✦ THEOLOGY TODAY

⑤SAGE

New Maps of the History of World Christianity: Current Challenges and Future Perspectives

Klaus Koschorke

Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich, Germany

Abstract

The new global situation of Christianity requires new historiographical approaches. Despite many recent efforts by contemporary historians, we are only at the first stages of drawing up an integrated history of world Christianity. Written from a European academic perspective, this article suggests that comparative studies among different regions of the Christian world and the search for early instances of transcontinental links in the "Global South" are critical to such a new historiography. As an example of such an approach, I introduce a new research project currently underway in Munich that examines journals published by indigenous Christian elites from Asia and Africa around 1900. These journals served not only as a "mouthpiece" for local Christians, but also contributed significantly to their cognitive interaction and transregional networking.

Current challenges

Religious historian Mark A. Noll expresses a sentiment that is shared by many historians today: "The new world situation for the Christian religion demands a new history of Christianity."[1] Over the last 25 years, there has been a boom of

---

1. Mark A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 9.

Corresponding author:
Klaus Koschorke, Evangelisch-Theologische Fakultät, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Geschwister-Scholl-Platz 1, 80539 München, Germany.
Email: klauskoschorke@sunrise.ch

projects attempting just such a new history labeled as "World History of Christianity" (Adrian Hastings), "Global Church History" (Wilbert R. Shenk), "History of the World Christian Movement" (Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist), "Global History of Christians" (Douglas Jacobsen), or "Christianity as a World Religion" (Sebastian and Kirsteen Kim).[2] These various efforts reflect the dramatic changes in the global ecumenical and demographical framework over the last 30 years—what Andrew Walls has labeled as the "shift of centers." In 1900, approximately 82 percent of the Christian world population still lived in the northern hemisphere; since the 1980s, the growing majority is located in the so-called "Global South," in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In 2010, the figure was about 65 percent, and it is growing.

Some of these new historiographies build on earlier initiatives in the field of the history of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Such initiatives arose first in the 1960s in various regional contexts, for example CHAI (the Church History Association in India), then during the 1970s on a continental level, for example CEHILA (the Commission for Church History in Latin America), and eventually in the 1980s in a transcontinental perspective with the creation of EATWOT (the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians). These initiatives focused on the "pioneers of indigenous Christianity" instead of Western agents and analyzed "the creative reception and incarnation of the Gospel in the particular regions in contrast to a recount of missionary endeavors."[3] Other new historiographical concepts developed in response to the rapidly changing demographical situation in many metropolises of the West. The plurality of world Christianity—be it Coptic Christians, Bolivian Pentecostals or Korean Presbyterians—is now to be found among the multiple communities of migrants. Regardless of their originating impulses, all of these projects reflect fundamental changes, both globally and locally, that demand a new map of the history of world Christianity. On the one hand, this new map should provide room for the various denominational, cultural, and contextual expressions of Christianity over the course of 2000 years; on the other hand, it should orient us to an increasingly complex religious and ecumenical landscape.

2. Additional titles include: Adrian Hastings, ed., *A World History of Christianity* (London: Cassell, 1999); David Chidester, *Christianity. A Global History* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000); Dale Irvin and Scott Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, Vol. I/II (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001, 2012); Wilbert R. Shenk, *Enlarging the Story* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002); Fred Norris, *Christianity: A Short Global History* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002); Sebastian and Kirsteen Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion* (London: Continuum International, 2008); Douglas Jacobsen, *The World's Christians: Who They Are, Where They Are, and How They Got There* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); Charles Farhadian, ed., *Introducing World Christianity* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). Particularly worth mentioning is the *Cambridge History of Christianity*, Vol. XIII, ed. Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley, and Volume IX, ed. Hugh McLeod (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006).

3. Kaj Baago, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1969); Lukas Vischer, ed., *Towards a History of Church History in the Third World. The Issue of Periodization* (Bern: Evangelische Arbeitsstelle Oekumene Schweiz, 1984), 131.

Despite many recent attempts, we are still at the first stages of drawing up such an integrated history of world Christianity. The many individual maps required to compose this new overarching map are quite heterogeneous in quality and origin. Alongside the most recent cartographies, which provide detailed studies of the history of the respective churches or movements, we have for other regions of the world only outdated maps that focus on bygone missionary stations or hagiographical sketches. Various new publications resort to juxtaposing more or less unconnected regional or local histories; such efforts might be described as a "bookbinder's synthesis," that simply "add and stir" a few isolated examples from the South to traditional Western-centered syllabi.

The growing monopoly of the English language in the field creates yet a different problem. While there are an increasing number of cross-cultural studies related to different regions or societies in the South available in English, research results and traditions in other languages, for example, in Spanish for Latin America, or French for francophone Africa, are often not taken into account. Digitalization projects have made many important sources, which previously slumbered in dusty archives, accessible for the first time to a wider public. At the same time, they mostly utilize the large colonial and missionary archives, thereby strengthening the metropolitan perspective in contrast to previous initiatives to document the "pioneers of indigenous Christianity" often through newly erected local archives.

The need for an expanded map of the history of world Christianity

As the holder of the only chair in church history at a Protestant faculty in the German-speaking academia that specializes in the history of world Christianity, I view the main challenge in my context to be the outdated curricula, which still reflect a rather limited Germanocentric, or at the best, Eurocentric perspective. Both in textbooks and in terms of academic organization, the world outside Europe is not really taken into account. Names such as Bartholomé de las Casas, a prominent critic of the Spanish *conquista*, S.A. Crowther, the first African bishop in modern times, or V.S. Azariah, a pioneer of Asian Ecumenism, often cannot be found in the respective indices of textbooks. This is especially problematic because church history as an academic discipline—as it is currently being taught at German universities and in spite of many remarkable innovations—risks studying an ever-shrinking part of the history of world Christianity which elsewhere is expanding. There are various reasons for this situation. The traditional distinction between church history and the history of missions combined with the tendency to assign the Christian history of the Global South to the history of missions is one factor. Another is the concern that traditional themes and paradigms of church history will lose their significance.

But the global reorientation of the field by no means signifies the devaluation of classical forms of historical work. Rather the challenge is to place the various particular regional or confessional histories on an enlarged map of the global

history of Christianity and to perceive them as parts of a larger whole. Even attending to the synchronicity of certain events and movements, I contend, can spark new insights. For example, Emperor Charles V, who is dealt with extensively in every course in Germany on the history of the Reformation, was not only the deciding opponent of the Lutheran movement, but at the same time the overlord of the Spanish Conquista, in whose wake the Catholic overseas mission of the early modern age took place. So, too, Thomas de Vio Cajetan was not only the cardinal who interrogated Luther in Augsburg in 1518, but also the superior—and notably supporter—of Bartolomé de las Casas, the most important critic of colonialism in this era. The reception of the anti-Protestant resolutions of the Council of Trent coincided in the New World, for example, in Mexico, with the end of quite remarkable indigenization efforts, such as the production of Christian literature in various native American languages. Not only was Pope Leo X the head of the Church to whom Luther addressed his "Treatise on Christian Liberty" and who excommunicated the reformer, he also received letters—which is little known—from an African monarch, King Afonso I (1465?–1543), the ruler of the Christian Congo-Empire who initiated the Christianization of his land partly even against the resistance of the Portuguese (who were primarily interested in slave trade) and whose successor was awarded the honorary title, *Defensor fidei*. Even less widely known is the fact that many Christianized Congolese, who were brought to the Americas as slaves, became active in evangelizing their compatriots in South Carolina, Haiti, and Brazil. As John Thornton notes,

> The conversion of (American) Africans actually began in Africa, and modern scholarship has largely overlooked this aspect of the problem. Much of the Christianity of the African world was carried across the seas to America. In addition to the Africans who were themselves Christians, there were also the catechists who helped to generate an African form of Christianity among the slaves who were not Christians.

Thus, we can describe the conversion of Africa, in Thornton's words, "as a continuous process, commencing in Africa and carrying over to the New World."[4]

Comparative studies: Church independency and national church movements in Africa and Asia around 1910

One important instrument for developing a new map of the history of global Christianity is comparative studies of different regions of the Christian world, especially those in the Global South, in order to identify analogous and divergent developments. What was happening at a given time in neighboring or far-distant

---

4. J.K. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), 254, 262. Cf. Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007), and Jason R. Young, *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2007).

countries? How did Christians in various colonial societies and missionary contexts react to comparable challenges? Often new insights are produced simply by directing the same questions to different addressees whose history has been studied previously in isolation from one other, or only as it relates to developments in the West. In the process, new overarching structures, developments, and trends may become visible.[5]

The genesis of independent churches in Africa and Asia around 1900 serves as an excellent example of the value of comparative studies. It is a well-established fact that African Independent (respectively Instituted) Churches were crucial for the development and explosive growth of African Christianity in the twentieth century. They arose around the turn of the century simultaneously in West and South Africa (and later also in Central and East Africa) as protest movements by Western-educated "native" Christian elites against the paternalism and, especially in Southern Africa, the increasing racism of Western missionaries. While demanding and implementing *African leadership* (often basing their claims on "Ethiopia" as a symbol of both ecclesial and political independence), they nonetheless followed—at least at an early stage—the organizational patterns and worship forms of the missionary churches from which they broke away.[6] African Independent Churches (AICs) have become the subject of intensive research especially with

---

5. Comparative studies are one of the central characteristics of the Munich School of World Christianity. They are the organizing principle of the Munich–Freising Conferences and the documentary history which has been published, alongside with a German and Spanish edition, in 2007 in English: Klaus Koschorke, Frieder Ludwig, and Mariano Delgado, eds., *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa and Latin America 1450–1990. A Documentary Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007). Cf. Klaus Koschorke, ed., *"Christen und Gewürze" in Konfrontation und Interaktion kolonialer und indigener Christentumsvarianten* (Studies in the History of Christianity in the Non-Western World, 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1998); Koschorke, ed., *Transcontinental Links in the History of Non-Western Christianity* (Studies in the History of Christianity in the Non-Western World, 6; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002); Koschorke, ed., *Falling Walls. The Year 1989/90 as a Turning Point in the History of World Christianity* (Studies in the History of Christianity in the Non-Western World, 15; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009); Koschorke, "History of Christianity in Asia and Africa in Comparative Perspective," in *African Identities and World Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (Studies in the History of Christianity in the Non-Western World, 10; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 261–76.

6. Representatives of the first generation of African Church Independency were, inter alia, Mojola Agbebi's Ebenezer Native Baptist Church in Lagos 1888, the United Native African Church 1891, the African Church Organization 1901, also in Lagos and in Pretoria in 1892 the Ethiopian Church of the former Methodist preacher Mangena Maake Mokone. Cf. Ogbu Kalu, ed., *African Christianity: An African Story* (Pretoria: Dep. of Church History, University of Pretoria, 2005), 308–29; Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450–1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 478ff.; Klaus Hock, *Das Christentum in Afrika und dem Nahen Osten* (Leipzig: Evang. Verl.-Anst, 2005), 141ff.; Michael C. Kitshoff, ed., *African Independent Churches Today: Kaleidoscope of Afro-Christianity* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1996); Timothy H. Parsons, "African Participation in the British Empire," in *Black Experience and the Empire*, ed. Philipp D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins (Oxford: Oxford University, 2004), 257–86; James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion: The African Episcopal Church in the US and South Afri*ca (Oxford: Oxford University, 1995).

regard to the successive waves and transformations of AICs and their later remark-able spread even outside of Africa.

Yet it has only been occasionally observed—and never in a systematic way—that similar movements developed in Asia around the turn of the century. In Asia one finds analogous constellations, such as the emancipatory struggle of indigenous Christian elites, who, despite their minority status, considered them-selves to be the spearhead of the moral, social, and religious uplifting of their respective countries and sought to improve their restricted rights in the mission churches. So, too, in Asia the famous ''Three Self'' formula, originally a missionary concept, with its demand for a self-governing, self-extending, and self-supporting native church, was turned against the Western-dominated mission organizations and their growing tendency to postpone the promised ''native leadership'' and self-government into an indefinite future. Just as in Africa here, too, close links existed between the ecclesial independence movements and the political aspirations of the emerging national movements. The protest against missionary dominance was often voiced as a call to overcome European ''sectarianism'' and the confessional differences imported from the West in favor of a united church in a national framework.

The ''National Church of India'' exemplifies such an experiment. Established in Madras in 1886, it sought to unite all Indian Christians, irrespective of their denominational affiliation, into one self-governing and financially independent national church. It intended ''to encourage independence and self-reliance...and self-government'' among Indian Christians and declared its aim as that of ''uniting the various denominations, and to have one united Church as suited to the national peculiarities and instincts of the people.''[7] A group of South Indian Christians, including socially high-ranking and financially independent persons such as law-yers, teachers, doctors, and clerks, initiated this project, which in turn inspired similar enterprises in other parts of India. As the physician Pulney Andy, a high-caste convert and the leading figure in the movement expressed it, the National Church of India sought to achieve the independence within the Church that Indians could not achieve in politics. At the first anniversary of the National Church in Madras 1887, Andy declared,

> The need for a United [National] Church in India [is] very great....[There is need for a] church that will not reflect Scotch Presbyterianism, nor English Anglicanism, nor German Lutheranism, but which will combine into a harmonious whole the best features of all denominations, and be suited to the social instincts and national char-acteristics of the native converts. Christianity has in India been molded too much after European pattern, and Missionaries have been a little over-anxious to perpetuate their own Church peculiarities.[8]

---

7. National Church of India. First annual report (Madras n.d. [1886–87]), 35.

8. National Church of India. Proceedings of the First anniversary (Madras n.d. [1887]), 49.

Furthermore, he explained the relationship to the Indian political national movement in this way:

> The object and aim of the National Church movement is to establish in India a Church which shall . . . be characterized by its sympathy with the national sentiments and aspirations of Indians, and profit by oriental modes of thought and religious peculiarities in the local development of spiritual truths . . . The movement is not very wide-spread at present, but it probably will set in like a flood, as soon as denominational Christian societies withdraw from supporting Christian churches, in order to direct attention more exclusively to purely evangelistic operations in India and other localities.[9]

In its initial years, the National Church of India was met with great enthusiasm. Later, support faded away and finally in 1930 it had to be dissolved as its financial resources proved too limited. The same happened to other movements such as the "Christo Samaj," established in Calcutta in 1887.[10] Nevertheless, these experiments had a lasting impact. They inspired similar undertakings, both within and outside the mission churches, and considerably influenced public debates in colonial and missionary India.

Similar Church independence movements existed in other Asian countries. This applies both to countries under colonial rule such as Ceylon or Burma (today Myanmar) and to those free of it, such as Japan where the "Non-Church-Movement" (Mukyôkai) of Uchimara Kanzo (1861–1930) deserves special attention. In republican China, notable examples are the 'True Jesus Church," the "Jesus Family," and the "China Christian Independent Church Federation." Since the so-called Boxer's uprising in 1900 there was a growing tendency among Chinese Christians to seek new forms of Christianity free from the dominance of foreign missionaries. As early as 1902, an all-Chinese Christian organization was established in Shanghai called the "Chinese Christian Union," which a year later started a quarterly magazine, *The Chinese Christian* (*Zhongguo Jidutubao*). In 1906, an independent, all-Chinese organization was formed called the Chinese Christian Independent Church (Zhonghua Yesujiao zilihui). Its constitution stated that the independent church was to be separated from any foreign missionary societies.[11]

---

9. National Church of India. Proceedings of the Third anniversary (Madras n.d. [1890]), 107. Not surprisingly, all prominent promoters of the National Church movement were among the Christian delegates at the session of the Indian National Congress in Madras 1887 and Allahabad 1888 (George Thomas, *Christian Indians and Indian Nationalism 1885–1950* [Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1970], 81).

10. For details see Koschorke, *History of Christianity*, 275ff.

11. Peter Tze Ming Ng, "Development of Indigenous Christianity in China before and after the Edinburgh Conference 1910," in *Phases of Globalization in the History of Christianity*, ed. Klaus Koschorke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 285–302; cf. D.H. Bays, *Christianity in China from the 18th Century to the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1996), 307ff.;

Nor was the strife for Church independency limited to Protestant milieus. For example, in the Philippines with its Catholic majority and 350 years of Spanish colonial rule, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente of the former Catholic priest Gregorio Aglipay deserves special attention. Founded in 1902 by the journalist, nationalist, and social activist Isabelo de los Reyes, the Iglesia Filipina Independiente comprised at one time about 20 percent of the Filipino population and still exists today.

Needless to say, not all of these movements were successful. Some of them disappeared after some time while others continue until today. They were usually initiated and supported by different groups of the Christian intelligentsia at that time—former priests, mission clerks or other Western-educated lay people who had been trained at mission schools or in other Christian institutions. Regardless of these movements' origins, the situation in Christian Asia and Africa around 1910 cannot be understood without paying proper attention to these emerging indigenous Christian elites. This becomes patently obvious from looking at the Edinburgh Conference of 1910 for which the "awakening of great nations" in Asia (and Africa) belonged to the decisive signs of the "current situation" in the "non-Christian world."[12] The central question was whether these "awakening nations" would go their own way with or without Christ. Manifold deliberations in missionary circles focused on the future of these—hopefully Christian—modern indigenous elites.

"To give publicity to our thoughts...": The native press and the emergence of a transregional indigenous Christian public sphere

These indigenous Christian elites or "educated natives" as they were labeled in the colonial discourse at that time—are the focus of a major new research project in Munich. The key sources are the journals and periodicals that were published in West Africa, South Africa, India, and the Philippines around 1900.[13] Quite different from missionary journals, which have attracted considerable attention in recent research by historians of globalization and other scholars, these journals edited by local Christians often go unnoticed and are seldom studied in a systematic fashion

---

D.H. Bays, "Indigenous Protestant Churches in China, 1900–1937," in *Indigenous Responses to Western Christianity*, ed. S. Kaplan (New York: New York University, 1996), 124–43.

12. World Missionary Conference, 1910, Vol. IX (Edinburgh, 1911), 108.

13. The title of this research project conducted in cooperation with the University of Göttingen/ Hermannsburg is "Indigenous Christian Elites from Asia and Africa around 1900 as Reflected in Their Journals and Periodicals: Patterns of Cognitive Interaction and Early Forms of Transregional Networking." First samples can be found in the articles by Adrian Hermann, Ciprian Burlacioiu, Emily Phuti Mogase, and Frieder Ludwig in *Veränderte Landkarten. Auf dem Weg zu einer polyzentrischen Geschichte des Weltchristentums. Festschrift für Klaus Koschorke*, ed. Ciprian Burlacioiu and Adrian Hermann (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 139ff., 151ff., 169ff.

or a comparative approach. Although they were limited in printed copies and often quite short-lived due to ongoing financial difficulties, some of these journals enjoyed wide circulation and helped to establish links with compatriots and coreligionists in other regions. These journals are significant as an expression of the growing self-confidence of the local Christian elites and their contribution to the political and religious discourses at that time. They are key elements of what the Munich project describes as the formation of a "transregional indigenous-Christian public sphere."

"The period when newspapers begin to live in the history of any people is an important era," proclaims proudly the first issue of the bilingual *Kaffir Express*. First established in 1871 in South African Lovedale (Cape Province), the *Kaffir Express* quickly developed into the "first independent African newspaper in Southern Africa."[14] It transmitted ecclesial, political, and religious news from all over the world and addressed "the intelligent portion of the native community who are able to read or have an interest in what is going on in the world beyond their own dwellings."[15] Similarly, in 1891 in South African Natal, the newly established journal *Inkanyiso* presented itself proudly as the dawn of a new era:

> "Ikanyiso" or "The Enlightenment" is the first Native Journal in Natal, and the second of its kind in South Africa. Although it is published chiefly for the benefit of the Natives, by having a column or two in English, we wish to give publicity to our thoughts . . . It is the general feeling amongst Natives that their grievances are frequently not heard.

The journal intends to serve as "their mouthpiece" (Jan 3, 1891). Just a few years later, *Inkanyiso*, which until then had been nominally under missionary supervision, announced proudly that it had passed "entirely into the hands of the Natives. It has long been their organ," but now it has been officially taken over by them "as their own property" (Jan 4, 1895).

The *Christian Patriot* was established in *Madras* (modern Chennai), the center of a small but influential elite of South Indian Christians in 1890. The journal's name signified its agenda: to be engaged as Christians in the lifting-up of the nation and, at the same time, to promote the "moral, social, intellectual and spiritual progress" of the Christian community. "Owned and conducted entirely by members of the Native Christian community the Christian Patriot will give expression to the sentiments and aspirations of Native Christians" (Feb 1, 1896). As the editors wrote in February 19, 1916, 25 years after its founding, the journal exists

---

14. L. Switzer and D. Switzer, Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho: A Descriptive Bibliographic Guide to African, Coloured and Indian Newspapers, Newsletters and Magazines 1836–1976 (Boston: Hall, 1979), 49f.

15. *Kaffir Express* 1 (October 1, 1870), 1.

to express our views on the various social, political and economic movements set on foot for the advancement of India. We are helping to promote the communal consciousness of Indian Christians, so widely scattered over India and so sadly divided by denominational and other differences, and bring about greater unity and solidarity ... We try to bring the various Christian organisations throughout India, Burma, Ceylon, Straits and South Africa, in close touch with one another, and by recording their activities, help to stimulate and co-ordinate their effort.

In other words, one of the central aims of the *Christian Patriot* was the networking and establishing of close links among Christian Indians who were geographically scattered and separated along denominational lines. The journal offers an impressive case study of what Benedict Anderson has described in another context as the formation of imagined communities through the medium of the press.[16]

To take a different example, the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente Revista Catolica* was established in 1903 in the Philippines as an advocate of ecclesial autonomy. Distributed ''in the whole Philippines'' jointly with a trade union magazine, *La Redencion del Obrero*, these two periodicals had more or less the same readership—a fact which evinces the close connection between ecclesial, social, and political emancipation. Likewise, in West Africa, journals such as the *Gold Coast Methodist Times*, which were under African management and editorship, did not confine themselves to church news, but intended ''to make the people feel that they had in the columns of the journal a mouth-piece'' in their manifold troubles.[17]

What were the major themes discussed in these heterogeneous periodicals? Naturally, they varied according to the local circumstances and the programmatic focus of the individual journals. Nevertheless, specific questions such as the relationship to the respective national movements, the role of European missionaries or members of religious orders, the position of native clergy, or the handling of one's own cultural heritage appear with considerable regularity in different contexts. As such, these publications provide a fascinating window into the debates and controversies of native Christians in various colonial societies of Asia and Africa around the turn of the twentieth century. Moreover, they allow one to identify specific similarities and differences.

Of special interest is the issue of cognitive interaction. What did the readers learn about the situation of Christians and churches in other regions or ''mission fields''? For example, in India in the 1890s, intensive debates about native episcopacy and indigenous leadership took place. News about African bishops in faraway Nigeria was received with great interest and stimulated debates about their own Indian candidates. In 1898, the *Christian Patriot* reprinted an article from a CMS

---

16. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006).

17. It was first the church and then the press that fostered West African nationalism, says E.A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria* (London: Longmans, 1966), 175.

magazine about "The Queen and the African Bishops" adding just one single sentence of comment: "When is India to have her own native bishops?" (*CP* June 18, 1898). Not only Sierra Leone, but also the "Uganda Church," were portrayed as "An Object Lesson to Indian Christians," because it "has made gigantic strides towards self-government" (*CP* Mar 3, 1905). Similarly other Asian countries and churches, specifically those in Japan, were presented as a model for India due to the progress they had made under the modernizing influence of "Christianity and Christian civilization" (*CP* Apr 30, 1905). So, too, considerable attention was paid both to the "Negro Problem in America" (*CP* Sep 11, 1897) as well as to the deplorable working conditions of Indian indentured laborers and Christian compatriots in South Africa (*CP* Nov 5, 1896). For the South African readers of *Inkanyiso* the issue of "industrial education," as it was being taught at mission schools, was of crucial importance. That is why they looked, quite remarkably, to Jamaica as the place where "Christianity and Civilisation . . . make rapid progress" and the churches are self-supporting, self-extending and self-governing, as the result of industrial training (*Inkanyiso* Dec 31, 1891). India was also presented as advanced in terms of educational facilities, and the Indian migrants in Natal were looked to with a mixture of admiration and fear. Finally, Filipino independent Catholics learned through the press about the existence of independent Catholics in Ceylon and India, who for their part sent letters to Manila asking for, among other things, priests.

The case of Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1808–91), "the slave boy who became bishop," raised especially widespread interest and discussion not only in the Christian press of Asia and Africa, but also in Argentina and Canada.[18] In South Africa, for example, the aforementioned *Kaffir Express* (Jan 10, 1870) presented him over against British racism as "living proof of what can be done by the Gospel and education." Meanwhile in India as early as 1873, both supporters and opponents of an Indian episcopacy referred to Crowther as example: "Bishop Crowther, they think, has done well in Africa, and a bishop of a portion of Tinnevelly would do equally well" (*Madras Mail* Mar 24, 1873). Already in 1852, a Red Indian pastor from Canada was compared in the missionary press to the famous Crowther; he himself had sent letters of congratulation in 1851 to some Indian colleagues in Bombay after having learned from the press about their ordination. What we can observe here, as well as in other such examples, is the formation of a transcontinental space of communication between native Christians from various parts of the world and the beginnings of a transregional "indigenous Christian public sphere."

18. For details see Klaus Koschorke, "When is India to have her own native bishops?' Der schwarz-afrikanische Bischof Samuel Ajayi Crowther (ca. 1806–1891)," in *Mission und Prophetie der christlichen Publizistik Asiens und Afrikas im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. M. Delgado and M. Sievernich (St. Ottilien: EOS-Verlag, 2011), 315–24.

Quite frequently such cognitive interaction through the press led to direct contacts. Indian Christians, for example, regarded Japan after 1904–05 as a leading power of the future and an example of the modernizing effect of Western Christian civilization. In 1906 they organized a visit by two prominent Japanese Christians to India to talk about the issue, "How may India profit from Japan?" Their tour through many Indian cities from Lahore in the North to Madras in the South was a triumph, and they provided a threefold response to this question: first, forget Western denominationalism and "sectarianism"; second, indigenous church leadership; and third, women's education. Furthermore, mutual visits and the sending of Indian students to Japan were agreed upon, and in 1907 a strong Indian delegation attended the Conference of the World Students Christian Federation in Tokyo. This was already three years before Edinburgh 1910, the first ecumenical gathering in Asia with a majority of Asian delegates. During these discussions, strong emphasis was placed upon the responsibility and the importance of native church organizations instead of missionary endeavors, and the conference served as platform for the emerging "educated" Christian elites of the continent.

The African Orthodox Church (AOC) provides another impressive example of transregional links that were established through the press. Founded in 1921 in New York, this black church had three years later a branch in South Africa, and by 1929 also one in Uganda and Kenya. In both instances, the first contacts were established through news in Marcus Garvey's *The Negro World*. In South Africa, the first members joined the AOC, with its headquarters in the US, prior to any exchange of letters or a personal visit by its leader (and future Archbishop) D.W. Alexander in New York, which only took place in 1927–28. In this way, the AOC, which still exists today in numerous countries, is a remarkable example of a church founded as the result of reading newspapers.[19]

The last mentioned example is also paradigmatic of early South–South connections, a phenomenon that can be observed not only since World War II (which often has been labeled "postcolonial" or "postmissionary"), but from the very beginnings of modern history. To discover such early instances of transcontinental interactions between different regions of the Christian world is a promising area of research that will contribute significantly to a more "polycentric" understanding of the history of world Christianity.[20] Certainly, the Western missionary movement has been, temporally and regionally, an important factor in the formation of overseas churches, but it is just *one* factor among others. A multitude of regional centers of expansion, indigenous initiatives, and local versions of Christianity must also be

---

19. A monograph on the African Orthodox Church is forthcoming from Ciprian Burlacioiu (Munich) in 2014.

20. "Polycentric Structures in the History of World Christianity" was the focus of the Sixth International Munich–Freising Conference (July 4–7, 2013). The proceedings, edited by Klaus Koschorke and Adrian Hermann, will be published in 2014 (Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden).

taken into account. In describing the global dimensions of Christianity, proper attention must be paid to these polycentric structures.

Christian internationalisms around 1910

This brings me to a final point: the multiplicity of Christian internationalisms and transregional and transcontinental networks around 1910. In the year 1910 the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, which is often described as both the peak of the missionary movement of the nineteenth century and the birth hour of the ecumenical movement of the twentieth, took place. Far too little attention has been paid, however, to the extent in which Edinburgh responded to the debates and developments in the "younger" churches in Asia and Africa. As I have argued elsewhere, Edinburgh received key impulses from these younger churches and in a ping-pong fashion returned them in a reinforced way.

Around 1910 a broad variety of transregional or transcontinental Christian networks existed—some of them were mission-controlled, others non-missionary or even anti-missionary in character, and others somewhere in-between. To the non-missionary (or even explicitly anti-missionary networks) belong pan-African and Ethiopianist movements in the context of the "black Atlantic," such as the aforementioned AOC or the African Methodist Episcopalian Church (AME), with a strong presence both in the US and in Southern Africa. In Asia, it was the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the regional branches of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) that served as a training ground for indigenous leadership and as a platform for communication between Christian elites from various parts of the continent. Of equal importance was the connection among and care for Christian compatriots in the diaspora by the respective Indian, Korean, and Japanese churches, or the foundation of indigenous missionary societies such as the "National Missionary Society" of India. Established in 1905, it followed the principle "Indian men, Indian money, Indian leadership" and worked outside missionary control. It became active in India itself, in neighboring countries such as Burma and Singapore and even in South Africa.[21]

Missionary channels of communication were being used not only by the missionary headquarters in the West, but increasingly also by the Asian and African Christians. This development can be seen, for example, from the National Missionary Councils (respectively National Christian Councils) in various Asian countries which sprung forth originally from the Edinburgh Continuation Committee Conferences in the region in 1912–13. Since 1922, they formed the nucleus of future self-government of the former mission churches and staging posts of the emerging ecumenical movement in Asia. The World Missionary Conference at Tambaram in 1938, which was held for the first time in an Asian

---

21. Cf. Donald F. Ebright, "The National Missionary Society of India, 1905–1942" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1944); Susan B. Harper, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop V.S. Azariah and the Travails of Christianity in British India* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 83ff.

country, was also the first ecumenical conference with a majority of delegates from the Global South—from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.[22]

Transcontinental networks, such as those described above, demonstrate that while Christianity has been global from its beginnings, it rediscovered its globality in a new way around the turn of the twentieth century. Early South–South links played a critical role in that rediscovery of the global dimensions of Christianity. A future history of world Christianity will have to pay close attention to these different transregional and transcontinental connections, specifically among the churches in the Global South, and the manifold forms of Christian internationalism that developed at that time. In order to understand current world Christianity we will need new maps of its history. Such new maps can only be drawn up through intensified interdisciplinary and cross-cultural cooperation.

Author biography

Klaus Koschorke is Professor Emeritus at the University of Munich (LMU), Germany, where he held the Chair of Early and Global History of Christianity until 2013. He is Visiting Professor at Liverpool Hope University (UK) and Basel University (Switzerland) and has also taught in various places in Asia. He has published extensively on the history of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and on processes of globalization in the history of world Christianity. His recent publications include *Phases of Globalization in the History of Christianity* (Harrassowitz, 2012); *The Dutch Reformed Church in Colonial Ceylon (18th Century)* (Harrassowitz, 2011); and: *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa and Latin America, 1450–1990. A Documentary Sourcebook* (Eerdmans, 2007, co-edited with F. Ludwig and M. Delgado).

---

22. For Edinburgh 1910 as "relay station" cf. Klaus Koschorke, "Edinburgh 1910 als Relaisstation. Das 'Erwachen großer Nationen,' die nationalkirchlichen Bewegungen in Asien (und Afrika) und die Weltchristenheit," in K. Koschorke (ed.), *Phases of Globalization in the History of Christianity* (StAECG 19; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 273–84; for Tambaram 1938 as transcontinental platform, cf. Frieder Ludwig, *Zwischen Kolonialismuskritik und Kirchenkampf. Interaktionen afrikanischer, indischer und europäischer Christen während der Weltmissionskonferenz Tambaram 1938* (Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 2000).