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The things in between: photographs from the Mariannhill Mission in KwaZulu-Natal and other objects in situations of intermediality
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INTRODUCTION

Image Circuits

The cover of this study shows the photograph of a young man of unknown identity. The photograph was taken sometime between 1902 and 1909 in the photographic studio of the Trappist abbey and mission station Mariannhill, near Durban, South Africa. The man reclines on a roughly assembled bench of untreated wood, in front of an out-of-focus backdrop showing a painted lake scenario. Wearing a large-rimmed skimmer hat, a neat suit with club collar, and a silk cravat, he holds a cloth-bound and slightly worn book. The book, whose cover he consciously displays, bears the title *The Living Races of Mankind*, and can be identified as one volume of the second edition (1901b). First published in London in 1900 as a fortnightly series, it quickly became an immensely popular coffee-table book.

One reason it was used as a reoccurring prop in this particular photographic studio was the fact that it contains several photographs of Black South Africans, who had been living near Mariannhill Monastery, and whose photographs had been taken by personnel of the same studio more than ten years earlier. The portrait of an African man on the inside cover of the study you are reading is one of those photographs. As the sitter posed confidently with the book, it appears that he found that the imagery contained therein bore sufficient resemblance to the people he had encountered in Natal—or still hoped to encounter. While the White sitter remains unknown to us, the African man was indeed a well-known personality to the missionaries, a personality, as I will suggest, that changed alongside the biography of his portrait. *Induna* Umdamane Zungu, as he became known to me, will accompany us through several parts of this study.

This study is—next to photographs—about such things in between, like *The Living Races of Mankind* being held by the sitter: media that the mission's photographer Br. Aegidius Müller intentionally positioned in photographic space, but which concurrently transgress it and point to places and times beyond themselves. By positioning props on a stage, the missionaries revealed something about their own conditions of understanding the world around them, and the production of knowledge about it. As photographic props, such media invoke other images, places and times, different to the ones of which they are a part, always relative to the conditions of their viewing. Even though they are images, or contain images, such as the book depicted in the cover photograph, their terms are at the same time material. On account of this condition, they constituted important social links between the missionaries, both their subjects and audiences, as well as other contemporaries.

Over time, Mariannhill's photographs were employed as propaganda, entertainment, art, social catalysers, scientific evidence, and family photographs. As well as being social agents themselves, Mariannhill's photographs thus bore important evidential traces as sources for several interpretative communities and individuals. However, as historical sources, photographs generally provide an incredible "rawness" of historical presences, which are both "unprocessed and potentially painful" (Edwards 2001:5). Together with seemingly unresolvable "epistemic uncertainties" (Stoler 2009), this results in a "random inclusiveness" (Bell 2006, Edwards and

Morton 2009), and therefore an excess of meanings (Poole 2005). Interpretations of photographs are thus never fixed, and may often even be contradictory.

Next to ethnologists and government officials, the activities and representations produced by missionaries gathered an even greater reputation of stabilising narratives of transformation and conversion by crafting biased documents and by destroying their subjects' cultural artefacts (Harries 2005). The German historian Ulrich van der Heyden states that "[t]he role of missionaries during the process of European colonisation is still being debated in colonial historiography and mission work: were they 'pioneers of colonialism' or 'advocates of the natives'?" (2008:247). I hope to show in the course of this study that such a dualistic approach is insufficient and limiting. While individual Mariannhill Missionaries worked in both of these directions, they participated in many other projects at the same time.

Missionaries generally may have been less prone to essentialise their subjects ethnically and racially, because they were rather concerned with the conversion and registration of individuals (Pels 1994, 1997). Mariannhill Missionaries, however, were certainly amongst those who described their African contemporaries in generalising terms (also see Harries 2005:244-245). For example, in their propaganda periodicals they favoured terms like "kafir" for their future potential subjects, instead of using more diverse "tribal" categorisations like "Zulu", or personal names.¹ By scrutinising the grass-roots processes of photographic production and circulation in combination with various other media, we will gain a more nuanced insight into the intentions and lives of involved actors and objects on both sides of the camera.

This study is therefore concerned with the "social life"² of images and related objects in situations of intermediality, which will lead to a better understanding of the historical role of the photographic medium within the mission encounter.³ This will also provide insights into how several of the photographs' stakeholders made claims to their authentication over time. In the process, the question will arise how missionary representations—despite their lesser reputation amongst scholars—complied with or varied from other contemporary photographic representations of colonial situations, or even those in the colonial centres. Deborah Poole describes such colonial "image worlds" as the "simultaneously material and social nature of both vision and representation" (1997:7). Susan Sontag had pointed out almost two decades earlier that such "image-worlds" are fitting images and the worlds they refer to into "schemes of

¹ The racist term "kafir" (also "kaffir") or "*Kaffer*" will appear repeatedly throughout this study in its historical form of employment. Derived from the Arabic term "*Kāfir*" for "infidel" (ie. a non-Muslim), White South Africans and foreigners used the term during the 19th and 20th century. It was both applied in popular colloquial use, as well as a scientific categorisation of the inhabitants of eastern South Africa. Today it is considered as derogatory and highly offensive.

² The basic idea being that images (Pinney 1997)—just like other artefacts (Appadurai 1986, Thomas 1991)—change in value and meaning by circulating between different interpretative communities and discourses.

³ The term "intermediality" is derived from the concept of "intertextuality", foremost associated with the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva, and Roland Barthes. It indicates that we always read and perceive documents in association with other documents. But "intermediality" often appears to be understood alternatively as "interpictoriality", where image content merely moves from one carrier to the other, and the focus is not so much on the perceiving subject as such. More on this on page 16.

classification”. She also made the important observation that “the notion of image and reality are complementary”, because they both change according to each other (Sontag 1979:153-180, also see Geary 2002). In order to understand the production of the South African “image world” we may study the respective “art worlds” that constituted them over time (Becker 2008 [1982]): by following photographers, artistic painters, their models, patrons, benefactors, and eventually the images evolving from their interactions, we not only learn about the logic of the image world itself, but also about its role in social interactions.

For only once we understand the practices that constituted the resulting image stocks, it is possible to adequately and effectively curate them. A part of this study will therefore trace Mariannhill’s photographs as they became dispersed and have today accumulated worldwide in many repositories of archives and museums.⁴ The recent exhibitions “Dutch Eyes” (2007) at the Dutch Photo Museum in Rotterdam and “Good Hope” (2017) at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam are only two examples where Mariannhill’s photographs have been used without sufficient attention, if any, to their original intentions or production.⁵ Placed on walls in wooden frames, partially covered by white *passepartouts*, the photographic objects were arranged and presented in an aesthetic format according to artistic convention that differs considerably from their original uses as either mission propaganda or scientific evidence. Even if there is no single correct way to deal with these situations, it nevertheless broadens our possibilities, as I shall soon propose, if we consider the lives of related images before and after the moment of a photograph’s creation.

Currently, these very image stocks are also being dispersed once more digitally on the internet. European museums—formerly framed “ethnological”—have recently begun to reinvent themselves, as well as their purpose and relevance for a local and international public. Within this process of reinvention, it still appears to be difficult to deal with stockpiled historical images, because they have often been produced within a public, non-academic, and if not racist, at least strongly racially biased economy of colonial classifications and representations. Their release on the internet once more exposes them to potentially similar discourses of essentialisation. Even if such discourses are no longer outspokenly racist, they rely on and have the potential to

⁴ As Vokes (2012) points out, the most recent approaches to “African photography” have been shaped by the overlapping disciplinary interests of anthropology and regional history, as well as art history and theory. However, as will become clear during my study, the interdisciplinarity must still be increased, especially regarding the history of photographic technology and aesthetics. This should shed more light on the mutual influence of social interaction in photographic production, aesthetics, and the possibilities and impossibilities that technology created in these regards. For overviews of the most recent interests see, for example, the introductions to the various special issues of journals and edited volumes in chronological order: Landau 2002, Morton and Edwards 2009, Banks and Vokes 2010, Pye 2010, Peffer 2010, Peffer 2013, Garb 2013, Haney and Schneider 2014, Gore 2015a, Morton and Newbury 2015.

⁵ The former exhibition attempted to document the history of Dutch photography, and the latter Dutch historical relations to South Africa. Curators clearly did not choose Mariannhill’s photographs for their relation to the Netherlands, but rather because they seemed to allow for more “humane” narratives than those photographs from/of South Africa found otherwise in “ethnographic” collections. Also the missionaries’ intentional self-depiction was clearly a point of interest to the exhibition makers, however not in the way that I discuss it (Chapter One).

reinvigorate past discourses of classification and photographic production, which have been partially inscribed in the photographs' institutional biographies. Due to their openness to interpretations, photographs therefore still linger ambivalently and often uneasily in between written words and supposedly lived situations of the past and the present.

For these reasons, I consider this study not only a contribution to the anthropology of colonial photography, but also to the anthropology of colonialism, ethnology⁶, and Christian missions (cf. Pels 1997, 2007). I aim to offer a critical understanding for limited periods in the biography of the photographs in question, as future interpretations and appropriations are unavoidable. To this end I will consider photographic practices and image (re)production practices more generally at Mariannhill Monastery and its filial station Centocow as a craftsmanship between performance, imaging, and writing (cf. Latour 1990:21, also see Clifford and Marcus 1986). This will first involve the images' production period roughly in between the 1880s and early 1930s, and secondly, my own involvement since 2006.

The photograph discussed above is not present in the mission's own photographic archive any longer. Instead, I discovered it in 2011 in the archive of the Linden Museum, the ethnological museum of Stuttgart, Germany. Since 2006, I have located Mariannhill's photographs in more than 20 major museum collections in central Europe, the USA, and South Africa. The cover photograph makes these image circuits most explicit, as it is evidence for the mission's reflection on the circulation process of their own image production, running parallel to multiple other kinds of circuits between colonial centres and their peripheries (cf. Stoler and Cooper 1997:28). The cover photograph is also an expression of the possible "refractions" of vision between Europe and South Africa, as it hints at the entanglement of publicly, institutionally, and privately held views on photographs (Strassler 2010:7).

I attempt to analyse the institutional networks evolving in the process through what can best be referred to as the "extended archive" of Mariannhill. Since the monastery and its archive in South Africa, but also the photographic studio and other material artefacts still exist today, there was the opportunity to study ethnographically, both the production of photographs and their "social lives" since then. This I could do partially by analysing how photographs have been used in publications and exhibitions. But only the fact that Mariannhill Monastery had its own professional photographic studio—unlike any other mission station studied so far—made an analysis of the production process of photographs possible.⁷ As a result, the photographic oeuvre

⁶ I discuss the historical and regional differences in terminology regarding "anthropology", "ethnology", and "ethnography" in Chapter Six.

⁷ However, as my discussion of the Trappist Abbey in Algeria further below shows, there were exceptions. Also see Poole (2003:198), who mentions that a "congregation of English evangelical missionaries" had founded a photographic studio in the Peruvian city of Cusco during the 1890s, which however they had to sell again before 1904 (also see Poole 1997:195). Furthermore, the German Moravian Missionaries (Herrenhuter Brüdergemeinde) at Genadendal near Cape Town (founded 1738, thus the oldest mission station in Southern Africa) produced photographs at least since the 1860s (see Kröger 2008). It is, however, still unclear how professional the situation was. When I visited Genadendal in 2011, a history of the photographic collection was in preparation.

of Mariannhill appears to be the earliest—or at least the only still existing—coherent archive of photographs taken by a single institution in colonial Natal, spanning almost six decades of production, interrupted only by the First World War.⁸ Therefore it holds importance, not only for a local history, but even more so for exploring a transnational history of photographic production and circulation.

In 1880, almost two years before the Trappists settled in Natal, Mariannhill's founder, Fr. Franz Pfanner, would have hardly expected this future proliferation and wide circulation of Mariannhill's photographs, when he explained their initial role for his project:

I have even the idea to forward twice a month a few sheets of light reading and interesting reports. We could add a few photos, done by our frater and this would keep awake the interest of our countrymen. This is necessary in order to obtain novices. If the novices don't come from the continent and especially from the Germans, we are lost. But "*Ignoti nulla cupido*" [What we don't know we never ask for]. How could novices desire to go to the Cape if they don't hear of it?⁹

Pfanner wrote these lines to an associate of Bishop Ricards of Grahamstown, who had called him to the Cape in 1879. The contemplative Trappist order held a reputation as laborious craftsmen, which led Ricards to believe they may instruct and train Africans "by silent example" (Ricards 1879). To this end—of first attracting novices, later benefactors, and ultimately funds—Pfanner became a great proponent of the press. Even before his arrival in Natal he had already published reports for an exclusively German-speaking audience, printed on a press brought from Europe together with a photographic camera. Against the opinion of his Trappist superiors (cf. Strunk 1892), Pfanner also believed performance and spectacle in rituals to be an inherent part of what it meant to be Catholic (eg. Pfanner 1889). To make this point, celebrations during feast days and baptisms were described at length early on in the mission's periodicals, and eventually by the late 1880s drawings and engravings after photographs were used in addition to mediate these experiences. The monastery likewise produced and inspired visual images and other media of various formats: ranging from commercially sold photographic cabinet cards, postcards, projections of lantern slides, paintings, statues, and theatre performances, to church murals, stained glass church windows, museum objects, saintly relics, and eventually propaganda films after the Second World War. At one point of their biographies all these images and objects were somehow connected to the photographic production at Mariannhill's studio.

In order to analyse these constellations and the circumstances as to how they (re-)surfaced over many decades, I follow the movement of images through three timeframes. First, I examine the production of photographs near Mariannhill Monastery and its filial station Centocow

⁸ Other extensive collections of photographs made locally and earlier than the 1880s can of course be found at the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban, and the National Archives repository in Pietermaritzburg. However, these are indeed collections in the strict sense of the term, accumulated from different sources and photographers over several decades. For a brief overview of the Pietermaritzburg repository and its photographic collection see Dominy (1982).

⁹ CMMA-GR: letter, Pfanner to Fraunhofer, 11.02.1880—Undated English translation by an unknown author. (AFPA-02053). Underscore, italics and Latin translation as they appear in the English translation.

between the 1880s and 1915, mainly carried out by the Trappist affiliate and professional photographer, Br. Aegidius Müller. His photographs and writings in particular, produced between 1898 and 1915, have been used extensively by the mission, and have been widely appropriated by local and international publishers and scientists ever since. As I will explain, this was partially due to the photographs' highly aestheticised standards, and the reliance on pre-existing imagery. Müller took inspiration from various specialised discourses with established image conventions, such as Catholic propaganda, artistic genre photography, tourism, and ethnology, while at the same time promoting his photographs as authentic representations within the very same fields (Chapters One to Six).

Secondly, I studied the period between 1926 and 1931, when the Black artistic painter Gerard Bhengu worked in close cooperation with his first patron, Dr. Max Kohler at Centocow Mission (Chapter Seven). Bhengu and Kohler not only relied on the work of Müller and others at Mariannhill, but their work also had impact on later practitioners and scholars of South African material and visual culture. Bhengu had achieved considerable fame by the 1960s, and was once more hailed by art historians after the end of Apartheid as one of South Africa's first successful Black figurative painters. Also Kohler achieved moderate recognition, both for his ethnographic writings and as Bhengu's patron. The co-production and formation years of both men at Centocow, however, have so far not been studied in any depth. Not only did Bhengu and Kohler—like Müller—attempt to represent their own communities, of German-speaking Catholic missionaries and Black South Africans respectively, but both also developed a practice of artistic image production and self-fashioning.

This study can only be a starting point of considering the oeuvres of Müller, Bhengu, and Kohler, as well as their full entanglement and impacts. By conjoining the two timeframes, my study nevertheless already reveals influences, similarities, and foremost developments in terms of how the authorship of Black South Africans regarding images was established, perceived, and represented in racially charged encounters. The analysis of appropriations, re-productions, and the circulation of images could not have been achieved by a study of both oeuvres in separation, as they are necessarily entangled within the same diachronic image world. This totality of possibilities of how images circulated internationally may be further distinguished for analytical purposes, and separated into localised sub-scenarios involving the institutions and actors of multiple art worlds.

Mariannhill's biographer, Br. Joseph Welzl, wrote about Br. Aegidius Müller in 1951: "His works enriched mission exhibitions in Europe, America and Rome, and still decorate private houses, as well as public localities in Africa" (Welzl 1951:480). Twenty years later, the German ethnologist Katesa Schlosser wrote of Gerard Bhengu: "Bhengu's pictures can be found in the homes and museums of South Africa" (1971:121). In many ways Müller, Bhengu, and his patron Kohler thus became "trans-disciplinary subjects" (Schneider 2011:132), who mediated between mission propaganda, contemporary art worlds, the anthropological discipline, as well as the popular imagination. Along the way, they of course interacted and cooperated with multiple other

actors, who eventually influenced where, when, and how particular images mattered. We will find these other actors not only in Mariannhill's own institutions, but also in South African museums, with the local government, as tourists, travelling ethnologists, as well as in European metropolises.

The third timeframe of this study is my own fieldwork in Europe and South Africa since 2006. The circumstances and experiences of moving between many field sites, as well as temporal spaces that are related to the two previous timeframes, conditioned my historical inquiries to a considerable extent (also see Marcus 1995:113). While moving around, I observed how people employed photographs and paintings. At the same time, my presence created occasions in which these images appeared to channel power from past to present: images depicting historical personalities, once combined under particular circumstances with particular powerful objects, turned out to develop agency and impact in the present (Chapters Three and Eight).

The social lives of photographs are erratic by virtue of their reproducibility. In the particular case of my study it was therefore necessary to study *images*, rather than merely *photographs*. For example, when the topic of a painting is replicated by staging the scenery for a photograph, we may consider this as the migration of an image between material manifestations. Accordingly, it is less sensible to think of research on photographs as simply following or retracing their supposedly pre-existing social biographies.¹⁰ Instead, to *write* the biography of a photograph while being immersed in the research process, means to inscribe its trajectories along intersections with other images. At the same time, one should be mindful of those spaces, objects, and subjects the image contains, and in, or next to which the photograph existed physically. Therefore I consider the ontological status of photographs, as both object and image, in the moments I describe ethnographically and historically.

Eventually, groping one's way along such trajectories between image, archive, and field (cf. Marcus 1995:98), the result is a combination of several interlinked social biographies. The cover photograph bears several traces regarding the four coordinates (image, space, object, subject) to which the idea of "biography" may be applied. All are crucial dimensions in processes and experiences of intermediality, and can in so far be described through a biographic approach. They will thus be at the centre of this study's four parts in the given order. This order also resonates with Marcus' (1995) suggestion of conducting multi-sited research by following people, things, metaphors, and stories through multiple spaces.¹¹ In the process, the boundaries

¹⁰ While Igor Kopytoff (1986) coined the term "cultural biography" for the study of objects, Elizabeth Edwards (2001) applied the term "social biography" to photographs (also see Wendl 2001:99). Edwards also makes the important observation that with biographies of photographs, we have to consider both the biography of the physical object, as well as the one of the reproducible image at the same time (2007:48). I follow the use of "social biography", in order to stress the interpersonal relationships at play. For highly condensed reviews on some aspects of recent approaches to photographs see Edwards (2012) for anthropology, and Tucker (2006) for science studies.

¹¹ More recently this approach has been adopted in transnational historical studies as "multi-sited historiography" (Zimmerman 2013).

between objects and subjects, images and objects, as well as between images and subjects become fluid, even ontological dilemmas, and therefore need to be reconsidered. As I hope to show in Parts One to Three, all these lines of investigation intersect in the photograph on the cover of this book, and to some extent also in the one to which we now turn.

Photographs as/in History



Figures 1 and 2: front and verso of a postcard titled “*Mariannhill—Am Umhlatusaneriver*”. The photograph was taken in approx. 1905. The postcard was sent from South Africa to Germany in 1912 (collection of the author).

It was in the summer of 2008 that I purchased this postcard (Figures 1 and 2) for a few Euros at a philatelic antique shop in Munich. It was one of several available postcards from southern Africa, all posted around 1900. The front of the card shows a picturesque scene of four women, who seem to tentatively shy away towards the left from an approaching man on the right. He carries a white cattle-hide shield, a stick, and a spear. The image's compositional main feature appears to be the well-defined reflection of the two women in the very stream they attempt to cross. The card bears a small caption in the lower left corner: "*Mariannhill—Am Umhlatusanriver*".

In January 1912, the Mariannhill priest Fr. Ludwig Tremel sent this postcard from Natal in South Africa to his cousin, Marie Wieselberger in Landshut, near Munich. Tremel had joined the Catholic Congregation of the Reformed Cistercians (OCR) at Mariannhill three years earlier, and had obviously since then been in contact with his family in Germany. On the verso he wrote that—despite the heat of summer—he is quite well, but wonders why his mother has not written for such a long time. It is likely that Marie and her family had received similar postcards over the previous years, so that Fr. Ludwig saw no further need to waste a single word on the postcard's curious scenery.¹² As both image and object, this postcard serves as an example how we can approach photographs *as* sources for history, as well as traces, protagonists, and actors *in* history (cf. Edwards 2001).

A wide range of such photographic genre scenes were a staple of the production at Mariannhill's photographic studio, in particular since the arrival of Br. Aegidius Müller in 1897. Along with the studio, the production of postcards and the publication of Mariannhill's periodicals were increasingly professionalised between approximately 1894 and 1907. The missionaries at Mariannhill generally referred to these kinds of photographs as "mission life" in their periodicals. Similarly narrative as the one at the river, other photographs show pious black children praying before a cross, or religious sisters handing out food to Black families.

The repertoire of photographs at Mariannhill was thus generally much wider and more diverse than the images produced by any of the other surrounding missions, which mostly consisted of static single- or group portraits. The images produced at Mariannhill between the 1890s and 1915 were even reused after the war, and up to the 1960s. The missionaries still considered themes and aesthetics to sufficiently resemble an alleged reality on the ground, in order to promote the same photographs as truthful and thus effective propaganda. In 1922, it was once more Fr. Ludwig Tremel who edited the second edition of the propaganda booklet *Die Mariannhiller Mission*. This was an extended version of the 1907 booklet *Das Trappisten-Missionskloster Mariannhill, oder Bilder aus dem Afrikanischen Missionsleben*, edited by Fr. Dominikus Frey for the mission's 25th anniversary. Both publications, to which I will frequently refer in this study, recount the mission's history, and show a distilled and refined accumulation of

¹² Even if the owner of the shop in Munich where I bought the postcard did not remember details of the acquisition, it is possible that he purchased it from the clearance of an inheritance, which may have come from nearby Landshut, where the family of Fr. Ludwig lived.

themes and images describing the experience of the mission encounter.

However, this particular idea of an encounter between the photographer and the mission's African neighbours has to be further scrutinised. Considering the contemporary "image world" in which Br. Aegidius Müller took part, we may safely assume that the above photograph was carefully arranged, and did not come about because the photographer accidentally happened to be in the right spot with his bulky camera equipment, at the very moment when a man with spear and shield was chasing several women across a river. Indeed, various takes of very similar scenes with the very same set of people, from the very same vantage point do exist as prints and glass plate negatives in the mission's archive. They allow us to recognise the scene as a performance, or rather as the staging of a well-arranged *tableau vivant*. As I will explicate in Chapter One, *tableaux vivants* were popular modes of theatre performance at the time, often relying on previously existing genre images, and became increasingly popular in commercial photographic practice at the end of the 19th century. Elizabeth Edwards has sketched the relevance of re-enactment and the pose within "ethnographic" photographic practice between the 1880s and 1920s (2001:157-180), which, however relied on locally created "indigenous" histories. I hope to show that Mariannhill's photographs instead often relied on tropes of popular romantic and colonial print media. These photographs nevertheless found their way as illustrations through various chains of authentication into past (Chapter Six), but also more recent anthropological publications (Chapter Two).

Despite the obvious staging of many of Mariannhill's photographs, they still allow us to trace particular historical personas, such as *induna* Umdamane Zungu, whose pre-photographic relationship to the mission also regulated their role in the performance during the photographic occasion (Parts Two to Four). While many of the photographs discussed in this study are clearly relying on popular blueprints, they equally have the potential to "shine through" with their actors' historical agency. Descendants of the depicted thus often preferred to "look past" the colonial and artistic circumstances of photographic production for the sake of their ancestors' personhood (cf. Aird 2003:25, also see Parts Two to Four). We can thus go beyond simply asking whether a photograph is staged or not, and begin to scrutinise which part of the staging can be attributed to which participant, why it came about, and how these parts were inscribed into the image (cf. Weiss 2010:49).

In this way, we may better understand the constitution of visual "colonial ontologies", the essences ascribed to the colonised in a colonial common sense: "the categories of things that are thought to exist or can exist in any specific domain, and the specific attributes assigned to them" (Stoler 2009:4). Even though the exact source of the image on which the river scene relied is uncertain, its construction nevertheless appears to rely on the common, but ambivalent tropes of martial prowess and male chauvinism that colonial discourse applied to African gender relations. These tropes were widely circulated in popular fiction at the time, for example in Rider Haggard's *Nada the Lily* (1892). This novel in particular was not only read, but also translated into German and republished by Mariannhill's editors, first in 1907 as a serial in the periodical

Vergißmeinnicht, and in 1925 in the form of a book (Haggard 1925).¹³

According to the trajectories of the three photographs presented so far, questions about “origins”, moments of creation and re-production are vexed and difficult to pin down, as their itineraries contain a host of intermittent certifications and resulting claims. Questions evolve that draw connections between far-apart places, but equally between distant timeframes. Therefore, the macro-histories of global circulation processes need to be brought in tune with the micro-histories of minute moments of appropriation. Various scholars have approached this conundrum. Deborah Poole (1997) hoped to replace the rather vague term “visual culture” and its apparent difficulties, by thinking of images as part of what she called a “visual economy”. This involves the inter-continental chain of image production, circulation, and valuation. Poole’s general theoretical approach, as presented in her introduction, is in itself methodologically highly relevant, in particular for global image circulation and the focus on the materiality of images. It has therefore found a wide reception. Her own execution, however, is in parts problematic, in particular regarding the photographs she discusses.¹⁴ Even though Poole encourages the study of various circulating media, from theatre to photographs, and their mutual influence, she does not discuss any concrete forms of circulation, or the very moments of media-transfer or intermediality.¹⁵ She tells us what to do, but not exactly how.

The question remains as to how we can effectively trace the global interconnectedness of image production and intentions of circulation, while staying close to the material image itself. Eventually, we must retrace the networks of people that exchanged images and information between centre and periphery through established routines, where supplies and demands were negotiated for particular reasons. Like the book *The Living Races of Mankind*, postcards, periodicals and writings by anthropologists, missionaries, and professional photographers, moved physically between continents. All of these publications contained photographs and ideas about them. Two recent projects on Africa, photographs, missionaries and objects, dealt with these ideas in advanced, however in temporally and topically restricted ways. In his studies on photographic practice in West Africa until 1880, Jürg Schneider (2010, 2011) suggests that we think about what he calls the “Atlantic visualscape”, in order to analyse the production and circulation of photographs, for which he consulted popular journals. Chris Wingfield (2012a) instead traced networks by following objects exchanged between members of the London

¹³ Only in 1980 Haggard’s *Nada the Lily* was only officially translated into German in 1980.

¹⁴ Poole hardly considers aesthetic conventions, modes of production, or local (Andean) audience-perceptions in their own contemporary and local right—or vice versa perceptions of Andean representations in Europe. In Chapter Five, for example, she discusses the nature of the photographic *carte de visite* in Europe and North America, without any relevance and connections to its reception in South America. Neither the reasons for selection and coherence of image examples from three centuries are made explicit, nor does she actually analyse more than a few of the images illustrating the book. The concept of a “visual economy” had been brought up already two years earlier by Broeckmann (1995). Also see the discussion of a “photographic economy” in Silvester, Hayes and Hartmann (1998) with equal attention to the material circulation of images between Germany and Namibia.

¹⁵ But see Poole’s very empirical and inspiring seventh chapter, which was republished in Pinney and Peterson (2003).

Missionary society.

While having great merit, both works only deal with one medium each, photographs in the first, and objects in the second case. These works can eventually be furthered by positioning my study in what Hevia (2009) has termed the “photography complex”. Building on actor-network-theory (eg. Latour 2005) and Tony Bennet’s “exhibitionary complex” (1995), Hevia suggests we expand our analysis beyond the image, to include the various technologies, subjects, objects, institutions, and circumstances that enable it, and analyse them equally as social actors. I will follow the involvement of objects particularly in Parts Two and Three, in order to think through their “entanglement” with images and people, and the evolving mutual dependence (Hodder 2011, 2016; Thomas 1991). Further narrowing down the macro-perspective of “image worlds” to “art worlds”, I eventually hope to provide a diachronic micro-ethnography in Chapter Eight by employing Alfred Gell’s “art nexus” (1998). Gell uses this term to describe the working of agency within the interactions between art producers, their art works, and those who are eventually impacted by both.

In order to achieve such detailed ethnographic descriptions, we need to move back and forth between photographs, as objects and images, as well as the spaces through which they circulate. In the case of the cover photograph, an enormous trajectory of imaginary spaces appears between what was once before the camera, and the photograph as object, including the photograph of Umdamane inside the depicted book. This suggests friction between the two photographs’ temporal and spatial movements on the one hand, and the intimate presences of the two depicted subjects on the other hand. As Vilém Flusser (1983:9) suggested, a photograph never *represents* a situation. Instead, it stands in between an observer and its own alleged historical referent, and therefore rather obscures, or even distorts the latter. This seems to echo not only Barthes’ “blocked memories” as “counter memories”¹⁶ (1993 [1980]:91), Susan Sontag’s description of an “image-world” (1979:165), but also Siegfried Kracauer’s image of photography and history as sharing an “ante-room”: a space where historical documents and photographic images can only show us “the last things before the last”, but no ultimate truth (1995 [1969]). The cover image illustrates such a situation, where we can imagine a photograph’s circulation and performance only through yet another photograph. While I do not neglect the value of the image itself, I strongly acknowledge the importance of studying photographs as fabricated physical objects in lived or imagined spaces, and the complications and questions this brings about (cf. Edwards and Hart 2005, Edwards 2012).

In order to promote their cause with various allies, the missionaries conditioned very specific spaces, in which they performed along their subjects, and displayed objects standing in for the latter. In order to maximise the impact of this effort, they often manifested these spaces photographically: we may here think of the mission’s own museum, temporary exhibitions abroad, exhibition displays, the photographic studio, theatre stages, church interiors, as well as

¹⁶ For other applications see Wright (2013:107), and Keenan (1998), discussing photography and memory also in relation to Sontag and Benjamin.

the interiors and exteriors of mission stations in a wider spatial sense. Furthermore, I will study how photographs and related media move in and out of such spaces, in order to understand how they accumulated as “mimetic capital”, and were later released with very specific intentions and in particular circumstances, while in the process generating “reproductive power”. Stephen Greenblatt describes “mimetic capital” as

[...] a stockpile of representations, a set of images and image-making devices that are accumulated, ‘banked,’ as it were, in books, archives, collections, cultural storehouses, until such time as these representations are called upon to generate new representations. The images that matter, that merit the term capital, are those that achieve reproductive power, maintaining and multiplying themselves by transforming cultural contacts into novel and often unexpected forms. (Greenblatt 1991:6)

We will see that the colonial and missionary encounter in Natal produced a very specific set of images, objects, and discourses on them, which certainly merit the term “mimetic capital”. Mariannhill Missionaries not only invested substantially in this “mimetic capital”, but they also helped to create and modify it, in order to draw an even better reward within the targeted visual economy. Yet, we will discover that they were never able to fully control it, and that the investment and entanglement in “mimetic capital” can entail a certain degree of entrapment (cf. Hodder 2016). When shifting our analysis between the various forms of mimetic capital as images and objects and through different time periods and spaces, we may encounter a series of pitfalls, which I now briefly discuss.

Apparently there is a divide as to how historical photographs are approached. Possibly due to a lack of information about the circumstances of production, mission-produced photographs have at times been studied in a deductive way (see Eckl 2006a:116). A deductive approach, perceived as a general law applied to specific circumstances, may be considered as inflicting “context” on photographs by positioning a social framework as *a priori* to the analysis of photographs (cf. Edwards 2001, 2014:172). As suggested by, among others, Latour (eg. 1990, 2005) and Marcus (1995), we cannot rely on a pre-existing social world or “ethnographic traditions” (cf. Pels and Salemink 1994, 1999), but need to “reassemble” it by following subjects, objects, and images in action. Due to the fact that, unlike any other studied mission station worldwide, Mariannhill had a photographic studio, as well as a museum, archive, and a library on site, institutional records indeed allow for such an inductive study. This not only applies to the photographic image itself, but also to photographic practice and production. As Christopher Morton and Darren Newbury argue, it is important to consider that “a preoccupation with context can drain images of their own energy as *images*” (2015:9), and we must therefore at times pay close attention to the details of how photographic content generates new meanings. The South African historian Jeff Guy instead argued that a focus on the visual in recent approaches of popular as well as academic South African history may have flattened and diminished the retrieval and reconstruction of historical social process (2002:52).

As much as a decade earlier, Christraud Geary (1990) had already suggested to bridge this

divide by combining a “reflexive mode” with a “documentary mode” of interpretation, thus focusing on the production of the photographs and the “picturing culture” of the producers on the one hand, and the content of the image on the other hand. In a similar way, Deborah Poole addressed these dimensions as a photograph’s “exchange value” regarding the reflexive side, and “use value” concerning the image content (Poole 1997:10). While Geary and Poole at times had to deduce from ideas independent of the photograph’s immediate biographies, we will see for the case of Mariannhill’s photographs that their production, their “picturing culture”, as well as their content can be analytically related to each other, in order to understand the “reproductive power” of images. A “forensic” analysis of content (Edwards 1992, Prins 1992 [1990]) can thus be combined with an analysis of the photographs’ social lives as objects.¹⁷

In this study, I hope to achieve such balance and circumspection concerning deductive and inductive approaches by paying close attention to the processes of intermediality, which I described for the photographs above. In a general sense, intermediality is often vaguely presented as relations between different media (cf. Belting 2001, 2005:314). Such processes have so far not been explicitly considered in anthropological and historical approaches to photography (but see Förster 2013, Gore 2015, Wendl 2001). Therefore it is important to further define intermediality, by separating it in two specific modes: first, the attention to concrete occasions of what may better be referred to as “interpictoriality” (Von Rosen 2011), where an image is transferred or appropriated, for example by recreating a photograph in form of a painting, or *vice versa*; second, the attention to people’s *experiences* of “intermediality”, when they try to make sense of images by relating them to other images, as well as other past and present experiences and traces. Paraphrasing Stoler (2009), I attempt to study photographs “along the grain”, following the social processes and technological conventions that allow us to describe how they were produced, used and ordered, archived, and brought into (social) relations (cf. Banks and Vokes 2010), and how they can be better used as historical sources by studying them in conjunction with other images (cf. Prins 1992:23) and objects.

In the course of Chapter One it will become clear that it is not a preference, but inevitable to follow images, instead of simply photographs. Scholars have recently suggested the study of ethnographic museum collections of objects as both archaeological, as well as social “assemblages”, which constitute networks or meshworks (Harrison 2013). In the case of photographic collections, however, this is immeasurably more complex: not only are we confronted with photographs as objects, with the same photographs being present in multiple archives at the same time, but also with the occasion of the production as partially visible in the image itself. As yet another dimension, we have to consider that this photographic occasion may have been staged, and based on previously circulating images and tropes, as I described above. Therefore, applying the metaphor of an “archaeological assemblage” to photographs may not be as straightforward. Carrying out a Foucauldian “image archaeology” by following “a network of

¹⁷ See more about interdisciplinary methodology regarding images in my discussion of archives and sources below.

relationships, an ‘interdiscursive configuration’ of practices” (Bate 2007:6) is tempting, but at the same time dangerous ground. While working across different media, images and their meanings are never stable entities, found “*in situ*”, as it were. One reason is that they never maintain a truly “indexical” bond to their original circumstances of production and placement. Instead, indexicality must always be considered as a claim, an issue to which I turn shortly.

The difficulties of writing a photograph’s coherent social biography, as well as possible solutions, may be further clarified through the art historical notion of “provenance”, and the archaeological notion of “provenience” (Joyce 2012, 2013; also see Barker 2012). Both concepts are used by the respective science communities to describe an object’s authentication through its past material and social involvements. “Provenance” is used in art history to describe the work of re-tracing an art work’s itinerary along the line of its owners, collectors, and dealers, to the maker. “Provenience” instead denotes the exact physical space where an archaeological object has been excavated. In both cases, which of course may intersect, one appears to trace “origins”. This distinction turns out to be useful for thinking about, with, and through photographs, and for observing how social actors produced, circulated, and authenticated images.

Provenance can best be illustrated with what I already said about the cover photograph. Provenience will become important when discussing an aspect of Figure 1 in the last section of this introduction. Due to their specific production and circulation histories as images and objects, both photographs (cover and Figure 1) are excellent examples to explain this approach. In both cases, we may consider the occasion of the photograph’s production at a concrete point in space and time as the “excavation” of an *image*, thus its archaeological provenience. Therefore it is possible to re-trace the provenance of the image theme of the river scene above even further back in time, beyond the occasion of the photograph’s production. As I just described, this does not only involve the experience of intermediality for the photographic models by forming a *tableau vivant* according to a preexisting idea. Furthermore, other individuals consuming the photograph at later points in time may recognise particularly well-known *tableaux* and likewise have an experience of intermediality. The movements of images in both cases may also be rendered as an inter pictorial migration of an image or an allegory.

The resemblance between photograph and referent is generally ambivalent and unclear. This is also the case with the physical relationship between a photograph and its actual place and circumstances of attempted “excavations”. Scholars of photography often use Charles Peirce’s semiotic theory of “iconic” and “indexical” relationships from the 1890s as a staple to define these two aspects of a photograph’s ontological nature. However, according to what I just explained, iconicity and indexicality are not objective constituents of photographs, but, like the very idea of “objectivity” itself (Daston and Galison 2007), they do have a history: under particular circumstances and at particular moments in time, iconicity and indexicality are merely claimed as constituting characteristics of photographic meaning (cf. Dubois 1998, Günzel 2014, also see Tagg 1993, as well as Chapters One and Eight of this study). As Peirce himself argued, such claims to resemblance or physical connection depend on contemporarily available

“collateral knowledge” in particular moments (Lefebvre 2007, Brunet 2008). Such moments, when social actors point out relationships with photographs in situations of crisis or controversy (Latour 2005), produce particular traces. Such traces may later be reassembled in particular ways around photographs, in the process making visible related networks of people and objects. I will describe such moments throughout this study in relation to practices of interpretation, imitation, and appropriation (cf. Schneider 2003, 2006, 2011; Thomas 1991).

When I introduce the photographic work of Br. Aegidius Müller in Chapter One, and the painterly work of Gerard Bhengu in Chapter Seven, it will become clear that “appropriation” must be understood as a continuous two-way process in the production of representations (cf. Schneider 2006:34). It is impossible to define two “cultures” as distinct entities, which therefore may be mutually appropriated. As there are no pre-existing pure forms of culture, there can also be no hybrids, as Bhabha would have it (Schneider 2003:217). A common “image world” and its “visual economy” instead may allow us to think the active transformations of images, spaces, objects, and subjects, for example in the form of imitation or plagiarism. Understanding photography as a complex visual practice between several interlocutors also allows for the study of metaphysical constructions regarding the technology of the photographic process, for example as “magical” (Chapter Eight).

When I started to engage with Mariannhill’s photographs historically, as well as during fieldwork in South Africa, the notion of “resemblance” played a central role in their authentication. Like with indexicality, we are not concerned with a strictly semiotic iconicity here. In both cases photographic authenticity is a claim as to why or why not a photograph truthfully represents an alleged (historical) reality. Photographic “resemblance”, however, is often highly ambivalent and creates a “rawness” and multivocality of possible historical meanings. As Edwards concludes her book, the generally “raw histories” presented by photographs have to be “articulated, digested, and made active” (2001:237). Depending on how resemblance is either established or questioned by social actors, this ambivalence challenges photographs as historical sources in terms of possibilities to read their content as historical fact (cf. Burke 2001, Tucker and Campt 2009). Concerning the ambivalence of resemblance, we must also consider the possibility that a photograph becomes easily detached from its origin as “mission-made”, as in the cases above, and circulates through discourses constituted within and between various other interpretative communities. This again stresses the importance of oscillating between perspectives, such as perceiving a photograph at the same time as object and as image, in the past that we study, but also in the present in which we perform as researchers.

I therefore argue that if we want to understand the production and relevance of photographs within, and especially beyond mission projects, we need to scrutinise the various things in between: how social actors intentionally constituted them between the physical mission encounter on the one hand, and the medium of the photographic image on the other. The first form of intermediality, which I will discuss in Chapter One, comprises concrete performances before the camera in the form of the before-mentioned *tableaux vivants*, mimicking preexisting

images. As I will explain, these *tableaux* constitute a medium in its own right. However, particular objects, bodies, exhibition formats, as well as imaginations of image transfer as “magical”, may be considered as media within processes of intermediality. The book displayed in the cover image, as well as the *tableau*-like pose of the group in the river scene, can both be considered as relying on such processes of intermediality. They reference particular preexisting imagery, while at the same time constituting concrete entities in photographic space.

I further argue that Mariannhill Missionaries intentionally created and strategically positioned such media within the photographic mission encounter in order to summon and motivate allies, such as novices, benefactors, and government officials. I will deal with these media consecutively over the eight chapters of this study. As I have explained above, an analysis of the “image world” of colonial Natal demands the inclusion of both circulating photographs, as well as other objects as “mimetic capital”. Among such other objects are those commonly framed as “ethnographic”. Due to the existence of a studio and a museum at the monastery, the case of Mariannhill allows exactly this for a fairly circumscribed and coherent social field and timeframe.

My approach to photographs thus resonates in the following lines by Alfred Gell:

In other words, it is frequently the case that works of art form ‘moments’ of temporal series, not just because they are datable objects (originating at certain space-time coordinates) but because they form *lineages*; they are ancestral to, and descended from, other works in the *oeuvre*. Taken together, they form a macro-object, or temporal object, which evolves over time. (Gell 1998:233)

Not only will we see that there was an internal development over time in both Müller’s and Bhengu’s oeuvres of photographs and paintings respectively, but that they also stood in a relationship to each other, as well as to the oeuvres of other artists. Both oeuvres may therefore be considered a complex “distributed object in time” (ibid.:234).

Accordingly, this study is not a historical ethnography of either Trappist life or endeavour in South Africa, and neither is it an ethnography of African people through photographs or paintings. Instead, I believe it to be a combined ethnography of the intermediary spaces *inhabited* by image-objects, the spaces that images *represent*, and the scapes¹⁸ that image practices *constitute*. Photographs and paintings can therefore be conceptualised as working *as*, but also *in* “contact zones” (Rippe 2007), as theorised by Pratt (1992) for the case of colonial contacts, and by Clifford (1997) for the case of museums.¹⁹ These various kinds of spaces, ranging from image space to space in moments of production, exhibition, and consumption, are intermediary. First, because they were communally occupied and negotiated by the photographer, the painter, and their sitters, and second because once photographs or paintings are engaged in social relations such as communal viewing, they mediate interests and ideas between groups and

¹⁸ Appadurai’s (1996) various kinds of “scapes” may be considered here: identity-, technology-, ideology-, image- and financial scapes constitute the social role of photographs in global relationships.

¹⁹ The term “contact zone” proliferates, and has been likewise applied to archives (Burton 2005), and various activities of missionaries (Becker 2015, Cox 2005).

individuals. Over the following pages I wish to introduce the main group of interest, the Missionaries of Mariannahill, some of the eminent members, and their relationships to photography.

Missionaries and Photographs between Europe and Natal

The first Catholics to arrive in the Colony of Natal were the French Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) in 1852.²⁰ Even though this congregation provided the Vicar Apostolic²¹ for the newly established vicariate, they never engaged in any extensive mission work. Instead, OMI concentrated on the local White population in the major cities. The community of 43 Reformed Cistercians, who would found Mariannhill Monastery, arrived in Natal thirty years later on 27 November 1882 (Biegner 1911:218). They encountered an already established presence of various Lutheran Protestant mission societies,²² as well as Anglicans, Methodists and Wesleyans (Brain 1975, Brown 1960). The Colony of Natal, even before British annexation in 1843, through responsible government in 1893, until the South African Union in 1910, had thus become one of the most intensely missionised places worldwide (Elphick and Davenport 1997).

Also in 1843, the contemplative Catholic order of the Reformed Cistercians (OCR), commonly known as Trappists, founded their first satellite outside Europe with the Algerian Monastery Staouëli. Today known as the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance (OCSO), the congregation was born out of a reformation group within the Order of Cistercians in the 17th century. They attempted to realign with the original rule for monastic conduct drawn up by St. Benedict of Nursia in about 540 (cf. Benedict and White 2008). The more colloquial name, Trappists, was derived from the French monastery La Trappe under the Abbot Armand Jean le Bouthillier de Rancé (1626-1700). In the eyes of this split group, the adherence to the original rule had declined with the Cistercians. Since yet another separation in the 1830s and 40s, three distinct observances of different degrees of austerity had established themselves with different abbeys and abbots as their ideals. Between 1892 and 1902, these were eventually reunited and separated entirely from the Cistercians by the Papacy (Gildas 1908). Since the 1870s, the Reformed Cistercians continued to install monasteries outside of Europe, such as in the Congo, Japan, China, and Australia.

In 1879, the Irish-born Bishop of Grahamstown, James Ricards (1828-1893), visited the Trappist annual chapter at the Abbey of Septfonds, France, and asked for monks to be settled in his vicariate at the South African Cape. As the story is commonly told, it was Fr. Franz Pfanner who volunteered to take on the challenge.²³ This is considered the foundational moment in the historiography of Mariannhill, and is re-iterated as an act of virtue in Pfanner's hagiographies (eg. Balling 1981). A fact hardly explored in Mariannhill's histories (but see Balling 1981, Dahm 1949, Gütl 2005, Green 2008) is that Ricards carried with him a publication, originally written in English, but in the same year translated into French, German, and Italian (Ricards 1879): *The*

²⁰ Lat.: Oblati Mariae Immaculatae.

²¹ Commonly also referred to as "bishop".

²² The American Missionary Society, the (German) Berlin Mission, the Swedish Missionary Society and the Norwegian Missionary Society.

²³ At this point, Pfanner technically was still prior of the Monastery Mariastern in Bosnia, which he had founded in 1869 (cf. Gütl 2005, 2017).

Catholic Church and the Kaffir: A Brief Sketch of the Progress of Catholicity in South Africa, and the Prospects of Extensive Catholic Missions on the Point of Being Founded for the Natives of British Kaffraria. This publication can be regarded as a literal pre-text, or *Urtext* to Mariannhill's development in South Africa. Ricards not only portrayed the supposed problem, but also provided a brief ethnography of the frontier and the "Tamboo Kafirs", as he called them. Furthermore, he gave a description of his ideal missionary, and in conclusion explicitly proposed to bring Irish Trappists to a farm north of Port Elizabeth, which he eventually named after the derelict Irish Abbey of Dunbrody. The text can also be seen as a pre-text to Ricards' own journey to Europe, in an effort to prepare his request to the Trappist council, as well as to address as many potential European benefactors as possible for funding his plan to bring approximately thirty Trappists to the Cape.

A community of this Order established amongst the Abatembu Kaffirs will, the Bishop believes, be attended with the most encouraging results. The material prosperity and ever-growing beauty of a large model farm like that which gladdens the eye of the traveller in Algeria, where, since 1843, the Trappists have been labouring with marvellous success, will exercise a powerful influence for good on the minds of the Tambookie Kaffirs, already, as we have seen, disposed to learn farming. [...] Is there not every reason to believe that the sinewy Kaffir, who, when he is so inclined, takes to toilsome exercise as a positive pleasure and relief from listless ennui, may, by the patient care and encouragement of these masters in the art of agriculture, be formed into habits beneficial alike to himself and to the whole colony? [...] Even humanly speaking, and putting aside for a moment the views of faith, the motive force of a body of men like the Trappist monks, would of itself seem the very best means of sweeping away those impediments of superstition and indolence and sensuality, which, up to the present, have deprived the colonists of the best labour in the world and, through the want of it, have paralysed the aims and projects of our most enterprising farmers. (Ricards 1879:50-52)

The success of the Algerian prime example being his main proof, Ricards argued for the economic benefits the involvement of Trappists would have. He then went on to describe the vast activities and accomplishments of the Algerian Trappists by extensively translating from Alfred Monbrun's *La Trappe de Staouëli* (1869), enumerating all essential workshops. Amongst them was also a photographic studio, which had already been present during the time of Monbrun's visit in 1865.²⁴ Mariannhill's founder Franz Pfanner certainly read Ricard's publication, and during one of his trips back to Europe during the 1880s, Pfanner eventually visited the Algerian monastery himself (Wendl 1998:54). There he may have been inspired by the studio, as well as the photographs and postcards produced at Staouëli. In the conclusion to his book, Ricards described the anticipated influence of the Trappists as follows:

The monks, it is true, are not missionaries; but after a time the monastery will become the centre and the home whence missions will radiate throughout the whole Tembu population. The material prosperity of the model farm, its hospital, and its *hôtellerie* cannot fail to exercise a salutary influence on the surrounding natives; and the young missionary priests, who are burning with ardour to throw themselves into the work of native missions, will, besides having a house of retreat and a home in illness, share in the prestige of the good monks. (Ricards 1879:124)

²⁴ According to an exhibition with the title "Primrose—Russian Colour Photography" (curated by Olga Sviblova and Elena Misalandi) held in 2013 at the Museum of Photography in Amsterdam (FOAM), it was also common for Russian Orthodox Monasteries during the second half of the 19th century to have adjacent photographic studios.

In 1882, it became obvious that due to misunderstandings, bad management, and the desolation of the land, the Trappists had to leave the property given to them by Bishop Ricards. However, negotiations had already begun with the Catholic Vicariate of Natal under Bishop Jolivet OMI, to receive them instead. On 27 December 1882, the community arrived at the place near Durban, which would become Mariannhill Monastery, and made the first photographs within a few weeks. The last remaining and by now very faded original prints from this time were used to illustrate the very first chronicle by Fr. Joseph Biegner (1898).



Figure 3: One of the first photographs ever taken in Natal of the Trappist community and the early structures they built on the farm *Seekoegat* near Pinetown, early 1883 (CMM Archives).

In 1892, the papacy decided that the three separate observances of the Reformed Cistercians must be reunited. This was the same year that the community at Mariannhill saw major changes, as Abbot Franz Pfanner was decommissioned from office for the many dispensations he had given from the strict monastic rule. This he had done in order to straddle the community's challenge of performing as contemplative monks and as missionaries at the same time. Such dispensations would also have been necessary to engage with photography, which, as we shall see, became an essential part of performing as missionaries. It is thus no surprise that several other Trappist foundations worldwide perished several years after their establishment, and were

taken over by other congregations, or, as in the case of Mariannhill, were transformed into individual mission congregations. Why some survived within the Trappist order, while others—such as in the Congo or at Mariannhill—were either exchanged or transformed, requires further study. Instead, I now turn to a brief description of Trappist life and conduct, in order to present some of the related limitations and advantages that influenced photographic production, as well as the production of knowledge more generally.

On entering the congregation of the Reformed Cistercians, the novices underwent a separation into several classes. In the congregation's own description, the Trappist typology (Figure 4) included choir monks (*“Chorreligiosen”*, who are not necessarily priests), ordained priests, lay brothers (*“Konversbrüder”*), as well as novices. Affiliates, such as the photographer Br. Aegidius Müller, were not included in this display, as they were not actual members of the monastic community. I will explain this different status in relation to the biographies I present in Chapter One. The lay brothers usually came from the lower working class and had a practical training. Accordingly, they were in charge of the workshops, agriculture, and construction works.²⁵ The priests and choir monks instead carried out more intellectual work, with some exceptions, and also constituted the *“Kloster Rat [monastery council]”*. The Abbot was always a priest, without exceptions.



Figure 4: original captions: *“Ein Trappisten-Pater; Ein Chornovize; Ein Konversnovize; Ein Konvers-Professbruder”* (as published in the *Mariannhiller Kalender* 1892).

In 1885, Pfanner also founded a community of missionary sisters at Mariannhill Monastery for the purpose of teaching at the local school. Pope Pius X. approbated the “Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood” (CPS) in 1906. In this study, I am only able to deal with them marginally, as

²⁵ See for example Gütl (2005) for several detailed biographies, as well as incentives to join Mariannhill Monastery. Also see Pels (1999) for a detailed study of motivations to join a Catholic mission congregation in the Netherlands several decades later.

they were not directly involved with photographic production.

Until 1909, while being Trappists, Mariannhill missionaries relied on the rule drawn up by St. Benedict in the 6th century.²⁶ The rule was supposed to regulate daily monastic life, and to keep the community focused on metaphysical concerns. On joining the congregation by entering one particular monastery, novices would gradually make different vows. “Simple vows” they made during their first profession, and after three more years “eternal vows” during the second profession. The main four vows included “poverty”, “chastity”, “obedience”, and “stability” (cf. Bonaventura 1887:9ff). Poverty excluded a Trappist from all private economic forms of exchange: while he worked for the monastery free of charge, the monastery provided for all his material and spiritual needs; chastity excluded him from all sexual (inter-)actions; absolute obedience had to be shown to one’s superior within the limits of the rule; and the vow of stability required the professed individual to remain with the one monastery where he had made his professions for the rest of his life. A more general rule within this contemplative congregation was the one of perpetual “silence” (ibid.:38ff).

This strict set of regulations could only be temporarily lifted or modified through dispensations granted by the abbot. Breaches of this rule were accordingly punished publicly before the assembled community. As became obvious in the case of Mariannhill, two of these restrictions caused problems for active mission work in South Africa. First, the rule of stability could not be guaranteed with members who had to travel far distances on a regular basis. Stability in a monastic setting means not only to remain with one single monastery for the rest of one’s life, but also to spend every night within its enclosure, or in those of its filial stations. The second restricting rule was that of perpetual silence and the obligation to communicate only in a particular sign language, unless instructed otherwise by a superior. The monks at Mariannhill, however, were already studying Zulu by the mid-1880s. Those who had to deal and converse with the outside world—either for purposes of active mission, ministry, education, propaganda, or business—were given permission to do so by the abbot (also see Chapter One).

Due to these restrictions one would have hardly expected a monastic contemplative community to develop such a highly effective propaganda machinery and printing enterprise as Mariannhill. Nevertheless, by 1890—only ten years after Pfanner had explained his propaganda efforts in the quote above—he could conclude in the editorial of Mariannhill’s periodical *Vergißeinnicht*:

[...] that my calendars have brought me an exceptional, yes, even a scandalous number of novices; when I ask the arriving postulants what had made them aware of our monastery, almost every single one replies: ‘I read the Calendar of Mariannhill.’ This is sufficient for me. As poor as I am, and as much as I require the money, I always

²⁶ The rule was also referred to as “constitution [*Ordensregel*]” and “regulation [*Reglement*]”. Until the moment of separation from OCR in 1909, the Trappists of Mariannhill Monastery and its mission stations would have relied either on the French *Reglement de la Trappe* (Le Bouthillier 1878), or its first German translation of 1887 (Bonaventura 1887, also see Gütl 2005:68). The translator, Fr. Bonaventura Baier, was Pfanner’s successor as prior at the Bosnian Trappist Monastery Mariastern. In 1886, Baier became the first Abbot of Mariastern.

prefer the novices. (Pfanner 1890a:50)²⁷

By the late 1890s, Mariannhill had eventually become the biggest Trappist Abbey in the world according to the sheer number of its members.²⁸ This superior manpower not only had consequences for the monastery's potential to excell neighbouring mission congregations in material terms, but also regarding the production of knowledge about the South African environment (cf. Part Three). As a result, at least one member at a time could be spared to engage with photography. Before the Trappists started photographing representatives of the local population more intensely, they focused on their immediate surroundings at the monastery and its development. The few remaining first photographs, which show encounters with Africans can be dated to the second half of the 1880s and are generally of poor quality.

Only by the early 1890s, photographs appeared in the form of engravings in the *Mariannhiller Kalender*. At the same time, deviations from the rule in terms of speaking and travelling became evident in many accounts, even after Pfanner had been replaced. Not only did the Trappists publish reports on mission tours in their propaganda periodicals, but they also established encounters between Trappists and Africans as one of the most popular photographic genres. This made the preference for mission over contemplation visually evident. Encounters with other White South Africans, tourists, and fellow missionaries, also became an important topic for Mariannhill in day-to-day life, as well as topics for the periodicals.

Despite the strong presence of missionaries in Natal, and the apparent competition between denominations, no study exists that discusses these, or other interactions in any depth. Another previously contemplative Catholic congregation, the German Mission Benedictines had already made the transformation towards a missionary structure by 1884. The community was expelled from the East African Catholic Vicariate due to Germany's defeat in the First World War. Like several other congregations from German colonies, they moved to South Africa in 1922, founded Inkamana Abbey near Vryheid, and occasionally cooperated with Mariannhill²⁹ (cf. Brain 1997:201). Various other existing histories of mission activity in Natal are either temporally, regionally, or confessionally restricted. Etherington (1978) only discusses the activities of Protestant communities up to 1880, and studies on various Protestant and other societies are limited denominationally and regionally (eg. Hovland 2012).

Even though interactions and rivalries between Mariannhill Missionaries and colleagues of other denominations in Natal existed, they only manifested themselves in few moments relating to the media I discuss. One may here think of communally held exhibitions, of which I explore

²⁷ My own translation from the German original.

²⁸ The size not only referred to the number of priests, brothers, and sisters at the monastery itself, but also at the outstations, which, as so-called "filial stations", technically belonged to the abbey as their motherhouse. This only refers to the congregation of the Reformed Cistercians, and not to Catholic monasteries in general, as some publications seem to suggest.

²⁹ For overviews of the Catholic mission expansion and involvement with German politics and colonialism at the end of the 19th century, see Faschingeder (2002), Gründer (1982), Habermas (2008, 2010), Habermas and Przyrembel (2013), Habermas and Hölzl (2014), Van der Heyden and Feldtkeller (2012), Keurs 2007.

one example in Chapter Five. Comprehensive studies of other mission congregations' use of photographs in Natal do not yet exist³⁰ (but see Godby 2009) and relating to wider South Africa, there are only brief accounts³¹ (Bester 1997, Kirkaldy 2005, Kirkaldy and Wirz 2000, Krüger 2011). Mariannhill's photographs have so far only been studied in one case (Adler 2000), in relation to a set acquired by the Ethnological Museum of Berlin between 1898 and 1899.³² I discuss the interactions of various missions with ethnological museums in more detail in Chapter Six.

A comprehensive analysis regarding the commonalities and differences of how Catholic and non-Catholics missionaries used photographs in their representative strategies has still to be written. One starting point may be the respective possibilities of self-representation. While Protestant couples could depict themselves as role models for what they perceived as the "ideal" nuclear family towards both their African subjects and their European benefactors, Catholic Trappists had to represent the missionary sisters and the monks in absolute separation. The relationship between denominations may also be scrutinised regarding the question of whether Catholic missionaries may have been more open to collecting material culture and photographing people, due to the said iconoclasm of Protestants (cf. Chapter Five). Of the more than 90 existing publications (excluding my own) that either deal with or touch on photographs produced by missionaries, only a minority discusses photographs originating from Catholic missions (Corbey 2007; Eckl 2006a, 2006b; Florescu 2014; Palma 2008; Pels 1989, 1999; Stornig 2013). This may have to do with the fact that non-Catholic historical archives are much more accessible, partially due to a longer history of transition towards indigenous churches. Therefore, these archives could be better accessioned, and also accessed by academic researchers unrelated to the respective confession. Catholics instead still maintain interpretative authority over their archives, due to ongoing stakes in the countries where photographs were produced. I will nevertheless contrast Mariannhill's attempts of representation against those of other missions throughout this work.

³⁰ Archives of mission societies who had a presence in Natal, such as the Archive of the Lutheran Berliner Missionsgesellschaft, do contain photographs. My survey of their contemporary periodicals between the 1860s and 1914 showed that the use of photographs was (relatively) minimal and consisted mostly of repetitive group and single portraits, made by either commissioned photographers, or visiting missionaries. As my research in the genealogical files of Durban's Bergtheil Museum showed, families of Berlin Missionaries around 1900 were dependent on commercial studios and also visited the Mariannhill studio to have their portraits taken. The Lutheran Norwegian Missionaries recently initiated several "repatriation" projects of their photographic collections to Cameroon (Gullestad 2007) and Natal. The latter collection has been transferred in digital format to the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban in 2008, but has so far not been comprehensively evaluated. My survey showed that most images have been taken after 1914 and that even photographs by Mariannhill had been appropriated into the collection. I was not able to evaluate any data regarding Lutheran Swedish Missionaries or American Board Missionaries. Parts of the latter collection of photographs can be found on the International Missionary Photography Archive (see below).

³¹ There are published image collections by some mission archives containing photographs from southern Africa, which, however, show no critical analytic engagement. Kröger (2008) contains early portrait photographs from the Moravian station Genadendal in the Western Cape. Vilhunen et al. (1995) contains photographs made by Finnish missionaries in Namibia around 1900. Also see Vilhunen (2004).

³² Webb (1992) and Klopper (2010) have also touched on Mariannhill's photographic production, but are inaccurate regarding several details.

Photographs made by missionaries were first acknowledged for their potential as sources for the writing of colonial histories in the mid 1980s. Paul Jenkins and Christraud Geary (1985), and especially Jenkins as archivist of the Basel Mission's photographic holdings,³³ proposed to explore the collection through depicted material culture, or the methodology of photo-elicitation in countries of production (also see Geary and Njoyu 1985). However, at the same time, Jenkins and Geary addressed the problem of missionaries' generally biased selection and interpretation of what they encountered. Only once socio-cultural studies of colonial photographs became firmly established with the two edited volumes *Der Geraubte Schatten* in Germany (Theye 1989) and *Anthropology and Photography 1860-1920* in the UK (Edwards 1992), as well as other anthropological studies of the mid- and late 1990s, did scholars start to pay more attention to the production and use of mission-produced photographs. Missionary publications, for example, attracted interest relating to their involvement in ethnography, information networks, the social biographies of mission albums (eg. Lübcke 2012), the photographic performance in mission encounters (eg. Gardner and Philips 2006), or the political involvement of mission photography (eg. Thompson 2012).

Compared to these previously studied cases, Mariannhill presents a particular constellation of presuppositions. The exceptional manpower of Mariannhill Monastery made it more effective than any other surrounding mission enterprise, a fact that was lamented repeatedly in the periodicals of the neighbouring understaffed Protestant Berlin Mission. The great number of highly skilled and specialised workers made it possible for Mariannhill to invest in several other stakes not immediately related to conversion or economic upkeep. To the best of my knowledge, no other mission at the same time had a museum, a printing press, and a fully equipped photographic studio with a professionally trained full-time photographer. Individual missionaries of other congregations and societies may well have compiled their private photographic collections, which, however, were often discontinued and dispersed when the respective missionary died (cf. Corbey 2000:61).

Instead, most mission societies and congregations had their media institutions attached to their European or American headquarters. The special situation at Mariannhill thus allows us to study very particular institutional spaces through their remaining traces, such as the photographic studio and the museum. To study the work of the mission's printing press turned out to be more difficult, as very few traces of the editorial correspondence survived. But unlike with the work of amateur photographers of other missions, the highly professional situation at Mariannhill, and the related sources it produced, also allows us to consider Mariannhill's photographic oeuvre from art historical viewpoints. This will show that aesthetic conventions—derived from both contemporary European art photography and ethnographic practice—conditioned the work of Mariannhill's photographers in a considerable way.

The fact that Mariannhill Monastery was able to establish filial stations all over Natal and East Griqualand, constituted an extensive and dynamic network. This national and international

³³ I am not listing all of Jenkins' publications, as the list would be too extensive.

network circulated people, goods, information, and photographs. To understand this missionary project between Europe and South Africa, it must be additionally analysed as a mediation of ideas. When missionary periodicals reported on problems in South Africa, these reports at the same time often addressed social issues in Europe (cf. Habermas 2008:665). Both locations were often implied, but not exactly pointed out as analogies. I will suggest that this is even more explicit with photographs. Mariannhill Missionaries tried to equalise their photographic production and themes with contemporary endeavours in social politics, entertainment, and related aesthetics, but also with conventions in emerging ethnological and anthropological studies in Germany. They produced photographs after, for, and against Europe's ongoing scientific, social, and commercial debates. In Chapter One I address the fact that the colonial appropriation of Euro-American photographic and aesthetic conventions has been rarely studied, especially not for the case of mission propaganda. Even though the African experience did provide content, I will argue that photographic aesthetics were provided by an intense engagement with European religious and worldly examples of images, as well as the contemporary photographic industry in both Germany and South Africa.

A Brief Historiography of Mariannhill, and the Changing Use of Photographs

In this section I present a concise account of how the general historiography and hagiography of Mariannhill as a community and congregation aligned with the visual economy at the monastery itself. Around 1905, when the photograph in the studio and the one at the river were made (cover and Figure 1), restrictions concerning the distribution of images were much stricter for members of the monastery than at the time when Fr. Ludwig Tremel sent his postcard seven years later. A circular letter from the year 1905,³⁴ issued by the temporary administrator of Mariannhill, Dom Edmund Obrecht OCR of Gethsemane (USA), states that every member of both the male and the female community may only send private picture postcards every second year, and have his or her photograph taken only every fifth year after the noviciate. The photographer Br. Aegidius Müller had to receive these postcards from his confreres, post them, and report back to his superior.

While the visual economy of the mission appears to have been highly transparent from and towards the outside, it was for several years highly restricted on the inside of the monastery. Despite being sent in 1912, the image of the postcard in question was taken in these very times of restriction. Mariannhill had just seen the resignation of its third abbot, Fr. Gerard Wolpert in 1904, and the subsequent installation of the administrator Dom Obrecht, whose reign lasted until 1907 (cf. Gütl 2005, Kempf 1984). The community indeed regarded it as a “reign”, as Obrecht had been installed to set things straight again in the South African abbey, which had gone astray from contemplative conventions in the eyes of the Trappist Generalate in Rome. In particular around the missions Centocow and Lourdes, the active missionaries had put up resistance to restrictions applied to them. I will not be able to deal with this history adequately in this work, but will refer to it wherever necessary.³⁵ In 1907, Obrecht, too, eventually failed to realign the Abbey, and accordingly Mariannhill was separated from the Reformed Cistercians in 1909. The community was temporarily transformed into the mission institute “Religious Missionaries of Mariannhill” (RMM) in 1910, and was again renamed “Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill” (CMM) for the first time in 1936 (cf. Dahm 1950).³⁶

The historical study of Catholics in Natal, and Mariannhill’s history in particular, has so far been dominated by insiders to the denomination, as well as to the congregation itself. After Brown’s *The Catholic Church in South Africa from its Origins to the Present Day* (1960), Joy Brain (eg. 1975, 1982a, 1982b), professor emerita of history at the former University of Durban-Westville, produced the basic studies on Catholicism in Natal, which have been continued and expanded by Philippe Denis OP, Professor of History of Christianity at the School of Religion and Theology, UKZN. Since the 1940s, members of Mariannhill published academic studies on their history, generally as dissertations at a theological faculty (eg. Dahm 1949, Lautenschlager

³⁴ CMMA-GR: uncatalogued circular, 1905.

³⁵ For internal histories dealing with this complex and highly fraught period see Dahm (1949), Kempf (1984), and Roos (1961).

³⁶ RMM: *religiosi missionarii de mariannhill* (lat.); CMM: *congregatio missionariorum de mariannhill* (lat.).

1963, Mettler 1968, Wendl 1998), or as data-collections for the beatification of Abbot Franz Pfanner, the founder of Mariannhill (Kempf 1981-1984).³⁷ Other histories were written as general popular information and propaganda for a general public (cf. Balling 2011).³⁸ The latter accounts can be considered as straightforward hagiographies, not least with the idea in mind to further the process of Abbot Pfanner's beatification. As somewhat of a counter narrative to the mainstream history produced by Mariannhill's male community, the "Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannhill" (CMM), one may consider the only exhaustive history of the "Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood" (CPS) by Sr. Anette Buschgerd (1990).³⁹ In her study *For A Great Price*, Buschgerd takes the perspective of the sisters and stresses the dependencies and eventually the emancipation from the male community. Nevertheless, for both the male and the female congregation, the separation from the Trappist order in 1909 became a cathartic time marker, after which the communities could freely evolve as mission congregations. The time prior to 1909, instead, is often addressed as a difficult, but nevertheless nostalgic period of origins.

The only exhaustive and truly critical academic work on the early period of Mariannhill has been written by an outsider.⁴⁰ In his dissertation, the Austrian Africanist Clemens Gütl (2005) analyses the social and economic interactions between Mariannhill Missionaries and Africans on and around the monastery's land between 1882 and 1909. In addition to this, he provides an account of the pre-history to the foundation. He sketches various biographies, not only of Pfanner, but also of the Zulu linguist and collector of ethnographica, Fr. Franz Myer, as well as several lesser-known members. Gütl emphasises that not only African converts, but likewise Europeans chose a career at the mission for reasons of social and economic pressure, and in search for stability. By creating so-called *Amakholwa* (Zulu: "believers") settlements, the missionaries attempted to disentangle the lives of some Africans from the colonial "native law". One of Gütl's many findings is that the experience of engaging with Mariannhill left many members of both groups, (ex-)missionaries, potential converts and land tenants, in a less-than-ideal situation, once they realised they could not comply with the religious, social, and economic demands put on them by the Missionaries of Mariannhill. As the monastery owned the extensive farms on which its filial stations were established all over Natal and parts of East Griqualand, the mission superiors could determine freely who was allowed to stay on the land, and who was not (cf. Chapter Three of this study).

³⁷ Beatification is the first major step towards Canonisation, after which a person may be officially adored as a saint within the Catholic Church. I discuss this process in detail in Chapter Eight.

³⁸ The publications of Fr. Adalbert Balling CMM in particular are extensive and exist in many different variations, editions, and translations. See the bibliography for a selection.

³⁹ CPS: *congregatio pretiosi sanguinis* (lat.).

⁴⁰ More specific aspects of Mariannhill's activities have been dealt with by South African outsiders to the congregation, such as education (Khandlhela 1993, 1995), theatre (Peterson 2000), or the biographies of Mariannhill's first African priests since the late 1880s (Mukuka 2008). The development and motivations for entering the congregation of Mariannhill's female congregation, the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood (CPS) in later decades have been studied by Gugglberger (2014).

After only two years, in 1885, the monastery was raised to the status of an Abbey. Once the newly installed Abbot, Franz Pfanner, decided to engage in mission work in 1886 with the foundation of Mariannhill's first filial station Reichenau, he encountered ongoing problems with the Trappist authorities. The mission activities of these first years led to an extensive paper trail of archival and published documents, but were only scarcely recorded in photographs. Even if active mission work remained a contradiction in terms for the contemplative congregation, the photographers started documenting and constructing the encounter situation of Trappists and Africans in photographs from the early 1890s onwards.

Problems eventually developed with the White population of Natal, in particular through Mariannhill's competition with local businesses. On the one hand the monks provided free labour themselves, and on the other hand they trained Africans as expert labour in various trades. This was not appreciated by local White competitors, who instead preferred to control Africans as menial labour. The Natal government eventually granted school funds to Mariannhill, which was disapproved for the same reasons, and discussed widely in local newspapers. Soon, also African parents started to comprehend the nature of the boarding school system, as entailing long absences of their children, as well as monogamous marriage demanded by the missionaries. Once children, especially girls, continued on the path set by the mission, parents became concerned about the loss of work force on the one hand, and potential *lobola* payments on the other (Zulu: "bride price"). Quarrels between parents and the missionaries eventually brought further attention to Mariannhill in the local press (cf. Gütl 2005).

Mariannhill's two extensive farms held names of Dutch origin (*Klaarwater* and *Zeekoegat*), which were relics from before the British had taken over the farming communities of Dutch descent and annexed Natal in 1843. Once it had become "the most English of the states and colonies of South Africa" (Brookes and Webb 1979:42), the Afrikaans-speaking population was a minority before the South African Union in 1910.⁴¹ Durban, and Pinetown near Mariannhill in particular, also had considerable German-speaking Protestant communities (Volker 2006). Because they were generally perceived as German (-speaking) Catholics, Mariannhill Missionaries had ongoing problems of positioning themselves next to these other communities, especially during the two World Wars.⁴² As I will show in Chapters Three and Five, the resulting need to position the community socially, resulted in the production of particular narratives, involving texts, photographs, and particular objects.

Therefore most writers on Mariannhill were insiders to the community. Starting with the author of the mission's first history, A.T. Bryant in 1887, they had a certain bias towards the hagiographic. But also many outsiders considered Mariannhill a worthwhile literary topic, especially before 1914. It is therefore necessary to further explain the already mentioned

⁴¹ Brookes and Webb state that even though the first census was only held in 1921, the percentage of the Afrikaans-speaking population of Natal was very small by 1910 (1979:250).

⁴² The majority of Mariannhill's members were indeed German-speakers from either Austria or Germany, if not even mostly Southern-Germany and Bavaria. However, several members were also of Polish, Australian, and American origin.

distinction between “internal” and “external” views and descriptions of Mariannhill’s endeavours. This refers not only to authors’ points of view, but also to the sources they used: Mariannhill’s own historians often relied selectively on their own archival material, while in turn outsiders had in most cases no (full) access to Mariannhill’s archives. As a result, they depended on Mariannhill’s published hagiographic secondary literature, as well as the publicly available writings on Catholics in South Africa. Governmental archival material, as available at the repositories of the South African National Archives, the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban, and in various European archives constitutes yet another group of sources for external histories. Despite the different nature of the sources used, both internal and external narratives mainly follow the biography of Mariannhill’s founder and first Abbot, Franz Pfanner.

In the 1960s, Mariannhill Missionaries initiated Pfanner’s beatification process for the first time (cf. Chapter Eight). Since then, the popular narrative on Mariannhill focussed on Pfanner and defined the congregation as a successful experiment concerning its mission efforts. It portrayed Mariannhill as a phenomenon, which had surpassed its own initial restrictions (eg. Schimlek 1953). This process, and the selection of documents it involved, effectually rearranged the entire topography and topology of Mariannhill’s various archival repositories (see methodological section below). Pfanner’s biography has thus constituted the backbone of Mariannhill’s historiography ever since, but at the same time re-directed the selection, archival migration, and accumulation of historical documents, including photographs. Even though it will be impossible to escape the pervasiveness of this trajectory and the archival structures and traces it produced, I attempt to explore alternative histories in a more diversified periphery of the mission, in particular as they relate to photographs. Due to the excess of information necessarily contained in, and created between related photographs, details unintended by the photographer offer directions to do so. In the following section I will embed this situation in the wider contemporary discourse on photography in Natal.

The focus on Pfanner is further stressed by the fact that his death in 1909 also coincided with the beginning of Mariannhill’s history as an independent mission congregation after its separation from the Trappist order. Following the same thread, the fictional novel *For the Sake of Silence* by the South African literary scholar Michael Green (2008) is currently the mission’s most popular and widely read history. While highly acclaimed in literary circles (it was awarded the prestigious Olive Schreiner Prize), its reception within the CMM and CPS communities was ambivalent: some considered it as a distortion of history, while others even considered it as a potential contribution to Pfanner’s beatification process. In particular due to the works of Mukuka (2008) and Green (2008) the CMM and CPS communities have grown increasingly sensitive towards the historical work by outsiders, which nevertheless sees a growing demand, especially in South African academic circles. The historian and anthropologist Carolyn Hamilton and the museologist and curator Nessa Leibhammer, have recently identified Mariannhill as a “collection hotspot in place and time” (2014:162). This is justified by the fact that the mission and its scholars accumulated a considerable amount of information on, as well as artefacts

produced by Africans. Hamilton had described this conceptual idea earlier as an “archival production hotspot”:

A relatively short period of time in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when key records pertinent to the pre-industrial history of the region were intensively laid down, by a relatively small cluster of highly active individuals—colonial officials, travelers and missionaries as well as local chiefs and counselors—operating within a fairly tightly circumscribed network. (Hamilton 2011:12)

I herewith add that this also relates to the mission’s photographic record: as selective as the textual history of Mariannhill is, as limited is the region’s general photographic record. At least for the period before the First World War, the rather remote areas where Mariannhill’s mission stations are located, have, to my knowledge, only been photographed by the missionaries themselves. This also holds true for the case of the monastery and its surroundings: even though Mariannhill Monastery was frequented by many outsiders as a tourist destination early on, it appears that none of the visitors took photographs at or around the monastery. At least none of those photographs have been published or deposited in public archives. In Chapter Three I explore whether this may have been a restriction imposed on the visitors.

Mariannhill’s photographs from before 1915 have always been tightly interwoven with the growing body of texts on the mission. But in particular the depictions of Black South Africans as distinctly “non-European” did less and less relate to the social reality of the time these texts were written in. Only as late as the 1960s, a point was reached when the temporal co-presence of image and text could no longer be presented as matching the respective social realities on the ground. The missionaries had nevertheless continued to utilise the photographs up to this point, to speak from and to a discourse between Europe and South Africa. It is foremost the mission station as a spatial and social arrangement that the photographs pointed to. Not all of them showed the stations, but instead depicted oppositions: on the one hand, the lifeworld of the African population as it supposedly existed before the missionaries arrived, and on the other hand, the lifeworld as it existed with the converted and materially transformed *Amakholwa*.

However, as I argue in Chapter One, they are not always presented in the common before/after dichotomy (eg. Rippe 2018, Thomas 1992). Building on these premises, I stress on the one hand how the missionaries presented themselves in their photographic accounts. On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that in case the missionaries themselves were not visible in the image, the photographs could be easily detached from their relation to the mission and enter various other commercial circuits. To further specify these connections between Europe and South Africa I discuss such circuits in Chapters One and Six regarding photographic and ethnological economies. Mariannhill’s photographer received such circulations and reintroduced them into the photographic production at Mariannhill itself. In the next section I briefly explore the visual economy prior to these developments.

Photography and “Zooluology”

By passing through a few Kafir kraals, one might easily bring together a very passable photographic group of ‘Papuan’s’, while among the tribes of New-Guinea we might as easily collect a troupe of ‘Zulus’ more true to genuine appearance than perhaps some such who have, in years not long past, been placed ‘on show’ in Europe and America.

Alfred T. Bryant, Introduction to *A Zulu-English Dictionary* (1905:16-17).

The Trappists were keen students of life and customs of the Zulus, and the photos were certainly taken with the express purpose of having a collection which could be of value for the future. Many of the scenes, hair styles, dress etc. are no more in vogue. For any student of tribal life and customs an invaluable source of information!

Sr. Adelgisa Hermann CPS, in a letter to Elizabeth Edwards, 05. April 1983.⁴³

Like other forms of evidence, images were not created, for the most part at any rate, with the future historian in mind. Their makers had their own concerns, their own messages.

Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (2001: 34).

Read against the last quote, opinions on the alleged authenticity of photographs seem oddly reversed in the first two. One would rather expect the earlier statement to be less critical, and the later one more so of claims to photographic truth. The first statement is by Alfred T. Bryant, who was one of Mariannhill’s earliest and best known members.⁴⁴ In the paragraph preceding the quote, Bryant claimed the general physiognomic familiarity of “Negroes” across the globe as a race, and then pointed to showmen imitating them on the stages of Europe. The second statement is by a member of Mariannhill’s female community of religious sisters, Sr. Adelgisa Hermann CPS, who was the monastery’s archivist until her death in 1995. The quote is part of a response to an inquiry by the British historian of anthropology and photography Elizabeth Edwards. Edwards started researching the photographic holdings of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford in the early 1980s, as part of which the museum’s curator Henry Balfour had purchased a pre-compiled “ethnographic” set of photographs at Mariannhill’s studio during a trip to South Africa in 1899 (cf. Part Three).

In Chapter One I argue that photographs such as the ones from Mariannhill have, to date, not been adequately understood within the contemporary visual economy for which they were produced. In fact, to adequately understand mission propaganda, the focus of analysis must be drawn more widely to involve contemporary artistic, commercial, and even scientific production networks. Eventually, it must be understood as an attempt not only to inform, but in particular to entertain audiences. Nevertheless, even later members of the congregation, like Sr. Adelgisa, have often taken them in as “ethnographic” photographs, which according to her may supposedly still provide historical evidence through photographic realism. The two statements become more comprehensible as one considers that photographic resemblances weaken with greater temporal

⁴³ PRM: letter, Hermann to Edwards, 05.04.1983. I am grateful to Elizabeth Edwards and Christopher Morton for making this letter available to me.

⁴⁴ Bryant was a resident at Mariannhill Monastery between 1883 and 1893, when he left the Trappist order for good.

distance to the referent (Kracauer 1963). While Bryant was clearly aware of the fact that at the time photographs, material culture, and theatrical performances of a “Zulu” identity were part and parcel of Europe’s biased perception of Black South Africans, Sr. Adelgisa had apparently accepted Mariannhill’s photographs as truthful representations, which had been sedimenting in the congregation’s historiography for many decades. Initially being ambivalent entertainment, the photographs later became prominent as historical evidence during and after Apartheid. While Bryant had been a contributor to Mariannhill’s propagandistic enterprise since the early 1880s, Sr. Adelgisa became involved once Mariannhill’s photographs and textual works had already been appropriated, circulated, and certified by various anthropologists, as well as Bryant himself. When replying to Elizabeth Edwards in 1984, Sr. Adelgisa Hermann still wrote in the spirit of Mariannhill’s centenary of 1982. At the time, she herself was working on a new history of the congregation (Hermann 1984). As her own work focused on the mission’s institutional history, she excluded old “ethnographic” depictions of Africans from before 1914 almost entirely. However, photographs showing encounters between missionaries and Africans are still used in Mariannhill’s publications today, now clearly as illustrations of historical facts. In the following pages of this section I sketch essential developments of the process of photographic stereotyping, insofar as it is relevant for this study.

The first production of daguerreotypes in the South African Cape region is recorded for 1846, seven years after photographic technology had become commercially available (Bensusan 1966:9-12). Verbeek and Verbeek (1982), as well as Spencer (1982) state that even though photographs were already being made in Natal by itinerant photographers by the mid-1850s, and photographic studios were established by the later 1850s, few images taken before the early 1860s survive. As far as we know, the first photographs in the Durban area with an “anthropological” intention, were taken by the colonial administrator Robert J. Mann in the late 1850s and early 1860s (Guy 2014, also see Guy 2002). He preceded the physiognomic style of frontal and profile views, which the German anthropologist Gustav Fritsch produced during his journey through South Africa between 1863 and 1865. Only since 1872 did Fritsch propagate this convention with the scientific community of Germany (cf. Dietrich and Bank 2008, also see Chapter Six).

African identities began to solidify between Natal and Zululand with the ongoing representational process around the so-called *Mfecane*. This major violent expansion of the Zulu under Shaka Zulu affected most of Southern Africa during the 1820s and 1830s.⁴⁵ Further hostile encounters of the Zulu in the 1830s against the “Boers” of Dutch descent, and the so-called “Anglo-Zulu War” in 1879 against the British, manifested “Zuluness”. The persona of Shaka Zulu—and with him the “Zulu” as a people—became ambivalently inscribed in word and image as both “terrific” and “terrifying” (Hamilton 1998). After the British government had annexed Natal as a colony in 1843, and started arranging so-called “native reserves” or “locations” for the

⁴⁵ For a discussion of the historiography and the popular and scholarly imaginations on the *Mfecane* see Wright (1989).

black population, they further essentialised ethnic belonging and identities in terms of space (eg. Guy 2013). The transformation and unification of identities was thus intricately bound to questions of colonial land distribution from the very beginning of the colonial encounter until today (cf. Part Two).

At least since David Livingstone's publications of the 1850s, narratives by missionaries in Southern Africa have relied on the visualisation of adventurous encounters with exotic Others in form of drawings, claiming both public appeal and scientific rigour at the same time. Photographs seem only to have become tools for missionaries by the 1860s (Jenkins 2006:140). Narratives related to such images not only presented an allegedly "objective" account, but usually involved the author as a crucial protagonist, who interacted with and influenced non-Europeans (cf. Kratz and Gordon 2002). Such encounters were eventually brought home through travelling showmen (Lindfors 1999), the post-card industry (Geary and Webb 1998, Geary 2013a), stereographs, and the mobilisation of their imagery for commercial produce, such as food adverts and labels. These media eventually made the "Zulu" and other "tribes" available to the (re-)imagination of Euro-American consumers (Sobania 2002). However, despite their historical popularity, very few authors have so far dealt explicitly with the early *photographic* construction of the ethnic identity "Zulu". Webb (1992) and Sobania (2002), and more recently Geary (2013) and Mokoena (2013) convey that the "Zulu" were made digestible for a European market by perpetuating the fact of their defeat during the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879. Due to the initial military success against the British, media reports at the same time stressed the Zulus' remaining savagery and ferocity. Recent authors further agree that historical realities were often adjusted, and that the resulting images were perpetuated in popular photographic formats, such as postcards and coffee-table books.

Between the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 and the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, Natal saw an exceptional influx of British military. This strong presence of White single males created an opportunity for the retrieval, as well as a market for memorabilia, souvenirs, trophies of war, "native curios", and of course photographs of the "Zulu"; the latter not only performing martial prowess, but also erotic inclinations (Stevenson 2005). Edwards and Hart (2004, also see Edwards 2002) analysed a series of photographs depicting bare-breasted Zulu women in the collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum⁴⁶ regarding their material history. One of these photographs was owned by a soldier of the Wessex Yeomanry during the Anglo-Boer War, and unlike many other archived photographs bears explicit traces of usage and tactile involvement: "dirty thumb marks, missing and torn corners, a central crease caused by constant folding and unfolding" (Edwards and Hart 2004:13). British soldiers, just like other travellers and tourists to South Africa who increased in numbers since the 1880s, not only had an apparent need for images of South Africans, but also for facilities to have their own photographs taken. In response to this evolving local and international market for images and objects of the Zulu, Mariannhill adjusted by professionalising its photographic business in 1894, as well as by expanding its museum in

⁴⁶ PRM: B1A.36.

the same year. British soldiers, in particular during the years 1899-1902, made extensive use of the studio's service. As I explain in Chapter Three, Mariannhill had already become a magnet for tourists and local visitors since the early 1890s, when South Africa began developing its tourism infrastructure.

For the time of photographic production under consideration we have to consider the fact that similar, but still nationally defined market interests were at play in German-speaking countries, which was the most relevant target market for Mariannhill. Since the time of the Berlin Congo Conference of the mid 1880s and Germany's occupation of colonies, reports and imagery on Cameroon, Togo, German South West Africa, and German East Africa had a strong presence in the popular press. Satirical magazines presented strongly racist, sexualised and stereotyping imagery of Africans. In their encounters with travellers, and especially with missionaries, Africans were often portrayed as greedy, clumsy, and in particular incapable of utilising "modern" European material culture "properly". This can amongst many other print- and performance-media be followed in the popular periodical *Fliegende Blätter*, or less explicitly in *Über Land und Meer* (Ciarlo 2011, Leonhardt 2007, Short 2012, Chapter One of this study, also see Corbey 1989, Nederveen-Pieterse 1990).

It was only a few years prior to the narrative of the British soldier's photograph housed at the Pitt Rivers Museum that the journal *National Geographic* had published a photograph of a Black man and woman shaking hands in its 1896 November edition. The photograph was titled "Zulu bride and bridegroom". As a matter of fact, it was the very first "naked" portrait in the magazine, which even initiated a tradition of aesthetics in this regard (Hawkins 2010, also see Lutz and Collins 1993). The (semi-) "nude native" became an ambivalent figure that easily transgressed the boundaries between science and entertainment (cf. Griffiths 2002, also see Edwards 2009), on the one hand appreciated by soldiers and tourists in form of photographs, on the other hand detested in the official policies and administrative practices of the Natalian Government. The latter opinion of course also applied to Catholic missionaries, who generally obliged their subjects to dress on approaching European settlements. The Catholic Steyler missionaries (SVD)⁴⁷ in New Guinea for example, never, or rarely depicted undressed people near their stations, in order to counter obscene secular photography (Stornig 2013:118). Mariannhill Missionaries instead attuned well to the humming local and international commercial market of images of Natal, and even dominated it for some years. But with the exception of photographs taken outside of the mission, inside Mariannhill's studio women were at all times portrayed with a covered torso. The exoticising image of the "Zulu" in Natal nevertheless became further encoded through the mechanism of supply and demand, which I will describe in Part Two.

Mariannhill's photographs in particular not only depended on, but contributed to racial categorisations and a stereotype of "Zuluness" through the fact that they were taken and circulated continuously over several decades. As I show in Chapter Four in accordance with a

⁴⁷ "*Societas Verbi Divini*" = "Society of the Divine Word".

growing scholarship (eg. Hamilton and Leibhammer 2016, Mahoney 2012), Mariannhill Missionaries identified Natal Africans as “Kafirs”, rather than “Zulu”. It was only through the process of circulation of related mimetic capital that this particular identity was eventually solidified, at least from the 1920s onwards. Also through the medium of film since the early 20th century, the international engagement with, and construction of this identity developed to such an extent that the film historian Peter Davis once referred to it—even if polemically—as “Zooluology” (1996:124).⁴⁸

Mariannhill’s involvement in this “visual economy” (Poole 1997) had repercussions in the recent past and also defined how Mariannhill is seen and represented today. The division of Black South Africans in terms of “tribes” is an ongoing renegotiation of social identities, not only by the colonial regime and missionaries, but also by Black South Africans themselves, who followed trends of labour migration, or changed patronage otherwise. At least since the 1920s until today, the notion of “Zuluness” has been employed by Black politicians to foster nationalistic identities and political consciousness (Harries 1993). Once again since the end of Apartheid, an ongoing discourse evolved in which African “traditional leaders” reclaim pre-colonial identities within (or against) state-provided political structures (Oomen 2008, 2011, Sithole 2009). In 2004, this development was institutionalised with the so-called Nhlapo Commission, to research cases of claims to chieftaincy, alternative to the one of the “Zulu Kingdom”. This eventually led to an ongoing friction within the politics of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). As “traditional leaders” have to reposition themselves within this political field, historical sources in the colonial archive receive new meanings and functions (cf. Buthelezi 2015, McNulty 2013). In the case of the “traditional leader” *Inkhosi*⁴⁹ Shoji of the *Amanganga* near Mariannhill, this also involved the photographs I worked with. Due to their excess of meaning, photographs, more than texts and objects, today become easily involved in discourses on heritage, politics, land-claims, and tourism, which can at times promiscuously overlap.

To understand that such processes of image production and interpretation are indeed not new at all, we need to retrace the trajectories of images in the vicinity of Mariannhill’s media production around 1900. As I already mentioned, popular culture and scientific German ethnological studies have gone hand-in-hand on an international level since the 19th century.⁵⁰ Accordingly, such overlapping discourses have since constituted the background for both the production and the reception of Mariannhill’s images. Anthropologists carried out physiognomic studies, while ethnologists collected material culture, and to such endeavours bodies, objects, and their relationships were central interests in photographs. Scientists considered photographs and

⁴⁸ Davis’ own definition of the term: “Zooluology: ‘the white myth of the Zulu; the equation of the Zulus with the wild animals of Africa; the domestication of these creatures; the Zulus as the prototypical ‘African tribe’; the political uses of the Zulu image’”.

⁴⁹ “*Inkhosi*” is the Zulu term for the political institution, which would have been labelled with the administrative terms “chief” in English, or “*kaptein*” in Afrikaans during colonial and Apartheid times.

⁵⁰ For the German case see for example Penny (2002) and Zimmerman (2001); For the British case Coombes (1994), Griffiths (2002) and Edwards (2009).

artefacts to be both “working objects” (Daston 2015) and illustrations providing reliable evidence of African subjects, if they fulfilled at least some criteria (Chapter Six). European ethnologists repeatedly demanded, at least since the early 1870s and into the first decades of the 20th century, that authentic “unspoiled” objects must be collected as soon as possible, before the respective cultures were “europeanised” entirely. Some ethnologists instead, such as the German Wilhelm Joest, already by 1884 claimed that moment to have passed in the Natal region. Joest lamented that it was already a profitable practice for Africans to “imitate” and even “forge” material culture as “Zulu curios” (Joest 1886:147). Nevertheless, a competition over supposedly “authentic” objects continued, apparently with increasing uncertainty what this actually meant. In Part Three I trace this situation for the case of Mariannhill, and explain how production, collection, and curation of such objects must be seen as essentially constituted within the extended social relations of the mission encounter, and how this constitution partially relied on photographs.

Even though the production of Mariannhill’s photographs indeed relied on traceable encounters, I show that the missionaries often idealised their relationship with Africans in photographic *tableaux vivants*. In depictions of their efforts to convert, they involved the previously mentioned media (text, images, and objects) in conjunction and creative performance. This was mostly done to equip their periodicals and exhibitions with illustrative material. To do so they utilised photographs as “mimetic capital” (Greenblatt 1991), which depended on, and at the same time referenced the *préterrain*, or social “fore-field” of its production (cf. Pels and Salemink 1994, 1999). In the case of Mariannhill’s photographic production, the *préterrain* was constituted by the contemporary colonial and racialised situation in both Natal and Europe. These were connected by the German press economy, in which Mariannhill actively participated. In Chapters One and Six I explain this process by showing that photographic scenes depicting “daily life” around Mariannhill and its stations were inspired by German “genre photographs”, which could later easily become “ethnographic photographs”.

These photographs never explicitly depict problematic issues referred to in the mission’s periodicals, such as the abuse of alcohol during feasts, or the resulting violence which colonial reports often observed as “native unrest”. Related issues of how to “civilise” and whether to integrate Africans into society was generally framed as the “native question” or the “native problem”. As a mirror, so to speak, this “problem” was often used rhetorically by Mariannhill Missionaries to point to the “social question” in Europe, the discourse on “moral decay” (eg. Pfanner 1890, also see Gütl 2005:314). By relating these two discourses, Mariannhill could employ European morally coded tropes. For example by photographing and framing situations around African marriages, they could construct them either as desirable orderly ceremony in a religious context at mission stations, or as undesirable feast in the setting of an African homestead. By codifying practices such as marriage or allegedly superstitious practices as either legal or illegal according to “native law”, the Natal Government made the latter commensurable to European law (cf. Mitchell 1893). Ann Stoler describes such processes as the creation of

“colonial ontologies” (Stoler 2009). In this case, one might more precisely speak of ontologies of the mission encounter: categories and issues regarding the being of subjects that were not naturally in place, but that were identified, created, and curated during the encounter between missionaries, their subjects, state power, as well as contemporary scientists and the entertainment industry.

Eventually, such ontologies were manifested by selection and description of particular material, visual, and textualised culture and through these still remain active until today, by being drawn into the legal, academic, and private sphere. Debates relate to questions such as the previously mentioned land and Nhlapo claims, heritage, copyrights, ownership and access rights. Debates also relate to the question of whether (or better for whom) such “mimetic capital” can still be used as a neutral source for the writing of history today, despite its fraught historical racialising biography; and eventually, whether ethnic labels such as “Zulu” actually have meaning today for the descendants of the people they supposedly relate to, other than their political nationalistic use (cf. Sithole 2009).

Today’s interpretations of various mimetic capital are thus still influenced by photographs following a particular iconography, as well as objects that started accumulating even more through the representational dynamics after the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879, and the intensification of a “salvage anthropology” at about the same time (Chapter Six). Robert Thornton’s (1983) suggestion that wars were catalysers for attention to the textual inscription of Otherness in South Africa, may accordingly be extended to objects and photographs. The processes of selection and reproduction of mimetic capital over time, and through and in between various media, made some images more eminent than others. Part of the social biography of “Zulu” material culture thus exists as material, narrated, and photographed “trophy of war”, such as re-collected by British soldiers, travellers, tourists, missionaries, and ethnologists (Stevenson 2005). This included particular, often clearly gendered, elaborate body decorations including colourful beadwork and male head rings, household utensils, and specific kinds of weaponry such as spears and shields, which became metonymic for “Zulu”. As ethnical markers, they gloss over other established local self-identifications and material culture that had been evaluated as less interesting by White collectors.

Mariannhill Missionaries too collected and labelled people, objects, and images as either “Kafir”, or less often, if at all, with denominations specific to their mission stations, for example as “*Amabhaca*” at Centocow and Lourdes. In the grassroots practice of inscription at Mariannhill Monastery before 1914, “Zulu” was only used for the language, and very rarely to identify Natalian subjects or objects. Being aware that “Zulu” was an identity related to Zululand, Mariannhill Missionaries only used the term more regularly for Natal Africans once it had spilled over into the popular and political discourse during the 1920s. Mariannhill Missionaries in fact recorded a much wider diversity of identities for people, who did not receive tribal labels in their baptism registers. I consider the latter as a more practical working-register, not intended to represent people to European audiences. Instead, it paid attention to a “religious ontology”

distinguishing “heathens” and “non-heathens”, as well as peoples’ origins, who came from places as far as Johannesburg or Zululand. As a result there existed a “backstage”, as well as a “frontstage” in the sense of Goffman (1990 [1956]), where the Trappists presented the ongoing relationship with their subjects in different ways. By exploring these differences in Parts Two and Three, I hope to show that only the fusion and performance of local with foreign mimetic capital enabled images and objects to develop the essentialising “reproductive power” they still maintain today.

Popular ethnic and religious constructions of people were closely intertwined with studies of local languages, as these were carried out exclusively by missionaries, initially Protestants, Anglicans, and Wesleyans. Only by the 1890s, and eventually with A.T. Bryant’s *Zulu Dictionary* in 1905, did Catholics catch up in scholarly contributions to the field. Ethnographic commentary by Mariannhill missionaries was, up to the foundation of the journal *Anthropos* in 1906, restricted to their own propaganda publications. But some members of the Mariannhill community published works on language, religion, material culture, and “art” in the form of Bushman paintings. The most prominent of these were Fr. “David” Alfred Thomas Bryant, Fr. Franz Mayr, Br. Aegidius Müller, Fr. Albert Schweiger, Fr. Willibald Wanger, Br. Otto Mäder, Fr. Paschalis Boneberg, and Fr. Bernard Huss. The number of active scholars at Mariannhill, in particular of the Zulu language, was far greater and they await additional studies.

Two ascriptions of (ethnic) identities other than “Zulu” dominate Mariannhill’s archive: the *Amanganga* living close to Mariannhill Monastery, and the *Amabhaca*⁵¹, living close to Mariannhill’s mission stations Centocow and Lourdes. Both were distinctly not “Zulu”, due to their history of flight in the aftermath of the *Mfecane* from the Zulu Kingdom. However, only the *Amabhaca* became iconic in this respect, and were distinguished by explicit captions on Mariannhill’s photographs. The distinctive iconicity was partially based on dress, hairstyle, and the ongoing political and ethnographic inscription of their history in relation to the Zulu, ongoing since the 19th century (cf. Bryant 1929, Hammon-Tooke 1967). The *Amanganga* instead were a much smaller group under the Shozi Clan, whose lineage constitutes the *inkhosi* or “traditional leader” until today. They were generally glossed over with the most common and derogative denominator applied to Black people at the time, “Kafir”. However, it is impossible to ascertain whether people photographed by Mariannhill indeed belonged to these groups, unless photographs can be clearly located, or respective historical individuals can be identified (Chapter Four).

Not only did Mariannhill missionaries write in often abstract and conventional ways about their subjects in correspondences with Europe, but they also corresponded about their subjects with governmental institutions. This could for example involve the exemption of African converts from “native law” to disentangle them from the “native” marriage system, or to bring problems with residents to the attention of a magistrate. In any case, they contributed to the creation of documents in the colonial archive, which can set yet another backstage to the stage

⁵¹ Alternatively spelled *amaBaca* before orthological changes in Zulu.

presented in photographs. Mariannhill Missionaries thus had a considerable interpretative authority over the identities of Africans, on the ground, as well as in representations produced for Europe. Backstage and frontstage, in their capacities as ministers, landlords, museum curators, photographers, as well as press-owners, they determined what it meant to be either “Zulu”, “Kafir”, or “*Amanganga*”, either “native” or “Christian”, either “primitive” or “near-civilised”.

As I hope to show, photographs played a considerable role in this process, and the images Mariannhill procured and conjured, were as much of European descent, as they claimed to show the true Africa. Even if some of these images obscure historical situations rather than clarifying them, the combination of various sources allows us to trace statements on and of several African and European historical personalities, who appeared as intermediaries in these processes.

The Limits of Creating Ethical Spaces for Photographs

Br. Aegidius Müller used the location shown in Figure 1 as a natural backdrop for his photographic compositions on multiple occasions, not only for arranged depictions of Africans, but likewise for a range of group portraits of the Trappist community. The photograph below can be found in an album of original prints at Mariannhill's Roman archive. It shows a group of students for the priesthood and is titled "*Studentenausflug* [student excursion]". It was taken in 1905, around the same time as the photograph of the postcard. Both images may have been sent to family members, as I explained above, but also appeared in the *Mariannhiller Kalender*. Seated in the front row with a hat and stick is Fr. Emanuel Hanisch, who will reappear several times throughout this study.

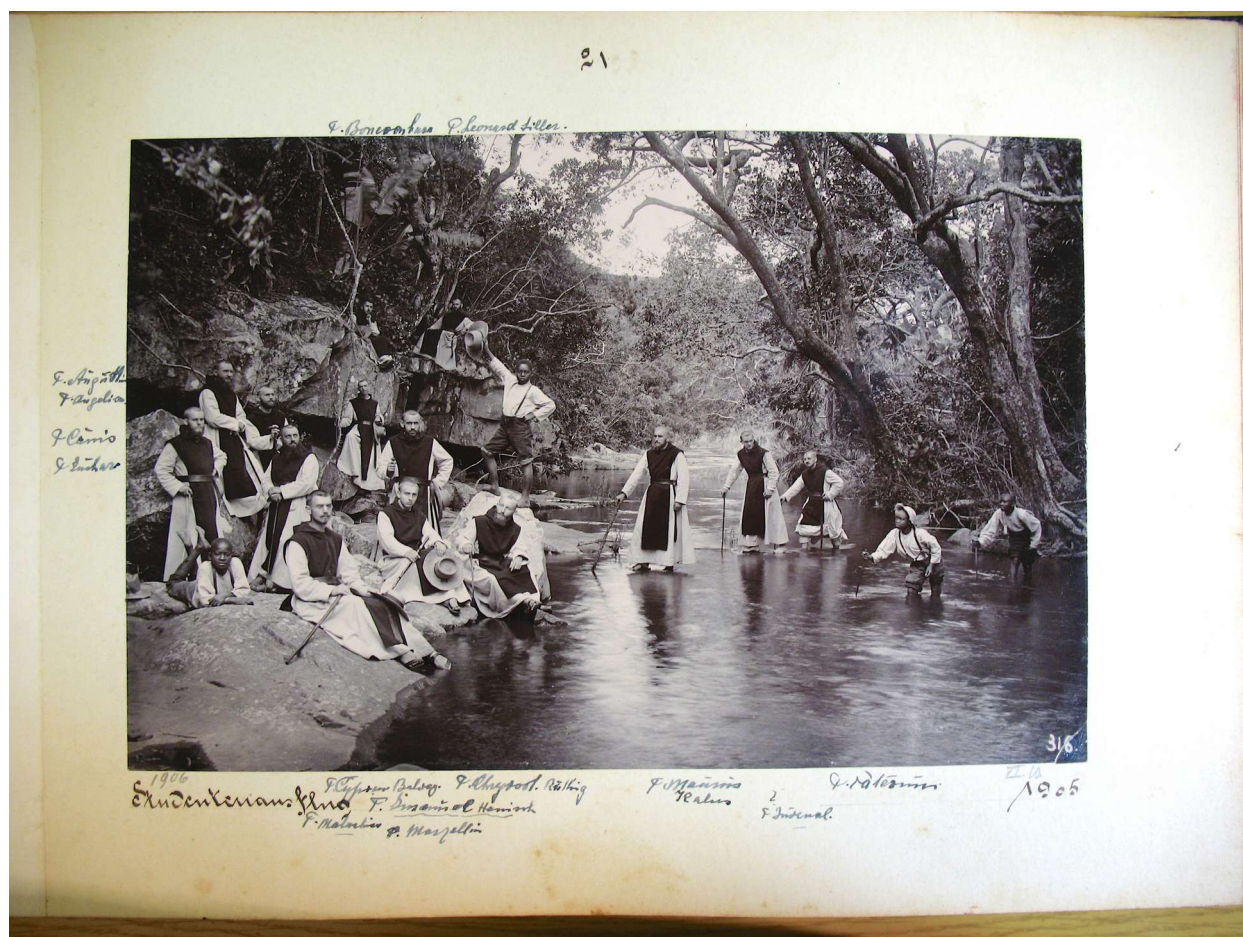


Figure 5: original caption: “*Studentenausflug*”—“Student excursion”. Page from a photographic album (CMM Archives, approx. 1905, another version is published in *Mariannhiller Kalender* 1906:79).

Due to the repeated staging of Africans and monks alike, it is evident that Müller did not select the site secondary to the occasion, but chose it primarily for its picturesque scenery. From the

caption of yet another print, I gathered that the location was close to Mariannhill's old mill. The mill's machinery was water-powered and thus close to the Umhlatuzane River, about 30 minutes on foot from the monastery. I followed the textual clue and located the stream, heavily overgrown in some places, above the cliff adjacent to the mill's still existing buildings. Penetrating the thick vegetation and wading muddy waters for several hours, I eventually was able to identify the very site. The structure and texture of the cliff depicted in the old photographs still has sufficient resemblance with today's landscape, in order to match the location with the various photographs. After more than 105 years, even the tree to the right of the image still exists. The fact that the big boulders in the photographs of 1905 have been replaced by others, shows the immense force of the stream during the rainy season.



Figure 6: the location at the Umhlatuzane River from the same vantage point as in Figure 5 (photograph by the author, June 2011).

In early 2011, I used these photographs to make an attempt at a “repeat-photograph”⁵² (Smith 2007), in order to socially re-engage and ground the historical photographs in the present. By locating the exact spot from which a photograph had been taken with the help of still existing landmarks and topographic formations, it is possible to create a matching photograph. This allows to show the physical changes and to implicate the social changes that have taken place since the original photographic occasion. After all, such an exercise and experience is the only possibility to establish any exact sense of photographic indexicality and iconicity. Otherwise, any claims to a physical relationship, as well as one of resemblance between photographs and what they represent, rely on the interpreting person’s “collateral knowledge” (Brunet 2008, Lefebvre 2007). As I will show in several chapters, any photograph could have been easily manipulated by montage or retouching. It is therefore only by matching the historical photograph with still existing topographies that we can be sure that it at least in parts relates to a particular historical space and situation. I will return to this conundrum in Chapters One, Seven, and Eight.

The social anthropologist Haidy Geismar, for example, engaged with Malakula islanders by re-photographing historical locations while the descendants of the depicted were posing with the old photographs in hand (2009:58ff). This approach allows researchers and their interlocutors to connect to each other and with a photographic past through consciously engaging in social performances during the photographic occasion. In this way, both parties may express relationships and negotiate histories. Methodologies such as “re-photography” and “photo elicitation” (cf. Dudding 2005) should nevertheless not be equated with the ethically charged postcolonial project labelled “repatriation”.⁵³ Respective “source communities” may after all be reluctant to engage with painful pasts, at least together with a yet uninvolved researcher (cf. Crane 2008). Despite the “seductiveness” of photographs in this regard (Geismar 2009:57), it is ethically questionable anyway whether one should engage in “repatriation” in the first place. In particular, this applies to cases where the researcher is not affiliated with an institution possessing objects in need of repatriation, or while there is no outspoken and direct claim by any “source community” to this very institution (cf. Peers and Brown 2003). While Mariannhill’s photographic studio was functional until 1939, photographs were accessible to the general public. Furthermore, over the following decades outsiders with sufficient inquisitive rigour could negotiate access. Strictly speaking the photographs had never been “ex-patriated” in the sense that they had left the country, or left behind an awareness of loss. Moreover, unlike the examples above, many of Mariannhill’s photographs can no longer be “patriated”: often it is impossible to identify the exact place of production or a “homeland [*patria*]” more generally (cf. Bakker 2007). As a consequence, these photographs can no longer be related to any identifiable “source

⁵² “Repeat-photography”, or alternatively “re-photography” is mostly employed by natural scientists to track environmental changes. Other than Smith (2007) it has not yet been widely theorised as a methodology within sociocultural anthropology. For variations to this approach see Edwards (2001:211-233), Geismar (2009).

⁵³ The literature on “visual repatriation” is by now considerable, but the works of Peers and Brown (2003, 2006), Bell (2006) and Geismar (2009) are particularly good introductions. More recently the practice has also been simply referred to as “returns” (Edwards 2015:245), or in a more general sense regarding museum objects as “restitution” (Förster et al. 2018).

community”.⁵⁴

During fieldwork in 2007 and 2011, I engaged with established Black families near Mariannhill Monastery, and hoped to identify other families in the area, who may still have photographs of the timeframe I am dealing with. Contacts inside and outside the Black Catholic community around Mariannhill conveyed to me that indeed only very few people can still trace their families back to photographed subjects of the late 19th and early 20th century. This was due to extensive voluntary and involuntary relocations since the “Group Areas Act” of the 1950s and beyond, which restructured the entire social landscape according to the “racial” categories “Black”, “Coloured”, and “White”. In 2011, I also tried to reconnect with the two families I had met during my fieldwork in 2007, and who could indeed trace their genealogies as far back as the 19th century. At the time, I had conveyed several prints of identified historical personalities to the family of the local *inkhosi*, E.B. Shozi, and to the family of his *induna*, Phewa, with the permission of the monastery’s superior. However, by 2011 the *inkhosi*’s interest in a cooperation was apparently satisfied, and further contacts did not materialise. Nevertheless, I will reconsider two crucial moments of these encounters in Chapters Four and Eight. These not only attest to the “porousness” between textual and oral sources towards each other (cf. Hamilton 2002)⁵⁵, but also show the necessity to include photographs and other material artefacts into this equation. The histories produced by traces of a colonial missionary-past are not to be approached lightly: the involved social actors are likely to situate topics, such as past cultural, religious, territorial, and economic negotiations within a colonial, apartheid, and essentially racialised history of confrontations, as they occurred between their biological ancestors on the one side, and their institutional predecessors on the other.

Even for the few cases where photographs can indeed be “patriated”, “source communities” do not exist in the strict sense of the term. Due to the extensive forced relocations during Apartheid, only very few families with stakes in land and history remained near Mariannhill. The two families I engaged with traced their ancestors back to the local *inkhosi* and one of his *induna*, whom the Trappists encountered on arrival in the 1880s. Even though these two families made claims to represent a historical community, it is for the reason of historical migrations problematic to speak of a “source community” at large. Once the two families expressed claims to photographs in 2007, I redirected these to respective members of the Mariannhill Mission. Soon it became clear that the two parties would not engage in a productive relationship, due to previous frictions concerning land claims on Mariannhill’s land. Black and White Mariannhill missionaries eventually expressed anxieties that photographs in their archives may be (mis-)read as historical evidence to bolster such claims. This occurred before and after my MA thesis on a limited portion of the photographic archive had circulated within and beyond

⁵⁴ This term of course bears some difficulties when understood as a bound and historically stable unity, which is never a given. In the special case of photographs made by missionaries, one may consider the religious community at large, comprising missionaries, converts, and other dependent subjects as co-producers and thus as the extended historical “source community” of photographs (Rippe 2007).

⁵⁵ Also see Hamilton (2002) for a historiography of postmodernist issues between textual and oral history.

the community.⁵⁶ At the time, this temporarily strained my relationship with the mission's generalate in Rome.

The ensuing negotiations led to the mutual agreement that I was given access to work on the collection, under the condition that I would not distribute any documents from CMM archives to third parties, without explicit permission by the mission's archivist. This entailed that I could not use the unpublished photographs from the CMM archives unrestrictedly to engage in something like "re-photography" or "photo elicitation" with outsiders to the congregation. It would have been ethically unsound to ask people for their engagement with the photographs during interviews, while refusing to share the easily reproducible photographs. As I already mentioned, no more possibilities appeared anyway to interview people around Mariannhill with photographs, due to the forced relocations. Only photographs related to the two before-mentioned families could therefore be connected to local oral histories. If other people addressed me regarding access to photographs, I either directed them to those photographs that had already been published, those that were freely accessible in ethnological museum collections and their websites, or alternatively to Mariannhill's archivist.

Eventually, I began thinking of what I was doing as a "re-connection" of histories (Rippe 2007, 2015). This may be a more appropriate term for an engagement with photographic archives, which have remained in the country of the photographs' origin (cf. Hayes et al. 1998:2), and for reconnecting identifiable photographs of historical personalities to the private histories of either biological descendants, or institutional successors in case of the missionaries. This eventually allowed me to include and address the very frictions I just described. Attempts to reconnect photographs through methodologies such as "photo elicitation" and "re-photography" may enable us to create new knowledge, but will not necessarily create historical evidence. In my own experience, they nevertheless allowed for the negotiation of relationships in the present, and to address important ethical issues accordingly.

During research in 2011, I approached Mariannhill's novice master, Fr. Lawrence Mota, with the photograph showing the Trappist students in 1905. I asked him whether he thought it to be a good idea to visit the same place with the monastery's current novices, as part of their educational programme. Joining a mission congregation or society in South Africa today promises financial and educational stability for young men and women. The same would have been the case for Europeans, such as Br. Aegidius Müller, in an economically and religiously unstable Germany at the end of the 19th century. Today, the novices educated at Mariannhill Monastery are exclusively Black. Some are from South Africa, but others are from several of the nearby countries where Mariannhill has houses, such as Zimbabwe, Kenya, or Zambia. Worldwide, Mariannhill currently has approximately 300 members, and by mid 2012—for the first time in the congregation's history—more than half of the congregation consisted of non-European members. The other half has an average age beyond 60, if not 70.

The novices' syllabus does include sections on history, including ideas such as "heritage".

⁵⁶ See Rippe (2007), and also parts of Chapters Four and Eight of this study, which reconsider one crucial episode.

I therefore suggested to the novice master that, just like in 1905, we could organise yet another “student excursion”, discuss the respective old photographs with the novices “on site”, speak about involved intentions of representation and propaganda, and see how the novices engage with the past of their future congregation. Additionally, I suggested that we may even re-stage a photograph in form of a *tableau vivant* or “living image” inspired by the old photographs, but now of the novices’ own conception. I thought the historical location at the river could have literally provided “space” for the novices to re-embody a past. This space would have enabled them to think through time and photographs, inscribe their own presence, and engage with the congregation’s history in a reflexive way; so I thought.

But the excursion and the new *tableau vivant* never took place. Therefore the scene, as I envisioned it to materialise, and as I had photographed it myself, remains unpopulated (Figure 6). Like several other approaches I had made since 2007 in regard to other photographs outside of the CMM community, I failed to receive responses, from the novices individually, as well as from the novice master. By avoiding my set-up, the novices resisted *becoming* “similar” to either one of the two historical photographs, the one showing Africans, and the one showing European monks. They even resisted positioning themselves anywhere in between. The two images were framed as a “chase” and as an “excursion” respectively. Especially in their opposition, the two photographs resonated within the novice’s experience of historical tropes as an experience of intermediality. We shall return to the same motif of “becoming similar” to an image through photographic performance in Chapter One in more depth.

Who can blame the novices for avoiding the suggested performance? Why would they want to relate to photographs, which clearly refer to a colonial past dominated and paternalised by Whites, who often stereotyped Blacks? Why should they join my academic endeavours, which may easily appear as an extension of this practice? Individuals of the new generation of Black missionaries expressed an anxiety to me about repeated stereotyping, or even being photographed for purposes of propaganda in Europe. Due to this experience, I empathise with Marianne Gullestad (2007) when she described encounters during her research on Norwegian Missionaries in Cameroon. Africans, missionaries and academics alike, all had their issues with the photographs she researched, and the friction this produced. In Gullestad’s and my experience, Africans criticised past and present practices of mis-representation, while White missionaries at the same time were anxious about and tired of still being accused of the same racist perceptions as their institutional predecessors.

As much as the cover photograph of the sitter with the book in Mariannhill’s studio literally conjured its own itinerary, or *provenance*, so did the succession of the three photographs, all taken in the exact same place at the Umhlatuzane River, allude to their common *provenience*, the space where a photographic image was “excavated”. Reconnecting the historical photographic space to present physical and social space, once again made me realise the difficulties involved in reactivating photographs in the South African context. A photographic image is thus constituted by various social discourses, but at the same time can influence them

drastically. Relating endeavours may be expressed in a highly politicised manner in public, but can at the same time be utterly subjective, private, and emotional. In this process I followed other people along these lines; people in the past, and in the present of my fieldwork; people who created, purchased, or reproduced photographs to produce and convey knowledge and arguments for various reasons. But as it appeared, this knowledge was often partially preconceived, rather than evolving only from the photographic occasion, as it was often claimed. At the same time, I had my own lasting engagements with particular photographs. Whether in the past or present, I consider social actors' engagements with photographic images as yet another kind of photographic occasion. As such it can be analysed next to the photographic occasion of the original production.

When writing up such experiences they are often difficult to disentangle. But eventually, this book is a text with photographic and painterly images at its centre; a text that speaks about and for images, as they cannot do it themselves; a text that describes my engagement with how others engaged with these images over time; a text that shows how photographs are implicitly and explicitly entangled with oral and textual narratives, but eventually establish their own narratives. As tactile practices and experiences of intermediality, they still impact people's lives today.

Under these conditions, the most feasible research design appeared to be a close cooperation with the mission's archivist, Fr. Ivo Burkhardt CMM, in order to accession and catalogue the photographic collection in its entirety, with the idea to make it accessible to a wider public, or at least academic researchers, in a structured and contextualised manner. This process is still ongoing, and ideally will involve the addition of my research data to a photographic database. The online platform International Missionary Photography Archive (IMPA) is the most likely host for the future presentation of Mariannhill's photographs.⁵⁷ While digital online archives certainly have advantages for the analysis of photographs, we must not forget about material past lives of photographs. In order to be able to make any convincing arguments about and with photographs, we need to "care about and for images" (Newbury 2011:651). In the next section I therefore draw attention to the particular situation of Mariannhill's photographs in their multiple archival situations as the "extended archive" of Mariannhill.

⁵⁷ The pioneering work of the Protestant Basel Mission (Mission 21), which began under Paul Jenkins, eventually became part of the online platform "International Mission Photography Archive" (IMPA). This presents one example how online presentation of photographic mission archives can take place, in order to stimulate an ongoing process of evaluation. See Miller (2007), and Stuehrenberg (2006) for overviews of the IMPA: <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15799coll123>.