

# 1

## INTRODUCTION: PROPAGANDA FOR CHRIST

In the local prayer house of my childhood, the  
Negroes in Africa came much closer to us than  
people in Oslo.

Berge Furre<sup>1</sup>

Visuality is about a direct route to one of the  
senses; its impact can be visceral, especially  
when it creates a sense of identification.  
Moreover, photography's indexical status in  
particular operates with powerful claims to  
transparency.

Patricia Hayes and Andrew Bank<sup>2</sup>

Colonialism continues to live on in ways that  
perhaps we have only begun to recognize.

Nicholas Dirks<sup>3</sup>

It has by now become quite common to characterize the changes in contemporary culture because of the mediation of social life as a 'pictorial turn'.<sup>4</sup> As a corollary to these changes, there is also a pictorial turn in the academic world, constituting visual images as an exiting site of convergence across disciplinary and thematic lines. In this book, I argue that the analysis of missionary photographs adds new insights to the ongoing conversation about the meanings and effects of pictures. The work of European and North American Christian missionaries not only included evangelizing, medical care, teaching and institution building, but also

1. Berge Furre (former MP and professor of history and theology in Norway) in a speech at a doctoral dinner in Oslo, 8, February 2003.

2. Hayes and Bank (2001: 7).

3. Dirks (1992: 23).

4. Mitchell (1994). He focuses on the regimes of 'spectacle' and 'surveillance' in his analysis of pictures and texts.

documenting the foreign ways of life that they encountered across the globe for the supporters 'at home'. I discuss what kinds of knowledge about Africa the public was invited to share, which qualities in the relations between Europeans and Africans this knowledge encouraged, and the role of prints, photographs and films in its transmission. My aim is to identify and reflect upon the implied social categories, relations and boundaries in this crosscultural field of activity. In a way, this is a study of the role of the missionaries as ethnographers, transmitting information about distant people to their supporters.

The book is based on an interpretive analysis of a selection of the published texts and photographs from the Norwegian evangelical missionary experience in Northern Cameroon from the 1920s, when the Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) started working in this region, and until the present.<sup>5</sup> Norway has sent out more missionaries per capita than any other country in Europe,<sup>6</sup> and in the twentieth century Northern Cameroon was their most important 'missionary field' on the African continent. Because regional variations are considerable, I do not regard the field in Cameroon as typical for Norwegian or European mission fields in any simple sense. But I do think that the communication to the supporters at home from this field provides an interesting case which makes it possible to identify more general dynamics. In a way comparable to – but not identical to – anthropological publications, advertisements for developmental and humanitarian relief, museum exhibits and the news media, the missionaries have taken pictures from their African contexts and arranged them in ways that address their particular preoccupations.

They were among the first to inform the public extensively about these regions, and missionary information materials are at present the object of considerable international interest. At this very moment, many institutions are involved in collecting, systematizing and making available the photographs of various Christian missions.<sup>7</sup> According to Terry Barringer, the role of missionary photographs in disseminating visual images from distant regions of the world can hardly be overestimated.<sup>8</sup> However, while interesting research has

5. The primary material for this study consists of a total of around forty books (personal accounts, history books, chapters in history books and booklets) produced by Cameroon missionaries about the mission's work, most of them illustrated; a feature film; and a digitized collection of 2,000 photographs, recently selected and collected by the Norwegian missionary and historian Kåre Lode and the late African historian Eldridge Mohammadou and brought to Cameroon. I have supplemented the photographic and textual material with formal and informal conversations both with missionaries in Norway and Cameroon and with church leaders, church members and other observers of the mission in Cameroon. With a few exceptions (such as the analysis of the cover of the main journal in Chapter 3), I have not used the missionary magazines in a systematic way. They constitute an interesting source which needs to be further explored. Of particular note is the picture magazine *Til Jordens Endes* ('To the Ends of the World'), which came out between 1960 and 1963, with a trial issue in 1959.
6. Tvedt (2003: 292, note 61). The Danish, Swedish and Finnish missions have also been numerous and strong.
7. See, for example, the special issue 'Rediscovering Missionary Photography' of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 26(4), October 2002. The archive of the Norwegian Missionary Society is taking part in the international project Internet Mission Photography Archive funded by the Getty Grant Foundation. Ten missionary organizations are participating in the project. See also the information about the Basle collection at [www.bmpix.org](http://www.bmpix.org).
8. Barringer (2002: 170).

been done internationally on the history and anthropology of the missions,<sup>9</sup> so far, relatively little analytical work has been done on their photographs,<sup>10</sup> and the present monograph is an effort to remedy this situation. This is an explorative study, which presents empirical material and puts into practice new analytical categories and a mode of analysis that is intended to contribute to the construction of a framework that may also be useful for the examination of other cross-cultural materials.

To what extent did the missionary photographs allow Norwegian audiences to ‘see with their own eyes’ what went on in Cameroon, and to what extent did the publications create and reproduce popular stereotypes about the backward, exotic native? What are the representations of space, ‘race’, gender, age and sexuality in the pictures from Cameroon? How did the missionaries represent themselves? How did they categorize and represent the various others that they encountered? How did they visualize other people’s neediness in order to inspire the European audience to become involved in the mission? Were they able to document the realities of human suffering without *reducing* people to positions of suffering and thus to being depicted as pitiable victims, as receivers of help, and as people with limited agency? To what extent did their photographs invite not only *sight* but also new *insight*? These are some of the questions I address.

In this introductory chapter, I present the theoretical ideas informing the study, seeing the missionary documentation as an articulation of a specific point of view in relation to particular audiences in Norway. Throughout the book I attempt to pinpoint the specificities of this point of view. It is both related to and distinct from the ideas of other colonial and neocolonial actors, in particular colonial administrators and adventurous travellers, but perhaps not so different from the views of the teachers, nurses and medical doctors employed by the colonial administrations. In the ideologies of colonialism and imperialism there was a basic tension between exploitation, on the one hand, and civilization and nurture, on the other. Like the work of doctors and nurses employed by the colonial administrations, the work of the missionaries (some of whom were also doctors and nurses) was civilizing and nurturing. I thus interpret the distinctness of the missionary publications within the ideological and institutional structures of colonialism and neocolonialism. The missionaries did not arrive in Northern Cameroon to extract wealth or to reign; they came with charitable gifts – first of all the gift of the Gospel, but also the tangible gifts of medical and educational work. Given the tensions between unequal global structures of power and the missionary focus on the equality of all human beings before God, their generosity set in motion specific relational dynamics.

An evangelical missionary is on the most basic level a person with a calling to preach the Gospel and share his or her most cherished spiritual beliefs with people in the field. Evangelizing is the pivotal activity around which medical and educational work turns, and evangelizing implies attracting and keeping people’s attention. This is so both in the field and in the home country of the missionaries. Thus, to be engaged in missionary work involves on the most basic level two sets of closely interrelated information strategies – evangelizing ‘out

9. See, for example, Ardener (2002); Bowie, Kirkwood and Ardener (1993); Huber and Lutkehaus (1999); Kipp (1990).

10. Exceptions are Geary (1988); Jenkins (1990, 1993); Long (2003); Mathur (1996–97); Morgan (2005); Thompson (2004). However, most of these studies focus on the regions where the missionaries were active, not on the history of representation in Europe and the USA.

there' and informing actual and potential support groups 'at home' (also involving evangelizing). At the grass-roots level of the support groups in Norway, women were the most central actors.

When interpreting the photographic images of the mission, I see them within the context of the changing structures of colonialism, political independence and economic neocolonialism, as well as within the more specific dynamics of the complex networks of relations among the missionaries, the people they work with and take photographs of in Africa, the leadership at their headquarters in Norway (including editors and publishers), and their audiences in Norway. I focus on the various relational and ideological *tensions* and *contradictions* that are unavoidably a part of missionary work, and on how these tensions have been managed over time. The more general theoretical problem is how paternalistic relations between Norway and Africa are reproduced and transformed in spite of the missionaries' focus on the equality of all humans, and in spite of the complex and partially overlapping nature of the practical social interactions within which the polarized ideologies emerge and which they also purport to grasp. In particular, I present three interconnected ideas. The first idea is that all through the twentieth century the missionary publications exhibit visual and verbal tensions between the central metaphors of Christian light and heathen darkness, on the one hand, and the whiteness and blackness of the represented bodies, on the other.<sup>11</sup> The persistence of the metaphor connected to the opposition of light and darkness has many sources: the Bible, the Enlightenment ideas, and Nordic light symbolism. The second idea is that the missionary materials exhibit transformations over time, from being (not always harmoniously) linked to the 'civilizing mission' of colonialism and imperialism, to being linked to the ideologies of 'development' which followed political independence, to being linked to a more recent rhetorical focus on partnership following an expansion of the kinds of audiences involved. The third and most basic idea is that the need to continuously justify their activities to the various donors in Norway has led to the creation, maintenance and transformation of patronizing ways of portraying Africans, as well as to a hierarchical division between what goes on in Norway and what goes on in Africa, hindering (without blocking) the feedback processes on which effective learning and innovative thinking depends. These effects are *neither intended nor wanted* by the actors themselves. My aim is to identify and explicate some of the visual and textual mechanisms through which the reproduction and transformation of the paternalistic hierarchy is made self-evident.

The missionary genres of publication were developed within a distinct and changing communicative situation, which encouraged a more or less unquestioned representation of the overall goodness of the missionary enterprise and the deep needs of the Africans. I argue both that the original written texts provide an important context for the visual materials and that the visual materials provide entry points to the identification and interpretation of self-evident and deep-seated idioms that are seldom explicitly verbalized and that are often different from the actors' explicit intentions. I also argue for the need to pay more attention to the way European constructions of 'the other' was vital to the construction of the European self, and for seeing these constructions as interrelated.<sup>12</sup> In other words, I maintain that the Norwegian

11. I use the terms 'heathen' and 'heathenism' as historical notions. In order to avoid visual clutter in the text, I write these without quotation marks.

12. Cohn (1996); Cooper (2005); Stoler (2002).

mission and their activities in foreign lands need to be seen together, as crosscultural, transnational, large-scale and dynamic fields for analysis, including social actors in both Cameroon and Norway. This encounter generated new social categories, new cultural boundaries and new hierarchies. In Norway, it had implications for nation building, the national welfare and the modern state, as well as for the situation of 'immigrants' and ethnic minorities and the development of international relations. In particular, the missionary publications produced interest, pity, and a form of involvement, as well as a disjuncture and hierarchical distance between the Cameroonians and the Europeans who supported them by prayers and donations from afar. I focus on the role taken by the Norwegian mission in this process, and explore the formation of categories such as 'donors' and 'receivers', and the cultural boundaries they involve, as well as their implications in a larger transnational and transcontinental context.

The main goal of the publications is to catch the attention of the public and inspire them to become involved in the work of the mission. Each missionary had a personal calling from God and was sent out (*utsendt*) by the society and the supporters at home. The 'friends of the mission' took an active interest in the people they had sent out and how they were doing among the heathens. When sending back messages from the field, the missionaries tried to meet the needs of the supporters; at the same time, they also wanted to modify their perceptions, applying both explicit strategies and tacit intuitions to that effect.<sup>13</sup> Since there seem to be certain limits to how many human beings a person can empathize with in a sustained way, the missionaries had to avoid the cognitive and emotional over-stimulation of the people in the audience. The most difficult point seems to be to touch people emotionally and at the same time avoid evoking feelings of shame or powerlessness. In the words of Lauren Berlant, scenes of vulnerability can 'produce a desire to withhold passionate attachment, to be irritated by the suffering in some way'.<sup>14</sup> The missionaries seem to have tried to focus on what they see as the problems in Africa in ways that are meant to give hope, to make the audiences feel that they can do something to help, and that it is worthwhile for them to become involved in prayers and organizational work. The publications should ideally empower the public in Norway to take action, not discourage them.

I document in the chapters to come that the various people involved in the Norwegian Missionary Society have acted strategically when compiling their information about the mission to the audiences at home. The overall representations of Africa in texts and pictures had to work on the perceptions of the audience of what Africa was like. Even if they often did not agree on all details, the missionaries and their leadership at home had explicit ideas about what would work and what would not work. The leadership acted as mediators between the missionaries in the field and the various kinds of supporters. Each missionary author's control of the production process was structured by the available pictures and conventions of genre, constrained by contemporary definitions of, for example, marketable books in a competitive market, and was involved in processes which negotiated, reproduced and transformed these conventions. Nevertheless, the materials produced were perhaps most striking in what the missionaries took for granted – such as bourgeois family values, Western biomedicine and agricultural technologies, a commonsense view of the transparency of photography, specific

13. The context for the popular reception of missionary propaganda has changed over the years, with the development of television, mass tourism, and the information campaigns of international NGOs.

14. Berlant (2004: 9).

pictorial conventions with a long history in Europe, and the typical Orientalist narrative plots of the stories they told to the supporters in Europe.

## The Power of Representation

Like other cross-cultural photographs, missionary photographs can be interpreted and contextualized in many ways. First, they can be viewed as historical documents, produced over time in a particular and changing historical context – and thus as resulting from specific photographic situations involving specific places and peoples. This kind of research interest ideally necessitates an approach which documents the *who*, *where*, *when* and *why* of every picture and which cross-references photographs with other types of historical documents.<sup>15</sup> Second, they can be viewed in relation to the history of the visual narratives about a particular region. Typical visual narratives have been patterned and framed not only by missionaries but also by anthropologists, travellers, colonial administrators and commercial photographers – who have reflected upon and represented the region and its inhabitants. Third, the discursiveness of the missionary images also emerges from their cross-reference to other images, both from this specific region and from other places and other times. They can fruitfully be viewed not only against a long trajectory of images of ‘natives’ but also against the conventions of the history of both artistic and other kinds of representation. Fourth, the photographs can be examined for traces of how men, women and children in the region have engaged with photography as a space for self-presentation. The nature of the subjects’ involvement or lack of involvement in the photographic situation influences the photographic output. And fifth, the photographs can be examined within the context of how the missionaries and the African subjects have been represented to audiences in Europe.

While attempting to constantly keep the other contexts in mind, I focus in this study primarily on the last context – the missionaries’ communications with people in Europe, in this case Norway. As internationally inspired transnational social movements within a national organizational framework, the missionary societies engaged in communication activities of a dual nature. The missionaries moved between continents long before the terms transcultural and transnational became the order of the day. They disseminated information in order to instil a sense of responsibility, commitment and involvement in Europe in relation to the ‘unreached people’ (who had not yet been reached by the Gospel) and – after some time – in relation to the national ‘sister churches’ they helped establish. I see their photographs as a central element in an extensive and long-lasting contact between Europe and what is now usually called the Third World or the South (*Sør*).

The missionaries mobilized, as it were, the indexicality of photography for their own specific ends and in their own specific ways. Their societies have for many years striven to familiarize European viewers with parts of the world beyond their personal experience. Until recently, and to some extent still today, most people in Norway could only dream of visiting Northern Cameroon.<sup>16</sup> The photographs functioned as a proof that these places and peoples

15. Jenkins (1990).

16. From time to time the missionary societies now organize guided trips to the mission fields. Often members of local congregations go together. This can be regarded as an adaptation to mass tourism intended to create new interest in the work of the missions and the national churches.

existed, and that the missionaries were actually working there. They became powerful images in an ongoing discussion in Europe about who ‘non-Westerners’ are, their needs, and the nature of their relationship to people in Europe. And they created new links of a specific kind between people across the globe, contributing to complex transcontinental networks. I therefore argue in this book that the missionary publications document a crucial part of what might be termed the historical development of a specific kind of involvement in the fate of unknown people who live far away. Like other photographs, they do not only convey ideas, meanings and beliefs, they configure them.

Thus, the photographs and films about distant peoples in some ways brought them closer to people in Europe and provided a basis for Europeans becoming interested in the various figures within the missionary repertoire of typical characters. My analysis both supports and challenges current picture theory, developed by theorists such as Roland Barthes, John Berger, and Susan Sontag.<sup>17</sup> Like other photographs, the missionary photographs are ‘both there and not there’,<sup>18</sup> both indexical and iconic,<sup>19</sup> exhibiting *a tension between absence and presence*. Many theorists of photography have in their analyses focused on absence, memory, death and frozen time. In partial contrast, the effect of the missionary photographs on the viewer in Europe is often a feeling of sensory immediacy and the presence of foreign people in the photographs, more than the absence of their real bodies. In a certain sense, and in certain ways, these photographs brought faraway people to life for European viewers.<sup>20</sup>

The real faces and bodies of faraway people are absent, but their features were made available for inspection in new ways. The photographs from Cameroon presented a specific expansion of the world of ordinary Norwegians to include places they had never been to and people they had never met – and, with some very few exceptions, were never going to meet – and they could not examine the photographic subjects with their own eyes. This fact adds a certain element of fiction to the viewing of the photographs, both for contemporary viewers and for me as a present-day analyst. The photographs helped the viewers to imagine Africa and Africans in general and Northern Cameroonians in particular. They constitute a meeting point between two worlds, making people in foreign lands understandable in specific, mediated ways. Thus, the missionary texts and pictures transmit cultural knowledge derived from an intensive and long-term encounter between people with different value systems and frameworks of knowledge.

As already noted, I examine each photograph in relation to the accompanying texts and written captions (when they occur), with a special focus on the strategies of persuasion employed in the many missionary books for the general audience (including the core supporters). Because they allow me to examine aspects of the life-worlds of the missionaries, the written texts are crucial to my interpretations of the missionary meanings of the documentary photographs. This kind of ideological discourse often works through selective attention rather than through outright suppression.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, I analyse the specific ways of

17. Barthes (1977a, 1977b; Berger (1972, 1973); Sontag (1977, 2003). Walter Benjamin is a partial exception to the theoretical focus on death and frozen time.

18. Mitchell (1994).

19. Barthes (1977a, 1977b).

20 See Rugg (1997: 214) for a discussion of the identification of memory and photography in the work of autobiographers.

21. Rosaldo (1989: 120).

seeing which individual images inspire, as well as the subject matter, composition, pictorial conventions, directions of gazes in individual pictures, the arrangement of images in composite mixed-media genres, and the complex and often contradictory relationship within and between images and verbal texts. Thus, I link the photographs to the missionary discourses – to the notions structuring them, limiting them, and providing them with a certain identity.<sup>22</sup> Texts can anchor, explain, contradict, narrate, describe, and/or label – speaking for (or to) the photographs. The photographs, for their part, can illustrate, exemplify, clarify, ground and/or document the texts. I regard the relation between texts and pictures as infinite, processual and dynamic – an unstable dialectical field of forces.<sup>23</sup>

Since photographic images and verbal texts are different media with different limitations and possibilities, they construct different objects. In the words of David MacDougall, texts about people in foreign lands often focus on difference, while visual images, and ethnographic films in particular, sometimes have what he calls a ‘transcultural’ quality, communicating commonalities of human existence across cultural boundaries: ‘Visual images have a way of undermining writing’, he argues.<sup>24</sup> To some extent this is also true for missionary photographs. Like other cross-cultural publications, the missionary publications are often rife with tensions and contradictions – between different parts of the texts, between texts and their illustrations, and between pictures and verbal commentary. At the same time, I do not find that ‘undermine’ is the most appropriate word. On the contrary, the fact that texts and pictures are often not in step can be central to the message conveyed. The message resides not in the text alone, not in the visual images alone, but in their combined force – be it in the form of contradiction, supplement or reinforcement. Sometimes the pictures can be interpreted as eye catchers or distractions that circumvent counterarguments to the verbal message; sometimes emotionally touching pictures allow the text to be persuasive; sometimes the message depends more directly on the pictures; and sometimes the missionary photographs both provide evidence and touch the heart, while the verbal texts provide the explanatory stories. Quite often old missionary pictures have more freshness and a richer potential for new uses than contemporary verbal texts.

The missionaries’ transmission of knowledge linked different social worlds within global colonial structures, and these structures granted the missions the power to represent the ways of life of Africans in Europe. To some extent the missions have therefore directed the ways Africans are represented in Norway, in particular in the era before the age of mass tourism, multichannel television, and the penetration of development experts and humanitarian organizations.

In drawing attention to the suffering of others, documentary photography often treads a fine line between the highlighting of injustice, on the one hand, and stereotyping, objectification and abuse on the other. There is generally an aspect of power inherent in the photographic medium, and taking and circulating photographs strengthened and consolidated the power of colonialism. Whether they intended to or not, Euro-Americans exercised a power over what is seen and represented in relation to Africans. At the same time, the working of this ‘scopic regime’ is, of course, far more complex than just a simple

22. Blanchard et al. (1995: 15).

23. Foucault (1973: 16); Mitchell (1994).

24. MacDougall (1998: 264).



dichotomy between Norwegians with power and Africans without power. The material under analysis exhibits examples of situations in which Cameroonians have been able to stage and present themselves in accordance with their own values, as well as situations in which the photographer has been able to represent them in ways that they can perhaps now use in their attempts to build a new future. In other words, viewing and performing are multidimensional and need to be carefully explored. I see the photographs as negotiated products, informed, on the one hand, by the missionaries' (and their editors' and publishers') ideas about the preconceptions of the audience, as well as by pictorial conventions and the technologies they mastered. On the other hand, the pictures were influenced by the ideas and perceptions of the people they worked with, wrote about and photographed in Cameroon. Both the ideas of the missionaries and the people they worked with changed over time, due to the encounter.

## A Postcolonial Analytical Perspective

In one of the quotes introducing this chapter, Nicholas Dirks suggests that colonialism continues to live on in ways that we have perhaps only begun to recognize.<sup>25</sup> In this book I substantiate his thesis by attempting to identify the mechanisms which help to reproduce the relational asymmetries. The term 'postcolonial' does not simply mean 'after colonialism' but refers to an analytical perspective: the study of practices affected by colonialism and imperialism. Thus, postcolonial theories explore the continuing material and discursive impact of colonialism on people's lives and ideological constructions. In the present book, I use the missionary texts and pictures to analytically pinpoint some aspects of specific relational dynamics which started before and during colonialism and continue in transformed ways during the changes from colonialism to economic neocolonialism and development programmes. Applying a postcolonial analytical perspective, I argue that pictures are important tools in the reproduction of asymmetrical relations and contain both intended and unintended cultural codes.

Within the theoretical framework of this study, the Christian missions represent, as already noted, a distinct set of perspectives and activities within colonialism.<sup>26</sup> I see colonialism as a *structured* inequality – as a shifting, regionally differentiated and transforming set of unequal social and economic relations embedded in discursive practices. Although their application was not at all uniform, it is possible to argue that colonial ideologies were largely characterized by a relentless binarism and dualist segregation. The mental world as colonialism was one of boundaries and distance: between metropole and colony, colonizer and colonized, governors and governed, centre and periphery, whites and blacks, economic accumulation and exploitation, observers and observed, men and women. In a very material sense, asymmetric colonial relations determined the terms under which some subjects could get access to the

25. Dirks (1992: 23).

26. The association of colonialism and missionary work is well established in international scholarship (see for example Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1997a; Dirks 1992; Pratt 1992). In Norwegian popular consciousness, however, Norway was not involved in colonialism. Nevertheless, as citizens of Denmark-Norway until 1814, Norwegians participated in the slave trade and the later colonial activities in many ways.

technological means of production and representation, and thus also how objects were created and represented. Colonial structures influenced authorship and ownership, the ways in which texts and pictures circulated, and how they were used, consumed and archived. Not least, they shaped the amount and quality of the accompanying information about and interpretations of the people in the images.

In other words, colonialism comprised more than capitalist political economy, and its prime agents were more numerous than states, statesmen, capitalists and corporations; it was not only a result of the power of superior arms, military organization, political power, and economic wealth, but also of what we might call cultural agents and initiatives. In other words, colonialism was also a cultural process involving socially transformative projects. It is therefore impossible to separate the missionary movement from broader processes of modernization (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; 1997a, Pels 1997). Colonialism was not one thing, but a differentiated *encounter* in which local and global forces, Africa and Europe, interacted on multiple levels and in subtle, many-stranded, and mutually determining ways.<sup>27</sup> It can fruitfully be seen as mutually transforming plays of social forces, as locally variable interplays of culture, religion, military power and political economy, often with unanticipated consequences. It was not a monolithic phenomenon; the colonial messages were sometimes accommodated, sometimes resisted or transformed into something new. In fact, if it were not so stylistically cumbersome, it would be most appropriate to speak about colonialisms in the plural.

Colonialism not only had cultural effects but was itself a cultural project. It included official reports and texts related directly to the process of governing colonies and extracting wealth, representations produced by other colonial actors such as missionaries and anthropologists, as well as fictional, artistic, photographic, cinematic and decorative appropriations.<sup>28</sup> The study of colonialism is among other things, and as already noted, also the study of the history by which binary categories such as the colonizer and the colonized became established in certain ways and were further developed. Nicholas Dirks argues that the concept of culture was in part produced during the colonial encounter: 'Before places and peoples could be colonized, they had to be marked as "foreign", as "other", and as "colonizable." ... Colonialism was therefore less a process that began in the European metropole and expanded outwards than it was a moment when new encounters within the world facilitated the formation of categories of metropole and colony in the first place'.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, Dirks argues:

Colonialism provided a theatre for the enlightenment project, a grand laboratory that linked discovery and reason. Science flourished in the eighteenth century not merely because of the intense curiosity of individuals working in Europe, but because colonial expansion both necessitated and facilitated the active exercise of the scientific imagination. It was through discovery – the siting, surveying, mapping, naming, and ultimate possessing – of new regions that science itself could open new territories of conquest: cartography, geography, botany and anthropology were all colonial enterprises. Even history and literature could claim vital colonial connections, for it was through the

27. Comaroff and Comaroff (1997a: 246).

28. See also Thomas (1994: 16).

29. Dirks (1992: 6).

study and narrativization of colonial others that Europe's history and culture could be celebrated as unique and triumphant.<sup>30</sup>

Over time, colonial categories became incorporated into conventional wisdom.<sup>31</sup> And, as already noted, the present book analyses how they live on in transformed ways. Even today, *the power of representation*, rather than just the force of arms and economics, is a key to Western hegemony. In this book I attempt to grasp empirically and analytically some aspects of the transformed cultural dynamics brought on by political independence and economic neocolonialism. Dichotomies such as 'donors' and 'receivers', North and South, black and white, as well as the stereotypes that often accompany them, are continuously applied, transformed and reaffirmed by being used in new discourses (such as the discourses of tourism and development programmes), at the same time as important social and economic processes cross the boundaries around the social entities designated by these categories. With political decolonization and the expansion of capitalism, privileged individuals and classes are based in many regions of the world, not only in the so-called North. The social boundaries have often hardened on the ideological and discursive level; at the same time, it is no longer self-evident which persons occupy which positions.

Furthermore, colonial histories were shaped not only by the various colonial actors with their distinct agendas, but also by indigenous resistance to, as well as active deployment of, the introduced institutions, beliefs, material objects and discourses. Within the field of postcolonial studies, the perspective has largely been reversed from a focus on oppression to a focus on local agency and resistance. I do not subscribe to a total reversal – victims of exploitation and oppression existed in the past and do indeed also exist in the present. But the various distinct colonizing projects were inflected or altered by the people they encountered, as well as well as by how the encounters influenced the institutions of the West. I see colonialism as multiple struggles that constantly negotiate and renegotiate the balance of dominance and resistance, rather than as a singular coherent strategy.<sup>32</sup>

The various colonizing projects also involved processes of 'development', the way this concept was later specified and put into practice. For example, the colonizers needed to install new forms of infrastructure. From about 1920, this was the main legitimation for the colonizing project and included – with considerable regional variation – establishing schools and contributing to social development. With their relative autonomy in relation to colonial control, missionaries supported the colonial authorities through education and other means of social change, but they also operated independently, and sometimes they resisted the politics of the colonial regime (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, 1997a). Missionary work thus epitomizes a central paradox in modernization: it could work as a tool for imperial rule, but at the same time it also provided tools for threatening and subverting colonial hegemony (Thomas 1994). Both literacy and the importation of Western political and religious ideas became resources for personal self-control and political resistance. The inflections of these ideas now form part of a new relational dynamics in which historically established conceptual dichotomies, stereotypes and prejudices are reapplied and reaffirmed, also by the formerly

30. Ibid.

31. Dirks (1992: 1).

32. Cooper and Stoler (1997); Pels (1997).

colonized. In particular, studying the missionary photographs makes visible how the mission has contributed to laying the foundation for the apparently softer ideologies and practices of 'development'. I call these ideologies and practices 'developmentalism', and see them as a gentle face that softens the harshness of economic neocolonialism.

At this point I want to mention Edward Said's Foucault-inspired analyses of 'Orientalism' and the culture of imperialism as a source of inspiration.<sup>33</sup> His pioneering and influential study transformed not only the field of so-called Middle Eastern studies, but also the studies of 'others' more broadly by drawing attention to the ways in which a whole series of 'Western' writers and scholars created 'the Orient' through repeated images and metaphors. Since Said's work, colonialism is no longer seen as just being out there, in exotic places, but also as lying at the heart of European culture. Said wanted to reverse the scholarly gaze and therefore asked the Orientalists to examine their own preconceptions in their representations of others. Said thus forcefully shifted the issue from the prejudices and biases of particular depictions to one of the politics of discursive representations. His analysis concerned the Middle East, and not Africa south of the Sahara, but his general approach is also useful to the study of the European representations of this large region.

Said argued that the matter is not simply one of prejudicial distortions that can be removed to achieve true representations, but that the very language of investigation and description constitutes the represented object in specific ways. In other words, the analysis of missionary photographs is not fruitfully framed as an analysis of 'manipulation' versus an 'accurate representation' of their work in the field.<sup>34</sup> Since the representation of anything is by definition to some extent the creation of something new, the missionary representation of Africa is by necessity the presentation of a specific and changing perspective. My aim in this study is to try to pinpoint this perspective, in the light of the relational dynamics within which it emerged. While much research on colonialism and neocolonialism has mainly focused on the consequences of the European presence for the colonized societies, I attempt to take into account the way the encounters between missionaries and local people also had a profound impact on Norwegian culture and society. In particular, the encounters and their representations have shaped the ways nonwhite people are seen in Norway.

Northern Cameroon is particularly interesting, since in some ways it can be considered a marginal outpost of the Muslim Middle East. Fulani and Hausa Muslims were present in the region as traders and conquerors long before the missionaries. As we shall see, the Norwegian mission was part of an international missionary effort to create an 'apostle belt' right across the African continent to stop further Muslim expansion south of the Sahara by reaching the heathens before they converted to Islam. This particular mission field thus represents an interesting crossroads for Christians, Muslims and pagans. The Muslims were rivals in the struggle to save heathen people's souls, and this is visible in the missionary representations. Many well-known ideas and stereotypes from Orientalist discourse, as identified by Said, are present in the missionaries' depictions of despotic and polygamous local sultans and their harems. Moreover, the work of Said has inspired me to identify the missionaries' focus on women in Northern Cameroon as the objects of the pity of Europeans.

33. Said (1978; 1994).

34. See, for example, Thompson (2004) for such a framing of the research problem.

The present study is also influenced by the critical work of the many scholars who have modified Said's ideas. First, not only literary and scholarly texts but also photographs and films made by Europeans constituted influential forms of Orientalist discourse.<sup>35</sup> In fact, working with photographs makes it possible to further develop Said's idea that there is generally a primacy of vision over narrative in orientalizing discourses. Second, when the material I work with allows it, I attempt to take into account the intentions of individual agents, not only the logics of the structural complexities and tensions within which they operate.<sup>36</sup> I look for the room for manoeuvre of Norwegian missionaries (as producers of the photographic images, subject matter and viewers), their core public in Norway (as imagined and actual viewers) and local Africans (subject matter and, more recently, viewers). Individual subjects do not just adopt roles which are mapped out for them; rather, they experience discomfort with certain elements implicit in discourse, find pleasure in some elements, and are openly critical about others.<sup>37</sup> Thus, I am interested in the specific institutional and relational dynamics created by the actions of individuals within structured relationships. Third, while Said did not probe into the many ways that Christian and bourgeois images of family life enter into colonial discourses, missionary texts and photographs cry out for such an examination. And fourth, it is a challenge in scholarship today not only to identify differences and social boundaries, but also to focus on the many social interconnections and the multiple overlaps across social categories and ideological divides.

In other words, the missionary photographs emerge within changing social and economic structures, without being fully determined by these structures. Colonial relations, the way they were structured in the nineteenth century and well into the first half of the twentieth century, are now gone but live on as changing, variable and differentiated socio-economic structures and forms of collective consciousness which are put to new kinds of uses by new social actors. Until recently – and to a large extent still today – in the era of humanitarian aid and development programmes, and mass communication through international media networks, the documentation of Africa in Europe is largely a one-sided communication. For example, in the news media today, a very small number of Western companies dominate the production of news from Africa and the so-called Third World more generally.<sup>38</sup> Not only are Africans seldom able to present themselves to the rest of the world, but people in Europe have so far also largely missed the opportunity of profiting from the perspectives of Africans on Europe. This is part of the reason for the continued Eurocentrism of hegemonic discourses. This is also the case in Norway, a country with limited participation in imperialism and colonialism, and an almost total lack of popular self-reflection on such issues.<sup>39</sup> Western cultural influence without equivalent reciprocity can be seen as a cultural corollary of economic neocolonialism.

After political independence, unequal economic and cultural relations have continued as neocolonial structures in multinational capitalist corporate production, international trade, immigration and integration policies, development aid, academic cooperation and missionary work. Such structures and processes coopt leading Africans as actors in key positions. Black

35. Alloula (1986); Ryan (1997: 26).

36. Mills (1997); Thomas (1994).

37. Mills (1997: 97).

38. Carlsson (1998: 63).

39. See Gullestad (2006a).

Africans are not only oppressed by whites coming from the outside but also by elite Africans involved in multinational corporations and organizations within new national and transnational hierarchies.

In order to pinpoint how colonial binaries are reproduced in transformed ways, I have heuristically defined three overlapping communicative modalities in the material that I have examined, corresponding roughly to three historical periods. I call these modalities *evangelizing*, *development* and *partnership*. The communicative modality of 'evangelizing' lasted roughly until Cameroon's political independence in 1960, but in some publications much longer. It is characterized by a primary focus on local people as 'heathens living in fear' and of the core supporters (often called the 'mission friends') as the primary audience in Norway. The communicative modality of 'development' started roughly with political independence and lasted to the end of the last millennium. It is characterized by a stronger focus on the transference of technology, and of the Norwegian government as an additional source of funding and audience for missionary information materials. The new visions involved in the third communicative modality – here heuristically called 'partnership' – are characterized by a more pronounced attention to African ideas and wishes. These modalities thus overlap and are also characterized by increasing complexity because of the addition of new audiences and new concerns. Many Africans in elite positions now use colonial binaries as a resource in understanding their current position and as a tool in mobilizing support. Intending to respect African interests, European missionaries (and development experts) to some extent continue using these categories and the dividing lines they imply.

When the missions installed specific images of Africa in Norwegian hearts and minds, they simultaneously installed specific images of what it is to be Norwegian. In fact, both the international, the transnational and the national dimensions of the missions have always been strong. The various missions have been organized as denominational (in this case evangelical Lutheran) and national (in this case Norwegian) enterprises, inspired by international movements. The perceived otherness and backwardness of Africa has been a part of the backdrop for the construction of the self-evidence of the perceptions of national homogeneity and modernity 'at home'.

This idea can be pushed even further: the very idea of modernity and its celebration of civilization, progress and rationality are, of course, predicated on difference. The modern presupposes the existence of the traditional to acquire its meaning. Through the very terms in which they perceived Africa, the missionaries and other colonial actors simultaneously constructed both 'our' modernity and 'their' traditional society. These conceptual categories and boundaries have since been adopted by many Africans and are deployed with new meanings and effects, as sources of resistance, power and influence.<sup>40</sup> The power of categories rests in their potential capacity to impose the realities they only purport to describe.

40. See Appiah (1997) and Howe (1998) about 'Afrocentrism' in the USA.

## Complexities of Gender, Age and 'Race'

In present-day Northern Europe, racism is generally a powerful word, often serving to terminate public discussion, not to open it up. Because racism in present-day Norway is popularly defined in individualizing terms as acts based on hatred and with malevolent intentions,<sup>41</sup> Norwegian historians writing about the Norwegian missionaries in Zululand from 1850 to 1900 maintain that 'in contrast to much of the literature on Africa at the time, there is no trace of racism in the Norwegian missionary reports, there was on the contrary an optimistic belief in the African's potential for conversion and salvation'.<sup>42</sup> I agree with these historians that the missionaries' view of Africans as equal to themselves in terms of being the children of God is crucial and should be underlined.<sup>43</sup> This idea gave their work its distinct critical edge within colonialism. Furthermore, missionaries are in some respects less prone to essentializing than other colonial actors, because for them otherness was already preferably in the past. Their race thinking is therefore often of a premodern and nonessentializing kind. Since they are often engaged with individual converts rather than whole groups, ethnic and racial essentializations did not often occupy the same position in their texts as in those of other colonizers.<sup>44</sup>

At the same time, the issue of racism becomes more complicated when it is seen more broadly as structured ideological and institutional phenomena, not only as individual malevolent intentions based on hate. As already noted, I focus in this book on the missionary publications as sites for tensions and contradictions. The missionaries' production of knowledge could not but take part in contemporary racialized classification as well as contemporary white privilege. I do not see white privilege primarily as a matter of how people look (phenotype) but of Eurocentric ways of life at the expense of non-European and coloured peoples worldwide.<sup>45</sup> Current critical race theories focus on the meanings that have been invested in people's looks and actions at various times and in various places, in contrast to the discredited scientific theories about biological races. 'Whiteness' and 'blackness' are analysed as specific experiences and forms of economic and symbolic capital that sometimes cross the conceptual categories and boundaries associated with the way people look. Within this theoretical framework racialization is not an exception but the rule, affecting everybody, including the author of this book. Being driven by their own peculiar mixtures of radicalism and conservatism, the Norwegian missionaries both relied upon and transformed the concepts, categories, values and practices available to them, including contemporary ideas

41. Gullestad (2006a).

42. Simensen (1995: 141), referring to Jørgensen (1985) and (1990: 144). See also Mikaelsson (2000: 206–16), who makes a similar point on the basis of missionary books published in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In a review of Mikaelsson's book in *Misjonstidende* June/July 2004 159: 36, Ragnhild Mestad finds this conclusion surprising, given that ideas about race were widespread in Europe.

43. See, for example, Bue (1992: 79), 136 and Øglænd (1988: 55) about the spiritual ties uniting people who share the same faith.

44. Pels (1997: 172). However, in the 1990s, terms such as 'race' and 'tribe' were used in missionary publications (see, for example, Sundby 1991: 4; Nissen 1999: 81). These notions are also commonly used in Norway (Gullestad 2006a).

45. Escobar (2004: 216).

about racial hierarchies. They used and transformed these ideas in the light of their own specific agendas and the particular religious and political circumstances in the regions where they worked. The division between soul and body in European thinking provided a basis for seeing universal equality in terms of souls, and various sorts of inequality (gender, age, ethnicity, 'race' and class) in terms of bodily difference.

The Norwegians brought with them to Northern Cameroon a polarized worldview, coloured by pietism, abolitionism and imperialism. In their publications for the general audience, they represented Cameroonian ways of life in terms of conventional colonial dualisms between light and darkness, and between Christianity and heathenism. While the symbolism of light and darkness has remained central up to this very day, the notion of the heathen is now outdated.<sup>46</sup> During the first decades of contact in Cameroon, these binaries were applied in ways that turned hybrid and fluid realities in everyday life into dualisms on the ideological level. This can be regarded as a part of the general tendency of cross-cultural encounters to force even deeper conceptual wedges into ever more articulated, indivisible orders of relations (Comaroff and Comaroff 1997a: 26). Contrary to popular belief, increased interconnections, knowledge and face-to-face contact often go hand in hand with polarization, disjunctures, new hierarchies, sharply differentiated notions and essentializing practices. The story I tell in this book is a story of both intimate and idealistic involvement and hierarchical distance at the same time.

In the early missionary books from Cameroon, the verbal stress was on the savage in his state of heathenism. At the time, the social and cultural differences between the missionaries and the various people they encountered were considerable. Some of these differences have now diminished. Because of the schools established by the missions and the colonial and national authorities, many Cameroonians were formally educated throughout the twentieth century. During this period, categories such as 'black' and 'white' were constantly applied, reproduced, transformed and reaffirmed by both whites and blacks,

I therefore draw on the scholarly literature on 'race' in this study,<sup>47</sup> including the studies of European and North American images of blacks, such as the work of Sander L. Gilman, Nederveen Pieterse and Gustav Jahoda.<sup>48</sup> This literature emphasizes both the changing nature of racial images and stereotypes and their continuous historical weight. According to Pieterse, in the European Middle Ages blackness symbolized sin, Satan, animality, gluttony, sexual promiscuity, laziness, and being happy-go-lucky. For Jahoda, the themes of animality (bestiality, apishness) and cannibalism show a transhistorical Eurocentric continuity.<sup>49</sup> From the eighteenth century these ideas became important for the justification of slavery, and a polarity between the noble and the ignoble savage was introduced. From the nineteenth century blacks were also portrayed as big children who needed help in order to become civilized. The idea that the mental processes of savage men were similar to those of civilized children became a commonplace in colonial discourse and scholarship, together with the related notion that mental development in 'the lower races' came to a gradual halt in early adolescence.<sup>50</sup> While some theories attributed this to 'degeneration', others attributed it to

46. See Chapter 5.

47. Such as Fanon (1967 [1952]); Goldberg (1993); Harrison (1995); Stoler (2002); Winant (2000).

48. Gilman (1982); Pieterse (1992); Jahoda (1999).

49. Jahoda (1999).

50. Comaroff and Comaroff (1991, 1997a); Stocking (1982 [1968]).



'immaturity'. Moreover, Sander Gilman has shown for Germany that stereotypes about Blacks were in active use also in countries without blacks. It is not difficult to document that such stereotypes were widespread in Norway, and that they have to some extent persisted over the last hundred years.<sup>51</sup> The terms have often changed, but not necessarily the underpinning ideological structures, images and stereotypes.

Perceptions of class, gender and age frequently encode ideas of racial difference, and it is often these overlaid constructions that display the complexity and distinctiveness of particular modes of representation.<sup>52</sup> Photographing a body as female or male does not just depend on the essential femininity or masculinity of that body, but on the discourses of gender (among other discourses) in which the photographing practice is situated.<sup>53</sup> This is so concerning the camera work of the photographer, the socialized body and the intentions of the photographic subject, as well as the cultural conventions of the viewer. According to Sally Markowitz, the category of sex/gender difference itself has been saturated with racial meanings for centuries, and not always in ways that are easy to discern: 'classifications of race and sex complement, even constitute, one another rather than simply cut across one another or even compete'.<sup>54</sup> As in other colonial and imperialist discourses, the perceived status of women (including the men's treatment of them) was (and is) central to missionary ideology and practice. In fact, colonial authority was generally bolstered by the often mistaken assumption that European women were less oppressed than women in other parts of the world, making women's emancipation a justification for various kinds of intervention. In the chapters to come, I want to demonstrate that gender is not simply a 'factor' that can be entered into the analysis but is a crucial dimension of difference that encodes or valorizes other differences, such as those based in 'race', class or geographic area.

Similar perspectives can be applied to children and childhood, and the almost ubiquitous infantilizing of the colonized from the nineteenth century onwards. While Norwegian missionaries regard local people as equal to themselves as children of God, children and childhood are also used as metaphors in many other ways. For example, in relation to specific conceptions of 'modernity', 'tradition' appears to be child-like. And children are perceived to be naturally innocent, and to have a specific role to play in the before-and-after narrative of religious conversion.<sup>55</sup> In missionary narratives, grown-ups are often seen as children growing out of heathenism, led by the missionaries. Africans have been represented as children and the missionaries as their parents. These metaphors indicate some of the particular qualities in their relationship. And just like children in Europe who formerly ought to be 'seen and not heard', photographic subjects in the same time period ideally remain available for observation.<sup>56</sup> In the missionary representations, specific codes of gender, sexuality, age and family life thus seem to reconcile tensions between the ideals of equality, on the one hand, and the inequalities of rank, prestige, power and monetary control on the other.

51. Botten (2003); Christensen and Eriksen (1992); Gullestad (2006a); Moldrheim (2000).

52. Thomas (1994: 67). In general, colonial writers have frequently attributed femininity to colonized peoples, and later to the 'developing' nation state (Mosse (1985); Parker et al. (1992); Spivak (1990).

53. Rose (1997: 279).

54. Markowitz (2001: 389, 398).

55. Thomas (1994: 131–33).

56. Mitchell (1994: 162).

## Mission Propaganda

Like all transmissions of knowledge – including the present book – missionary documentation is shaped by the locations of the observers – their field of vision as well as blind zones. Any location is both enabling and limiting in this sense. The missionary photographs are assembled and shown within a range of distinct mixed-media genres (slide shows, magazines, newsletters, books and films), in association with some kind of commentary or narration. For the purposes of this study, I examine certain similarities among the many different publications directed at a general audience. These similarities are, above all, due to the shared particularities of the relations of production and dissemination. I ask not only what the publications *mean*, but what the missionaries want them to *do*. The short answer to this question is that these publications are intended to persuade and engage. First, the distinct genres emerge within similar institutional contexts, being used to present missionary experiences to actual and potential supporters in Norway. This is particularly so within the modality of evangelizing. The missionaries needed to effectively persuade the audience at home that the peoples in Cameroon needed to be saved. Second, the various publications have a specific religious anchoring in pietistic, revivalist Christianity with an emphasis on each individual's personal experience of God's presence in his or her life. The books can be read as documents about life in Africa as well as testimonials about the workings of God, based on selected biblical passages that serve as key metaphors throughout the century.<sup>57</sup> Third, and closely related to the religious content, the transmission of knowledge in the publications contains an aspect of advertisement or propaganda for the mission. The main aim of the missionaries is not simply to transmit knowledge about Africa – it is of course that, too – but to transmit knowledge as a public relations tool to 'win women and men, old and young and children for the Gospel and for Christ' and encourage them to support the mission spiritually and financially.<sup>58</sup> They wanted to keep the supporters they already had as well as recruiting new supporters at home and new missionaries to the various fields.

In other words, these publications belong to a special kind of popular culture and constitute a special kind of mass media which is similar to and different from other genres of mass popular culture on the market. And similar to – but also in ways different from – other forms of popular culture, they do not primarily engage the critical intellect of the audience. To some extent they have to be entertaining and to live up to the expectations of the audience. But unlike most popular books and films, selling and entertaining is considered a means, not the end. The goal is serious in its own particular way: the dissemination of information in order to move the heart and engage people to support the mission's work, devotionally, socially and financially.

The publications are supposed to involve people at home in the missionary effort – in prayer, organizational work, donations of money and new recruitment. Thus, the transmission of knowledge has many dimensions and aims – informational, entertaining, devotional as well as promotional. The missionary activities (including the subsistence of the

57. See Chapter 3 and Chapter 5.

58. Paul B. Wegmueller, *Filmevangelisering* ('Evangelization by means of film'), page 9 of an undated stencilled manuscript distributed to all the NMS missionaries by the film office of the NMS (*Det norske misjonselskaps filmsentral*). The text is located in the NMS Archive.

missionaries and their leadership in Norway) depend upon the support from the home country, and neither the leadership in Norway nor the authors of the materials want to present information that they think might offend the readers and discourage this support. The search for support inevitably influences their choices of pictorial and narrative strategies, often in the direction of the optimistic and inspiring.

I want to argue that missionary books, magazines, films, talks and slide shows form part of a continuous and changing campaign directed at people in Norway. Telling the Norwegian public about their evangelizing, education and diaconal work among the sick is meant to move fellow Norwegians to see the need for the missionary venture, and to evoke specific responses – ‘to ignite a fire in the hearts’ (*tænde ild i hjertene*) for the missionary cause.<sup>59</sup> In the forewords or introductions to their published books, missionaries often express their love for Africa and the hope that reading their books will enable the public in Norway to share this love.<sup>60</sup> For example, Jorunn Sundby tells her young readers that she has become fond of the Cameroonians,<sup>61</sup> and that she hopes her book has made them come closer to the reader.<sup>62</sup> Henri Nissen wants to ‘give the readers a taste for Africa – in fact for the whole fantastic world outside the hustle and bustle of the West’.<sup>63</sup>

When wanting to pinpoint the distinct character of the missionaries’ campaigning, I have the choice between using market-oriented and politically-oriented conceptual language. In market-oriented language, the mission wants to ‘sell’ its projects to its various audiences, and the competition is hard for the attention of the audiences. In societies characterized by a pluralism of religions and ‘good causes’, religious actors have to ‘market’ their religious messages. This economist’s way of talking has not diminished with the expansion of economic neoliberalism since the 1980s. Neo-liberal economic concepts permeate most institutions, including the missionary societies. Moreover, the activities of the missions contain a marked business aspect. They need money to carry out their good works, and they know well how to collect it, allocate it, manage it and make it grow.

I have nevertheless chosen to redefine the concept of propaganda. As we shall see, this concept has from time to time been used by missionaries themselves to describe their information work. Moreover, an aspect of propaganda is almost inherent in the general definition of documentation.<sup>64</sup> Documenting is usually a question of representing something for somebody else with a specific purpose in mind. Since the concept of propaganda directs attention to ideas, images and forms of knowledge, I have adapted it to the missionary publications by offering a more complex and more precise analytical definition than the usages

59. Flatland (1922: 41).

60. For example Budal (1962), Bue (1992); (foreword and the text on the jacket), Lode (1990), Røst (1942); the editors’ foreword).

61. Sundby (1991: 68).

62. Sundby (1991: 64).

63. Nissen (1999: 6). Nissen’s book is written for the Danish general public. He is a Danish missionary and journalist who worked at the radio station in Ngaoundéré for three years. He was sent by the Danish Sudan mission, but cooperated with the national church and the Norwegian missionaries.

64. The most well-known photographic propaganda project is perhaps the documentary project ‘Farm Security Administration’ (FSA) between 1935 and 1943 in the USA. The aim of the project was to produce photographs that could obtain the support of the public for the various New Deal programmes to help poor people, in particular poor people in the countryside.

that are current in both research and everyday life. This analytical strategy has the added advantage of making it possible to trace the connections between mission propaganda and political propaganda, including development propaganda.

The word 'propaganda' is of relatively recent origin. The first documented use of the term occurred in 1622, when Pope Gregory XV established a standing committee of cardinals in charge of missionary activities of the Roman Catholic Church. It went by the name *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (The Holy Congregation for Propagation of the Faith). At the time Pope Gregory realized that the holy wars were a losing endeavour, and established the Propaganda as a means of coordinating the efforts of the church to elicit the voluntary acceptance of church doctrines.<sup>65</sup> There is thus an interesting etymological connection between the concept of propaganda and the Christian missions. This is also evident in the fact that the word propaganda is etymologically related to the Latin word *propagare*, meaning 'to plant saplings', a central biblical image in the missions.<sup>66</sup> One of the great European Protestant missionary societies, founded in 1701, was called The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.<sup>67</sup>

In the twentieth century the word 'propaganda' took on odious connotations in everyday speech by being related to aggressive marketing and the political machineries of communism and Nazism. The negative flavour is to some extent also evident in contemporary scholarship. For example, in their book *Age of Propaganda*, Pratkanis and Aronson define propaganda as 'the communication of a point of view with the ultimate goal of having the recipient of the appeal come to "voluntarily" accept this position as if it were his or her own'.<sup>68</sup> In *Propaganda and Persuasion*, Jowett and O'Donnell define the concept as 'the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that

65. Pratkanis and Aronson (1992: 9); Smith (1968: 579) in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*.

66. Fafner (1985: 197). The term 'propaganda' was also used in Protestant theology by Martin Kähler in the second half of the nineteenth century. He distinguished between the terms 'mission' (referring to the work of winning souls for Christ) and 'propaganda' (referring to the work of winning people for the form of Christian life which at any point in time seems right). Genuine mission work degenerates into propaganda if one does not distinguish between *Christianity* and *culture* (Berentsen 1990: 107–12). I do not apply the distinction between 'mission' and 'propaganda' in this book, but I think it is relevant for some of the ideas involved in the discussion of the communicative modality of partnership in Chapter 9. Mission theologians now more consciously want to transmit the Gospel (Christianity) but not all aspects of European world views (culture). They thus tend to apply a kernel/husk view of religion, implying that it is somehow possible to pass on a pure form of Christianity separate from the culture in which it is embedded. But missionaries can only transmit their faith from within their own cultural presuppositions (Bowie 1993: 11). Propaganda is thus something to be avoided at the same time as it is unavoidable. Most missionary information activities necessarily contain an element of propaganda. I also think this discussion might be fruitfully related to the way I adapt Arendt's distinction between compassion and pity later in this chapter. Missionaries want to transmit Christianity and inspire compassion, but almost unavoidably also transmit culture and inspire pity. In contrast to Kähler and Arendt, I see the relation between 'mission' and 'propaganda' and between 'compassion' and 'pity' as continuous tensions rather than as one being a perversion of the other.

67. It joined with the Universities Mission to Central Africa in 1963 to become the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (Kirkwood 1993: 24).

68. Pratkanis and Aronson (1992: 9).

further the interest of the propagandist'.<sup>69</sup> The *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, for its part, defines it as 'the relatively deliberate manipulation by means of symbols (words, gestures, flags, images, monuments, music etc.), of other people's thoughts or actions with respect to beliefs, values, and behaviors which these people ("reactors") regard as controversial'.<sup>70</sup>

These definitions both fit and do not quite fit the missionary publications. Evangelical missionaries want to convince people, not to make them accept their position 'as if' it was his or her own. They want each individual to go through his or her own process of conversion; they do definitively not want to brainwash people into converting. A conversion has to be deeply felt in order to be regarded as valid and authentic. The affective aspect is explicit and positively valued. This is the case, whether the convert is European or African. The fundamental theological distinction is between the saved and the nonsaved, and between the believer and the nonbeliever, regardless of 'skin colour', geographical origin or other differences.

Moreover, the term propaganda is most often used by outsiders, not insiders. For example, some Norwegian missionaries have used the word propaganda about the activities of Muslims in the region.<sup>71</sup> And Muslims have regarded the Christian radio emissions as propaganda.<sup>72</sup> However, some Protestant missionaries have used the term in a positive sense about their own activities. For example, while writing about filmmaking in a backstage publication (intended only for other missionaries) about strategies concerning photography and film, a missionary leader acknowledged that most missionary institutions 'have one or more films in their propaganda arsenal' and wanted to further develop this medium. He strongly advised his colleagues to use advertising as a model and think through *the idea* of their visual media, and *where they wanted to lead the audience*.<sup>73</sup>

However, because of its negative connotations, it is nevertheless with some hesitance that I redefine the concept of propaganda for the analysis of the missionary transmission of experiences and information. In contrast to everyday usage, I do not see 'propaganda' and 'information' as mutually exclusive categories. On the contrary, I see missionary propaganda as a part of specific communicative modalities, a specific way of informing about intercultural encounters for specific readers with specific goals in mind. For the purposes of this study, I define *mission propaganda* as the communication of experiences and information from the field arranged in ways that are meant to touch people emotionally and spiritually and propel them into supporting the mission. Within the evangelizing modality, in particular, missionary stories aim at evoking *engagement* with the spiritual and material suffering of people in Africa (and elsewhere), *piety* to God, as well as *confidence* in the religious teachings of the mission and in its ability to help by acting on God's behalf.

69. Jowett and O'Donnell (1999: 6).

70. Smith (1968: 579).

71. See, for example Flatland (1922: 14); Oseland (1946). In a commonsensical way, several analysts of missionary photography also use this term about the publication activities of Christian missionaries (Brewer 2005: 105, 119; Johnson and Seton 2002: 166, 167, 168).

72. Larsen (1973: 109).

73. The Danish general secretary H.P. Madsen in the stencilled Nordic newsletter *Focus* no. 1, March 1953: 9–11. The article was printed in the very first issue by Jan Dalland, the leader of the NMS film office in Stavanger, who edited the newsletter. The newsletter came out fourteen times between 1953 and 1963. See Chapter 2.

It might be useful here to introduce and modify a distinction made by Hannah Arendt.<sup>74</sup> According to her, the person or institution who wants to elicit compassion for people as categories, not as individuals, unavoidably elicits pity. Compassion, she says, is ‘to be stricken with the suffering of someone else, as though it were contagious’.<sup>75</sup> It abolishes distance, while pity involves distance. It is incapable of institutionalization, while pity sets out to change the world. Arendt refers to Dostoevsky, saying that to him the sign of Jesus’ divinity was his ability to have compassion for all men in their singularity, that is, without depersonalizing the sufferers and lumping them together into aggregates and types:

Closely connected with this inability to generalize is the curious mutedness or, at least, awkwardness with words that, in contrast to the eloquence of virtue, is the sign of goodness, as it is the sign of compassion in contrast to the loquacity of pity.<sup>76</sup>

Arendt goes on to say:

As a rule, it is not compassion which sets out to change worldly conditions in order to ease human suffering, but if it does, it will shun the drawn-out wearisome processes of persuasion, negotiation, and compromise, which are the processes of law and politics, and lend its voice to the suffering itself, which must claim for swift and direct action, that is, for action with the means of violence.<sup>77</sup>

While compassion is symmetrical and involves solidarity, Arendt says, pity is paternalist, asymmetrical and potentially self-aggrandizing. With a few crucial modifications, I find Arendt’s distinction useful for my analytic purposes in this study. First, I want to stress that, for me, the social actors are not the passions and sentiments in themselves but human beings holding, nurturing and inviting others to engage in these emotional states and building institutions on that basis. Second, I ask whether this kind of compassion is possible across great cultural difference, or whether it first requires some level of comprehension and communication (i.e. the ability to speak to each other). Arendt argues that ‘compassion abolishes distance, while pity involves distance’. But perhaps the argument could be turned around to say that when the cultural distance is considerable – because of a history of separation and/or domination – then it is hard to achieve compassion. People can only be perceived as individuals by people in the audience at home if they have a way to know them and to share their experiences. Missionaries in the field do get to know individuals, but they often present them to audiences back home as stylized types.

Third, I do not follow Arendt when she says that pity is the sentimental perversion of the passion of compassion. It is not necessarily a question of either (good) compassion or (perverted) pity but of a continuous tension between different modes of feeling. Given the communicative modalities of the mission, the continuous wish for compassion is almost unavoidably turned into an invitation to pity. The historical notion which most explicitly dramatizes the pity produced by missionary propaganda within the communicative modality of evangelizing, in particular, is ‘the poor heathens’ (*de stakkars bedningene*). As noted in the

74. Arendt (1990 [1963]: 85–94); see also Loga (2005: 37).

75. Arendt (1990 [1963]: 85).

76. *Ibid.*

77. *Ibid.*: 86–87.

preface, in Norwegian the term *stakkars* ('poor, unfortunate, wretched, pitiable, miserable') invites pity. This notion has been central to the core supporters' conception of the potential converts.

While sharing certain formal properties with commercial and political advertisements, the missionary publications are also distinct – with reference to information strategies, the knowledge they transmit, their perspective on the world, as well as what they want to achieve. For example, commercial advertising aims at evoking desire and encourages people to buy specific products to satisfy this desire. The aims of the missionary propaganda are in some respects closer to political propaganda than to advertisements. But in contrast to much war propaganda, which uses negative images to dehumanize an enemy, and in spite of their own use of negative images of heathenism to justify the need for intervention, the missionaries have at the same time also consistently tried to humanize and idealize those Africans whom they regarded as potentially receptive to the Word. In particular, they have published many eye-catching pictures of beautiful, young, anonymous women. These pictures and the accompanying texts are in my view meant to seduce the viewer.

The concept of seduction leads to a better understanding of the missionary publications and to a necessary reconceptualization of the concept of propaganda. While the conventional definitions of propaganda that I referred to above largely focused on *manipulation by coercion*, with the recipient accepting the message 'as if' it was his own, I want to argue that current forms of propaganda focus more on *seduction*, on seducing the recipient into making the message his own. To have power over people thus consists of getting them to voluntarily adopt specific ideas, and this adoption very much depends on their own contribution. In this respect, the performative effects of missionary publications foreshadow an emerging and more complex notion of power through individual seduction rather than collective coercive manipulation, which made itself felt particularly from about the 1960s onwards. In Western countries, power today works in more sophisticated ways than ever before – through *shaping*, not breaking, the wills of the subjects. People now see themselves as individuals making their own choices, at the same time as these choices are largely (but not fully) shaped by powerful forms of seductive propaganda and advertisement. In other words, power often works through the autonomy and discipline of individual choice.

## A Goodness Regime

In the following pages, I present a theoretical description of some the logical implications of the above discussion of propaganda, compassion and pity. These implications will be substantiated in the chapters to come. The Word of the Holy Scripture is, of course, primordial to the evangelical missionaries who went out into the world to save people for Jesus. They primarily want to baptize people who are competent in reading and writing, in order for them to be able to read the Bible themselves. Literacy epitomizes, as it were, the change from heathenism to Christianity and Civilization. But Christians also believe that Man is created in *the image* of his maker, and the Holy Scripture is full of descriptions, narratives and parables intended to bring people and places before the inner eye of the reader. In both face-to-face interaction and mass communication, the missionaries generally communicate by means of stories rather than by just providing arguments, and using stories

and parables can be regarded as a way of communicating images verbally. Stories potentially have the ability to hold the audience's attention, and to educate, inform, instruct, amuse, divert and entertain – all at the same time. When embedded in a personal story, persuasion works even better. In the words of Pratkanis and Aronson, 'most people are more deeply influenced by one clear, vivid, personal example than by an abundance of statistical data'.<sup>78</sup> It is often a question of presenting specific *facts* in a way that is both *consistent* and *embedded in a story*.

In their publications for the general audience at home, the missionaries present (more or less deliberately) both everyday facts and what they take to be deep truths, using specific categories and narrative plots that are intended to touch the heart. Over time, they have cultivated a few master narratives from Cameroon. Through repetition of these narratives, a sense of responsibility for alleviating the need of the African is established in the audience. Since some repetition is often convincing, but too much can be boring, the best strategy is usually repetition with some variation. This kind of propaganda attempts to elicit high levels of emotion, and at the same time suggest a doable, effective response.

Like all stories, the missionary stories and testimonials present heroes, villains, victims (deserving and undeserving) and good helpers. In the chapters to come, I show that the missionaries' master narratives from Cameroon have portrayed African women and children as the soil in which to sow the Word as well as victims waiting for help, and heathen and Muslim men as villains. Depictions of Muslim leaders, in particular, tend to stress their exotic and bellicose character. The lives of people in Cameroon are thus visually and verbally absorbed within the symbolic framework of the mission. The evangelical God, including the central figure of Christ, is the main character, with the missionaries as his self-sacrificing spokesmen and helpers. In documentary photography, the agency of Christ cannot easily be depicted. Supported by theology and the traditions of European art history, the missionaries often stand pictorially in his place. Through the analyses of the photographs, I indicate some of the ways that missionaries imitate Jesus, the way they have learned to represent him, and how some photographs have perhaps been inspired by earlier Christian as well as non-Christian images. The missionary publications exhibit both intertextuality and what we might term 'inter-imaginability'.

Using a notion presented by Jill Loga, the missionary propaganda and the institutions and practices it involves can be analysed as a powerful 'discourse of goodness' involving a knowledge regime,<sup>79</sup> defined as ideas and beliefs that both enable and limit what can be represented, which choices can be made and which actions can be understood as meaningful. Within a particular knowledge regime, some people are better able to articulate their experiences than others, and some experiences are easier to articulate than others. The dynamics created by the missionary interpretations of goodness and need underpin a knowledge regime that represent Africa and Africans in particular ways. The power of a goodness regime is put into practice in the ways it limits the articulation of opposing views and critical analysis.<sup>80</sup> The one who is critical risks being regarded as ungrateful (the missionized in Africa) or cynical (the audience in Norway). However, it should be noted that the term goodness (*godhet*) is not a term which is often used by missionaries and supporters.

78. Pratkanis and Aronson (1992: 130).

79. Loga (2003).

80. Loga (2003, 2005).



In my study, it summarizes a whole set of expressions and terms – such as self-sacrifice, the values of helping the needy, of generosity, and love for others.

By supporting the mission, the core supporters at home build up a good conscience and the hope of their own salvation. The missionaries, for their part, obtain renewed confidence in the necessity and feasibility of their project. I argue throughout this book that the element of persuasion of the self in missionary propaganda cannot be underestimated. Goodness is such an elusive quality that a commitment to it needs to be reaffirmed many times to be persuasive. Credible speakers believe in what they are saying, and by convincing others, they also strengthen their own convictions.

The value of goodness is inherent in the calling to strive for the salvation of others, as well as in the many charitable activities, such as education and work among the sick. Among the primary supporters in Norway, the value of goodness is expressed by the importance of ‘doing something for others’ and in the many sacrifices of the missionaries.<sup>81</sup> Self-sacrifice is a recurrent theme, a symbol of the ultimate gift in the missionaries’ imitation of the goodness of Christ.<sup>82</sup> According to Hannah Arendt, Christ did not give alms in public. In her view, Christian goodness is corrupted in relation to its own values when it is made public. In order to remain uncorrupted, it needs to remain hidden.<sup>83</sup> I think that this is an idea that the Protestant missionaries partly share and partly had to disregard in order to be able to do their work. Since they had to enlist support at home, and since the information materials focused on the self-sacrifice of the missionaries, the tension between modesty and publicity in the missionary presentations of self is recurrent.

The success of the propaganda depends on the self-evidence of the double perception of the overall goodness of the missionary enterprise and the deep needs of the Africans. The concept of missionary goodness depends, as it were, on a portrayal of Africa as a problem-ridden continent. With no problems, there is no need for the mission to help out. There is therefore almost inevitably an inverse logic implied in the portrayal of the relationship between the mission and Cameroonian life in the sense that the problematic aspects of life in Africa justify the claim that the mission is needed. In spite of the fact that there is much more in the missionary portrayal of Africa than just problems, the perspective on Africa as needing help and the accompanying perceptions of the goodness of the donors have over the years become generalized as unquestioned conventional wisdom. This conventional wisdom is today reproduced and transmitted by agencies of humanitarian relief and development programmes, as well as by African leaders in their search for economic support from abroad and political support at home.

All through the social and political transformations of the twentieth century, the social categories of ‘donors’ and ‘receivers’ and the boundaries between them have been produced and reproduced, concealing what people in Europe receive from Africa in terms of economic wealth, goods, ideas and positive self-images. European codes have dominated both the building of transcontinental relations and the transmission of knowledge from the mission field. I will show throughout the book that the unquestioned goodness of intentions for a long time justified a certain lack of attention to the views of the people they worked with and a

81. See Holtedahl (1986).

82. In the terms of classical rhetoric, the establishment of the trustworthiness of the communicators (in this case by a focus on self-sacrifice) is called the *ethos* of communication.

83. Arendt (1990 [1963]: 83–89).

certain lack of reflection on the formation of social categories and boundaries.<sup>84</sup> I demonstrate in Chapter 10 that the missionaries' belief in the need for each person's salvation and their convictions concerning what was in the best interests of the converts has been strong, to some extent leading to the demonization of African belief systems and traditions of knowledge. These processes exemplify the more general point that unselfish acts of helping out – acts of goodness – can have unintended side-effects in terms of potentially challenging the self-respect of the people on the receiving end.

## Photographic Identification and Distancing

Photographs are generally most powerful when they express moods and ideas that the spectators already have. They lend themselves to a kind of implicit but nevertheless productive visual rhetoric, ideologically shaping the points of view of the viewer by confirming them. This is so because they are usually not regarded as communicative messages with intentions and arguments. Instead they are often seen as transparent mirror images of the world. Then the spectators do not start reflecting and discussing in order to avoid cognitive dissonance. People do not generally argue with 'the world the way it just is'.

In the Western world, vision has been used as a metaphor for privileged knowledge for centuries. Modern science is based on the fact that 'I have seen' is in many situations a stronger statement than 'I have heard'. In the Nordic languages, for example, the verb to know (*å vite*, in Norwegian) is etymologically connected to seeing. This foregrounding of vision underpins the power of photography. Photographic technologies and practices developed as a part of and a parallel to a fascination with the accurate recording of things within broader attempts at classification and possession.<sup>85</sup> One could perhaps say that in missionary photography, the traces of light on the photographic plates came to represent the gradual victory of Christian light over heathen darkness. At the same time, I argue that photography is not always detached observation, but can be part of many kinds of relations, including relations of compassion and care.

The publication of missionary images includes many stages. First, the pictures are taken, reflecting a more or less conscious and deliberate act on the part of the photographer, as well as the involvement or noninvolvement of photographic subjects. These acts are influenced by complex cultural codes and value systems. For better or worse, a photographer usually sees most clearly what appears as most strange to him or her. This is particularly evident in cross-cultural photography. Like all photographs, the missionary pictures show a reality which is shaped by the choice of subject matter, the angle, the focus and the particular poses.

Studies of photographs and films therefore have to deal with the double character of pictures – on the one hand, they are cross-linguistic and transcultural phenomena, and on the other hand, they are made, consumed and appropriated within specific (and changing) social, cultural and linguistic contexts and codes. For the missionaries and their core public, the published photographs were perceived as a window through which the people at home could see the faraway objects of their prayer and donations. Nevertheless, like the taking and

84. This also occurs in the discourses of humanitarian and developmental aid (Tvedt 2003).

85. Clarke (1997: 15).

ordering of the photographs, their viewing and interpretation are influenced by complex cultural codes and value systems. Photographic images derive their evidential force both from their indexical relation to a prior reality and from the material, technical and cultural processes and discursive frameworks through which they are produced and made meaningful.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, pictures are more than just messages – they carry additional meanings that are not easily decoded. Both photographs and films are generally characterized by forms of richness and redundancy, which can potentially provide the basis for new interpretations. What was ground for the photographer may become figure for the interpreter. Thus, as different media, pictures say both more and less than the written text. Sometimes they say less because not everything in the text has been photographed. Sometimes they say more because a picture generally presents more detail than a verbal account.

The pictures release and generate interpretations; they do not determine them. The aim of my research is not primarily to look for a reality ‘behind’ the pictures by presenting ethnographic facts about the people and groups represented, but to contribute to the decoding of their power by reading them in the light of the accompanying original texts and presenting an interpretation of how they are composed. Throughout the book I refer to theorists of photography such as Walter Benjamin, John Berger, Susan Sontag and Roland Barthes. In particular, I use Barthes’ notion of the *air* of a photograph, as well as his distinction between the *studium* and the *punctum*. The *studium* is characterized as a general interest without love, and the *punctum* is something which pricks a particular observer: ‘It is what I add to the photograph and *what is nonetheless already there*.’<sup>87</sup> For Barthes, the *studium* is ultimately always coded, the *punctum* is not: ‘What I can name does not really prick me. The incapacity to name is a good symptom of disturbance.’<sup>88</sup> The *punctum* is personal, tied to the biography of the spectator. What touches one observer does not necessarily touch another. But in contrast to Barthes, I want to argue that by making interpretations public, they can be debated, and maybe modified and shared by a wider audience – or found wanting in relation to the pictorial and textual evidence.

Inspired by Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of literary ‘othering’ – defined as distancing, an objectifying style, and a synthesis of the tropes of ethnography, evangelism, science and moralism<sup>89</sup> – I introduce the concept of *photographic distancing*. As a rough definition, I define photographic distancing as the creation of exotic scenes and types, inviting viewers to distance themselves from the subject. It invites a form of dis-identification in the viewer. But in contrast to Pratt, and in line with my focus on the importance of the potential for various degrees and modes of identification in the visual representations of the missionaries, I also want to introduce the concepts of *literary* and *photographic identification*. In the missionary propaganda, photographs can be regarded as tools which encourage the viewers in Norway to identify with some of the photographic subjects and engage in their lives across cultural and geographic distance, and to distance themselves from others. In general, viewers identify with people who, according to their own ideas about beauty and moral value, are attractive and

86. Ryan (1997: 19).

87. Barthes (2000 [1980]: 55, italics in the original).

88. Barthes (2000 [1980]: 51). The distinction between the *studium* and the *punctum* can perhaps be linked to Arendt’s distinction between pity and compassion. Compassion is individual, momentary and speechless, just like the *punctum* before it is shared with others.

89. Pratt (1992).

seem worthy. Some missionary pictures dwell on the beauty, humanness and moral character of Africans. Because a black appearance inevitably signals difference to Norwegian viewers, the missionaries have applied various strategies to counteract interpretations of difference by focusing on the subjects' humanity. I argue in the chapters to come that in the missionary materials many pictures of women and children, in particular, attempt to communicate human sameness. Together with the accompanying texts, they bear witness to the ways the missionaries have read beauty into African bodies, and how they assume that their viewers will also read the same kind of beauty into the pictures they offer. Not only female victims but also male villains are often portrayed as attractive. By portraying the victims as attractive, the viewer is seduced into wanting to help. By portraying the villains as attractive, I assume that indignation on the part of the victim is heightened.

The invitation to photographic identification is in my view crucial to the power of some of the missionary photographs, and is perhaps more central than photographic distancing to the effects of missionary propaganda. This is, however, a complicated issue. If identification is defined as *the ability to see the world from the point of view of the other*, the extent to which the Norwegian viewers were actually led to see the world from the point of view of the Cameroonian photographic subjects – and thus the potential for compassion – is relatively small. They have no doubt identified with the people in the photographs, *the way they were seen by the missionaries within the relevant communicative modalities encompassing missionaries, Africans and the various viewers in Europe*. They believed that they saw the world from the point of view of the locals, without always doing so. But when they believed that a particular mediated point of view was true, it might become true in its consequences. With a neologism created for the occasion, one could call the particular combination of identification and distance 'pitification'. Pitification is the result of the ways the photographic subjects are portrayed as objects of the goodness of the missionaries, and through them of the goodness of the supporters in Norway.

Most missionary photographs were probably taken just for private reminiscence. But some pictures were taken, or chosen after they had been taken, to be published in specific genres of publication and connected to various sorts of verbal commentary. The pictures published by Norwegian missionaries exhibit a repertoire of photographic subject matters that I will discuss in the chapters to come: missionaries engaged in evangelizing, teaching and medical work; missionary buildings (churches, schools and hospitals, with and without people); groups of students at different levels (often with the white missionary teacher at one side or in the middle); baptisms; missionary graves; heathens (represented by innocent-looking women and children); people with leprosy and other illnesses; former slaves who had escaped from forced labour; smiling converted Christians; the local Muslim rulers (their appearance, activities and buildings); as well as dangerous snakes and African animals and birds. This short survey of the inventory of representative photographic subject matter epitomizes a set of typical narratives and ways of justifying the missionary enterprise. Some of the meaning that can be read into these pictures is the result of the explicit intentions of photographic subjects, photographers and editors, but many aspects of meaning reside in unacknowledged underlying cultural codes and conventions which have to be teased out by means of careful analysis.

The missionary books exhibit much variation concerning how pictures and text are distributed. The significance of each photograph is influenced by its location in relation to other photographs, through juxtaposition, contrast and/or a specific progression of the visual

narrative. The number, sequencing and size of the photographs as well as the layout of the pages play an important role. I have examined images and texts by asking to what extent they bear witness to how missionaries and publishers have attributed meaning to what the missionaries observed in the field. For example, I ask if a dramaturgical strategy is deployed in the selection and ordering of the illustrations, and if there is a visual construction of equality or authority. Not every author tells the same stories, presents the same photographic subject matter, or uses the photographs in exactly the same way. Even within one and the same book, the relationship between pictures and texts is generally not uniform.

In an everyday sense of the word, the pictures *illustrate* the missionary books. But to see them as 'just illustrations' simplifies the complex relationships between images and texts. In the missionary books, the photographs often function as eye catchers, telling a story of their own which is relatively loosely related to the story in the text. Besides being united between the covers of one book, the photographs and the narratives are united in the sense that both derive from the missionary experiences in the field, and sometimes also their experiences while travelling to the field.

In missionary books and magazines, there are often at least two layers of text: the main body of text and the captions. In preparing their publications, the missionaries (and their editors and publishers) had to decide which pictures might illustrate the main body of the text, whether to add a caption or not, and if a caption is added, what information to include. Sometimes there have been differences of opinion between the leadership at home and the missionaries in the field about these issues when editing the texts and choosing the pictures. Since captions serve to prioritize certain sorts of information in relation to the pictures, both the presence and absence of captions confer meaning and influence the interpretations that contemporary viewers are invited to make. Through the captions, the missionary photographer and/or editor mediates between his or her framing of the life-worlds of the photographic subjects and the audience in Europe. Together with the particular perspective of the photographer, including the choice of subject matter and its framing, the captions are central to making African photographs fit audiences in Europe.

## **The Analyst Is Both Outsider and Insider**

Since every point of view and every act of speaking is always partial and comes from somewhere, every piece of research has to be reflexively 'situated'. Knowledge is situated when the researcher understands that it is partial, and that this partiality is connected to the contexts in which it is produced.<sup>90</sup> My role in this book as the interpreter of cross-cultural photographs and religious texts necessitates that I reflect upon my social location in relation to the phenomena I discuss. Both images and religion constitute fields of experience that are difficult to conceptualize in rationalizing terms. Knowing only too well that one's own blind zones are most clearly seen by others, I nevertheless try to be reflexive about my own complicity in neocolonial relations, including the contradictions implied in the social location of my study and the problematic aspects of the categories I use.

90. Haraway (1991).

As an anthropologist I find that scientific and popular forms of representation often inhabit partially overlapping ideological spaces, and are not as far apart as is commonly assumed. I therefore see both parallels and links between missionary activities and anthropology – between the carving out of mission fields and the carving out of academic careers through the intellectual colonization of other people (as well as between these two and the carving out of political and economic empires). Both missionaries and anthropologists employ specific rhetorical strategies and specific strategic omissions of information which play down our complicity in the structured processes of imperialism and neocolonialism. Our self-understanding is based on what we see as human universals as well as on processes of self-construction through opposition to ‘the other’ from different sides of a power divide. Like the recent history of anthropology, the recent history of missionary publication could be described as a story about gradually having to take into account the reactions of the people we write about and take photographs of.<sup>91</sup> This gradual taking into account of the reactions of the subjects demonstrates that a neat separation between scholars and research subjects or between missionaries and converts is no longer empirically tenable. Some of the former research subjects have become anthropologists, and some of the former converts have become influential theologians, destabilizing former social certainties.

At the same time, there are also interesting differences between anthropology and the missions. While anthropologists have travelled to faraway places in order to study belief systems and practices, attempting to be cultural relativists in a descriptive sense, missionaries settled in some of those very same places in order to *replace* people’s belief systems and practices. They have definitively not been cultural relativists, but, yes, missionaries. While academic anthropologists sometimes express a need ‘to give something back’ in the form of minor services for the data they obtain and the hospitality they receive in the field, missionaries generally see themselves as the ones who are bringing the gift of the Gospel to the people they work with. And while the missions have made extensive use of photographs in their information materials until the very present, from about 1930 onwards, there has been a decline in the use of photographs in scholarly anthropological publications.

I assume that part of the reason for this decline was precisely an attempt to upgrade the discipline academically by distinguishing it from the writings of travellers and missionaries. Anthropologists have tended to construct a *Feindbild* (enemy image) of missionaries as exemplary colonialist indoctrinators, thereby viewing their own writings as both more serious and as the result of an essentially harmless curiosity.<sup>92</sup> They could also play down the fact that when developing intensive and long-term field research methods in the 1940s and the 1950s,

91. It is a well-known fact that the history of anthropology is not exemplary in this respect. See, for example, Rassool and Hayes (2002). There is also much to learn from the recent debates within anthropology concerning the practices of writing. See Clifford and Marcus (1986). See also Hsu’s (1979) discussion of the diaries of Bronislaw Malinowsky, one of the founding fathers of modern social anthropology: ‘In spite of his hostility towards Christian missionaries, Malinowski’s sense of racial and cultural superiority over the natives in his field came through loud and clear. He frankly called them savages, niggers, boys, not once, but repeatedly’ (Hsu 1979: 518). ‘Malinowski never seemed to relate to his natives as human beings who might be his equals or trusted colleagues’ (ibid.: 521). Hsu noted that Malinowski was unable ‘to relate to the natives on anything like their own terms’ (ibid.: 521). See also Rosaldo (1989: 116).

92. Pels (1997: 171).

they depended on dictionaries and grammars written by European and American missionaries who had become proficient in many languages as a means of proselytizing, as well as on the social networks and institutions developed by the missions.

Another reason for the decline in the use of photographs in anthropology was that the anthropologists were no longer interested in racial features and material culture. In other words, they were not interested in bodies, houses and tools, but in kinship systems, political decision making, economic allocations and other less tangible and less directly photographable aspects of human existence. This was linked to the change in theoretical perspectives from diffusionism to functionalism. Writing about British social anthropology, Elisabeth Edwards identified a shift from photographs as objects collected and exchanged by practitioners who treated them as 'examples of isolated phenomena for the purposes of comparative study' to 'an increasingly integrated model of social structure for which the photograph was perceived as a less satisfactory mode of recording and expression' and within which photography became one aspect of recording fieldwork.<sup>93</sup> In a way, anthropological fieldworkers have themselves taken on the function of a plate of glass or a strip of film.<sup>94</sup> To the extent that anthropologists still use photographs in their publications, there has been a shift from pictures which are commented on to illustrated texts.<sup>95</sup> When presented as nontheorized 'illustrations', the anthropological use of photographs is often similar to the missionary publications.

In a similar way as the missionaries, but with much less experience than they have in Cameroon, I, too, both inhabit and relate to colonial and neocolonial economic and political structures. And, as a scholar, I inevitably participate in transformed colonial relations within academic life. My writing in this book is thus doomed to exhibit dilemmas of representation which are similar to the ones exhibited in the missionary publications. For scholars in general and anthropologists in particular, colonialism is not a historical object which is external to the observer.<sup>96</sup> *Everybody* in the world is today forced both to inhabit and to relate to the changing and unequally structured global relations left by colonialism and maintained by economic neocolonialism and developmentalism.

As an analyst I am thus both part of and not part of what I analyse – both an insider and an outsider. This situation has been a challenge when I have been working to establish an analytical language in order to grasp the specific codes and legitimating practices of the system I study. When examining the discursive universe of the missionaries, I am forced to think and communicate by means of the categories in this universe at the same time as I examine them. This is made all the more necessary by the fact that some of these categories are now also used by Africans. It is an inescapable complication in this kind of analysis that the analytical language cannot be fully dissociated from the ideologies under examination.

One example is the enduring tendency in Europe to talk about 'Africa' instead of about particular peoples and places on this vast continent. As discussed by Bill Ashcroft, among others, this is a highly problematic concept. Africa, he says, is the 'unknown into which knowledge must advance. Thus the idea of Africa precedes and justifies colonialism; and this

93. Edwards (2001: 38, 47).

94. Pinney (1992: 82).

95. Wolbert (2000: 323).

96. Pels (1997: 164).

idea persists to the present.<sup>97</sup> In this book I am forced to continue this practice, since the materials I examine have to some extent actually been presented and interpreted as representations of Africa.<sup>98</sup> At the same time, this practice is the object of my analysis. Other examples are the problematic notions of slavery and the 'harem' applied to practices in Northern Cameroon, the notions of heathenism (*hedenskap*), 'false gods' or 'idols' (*avguder*) for the beliefs of Cameroonians, as well as the catch-all term 'magic remedies' or 'charms' (*tryllemidler*) for 'amulets' and a range of other objects belonging to distinct traditions of knowledge which were lumped together and considered to be heathen by the mission.

Similar problems relate to many terms used in this book. In particular, I am painfully aware of the problems related to the application of racial terms such as 'white' and 'black', racially coded terms such as 'missionaries' and 'locals', 'European' and 'African', 'Norwegian' and 'Cameroonian', as well as ethnic terms such as 'Fulbe' (town 'Fulani'), 'Mbororo' (pastoral 'Fulani'), 'Gbaya', 'Dii' and 'Mbum'. All of these are problematic terms because they refer to socially constructed and historically mutable realities. There is therefore a great risk that the very terms of the analysis reproduce and affirm all the conceptions and binaries that I aim to critically explicate. For example, for stylistic reasons I sometimes use the term 'local' about Cameroonians, knowing all too well that they were as influential as the crosscultural encounter as the missionaries. The use of categories represents a serious problem with no easy solution. The only way to proceed is to question these and similar categories by attempting to make explicit their historical nature.

Like the missionaries whose photographs I examine, I am a Norwegian citizen and thus an insider doing anthropology close to 'home'. But in contrast to many authors who write about missionary activities, and who are themselves part of the organization they study, their activities constitute a social, religious and cultural world that was new to me when I started examining it. As a feminist scholar, perhaps I also notice slightly different things than a researcher with different analytical perspectives would have noticed. Nevertheless, as an ethnographer, I find that entering the published world of Norwegian missionaries is not fundamentally different from entering any other sociocultural world.

But, as I have already had the occasion to emphasize, the outsider aspect of my location is *caught up within* the larger political-historical world that we have inherited from slavery, imperialism and colonialism, and thus also *within* the current agendas of capitalist and imperialist expansion and influence. As noted in the preface, my reading of the texts and the photographs is informed by conversations with present and former missionaries, as well as with some of the Cameroonian subjects who are represented in the photographs. I also rely on my previous anthropological studies of aspects of culture and social life in Norway.<sup>99</sup> The analytical perspective that I bring to bear on the missionary material builds on theoretical reading as well as my former research projects, including a recent study of the Norwegian debates on immigration.<sup>100</sup>

97. Ashcroft (1997: 11).

98. But note that many core mission supporters in Norway have also been well versed in the details of the particular places and institutions that they supported in 'their' mission field.

99. Gullestad (1979, 1984/2002, 1992, 1996a, 2006a).

100. Gullestad (2006a).



While this book has a thematic structure and concentrates most on the latter half of the twentieth century, I try to avoid judging the knowledge transmitted in the past in terms of present-day ideas and values, and to be sensitive to the disjunctures between the frameworks of past actors and me as a present interpreter. In other words, I attempt to pay attention to the historicity of the photographs by looking for the reasonableness of the missionary images and verbal texts in terms of the particular contexts and constraints of the time, including the materiality of the life situations of the missionaries in relation to local people and how the relations have evolved over time. This aim, of course, includes reading the texts and interpreting the photos in a scholarly critical way. I try to understand the motivations and experiences of the missionaries in the 'mission field' and their leadership 'at home', and how their roles as mediators between the supporters in Norway and the people in Cameroon influenced what they communicated back home, and also some of the reactions of the locals to them – the indirect voices and self-presentations of the missionized within the missionary representations.