

## The “Mission Archives” in the Archives of the Francke Foundations in Halle

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### Historical Background

After a ship voyage lasting more than six months, the two theologians Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682-1719) and Heinrich Plütschau (1677-1747) arrived in Tranquebar (today: Tharangambadi), the main bastion of the Danish colonies in Southeast India on 6 June, 1706. Their arrival marked the beginning of an intercultural dialogue that carried on into the nineteenth century between the European representatives of the first Protestant mission in Copenhagen, Halle and London and the people living in the South Indian kingdom of Tanjore. The mission undertaking was funded by the Danish Crown, but it received guidance and support from the educational and social institutions in Halle named after the pastor and professor of theology, August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), who had established them. The mission was later also supported by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in London. Thus, the mission in Tranquebar is called the Danish-Halle mission or the Danish-English-Halle mission.

Ziegenbalg and Plütschau had studied in Halle where they encountered the ideas of Pietism, the first reform movement in the Protestant Church since the Reformation. August Hermann Francke envisioned the worldwide propagation of Halle Pietism. The orphanage and the schools in Glaucha at the gates of the city of Halle were to become the foundation and the point of departure for a universal, religion-based improvement of all estates both within and outside Germany. The mission in India should be placed in this context.

Around 15,000 people lived in Tranquebar and its environs consisting of Hindus, Muslims, Indian Catholic Christians as well as Europeans working for the East India Company. After initial conflicts with the East India Company, which even led to Ziegenbalg being imprisoned for four months, the missionaries were able to work largely without disruption and gradually began to extend their radius from Tranquebar, the centre of the mission, to the surrounding regions. Mission districts even came up in English territory after the missionary Benjamin Schultze (1689-1760) left Tranquebar in 1726 due to differences with his colleagues and founded a Protestant mission in Madras (present day: Chennai). This station was then financed by the SPCK with missionaries from Halle. In the following years, other mission stations were established on English territory, among others in Cuddalore (1730), Thanjavur

(1762), Tiruchirapalli (1762), Palamkodtei (1785), which meant that the missionaries travelled extensively.

The missionaries were helped in their work by being part of a wide correspondence-network which not only made the local infrastructure accessible to them, but also promoted exchange with Europe. Thus, they established contact with Protestant preachers in all European colonies between Cochin and Batavia as well as at the Cape of Good Hope, with scientists in Europe and, naturally, with August Hermann Francke, his co-workers and successors. Locally, they sought contact through correspondence with representatives of the British and Dutch East India Companies, with Catholic missionaries in South India and, primarily, with Indians themselves, including Hindus from different castes, Muslims, lawyers, merchants, and even Indian princes. One of the most interesting sources on the life and thought of Tamilians at the beginning of the eighteenth century is the collection titled *Malabarian Correspondence* (*Malabarische Correspondenz*), a correspondence carried out by the missionaries Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg and Johann Ernst Gründler (1677-1720) between 1712 and 1714 with Indians. The letters were sent by the missionaries to Halle where they were edited and published in the periodical that appeared regularly since 1710: *Der Königl. Dänischen Missionarien aus Ost-Indien eingesandter Ausführlichen Berichten*, the so-called Halle Reports, published by the Orphan House. These letters were thus made available to an interested readership in Europe.

The Halle Reports contain diaries, letters, travel diaries, treatises, statistical accounts and obituaries, and were therefore, not only the most important bearers of information media about the Danish-Halle mission, but also the most effective propaganda tool to raise donations and to build up a network of sponsors. The list of subscribers went far beyond Protestant Germany, extending to Russia, Finland, Livonia, North Bohemia, Denmark, the Netherlands, England, Italy and Austria. The editors selected material from the documents sent by the missionaries and partly censored the sources in keeping with the intentions of the mission.

For the missionaries, language was the most important instrument to spread the word of God in the local language and to this end they translated the Bible and devotional Pietist literature. They mainly learnt Tamil, but also Telugu and Hindustani, as well as Portuguese which was important because of the presence of Europeans and their descendants. As early as 1715, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg published the New Testament in Tamil, which was printed in the mission printing press in Tranquebar. Based on their study of theology, for which they had learned many languages, the missionaries undertook pioneering research in comparative linguistics. This includes Ziegenbalg's *Grammatica Damulica* (Halle 1716), Schultze's *Grammatica Hindostanica* (Halle 1745) and *Grammatica Teluguica* (Madras 1728), or the *Tamil-English dictionary* by Johann Philipp Fabricius (1711-1791). The printing press in Tranquebar primarily produced translations of the Bible and Protestant devotional literature, but also grammars, dictionaries, schoolbooks, calendars and works commissioned by the Danish and English colonial administrations. Preachers distributed many of the shorter works free of cost to the people.

In addition to this, the missionaries undertook the education of the youth. Already in 1707, the first school was established in Tranquebar and in the same year a girls' school was set

up, which was probably the first school for girls in India. The training of catechists aimed at teaching local adults, and they were inducted directly into the service of the mission as so-called “national workers”. In 1733, the first Indian who had been baptized by Ziegenbalg in 1718, was ordained and given the name Aaron.

Several missionaries saw themselves not only as theologians but also as scholars/scientists, and they sent their written observations on culture and society, on fauna and flora, on meteorology and medicine, but also their preserved natural history specimens or cult objects to Halle, where they can still be admired in the Cabinet of Artefacts and Natural Curiosities. Some missionaries became members of international scientific societies, corresponding with academy members and scholars all over Europe. Several observations and descriptions were published in the Halle Reports, but also in scientific periodicals and journals, and all this contributed to the knowledge of India in Europe. In due course of time Halle lost its role as the spiritual centre of the mission. In 1837, the Lutheran Mission Society of Dresden took over the mission station in Tranquebar and then handed it over in 1848 to the Leipzig Mission Society. Today, the Evangelical-Lutheran Christians of Tamil Nadu are unified mainly in the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church (TELC), which was established in 1919.

## **The Cataloguing of Sources**

The sources for the Danish-Halle mission are primarily kept in the archives of the Francke Foundations. As early as the eighteenth century, a separate mission archive was set up, which was administered by the East India Mission Institute located on the premises of the Francke Foundations. Today it is a part of the archives of the Francke Foundations and is divided into an India and an America section. The term “mission archive”, however, has persisted and become part of the literature. Until the beginning of the 1990s, the manuscripts were preserved in chests specially made for them. Today they are kept in a temperature-controlled room in the August Hermann Francke Study Centre.

The oldest catalogue of the holdings is from 1828 and it was used for the first time in the second half of the nineteenth century by Wilhelm Germann (1840-1902), who analysed the correspondence of the missionaries and of the mission directors for his work on the Tranquebar mission. In the following years, the mission archive was constantly expanded; new archival documents became part of the holdings or were relocated from other sections of the archives. In the 1950s, the holdings were again catalogued in a finding aids book and a card index. The entire holdings were re-documented with content summaries and standardized keywords from 2003 to 2005 within the framework of a cataloguing project funded by the German Research Council (DFG), which is available on the website of the Study Centre. An English version of the database can also be found there. The latest addition to the archives of the Francke Foundations took place in April 2006, when the archive of the Leipzig Mission was handed over as a depository. This contains the former Tranquebar archive which was sent from India to Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. These archival materials have also been catalogued in the archival database of the Study Centre. Additionally, all diaries and travel diaries from the mission archives as well as the published *Halle Reports* are available in the digital collections of the Study Centre.

The archival documents in the India section of the mission archives of the Francke Foundations have not been filed according to a standard principle of classification. Instead, they were put together into groups of the holdings partly according to chronology and partly based on content. The mission archive (India) consists of 33,178 individual manuscripts.

These include mainly:

- letters and diaries of the missionaries
- drafts of letters and instructions from the directors in Halle to the missionaries
- copies of letters from the Mission Board in Copenhagen and from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in London to the missionaries
- the inner-European correspondence between the mission directors in Halle, Copenhagen, and London
- letters of donation from supporters of the mission
- mission accounts and other accounts
- school catalogues as evidence of teaching activity and sponsorship of Tamilian children
- work contracts
- drawings and building plans
- reports and treatises of the missionaries on religion, language, morals and customs, flora and fauna, geography, and climate as well as medicine in South India.

Other holdings of the archives of the Francke Foundations contain supplementary archival documents on the Danish-Halle mission: in the main archives there are 68 letters, 14 book manuscripts, 6 diaries; in the economic and administrative archives there are 29 files with donations, bequests, matters concerning estates, endowments, mission accounts, records of various mission societies; in the image archives there are six paintings, some copperplate engravings and photographs. The so-called Tranquebar archive in the Leipzig Mission Archives contains 1,482 manuscripts of correspondence with Europe kept in Tranquebar. These also include original documents of prime importance, such as the letters of appointment from the Danish king and instructions for the first missionaries, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg's last will and testament, or the hand-written letters from August Hermann Francke to the missionaries. Other hand-written sources that have a direct connection to the holdings of the India-section of the mission archives are in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz. These holdings, designated as Francke estate, were originally part of the archives of the Francke Foundations. These archival documents have also been catalogued in the archival database of the Study Centre.

A collection of palm leaf manuscripts also belongs to the Danish-Halle Mission's tradition, of which 102 manuscripts are in Tamil and 162 are in Telugu. They are mainly translations of Biblical or other religious texts, and sermons. The Tamil manuscripts were catalogued by Daniel Jeyaraj and the Telugu manuscripts by Gérard Colas and Usha Colas Chauhan. These catalogues can also be accessed all over the world through the website of the Study Centre. As a supplement to the mission archives, the Francke Foundations also have a mission library with printed material from the missionary printing press in Tranquebar, and about 100 objects that the missionaries sent from India to Halle, which are kept in the Cabinet of

Artefacts and Natural Curiosities preserved in its original state since the eighteenth century. These objects include preserved plants and animals as well as artefacts. The latter are kept in their own “Malabarian cupboard” and include both religious objects as well as objects of daily use.

### **Finding Aids and Online Databases**

*Repertory of the mission correspondence. Halle 1828.* Halle, Archives of the Francke Foundations: AFSt/W XXVIII/-/24.

*Card index of the 1950s.* Halle, Archives of the Francke Foundations.

*Archive database of the August Hermann Francke Study Centre*

[http://archiv.francke-halle.de/start.fau?prj=ifaust8\\_afst](http://archiv.francke-halle.de/start.fau?prj=ifaust8_afst)

Database of the archival holdings of the Danish-Halle Mission

<http://fas.francke-halle.de/cgi-bin/dhmeng.pl> (English)

Digital Collections of the August Hermann Francke Study Centre,

<https://digital.francke-halle.de/>

Palm leaf and paper manuscripts in Tamil

<http://fas.francke-halle.de/tamil/index.html> (German)

<http://fas.francke-halle.de/tamil/pbm/gesateng.html> (English)

Palm leaf manuscripts in Telugu

<https://www.francke-halle.de/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=710&token=5ffaf46bd49fbe67bafc733efa5b530931a179d8> (English)

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