us if you could publish for us the news headlines of the world every month so that we might share in hearing about other people, instead of being left ignorant of other newspapers, as if we are people who do not deserve to be informed about foreign events.⁷³

The beginnings of this press coincided with the printing activities of the European missionaries. They first published readers with biblical texts and small tracts in English and native languages and at a later time diversified their publications also with small missionary journals. Initially, natives were employed in practical jobs, and later the gifted ones accompanied their teachers in the editorial act, learning to manage such a task. As a typical example, many of the first South African publishers and journalists emerged from the South African mission station of the Glasgow Mission Society at Lovedale, after having completed their training at the publication of *The Kaffir Express* beginning in 1870. The following list of some important and long-living periodicals with native involvement before and after 1900 can provide a very general idea of the situation regarding the press landscape in the journalistically most dynamic regions of sub-Saharan Africa:

West Africa⁷⁴

African Interpreter and Advocate (Freetown, Sierra Leone, 1867–1869)
Independent (Freetown, Sierra Leone, 1874–1878)
Gold Coast Times (Cape Coast, Ghana, 1874–1885)
Oserver (Monrovia, Liberia, 1878–1883)
Lagos Observer (Lagos, Nigeria, 1882–1888)
The Sierra Leone Weekly News (Freetown, Sierra Leone, 1884–1922)
The Lagos Weekly Record (Lagos, Nigeria, 1891–1921)
Sierra Leone Times (Freetown, Sierra Leone, 1892–1904)
Gold Coast Chronicle (Accra, Ghana, 1894–1901)
The Lagos Standard (Lagos, Nigeria, 1895–1920)
Gold Coast Independent (Accra, Ghana, 1895–1922)
Gold Coast Leader (Cape Coast, Ghana, 1902–1922)
Liberia Recorder (Monrovia, Liberia, 1902–1906)
Nigerian Chronicle (Lagos, Nigeria, 1908–1915)
The Nigerian Pioneer (Lagos, Nigeria, 1914–1922)

South Africa⁷⁵

Indaba ('The News', Lovedale 1862–1865)
The Kaffir Express (with the Xosa enclosure *Isigidimi Sama-Xosa* until 1876) (Lovedale 1870–1875)
The Christian Express (Lovedale, 1876–1921, succeeded *The Kaffir Express*)
The South African Outlook (Lovedale, 1922ff., succeeded *The Christian Express*)
Imvo Zabantsundu (King William's Town, 1884ff.)
Izwi Labantu (East London, 1901–1909)
The South African Spectator (Cape Town, ca. 1900–1912)
Inkanyiso Yase Natal ('The Natal Light', Pietermaritzburg, 1889–1896)
Ikwezi ('Morning Star', Chumie Mission Station, 1844–1845)
Ilanga Lase Natal ('The Natal Sun', Durban, 1903–1922)
Leselinyana La Lesotho ('The Little Light of Lesotho', 1863–1920s, with many and long gaps)

73 Letter to the editor of *Mahoko a Becwana* (Words of Batswana) I/1, January, 1883, pp. 2f, reprinted in: P.T. MGADLA/S.C. VOLZ (Eds.), *Words of Batswana: Letters to Mahoko a Becwana, 1883–1896* (Cape Town 2006), p. 6f.

74 For a first list of the West African journals I am indebted to Prof. Frieder Ludwig, Hermannsburg; short presentations of both the West and South African press can be found in R. AINSLIE, *The Press in Africa: Communication past and present* (London, 1966).

75 The best description with commentaries of the South African press is still to be found in L. SWITZER/D. SWITZER (Eds.), *The Black press in South Africa and Lesotho: a descriptive bibliographic guide to African, Coloured, and Indian newspapers, newsletters, and magazines, 1836–1976* (Boston 1979); see also L. SWITZER (Ed.), *South Africa's alternative press: voices of protest and resistance, 1880s–1960s* (Cambridge 1997); interesting is also the older work of TH. CUTTEN, *A History of Press in South Africa* (Cape Town 1935), with a chapter on the legislation affecting the press.

South Africa (continued)

Umshumayeli Wendaba ('Publisher of the News', Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in Grahamstown, 1837–1841)

Tsala ea Becoana ('Friend of the Bechuana', Kimberly, 1910–1912)

Tsala ea Batho ('The people's friend', Kimberly, 19012–1915, succeeded *Tsala ea Becoana*)

7. Conclusion

This incomplete list of African press organs – without considering the press of the white colonial class – can only give an idea about the scale and the extent of newspapers in some regions of Africa, involving also an important native journalistic agency. This press is at the same time very strong evidence for the existence of a native public, including not only readers but also listeners of the written word. Thus, the information reached not only a small part of the natives, but an increasingly larger public beyond the elite. The public paid attention not only to the local press, but followed with the same awareness the foreign black press, which dissolved the colonial control on information. In this way, the direct circulation of the foreign black press, or the reprint of information and commentaries from foreign black periodicals in the local journals, became – so the thesis – an important channel which helped Blacks on the different shores of the Atlantic to communicate and interact beyond the networks of western colonialism. Before 1900, the religious Afro-American press played the leading role. Later, secular press organs especially from London took on an important function. The African native press offered an important market place for this exchange, and a reservoir of gifted contributors for other publications.

Thus, the Black Atlantic might be appropriately described as a polycentric web of regional centres connected to each other through the medium of periodicals already at the beginning of the 20th century. The subsequent growth of African Christianity can be suitably understood only from such a polycentric perspective, with Africans taking the leading role. It is the merit of Klaus Koschorke to have highlighted in the context of the German speaking academic community this background of the dynamic growth of African Christianity and its role for the present and future of the World Christianity.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ These dynamics were discussed at the Third International Munich-Freising Conference from September 15–17, 2004 on "African Identities and World Christianity in the 20th Century". The proceedings of the conference were published in: K. KOSCHORKE (Ed.), *African Identities and World Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (StAECG 10, Wiesbaden 2005). Furthermore, the role of journals for the transregional communication and interaction of native Christians in Africa (South and West Africa) and beyond (India and the Philippines) at the turn of the 20th century is the subject of a DFG-sponsored research project based at Klaus Koschorke's chair in Munich, in collaboration with Frieder Ludwig (University of Applied Sciences for Intercultural Theology Hermannsburg).

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Umschlagsbild: Eine Reproduktion des Behaim'schen Globus, entnommen aus einer französischen Enzyklopädie des 19. Jahrhunderts
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Im Jahr 1492 stellte der Nürnberger Kartograf und Entdeckungsreisende Martin Behaim den ältesten heute noch erhaltenen Globus fertig. Er repräsentiert das geografische Wissen seiner Zeit und zeigt Europa, die Umrisse Afrikas sowie die damals bekannten Regionen Asiens. Unglücklicherweise fehlt auf seinem ‚Erdapfel‘ das in demselben Jahr von Christoph Kolumbus ‚entdeckte‘ Amerika. Es dauerte Dekaden, bis sich die Landkarte im Kopf den veränderten Realitäten angepasst hatte. Klaus Koschorke nimmt dies in seinem Aufsatz „Veränderte Landkarten der globalen Christentumsgeschichte“ (2009) zum Ausgangspunkt, um auf die Notwendigkeit neuer Karten der Geschichte des Weltchristentums hinzuweisen.

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Inhalt

Vorwort	IX
Einleitung: Veränderte Landkarten und polyzentrische Strukturen der Christentumsgeschichte – Zum akademischen Wirken Klaus Koschorkes und dem Programm der Festschrift CIPRIAN BURLACIOIU / ADRIAN HERMANN	XI
Wurzeln und Wegmarken MARTIN KOSCHORKE	XLIX
Verzeichnis der Schriften von Klaus Koschorke	LII

I. Antike / Frühmittelalter

1. Frühjüdische und frühchristliche Mystik? Kritische Anmerkungen zu einer populären Strömung in der gegenwärtigen Gnosis-Forschung ENNO EDZARD POPKES	1
2. Polyzentrismus als Merkmal der frühen Christentumsgeschichte ADOLF MARTIN RITTER	15
3. Teilung der Erde. Hippolyt und die Entdeckung des Raumes in der Christentumsgeschichte MARTIN WALLRAFF	27
4. „... , damit so der Frieden der Kirche bewahrt und der Name Gottes gepriesen werden.“ Visitation als Instrument kirchlicher Reorganisation. Die Reise des Mar Aba CLAUDIA RAMMELT	39

II. Neuzeit / Moderne

5. Das afrikanische Vermächtnis des Christentums in Brasilien JOHANNES MEIER	55
6. Einige Merkmale der spanischen Evangelisation der Philippinen MARIANO DELGADO	71

VI	Inhalt		Inhalt	VII
7.	Konstruktion des Anderen. Zum Bild der rumänischen Orthodoxie in Siebenbürgen bei Johannes Honterus (1542/1547) und Johannes Tröster (1666) ANDREAS MÜLLER	85	III. Systematische und theoretische Perspektiven	
8.	Mar Thoma: eine indische Stimme der syrischen Thomaschristenheit in der Interaktion mit deutschen und niederländischen Protestanten MARTIN TAMCKE	95	18. „Polyzentrik des Christentums“ und das Projekt einer Ethnologie des Christentums. Ein Dialogangebot PETER J. BRÄUNLEIN	243
9.	“How small a part of the world”: An 18th-Century Literary Topography of World Christianity in Daniel Defoe’s <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> Trilogy RICHARD FOX YOUNG	111	19. Rethinking Polycentric Structures in the Postcolonial Church: Dangers of “Drone Missiology” or Afghanization of Christianity TEOTONIO R. DE SOUZA	267
10.	Historismus, Vorsehungsglaube und Ethnozentrismuskritik. Herders frühe Geschichtsphilosophie JAN ROHLS	125	20. „Darkness has hit Africa at noon“ – eine Würdigung von Ogbu Kalus Choreographie afrikanischer Christentumsgeschichte ANDREAS HEUSER	275
11.	Transregional Contacts Between Independent Catholic Churches in Asia Around 1900: The Case of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente and the Independent Catholics of Ceylon ADRIAN HERMANN	139	21. Transkulturelle Perspektiven auf polyzentrische Strukturen KLAUS HOCK	295
12.	Women in Mission and Media in English-Speaking West Africa, c. 1890–1930. A Tentative Outline of Developments and Trajectories EMILY PHUTI MOGASE / FRIEDER LUDWIG	151	22. World Christianity on the Scales ELIZABETH KOEPPING	315
13.	„Japanese women and the problems of the present day“ – ein Blick von Umeko Tsuda auf das „Ideal of womanhood“ von vor 100 Jahren CHRISTOPH BURGER	161	23. Pietismus in China? Anmerkungen zum typologischen Pietismusbegriff HARTMUT LEHMANN	331
14.	The Role of the Religious and Secular Black Press in the Forging of the Transatlantic Black Community at the Turn of the 20th Century CIPRIAN BURLACIOIU	169	24. Interkulturelle Theologie – Systematische Theologie – Theologische Ethik. Überlegungen zu ihrem spannungsreichen Verhältnis WOLFGANG LIENEMANN	339
15.	The Southern Shift of Christianity PAUL GIFFORD	189	25. Theologische Ausbildung im Horizont der Weltchristenheit illustriert am Beispiel von Letty Mandeville Russell (1929–2007) CHRISTINE LIENEMANN-PERRIN	369
16.	Wandlung und Polyzentrismus im Lutherischen Weltbund um 1970 JENS H. SCHJØRRING	207	26. 40 Jahre CEHILA: Von der Befreiung der Armen zum Phänomen der Religion. Anmerkungen aus Lateinamerika zur Außereuropäischen Christentumsgeschichte ROLAND SPLIESGART	385
17.	Political Celibacy. 1983 as a Turning Point in the Roman Catholic Church for Priests-Politicians ARMANDO LAMPE	223	27. Mission Studies and Historical Research: Past Trends and Future Trajectories BRIAN STANLEY	403
			Autorenverzeichnis	415



Klaus Koschorke

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Auf dem Weg zu einer polyzentrischen Geschichte
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Festschrift für Klaus Koschorke zum 65. Geburtstag

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