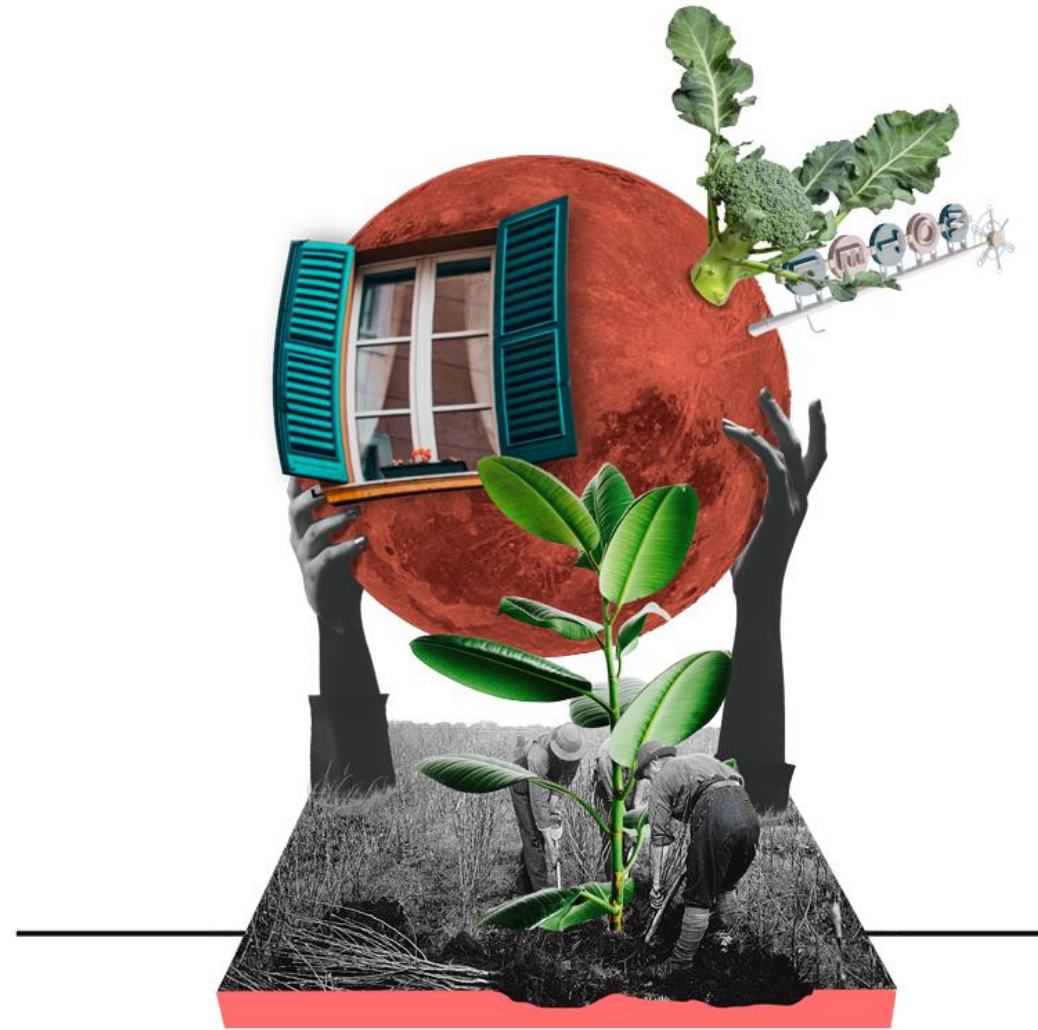


# Webinar 'Mission and Humanitarian Engagement: A Colonial History?'

## The Coloniality of Charity: Humanitarianism and Mission in the Age of Empire

Wednesday, 26 February 2025

Dr. Linda Ratschiller



# Introduction



## Main historical characteristics of humanitarianism:

- 19th century: context of imperial expansion and formal colonisation
- strategic giving through institutions
- emergency relief AND long-term social change
- global dimension: the 'West' (Global North) as 'donor' and the 'Rest' (Global South) as 'receiver'

# Introduction

## Mission societies as humanitarian organisations

- The abolition movement & imperial expansion
- Global networks of charity
- Constructive imperialism and the civilising mission





# The Abolition Movement and Imperial Expansion



*Josiah Wedgwood, Anti-slavery medallion, 1787.*

Alliance between Enlightenment humanitarians and evangelical Christians: 1807 Slave Trade Act

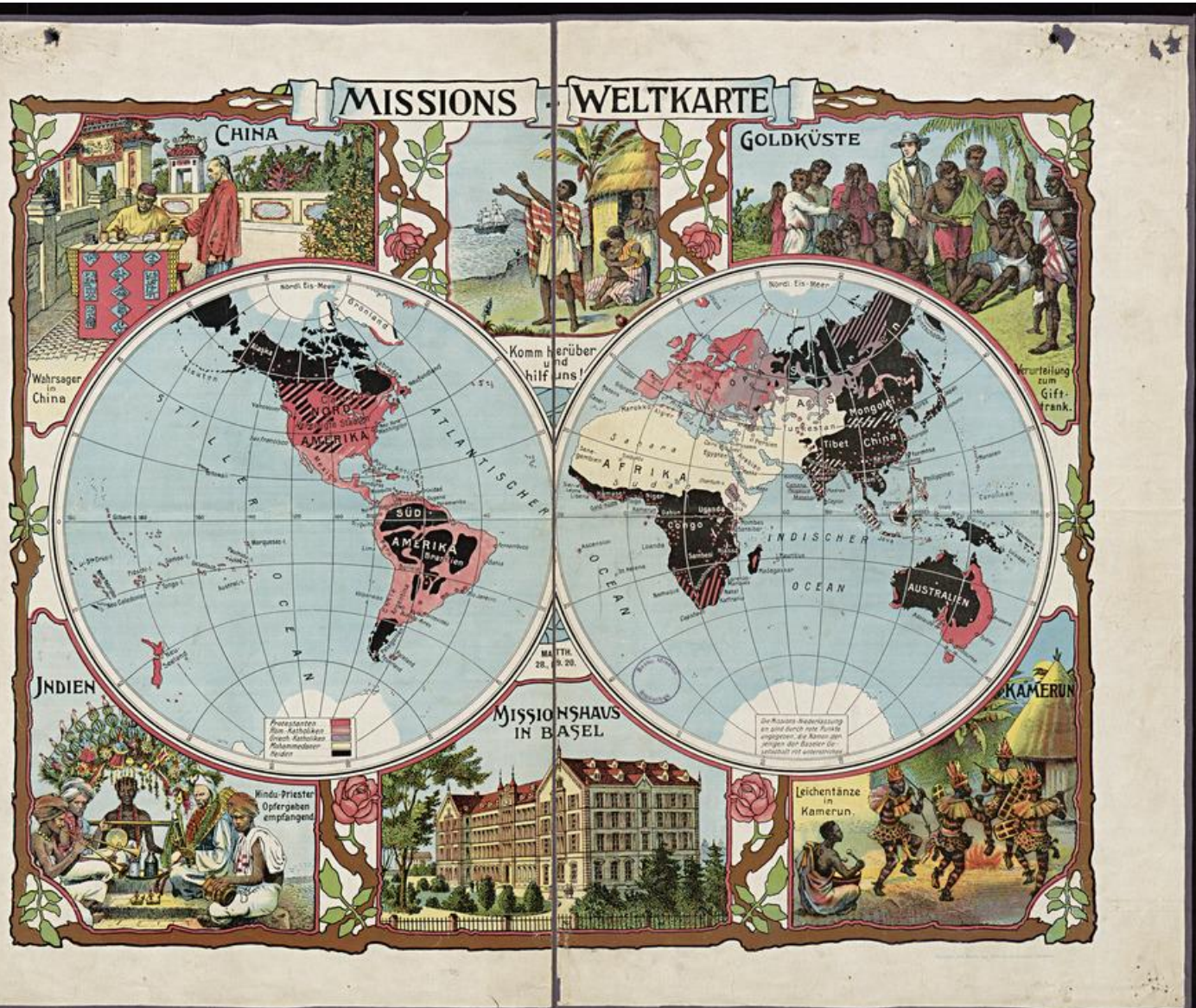
Sierra Leone: the liberation of enslaved Africans was “simultaneously an act of emancipation and of colonisation” (Anderson, 2013)

Abolition of slavery as a moral imperative that required European oversight

Evangelical development activism: missions provide rationale for imperial expansion and consolidation of colonial rule, even when they oppose formal colonisation and violence



# Global Networks of Charity



## Halbbatzen-Kollekte:

1855: 68,583 CHF (~40,000 donors)

1880: 268,271 CHF (~90,000 donors)

1905: 450,000 CHF (~165,000 donors)

1913: 602,021 CHF (~195,000 donors)

*Weltkarte der Basler Mission, um 1900, in:  
Archiv Basler Mission, BMA 97856.*

# Constructive Imperialism and the Civilising Mission

**France:** *mission civilisatrice* mid 19th c. – roots in Enlightenment and French Revolution, rationale for expansion into Africa and Southeast Asia during the Third Republic

**Britain:** Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary from 1895, “constructive imperialism” – imperialism as beneficial for colonised people & rational utilisation of colonial resources

**Germany:** Bernhard Dernburg, State Secretary for Colonial Affairs from 1907: “Hat man früher mit Zerstörungsmitteln kolonisiert, so kann man heute mit Erhaltungsmitteln kolonisieren, und dazu gehören ebenso der Missionar, wie der Arzt, die Eisenbahn, wie die Maschine, also die fortgeschrittene theoretische und angewandte Wissenschaft auf allen Gebieten.” (Bernhard Dernburg, Zielpunkte des Deutschen Kolonialwesens. Zwei Vorträge, Berlin 1907, p. 9.)

☞ shift from an initial emphasis on the welfare of white colonists to improving economic and social conditions for the colonised, ostensibly for their own benefit

# Constructive Imperialism and the Civilising Mission

For example, health care and medicine: Hans Ziemann "Die hygienische Eroberung Afrikas" (1907)

Ludwig Külz: "Den Eingeborenen, unseren kolonialen Hauptwert, in seiner vollen Leistungsfähigkeit nicht nur zu erhalten, sondern nach Möglichkeit zu heben, seine physischen Entwicklungsbedingungen zu fördern, Hindernisse für letztere zu beseitigen oder fernzuhalten, ist die vornehmste Aufgabe der Kolonialhygiene." (Ludwig Külz, Die Volkshygiene für Eingeborene in ihren Beziehungen zur Kolonialwirtschaft und Kolonialverwaltung, in: Deutsches Kolonialblatt (1910), p. 12–21, here p. 12.)

- ☞ missions as indispensable partners in implementing the civilising mission
- ☞ humanitarian engagement coupled with economic interests and imperial aspirations

# Conclusion

Anton van Harskamp: “The point is: when we realise that development is some kind of a substitute for the progressive, linear (and liberal) concept of history, we simply must become suspicious! In particular, when we reckon with the well-known interpretation that this concept is ultimately a secularised version of a Judeo-Christian idea – that the course of history is continuously moving forward to salvation.” (Anton van Harskamp, Introduction, in: Oscar Salemink et al. (eds.), *The Development of Religion / The Religion of Development*, Delft 2005, p. 1–6, here p. 2.)

**Thank you for your attention!**