Heroic Missionaries, Heathen Medicine Men and Conditionally Competent Natives

A postcolonial look at the NMS' mission exhibition "To the Ends of the Earth" between 1948 and 1950

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Master`s Thesis

Master in Community Development and Social Innovation

Word count: 26 400

13.05.22 (30.05.22)

Abstract/Sammendrag

Between 1948 and 1960, the travelling mission exhibition “To the Ends of the Earth” organized by the Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) travelled across Norway, informing Norwegians about the “mission fields” and the work that the mission organization did in them. Through a postcolonial archive study, the exhibition is revealed to have mainly been a tool to promote the significance of and the need for the missionaries. By presenting heathendom as the cause of the natives’ suffering, the NMS solidified their position as the only actor who could provide the help they needed. Beyond topics of religious nature, the exhibition is shown to have been quite ethnographic in its presentation of the mission fields. Through this, an ambivalent image of the native as both competent and infantile was presented, in which their competence was largely dependent upon their conversion to Christianity. Though the exhibition attempted to make the claim that the natives could become equal to the missionaries, a postcolonial reading of the material undermines this image. It also reveals that the exhibition’s presentation is unlikely to have been truthful, but rather an edited version of reality created to present the NMS favorably.

Mellom 1948 og 1960 dro det Norske Misjonsselskaps (NMS) misjonsutstilling «Til Jordens Ender» gjennom Norge, og lærte nordmenn om «misjonsmarkene» og det arbeidet som misjonsorganisasjonen gjorde der. Gjennom en postkolonial arkivstudie viser misjonsutstillingen seg hovedsakelig å ha vært et verktøy for å fremme viktigheten av og behovet for misjonærer. Ved å framstille hedendom som årsaken til de innfødtes lidelser forsterket NMS sin posisjon som eneste aktør som kunne tilby hjelpen de innfødte trengte. Utover temaer av religiøs natur framsto utstillingen som å ha vært ganske etnografisk i sin presentasjon av misjonsmarkene. Gjennom dette ble et ambivalent bilde av de innfødte framstilt, hvor de var både kompetente og infantile, men hvor kompetentheten deres i stor grad var avhengig av deres konvertering til kristendom. Selv om utstillingen forsøker å påstå at de innfødte kan bli likeverdige med misjonærene, så blir dette inntrykket undergravet av en postkolonial lesning. Det avslører også at utstillingens framstilling mest sannsynlig ikke er sannferdig, men en redigert versjon av virkeligheten lagd for å framstille NMS positivt.

Acknowledgements

I wish to extend a thank you to my supervisor professor Frieder Ludwig, for being supportive and challenging my ideas and understandings, both in this thesis and throughout my studies.

Further, I thank the VID Stavanger library staff for guiding me to relevant literature and helping me uncovering new perspectives.

I also wish to thank the archivists of the Mission and Diakonia Archive, Bjørg Bergøy Johansen and Silje Dragsund Aase, for aiding me in my archival research.

Lastly, I wish to thank family and friends for academic and moral support.

Stavanger, May 2022

Daniel Sundnes Drønen

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1 Introduction

In December 1947, the missionary Racin Kolnes sent a letter from Trondheim to one of his colleagues expressing his frustrations over his first attempt at a mission exhibition; no one had shown up! The name had been uninspired, the promotion a failure, the venue terrible, the artefacts too few, and the outreach pathetic. If there was ever to be a mission exhibition, it had to be done differently – it had to be done right! Only six months later, the mission exhibition "To the Ends of the Earth" was standing ready for its first opening in Ålesund. This would turn out to be the beginning of a twelve-year long victory lap, as the exhibition would become the arguably most successful PR stunt for the cause of the mission in Norwegian history.

Between 1948 and 1960, the Norwegian Mission Society (hereafter referred to as NMS) organized a travelling exhibition named "To the Ends of the Earth" ("Til Jordens Ender") that travelled across Norway, presenting the organization's work in different regions across the world. The exhibition had an impressive outreach, as it visited over 110 different places in the country, and was seen by 990 000 Norwegians – at a time when the population was only 3,5 million. The exhibition contained artefacts from the "mission fields" – the name the NMS used to refer to the regions they worked in – which were presented by missionaries who had lived in these regions for substantial amounts of time (Aarvik, 1995, 15-18).

For many of the visitors in the post-war Norway, this was probably their first encounter with the world outside of Europe, perhaps even outside of Norway. This means that for many, the NMS' presentation of the mission fields was defining in their understanding of the world beyond Europe, and of the "natives" of the mission fields. At the same time, the exhibition was not simply a presentation of the regions in which the NMS worked – it was also a presentation of the work which the missionaries had done in these regions. Thus, the exhibition was not just a presentation of the mission fields, but also of the mission.

How did the NMS then present its mission fields and itself through the mission exhibition "To the Ends of the Earth"? In this thesis, I will argue that the NMS presented an image of themselves as competent and the mission fields as dependent upon their help, a presentation in which the competence of the natives was conditional upon their religious status. To do this, I will present archive material through a postcolonial lens, analyzing documents produced and stored by the NMS from the time of the exhibition. To limit the scope of the research, I will only focus on the period 1948 to 1950, up until the exhibition's stay in Stavanger in late 1950, in which Japan was announced to be included. Thus, I will only study the exhibition's presentation of the NMS' first four mission fields: South Africa, Madagascar, China, and Sudan/Cameroon.

As a field of research, the exhibition "To the Ends of the Earth" is not particularly well studied, with only one academic article having been written about it by Hilde Nielsen, analyzing its impact on the Norwegian self-image as an aid-nation. In that regard, I believe that this is a topic that requires further study, to learn more of the impact that the NMS has had on the Norwegian understanding of the outside world. This is partly motivated by personal interest, as I have grown up with the NMS as an organization, and always have found their work fascinating. The choice of topic is also partially motivated by the Stavanger 2025 project, in which the 900th anniversary of the city of Stavanger is celebrated – the mission exhibition "To the Ends of the Earth" was in many ways a chapter in the history of the Museum of Mission, Stavanger's oldest museum, and seeing as the NMS is an organization based in Stavanger, I believe this topic reflects on some of the impact the city of Stavanger has had on the nation during its long life.

In the context of this thesis, as most of the data material was either written by the NMS or repeating their language, some mission-specific terminology should be established. Throughout the material, the NMS is often simply referred to as "the mission", and unless otherwise stated, references to "the mission" will refer to the NMS. When supporters of the

NMS were addressed, these were referred to as “friends of the mission” or simply “mission friends”. As already established, the NMS referred to the regions they worked in as the “mission fields” – in the continuation of this thesis, this term will be used to refer to South Africa, Madagascar, China and Cameroon/Sudan collectively. Similarly, people from these territories will collectively be referred to as “natives”. With regards to the non-Christian religious practices of the natives, this was referred to as “heathendom” by the mission, and this terminology will be used throughout the paper. Many of these terms are not unproblematic, particularly not the last one, and especially not when approaching the material from a postcolonial perspective. However, seeing as the aim of this thesis is to present the presentation presented by the NMS, I believe that it is more meaningful to use their own terminology as it best represents their viewpoint and presentation.

One exception for this is the territory of Cameroon. In the exhibition, the mission swapped between referring to their – at the time – youngest mission field as Cameroon – referring to the territory of UN trusteeship with limited self-government (Benneh & DeLancey, 2019) – and as Sudan – referring to the sub-Saharan territory that was central in the European mission project to stop the spread of Islam (Endresen & Nikolaisen, 1949, 295-296). To simplify the presentation of the data, I will only be referring to this mission field as “Cameroon”, unless otherwise stated.

With relevant mission-terminology established, it is time to return to the research question at hand: how did the NMS present its mission fields and itself through the early years of the mission exhibition “To the Ends of the Earth”? To approach this, I will first present my theoretical groundwork. This will take the form of a discussion around the concept of postcolonialism, as well as presenting different authors’ thoughts about the impact of missionaries, both within the colonial project and in the specific case of the NMS. Thereafter, the choice of data will be explored through a methodological discussion around archival research. Some relevant context will then be provided, before the collected data is presented. The data will be divided into four categories: the content of the exhibition, the NMS’ publications for mission friends, the internal communication of the NMS, and

newspaper articles written about the exhibition. In addition to this, I will present the article written by Nielsen. After that, I will analyze the data, this too divided into four sections – what the NMS wanted to present in the exhibition, how they presented the mission fields, how they presented the mission and missionaries, and how they were presented in relation to each other. At the very end I will address the impact of the natives present at the exhibition, and thus attempt to answer the research question at hand, before the concluding the thesis.

2 Theory

In an article about the academical nature of mission history, Tomas Sundnes Drønen (2009a, 9) argues that a postcolonial perspective is a useful tool to study mission work in the past. Accordingly, I will try to approach the source material through a theoretical framework of postcolonialism. In the following, I will try to define what postcolonialism is, and how it can be used to analyze mission work in the form of an exhibition.

2.1 Postcolonialism

The question then is, what is postcolonialism? Many authors seem to agree that it is a concept that is difficult to define. Robert Young (2003, 6-8) presents postcolonial theory as not an actual scientific theory, but instead a collection of practices, perspectives, and sets of ideas that can at times be contradictory to each other. Equally, John McLeod (2010, 2-3) highlights how postcolonialism as a concept encompasses almost too much, making it very difficult to define.

A good point of departure is to distance the term from the idea of historical periods. Though postcolonialism as a word appears to be referring to a historical time – the time *after* colonialism – this is not the purpose of the term. McLeod (2010, 5-6) makes a distinction between "postcolonialism", referring to the reading practices, attitudes, and values that will be discussed further here, and "post-colonialism", the historical time period after the end of the colonial time period. This distinction is important to keep in mind in the continuation of this thesis, as the time period that is being studied, 1948-1950, arguably did not happen in post-colonial times.

If postcolonialism does not refer to a historical period, then what is it? McLeod (2010, 6) argues that postcolonialism isn't something that *is*, but rather something that one *does*. He considers postcolonialism to be a way of thinking, a certain mode of perception, a method of investigation. Postcolonialism is a way to approach the study of texts. He presents three categories of texts, understood in its broadest definition, that are the interest field of postcolonial studies; the cultural endeavors produced by people in formerly colonial territories, cultural texts produced by migrants from formerly colonial territories, or the re-reading of texts produced in the colonial time period in light of theories of colonial discourse (ibid., 40) – the last one is the one most relevant here. Drønen (2009a, 8-9) operates with a similar definition – he connects postcolonialism with comparative literature, and the study of texts written by authors from formerly colonized territories using the language of the colonizers. For him, postcolonialism is about understanding the experience of the colonized and how they were victims of the colonial powers.

However, postcolonialism should not be limited purely to the study of the colonized as victims. Another important point for Drønen (2009a, 9) is that he considers the colonial influence to have been a two-way street; the colonized have certainly been affected by the colonizer, but so too has the colonizer been affected back. Young (2003, 17-20) highlights this by emphasizing how people of the Third World have had and still have knowledge and skills, and that even though they haven't been acquired through formal education, these should still be respected.

2.1.1 Colonial discourse

Postcolonialism seems then to be a certain perspective used to study the impact of the colonial experience, both on the colonized and the colonizer. When used in a historical study, as it will be in this thesis, it is specifically about studying older texts from colonial times in the light of colonial discourse. What then is this colonial discourse?

The colonial discourse was a narrative taught to both colonizer and colonized that attempted to justify the social status of them both; colonialism established a certain way of thinking, and attempted to convince everyone that that world view was the correct one. This happened through a process called interpellation, in which individuals internalized the dominant values of their societies and came to think of their place in the society a certain way, according to those dominant values. This process affected both colonizer and colonized, leading the former to believe that their position of authority and superiority was legitimate, while the latter accepted that their value was diminished. This led to both colonizer and colonized internalizing and accepting the fact that the colonized were seen as not fully human, and that while the colonizers maintained their status as subjects, the colonized were reduces simply to objects (McLeod, 2010, 20-23, 44).

A defining trait of the colonial discourse was the dualistic segregation. The colonial ideology was defined by its division and distance, with everything organized in opposites; metropoles and colonies, colonizer and colonized, exploiter and exploited (Gullestad, 2007, 23). The discourse established colonizer and colonized as both physically separated, while also mentally, socially and spiritually different. One of the very important opposites was that of the savage and the civilized individual – with the colonized African or Asian as the savage, and the European as the civilized (McLean, 2012, 602).

There is however a fundamental contradiction in this. The connection between savage and civilized is a progressive one – even though savage and civilized are opposites, there is an accepted idea that the savage can develop into a civilized individual (McLean, 2012, 603). However, the dualistic segregation of the colonial discourse forbids the idea that colonizer and colonized can become equal – meaning functionally that the colonial discourse forbids the colonized from changing in any way.

2.1.2 Orientalism

A famous example of colonial discourse is Edward Said's Orientalism. Orientalism does not encompass all that colonial discourse is, but is rather a sub-discourse – or, if one operates with the idea of many different colonial discourses, Orientalism can be seen as one of them (McLeod, 2010, 46).

Orientalism was a research tradition with history back to the 17th century, culturally studying fields like religion, philosophy and law in the region referred to as the "Orient" in eastern Asia, and has always had a close relation and shared history with colonialism (Ruud, 2009, 25-27). McLeod (2010, 47-52) defines orientalism as "the sum of the *West*'s representation of the Orient", where the *Western fantasy of what the Orient was* – and not what it *actually was* – was made into a dominant narrative that became institutionalized, both in the West and in the Orient.

In this representation, the West and the Orient were presented as binary opposites, thus defining not only the Orient, but also the West. This led to orientalism creating an image of the Orient that was as much about defining what the West *was not* as it was about what the Orient *was*. The stereotypes that were created through this research tradition defined the Orient as timeless, strange and irrational, degenerate and lazy, as well as feminine and passive – and as an opposite, Europe and the West were presented as progressive, rational, hardworking and brave, and as masculine initiative takers. These stereotypes were not limited to academical contexts – even though orientalism was a research tradition, it became both institutionalized and latent at its time, allowing it to influence all spheres of society. This was especially true for the creative spheres, where adventurers and explorers going to the Orient became the biggest heroes of their time period, as they brought home stories about the exotic unknown while presenting themselves as brave and heroic for doing so (McLeod, 52-55).

Edward Said has been heavily criticized since his book was published. His writing has been accused of being ahistorical, ignorant of initiatives of resistance on all levels, and ignoring the impact and relevance of gender (McLeod, 2010, 56-59), as well as being selective in his choice of sources (Ruud, 2009, 80). Even so, Said's observations can be of interests when reading texts in a postcolonial perspective, as long as they are not treated as absolute.

It is worth remembering, however, that colonialism was not just about discourse, interpellation and narrative – the colonies became colonies because the colonial powers gained control over them through military power and organized violence (Young, 2003, 33-34). It is this military control that allowed other forms of control to develop. The documentation of regions like Africa to Europe was controlled by Europeans, because they controlled the equipment, the language, the ships that brought people and information back and forth, and so on (Gullestad, 2007, 26). This again allowed the development of Orientalism and the colonial discourse, as there were no opposing voices outside of Europe that were permitted to challenge them.

2.1.3 Spivak

Another author who reflected on this biased presentation was Gayatri Chakravotry Spivak (1988, 271) in her article "Can the subaltern speak?". In it, she too points out how the West has defined itself as the Subject – with capital S – through their laws, political economy and ideology, rendering everyone else as objects in the Western perspective, and preventing all other viewpoints than the Western one from being considered legitimate.

This does not mean that Spivak (1988, 283-286) agrees with such a standpoint. She is of the same opinion as Young – the people of the Third World, "the subalterns" as she calls them, are in possession of knowledge and skills that are worthy of value. However, her standpoint is more pessimistic than his. When discussing whether these skills and knowledges can be expressed, Spivak asks the question "Can the subaltern speak?", and concludes no. The first hindrance is one of accessibility – subaltern groups, being the lower classes in colonial

territories, generally will not even be given or able to take the chance to speak up about their experiences and issues. The second, and perhaps bigger, issue is about ability. Put simply, Spivak believes that even if a subaltern was given the possibility and the chance to speak, they would not be able to express their experience, because they lacked the knowledge and vocabulary to explain or even truly understand their own situation. Thus, they are dependent upon others to speak for them – typically Western or Western-trained intellectuals.

Another problem is the fact that the intellectuals who claim to speak on the behalf of the subalterns often have not even spoken with them. Spivak (1988, 284-286) says that intellectuals studying subalterns have an obligation to suspend their own consciousness and make a real effort to present the subalterns as a subject if they are to be more than a simple point of investigation. Unfortunately, this does not happen. Spivak shows this through an example from her home country of India, where she divides society into four groups: the dominant foreign groups, the dominant national groups, the dominant regional groups, and finally the subaltern classes at the bottom of the hierarchy. According to Spivak, when intellectuals – typically from the dominant foreign or national groups, Westerners or Western-trained – wish to study subaltern groups, they tend to consult people from the dominant regional groups, rather than the actual subalterns. Additionally, she claims that members from these regional dominant groups are substantially more likely to answer in alignment with the interests of the dominant national groups rather than in their own interest, and definitely not in the interest of the subaltern groups. Thus, not only can the subalterns not speak on their own, they also don't have anyone who seem to be genuinely interested in speaking with them, and thus the subalterns are forced into silence.

This becomes even more of a problem when discussing subaltern women. With the fact that women across the world find themselves forced into silence by different patriarchal systems, Spivak (1988, 287, 296-299) question how much more into the shadows subaltern women are pushed when they are also suffering from the silencing of colonial powers. As an example, she writes about the British efforts to end widow burning in India, which she

describes as “white men saving brown women from brown men”. Her criticism is that this turns the widows from acting subjects into objects that imperialists can save from savage locals. However, she is also critical of the response from Indian men, who claim that “the women actually want to die”, as they also make the claim on behalf of women, without seemingly asking them for their opinion. Thus, we see the double objectification, both from the colonial patriarchal system and the local patriarchal system, silencing women on the issues affecting them. Unfortunately, Spivak does not offer any substantial advice on how to overcome this barrier, neither for the subaltern women themselves, nor the intellectuals that might wish to represent them fairly, and it appears that other authors are struggling with the same challenge (McLeod, 2010, 224).

2.1.4 Summary

To then summarize the concept of postcolonialism, it can be said to be many things, but in this case it refers to a certain framework, a perspective or a lens to study past documents through. Through a historical angle, postcolonialism aims to re-read texts from colonial times in light of colonial discourses, and to attempt to uncover, understand and present the stories, viewpoints and narratives of the colonized – however, this might be difficult, or even impossible, as the voices of the colonized might have been ignored, edited out or otherwise silenced. With regards to the colonial discourse, it is based around the internalization of a dualistic division where colonizer and colonized are presented as opposite of each other, with the colonizer as an acting subject with agency, and the colonized as a passive object. The colonial discourse is inherently ambivalent, as it suspends the colonized between being incomprehensibly different and at the same time understandably stereotyped. Another important aspect of the colonial discourse is also the unequal power dynamic, where the military might of the colonizers allowed them advantaged positions in almost all situations. On the opposite end, the position of colonized women was exceptionally difficult, as they were doubly oppressed by both colonialism and patriarchy, rendering it very challenging to gain access to their viewpoints and experiences.

2.2 Mission

With the concept of postcolonialism established, it is time to look more into the history of Christian mission, and its relationship with colonialism. Many have undervalued the impact of mission in the colonial project (Gullestad, 2007, 10), but to what extent is the mission connected to colonialism, and is postcolonial perspectives applicable when studying the history of mission?

2.2.1 Mission and colonialism

Some authors would like to define the connection between mission and colonialism as very strong. In an article titled "Toward Epistemic Decolonial Turn in Missio-Formation in African Christianity", the authors Chammah J. Kunda & Roderick R. Hewitt (2015, 379-380) define the Christian mission as nothing more than an expansion of the colonial project, with the aim to force Africa and other colonized territories to accept Christianity and a European mindset.

In their view, colonialism and mission have in certain ways been two sides of the same coin. Colonialism and Christian mission stem from the same ancestry, having a shared history back to the ideas of the Enlightenment and rationality. Christianity had also been fundamental in the development of the modern project, something which the Christian mission continued to maintain by dismissing other viewpoints and worldviews in the colonial efforts. Thus, the mission was a legitimizing force in the creation of the colonial narrative. Kaunda & Hewitt (2015, 381-384) also point out how this problematic kinship between colonialism and mission lives on even into modern times, where some mission organizations still use colonially loaded expression like "conquering nations for Christ" or similar.

Drønen (2009a, 12), who has already been established as supporting a postcolonial perspective in studying mission history, is also of the opinion that the mission has been a part of the colonial project – he does not even question whether mission work was cultural imperialism. Instead, he asks the question; what was the consequences of the meeting between colonized and missionary?

Another couple of authors who have asked the same question are Jean and John Comaroff (1991, 7-11), who have expressed some strong opinions about the work performed by British missionaries in South Africa. They too are of the opinion that the impact of missionaries has been both undervalued and understudied, and they argue that much of the analysis that has been done has oversimplified both the colonized, the colonizer, and the missionary. They too see missionaries as a part of the colonial project, and consider them the bringers of European moral values and ideals.

The Comaroffs (1991, 198-199) find themselves in agreement with Drønen, in that they believe both missionaries and colonized affected and used each other, though they highlight that the missionaries had the advantage of power imbalance, and thus were able to "use" the colonized more. They argue that the missionaries influenced the colonized in two ways. Firstly, they tried to make the colonized convert to Christianity by directly preaching to them. Secondly, they tried to change their habits to become more European – which the Comaroffs refer to as "conversation" – with the intentional goal of thus making them more receptable to their preaching.

The missionaries actively tried to change the African way of life to a different, more European one. This served several purposes. First and foremost, the missionaries considered believing in Christianity to be a rational choice only an individual could make. If the colonized, who were perceived as savages in the eyes of the mission, were to make such a choice, their intellect had to be awakened. The missionaries forced the colonized into a – by European standards – rational discussion, thus also forcing them into a European understanding of the world, and into the colonial discourse. Additionally, the missionaries had the advantage in such a worldview – not only were their skills and knowledge more legitimate and superior in a European way of life, but they also introduced the moral economy of Christianity with its singular moral standard, which they as missionaries had the authority over. This moral economy extended to cultural practices that the missionaries

disagreed with, like gendered work division that did not fit with European practices (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991, 203-213, 228-245).

This understanding of a singular moral standard did unsurprisingly lead to religious conflicts in the encounter; while the missionaries created their own and wanted to challenge the colonized's religious places and rites, the colonized often did not have such things. Instead, their religious practices influenced their everyday life. This was also part of the reason why changing the African way of life was so important to the missionaries. However, they did often misunderstand the spiritual and cultural practices of the colonized, like the practice of rainmakers – religious leaders who through rituals made it rain. The missionaries perceived these rainmakers as deceivers, and criticized their traditional practices – while at the same time claiming that the only way to get rain was through praying to the Christian God. The missionaries did not see the irony of such claims, and thus failed to fundamentally change the religious understanding of the colonized – instead, they were perceived as "alternative rainmakers" in the same worldview (Comaroff, 1991, 202, 208-212).

This reality of the religious encounter was also reflected in the colonized's conversions. As mentioned, the missionaries believed that the gospel alone would be able to convert people, though this proved to have little success. When the first converts came to the mission, they were typically outsiders and outcasts, and then later women – men were typically the last to convert. There was also the issue of "true" conversion; converts would seldomly abandon all their old practices. While the missionaries saw being Christian as an exclusive, rational choice between religious options, that was not true for the colonized, who often made bricolages of their religious lives, adopting some aspects of Christianity, while keeping other parts of their traditional faith. In the end, the Comaroffs (1991, 213-214, 238-251) argue that the mission didn't really achieve much "true" conversion, but that they were very successful in substantially changing the African way of life.

Many authors have been skeptical of the Comaroffs and their conclusions. As an example, Drønen (2009b, 8-9) questions the fact that the missionaries were the ones changing the colonized – instead, he argues that it largely was the colonized who chose and adapted parts of the Christian message to fit with their interests and choices. Similarly, Ian Fairweather (2004, 20, 24-27) comes to different conclusions than the Comaroffs. He believes that it is still too common to perceive colonialism and mission as being imposed upon passive colonized. In his study of the impact of Finnish missionaries in northern Namibia, he observes how early converts did not adopt European styles and practices just because of the influence of the missionaries, but rather as an active choice because they wished to distance themselves from their heathen fellows.

2.2.2 Norwegian mission

When reading the conclusions of the Comaroffs, it is also important to remember that they studied British mission work in South Africa, where the British were the colonial power. However, in this thesis, the study is of the NMS, a Norwegian mission organization, coming from a country that never held any colonies. It can in many ways be compared with the example of the Finnish mission in Namibia presented by Fairweather (2004, 22-23) just above. He highlights how the Finnish missionaries brought a different aura than other colonizers or missionaries coming from the colonial superpowers, and he wonders whether the Finnish history of being a poor country and former colony created humbler missionaries that were perceived differently by the colonized. Even so – when Drønen (2009a, 12) compared mission work to cultural imperialism, he was talking about the Norwegian mission. Clearly, it is reasonable to assume that the missionaries' background from a non-colonizing country probably mattered in how they acted with and were perceived by the colonized, but it does not liberate them entirely from being a part of the colonial project.

How then should the Norwegian-ness of the NMS be approached? To get a better idea for this, I will turn to Marianne Gullestad and her book about mission photos in Cameroon. Even though her book focuses on the practice of photography among Norwegian missionaries, it also addresses many other aspects of how the NMS operated in their information work.

Additionally, Gullestad (2007, 21) herself argues that photos could bring Cameroon to Norway in a way no story could, highlighting the importance of the visual; I will argue that an exhibition of the mission fields achieves something similar, only making the visual three- rather than two-dimensional, and thus I believe her observations and arguments are applicable to the exhibition as well.

Gullestad (2007, 30-35, 66-67, 124) starts by explaining the concept of mission propaganda. According to her, the information work that NMS performed in Norway was a sort of propaganda with the goal of not only informing about their mission fields, but also gather support to the mission. This was built on a double messaging in the mission propaganda, where the mission work was presented as good while the "heathens" were presented as being in desperate need of help – the implication being that the only ones that could help were the missionaries. The mission propaganda was presented in such a way as to evoke strong feelings, as the goal was to encourage new observers to feel strongly about the issue and want to support the mission. Part of this messaging built on the Christian idea that all people are created in the image of God, meaning colored people were not fundamentally different from Norwegians, and thus more deserving of their sympathy. At the same time, the propaganda had to balance on a fine line – the readers needed to know enough about the heathens to understand them and want to save them, but at the same time not so much that they seemed not to need to be saved. Thus, the mission propaganda was heavily edited to exclude issues and conflicts experienced by the missionaries, especially with regards to religious compromises, like those previously presented by the Comaroffs (for examples of this, see: Skeie, 2013 for Madagascar, or see: Drønen, 2009b for Cameroon).

When it comes to the significance of mission photos, Gullestad (2007, 36, 107, 129-130) highlights how "I have seen" often is experienced as more legitimate than "I have heard", thus making mission photos more impactful than just mission stories. Photos from the mission fields were taken with a Norwegian audience in mind, often with little regard for the people being presented in them. Even though they were taken to inform about the mission fields, many of them also presented the missionaries in a positive light, as promoting the

mission as good was an essential part of the mission propaganda. One example of this was photos of mission buildings, which were presented as proof of the mission's conquering success.

One challenge in this positive presentation of the missionaries was the fact that they were often presented as being humble and self-sacrificing, as this was seen as a fundamental part of being a Christian missionary giving up large parts of their life for the mission cause. However, much of the imagery seemed to center more on the missionaries than the natives, like how baptism photos generally focused more on the Norwegian priest than the native being baptized. Gullestad (2007, 139-134) points to this as being a fundament ambivalence that is present throughout the missionaries' presentations of themselves, with them claiming to be self-sacrificing servants of the mission cause while appearing as the heroes in their own retellings and photos.

Gullestad (2007, 162-165) also has interesting observations regarding the mission's presentation of other things, like their different views on conversion of women and men. Women were presented as the "fertile soil", while men were seen as the "fruit" of conversion – the fact that native women in general were more receiving of the gospel led to them being seen as "fertile soil" to sow the seeds of the mission work. However, it was only when this "fertile soil" led to the conversion of men, represented as "fruit", that it was seen as something truly worthy of celebration (Gullestad, 2007, 162-165).

Another important imagery in the mission's presentation of their meeting with the mission fields was the imagery of light and dark. In much of their mission work, the mission fields were presented either as dark, or suffering under darkness, while the missionaries were presented as bringers of light, or often simply presented by light, and this was a fundamental division in many mission stories (Gullestad, 2007, 28).

To summarize, the Norwegian missionaries of the NMS were in a different position than both traditional colonizers and mission organizations from colonial superpowers. Even so, Gullestad shows that through mission propaganda, the NMS has shown tendencies of colonial practices, and should definitely be analyzed critically in a postcolonial perspective.

2.3 Museums and exhibitions

Finally, it is worth having a look at museums and exhibitions in a postcolonial perspective. Most museums in a Western context have the issue of presenting Western culture as superior (Simpson, 1996, 1). This is especially true with regards to presentations of other cultures, as "[n]o genre of museum has been able to escape the problems of exoticizing and assimilating inherent in exhibiting other cultures" (Tolla-Kelly, 2016, 905). This is partly due to the fact that museums inherently make the people behind the artefacts they present into passive objects to be studied, rather than subjects that can be interacted with (Simpson, 1996, 3-4). The other part is the myth of the neutral exhibition; no exhibition is a neutral presentation, but always loaded with the values and views of those who made it. However, when presented as neutral, the observers get the impression that the exhibition is objective, thus coloring their view of reality (Tolla-Kelly, 2016, 905). The problem with such "neutral" exhibitions and their "objective" impressions, especially in an uneven colonial context, is that they force those who feel wrongfully presented to conform with the wrongful image presented (McLean, 2012, 607).

How then can an exhibition be understood in a postcolonial framework? Approaching it through a postcolonial lens will help de-neutralize an exhibition (Tolla-Kelly, 2016, 900), and looking critically at re-addressings of colonial stereotypes can potentially reveal them to be re-confirmations; addressing the "savage" as nothing more than a victim of European imperialism is simply a re-colonialization (McLean, 2012, 607). Questioning who is responsible in the process of creating the exhibition is also of value; a diverse staff consulted by external experts on the topic presented are likely to produce an exhibition with a different expression than if made by a homogenic group (Dixon, 2012, 84).

2.4 Summary

To then summarize, Christian mission and colonialism seem to share the same history of ideas, and have had a close relationship throughout colonial times. The mission has been the driving force in the spreading of Christian morals and values, and have according to the Comaroffs been responsible for changing the way of life of colonized people towards a more European one. However, this seem to be less true for mission organizations that do not come from nations that are colonial superpowers, like Finland and Norway. Even so, these mission organizations are not free from the colonial discourse, and Gullestad shows how the NMS' mission propaganda still reenforces certain colonial ideas. And finally, exhibitions in the West have typically been reenforcing ideas of Western superiority, while contributing to the colonial discourse, and should, together with the rest of this thesis, be approached through a postcolonial lens.

3 Methodology

Moving on from the theoretical discussion, I will now address the topic of methodology in this thesis. In the following, I will explain my choice of method and some of the theoretical aspects that apply to it. I will then explain where and what kind of data I found, and discuss some of the ethical considerations connected to it. Lastly, I will try to show how I will connect the analysis of the data to the research questions at hand.

3.1 Method

In approaching this topic, I will be relying on text studies over other methods of data collection, due to the historical nature of the topic being studied.

To do this, I will turn to methodological approaches that are common for historical research. To some, methodology for the study of history can seem strange, as they perceive historical sources as objective. They are not – in fact, historical sources are highly biased and subjective. Nevertheless, they are of vital importance, as there is no history without sources (Andresen, Rosland, Ryymin & Skålevåg, 2015, 46).

Among historical methods, there are both quantitative and qualitative methods. Though there are some interesting numbers to be uncovered with regards to the mission-exhibition, the focus of this thesis will be qualitative. In the context of historical methods, qualitative methods aim to interpret historical texts: traditionally, the question in historical research was whether a text could be trusted to not contain falsehood or misinformation. Though this is still of importance, it is not the main relevance of a historical text. Rather than judge a text on its "historical correctness", the focus is on analyzing the way the text is written, and what that says about the author and their worldview. This analysis of "text" extends beyond the

written word – in this context, all types of human expressions can be understood as “texts”, and thus studied in this way (Andresen et.al., 2015, 107-109).

Andresen et.al. (2015, 110-118) describes two ways of analysis in the qualitative historical method, with notable overlap. The first is representation analysis. In this, texts are read to see how certain things or topics were represented at the time. This is a study of the historical meaning of a text; the focus is on what the author wanted to communicate, what they intended the meaning to be, independently of how the reader interprets the text, now or in the past. The other way described is the discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is the study of textual narratives, and is a search for patterns in texts that form somewhat independently of the author and their individual context. The discourse analysis assumes that certain ideas and ways of seeing the world are so dominant that all authors and texts of a period and place are influenced by it. Accordingly, the discourse analysis is often focused on finding that which is so obvious in a text, that it isn’t even mentioned. As stated, these two ways of analyzing are quite similar, though they differ a bit in that the discourse analysis is more systemic in its approach, while the representation analysis seem to take the context of the individual text more into consideration.

3.2 Data

In the following, the selection of data material will be addressed.

3.2.1 Where the data was found

With an idea how the data will be approached, let me now address where I found my data. My places of collection were the library and the archive, more specifically the VID library and the Mission and Diakonia Archive (hereafter referred to as MDA) in Stavanger.

No matter the topic, libraries are a good and trustworthy place to find sources and start any data search, and librarians can be a useful aid in finding what you need (Dalland, 2020, 141-142). In the case of this thesis in particular, I believe the choice of the VID library in Stavanger is exceptionally good. This is because VID Stavanger used to be the School of Mission and Theology, a school built by the NMS to educate its own missionaries (VID, n.d.-a). Accordingly, the VID library has historically had a close connection to the NMS, and is arguably the best library to consult about information about this specific organization. In addition to this, VID as an academic institution has a research group focussing on the intercultural history of Christianity (Cristin, 2022), and can be trusted to hold the most recent critical literature on the topic.

The archive will be the most central place for my data collection. Archives are collections of a potentially vast arrays of documents, and are important for the maintenance of the memory of a group; as an example, public, national archives are fundamental to maintaining the memory and history of a nation. Similarly, an organization can maintain a private archive to keep a record of their own history (Andresen et.al., 2015, 53-56). The MDA is partly such an archive – it is a merging between the Diakonia archives in Oslo and the Mission Archives in Stavanger. The latter is the archive of the NMS, maintaining records and documents all the way back to their founding (VID, n.d.-b), making this the optimal place to consult for data on historical efforts made by the NMS.

When using an archive, one must remember that even though archives give the illusion of neutrality, they are neither neutral nor objective. Randall C. Jimerson (2006, 22-24) points out how the very existence of archives are linked to economic and political power, and that the very existence of written documents are an indication of power – something which is doubly relevant when studying and exhibition presenting people who were illiterate. It is thus important to remember that even though the MDA is a probably a trustworthy source on the NMS' own views on their work, it is not an objective source regarding the exhibition.

3.2.2 What data was found

As I mainly rely on the archive for data, most of my sources will be primary sources, though there is some secondary literature to support some conclusions. In contrast to secondary literature, primary sources are texts produced in the time of the event they're describing, with texts being understood in its broadest sense – this could mean anything from paintings to governmental documents. All primary sources are a product of their time and reveal things about their own time period and varying levels of subjectivity from their authors. Secondary literature, on the other hand, reflect on earlier times, often commenting on primary sources or the events they depicted (Storey, 2004, 18-19).

From the library, I collected secondary literature in the form of academical texts written about the "To the Ends of the Earth"-exhibition and other relevant work done by missionaries from the NMS. Additionally, I was able through the help of the librarians to procure copies of a substantial amount of the material from the archive through the library, which made these sources more readily available to me.

In the archive, I collected a variety of data from over twenty boxes of archive material related to the mission exhibition in different ways, a collection that was selected with the aid from the local archivists. This is a selection of material, and it is possible that there are other relevant data – however, I am confident that the selection presented in this thesis is adequate to answer the question at hand. With regards to what I found in the archive, I will divide this into four categories of material.

First is the official exhibition material. This includes brochures from seven of the places visited. In this category I also include three mission films. These are a bit of an exception in comparison to the other material I analyze. Notably, two of these films were not part of the exhibition until 1956, while the last, though a part of the exhibition, was produced by another mission organization. These films were chosen due convenience, as other, more time appropriate films were not digitally available, and it was unrealistic to gain access to

them. Though it can be argued it would have been better to exclude films entirely as to not compromise the time scope of the study, I believe that the significance of film in the exhibition was too large to exclude the medium from the analysis.

The second category consists of material published by the NMS for the mission friends. This included the NMS' anniversary books, which were books reporting on the work the mission had done in the previous years. After the war, the books were published triennially. To make sure that I fully covered the impact of the early years, three of these were included, spanning from 1946 to 1954. I have also included articles from "Norske Misjonstidende" (hereafter referred to as *Misjonstidende*), the NMS' weekly magazine that reported from their work both in Norway and on the mission fields. I've read all 178 issues published between 1947 and 1950, including all articles mentioning the exhibition into the material.

Thirdly, there is the internal correspondence within the NMS. While looking through this material, I read close to three hundred correspondence letters – messages sent between missionaries within the NMS and the people with the local responsibilities in different cities, as well as some other actors. These mainly focused on the practical issues and challenges of the travelling exhibition, though some revealed internal discussions regarding issues of interest to the thesis. This correspondence did not cover all of the places visited, as the mission at times struggled to keep archives – e.g., all potential archive material from the stay in Porsgrunn was lost almost immediately after the exhibition left the city (MDA, 1950d). In this category is also a working committee-report regarding the start of the exhibition included.

Notably, it appears to not be much written discussion about what and how the exhibition was presented in the internal communication – this is likely due to the fact that it was the travelling missionaries who were responsible for this, while the correspondence was mainly with local committees who were told not to interfere with this part of the missionaries' work

(MDA, 1960b). Thus, there seem to be almost no records regarding the presentation within the exhibition.

Lastly, there is a large selection of newspaper articles about the exhibition. These were cutouts stored by the NMS at the time as the exhibition travelled around. In most cases the cutouts were stored without context to what newspaper they came from, and thus such information is absent. I read 170 newspaper cutouts from ten of the 16 places visited by the exhibition in the first few years – the other places had no such collection in the archive.

With regard to this last category, it is important to keep in mind the unneutral nature of archives. Since this is a collection of newspaper articles gathered by the NMS for their own archive, it is not impossible that they could have been selective about which external sources to keep. The fact that there is only one article that is truly critical of the exhibition included in this collection could lend credit to such an assumption. However, they did include this one critical perspective, and otherwise the collection seems to have been pretty thorough, making an effort to include several cut outs of what seem to be the exact same notice printed in different newspapers on several occasions. In addition to this, other authors have deemed their collection legitimate (see: Nielsen, 2007). In view of this, I believe the selection of material presented in the archive is trustworthy. However, I do not believe it to be neutral, and that assumption extends to all the archive material – though it might be trustworthy, it is also biased towards the interests of the NMS.

3.2.3 Ethical considerations

In the following, I will address the ethical considerations that went into the data collection process. By not conducting interviews or surveys, many of the traditional ethical challenges connected to a study of this scope are avoided. Similarly, I have few ethical worries regarding using officially published material that was available in the VID library.

When it comes to the archive, however, there are certain ethical considerations that I have tried to keep in mind. According to the NESH (The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities) guidelines, it is important to reflect upon how your values and attitudes affect choice of topic and sources (Torp, 2021). As I mentioned in the opening, I have a personal interest in and history with the NMS, and as such, I will try to make an effort to be aware of my own biases throughout my work with the data and research question at hand. This might be especially relevant when working in a physical archive like the MDA, which is inaccessible for those unable to travel to Stavanger. As one of the few people with access to the data material, I have an extra responsibility to try and present it objectively, and to not write about what I want to discover instead of what I actually discover (Nygaard, 2017, 56).

There are some other ethical considerations that are relevant and unique to archives. Firstly, it is important to remember that even though they might appear so, archives are not neutral – there is a process of selection of what is accepted and what is available (Tesar, 2014, 102). Further, when studying archive material, it can be tempting to disregard ethical considerations, since the author often no longer is alive. However, the deceased are still deserving of privacy, especially if they have descendants who are still alive and can be affected by what is published (McKee & Porter, 2012, 67-69). This is also highlighted by the NESH guidelines, which encourages "respect for posthumous reputations" and to "choose your words with care" (Torp, 2021). Consent is also still an issue when working with archive material. Even though the authors often are unable to give consent anymore, it is possible to question how their writings ended up in the archive, and whether or not they consented to that (McKee & Porter, 2012, 67-69). Finally, since ethical questions can be challenging, it is recommended that you discuss them with an expert or supervisor when you are faced with them (McKee & Porter, 2012, 79; Ryan, 2016, 33).

In my data collection, I have tried to remain conscious of these ethical considerations when going through the archive material. I have discussed with the archivists in an attempt to get hold of information about as many aspects as possible regarding the exhibition, and I have

actively attempted to include all data points of interests, independently of whether they present NMS positively or negatively. In two cases I have also intentionally chosen to exclude specific data points because they revealed what I believe to be sensitive personal information about the people being written about. Both of these were correspondence letters, which, even though they are “official” communication within the organization, often can get quite personal.

3.2.4 Validity

Before moving on to the data, there is the question of validity. I believe that the data I have collected can be trusted to be valid with regards to the research question at hand. When answering the question of how the NMS presented itself and the mission fields through the mission exhibition “To the Ends of the Earth”, I don’t think any other source material could provide a better answer than the written material produced and collected by the organization itself . The unneutral nature of archives as well as the inherent bias in all historical material is in this case favorable, as it is in the interest of the thesis to see the perspectives and reasonings of specifically the NMS.

4 Context

Before presenting and analyzing the data, some more context is required. First, some of the context regarding the significance of mission and missionaries in Norway will be presented, then some history of the Mission Museum before presenting a timeline for the mission exhibition "To the Ends of the Earth" will be provided. Lastly a brief description of the general organization of the exhibition's everyday life will be given.

4.1 NMS in Norway

As established by Fairweather (2004, 18-27), Finnish missionaries were received more favorably and perceived as humbler due to their nation's colonized rather than colonizing history. A similar conclusion could be drawn about Norwegian missionaries – when the Norwegian Mission Society was founded as the first mission organization in Norway in 1842, the country was still under Swedish rule. Though this relationship was different from the colonial domination of the mission fields, it is not unreasonable to assume that this history had an impact on how Norwegian missionaries were perceived, both inside and outside of Norway.

With regards to inside Norway, the significance of missionaries has been high. When the NMS was founded in Stavanger in 1842, there had been a 20-year process to prepare for it, and it did so with wide support from the Norwegian population (Jørgensen, 1992, 15). This interest and support was maintained – as shown by the fact that *Misjonstidende* in 1870 had three times the subscribers of the largest national newspaper – and Norway became the country that sent out the highest number of missionaries based on their population, an achievement that was highly dependent upon the economic support of the general population (Bakke, 2013, 175). In an article about the "To the Ends of the Earth"-exhibition, Hilde Nielsen (2007, 197-198) argues that this was partly because the mission movement in

Norway filled the absence of the colonial power as providers of information about the outside world. She highlights how even in the 1950s, when other secular actors could share their experiences of the outside world with the Norwegian population, none of them could do it with such a consistency and outreach as the mission organizations. It is thus apparent to see that the mission organizations, and perhaps particularly the NMS as the oldest, played an important role on the Norwegian society, even in post-war times.

4.2 History of the exhibition

With the significance of mission and missionaries in Norway established, let me move on to the mission exhibition "To the Ends of the Earth". However, before there was a mission exhibit, there was the Museum of Mission.

4.2.1 The Museum of Mission

According to Svein Aarvik (1995, 4-12), the Museum of Mission was founded in 1864, as an institution and expansion of the School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger. It was the first and oldest museum in Stavanger. In 1885 the Museum of Mission was deemed important enough to get its own building. The museum was open for visitors, who mainly consisted of school classes, though they were quite popular as a Sunday visit, and Aarvik speculates that it inspired many to pursue mission work. In 1914, the School of Mission and Theology got new buildings, and the Museum of Mission was moved into their basement, but not before first being a part of a minor exhibition in Christiania (now Oslo) which proved quite successful. Since its founding, the museum had contained artefacts from South Africa and Madagascar, while from 1912 and onward, items from the new mission fields in China also joined. After 1931, visitors could also see artefacts from the newly started work in Cameroon. However, when the Nazis occupied Norway during the Second World War, they took over the buildings of the School of Mission and Theology, and the Museum of Mission was forced to store their artefacts across the city. Quite a few of them were damaged in the process, and some went missing, even till today.

4.2.1 “To the Ends of the Earth”

After the war, the Museum of Mission was not immediately restored, leading to the mission exhibition “To the Ends of the Earth”. Racin Kolnes, a missionary who returned from China during the summer of 1947, is credited with starting the project. In the fall of 1947, Kolnes attempted an exhibition in Trondheim with very limited success (Misjonstidende, 1947), but after an inspiring visit to a similar exhibition in Denmark early 1948 he convinced the working committee to fund the project (MDA, 1949a, 123-124). Kolnes then collected what artefacts could be regained from the Museum of Mission in Stavanger, as well as reaching out to former missionaries to ask them to loan artefacts for the exhibition, as speed was of the essence and there was no time to request anything directly from the mission fields (MDA, 1948a).

Already on June 1. of the same year the exhibition was ready for its “dress rehearsal” in Ålesund, in connection with the city’s 100th anniversary (Aarvik, 1995, 16-17). The exhibition then went to Lillehammer, in association with NMS’ General Assembly, before visiting Bergen, Porsgrunn, Askim, Sarpsborg, Tønsberg, Drammen, Oslo, Hamar, Arendal, Haugesund, Kristiansand, Stavanger, Gjøvik and Trondheim by the end of 1950 (MDA, 1960a). Of these, the visit in Oslo was seen as particularly exciting, as many skeptics feared the exhibition would not be well received – however, the exhibition was a resounding success wherever it went, including the capital. In this period, the exhibition also had visits from several natives from the mission fields at varying times.

In 1951, the exhibition converted from travelling by train and lorry to being transported on the ship M/K Håvik, travelling along the coast of Northern Norway (Aarvik, 1995, 17). In 1953, this led to a demanding tour of Finnmark, the most northern region of Norway which was then still suffering from scorched earth-tactics employed by the Nazis. Even though the trip was an economical loss, the participants at the time deemed it a great success (MDA, 1960d). After this, the exhibit spent 1954 in storage at the School of Mission and Theology (MDA, 1954), before continuing on. The records are limited for the following years, until the exhibition had a last push in 1960; “To the Ends of the Earth” was brought onto the ship M/S

Brand and did a tour of the coast of Norway, visiting a total of fifty places in its four months of travel (Aarvik, 1995, 17). The exhibition was then disassembled on May 10., 1960, together with the announcement of a new exhibition, “Africa Calls”, for the following year (MDA, 1960c). By then, the exhibition “To the Ends of the Earth” had been seen by 990 000 visitors, and visited 110 different places. This was probably the most well organized and successful PR-effort for the mission cause ever performed in Norway, and its success is by some attributed to the passionate efforts of the working missionaries and volunteers, as well as the use of modern technologies – the films were especially celebrated for their significance (Jørgensen, 1992, 298-230).

4.3 Everyday organization of the exhibition

To understand the content of the exhibition, it is beneficial to have a general idea of the structure of how the exhibition visited all these cities.

This process was well summarized in a document titled “Instructions to the local committee” (own translation) (MDA, 1960b, 1-6). Before the exhibition arrived in a city, a local committee of volunteers was set up. They were tasked with most of the mundane responsibilities around the exhibition, like spreading promotional material, organize the café and prepare private lodging for the missionaries. They were also required to get the material needed to set up the exhibition, like wood, rocks, a sack of moss, and an electrician (MDA, 1950g), as well as someone to install a telephone in the relevant venue (MDA, 1950f). The finding of venues also typically fell on the local committee, as the exhibition required two venues every place they went; one for the exhibition, and one to show the films in.

When the missionaries arrived, typically 10 in number, the process of setting up the exhibition was hectic, as the schedule was rather tight when the exhibition was on the move (MDA, 1948g). Outside of volunteers helping with physical labor, no one other than the missionaries had any say in how the exhibition was organized or presented. When an

exhibition opened, there was a ceremony for only those invited, where local political and religious figures got to speak about the mission and exhibition. The exhibition then stayed open for typically about 14 days, with Oslo being the great exception at 21. During this time, the exhibition stayed open from 9 to 22, with the exception of lunch. The exhibition was divided into five sections: one for each mission field, as well as one for the “home front”. The section for Cameroon and South Africa were typically connected together by a “jungle”, though this, together with most other aspects, varied depending on the venue. During opening hours, each section had one missionary operating as guide and presenter – these were always missionaries that had lived in the field they were presenting (MDA, 1949d). In addition to them, there were volunteers selling tickets, standing guard and fulfilling other practical tasks. When the exhibition closed, a short ceremony was held where all relevant parts were thanked (MDA, 1960b, 1-6). Then the exhibit was hastily taken down before traveling to a different city, and repeating the process.

With an understanding of the context around, as well as the general history and practical execution of, the exhibition, it is time to turn to the data material.

5 Presentation of Data

In the following, I will present my findings regarding the mission's presentation of the mission fields and itself through the mission exhibition "To the Ends of the Earth". As previously explained, the data is divided into four categories: the presented content of the exhibition, what was written about the exhibition in NMS' publications for mission friends, what was communicated internally within the NMS, and media coverage in the form of newspaper articles written about the exhibition. In addition to these, I will present the article written by Hilde Nielsen about the exhibition at the end.

5.1 Content of the exhibition

I will start with presenting what was communicated through the exhibition. Firstly, the different brochures that were printed and distributed in relation to the exhibitions will be presented, then some of the physical elements of the actual exhibition, before three of the films presented in the exhibition will be summarized.

5.1.1 The brochures

The brochures were a central piece of the promotional material of the exhibition, and probably one of the first things that met people visiting the exhibition. In addition to providing the program, the brochures also contained a text promoting the exhibition.

Looking at the content of the brochures (MDA, 1950h), the natural starting point is the one from Ålesund. It opened up with an invitation, before describing how Norway had become known and loved among the colored people of Africa and Asia thanks to the mission, and that these territories were like Norwegian colonies conquered by the gospel over the last 100 years. This was described as something that had been achieved through a "tough battle against ignorance, superstition and heathendom" (own translation), a battle which was still

ongoing thanks to the efforts of interested, loving and self-sacrificing Norwegians. The text then praised the information work that the mission has done in the past, but expressed a wish for closer contact with the culture, religion and way of life of the colored peoples – a wish that was partly fulfilled by this exhibition, and which was expected to be of great interest for people of all backgrounds across the country. The text then invited people to come and see the exhibition, its artefacts and its films.

Comparing the introduction text of almost all the other brochures, the text does not change meaningfully between cities. However, the Stavanger brochure had a notably different message (MDA, 1950h). It too opened with an invitation, but followed immediately with talking about the exhibition. It was presented as being not a boring museum tour, but an exciting experience of life as it was lived among the colored peoples. There were promises of seeing life illuminated from all sides – culturally, socially and religiously – as well as the wild animals, the primitive life, and "the gloomy emptiness of the idols and magical remedies" (own translation). It was promised that every mission field would have its own section, as well as qualified missionaries present to teach about them "factually and visually" (own translation). The films were also promoted as a great way of seeing the mission's work. It was concluded with an invitation to come and see the work of the mission among colored people for the last 100 years.

These two brochures seem to communicate quite different messages. In the Ålesund-brochure, the mission appeared almost as some sort of benevolent colonial force on behalf of Norway. The NMS and its missionaries were presented as people who have fought and fight self-sacrificingly against ignorance and heathendom. Meanwhile, the mission fields weren't really present in the text, beyond being within the implications of "ignorance, superstition and heathendom". In comparison, the Stavanger-brochure appeared much more informative about the contents of the exhibition. The missionaries were still presented as important, but now they were competent within the exhibition, being able to provide factual knowledge about their fields. Notably, the examples included of the mission fields were still somewhat negative, in particular the "gloomy emptiness" of the idols. Thus, both

texts seem to have conveyed similar ideas, with a competent mission and negatively loaded mission fields, though they emphasized different aspects.

5.1.2 Physical elements of the exhibition

In the following, I will present some elements of the physical organization of the exhibition I believe are particularly relevant to discuss the thesis question.

One of these is the organization of the mission fields' sections in the exhibition. In a floor plan of the exhibition in Stavanger (MDA, 1950i) the exhibition was divided in two rooms. The smaller only contained the "Home front", the part of the exhibition regarding the work NMS did in Norway, while the other four sections were together in the larger room with a book sale. If one approached the exhibition clockwise from the bookstore, one would have moved through Cameroon and South Africa, joined together by a jungle, then Madagascar, before ending up in China. An argument can be made that this kind of division implied a developmental hierarchy, with Cameroon as the most primitive, and China as the most developed. The fact that both these sections had full scale buildings – a hut of mud and straw in Cameroon's case and a small religious temple in the Chinese section – reenforces such an idea.

The significance of buildings was also repeated other places in the exhibition, and miniatures were both a significant and popular element in the exhibition. These included among other things an entire Chinese mission station, a leper-village in Madagascar, and a teacher school in South Africa (MDA, 1952). Notably, all these miniatures were of buildings mainly built for the mission, though not necessarily by missionaries.

A notable artefact in the exhibition was the alms box of Gustava Kielland, a leading figure in the mission's women's associations, which played an important part in funding much of their work (MDA, 1949j). The inclusion of this artefact and its accompanying story into the

exhibition shows that the mission wanted to show the significance of the supporters of the mission as well, not only the outgoing missionaries.

Lastly, there were two other elements of the exhibition with great significance, namely the light globe and the light map. The light globe was a large rotating globe in the middle of the exhibition, with electric lights on it corresponding with every Norwegian mission station in the world. The light map had a similar message, but was more interactive; it had light bulbs on the map for every mission station, and as someone turned a dial to a decade between 1840 and 1950, the relevant light bulbs lit up depending on when their mission station was established, showing the spread of the mission's influence throughout the decades (Misjonstidende, 1948b). Both of these elements clearly associated the mission with light, and were in many ways the crown jewels of the exhibition.

5.1.3 The films

As previously stated, the presented selection of films is suboptimal with regards to the time scope of the material. The films were however such a central part of the exhibition – in Sarpsborg, fourteen out of sixteen thousand visitors also watched the films (MDA, 1949e) – that it would be detrimental to the analysis not to include the available films. The three films presented here are *My Name is Han* (Bryan, 1948) from China, produced by The Protestant Film Commission, *Der Medisinmannen Rår* ("Where the Medicine Man Rules") (Solberg, 1956) from South Africa and *De Utstøttes By Mangarano* ("City of Outcasts – Mangarano") (Strandings', 1956) from Madagascar, both produced by the NMS.

My Name is Han

My Name is Han (Bryan, 1948) followed the story and perspective of Han, a Chinese farmer who returned to his destroyed home and farmland after the War. While Han's wife and children, as well as most of the village, were Christian and stayed positive, Han wasn't, and he was demoralized. Several times he got help from Christians, be it from the Chinese missionary who taught him farming techniques or the Chinese pastor who tutored his

daughter, but he refused to join them to church, one of the few undamaged buildings left in the city. However, when his son was hurt by an explosive and then saved by being brought to a mission hospital, Han started to question his lack of belief. When he later found his neighbors from the village working on his field under the leadership of the Chinese pastor and missionary, he realized that no man need be alone when they can be together in God.

The story is told in a first person-perspective, with Han as narrator. However, the fact that it is a produced film, made by a foreign film company with a mission agenda leaves it unlikely that this was an unaltered story told by a Chinese farmer. The fact that both the pastor and the missionary were Chinese is however interesting, as it shows that the mission's work could also be done by the natives. The significance of Christianity is however very apparent; the situation in China was presented as desperate and dire due to the aftereffects of the war, and Han's life was presented as a hopeless struggle, except for the moments where he interacted with people who were Christian, and he only truly gained hope when he started to believe in God by the end of the film.

Der Medisinmannen Rår

Der Medisinmannen Rår (Solberg, 1956) was a story about the birth and death of a child in a Zulu village narrated by a Norwegian voice commenting on the superstition of the Zulu people. A woman in the village was pregnant and the medicine man was summoned. The story then followed him and the rituals he put the pregnant woman and her child through – these included practices like drinking herbal medicine and burying the child up to the neck to banish fever demons. In the village there was also a young Zulu, Christian woman, Togosile, who taught the other children about Jesus – Togosile was notably the only person in Western clothing, and her introduction was accompanied by a shot of the nearby church. When the newborn child fell ill, Togosile tried to convince the chief to bring it to the mission hospital, which was represented by a black doctor. However, the chief refused and summoned the medicine man, who failed to save the child. The medicine man blamed Togosile's father for cursing the child, though his fate was left unclear. The film ended with a

group of shepherd boys tasked with staying up all night to watch over a ritual sacrifice finding comfort in the stories they were told by Togosile about Jesus.

It is notable that the narrator appeared relatively neutral in his presentation of the heathen beliefs of the Zulus throughout the film, even if he introduced it as "superstition". However, statements like "the witches are out riding baboons in the moonlight!" (own translation) (Solberg, 1956) being presented without proper contextualization were and still are likely to sound ridiculous to an audience. On the other hand, the medicine man was presented as actively malicious and manipulative – the narrator went out of his way to highlight how his remedies – which he sold – did not work, he only cried crocodile tears for the dead child, and his accusation against Togosile's father was explained as him targeting an enemy of his. Thus, the superstition of the normal Zulu was presented as only foolish, while in the hands of the medicine man it was dangerous and evil.

De Utstøttes By Mangarano

De Utstøttes By Mangarano (Strandenæs, 1956) was a narrated documentary about Mangarano, a village for lepers in Madagascar. In this village, people with leprosy were cared for by nurses from the NMS, as well as a Malagasy doctor, who used modern medicine to cure the previously uncurable illness. The film showed lepers being quite skillful in writing, sewing and playing music instruments without fingers or hands, and others were shown doing physical work – at the same time, the nurses had to overlook that the sick actually took the medicine they were given, and didn't throw it away or try to sell it. The film went on to highlight the church service as a central element of Mangarano, and one leper was quoted as thanking God for her illness, as that was the only reason why she had learnt about Christianity. The Norwegian nurses were also celebrated for their hard work and self-sacrifice, in particular Alma Jensen, a nurse who had died and was buried near the village. The film then ended with a young, cured woman being allowed to leave Mangarano, while the narrator told that many still suffer, and that they were dependent upon the support of Norwegians.

The presentation of the Malagasy lepers was dualistic in this film. On one hand, they could achieve incredible things even without hands or feet. At the same time, they could not be trusted to take their own medicine. The Malagasy thus appeared both competent and infantile at the same time. The Norwegian nurses, meanwhile, were presented as undeniably heroic. This was especially true for Alma Jensen, who gave her life for the cause, but the other nurses were also presented as doing hard work and being self-sacrificing as they gave up their lives to help the lepers of Mangarano.

5.2 Publications for mission friends

There were two categories of publications produced by the NMS with mission friends as the target audience included in the data. The first are their anniversary books, while the other is NMS' own magazine, *Misjonstidende.*

5.2.1 Anniversary books

Three anniversary books were included in the data material. The anniversary book of 1946-1947, *Gå Ut* (Go Out) (Weider, 1947, 63), had a brief mention of "ambulating exhibitions" being a new tool for the mission, but no promotion or mention of "To the Ends of the Earth". The anniversary books for 1948-1951 and 1952-1954 on the other hand each had full chapters dedicated to the exhibition.

Misjonsskipet Går Videre (The Mission Ship Goes On) (Nodeland, 1951, 147-150) and *Misjonsskipet: i den fjerde nattevakt?* (The Mission Ship: in the fourth nightwatch?) (Lunde, 1954, 145-150) both told of the exhibition's story and success, and how it was well received wherever it went. Both named central missionaries by name and praised them for their knowledge, expertise, skills and efforts, and it was highlighted how the practical skills of the missionaries was a surprise to people unfamiliar with the mission. In an extension of this, the exhibition was presented as finally showing the rest of the Norwegian population what the

“despised stocking-knitting women’s associations have fought for in sacrifice and prater from 1850 till today” (own translation) (Nodeland, 1951, 147), and it was celebrated that the mission finally was getting the recognition it deserved. With regards to the content of the exhibition, however, very little was written, except for a mention of the fear that the exhibition might under-communicate the suffering and desperate need of the natives, but the conclusion was that the seriousness of the mission’s work was understood by most. There was also a mention of pastor Msomi from South Africa who visited the exhibition, but mainly to inform about how he brought a gift to the Norwegian king as thanks for Norwegian mission efforts in South Africa – his only contribution to the exhibition was to “smile his way into everyone’s hearts” (own translation) (Ibid., 149).

As mentioned, there was little talk of the content of the exhibition in these books. This could possibly be because it was assumed that mission friends were already familiar with the mission fields, and that it was more meaningful to promote the efforts of the missionaries as the heroes of NMS. It was also apparent that the mission felt there existed negative, undeserved stereotypes about them, and that they wanted to challenge and disprove these. Thus, the focus of the books seems to mainly be on the positive impact which the exhibition had on the image of the mission towards people not already supporting it. The message was that the mission was more than just “stocking-knitting women’s associations”, and the books celebrate that this message seemed to have been received by many – particularly in Oslo, the mission-unfriendly capital, where the exhibition “came, saw and conquered” (own translation) (Nodeland, 1951, 149).

In large, the anniversary books seemed to celebrate the exhibition as a promotional success that elevated the missionaries’ hero status and finally showed the true value of the mission work to the rest of the Norwegian population, while showing little to no interest in the actual presentation of the mission fields.

5.2.2 *Misjonstidende*

From the 178 issues of *Misjonstidende* that were read, the exhibition was mentioned in 22 articles. Almost all places visited this period were mentioned, with the visit in Stavanger being the most notable exception. One of the mentions was a response to a publication in Dagbladet, and will be presented together with that article under “Media coverage”.

The articles about the exhibition were most typically written after it was finished in a city, celebrating its success. Notably, Bergen and Porsgrunn (Misjonstidende, 1948c) as well as Oslo (Misjonstidende, 1949c) did get promotional articles, while the exhibition’s first opening in Ålesund originally only got two paragraphs written about it after its conclusion (Misjonstidende, 1948a). In relation to the bigger cities and articles there were descriptions of what the exhibition contained, but these were generally less focused on the objects within the exhibition as much as on the message they conveyed: in a larger article about the opening in Ålesund, the exhibition was presented as really conveying the desperate need out in the world, and the light map was described as telling a clear story about “God’s light and victory in the darkness of heathendom” (own translation) (Misjonstidende, 1948b). Similarly, in an article about the exhibition in Oslo, the light globe was associated with Jesus as the light of the world (Misjonstidende, 1949d).

More commonly, however, the articles seemed to have focused on celebrating the successful outreach of the exhibition. Every article listed the number of people who visited, as well as the number of people who watched the films, like when Gjøvik, a city with 6000 inhabitants, had 16 000 people visit the exhibition (Misjonstidende, 1950c). It was also common to congratulate and thank the participating missionaries and volunteer, and the articles liked emphasizing the numbers; in Drammen, 130 volunteers did an excellent job (Misjonstidende, 1949b), and a total of 600 mission friends were involved in Kristiansand (Misjonstidende, 1950a). These were later also thanked in an article by one of the missionaries who had been working on the exhibition (Misjonstidende, 1950b). Still, it was more common that it was the missionaries being celebrated, like when they were celebrated as heroic for working from 9 to 22 (Misjonstidende, 1948d).

The presence of Pastor Msomi from South Africa in Tønsberg was mentioned, though the pastor wasn't credited with anything beyond his presence (Misjonstidende, 1949a). The pastor was also at the exhibition in Oslo, together with Razafinzato from Madagascar – together the two of them were credited with turning on the light globe at the start of the exhibition (Misjonstidende, 1949d).

Looking at it holistically, it is notable that *Misjonstidende* wasn't used much to promote the exhibition, as they seldomly wrote about a visit to a city in advance or described much of its content. It appears that the magazine was more interested in the message and imagery of the exhibition rather than its actual content. It seems clear that the focus of *Misjonstidende* was to celebrate the success of the exhibition and congratulate those who participated in it. This celebration also seemed to include the exhibition's ability to change the perceived image of the mission; in Drammen, the article celebrates that "many prejudices have been cleared away" (own translation), but from the context of the article, it seemed to be prejudices about the NMS rather than the mission fields (Misjonstidende, 1949b). This implication seems to be reflected in the rest of *Misjonstidende*'s praise; while all named missionaries and volunteers were presented as hardworking or competent in some way, the two natives, Msomi and Razafinzato, were only presented doing the childish task of turning on the light globe, while not having any of their skills or competence acknowledged.

5.3 Internal communication

Most of the correspondence regarding the exhibition was related to practical issues of moving and preparing the exhibition between and in different cities. There were however some correspondence letters of interest, especially regarding the startup of the exhibition, but also about other things during its travels.

5.3.1 Regarding the startup

Kolnes was as previously stated fundamental in the starting and shaping of the exhibition. Many of the aspects of the exhibition seemed to be particularly influenced by Kolnes' visit to the Danish exhibition and the struggles he experienced during his test-exhibition in Trondheim.

In a letter to the working committee, Kolnes (MDA, 1948a) shared his experiences from the Danish exhibition, revealing how it inspired him regarding the content of the exhibition, the use of missionaries as guides, the establishment of local committees, and the value of a separate venue for films. He noted how the Danish exhibition did an excellent job in communicating the culture and life of the mission fields presented – however, he was disappointed that it did not communicate the desperation of heathendom clearly enough, and he feared that the visitors might leave the exhibition with the impression that the life of the heathens could be quite good. This concern was repeated in the Working Committee's reports, where the importance and challenge of communicating the misery of heathendom was highlighted (MDA, 1949a).

In connection with the test-exhibition in Trondheim, Kolnes wrote another letter about his hard-earned discoveries. In addition to realizing that the exhibition needed a better name, location and promotion to avoid it appearing as an event only for mission friends, Kolnes highlighted the significance of the missionaries. He explained how the test-exhibition had been saved by the individual efforts of the missionaries conducting the oral presentations, and that the inclusion of the private collection of one of the participating missionaries was the only reason the exhibition was not a total fiasco (MDA, 1947).

Both of these discoveries ended up being fundamental to the exhibition; the missionaries as guides sharing their personal experiences from the fields became an essential element of the exhibition, while many of the artefacts presented came from the private collection of missionaries. After he was tasked with creating the exhibition, Kolnes sent out a letter to

missionaries in Norway, asking them to borrow, give or sell artefacts from their personal collections to the exhibition, as there was no time to get them directly from the mission fields. In this context, Kolnes presented three categories of artefacts he wanted to present, representing his three goals for the exhibition. One was artefacts showing people and land, items that showed the life and culture of the fields, especially its peculiarities. Another category was "the desperate need of heathendom", artefacts that showed heathen faith and practices. And lastly, he wanted artefacts that showed the mission's efforts and results (MDA, 1948a).

Even though this strategy proved successful, as the exhibition was a resounding success, it did prove difficult at times. Since large parts of the exhibition were only borrowed, parts of it could be taken away at the whim of an individual, like when Kolnes himself took away his part of the Chinese collection during the exhibition's stay in Drammen, due to him bringing the artefacts to a scout camp (MDA, 1950c). Though this often was temporary, it meant that the organizers of the exhibition never knew exactly what they had at their disposal.

The most important thing presented in these letters were the three goals for the exhibition through Kolnes' request for items. The exhibition wanted to communicate three things to the people that came to see it; it wanted to teach about the people and land of the mission fields, to communicate the desperate need of heathendom that the natives suffered under, and to show the effort and positive results of the mission's work. The focus on presenting the natives as being in need of help and suffering because of their heathendom seem to have been particularly important for Kolnes, as he saw the absence of this in the Danish exhibition as a large flaw. However, even though these requests for artefacts communicated a clear goal for the exhibition, they also reveal the hasty and somewhat unplanned nature of it – they were dependent upon gifts and loans, as they were unwilling to wait for artefacts to be brought from the fields. This reenforces the image of the exhibition being dependent upon the individual efforts of the missionaries participating in it.

5.3.2 During the exhibition

Though mainly centered around practical issues regarding setting up and transporting the exhibition, there were also other discussions of interest in the correspondence.

Some were about the presentation in the exhibition. In one correspondence letter, a male missionary complained about the inconsistent usage of Cameroon and Sudan around one another in the exhibition, and requests that one or the other be used consistently (MDA, 1950j). In another correspondence, there was a discussion about how Bank Hell Notes – a currency burnt in Chinese rituals in support of the dead – could be used to talk about the heathen's understanding of death, the grave and their hopelessness. The correspondence also included a plan to buy more banknotes cheaply in Hong Kong – a region then filled with refugees – to sell them as souvenirs at the exhibition (MDA, 1950l).

Others revealed the perception of the NMS, both the negative perceptions of the organization from the outside, as well as the internal efforts to produce a positive image. In one case, a shipowner refused to offer a miniature of one of his ships to the exhibition, as he feared that the association with the mission organization would lead to him being ridiculed by other sailors (MDA, 1950k). Meanwhile, the missionaries had to be accommodated privately with volunteers, a letter explained, not primarily because it was cheaper, but because it would be damning for the image of the mission if they lived in hotels (MDA, 1950e).

Regarding communication with others, a single letter was addressed to Razanajohary, a Malagasy student visiting Norway. In it, he was invited to visit the exhibition, but was only planned to hold two lectures, as they assumed he would be tired after a long summer of work – presumably for the mission (MDA, 1950b). Longer was the correspondence with a Finnish pastor curious about the methods of the exhibition; through several letters, the practices were explained and the impact of them celebrated. The exhibition was presented as successful propaganda, greatly improving the general population's knowledge about the

mission, changing the minds of those previously opposing it, as well as empowering the love of the mission friends. In response, the Finnish pastor congratulated the exhibition, and argued that any legal form of advertisement should be used to promote the mission (MDA, 1950a).

These correspondences reveal several things. The examples show that the presentation of the mission fields was discussed, though with very different messaging – while the complaint regarding Cameroon/Sudan shows a wish for a respectful presentation, the discussion around the Hell Bank Notes show no respect for Chinese religious practices, nor the disadvantageous position of the Chinese natives. The rejection by the shipowner shows that the mission's fear of negative stereotypes about themselves were not unfounded, and they show through their correspondence that they knew and intended that the exhibition would change that perception. Lastly, the letter to Razanajohary implies that his inclusion into the exhibition was not his priority, as he had already been working for the NMS all summer – his participation was simply an addition to this.

5.4 Media coverage

The media coverage material consists of newspaper cut outs collected and stored by the NMS in their archives. In the following, I will present six topics reflected in the media coverage; the general coverage of the exhibition, the expressed goals of the NMS, the presentation of the fields, the presentation of the mission and missionaries, the symbolism of light and dark, and the presentation of the natives present at the exhibition. Finally, I will present one highly negative article written by Dagbladet about the exhibition, as well as some of the responses to it.

5.4.1 The general coverage

Most of the articles were written either in advance of or in the very early stages of the exhibition, being promotional pieces informing readers of some of the things they might encounter, topic-pieces written during the exhibition about one or a few specific elements of the exhibition, or during the later stages or after it finished, celebrating the success. Typically, they wrote about the cultural practices of the people of the mission fields or about the history and work of the NMS and its missionaries, often times both. The most common theme, however, appeared to be about the exhibition's incredible outreach, ability to make people come visit it and its strong impact on those who did. One article described how a man travelling to Askim postponed his surgery for later that day so that he could visit the exhibition – only to postpone it one more time, so that he could spend even more time there (MDA, 1949c). Similar stories about people going out of there way and travelling far to see the exhibition were not uncommon, nor were other tales expressing the influx of people. This praise was also extended to the impact of the films, either encouraging people to go watch them, or listing how many had seen them.

5.4.2 The expressed goals

Throughout the exhibition's tour of the nation, the newspapers reported on what the missionaries expressed the goal of the exhibition to be. During the early stages, the general impression appeared to be that the exhibition was focused on teaching about foreign cultures and practices. In Ålesund, Kolnes was quoted as saying that the exhibition was the best way to teach the population about the life and culture of the colored people of the world (MDA, 1948c). Similar statements could be found throughout many of the other articles from different cities. Even though there was no attempt to hide the fact that the NMS was also being presented, the message repeated in the media seemed to clearly be that the exhibition was focused on teaching about the culture and way of life of colored people in the mission fields.

This message seemed to change when the exhibition arrived in Kristiansand and Stavanger. In Kristiansand, it was expressed that the main goal of the exhibition was mission

propaganda and spreading knowledge about the mission and their work (MDA, 1950n), and in Stavanger, the main goal was said to be to show people in Norway what met the missionaries out on the mission fields (MDA, 1950r). It was also expressed that the exhibition had the specific goal of reaching out to a wider front than usual mission work did (MDA, 1950q). This change in what goals were conveyed could possibly be related to the fact that Kristiansand and Stavanger both were cities with already strong support for the mission – in that case, these articles can be read in a similar light as the publications for mission friends. Still, it is notable to observe that outwardly the exhibition was presented as being focused mainly on teaching about the culture and way of life of the colored people of the mission fields.

5.4.3 Presentation of the mission fields

When it comes to reporting about the fields, two things were commonly repeated throughout the articles; the natives were primitive and suffering under heathendom. With regards to the latter, heathendom was repeatedly presented as the cause of all the ills that plagued the natives, causing them to live in fear, uncertainty and anxiety (MDA, 1950o). A repeated message was that the natives would not have been happier in their original obliviousness (MDA, 1950t).

Regarding primitivity, this was repeated in connection to every field, typically in a general introduction of the exhibition. In these, China often found itself in a peculiar place, as it was often praised for its ancient high culture, but at the same time, also presented as more primitive than Norway (MDA, 1949f). A common sentiment was that “they are like us, - except they have come less far in their enlightenment” (MDA, 1948e). However, when it came to the esthetic, the newspapers were consistently shocked at the achievements of the native people (MDA, 1948g), and what they were able to achieve “without the guidance of God” (MDA, 1949c). One article was even so impressed at what the natives had achieved, it concluded that one could not talk of “primitive cultures” (1948d).

When it came to the presentation of cultural differences, these were often sensationalized in titles or introductions, but appeared less dramatic when they were actually described by the missionaries. In one article, the practice of men sewing and women doing the farming in Cameroon was presented as sensational in the headline, while in the body text the missionary presenting it was very neutral about the practice (MDA, 1948e). A similar level of cultural understanding was shown when a reporter asked if a piece of Chinese traditional clothing could be called a "Chinese bunad", and the missionary went out of his way to describe how that would be an oversimplification of the significance of the garment (MDA, 1948d).

However, this level of cultural understanding was not apparent when something was related to heathendom. All practices related to idols or other religious elements were presented as foolish and often harmful to the natives. As an example, an article wrote about the practice of Death Bank Notes – a specific Chinese currency which was bought to be burnt so that the dead could use them in the afterlife. In the article, the Chinese priest – called "a greedy idolater" – was presented as tricking gullible Chinese natives into wasting all their money on buying this currency from him, leaving them in debt while he pocketed the profit (MDA, 1950r). Similar stories were repeated about "magicians" or medicine men and their negative effects in relation to South Africa, Madagascar and Cameroon as well.

This lack of understanding went beyond just amoral religious leaders and idols; in one case, a male missionary criticized the natives in Cameroon for not realizing that they had a cross of light, the Southern Cross, above their heads, as this was one of the first things new Norwegian missionaries noticed when they arrived (MDA, 1949e). Similarly, simply living under the influence of heathendom was presented as constantly living in "fear, uncertainty and anxiety" (own translation) (MDA, 1950t). However, this did not undermine the credibility in the eyes of the media, as the exhibition was consistently presented as providing a trustworthy image of the life on the fields "exactly as it [was] lived and acted out among the colored peoples" (own translation) (MDA, 1949g).

In summary, the media coverage appears to have focused on the mission fields as being primitive and plagued by heathendom. However, the primitivity was not presented as absolute, as both Chinese high culture and the natives' esthetic capabilities were celebrated. A certain level of cultural understanding by the missionaries was also presented, at times almost against the will of the articles. This understanding seems to not have been extended to practices related to heathendom, however, as they were presented almost unquestionably negative. Notably, this presentation of the mission fields was presented as being completely trustworthy.

5.4.4 Presentation of the mission

When the newspapers wrote about the NMS or the missionaries, it was typically to praise them for their work in some way. With regard to the mission as movement and the NMS as an organization, they were credited with being Norway's most important ambassadors, having made the country beloved among the colored people of Africa and Asia (MDA, 1949d). In an article from the exhibition in Oslo, the mission's cultural efforts among the colored people of the world were presented as "flawless", especially when compared to other, more detrimental cultural efforts made by other Western nations (MDA, 1949g).

Regarding the missionaries, they were generally presented as competent and heroic. An article from Ålesund contrasted the fun of the exhibition with the suffering that the missionaries had gone through, and how they had had to handle challenges like malaria, a disease that would send a sailor ashore for 6 months, while the missionaries simply had to suffer through it (MDA, 1948f). The missionaries narrating the different sections were presented as especially heroic; Martha Palm, the narrator of the South African section, was once presented as single handedly building hospitals and fighting back the dangerous influence of the medicine men in South Africa (MDA, 1950p). An important aspect of this heroic presentation of the missionaries was their willingness to sacrifice – they were presented as selflessly risking health and life to help those in need, a choice purely motivated by love (MDA, 1950m).

This heroic image extended somewhat to the work on the "home front"; in an article fully dedicated to Gustava Kielland and her alms box, the work women's associations had done throughout the last 100 years was celebrated as being fundamental for the achievements of the mission – in direct opposition to the many negative stereotypes about their insignificance (MDA, 1949j). Though Kielland was not presented in exactly the same heroic way as many of the missionaries, she and her movement were shown to be essential for their success, and did thus benefit from their positive image.

Throughout the media coverage, the NMS was consistently presented as a large and positive factor in the world, doubling as an ambassador for Norway. Its missionaries were shown as both self-sacrificing and heroic, suffering through terrible struggles while also achieving great things. Together, these presentations of the organization and its missionaries seem to have had a positive effect on the image of the work at the home front.

5.4.5 Light and dark

In several newspaper articles, the metaphor of light and dark was used. The mission's work was presented as being a fight "against the darkness of heathendom" (own translation) (MDA, 1949b), while everyone who lived in Africa were living "in darkness down there" (own translation) (MDA, 1949d). When the missionaries' successful work in Madagascar was written about, it was presented that "the magician's dark power was broken by the light of the gospel" (own translation) (MDA, 1950o). Through this, a connection between the magician and the darkness was strongly implied, meaning that the magician (or medicine man, or Chinese priest) was seen as directly connected to heathendom.

When another article then described the work of the mission as enabling God to lead the anxious natives from darkness to light through the transformational power of the gospel (MDA, 1950t), two things were implied. Firstly, a similar connection as the one between magician, darkness and heathendom was established between missionary, light and

Christianity. Secondly, as light and dark as well as Christianity and heathendom were consistently presented as directly opposed to each other, that meant that the missionaries and the magicians were also in direct opposition. Thus, the usage of metaphors of light and dark did not only create positive and negative associations to Christianity and heathendom respectively, but did also present the missionaries and the magicians as directly opposed to one another in a religious conflict.

5.4.6 The presence of natives

The presence of three natives at the exhibition were mentioned in the newspapers. The first was pastor Msomi from South Africa, who in Tønsberg held a sermon, and talked about how thankful the Zulu people was for the fact that the mission had come to South Africa (MDA, 1949f). His presence was also mentioned several times in Oslo, but there his function was first and foremost being "picturesque and sensational" (MDA, 1949h), and when he together with the Malagasy dentist student Razafinjato participated in the opening ceremony of the exhibition, neither of them were named (unlike all participating Norwegians), they were wrongfully presented as "two Malagasy", and their only contribution was to turn on the light globe (MDA, 1949i). Lastly, a young Malagasy pastor named Andrianarijanona led three guided tours of the exhibition for mission youth in Stavanger; he only got an untitled notice, in which he was presented only as a "proper" Malagasy (MDA, 1950s).

It appears that the media coverage had little interest in the natives present at the exhibition, beyond acknowledging their presence. It might appear that their only valued contribution to the exhibition was their "nativeness", an idea reenforced by the fact that they got Msomi's nationality wrong. This becomes especially apparent when compared to the presentation of the missionaries, who as established were presented as very competent and hard working.

5.4.7 Dagbladet

Lastly, there was the article written by Dagbladet in relation to the exhibition's stay in Oslo, as well as some if its responses. This was the only clearly negative article in the archive material, and it is addressed as such in several other sources (see: Jørgensen, 1992).

The article accused the exhibition of being misleading, presenting itself as being an ethnographic presentation of the mission fields while actually just being a promotion of the mission. The exhibition was said to be responsible for causing race superiority and race hate in its visitors, as it told a story of poor heathen children needing to be saved by brave, white men from evil, ugly magicians. The article went on to ridicule a missionary for telling a group of children how 5 cents might help save a child from the ugly magician, as well as criticize the mission for not giving an honest presentation of foreign cultures. Even Dagbladet however could not help but credit the exhibition for its incredible outreach and PR, pointing out how they in 14 days had had more visitors than the ethnographic museum had in a year, though they presented this as something negative (MDA, 1949k).

Many responses to this article were written, criticizing most points that it made. An article argued that it was unfair to accuse the exhibition of being un-ethnographic, when it had made no claim of being so: "When someone wants to draw a church – and does it, then it's both naïve and tactless to respond: but this is no museum!" (own translation) (MDA, 1949l). *Misjonstidende* (1949e) also came to the defense of the exhibition, challenging every aspect of Dagbladet's article, especially the claim that it caused race hate, arguing that the NMS was the only organization to do any good for the colored people of the world, and that they as a Christian organization were the antidote to race hate, as they preached everyone being God's children.

Dagbladet seems to have had mainly two relevant criticisms against the exhibition. The first was the fact that the exhibition claimed to be ethnographic, but failed to be so – an accusation that was swept aside as incorrect. The other criticism was that the exhibition created a narrative of missionaries fighting against magicians to save heathen children, and that this was something negative – a narrative which *Misjonstidende* did not reject, but which they rather saw as something positive which should be celebrated.

5.5 Academic research

Lastly, Hilde Nielsen's article "Til Jordens Ender: Om hvordan verden ble brakt til Norge og omvendt på etnografiske utstillinger i misjonsregi» will now be presented.

Nielsen (2007, 196, 199, 207) writes about "To the Ends of the Earth", which she describes as an "ethnographic mission exhibition". She explains how the exhibition was built out of mission collections, which can often appear ethnographic, but are typically incomplete, amateurish and plagued by a mission agenda. The exhibition as a whole is also given credit for appearing quite ethnographic at times, however the focus on the "desperate need" of heathendom undermined this, and made them more similar to colonial "world exhibitions" in Nielsen's eyes.

The organization of the exhibition represents a racial hierarchy, according to Nielsen (2007, 196, 204-205), in which the developed China was presented on top, while the primitive Cameroon was at the bottom, an understanding that was reflected both in the writings about and practically within the exhibition. The main distinction, however, was still between the civilized, Christian Norway and the barbaric, heathen mission field. Nielsen argues that these divisions echo colonial discourse, and that the mission created a sort of "Norwegian orientalism", centered around a narrative where the rest of the world needed help, and where the missionaries were the only ones that could help them. She then concludes that it is quite likely this narrative has been central in shaping the modern-day perception of Norway as an aid-nation.

It appears that Nielsen share the same accusations as Dagbladet, though perhaps worded more softly. She is critical of the un-ethnographic nature of the exhibition, and even though she does not accuse them of race hate, she is critical of the narrative they create about the relationship between the mission and the fields, or on a larger scale, between Norway and the world.

6 Data Analysis

In the following, I will analyze the data presented and attempt to answer the question of how the NMS presented the mission fields and itself through the exhibition "To the Ends of the Earth". This will be approached in four parts; first, what did the NMS express that they wanted to present in the exhibition; then, how the exhibition presented the mission fields; afterwards, how the exhibition presented the mission and missionaries; and lastly, how these were presented in relation to each other. At the end, the impact of the natives present at the exhibition will be addressed. Throughout this, I will argue that the exhibition was representative of Gullestad's mission propaganda, and that it showed clear patterns of colonial discourse – but that it also differed substantially enough at points that it could be presented as representing a unique NMS-version of the discourse.

6.1 What the NMS wanted to present

A natural place to begin is with what the mission itself wanted to communicate, something which varied somewhat throughout the different sources. In the end, the overarching goal appears to have been to promote the mission.

The clearest expression of the exhibition's goals was through Kolnes' letter requesting artefacts (MDA, 1948a): in it, he expressed that he wanted the exhibition to teach about the lands and peoples of the mission fields, to communicate the desperate need of heathendom, and to show the efforts and success of the mission. These three goals could be clearly seen throughout the exhibition, but they were communicated differently at different times and through different ways of communication. In the early stages of the media coverage, the reported goal was to teach about life and culture of the colored people of the world, though when the exhibition arrived in more mission-friendly cities, this changed towards a focus on the promotion of the mission. An almost opposite trend could be seen in the brochures; the first ones leaned heavily into the significance of the mission and the heathendom, almost without mentioning the land or culture of the mission field, while the later Stavanger

brochure balanced the three goals more equally (MDA, 1950h). Meanwhile, the publications meant for mission friends seemed to solely celebrate the exhibition's positive impact on the perception of the Norwegian mission, showing basically no regard for whether or not visitors had learnt more about the land and people of the mission fields.

However, the exhibition did claim to present the land and culture of the mission field, and were in response to that criticized for being un-ethnographic, first by Dagbladet during its own time (MDA, 1949k), and later by Nielsen (2007, 196). At the time, these accusations were fought back with statements like "When someone wants to draw a church – and does it, then it's both naïve and tactless to respond: but this is no museum!" (own translation) (MDA, 1949i), implying that the exhibition never had tried to present itself as anything other than a project to promote the mission. The exhibition did not technically claim to be ethnographic either, though it was promoted as showing life "exactly as it is lived and acted out among the colored people of the world" (own translation) (MDA, 1949g). Looking at the goals expressed by Kolnes, it is clear that the exhibition was not intended to be purely ethnographic - it might seem however as if the mission wanted it to appear as such, probably because a "neutral" exhibition would be seen as objective, and thus more trustworthy (Tolla-Kelly, 2016, 905).

Though it wasn't presented that clearly outwardly, the goal of communicating the desperate need of heathendom was clear within the NMS from the start. Kolnes' main worry after visiting the Danish exhibition was that they hadn't communicated the negative impact of heathendom on the natives lives well enough, and he worried that if they did the same in Norway, it could be detrimental to the mission (MDA, 1948b). It is possible that Kolnes said this purely out of promotional interest for the sake of the exhibition, but it is also possible that he genuinely considered the Danish exhibition less truthful for not communicating the suffering of heathendom well enough. In that case, focusing on the desperate need of heathendom was not a choice that was meant to make the exhibition less ethnographic, but rather make it more truthful.

These goals seem to place the exhibition well within Gullestad's (2007, 30-35, 66-67, 124) idea of mission propaganda: it was intended to inform about the life and culture of the mission fields, while also presenting the heathens as being in desperate need for help – a help which only the missionaries could provide. The three goals reflected this, as they aimed to teach about the fields, warn about the suffering of heathendom, and show how the mission had and could alleviate and end that suffering. It is clear that the mission was aware of this too, as they in correspondence with a Finnish pastor discussed how mission exhibitions were a tool of propaganda to achieve all of the things mentioned above (MDA, 1950a).

6.1.1 Summary

To summarize, it appears clear that the exhibition had three goals, which were communicated differently. The mission wanted to appear somewhat ethnographic to gain legitimacy, though they also saw heathendom as an essential part of the mission field, and thus its presentation. When looking at these goals through the perspective of mission propaganda, it appears their main goal was to promote the mission.

6.2 Presenting the mission fields

In the following, I will argue that the exhibition's presentation of the mission fields reflects some aspects of the colonial discourse – however, the focus is mainly on heathendom being a negative, while the more developmental differences are presented as less segregating. The fact that the narrators were the missionaries was also reflected in the presentation of the fields.

One thing that was of great interest for the audience of the exhibition, and which likely left a large impact on many of them, was the films showed. In the context of this thesis, three films have been presented: *My Name is Han* (hereafter referred to as *Han*) (Bryan, 1948),

Der Medisinmannen Rår (hereafter referred to as *Medicine Man*) (Solberg, 1956), and *De Utstøttes By Mangarano* (hereafter referred to as *Mangarano*) (Strandenæs, 1956).

The films shared many messages and themes. In all of them, the situation outside of the mission's influence was presented as desperate: in *Mangarano*, leprosy was an incurable disease that led to banishment, but the presence of the mission suppressed that suffering through care and cures; in *Han*, Han's life was a struggle with little hope for improvement, but when the mission got involved he became hopeful for the future; and in *Medicine Man*, the life of superstition was presented as harsh and brutal, and the mission was presented as an alternative which could have prevented the suffering, but was rejected, and thus the suffering continued. Here one can see the idea of mission propaganda be reflected, in that the natives needed a help only the mission could provide, or else their suffering would continue.

Notably, all three films connected the mission with hospitals and modern medicine, reaffirming the relationship between Christianity and rational modernity (Kaunda & Hewitt, 2015, 381-383). Even so, in all of the films, the educated doctors were natives, and in *Han* there was also a native priest and missionary, indicating that the natives could also take on these kinds of duties – they were not reserved for Norwegian missionaries. However, these were also almost the only natives that were presented as competent, indicating that for a native to be successful, they needed to embrace European knowledge and lifestyles, as presented in the Comaroffs' (1991, 288-230) conversation.

All of these mentioned natives are men, but native women also played notable roles in two of the films. In *Han,* Han's (unnamed) wife was a Christian, together with her children. However, this was not celebrated in the film, and even though she was shown as keeping Han's spirits up, she was unable to influence his religious opinions – that happened only after initiatives taken by men. This reflects Gullestad's (2007, 162-165) observation about the "fertile soil" and the "fruit" – the conversion of women was not seen as a real

achievement, but rather the groundwork for converting men, which was the exact conclusion of Han's story and film. Similarly, in *Medicine Man,* the Christian Togosile was shown teaching the young boys about Christianity, and the conclusion of the film was that the same boys found comfort in the thought of and belief in Jesus, again reaffirming the idea of "soil" and "fruit". However, that was not Togosile's only contribution to the film – she did also try to convince the chief of going to the mission. Though she was unsuccessful, it is noteworthy that the film showed a native women try to take action, considering the typical double silencing of subaltern women (Spivak, 1988, 287).

On that note, the films did claim to be speaking on behalf of the natives – *Han* was even told from a first person-perspective. However, these were scripted movies produced by mission organizations presenting narratives that fit with their general messaging, making it unlikely that these films actually were the "speakings" of subalterns. Still, it is worth remembering that missionaries, unlike the intellectuals Spivak (1988, 284-286) criticized, actually did encounter and talk with genuine subalterns, and even though it is unlikely that they suspended their own consciousness when telling their stories, they probably knew them better than most other Western actors.

Moving on from the films and over to the collection of artefacts presented at the exhibition, one very common observation made by journalists was how esthetic all the artefacts presented were, often to the surprise of the audience. One article even went so far as to say that the level of skill displayed through the artistry disproved the existence of primitive culture (MDA, 1948d), showing that the exhibition did present the skill of the natives. Though the communication of this esthetic skill probably was intentional, it is also possible that this was a byproduct of the makeup of the exhibition; many of the artefacts came from private collections of missionaries, who probably favored collecting the more esthetic items, thus skewing the representation.

Somewhat related was the selling of Chinese "Death Bank Notes" as souvenirs at the exhibition (MDA, 1950l). Beyond the fact that the practice revealed how little regard the missionaries showed the religious practices of the natives – which was common for missionaries (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991, 202) – the notes were bought in Hong Kong at a time when the region was filled with refugees, making the practice appear exploitative. The Hell Bank Notes were not only sold, though – they were also used to teach about the heathendom of the fields, and how the "greedy idolators" – the Chinese priests – were exploiting gullible Chinese natives (MDA, 1950r). A similar narrative could be found repeated in all of the mission fields; in Cameroon and Madagascar, the magicians kept people living in fear of evil spirits, and in *Medicine Man,* the natives of the village were shown organizing their lives in accordance with the rituals and idols provided by the medicine man (Solberg, 1956). In most cases, the suffering of heathendom was associated with some sort of idol that was detrimental to the natives, either through dictating their actions or costing them money – showing how the mission wanted to present physical idols which they could challenge (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991, 202). Through this, the medicine men or magicians were always presented as deceitful and greedy, as they did this to manipulate the natives to hold power over them or get their valuables.

At the same time, the exhibition did not seem to problematize other aspects of the natives' lives as much. While the Chinese practice of burning money was presented as a heathen scam tricking people into poverty (MDA, 1950r), a male missionary was shown going out of his way to communicate the cultural significance of Chinese traditional clothing beyond being a "Chinese bunad" (MDA, 1948d). Similarly, another male missionary was highly critical of the Cameroonian natives for not realizing the significance of the Southern Cross before their arrival (MDA, 1949e) – even though they had no knowledge of Christian symbolism before the influence of the mission. But when men were presented as doing the sewing and women the farming in Cameroon through a newspaper article, this was done seemingly without any judgement or criticism from the narrating missionary, even though the article did try to sensationalize it through the headline (MDA, 1948e) – notably, challenging non-European gender roles was something the Comaroffs (1991, 208) typically accused missionaries of doing.

Through this, it might appear as if the mission mostly took issue with heathendom and the practices that were connected to it; whenever something was related to the medicine man or to heathen idols it was presented as terrible and detrimental to the natives, while matters not affected by heathendom were presented more neutrally and culturally aware. It can be argued that this was shown in *Han* (Bryan, 1948); what Han did throughout the movie did not really change, but when he was farming in the beginning it was shown as desperate and futile, as he was living in heathendom without God, while at the end, his farming was presented positively, as he had embraced Christianity. This idea reflects the Comaroffs' (1991, 244-245) observation about how the missionaries presented and operated with a singular moral standard, in which Christianity was the only correct moral choice.

This was however not an absolute. There were still statements in the exhibition regarding the native's primitivity, and even those who had abandoned heathendom were often presented as still requiring the mission's assistance, like the lepers of Mangarano (Strandenæs, 1956), but the overarching implication seemed to be that the biggest hurdle for the natives was their heathendom, and that if they "overcame" that, then their lives were not so bad. It was thus very important for the mission to communicate that the "happy obliviousness" of the natives was a lie – because if the natives were oblivious to Christianity, it meant that they lived in heathendom. And in the mission's presentation, living in heathendom was the same as living in "fear, uncertainty and anxiety" (own translation) (MDA, 1950t). In accordance with the ideas of mission propaganda, heathendom – and thus obliviousness to Christianity – needed to be presented negatively , because that meant that the mission was needed to help those suffering under heathendom.

Nielsen (2007, 204-205) highlights that there was a hierarchal presentation of the fields based on an idea of development, where China was presented as more advanced than the others – however, she points to the distance presented between the fields and Norway as having been the most significant one. This idea is reenforced by the layout of the exhibition,

in which a hierarchical organization can be argued in the placement of the fields, while the "home front" representing Norway was placed in an entirely separate room (MDA, 1950i). Assuming that the difference within the mission fields was mainly developmental, while the difference between the mission fields and Norway mainly was religious, this reconfirms the idea that the main divider in the mission's presentation was that of heathendom, while other distinctions were less important. As the mission did not see the colored natives as fundamentally different, due to the belief that all humans were the children of God (Gullestad, 2007, 28), it appears that the divisions they presented were ones that could be overcome. Of these dividers, heathendom was the one the NMS presented as the most significant, as that was what they as a Christian mission organization offered to change.

This focus on heathendom was central in the exhibition's presentation of the mission fields, however it is unlikely that it was experienced in the same way by the natives. Though there are no sources written from the perspective of the subaltern present in the material, it is unlikely, based on the observations of Comaroff & Comaroff (1991, 238-242), that the religious experience of the natives was such a clear choice between heathendom or Christianity. The fact that Norwegian missionaries were known to edit religious compromises and disagreements out of their presentation of the mission fields (Gullestad, 2007, 124) builds under such an assumption. It is therefore likely that all mentions of heathendom in the exhibition are representative of a very missionary-biased perspective, an assumption supported by Nielsen (2007, 207) who criticized the very un-ethnographic presentation of the mission fields when heathendom was addressed. She did, however, also credit the exhibition for being quite ethnographic in its presentation of other aspects of the exhibition, lending credence to the idea that the mission-bias was mainly confined to the representation of heathendom.

6.2.1 Summary

Summing up, it can be seen in the exhibition's presentation of the mission fields that heathendom and life under it was presented as fundamentally bad. Meanwhile, other aspects of the natives' lives were presented more neutrally or positively, like their esthetic

capabilities, even though they were generally presented as primitive. While heathendom was the main dividing element, reflecting the segregating nature of the colonial discourse, the developmental differences were presented as less of a barrier. Even though the mission clearly was presented as the most developed through modern medicine and other knowledge, natives were also shown being doctors and pastors – the mission's presentation of the native did not forbid that they could develop to the level of the missionary, unlike what was permitted in the colonial discourse (McLean, 2012, 603). With regards to the natives' own stories, it seems unlikely that the exhibition did communicate their proper perspectives. Though the missionaries probably were more likely than other Western actors to actually interact with subalterns, their simplistic presentation of heathendom undermines the idea that they could be trusted to present their perspectives fairly.

6.3 Presenting the mission

With regards the presentation of the missionaries and the NMS, I will argue that the exhibition focused extensively on presenting them in a positive light. This was done through creating a hero-narrative around the missionaries and the organization, while connecting the "home front" to the positive image of the mission outside Norway.

One thing that was represented throughout the exhibition was the mission's buildings out in the mission fields. They were mentioned in all three films presented, and several of the newspaper articles focused on the impressive miniatures of mission stations and similar buildings. The mission also clearly saw this as significant, as the inclusion of miniatures was discussed explicitly in the very first Work Committee report (MDA, 1949a). This fits with Gullestad's (2007, 129-130) observation of how the mission presented churches and similar building as proof of their success as part of the mission propaganda.

Looking at the films, the NMS was notably absent in two of them, though their presence was implied. In *Mangarano* (Strandenæs, 1956) they were however very present, represented

particularly by the Norwegian nurses tending to the lepers. These nurses were presented as self-sacrificing and heroic, willing to give up everything, even their lives, to help the natives – one of them, Alma Jensen, was even celebrated for having done so. A similar image of the missionaries was presented in the media coverage. The missionaries were seen as courageous for suffering through hardships that others would not, like how they had to live through the malaria that sent sailors home for six months (MDA, 1948f). It was also the individual efforts of the missionaries that were shown to be the driving force behind the achievements of the mission, through their individual love and passion for the cause (MDA, 1950m). This heroic representation was also repeated in the publications for mission friends, where the focus was shown to be almost exclusively on the missionaries as heroic; in the anniversary books, all significant missionaries were named and praised for their skills, expertise, knowledge and efforts – something that was shown to be surprising to people unfamiliar with the mission, as they were typically unaware of all the practical challenges that met the missionaries on the field (Lunde, 1954, 146).

This positive presentation of the missionaries was important in a mission propaganda-perspective, as it depended upon an image of the missionaries as competent and qualified to justify that they were the only ones capable of helping the natives (Gullestad, 129-130). Additionally, it fit with some of the orientalist ideas regarding the presentation of the West, as the missionaries were presented as hardworking, brave and initiative taking. In an extension of this, the missionaries seemed to fill the role that the adventurers and explorers had in Orientalism, both as the informants informing about the unknown, and as the biggest heroes of their time (McLeod, 2010, 52-55). At the same time, the missionaries were consistently presented as self-sacrificing and humble in their work, though this ambivalence was not problematized, as it was a fundamental part of the missionaries' self-promotion in their mission propaganda (Gullestad, 2007, 162-165). This was probably best presented in the media coverage of the missionary Martha Palm, who at one time was presented as too humble to talk about herself in the presentation of her field (MDA, 1948f), while later being presented as singlehandedly building hospitals and challenging the authority of the medicine men in South Africa (MDA, 1950m).

This hero-narrative about the missionaries was not only presented in the exhibition; an argument can be made that it was built on and into it. In relation to the test-exhibition in Trondheim, Kolnes wrote about how the exhibition had been saved by the efforts of a missionary couple, thanks to their relentless efforts in hosting presentations (MDA, 1947). The oral presentations of missionaries went on to become one of the carrying beams of the success of the exhibition. Thus, the self-sacrificial and heroic nature of the missionaries was not just communicated *in* the exhibition, but also communicated by the very way it was organized and presented. The missionaries did not need to talk about themselves as self-sacrificing, as it was presented through their actions.

With regards to the larger movement, the NMS was presented as an ambassador for Norway, being one of its most important international actors that had made the country beloved in Africa and Asia (MDA, 1949d). Looking at the language of the brochures, the mission seemed to want to present themselves as somewhat of a benevolent colonial force, claiming territories as colonies for Norway acquired through the Gospel rather than by weapons (MDA, 1950h). The emphasis of the exhibition seemed to be more on what made them different from actual colonists though, as they tried to present themselves as a positive influence on the natives of the fields. This image also seemed to be adopted by those visiting, as one article described the mission's cultural influence as "flawless" in comparison to the negative impact of other Western actors (MDA, 1949g). This again reflects the idea of the mission propaganda, in that the mission wanted to present itself as the only truly qualified actor to help the heathens of the mission fields (Gullestad, 2007, 34). Even so, the usage of colonial language does show that there was a perceived connection between the mission movement and the colonial project (Kaunda & Hewitt, 2015, 384), which the mission was only partially interested in denying.

Another thing the exhibition aimed to do was challenge the negative stereotypes related to the "home front" of the organization. Throughout all the coverage around the exhibition, the

stereotype of the “Stocking-knitting women’s association” as something silly or negative was repeated, and some of the correspondence revealed that these negative stereotypes caused legitimate issues for the exhibition.

The inclusion of a section about the “home front” in the exhibition showed that the mission wanted to change these stereotypes, but it was also arguably the best proof that the exhibition was intended firstly to function as mission propaganda and not serve some ethnographic purpose. Had the goal of the exhibition been to teach only about the land and culture of Madagascar, Cameroon, South Africa and China, it would have made no sense to include a section about the NMS’ work in Norway. Instead, the inclusion of the Alms box of Gustava Kielland meant that not only did the exhibition want to teach about the work the mission did outside of Norway, which was generally unknown to most – they also wanted that to reflect back on the work of the “home front”, to make it appear more significant and positive. This was best summarized in one of the anniversary books, where the exhibition had finally showed what the “despised stocking-knitting women’s associations have fought for in sacrifice and prayer from 1850 till today” (own translation) (Nodeland, 1951, 147). Through this, the stereotypes of the mission in Norway were recontextualized into the larger narrative of the mission’s work out in the world. This was reflected clearly in the publications for mission friends, which focused heavily on how the exhibition changed the perception of the mission among the general population.

6.3.1 Summary

To recap, it appears that in regard to the mission and its missionaries, the exhibition aimed to present them positively in all ways. The missionaries were presented through a sort of hero-narrative, in which they were both heroic and self-sacrificing, leaning into the orientalist discourse but also reflecting the humbleness of mission propaganda, an idea that was not only presented in the exhibition but also built into its organization and execution. The NMS as an organization was presented as a Norwegian ambassador and benevolent colonial force, where they were seen as a much better alternative than other European actors on the mission fields, while still being reluctant to be presented completely separate

from them. The “home front” was recontextualized into the new and more positive image of the mission, which solidifies the assumption that the goal of the exhibition first and foremost was mission propaganda.

6.4 Presenting the relation between

When looking at the connection between the presentation of the mission field and the mission, I believe that a version of the colonial discourse can be seen in which the defining division was between heathendom and Christianity. In this, the segregation was between missionaries and heathen religious leaders rather than the natives, implying that there was nothing that fundamentally separated the natives from being like the missionaries. This discourse did not, however, give a fair representation of the position of the native, rendering them passive and silent.

A fundamental aspect of the colonial discourse is the dualistic segregation, between colonizer and colonized, metropoles and colonies, and other opposites (Gullestad, 2007, 23). A similar division can be seen in the metaphor of light and dark, which was used actively in the exhibition to present the mission and the fields. As established, the media coverage showed how the mission actively used the imagery of light and dark to present their fight against heathendom. Through this, the medicine man in South Africa, the magician in Madagascar and Cameroon, and the Chinese priest were all associated with heathendom and darkness, while the mission was the representative of Christianity and the light, and the missionaries the ones who could enable the natives to be brought from dark to light through the gospel.

This idea was not only present in the language of the missionaries, but also in two of the most central elements of the exhibition, namely the light map and light globe. In both cases, they showed a world map that was dark with the only sources of light being the mission stations, indicating that without the mission, everything would be dark. Seeing as the dark

was connected to heathendom, and living in heathendom was equal to living in suffering in the exhibition's presentation, this reenforced the message of the mission propaganda where the missionaries were presented as the only ones who could help the natives. This imagery was not an accidental one; Gullestad (2007, 28-29) highlights how the imagery of light and dark was common in the mission's presentation of their work in the fields, and in an article in *Misjonstidende*, it was written how the light map showed "God's light and victory in the darkness of heathendom" (own translation) (Misjonstidende, 1948b), indicating that the mission new full well what these two elements communicated, and that they celebrated it. The centrality and status of these two exhibition-elements also indicate that this imagery was important for the mission.

This sets the stage for a narrative which could be seen as fundamental for the NMS' version of the colonial discourse. The core idea of mission propaganda was that the heathen natives were in desperate need of help, and that only the missionaries could save them. Meanwhile, in the metaphor of light and dark, the missionaries were the representatives of light and Christianity, while the magicians and medicine men, *not* the natives, were presented as the agents of darkness of heathendom. Thus, the fundamental division in the discourse was between the missionaries and the magicians, not between the missionaries and the natives.

Dagbladet wrote about how the exhibition presented poor heathen children who needed to be saved by brave white men from ugly magicians (MDA, 1949k). Taking inspiration from Spivak (1988, 297), I will argue that a central narrative of the mission exhibition was about "white missionaries saving colored natives from dark magicians". The exhibition seems to have been built on an idea of a battle between brave, self-sacrificing missionaries on one side, championing light and Christianity, against the magicians championing heathendom and darkness on the other. In this battle, they fought over the influence over the natives. From the mission's perspective, this was a battle to save the natives from the control of darkness and heathendom, exemplified by the light maps in which the light of the mission station fought back the darkness of the heathendom. In this perspective, it also makes sense why the mission wanted to associate themselves with colonial imagery, as it in their

perspective was a battle and a conquering of territory, only on a spiritual rather than military level. This narrative of battle was also reflected in the media coverage, best shown again by the article about Martha Palm, where her work in South Africa was framed as a battle against the medicine men (MDA, 1950p).

This idea can be found reflected in two of the films presented. In both *Han* and *Medicine Man*, the life of a child is at risk. In *Medicine Man* (Solberg, 1956), both the remedies of the medicine man and the mission's hospital were presented as options, but the mission was rejected in favor of the medicine man, and as a consequence the child died. Meanwhile, in *Han* (Bryan, 1948), the child was sent to the mission, and thus it survived. When compared like this, the implication seems to be that the mission, and thus Christianity, brought life, while the medicine man, the agent of heathendom, caused death.

The NMS' version seems to have shared many attributes with the common colonial discourse. There was a clear dualistic segregation, marked by light and dark, Christian and heathen, and the heroic presentation of the mission and missionaries showed many of the Western qualities of orientalist discourse (McLeod, 2010, 52-55). However, the fundamental dualistic segregation was between missionary and magician, Christianity and heathendom. Though the natives were presented as heathen in much of the exhibition, heathendom was not an essential part of the natives – the message of the mission's work was that the natives could become Christian. This means that the defining divide in the NMS-discourse, heathendom, was something that could be "overcome"; the natives could stop being heathens and become Christians. Thus, the natives were not presented as essentially different from missionaries and Norwegians, reflecting the fact that the mission believed all humans to be the children of God (Gullestad, 2007, 28). In this way, the NMS' version also differed from the common colonial discourse, in that they presented the natives as fully human, or at least capable of becoming so (McLeod, 2010, 44).

This is not to claim that the exhibition presented the people of the mission fields as entirely equal to Norwegians except a difference in religion; there were definitely presentations of the mission fields as primitive, and even converted natives were presented as needing help. However, as previously established, the exhibition did present cultural practices more neutrally when divorced from heathen practices, and there is data implying that the mission presented natives as capable of developing when they were "freed" from their heathendom.

But what of the heathen natives in this discourse, how did this fight-narrative present them? For one, they were presented as passive. In the imagery of light and dark, the natives were presented as either under the controlling darkness of the magicians, or they were being liberated by the Christian light of the mission. In either case, they weren't presented as really making any choices or playing an active role. The only exception is perhaps the active choice of becoming Christian, which was an important part of the mission's understanding of conversion (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991, 203-204). But when Han made the choice to become Christian in *Han* (Bryan, 1948), it was after spending the entire film being passively or actively affected by Christian actors around him, making it less about his agency, and more about the convincing efforts of the mission. This is an aspect of colonial discourses that has been criticized heavily, as the natives have been proven to have taken a very active role in the negotiation of their own religious lives (Drønen, 2009b, 8-9). This also shows that, even if the NMS' version of the colonial discourse arguably presented the natives as fully human and as subjects when they had converted to Christianity, they still rendered them as just objects in their narrative when they were heathen.

In an extension of this, the simplistic understanding of religious choice presented in the narrative was most likely untrue. As previously established, though it is impossible to know through the material presented in the exhibition, it is reasonable to assume that the religious experiences of the natives did not conform to such a simple choice between either Christianity or heathendom. As addressed by the Comaroffs (1991, 238-257), natives were unlikely to abandon all of their cultural and religious practices even if they converted to Christianity, instead creating bricolages of their faith, and not adopt the missionaries'

exclusive understanding of religion. In such a case, it is unreasonable to assume that heathendom could have been experienced even remotely as negatively as the mission presented it by the natives, and it is probable that they didn't share the impression that they needed to be "saved" from their religious beliefs. But since issues like these probably were edited out of the exhibition, as was common for mission propaganda (Gullestad, 2007, 30-35), it is impossible to know what the real religious landscape of the fields was like.

What is probable, however, is that the exhibition did not provide a completely truthful representation of the situation. This would mean that the missionaries, who had experiences from the field, probably knew that the presentation they gave was not entirely truthful, bringing into question whether or not they believed in their own discourse. In that case, the exhibition cannot be said to have been a true presentation of how the missionaries experienced the fields, but rather an edited version of what they wanted to present to the Norwegian audience.

6.4.1 Summary

To summarize the entire presentation of the exhibition, the mission presented an image of itself and the fields replicating some of the ideas of the colonial discourse, while at the same time clearly being mission propaganda. The fundamental division in the NMS-version of the colonial discourse appears to have been heathendom, which was presented as being responsible for all the natives' suffering, and also as something which could be overcome. Beyond heathendom, the natives and their cultural practices were presented much more – though not entirely – neutrally and competently. Though they were often presented as primitive, they were also presented as capable of achieving development, and not fundamentally different from the missionaries and normal Norwegians, reflecting the mission's view of all people being created in God's image. This did not entirely include women, though, as the exhibition reconfirmed sexist narratives, though with exceptions. It is however unlikely that this presentation was truthful, even in the eyes of the missionaries – the mission's simplistic representation of the religious realities of the mission field and the exclusive choice presented for the natives has been proven to be untrue by other authors,

and it seems likely that the mission had intentionally edited out any presentation contradicting this simplistic image. The mission's narratives also rendered the heathen natives as passive objects existing only to be saved by the missionaries, reenforcing the idea of the mission propaganda that the only thing capable of saving the natives was the missionaries. As this most likely was not a reflection of reality, it brings into question whether the mission fully believed its own presentation, or if they – more likely – knowingly altered it to create an image that would gather more support for the mission.

6.5 The natives present

Knowing now what the exhibition did communicate about the mission fields and mission, the presence of natives at the exhibition seemed to have little impact on it, beyond undermining the message about the native's potential by exotifying their presence.

There were in total four natives who visited the exhibition, all of them male: the South African pastor Msomi, the Malagasy dental student Razafinzato, the Malagasy student Razanajohary, and the Malagasy pastor Andrianarijoana. All of them were educated, probably through the mission, and were thus likely to have interpellated the missionaries' ideas, making them less likely to challenge any presentation (McLeod, 2010, 22-23). Their education would probably also disqualify them somewhat as subalterns in the view of Spivak (1988, 296-299), as they were likely to have been taught Western ideas and shared a perspective on the world with the missionaries. The fact that they were all male could also be understood as leaning into the idea of men as fruit (Gullestad, 2007, 162-165) – the inclusion of these Christian African men in the exhibition thus served as proof of the mission's success, making them a boon to the project of mission propaganda.

Because looking through the data, the greatest contribution of these natives seems to have been to be seen. Razanajohary and Andrianarijoana did speak as part of the exhibition, but

Razanajohary only held two lectures (MDA, 1950b), and Andrianarijoana was only tasked with guiding the mission's own youth groups – as well as being referred to only as "a 'proper' Malagasy" (own translation) rather than by his own name (MDA, 1950s). Msomi did hold a sermon and speak a few times, but only to celebrate the mission's work in South Africa (MDA, 1949f), and in the mission's own publications, his greatest contribution was presented as "smiling his way into everyone's hearts" (Nodeland, 1951, 149). Similarly, the only communicated contribution of Msomi and Razafinzato during the exhibition's stay in Oslo was to turn on the light globe at the start of the exhibition (MDA, 1949i).

It seems that the presence of actual natives at the exhibition mainly served the purpose of exotifying it, as their knowledge of their own home regions were overshadowed by the competence of the missionaries, both in the media coverage and in the NMS' publications for the mission friends. It appears as if the natives present at the exhibition had the effect of re-objectifying themselves – even though these were educated, Christian natives, and thus proof of the possibility of natives to "overcome" heathendom and become developed subjects, their most important contribution to the exhibition was to be seen, as objects.

This could be explained by the fact that the natives were not in Norway for the purpose of the exhibition, but rather for other reasons, and were simply invited to come since they were in the country. This idea is reenforced by the internal correspondence letter sent to Razanajohary, which only scheduled him for two lectures, as they feared he might be tired after a long summer (MDA, 1950b). However, this led to the issue of the actual natives appearing as less competent than the missionaries when talking about their own homes – this might not have been the intended goal of inviting them, as the natives were given chances to talk about their home regions, but the impression presented both in the media coverage and in the NMS' own publications was that the natives were mainly curiosities that one could see at the exhibition. It thus seems like the exhibition failed to present the natives as subjects which could be interacted with (Simpson, 1996, 3-4), even when they were physically present in the exhibition.

Unfortunately, the data did not include much information about what the natives said at the exhibition, and nothing about their own opinions or reflections. Msomi was quoted on talking well about the mission's work in South Africa, but it is impossible to say what his motivation behind it was. It could have been in genuine support of the mission, as an act to distance himself from other heathen natives and show his dedication to the mission (Fairweather, 2007, 27); he could have interpellated the NMS-version of the colonial discourse, believing thusly in its significance (McLeod, 2010, 22-23); or he could have been opposed to everything the exhibition presented, but felt forced to conform to and agree with the imagery presented in the exhibition (McLean, 2012, 607). It is impossible to know, as there are no available records of the natives' opinions in any of the presented archive material.

In an extension of this, no natives were at any point included in the planning or organization of the exhibition – all decisions were made by Norwegian missionaries in Norway. The mission could have included natives in the process, as proven by their presence, something which would have strengthened the exhibition's legitimacy and made it more trustworthy in a postcolonial lens (Dixon, 2012, 84). However, the mission chose not to consult natives when they made the exhibition. Whether this was a deliberate choice, or if the option simply didn't think of including them, is of less importance – the point is that this shows that the mission chose to present their version of the mission fields, and their version of the meeting between missionary and native.

6.5.1 Summary

Looking then at the presence of native as a whole, it appears that they did not challenge the exhibition in any way – if this was because they supported it, or felt like they could not challenge it, is impossible to say. Though the mission might have intended otherwise, the main contribution of the natives present appears to have been to be there and appear exotic. This led to the objectification of the natives, which undermined the message of the exhibition which presented the natives as fundamentally human and subjects, especially

considering the natives present at the exhibition were educated and Christian men, and thus the peak of the mission's achievement. The presence of natives also didn't seem to have made any impact on the presentation of the fields, indicating that the mission saw themselves as competent enough to teach about the fields without their help – or more likely, that they only wanted to present their version of reality at the exhibition.

7 Conclusion

How did the NMS present its mission fields and itself through the early years of the mission exhibition “To the End of the Earth”? Two things were fundamental to this presentation. Firstly, it seems clear that the exhibition fell into the category of mission propaganda: it provided an informative and educational presentation of the land and culture of the mission fields, but only in such a way and with such a focus as to show that they were in need of a help that only the mission could provide. Secondly, the exhibition appears to have been built on an NMS-version of the colonial discourse, in which Christianity versus heathendom was the fundamental division, while other dividers like primitive and civilized were presented as more developmental.

This created a two-fold presentation of the native and the mission fields. On one hand, they were presented as competent and capable of achieving the same things as the missionaries, if only given the chance. On the other hand, the mission fields were presented as being under the dark influence of heathendom, which was equated with suffering. In this presentation, the natives’ potential was conditional upon their religious status; though there wasn’t a fundamental difference between the potential of the colored natives and the white missionaries, as the mission saw all people as the children of God, heathendom was presented as an absolute barrier for the natives, preventing them from achieving their potential or doing anything other than suffer.

Notably, it was not the natives but the missionaries that were capable of overcoming this barrier in the exhibition’s presentation. Through a narrative of battle, in which the missionaries were presented as fighting against the dark, heathen influence of medicine men and other heathen leaders, they were presented as heroic, self-sacrificing saviors, that not only gave up many years of their lives to save others, but also did so under great discomfort and with danger to health. This same heroic narrative was extended to the organization of the NMS, which was shown as a benevolent colonial force fighting back against the darkness of heathendom across the world. The hero-imagery was even extended partially back to the

mission friends in Norway, as their support was celebrated for being fundamental in the mission's success.

One consequence of this narrative of battle was that the natives were rendered as passive objects – either they were victims under the control of the medicine man, or they were saved by the missionaries. Though they were presented as more competent and agentic when not under the oppression of heathendom – and thus more like acting subjects rather than objects – they were still at times shown as infantile and in need of the mission's supervision.

This was especially true in the case of the natives that actually were present at the exhibition. These were all educated, Christian males who had seemingly overcome both the religious and developmental divisions presented in the NMS' version of the colonial discourse, indicating that they should have been seen as equal subjects. Even so, their presence at the exhibition was seen as being mainly exotifying and exciting rather than informative, which led to a re-objectification of the natives. Whether this was what the exhibition wanted to communicate, or if it was a byproduct of their general presentation, is hard to say.

It seems clear that the exhibition "To the Ends of the Earth", though promoted as teaching about the life and culture of the mission fields, first and foremost was about the mission and missionaries. This was reflected in the very exhibition – not only were the missionaries the guides of the exhibition, sharing *their* experiences of the mission fields, but most of the artefacts also stemmed from their personal collections, reflecting that this was their presentation of these things.

In an extension of this, it seems apparent that the presentation of the mission fields and the natives was conditional upon whether it benefitted the mission or not. The natives were

presented as competent and as having the potential to achieve great things – together with being presented as fundamentally human, this made them appear as worthy of being saved. At the same time, heathendom was shown as the great cause of their suffering, both because that meant that the natives needed to be saved, and because heathendom was not only something that could be "overcome", thus making it possible for the natives to be saved – but it was also specifically the thing that the mission as a religious organization was fighting against. Thus, the competence of the natives was dependent upon their religious status, whether they were heathen or Christian, and in their presentation, the NMS made themselves the only ones who could help the natives make that change.

It is also possible that the claim that the NMS presented the natives as equal once they were Christian is giving them too much credit, as they still presented converts as being in need of the mission's help. Though the developmental differences were presented not as fundamental, they were still differences, making mission fields and mission different. This idea was also severely undermined by the presence of the natives at the exhibition – these natives had overcome both the heathen and the developmental divide, but still ended up being seen as exotic objects rather than subject-equals of the mission. It is possible that this was the intended message of the mission, in that they actually did not want to present the natives as capable of becoming equal. Another possibility is that the hero-narrative made the missionaries appear so great that it was impossible for the natives to compare. Even though the divide presented in the exhibition was between missionary and medicine man, the distance between native and missionary might have appeared as so great that the native never could be seen as an equal by the Norwegian audience.

In the end, it is important to remember that this was a presentation of what the NMS wanted to convey about the mission fields and themselves. The simplistic presentation of the religious landscape of the mission fields was very unlikely to be a true representation of the religious realities that faced both natives and missionaries, and it is likely that the missionaries were aware of this, and intentionally chose to present it differently. The exhibition can thus not be said to be a presentation simply of how the mission and

missionaries experienced the mission fields, but an intentionally edited version, made to promote the significance and need of the NMS, often to the detriment of the presentation of the mission fields and its natives.

One limitation of this study is its time scope – it only studies the first three out of 12 years of the exhibition. Future studies can benefit the understanding of the exhibition by focusing on other periods, or its entire life span, to see if the same messaging was consistent throughout or if the message changed over time. Similarly, the material presented in this thesis was limited predominantly to what the NMS had stored in their archives. Different viewpoints and understandings of the exhibition are likely to be acquired by using other sources. Of especial interest would be the viewpoints of the natives that were present at the exhibition or other subaltern opinions about it, though these might be hard to get a hold of.

In the mission exhibition “To the Ends of the Earth”, the NMS presented itself as a morally superior actor among the colored people of the world compared to other Western actors, and their cultural efforts were presented as “flawless”. Though they at times presented the mission fields quite ethnographically, and their version of the colonial discourse presented the natives as less fundamentally different, it is generous at best to give the exhibition credit for presenting the natives and mission fields truthfully – the exhibition served one purpose before any other; to promote the significance of and need for the NMS and its heroic, self-sacrificing missionaries.

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