

International **Mission Photography** *Archive*



In the century before World War II, missionaries were a grass roots presence wherever Western influence reached around the world. They were among the first to use photography to document their activities and their pictures capture a visual record of a world that would otherwise be unknown today. Until recently, the usefulness of these images was limited by their lack of description and especially by their dispersion across many sites.

[www.usc.edu/impa](http://www.usc.edu/impa)



**“IMPA is the leading resource for mission scholars, cultural historians, and others who are interested in pictures that document social change in non-Western cultures.”**

— JON MILLER, *USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture*

KEYWORD

freed slaves

PLACE > South Africa

*title* Freed child slaves, Kumase, Dec. 1905

*record no.* impa-m25737

*repository* mission21/Basel Mission

*format* b/w positive, paper print, gelatin-silver, 10.3 x 15.0 cm.

The International Mission Photography Archive (IMPA) presently displays more than 50,000 of these pictures from Protestant and Catholic mission collections in Britain, France, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. Building this resource is an ongoing joint effort of the Center for Religion and Civic Culture, the USC Digital Library, and an international team of scholars and archivists. The digital database accessible through the IMPA website is text-searchable, with metadata entries in English based on Dublin Core standards.

[www.usc.edu/impa](http://www.usc.edu/impa)



**“IMPA opens up stunning global resources for the study of mission history, integrating far flung archives for online access from anywhere in the world.”**

— DAVID MORGAN, *Duke University*

COLLECTION > [Maryknoll](#)

KEYWORD

[Fr. Meyer](#)

*title* Fr. Meyer's wayside medical work in Guangzhou, China, 1948.

*record no.* *impa-m3772*

*repository* *Maryknoll Mission Archives*

*format* Photographic prints, 25.3 x 20.5 cm.

This growing repository is an important resource for scholars from many disciplines, including religious studies, histories of China, India, and Africa, economics, anthropology, international relations, art history, and comparative sociology. It is also of interest to non-academics and indeed to anyone with an interest in the history of the missionary movement, the largest popular social movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The geographic scope of the archive includes Sub-Saharan Africa, China, Madagascar, India, Kalimantan, the Pacific, Korea, the Caribbean, and South America. With a few exceptions, the pictures were taken between 1860 and 1950.

[www.usc.edu/impa](http://www.usc.edu/impa)



SEARCH >

Genadendal

*title* Group of schoolboys, Genadendal,  
South Africa  
*ref no.* impa-m11444  
*repository* Moravian Church  
*format* 2 copies, colored slide no. 2167  
photographs

**“Mission photographs and maps represent a treasure trove for the historian, anthropologist, and scholar of religion and visual culture. ... These resources open avenues for new lines of inquiry and invite scholars to re-imagine colonialism, evangelism, cultural encounters, and the evidential characteristics of maps and images.”**

— DAVID MORGAN, *Duke University*

# participating archives



Top: Aburi station, silk-cotton tree in the English botanical garden, impa-m38581, mission21  
Bottom: Hairstyles, impa-m37760, mission21

The **Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, Inc.** (Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers) was established in 1911 at Maryknoll, New York. For IMPA, we selected images from China, Korea, Japan, and the Philippines, most of them from the period 1912-1945.

The **Centre for the Study of World Christianity** at Edinburgh University has contributed lantern slides from the collections of the Church of Scotland Foreign Missions Committee (Malawi, Zambia, Kenya, Calabar, India and Jamaica) and the Regions Beyond Missionary Union (India, Peru and the Congo). These date from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s.

**DM-échange et mission** in Lausanne, Switzerland, is a consortium of Swiss Protestant missionary organizations active in southern Africa, particularly Mozambique.

The **Hermannsburg Mission** in Hermannsburg, Germany has contributed photographs from Ethiopia (1927-1958) and two regions of South Africa (Natal and Transvaal)

The **Leipzig Mission**, founded in 1836, was active principally in East Africa, India and (more recently) Papua-New Guinea. The archive in Leipzig possesses some 20,000 historical photos.

Founded in 2001, **mission21** in Basel, Switzerland is made up of four previously independent missionary societies among which the Basel Mission is the largest. The main areas of activity of the Basel Mission, from its inception in 1815

until the mid-twentieth century, were Ghana, Cameroon, India, China, and Kalimantan.

The **Moravian Church**, established in 1722, first sent missionaries to Africa in 1737. The photographs contributed to the Archive, some dating as early as the late 1860s, are from Tanzania and South Africa.

The **National Library of Scotland** holds the photograph collections of the United Presbyterian Church, the Free Church of Scotland, and the United Free Church of Scotland. Areas covered by the images include the Near East, New Zealand, Africa, India, Pakistan, China, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

**Paris Evangelical Missionary Society**, established in 1822 and now subsumed administratively under Département évangélique français d'action apostolique (Défap), is the largest franco-phone Protestant mission in the colonial era. Its collection of more than 20,000 photographs come principally from southern Africa (Lesotho in particular) and Oceania.

The photograph collection of the Mission Archives at the **School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger** is mainly related to the work of the Norwegian Mission Society, founded in Stavanger in 1842. Overall, the collection comprises approximately 25,000 items from the years 1870-1950.

The selection from the 25,000 prints held in the missionary society collections at the **School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)** is a representative sample of images from Africa, China, the Caribbean, Madagascar, South India, and Papua-New Guinea.

The **Yale University Divinity School Day Missions Library** is a world-renowned collection documenting world Christianity and the history of the missionary movement. Selections from its archival and manuscript collections have focused on photographs of China missions and photographic postcards of mission work throughout the world.



On the cover: (1) Else Schärf with lepers, Isoko, Tanzania, 1929, impa-m6669, Moravian Archives; (2) Apostolic Vicar of New Guinea, ca.1900-1930, impa-m13197, Day Missions Library; (3) Indigenous catechist honored by Pius XI, Fiji, ca.1900-1930, impa-m13093, Day Missions Library; (4) Gateway, Tranquebar, impa-m36391, mission21; (5) Man fishing, Japan, ca. 1920-1940, impa-m60139, Maryknoll Mission Archives; (6) Margarethe, impa-m28886, mission21; (7) QC-30.003.0027, impa-m33879, mission21; (8) two Maryknoll priests on a river ferry at Jiangmen, China, 1920, impa-m6099, Maryknoll Mission Archives; (9) Mission children, impa-m56632, mission21; (10) Men with water jars on the Irrawaddy, Myanmar, s.d., impa-m1039, School of Oriental and African Studies; (11) Sister Frieda Wetzel working with a microscope, Tanzania, ca.1927-1938, impa-m1219, Leipzig Mission; (12) Queen Ranavalona III, Antananarivo, Madagascar, ca.1890-1895, impa-m2297, School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger; (13) Chinese children in their best clothes, impa-m43059, mission21



Top to bottom: (1) Ringing of the church bells, Gonja, Tanzania, ca.1927-1938, (impa-m1169, Leipzig Mission); (2) Antsirabe Church exterior, Madagascar, 1900, impa-m2894, School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger; (3) Tiling the church roof, Elim, South Africa, impa-m11823, Moravian Church; Maryknoll Mission Archives; (4) The cathedral at Manzhoukuo, China, 1934, impa-m5487, Maryknoll Mission Archives

## The Archive at a glance

The International Mission Photography Archive (IMPA) is a joint project of the Center for Religion and Civic Culture and the USC Digital Library. The photos in this archive document the cultural impact of Western influence and views of traditional culture, landscapes, cities, and towns before and in the early stages of modern development.

- ▶ IMPA is a resource for scholars from religious studies and from a wide-range of other disciplines
- ▶ IMPA is freely available online, offering a searchable database with metadata entries in English based on Dublin Core standards.
- ▶ IMPA provides open access to more than 50,000 historical images from Protestant and Catholic missionary collections in Britain, France, Norway, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States.
- ▶ IMPA has a geographic scope including sub-Saharan Africa, China, Madagascar, India, Kalimantan, Korea, the Pacific, and the Caribbean.
- ▶ IMPA contains visual records from 1860 to 1950.

## Steering Committee

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## About the USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture

The Center for Religion and Civic Culture (CRCC) is a research unit of the College of Letters, Arts & Sciences at the University of Southern California. CRCC was founded in 1996 to create, translate, and disseminate scholarship on the civic role of religion in a globalizing world. CRCC engages scholars and builds communities through innovative partnerships.

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## USC LIBRARIES

### About the USC Digital Library

The USC Digital Library selects, collects, preserves and makes accessible high quality digital images of unique materials with metadata to support research, and provides a gateway to resources on Los Angeles and Southern California. Spanning a wide range of visual media, the USC Digital Library offers digital images of drawings, illuminated manuscripts, maps, photographs, posters, prints, rare illustrated books, as well as audio and video recordings. Encompassing the subject strengths of the vast collections of the libraries at the University of Southern California, these materials represent the applied sciences, fine and decorative arts, history, performing arts, and social sciences.

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