16. History of Christianity in Africa and Asia in comparative perspective

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I. Introduction

The growing importance of Africa in the context of World Christianity requires new approaches in historiography. Many new projects have been undertaken, both in the field of African Christian history and in historical studies on World Christianity. Whereas in 1971 authorities like J.F.A. Ajayi and E.A. Ayandele had to complain bitterly about the lack of research on African initiatives and local actors in the field of African church history[1], now there is a flood of publications and research projects dealing not only with African instituted churches and movements, but also with numerous other aspects of the history of Christianity in Africa. African as well as Western authors have provided descriptions of the history of Africa within regional[2] and continental[3] perspectives. Projects such as the Database of African Initiated Churches and African Church Leaders[4], the Dictionary of African Christian Biography[5], research on intercultural processes in different regions[6] and the growing number of biographies of African Christian leaders[7] prepare a richness of materials, which still needs to be evaluated fully. Research and Documentation Centres in various parts of Africa[8] and projects based in Western Universities[9] as well as numerous local field

1   J.F.A. AJAYI/E.A. AYANDELE, "Writing African Church History", in: P. BEYERHAUS/C.F. HALLENCREUTZ (Eds.), *The Church Crossing Frontiers* (Uppsala 1971), 90-108.
2   T.T. SPEAR /I.N. KIMAMBO (Eds.), *East African Expressions of Christianity* (Oxford 1999); R. ELPHICK /R. DAVENPORT (Eds.), *Christianity in South Africa*. A Political, Social and Cultural History (Oxford 1997); S. LANNEH, *West African Christianity*. The Religious Impact (Maryknoll 1983); etc.
3   Particularly of interest are the descriptions from: A. HASTINGS, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950* (Oxford 1994); B. SUNDKLER /CHR. STEED, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge 2000); J. BAUER, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa, 62 -1992* (Nairobi 1994); E. ISICHEI, *A History of Christianity in Africa* (London 1995); and – most recently – O. KALU /I.W. HOFFMEYR (Eds.), *African Christianity: An African Story* (Pretoria 2005) which seeks to "tell the story of African Christianity as an African story, by intentionally privileging the patterns of African agency without neglecting the noble roles played by the missionaries".
4   See www.geocities.com/missionalia/aic.htm.
5   Cf. J.J. BONK, "The Dictionary of African Christian Biography" (*Missiology* XXVII, 1999, 71-83); ID., "How the DACB began, and where it is going" (www.dacb.org/introduction.html).
6   Cf. e.g. C.K. OMARI, *God and Worship in traditional Asu Society* (Makumira 1990); A. ADAMAVI-AIJO EKUÉ, *"Und sie denken, du bist eine mamissi ...".* Geistinhabitation in einem Frauenkult und ihre Adaptation im Kontext afrikanischer Christen in Süd-Togo (Hamburg 1996).
7   Cf. e.g. S. ABUN-NASR, *Afrikaner und Missionar*. Die Lebensgeschichte des David Asante (Basel 2003); U. VAN DER HEYDEN, *Martinus Sewushan*. Nationalhelfer, Missionar und Widersacher der Berliner Missionsgesellschaft im Süden Afrikas (Neuendettelsau 2004).
8   Such as the Akrofi-Christaller Centre at Akropong/Ghana; Uganda Christian University, Mukono/Uganda; St. Paul's United Theological College, Limuru/Kenya; Tumanini University, Makumira/Tanzania: UNISA.

studies and oral history projects have produced varied perspectives on the history of African Christianity that were previously not available.

At the same time there has also been a remarkable increase in attempts to develop a Global Church History which reflects the changed realities and pays proper attention to the non-Western experience. From the paucity of writing by people such as Kenneth S. Latourette, Stephen Neill, Bengt Sundkler, H.W. Gensichen and Andrew Walls, there has been a flood of publications seeking to grapple with the significance of the shift of the centres of gravity of Christianity from the North to the South. To mention just a few recently published titles in English: Adrian Hastings, *A World History of Christianity* (London 1999); David Chidester, *Christianity. A Global History* (San Francisco 2000); Dale Irvin/ Scott Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*. Vol. I (Maryknoll 2001); Fred Norris, *Christianity: A Short Global History* (Oxford 2002); Paul R. Spickard /Kevin M. Cragg, *A Global History of Christians* (Grand Rapids 1994), and others more. Publications such as Philip Jenkins' much hailed: *The Next Christendom* (Oxford 2002) present the reality of global Christianity to a wider audience. Even among more conservative academic circles and in countries with less historical overseas ties there is a growing insight that Christianity is no longer limited to its traditional centres in the Northern hemisphere and that its history in Asia, Africa and Latin America cannot be dealt with simply under the rubric of mission history.

Important and exciting as many of the new studies are, they often convey the impression that we are still at the beginning of the project of an integrated history of World Christianity. While the process of coming to terms with the global scope of Christian faith certainly is not new, at the same time there are difficulties with some of the emerging scholarship. There remains a tendency for the needs of Northern churches to dictate the terms in which Southern Christianity is understood and used. In other accounts the global perspective is limited to the juxtaposition of unconnected regional or continental histories. Adrian Hastings otherwise most deserving *World History of Christianity* (London 1999) for example, consists of loosely connected chapters on "India", "Africa", "Reformation and Counter Reformation" in Western Europe, "Eastern Europe", "Latin America", "China" and "Australasia and the Pacific" – each chapter following a different pattern while some areas are neglected.[10] In this and similar publications, the question of interactions between the various regional centres of Christianity or the issue of parallel movements and specific differences of development in various parts of the Christian World is seldom raised, and the identification of common themes for Christians in different cultural contexts is often neglected. In some cases the uneven treatment and rather isolationist approach to a given region may rise from developments which as such are to be welcomed: the increasing access to and use of local sources – thus reaching the grass root level and producing a series of local histories. At the same time, however, developments in other parts of the Christian

world are only sparsely taken note of. Altogether, an often unbalanced picture emerges. Great advances made in the description of Christianity as a global movement face atomizing tendencies and dissolution into a multiplicity of regional and cultural contexts.

Given this situation, I would like to advocate intensified comparative studies in the history of Christianity in the non-Western world. New and often surprising insights can already be found by examining certain topics that have become dominant in one continent also in other geographical and cultural contexts. This makes comparative analysis of the history of Christianity in different regions and the identification of related and divergent developments possible. Especially rewarding is the comparison of the Christian history in West Africa and South Asia, which share elements of a common colonial and mission history, while they represent very different cultural and religious contexts. The following contribution is no more than a preliminary sketch. Three paradigms will be discussed:

1. Pre-colonial Christianity. African Ethiopia and the Indian St. Thomas Christians in the debates of indigenous Christian elites in 19th und 20th Asia and Africa.

2. Early Church Independency. The Rise of indigenous Christian movements in Africa and Asia at the turn of 19th and 20th century.

3. The beginnings of the ecumenical movement in Asia and Africa. Christian patriotism and the protest against Western missionary denominationalism.

II. Pre-colonial Christianity: African Ethiopia and the Indian St. Thomas Christians in the debates of indigenous Christian elites in 19th and 20th century-Asia and Africa

In marked contrast to America, Christian Churches existed in Africa and Asia in the 15th and 16th centuries long before European missionaries made their presence felt in the region. In India as well as in Ethiopia, the Portuguese encountered Christian communities that had existed in the area for centuries. In spite of all attempts to integrate them into the Catholic Church, these communities retained their religious autonomy – at least partially – until today. As representatives of a non-colonial type of Christianity, they also played an important role in the ecclesiastical and political emancipatory movements on both continents in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While this has been explored at considerable length with regard to African Ethiopia, analogous debates on the Indian St. Thomas Christians in India and South Asia have for the most part gone unnoticed.[11]

We shall first take a look at *Africa* in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Here Ethiopia undisputedly played an increasingly important role as a symbol of political and ecclesiastical independence. Various factors contributed to this development: (1) Ethiopia was the only African nation (apart from Liberia) that was never subjugated to colonial rule. On the contrary, in 1896, at the peak of European imperialism, in the battle of Adwa, Ethiopia succeeded in defeating the Italian invaders and thus helped to destroy the myth of European

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Pretoria/South Africa.

9   Such as the 'African Christianity Project' 1992-1998 in Edinburgh or the Cambridge based 'Currents in World Christianity Project' (cf. F. LUDWIG /A. ADOGAME [Eds.], *European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa* [Wiesbaden 2004], 255ff. 261ff; also 275ff. 291ff. 313ff).

10   A similar observation applies to two recent German publications in the field of Asian Christian history: K. WETZEL, *Kirchengeschichte Asiens* (Wuppertal 1995), which consists more or less of a series of single lexicon articles, and: F. HUBER, *Das Christentum in Ost-, Süd- und Südostasien sowie Australien* (Leipzig 2005), which, while offering differing thematic overviews, provides primarily separate regional histories.

11   More details on the following section can be found in: K. KOSCHORKE, "Emanzipationsbestrebungen indigen-christlicher Eliten in Indien und Westafrika um die Jahrhundertwende", in: D. ROTHERMUND (Ed.), *Aneignung und Selbstbehauptung*. Antworten auf die europäische Expansion (München 1999, 203–216).

invincibility. (2) Ethiopia was known as a Christian country from earliest times. Thus it served as model and symbol for a growing number of Christians on the continent who wanted to maintain (or adopt) their Christian identity without being subjugated to missionary control. (3) Most important, however, were certain biblical references that were effective in the Ethiopian discourse from the very beginning. Not only Acts 8 – the account of the baptism of the "Ethiopian" Eunuch – played an important role, but also and more importantly Psalm 68:31 (in the Kings James version): "And Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hand unto God". This verse was understood as a promise to all people of African origin.

The early history of this Ethiopian discourse cannot be described here.[12] Its beginnings are to be traced back to the Afroamerican diaspora in the West Indies and the USA at the end of the 18th century.[13] The term 'Ethiopia' functioned in this context as a broad synonym for (Black) Africa and people of African origin. A specific reference to the concrete country of Ethiopia cannot be found in early pertinent writings, such as the *Ethiopian Manifesto of* the African American and New Yorker, Robert Alexander Young, in 1829 or David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* from the same year.

The movement gained importance toward the end of the 19th century in Western, Southern and Central Africa. In West Africa, people such as the scholar and politician Edward Wilmot Blyden – who was born a descendant of former slaves in the Caribbean and emigrated to Liberia in 1851 – became essential for the spread of Ethiopianist ideas. Both advocates for Church independency and representatives of the national movement later referred to him. In a speech on 'Philip and the Eunuch' in 1882, Blyden pleaded for a self-conscious African Christianity. He emphasized the example of the Ethiopian Church which had been founded by Africans themselves – prior to any Western missionary activities and even without the assistance of the biblical evangelist Philip (who according to Acts 8 was "taken up" by the Spirit after having baptized the eunuch). So Philip was prevented providentially from interfering in the affairs of the nascent Ethiopian Church, thus serving as model to modern European missionaries. This brought into view the church of the specific country of Ethiopia. Blyden had collected information on this church. Especially its resistance to outer influences seemed remarkable to him. "Only last year the Abyssinian monarch told certain Catholic and Protestant missionaries, who sought to establish themselves in his territory, that he did not want either of them because the Ethiopians were already Christians, and had held fast to their faith under a strain which had destroyed that of more prosperous and civilised peoples. He boasted that his own community was the only African

Church that had held fast to its Christian faith, century after century, against the successive onslaught of Heathenism and Mohammedanism".[14] In 1891, during the climax of the Niger crisis, Blyden was called to Lagos where he pleaded – at first unsuccessfully – for the foundation for a 'United West African Church' under African leadership. As a result of the crisis, the ideas of Ethiopianism in Nigeria received wide resonance. For the pioneers of African church independence, a theoretical basis for the demand for autonomy, was established. Thus, J.K. Coker, who established the 'African Church' in 1901, appealed to the view of Blyden that Africa was a continent with a long humanitarian tradition: "This great work was in the past specially assigned to the Ethiopians and the Egyptians, and consequently to us their offspring. ... West Africa ... is the selected place for this work".[15] And S.A. Coker, president of the Congregational Union of West Africa, used in 1917 the example of the old Churches in Asia and Africa (and specifically in Ethiopia) as an illustration of the *'Rights of Africans to Organize and Establish Indigenous Churches Unattached to and Uncontrolled by any Foreign Church Organization'*.[16] But also leaders, who articulated the African protest *within* the mission churches, were influenced by these ideas. Thus, in Nigeria the respected Anglican church leader 'Holy' James Johnson became an outstanding representative of Ethiopianism.

In South Africa, the 'Ethiopian Church' in Pretoria was founded in 1892 by the former Methodist preacher Mangena Maake Mokone as the first independent Church in the country. It gave its name to many similar undertakings to follow.[17] The movement reached its climax in 1896 when the congregations of the Ethiopian Church joined the African American Methodist Episcopal Church. This furthered the fusion of the African and Afroamerican forms of Ethiopianism. From South Africa the Ethiopianist movement – which increasingly demanded equal rights for Africans not only in ecclesiastical, but also in social and political affairs – soon spread into Central Africa. The slogan 'Africa for the Africans' also became the watchword of a militant anti-colonialism.

The *Indian* equivalent to Ethiopia are the St. Thomas Christians. They had already been living in the country for centuries when Vasco da Gama first set foot on Indian soil in 1498. In spite of many divisions – which resulted, among others, from Western attempts to take them over – they have remained a distinctive and important, albeit splintered, community until today. However, in the debates of the emerging Indian Protestant elite in the 19th century they did not play any significant role. The Protestant intelligentsia in South India – although numerically a small vanishing group – had gained general acceptance through their educational attainments as a "progressive community"[18]. They organized themselves in numerous 'Christian Native Associations', published their own journals (like the 'Christian Patriot'), supported the Indian National Congress in its early years and regarded them-

12 Cf. G.M. FREDRICKSON, *Black Liberation*. A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa (Oxford 1995), 57-92; E. KAMPHAUSEN, "Äthiopien als Symbol kirchlicher und politischer Unabhängigkeit", in: KOSCHORKE (Ed.), *Transcontinental links* 293-313; E. KAMPHAUSEN, *Anfänge der kirchlichen Unabhängigkeitsbewegung in Südafrika*. Geschichte und Theologie der Äthiopischen Bewegung (Frankfurt 1976); S.D. MARTIN, "African American Christians and the African Mission Movement during the 19th century", in: KOSCHORKE (Ed.), *Transcontinental links* 57-72, here 61ff; I. GEISS, *Panafrikanismus*. Zur Geschichte der Dekolonisation (Stuttgart 1968), 108ff; J.M. CHIRENJE, *Ethiopianism and Afro-Americans in Southern Africa, 1883-1916* (Baton Rouge/London 1987); S. DWANE, *Ethiopianism and the Order of Ethiopia* (Glosderry 1999); O.U. KALU, "Ethiopianism and the Roots of Modern African Christianity", in: S. GILLEY/B. STANLEY (Eds.), *World Christianities c.1815 – c.1914* (Cambridge History of Christianity VIII; Cambridge 2005, forthcoming). Cf. also J.B. WEBSTER, *The African Churches Among the Yoruba, 1888-1922* (Oxford 1964).

13 Already in about 1783, George Liele, a former slave and preacher from Savannah/Georgia, established the *First Ethiopian Baptist Church* in Jamaica.

14 Published in: E.W. BLYDEN, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* (Edinburgh [R]1967), 113-129. 152-172.

15 J.K. COKER, *The African Church*. A Lecture Delivered by J.K.Coker (n.p. [Lagos] 1913), 17.

16 National Archives Ibadan: Oke Papers 3/1/1: S.A. COKER, *The Rights of Africans ...* (Lagos, April 10, 1917), 16 (Communication F. Ludwig).

17 KAMPHAUSEN, *Äthiopien* 296ff; M.J. CHIRENJE, *Ethiopianism and Afro-Americans in Southern Africa 1883-1916* (Baton Rouge /London 1987).

18 R. SUNTHARALINGAM, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, 1852-1891* (Jaipur-New Dehli 1980), 114f; Y.V.K. DOSS, "The Swadeshi Movement and the attitude of the Protestant Christian Elite in Madras (1905-1907)" (*Indian Church History Review* 22, 1988, 5-22), 5.

selves as being at the peak of Indian social progress. In their view the Indian St. Thomas Christians in remote Kerala hardly played any role. They were either totally ignored or else regarded as "backward" and as an obstacle to India's much needed "social and moral up-lifting" (of which the Indian Protestant reformers were dreaming).

However, by the end of the 19th century – and parallel to the growth of national sentiment in Indian society – the situation changed. Voices among the Protestant intelligentsia that regarded the Church of the St. Thomas Christians as a model for the Indian church of the future increased. This Indian church of the future was not to be colonial, it would not be dominated by missionaries and neither would it be divided by the denominational differences of the West. In 1896, the 'Indian Christian Association of Great Britain' was established in London. It intended "to bear the interest of the Indian Christian community, and ... to help the interchange of thought between the Indian Christians in all parts of India and the Colonies, promoting spirituality, brotherliness and love among them"[19]. The Associa-tion pled for equality between Indian and European Christians and refused the "sectarian-ism" of the Western missionaries. Instead, it drafted a strongly idealized picture of the St. Thomas Christians. Already in the first edition of its journal, the 'Indian Christian Guard-ian', some programmatic statements were made about the Syrian Orthodox Church in Southwest India which was portrayed as the ancient and venerable "Mother Church of India":

> The ancient Indian Christian Church is no new sect. She existed before either Rome or England sent out her missionaries. She exists today in her native simplicity, and has proudly declined the overtures both of Rome and England. Alas! the missionaries, having failed to absorb her within their own Doxies, began to set up little sects of their own, calling them after their own names – Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Baptist, and many others. God help us, members of the Indian Christian Union. We each and all claim to belong to one or the other of these sects, and shame upon us, that none of us are in communion with the beloved mother Church of India.[20]

In Protestant India, the founding of the 'Indian Christian Association of Great Britain' was met with approval. At the same time, the interest in the Syrian Orthodox branch of Indian Christianity grew. It played an important role in the formation of the 'National Mis-sionary Society' in 1905, which represented a remarkable emancipation movement among native Christians. 'Indian men, Indian money, Indian leadership' was the motto of the movement that did not intend to compete with the Western mission societies but to provide an indigenous alternative. Already one year after its founding, it had organized nearly a hundred branches throughout India. In its ranks we find quite a number of future Indian leaders (such as V.S. Azariah). In this movement, members of the Mar Thomas Syrian Church were involved from the beginning. This was admittedly the group within the St. Thomas Christians that suited the Anglicans anyway. Nevertheless, the changed perception by the other Indian Christians of this group was remarkable. The St. Thomas Christians were now described as "the oldest and in many ways the most important Christian commu-nity in the lands". Their willingness to cooperate with the other branches of Indian Christi-anity – now that also "among the Indian [St. Thomas] Christians a national consciousness has arisen" – was regarded as exemplary and as proof of their "true Christian patriotism".[21]

The subsequent development cannot be discussed here in detail. However, two marked tendencies should be mentioned. The one is the increasing integration of the Syrian churches into the emerging Indian ecumenical movement, and the other is the growing interest of the Protestant elite in this ancient branch of Indian Christianity. The first point became visible in 1912/13, when parallel to the Indian Edinburgh continuation committee conferences, also a 'Syrian Church Unity Conference' in Calcutta was held. Various non-Roman groupings attended and as a consequence remained tightly connected to the Protes-tant-led Church unification movement. In the context of the global ecumenical movement this early participation of Orthodox churches is absolutely striking. The changed perception of the St. Thomas Christians by other Indian Christians as an autonomous force and non-missionary alternative was revealed, for example, in the coverage of the Kottayam confer-ence of 1911 by the 'Christian Patriot'. This South Indian conference dealt with social questions and Syrian Orthodox Christians participated in leading positions along with Prot-estants and Catholics. "The wave of nationally self-consciousnes", so we read, has now reached also the South of the subcontinent and "awakened the ancient Christian community of Travancore" from "their lethargy of centuries". Yet "unbacked by what is known as mission money and mission control" they have asserted themselves for more than one and a half millennium amid a hostile environment and refuted "the oft-repeated belief of the mis-sionaries, that if left to themselves Indian Christians would one and all relapse into hea-thenism". Admittedly, they had been paralyzed for a long time by the customs and "social evils" of the surrounding Kerala Hindu society. This, however, is regarded as more than compensated by their present commitment to "social progress" and close cooperation with other Indian Christians.[22]

The changed perception of the St. Thomas Christian community was by no means limited to Christian circles. National leaders like Gandhi – and later Nehru – also referred to the Syrian Orthodox Church as prominent representative of a non-colonial and not-denational-izing form of Christianity.[23] Even Vivekananda – protagonist of the Hindu-revival and harsh critic of British rule – included them in his picture of India's pre-colonial Golden Past: "The purest Christians in the world were established in India by the Apostle Thomas about 25 years after the death of Jesus. This was while the Anglo-Saxons were still savages, painting their bodies and living in caves".[24] Growing interest in the "ancient Christian com-munity" in Kerala was also shown in other Asian Churches as for example in Sri Lanka: "Does not this Church give hope and encouragement for a national Church of Ceylon?"[25]

As Ethiopia in the African discourse, so the St. Thomas Christians in India (and South Asia), increasingly attracted attention in public debates as the representatives of a non-co-lonial type of Christianity. However, differently from Ethiopia they did not develop into a symbol of separation but of unification among the indigenous Christians.

19   Christian Patriot 30.4.1896
20   Indian Christian Guardian Vol. I (1897)
21   The first years of the N.M.S. 1905-1916 published by the National Missionary Society of India (Salem n.d.), n° 4.16.60-66.

22   Christian Patriot 20.5.1911.
23   M. GHANDI, Collected Works. Vol. 28 (Ahmedabad 1968), 133f; J. NEHRU, An Autobiography (London 1936), 273f; "Christianity came to India ... long before Europe turned to it ... Their Christianity is practically indigenous".
24   "Speech of 11.7.1895 in Thousand Island Park [New York]", in: The Complete Works of Swami Vivekan-anda. Vol. 8 (Calcutta 1972), 13.
25   "The Church in Ceylon and Her Worship", in: The Ceylon Churchman 1920 (pp. 160ff. 182ff. 212ff), p. 182.

III. Church Independency in Africa and Asia in the early 20th Century

The second paradigm to be discussed here relates to the beginnings of Church independency at the turn from the 19th to the 20th century in Africa and Asia. African Instituted Churches were one of the main factors in the explosive growth of Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa in the 20th century. At least at their initial stage, however, they resulted from a conflicting constellation of missionary paternalism and the emancipatory tendencies among the emerging indigenous Christian elites, which could be observed simultaneously in other "mission fields" too. Here again research on the phenomenon of Church independency in Africa has advanced much further than that of similar movements in Asia. In Asia the situation varied considerably in different regions, and independent church movements did not have such a strong significance as in Africa. Nevertheless, also in Christian Asia the situation at the beginning of the 20th century cannot be understood without taking these groups into consideration.

West Africa. The beginnings of Church independency in West Africa are closely connected with the name of Samuel Ajayi Crowther Crowther (ca. 1806-1891). A freed slave, Crowther had been elevated as first African in the Anglican Church to Episcopal dignity as Bishop of the Diocese of British Equatorial West Africa. He was regarded as visible proof of the success of the missionary strategy of the CMS, which aimed at the formation of self-extending, self-supporting and self-governing native Churches. He also became a symbol of hope for social advancement for the emerging African middle class, who were playing an increasingly important role in early West African colonial society. "The educated (African) elite", so we learn from the *African Times* in its issue of July 1, 1880 – "more or less under the influence of the Christian faith, more or less imbued with Christian principles and precepts, are and will be indispensable as a vanguard of the great army of civilisation that must be projected upon the ignorant barbarism of heathen Africa whenever the means for such projection shall be arranged."[26] These "educated natives", as they used to call themselves, were often the product of mission schools. They regarded themselves as the principal agents of "civilizing" and Christianizing their country – a claim that seemed not unjustified taking into account the Christian history of the region. Crowther personified their hope of a position equal to the Europeans in Church, economy and politics.

Not surprising, therefore, was their anger and disappointment when at the end of his episcopacy Crowther was increasingly stripped of authority by British missionaries and a white was appointed his successor after his death in 1891. In Lagos – the centre of the West African elites – protest gatherings of local Christians took place, and in the Niger Delta church members demonstrated in the streets shouting: "We do not want white bishops"[27]. The protests spread beyond the boundaries of the Anglican Mission and included members of other denominations as well. Plans for an independent 'West African Church' under African leadership were made and dismissed. Finally, however, first independent Churches were established, such as the 'United Native African Church' in 1891, and the 'African Church

Organization' in 1901. Already in 1888, a secession had taken place in the Baptist Church of Lagos. Here local laymen – prominent among them Dr. David Brown Vincent, who later abandoned his Western name for Mojola Agbebi – had disagreed with their American missionaries and established the Ebenezer Native Baptist Church. Small as these early instances of Church independency were, they gave rise to a movement which led to a whole series of secessions from the mission Churches of Lagos. It produced a considerable group of African Churches deriving from Baptist, Anglican and Methodist parents. By 1920 these African Churches had grown to remarkable significance and included about a third of all Yoruba Christians.[28]

Similar developments took place simultaneously in *South Africa*. The 'Ethiopian Church' established in Pretoria in 1892 by Mangena Mokone, a former Wesleyan minister, already has been mentioned. It inspired the founding of numerous other churches which soon started to frighten the white missionaries. The movement gained momentum with the arrival of Afro-American preachers from the African Methodist Episcopal Church (1896). The ecclesiastical context in South Africa was much more racist than the one in West Africa where the African Church movement in Nigeria developed "from a position of relative strength" looking back at a history of at least partial autonomy.[29] Just the same, the analogies between the movements in both areas are striking.

In other parts of Africa comparable Churches developed later – as in Malawi, where the 'Last Church of God and His Christ' or the 'Chipangano Church' originated in the 1920s.[30] But as in Western and Southern Africa, it was primarily former mission employees and products of mission schools who made the first steps toward church independency. This explains the continuing relationship of the emerging 'African Churches' with the respective missionary 'parent Church', whose doctrine, theology and liturgy usually were not challenged. At the same time, this marks a significant difference between the first and the second wave of Church Independency, that traditionally has been considered under the rubric of 'Prophetism' or 'Zionism'. In the latter case, it was mostly charismatic personalities such as the prophets William Wade Harris or Joseph Kimbangu who were anchored more strongly in the respective regional culture and became initiators of a new and much more spontaneous stage of the African Church Movement.

In West Africa there were also early attempts to form trans-regional networks between the new Churches. Already in 1898 African Baptists had founded a society to link all independent Baptist Churches from Sierra Leone to Cameroon. In a similar way the 'West African Episcopal Church' connected churches of Anglican origin in the Gold coast, in Lagos and the Niger delta.[31] In contrast the Lagos based 'African Union', founded in 1912 with Mojola Agbebi as first president, presented a general platform of independent churches with different denominational backgrounds.

26   Cf. J.F.A. AJAYI, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841–1891*. The making of a new elite (London 1965); E.A. AYANDELE, *The Educated Elite in the Nigerian Society* (Ibadan 1974); K. MANN, *Marrying Well.* Marriage, Status and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos (Cambridge 1985).

27   F. LUDWIG, *Kirche im kolonialen Kontext.* Anglikanische Missionare und afrikanische Propheten im südöstlichen Nigeria (Frankfurt/Bern 1992), 149.

28   HASTINGS, *Church in Africa* 497; WEBSTER, *Churches among the Yoruba* 42ff. 136ff.

29   HASTINGS, *Church in Africa* 498.

30   Cf. the contribution by Adrian Hermann in this volume. – First examples of Church independency in Malawi can be found as early as 1900. Cf. M.C. KITSHOFF (Ed.), *African Independent Churches Today.* Kaleidoscope of Afro-Christianity (Lewiston etc. 1996), 25ff; J.C. CHAKANZA, "The Independency Alternative: A Historical Survey" (*Religion in Malawi* 4, 1994, 32-42).

31   HASTINGS, *Church in Africa* 493ff.

Asia. Also in Asia at the turn of the century, efforts by local Christians to gain freedom from missionary and European control can be observed in many places. In varying degrees they led to the formation of independent churches. These movements often began spontaneously, were seldom coordinated and reflect very different ecclesiastical, social, cultural and lingual backgrounds. That is one of the reasons why a comprehensive investigation has not been undertaken and why even a more or less complete list of its major representatives is still lacking.[32] Nevertheless certain comparable patterns of development can be recognized in various regions. To mention just a few of the more prominent representatives of the Asian church independency movements: the 'Non-Church' (Mukyôkai) movement of Uchimara Kanzo (1861-1930) in Japan[33]; the 'Iglesia Filipina Independiente' of the former Catholic Priest Gregorio Aglipay (1890/1902) in the Philippines[34]; the 'True Jesus Church', the 'Jesus Family' and the 'China Christian Independent Church Federation' in China[35]; or the 'Self-Supporting Karen Baptist Missionary Society' (1917) in Burma. In other places the call for a non-missionary version of an Asian Christianity was loudly made without, however, leading to concrete results.[36]

Especially productive in this respect was *India*. This example will be presented in some more detail in what follows. Already in 1869 detailed plans for the establishment of a *'National Church in Bengal'* were being discussed. The initiator of this – at first unsuccessful – project was Lal Behari Day, a Congregationalist minister in Calcutta. His proposal was for the coming together of all Indian Christians – Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox – in a single Church on the basis of the apostolic creed.[37] One year later *The Bengal Christian Association for the Promotion of Christian Truth and Godliness and the Protection of the Rights of Indian Christians'* was founded, and in 1887, also in Calcutta, the Bengal *'Christo Samaj'* came into being – which aimed at "the promotion of Christian union and the welfare of Indian Christians" and the establishment of "a Church that would be regu-

lated by natives of this country and adapted to their peculiarities"[38]. Its founding leader was Kali Charan Banurji, an illustrious Brahmin convert to Christianity who had considered joining Christian ministry but had given up this intention because Indians were not given sufficient rights in the mission Churches. In South India, already in 1858 *'The Hindu Church of the Lord Jesus'* – which stressed its independence over and against European aid and supervision – was founded as a result of a dispute between missionaries and local Christians. It comprised some 2000 members. Most important, however, was the *'National Church of India'*. 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". The project was initiated by a group of South Indian Christians to which socially high-ranking and financially independent persons such as lawyers, teachers, doctors, clerks, etc. belonged. It also inspired similar enterprises in other parts of India. As the physician Pulney Andy, a high caste convert and the leading figure in the movement put it, it intended to reach at least within the Church the independence Indians could not achieve in politics. At the first anniversary of the National Church in Madras 1887, he 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 characteristics 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.[39]

And the relationship to the Indian political national movement was explained 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 [...]. There appears to be all the material for the development of the National Church movement in existing Christian churches of almost every denomination, with a strong tendency to emphasize the conservatism of the national character and thought, exist everywhere. 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.[40]

In its initial years the National Church of India was met with great enthusiasm, but later support faded away, and finally in 1930 it had to be dissolved. Its financial resources proved too limited and the attitude of many conservative missionaries too hostile. It shared the fate of related Indian movements such as the 'Christo Samaj' of Calcutta that did not last long either. Short-lived, however, as those early experiments were, they were not without impact. Most topics raised by them remained on the agenda of Indian Christianity for years to come both inside and outside the mission churches.

32   Unfortunately, a Cambridge based project on 'Asian Instituted Churches' has lapsed. For India cf. R.E. HEDLUND (Ed.), *Christianity is Indian*. The Emergence of an Indigenous Community (Mylapore/ Dehli 2000); ID., "Emerging Indigenous Christianity in India and Asia (19th and 20th Centuries)", in: KOSCHORKE, *Transcontinental links* 273–292. Scattered information can be found in the respective country entries in: D. BARRETT ET.AL. (Eds.), *World Christian Encyclopedia*. Vol. I (Oxford 2001); J.C. ENGLAND/J. KUTTIANIMATTATHIL ET.AL. (Eds.), *Asian Christian Theologies*. 3 vols (Dehli /Maryknoll 2002-2004).

33   On Uchimara Kanzo s. ENGLAND (Ed.), *Asian Christian Theologies* III, 323ff; cf. also M.R. MULLINS, *Christianity Made in Japan*. A Study of Indigenous Movements (Honolulu 1998); M. HIROSHI, *The Life and Thought of Uchimara Kanzo* (Grand Rapids 1996).

34   For the Philippines the years 1887/88, with anti-colonial protest movements and the end of the Spanish sovereignty, mark a turning point in the political history, that corresponds with the separation of the Catholic priests from the Roman-Catholic hierarchy (1890/1902). The thus founded 'Iglesia ni Christo' at times (1918) comprised ca. 14% of the islands populace. – Cf. A.L. TUGGY, *Iglesia ni Christo*. A Study in Independent Church Dynamics (Quezon City 1976); ENGLAND (Ed.), *Asian Christian Theologies* II, 368ff; F.H. WISE, *The History of the Philippine Independent Church* (Quezon City 1965).

35   D.H. BAYS, *Christianity in China from the 18th Century to the Present* (Stanford 1996), 307ff; ID., "Indigenous Protestant Churches in China, 1900 – 1937", in: S. KAPLAN (Ed.), *Indigenous Responses to Western Christianity* (New York 1996), 124-143; V.M. GRUBB, *The Chinese Indigenous Church Movement* (London/ New York n.d.); ENGLAND (Ed.), *Asian Christian Theologies III*,153f.

36   For colonial Ceylon cf. K. KOSCHORKE, "Kirchliche Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen im kolonialen Ceylon. Eine Denkschrift einheimischer Christen aus dem Jahr 1878" (*Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* 50, 1994, 131 – 136).

37   L.B. DAY, *The Desirableness and Practicability of Organizing a National Church in Bengal* (Calcutta 1870); cf. G. THOMAS, *Christian Indians and Indian Nationalism 1885–1950* (Frankfurt 1970), 70ff; K. BAAGO, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity* (Madras 1969).

38   THOMAS, *Christian Indians* 75.

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

40   *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 (THOMAS, *Christian Indians* 81).

Why did early church independence in Christian India (and Christian Asia) play a much more limited role and was less successful in establishing autonomous churches compared with Africa? Certainly no general answer can be given, and in any case precise analysis of the various and heterogeneous movements has to be undertaken. But one important factor certainly lies in the different sort of religious competition to which Christianity was exposed in the various contexts. In South Asia, and particularly in India, a revival of the traditional religions and specifically of Hinduism and Buddhism had been underway for quite some time and was often connected with modernizing tendencies. Ironically in a number of cases it was precisely the competitive model of the Western missionary Protestantism that was imitated by the representatives of Hindu or Buddhist modernism.[41] So in Asia, alternatives for religious modernization over and against the Christian option existed for the Western educated indigenous elites, who were the decisive social class in the formation of independent Churches. In contemporary Africa, however, analogous processes of modernization within the traditional religions cannot be detected, at least not to this extent and at this time. Here the religious alternatives became either an intra-Christian one – as Church independency – or one represented by Islam, which was at least initially less attractive.

IV. The Beginnings of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia and Africa

The third example concerns the beginnings of the ecumenical movement in Africa and Asia. These beginnings were closely connected with the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh 1910 but under no circumstance simply a result of this meeting. Quite the contrary: in an unprecedented way Edinburgh *reacted* to developments and impulses from the so-called mission fields of Asia and Africa, which it passed on to the missionary headquarters and Churches in the West, and then subsequently returned them to their origins. There already existed among native Christians – simultaneously to the growth of national sentiment – numerous initiatives to overcome the "sectarianism" and denominational differences imported from the West. The Indian National Church movement and related endeavours which aimed at uniting all Indian Christians irrespective of their denominational affiliations already have been mentioned.[42] For West Africa, the intensively debated – but uncompleted – project of a 'United West African Church' in 1891, the 'United Native African Church' founded in the same year or the non-denominational 'African Church Organization' established in 1901 should be kept in mind. In South Africa, debates in 1922 within the African National Congress still made demands for the "union of Churches free from all sectarianism

and denominational anomalies" to be inserted into the party platform.[43] As in Asia, so in Africa, albeit less intensively, native Christian emancipation endeavours were articulated as a challenge to overcome the denominational fragmentation of the mission churches.

Even though such early ecumenical initiatives by indigenous Christians deliberately presented themselves as an *alternative* model to the mission churches, they increased pressure on them to intensify cooperation. There were already initial negotiations over the unification of individual missions in India among Presbyterians, Reformed and Congregationalists that led in 1908 to the founding of the 'South India United Church'. The topics of 'comity', 'cooperation' and 'church unity' increasingly determined the agenda of the Asian mission conferences. Two of these conferences – Madras 1902 and Shanghai 1907 – served Edinburgh later as models for organization and agenda. "I have heard it said often" – remarked the Anglican Bishop of Bombay, Edwin James Palmer – "that if we, foreign missionaries, left India in a body to-day, *all Indian Christians would very quickly unite and form one Indian Church*. I have heard it said again and again that it is only we foreign missionaries who keep the Indian Christians from unity"[44]. And another missionary report from India portrayed the mood in the country as follows: "The modern young man wants a national Church, first and foremost, to attain independence from all foreign sway and all its concomitants". All this was said in 1909, one year before the Edinburgh assembly, and reflects the mood in many of the reports that were sent and debated at the World Missionary conference.

The importance of Edinburgh – which often and rightly has been labeled as the "birth hour" and "initial igniting" of the modern ecumenical movement in the Protestant Churches of the West – lies not at least in the attention that it paid to the dramatically changed situation "in the non-Christian countries". Special attention was directed to the emergence of national movements in Asia and also in Africa. In the eyes of the Conference, they signaled danger, but also a unique chance which required new ways of doing missionary and church cooperation. So the final appeal of the Conference "To the members of the Church [singular!] in Christian lands" states: "During the past ten days we have been engaged in a close and continuous study of the position of Christianity in non-Christian lands. [...] Our survey has impressed upon us the momentous character of the present hour. We have heard from many quarters of the awakening of great nations, of the opening of long-closed doors, and of movements which are placing all at once before the Church a new world to be won for Christ". Particularly the situation in Asia impressed the conference, such as the collapse of feudal structures recently in revolutionary Turkey, the unprecedented leap of Japan into modern times and the strong national movements of India and China. Whether they would find a way *with* or *without* Christ still seemed to be an open question. *Both* options appeared possible in the analysis of Edinburgh.[45] "The next ten years will in all probability constitute a turning-point in human history, and may be of more critical importance in determining the spiritual evolution of mankind than many centuries of ordinary experience. If

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41   On the far-reaching impact of the Protestant missionary movement on 'modernizing' developments within South Asian Buddhism and Hinduism cf.: H. BECHERT, *Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft...* Vol. I (Frankfurt etc. 1966), 37ff; K. MALALGODA, *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society* (Berkeley etc. 1976), 191ff: "Protestant Buddhism"; G.D. BOND, *The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka* (Columbia 1988), 45ff: "The Early Revival and Protestant Buddhism"; C.F. ANDREWS, *The Renaissance in India.* Its Missionary Aspect (London 1912); J.N. FARQUHAR, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (New York 1915); D. KOPF, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton 1979), 157ff. 217ff; cf. also: M.M. THOMAS, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (London 1969), 1ff. 56ff. 111ff. 238ff; T. BREKKE, *Makers of Modern Indian Religion in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford 2002).

42   Cf. also: D.V. SINGH, *Ecumenical Bearings in late 19th Century Christianity in India and their Impact on the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh 1910* (D.theol. Thesis Calcutta 1977).

43   P. WALSHE, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa.* The African National Congress 1912–1952 (London 1970), 244f.

44   E.J. PALMER, *Reunion in Western India.* Papers and Articles by the Bishop of Bombay (Bombay 1910), 3ff.: "The Hope of the Reunion of Christendom".

45   This was not as unrealistic as it may seem today. For example, in 1911 in China the Manchu Dynasty that had been reigning for centuries was overthrown, and the first President of Republican China – Sun Yat-se – was a Christian.

those years are wasted, havoc may be wrought that centuries are not able to repair. On the other hand, if they are rightly used, they may be among the most glorious in Christian history".[46]

The further development of the ecumenical movement in the *Western Churches* cannot be discussed here in detail. It led successively to the foundation of the World Council of Churches in 1948 in Amsterdam. In the subsequent history of the ecumenical movement in *Asia* the Asian 'Continuation Committee Conferences' of 1912 and 1913 played an important role.[47] Here topics such as cooperation, indigenous leadership and "the desire for a nationwide Church" were discussed and decisions made that considerably shaped the future development of the Asian Churches. Twenty-one such conferences took place at the regional or national level in Ceylon, India, Burma, Singapore, China, Manchuria, Korea and Japan. In each case the debates led to the founding of 'National *Missionary* Councils', which about ten years later were transformed into 'National *Christian* Councils', first in India, Japan and Korea – as the nuclei of future structures of self-government. In India in 1923 a constitutional ruling was made that half of the members should be nationals. Similar situations occurred in China and Japan.[48] Apart from the issue of church unity, the building of a "Native Church" was a central topic of *all* conferences. For the native co-workers increased rights were demanded, respectively – according to the national and some regional conferences in India – "*complete* equality in status and responsibility" between Europeans and Indians.[49] The China conference of Canton emphasized that "the Chinese Church as such, and not foreign-directed organizations", have to be a "permanent factor of the evangelization" of the country.[50] The goal of a "united Church" in the national context respectively the postulate of "a comprehensive Church organization adapted to the country" were further demands that were raised regularly.[51] They understood themselves as an expression of "national solidarity"[52]. The resulting establishment of church structures on a *national* level was a first step in this direction. Also in other developments in Asia, ecumenism and the search for autonomy and self-determination were closely related. So it is certainly not by chance that the Church of South India (CSI) – the most prominent result of the Asian Church Union movement – was founded exactly in 1947, the year that India gained political independence. As the first world-wide union between churches with episcopal and not-episcopal tradition, it was closely watched and hailed by the international ecumenical community. At the same time it inspired similar enterprises both in Asia and Africa.

Nevertheless, from the beginning there were Indian Christians who voted against the way leading to the CSI and criticized the extensive adaption to Western church models. In 1921 the '*Christo Samaj*' (Madras), an association of South Indian Christians who fought for the "promotion of unity among Indian Christians", "irrespective of ecclesiastical and social distinctions", published a memorandum. In it they spoke vehemently against the introduction of Western organizational forms in the future Indian church: "We entirely disapprove the proposal for the formation of a centralized ecclesiastical organization comprehending the entire Christian community in India"[53]. Similar was the vote of a group of Indian lay theologians who rallied around Paul Chenchiah and Vengal Chakkarai and made their voice heart in the run-up to the World Mission Conference 1938 in Indian Tambaram. They became known as the "Madras Rethinking Group". They pleaded for the development of an autonomous Indian theology and for a church model based on Indian traditions, like the Ashram Movement, rather than on Western organizational structures.[54]

As in Asia, various post-Edinburgh conferences were being held in *Africa*. However, compared to Asia, they produced only limited results. Especially to be mentioned are the conferences of Calabar (1911) and Kikuyu (1913). Kikuyu regarded itself as the "earnest attempt at reunion of the various churches that bear the name of the Lord Christ".[55] But its idea of a Eucharist communion between the various Protestant bodies ran aground on the violent protests it evoked within the Anglican Church. *One* reason for the failure of this experiment may have been the weak participation of African church leaders at that conference. Finding less and less room to move within the established mission church structures, they had already increasingly committed themselves to becoming active in Church independency.

Nevertheless important ecumenical initiatives originated in Africa, not only in regard to the African context, but in a transcontinental perspective as well. In dealing with the mission history of the 19th and 20th centuries, too little attention has been paid to the fact that the global communication structures of the international missionary movement not only served for the exchange between the missionary centres and headquarters but were also utilized increasingly for networking between the indigenous Christian elites of the various regions. Already Edinburgh – where only 17 Asian and no African delegates participated – had produced through its extended preparatory correspondence a mobilising effect among local Church leaders – present or future – in multiple places in Asia. Later also contacts between the Christian elites from different continents grew stronger and with them the introduction of African topics onto the global ecumenical agenda.

Tambaram 1938 – the World Missionary Conference on the eve of World War II, where for the first time the majority of the delegates came from the Southern hemisphere – is very instructive in this respect (as Frieder Ludwig recently has shown). The participation of

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46 *World Missionary Conference, 1910*. Vol. IX (Edinburgh etc. [1911]), 108.
47 *The Continuation Committee Conferences in Asia 1912-1913*. Published by the Chairman of the Continuation Committee (New York 1913) [abbreviated as CCC]. Cf. H.-R. WEBER, *Asia and the Ecumenical Movement 1895-1961* (London 1966), 56ff.130ff.143ff; K. BAAGO, *A History of the National Council of Churches* (Madras 1965); N. KOSHY, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia*. Vol. I (Hongkong 2004).
48 BAAGO, *Council* 33; cf. *International Review of Mission* 12 (1923) [191-223: "A missionary survey of the Year 1922"] 196; *International Review of Mission* 11 (1922) 502-514; WEBER, *Asia* 140f.
49 CCC, 32.127.
50 CCC, 193ff.
51 So e.g. the conference in Madras (CCC, 31): "Desire for a Nation-wide Church"; Jubbulpore (CCC, 60): "Developement of one united Indian Church"; Canton (CCC, 192): "one Church open to all Christians ... which in all its constituent parts will comprehend the whole Christian life of the nation"; Tsinanfu (CCC, 251): "development of a nation-wide Church". See, however, also the Japanese National conference: "maintenance of separate Churches" (CCC, 448).
52 CCC, 126.

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53 [THE CHRISTO SAMAJ], *The Memorandum on the Further Development and Expansion of Christianity in India* (n.p. [Madras] 1921), 16.
54 G.V. JOB ET.AL., *Rethinking Christianity in India* (Madras 1939), 92ff.197ff.209ff.
55 Cf. O.U. KALU, *Divided People of God*. Church Union Movement in Nigeria 1875–1966 (New York etc. 1978); J.N. AMANZE, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Africa* (Gaborone 1999), 182ff. – About the Calabar Conference 1911 at which representatives of the *Church Missionary Society*, the Qua Ibo Mission, the Primitive Methodist Mission and the United Free Church of Scotland Mission participated, an extended report can be found at the National Archives Ibadan, RP 2/3, Foreword: "The Calabar Missionary Conference of November 1911 was one of the numerous results of the Edinburgh Conference of 1910" (Communication F. Ludwig). – There are other local African post-Edinburgh conferences like that at Lokoja/Nigeria 1911.

African delegates led to direct contacts with Asian politicians such as Mahatma Ghandi and with Asian Church leaders. This resulted, among other things, in a critical evaluation of the ecclesiastical and political situation at home compared to Asia. The Africans admired the progress of the Indian Church union movement and the advancement of Indian episcopacy. In the words of the South African delegate Mina Soga after her return from Tambaram: "I came home an incisive critic of South African Christianity"[56]. On the other hand, Tambaram also saw for the very first time an attempt by African representatives to break down, in alliance with the Asians, the cultural and theological dominance of the West. The issue at stake was the African practice of polygamy as a legitimate form of Christian family life. Christian Baeta from Ghana organized a series of preparatory meetings to the Tambaram conference in the Gold Coast, where among other themes the rule of monogamy as "the white man's custom" in the African Churches was criticized. In cooperation with other African delegates he intended to place the issue before the conference in order "to get a definite pronouncement ... on the question whether or not there is anything in polygamy essentially alien to, and incompatible with, profession of the Christian faith"[57]. The attempt failed lamentably because the Asians refused cooperation. However, this incident illustrates the way in which the communication structures of the international missionary movement were being used by African and Asian Christians for interaction and pursuit of their own specific interests. This incident also demonstrates the incipient change of the ecumenical agenda and the vision of a worldwide Church, one that is no longer unilaterally dominated by the views of the West.

Abstract

The growing importance of Africa in the context of World Christianity requires new approaches in historiography. Comparative studies are needed to develop a more integrated understanding of the history of Christianity in the Non-Western world. While for many years African Christian history used to be regarded just as an appendix to Western mission history, and currently sometimes threatens to loose overall perspective amid a multitude of regional and local topics, it is essential to identify central themes which through comparative analysis can present a clearer picture of related developments in different contexts. Focussing on the relationship between Africa and Asia, the paper discusses three paradigms: (a) Pre-colonial Christianity. African Ethiopia and the Indian St. Thomas Christians in the debates of indigenous Christian elites in 19th and 20th century' Africa and Asia; (b) Early Church independency. The Rise of indigenous Christian movements in Africa and Asia at the turn of 19th and 20th century; (c) The beginnings of the ecumenical movement in Asia and Africa. Christian patriotism and the protest against missionary "sectarianism".

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56   F. LUDWIG, *Zwischen Kolonialismuskritik und Kirchenkampf.* Interaktionen afrikanischer, indischer und
     europäischer Christen während der Weltmissionskonferenz Tambaram 1938 (Göttingen 2000), 75.
57   LUDWIG, *Kolonialismuskritik und Kirchenkampf* 31.

Die Geschichte des Christentums in Afrika und Asien in vergleichender Perspektive

Die wachsende Bedeutung Afrikas im Kontext des Weltchristentums erfordert neue historiographische Zugänge. Vergleichende Studien sind notwendig, um eine stärker integrierte Sichtweise der Geschichte des Christentums in der nicht-westlichen Welt zu entwickeln. Während die Geschichte des afrikanischen Christentums lange Zeit als bloßer Appendix der westlichen Missionsgeschichte behandelt wurde und sich gegenwärtig manchmal in eine Vielzahl regionaler und lokaler Partikular-Geschichten aufzulösen droht, ist die Identifikation zentraler Themen notwendig, um durch vergleichende Analyse ein genaueres Bild verwandter Entwicklungen in unterschiedlichen Kontexten zu gewinnen. Der vorliegende Beitrag diskutiert das Verhältnis von Afrika und Asien und untersucht dabei drei Beispiele. (a) Vorkoloniales Christentum. Äthiopien und die indischen Thomaschristen in den Debatten indigen-christlicher Eliten im Afrika und Asien des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts; (b) Frühe kirchliche Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen. Das Aufkommen indigener christlicher Bewegungen in Afrika und Asien um die Wende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert; (c) Die Anfänge der ökumenischen Bewegung in Asien und Afrika. Christlicher Patriotismus und der Protest gegen missionarisches "Sektierertum".