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*MISSION PROPAGANDA: A STUDY OF FORM, COLONIAL ATTITUDES,*  
  
AND FEMINISM IN MARIA THERESIA LEDÓCHOWSKA'S  
  
NEWSPAPER PUBLICATION

by

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines *Mission Propaganda*, a newspaper-style publication distributed by the St. Peter Claver Sodalität, an association of nuns, lay-members, and subscribers founded by Maria Theresia Ledóchowska in 1894. The “sodality” was dedicated to supporting Catholic missionary work in Africa, and advocated for the liberation of African slaves.

Ledóchowska used *Mission Propaganda* to encourage Europeans to support the African missions. She also used it to inform Europeans about African culture. She

attempted to create a connection between the need for Catholic missionary work in Africa and the need for reform in Europe. She believed Europeans needed moral, religious, and social reform just as the Africans did. One area of social reform Ledóchowska focused on was women's rights. Although tame in comparison to other more vociferous feminists of the day, Ledóchowska dedicated much of her effort toward encouraging women to take a more active role in society. She masterfully employed both innovative formatting and interesting content to make *Mission Propaganda* an effective tool to achieve her purposes.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Although my comments may be brief, my gratitude will endure well beyond the time I've spent working on this thesis. I would like to first thank Dr. Robert McFarland. I was first introduced to Maria Theresia Ledóchowska's work through one of his courses. He also set me on a track to begin doing undergraduate research. I also express my thanks to Dr. Michelle James. She gave me guidance on what to do as I headed over to Austria to locate some of the long-forgotten texts written by Ledóchowska. She is also the founder of what has become the *Sophie Project*. A project dedicated to the recuperation of neglected women's literature, art, music, drama, etc. My work with Ledóchowska falls under the umbrella of the Sophie Project.

I am deeply grateful for all of the patient coaching I have received from my thesis advisor, Dr. Cindy Brewer. She helped me to organize my thoughts in the initial phases of writing this thesis. She has also consistently and effectively offered her insights about Ledóchowska's work. She is truly an expert in the field.

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## Section 1

### Introduction: “What Do You Do With a Problem Like Maria?”

Maria Theresia Ledóchowska, born April 29, 1863 in Loosdorf, Austria, was an influential woman in Europe from the mid 1890s through the time of her death on July 6, 1922. She founded the St. Peter Claver-Sodalität on April 29, 1894. This Sodality still exists today under the name “Missionary Sisters of St. Peter Claver” (Walzer 93). In Ledóchowska’s time it was an organization of Catholic nuns committed to supporting Catholic missionary work in Africa. They focused on raising funds to buy Africans out of slavery and for educating these freed slaves in Catholic doctrine and European culture.

Ledóchowska was a gifted writer and was enthusiastic about missionary work. She gave many speeches throughout Europe, wrote plays, and oversaw production of a number of periodicals produced by the Sodality. One notable publication was a periodical in newspaper form entitled *Mission Propaganda*.

Ledóchowska was influential as an activist for missionary work and also worked to improve the social standing of women in Europe and Africa. Ledóchowska died in Rome on July 9, 1922, and was beatified by Pope Paul VI on October 19, 1975.<sup>1</sup> Although she accomplished much during her life, and was a prolific writer, not much scholarly attention has been given to her. There are some possible explanations for this neglect.

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<sup>1</sup> For a biographical outline of Ledóchowska’s life see, <http://www.srsclaver.de/links.htm>.  
Sophie Journal

Laura Wildenthal's book entitled *German Woman for Empire* discusses the impact of European women during the colonial period in Africa. In a personal conversation between Wildenthal and Dr. Michelle James of the BYU German department, Wildenthal literally threw up her hands when asked about missionary women. She said she does not know what to do with them. Ledóchowska is one of these missionary women Wildenthal was referring to. Yes, she was one of the most productive colonial writers during that time period, and she tackled hard issues such slavery in Africa and women's role in society. However, she was a religious writer, tied to the Catholic Church and its missions in Africa. This puts a different twist on Ledóchowska than on other colonial writers.

Scholarly work dealing with colonial literature has traditionally focused on texts written by men. However, within the last two decades, the amount of academic investigation into women's colonial literature has surged. But mission literature seems to be in a category of its own and is rarely included in studies of colonial literature as a whole. From the historical and anthropological standpoint, there are two groundbreaking books on the subject of women missionaries. These are *Women and Missions* by Fiona Bowie and *Gendered Missions* by Mary Huber. Other books have been written specifically about German-speaking missions in Africa, but give no attention to the literary contributions of women missionaries. Two examples are *Christliche Mission und deutscher Imperialismus*, by Horst Gründer, and Gert Paczensky's *Teurer Segen: Christliche Mission und Kolonialismus*.

Since she is a female missionary writing colonial literature, many scholars have overlooked Ledóchowska's work. Most of what has been written about her is written from either a biographical or religious standpoint. Until recently, almost no scholarly

investigation has been pursued about the cultural, social, or political perspectives of her work. Cindy Brewer, of Brigham Young University, has written about Ledóchowska's fictional texts, such as the dramas *Von Hütte zu Hütte* and *Zaida, das Negermädchen*. There is, however, no scholarly assessment of Ledóchowska's non-fictional texts to date. Since it would not be possible to examine all her non-fictional works within the length and time constraints of an a honor's thesis, this project will offer the first analysis of one of Ledóchowska's most interesting and innovative projects. I will focus specifically on her newspaper periodical entitled *Mission Propaganda*.



## Section 2

### Formal Aspects of *Mission Propaganda*: Embracing the Literary Style of the Modern Metropolis.

In order to grasp the significance of Maria Theresia Ledóchowska's work it is imperative to understand the time period in which she lived. Her most prolific and influential years were during the first two decades of the twentieth century. She took an active role in an exciting period of cultural change that started near the end of the 1800s and lasted through the early 1900s. This was a period of expanding empires, cities, industries, and political movements. It was an age of emancipation for many groups of people. It was during this period that the feminist movement gained strength. The stage on which most of these changes, movements, and expansions took place was that of the booming modern metropolis. This period of growth brought with it a new literary form that represented the city—the modern newspaper.

Ledóchowska embraced this budding means of disseminating information. The first edition of her monthly newspaper entitled *Mission Propaganda* was published in October of 1914. Prior to this time her organization—St. Petrus Claver-Sodalität—had focused primarily on a publication called *Echo aus Afrika*, published in a magazine-style format. Ledóchowska also published a number of dramas. By adding *Mission Propaganda* to her repertoire she expanded her readership to those who preferred the short, segmented style of newspapers to lengthier magazine articles.

Ledóchowska used modern newspaper-formatting techniques in order to win over city readers. In this section, I will first briefly describe what society was like at that time

in Europe and what the newspaper's role was in that cultural setting. I will then discuss the ways in which the newspaper format adapted to the changing culture at the turn of the century. Finally, I will focus specifically on the formal aspects of *Mission Propaganda* and show why it was a logical—and likely effective—means of helping to meet the goals of the St. Petrus-Claver-Sodalität.

Many of the cultural, political, and societal changes that took place around the turn of the century can be linked indirectly—if not directly—to the birth of major cities. Of course the basic concept of a city is nothing new, but near the end of the nineteenth century society began to build up cities to an unprecedented scale. The modern metropolis was born. The industrial revolution had brought a huge influx of people to the cities. Many people left their life of farming and followed the siren call of success in the rapidly growing metropolis. The city became fertile ground for ideas, cultures, and customs to be changed as well as exchanged. Anything was possible. This was the stage on which Ledóchowska was seeking to gain support for the Catholic missions in Africa with her publications. In his book *Reading Berlin*, Peter Fritzsche described the modern city in the following manner:

The urban setting was regarded as largely unknown territory. This was not because technical handicaps or inadequate knowledge or even social disdain had left parts of the city unexplored, like the blank spaces on a European's nineteenth-century map of Africa, but rather because the industrial city was such a brand new conglomeration. Its mystery lay in its perpetual newness and in the fleeting and abrupt nature of its movements.

(97)

This “unknown” aspect of the metropolis was one of its most defining characteristics. In

contrast with rural settings, life in the city was fast-paced. In the past country dwellers could live out their life in a farm home and little would change in their lifetime. People were simply used to living life in one way and in one place. Life in the city vastly different. Things changed at a pace people had not experienced before. What used to be a bakery on the corner could be a bank a few years later. What was once the home of a childhood friend could soon be replaced by an office building. Time-honored truth could easily fall victim to the next scientific theory or discovery. It seemed nothing was immune to change when it became part of the modern city.

The fast-paced lifestyle of the city brought with it fast-paced reading. This is where newspapers really gained popularity. The words of a critic in 1913, with Fritzsche's accompanying comments, bring this idea to life:

“And when do I read? On the streetcar, on the platform of the omnibus, in an entryway during a rain shower, in the half-hour before falling asleep.” Moreover, he added, the reading material had to complement this busy, unmistakably metropolitan routine better than “long-winded plots, a horse-and-buggy style, and deep psychological analysis.” (41)

As this quote indicates, the rapidly expanding literary genre for urban readers at the turn of the century was the newspaper. City-dwellers didn't always have time to sit down and read a lengthy article. They wanted to pick up a paper and be able to do two things: First, determine at a glance what articles are of interest to them. And secondly, be able to quickly digest the contents of the articles they chose to read.

In the constantly changing environment of the metropolis, people became evermore dependant on the daily newspaper for up-to-date information. In consideration of the earlier statement by Peter Fritzsche about the “unexplored” nature of the city, we

can view the daily newspaper as a type of “guidebook” to maneuvering one’s way through the newest societal, political, and cultural changes. Fritzsche notes the following:

The great text of the big city around the turn of the century had a wide range of authors. Any number of genres—the novel, drama, vaudeville, photography, advertisements—represented the metropolis. But none was as indispensable or as focused on the metropolis as the mass-circulation newspaper. It was the most versatile guide to the huge and ever-changing inventory of the industrial city. By the end of the nineteenth century, most city people read newspapers and, often enough, only newspapers. (15)

Ledóchowska harnessed this popularity and power of newspapers in order to accomplish the goals of her organization. These goals were to support Catholic missionary work in Africa, and to free African slaves.

As newspapers gained popularity, they also become more innovative. Prior to the early 1900s, newspapers were mostly a compilation of lengthy articles written almost exclusively in small print. The idea was to pack as much print onto one page as possible. Aesthetics were secondary. However, as time moved on some newspaper companies began to change their format in order meet the needs of the changing city population, and in order to attract more readers. One of the pioneer newspapers was Berlin’s *Berliner Zeitung* (BZ). Peter Fritzsche describes the paper in the following way:

While most Berlin newspapers used headlines sparingly, BZ generally topped one or two columns with two-line headers large enough to be read by passersby at a distance, and soon wrapped the front page with an additional banner headline. Since BZ was bundled, distributed, and sold folded along its width, the top half of the paper, with the distinctive title

header and headlines, had the bold, economical look of a poster. No other paper—as a glance at streetside kiosks confirms—promised exciting stories presented in such readable form. The rest of the layout was inviting as well. Large typeface facilitated reading while subheads broke up the uniformity of columns of print. In addition, editors left ample room between stories, giving the paper a clean, spare look. *BZ am Mittag*'s front page was designed as a “show window” to entice readers and encourage browsers. To sell the news it literally dressed up the news. (135)

Fritzsche gives some good examples of what the major formatting innovations were that made newspapers attractive to people living in the city at the turn of the century.

Interestingly, Ledóchowska's *Mission Propaganda* reflected all of the innovations mentioned above. It had a bold title, which took up about a quarter of the front page. Articles within the paper were given interesting bold-type headings such as “Die Sklaverei der Frau,” and “Eine bekehrte Zauberin” (Oct. 1914, 2 and Dec. 1914, 3 respectively). These headings caught both the eye and interest of readers.

The paper was very well laid out. A page consisted of two columns with a generous margin next to each. In general, articles were kept to no longer than a half page. Lines also separated the articles from each other. This facilitated the quick reading style of many city-dwelling newspaper readers. Of course, such a format seems commonplace to us today, but at the time Ledóchowska started publishing her newspaper, such techniques were considered new.

Another modern innovation Ledóchowska used in *Mission Propaganda* was photography. Photography was emerging as a powerful addition to the modern

newspaper. One of the pioneers in combining short texts with photographs, Felix Salten,<sup>2</sup> would include photos along with his written articles about the Wurstelprater in Vienna (an amusement park). Up until this time period, pictures in newspapers were scarce, and, if included, were normally mere sketches or relief cuts put to ink. Catching snapshots of humanity on film and combining them with a short, “snapshot” article, was in harmony with the *Zeitgeist* of the cities in the early 1900s.

Ledóchowska seems to have recognized the power of this new style. She laced interesting photos throughout *Mission Propaganda* to give the readers a virtual visit to the mission-lands of Africa. Rather than snapshots of urban Europeans, she used interesting photos of Africans in slavery, or of recent converts. Instead of pulling the readership into the intricate world of the modern city, she pulled them into the intriguing life of a missionary in Africa, or that of a slave. Rather than serving as a “guide book” to the modern jungle-like metropolis, *Mission Propaganda* was a “guide book” to the Africa’s more “primitive” jungles. The photos placed the reader in Africa, and let them experience what was there without ever having to leave Europe.

The final element of form in *Mission Propaganda* that I would like to touch on is the feuilleton section, which was always found in the last few pages of the paper. The feuilleton was a new literary form in turn-of-the-century Europe. Most feuilletons dealt with the city, and were used in order to make the unexplored “frontier” of the modern metropolis accessible to readers. The feuilleton broke the chaos of the city down into bite-size scenes of city life.

In the early 1900s the feuilleton section was a vital ingredient in the newspaper. The section had a specific form that it usually followed. Fritzsche describes it in the

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<sup>2</sup> See for example, Mattl’s *Felix Salten*.

following manner:

The feuilleton [...] served up an excess of details. For the most part, the feuilleton writer observed, rather than explained. Just a short sketch, two or three thousand words at most, without any pretensions to analysis and conclusion, the feuilleton was an ideal form for recounting the [...] splendor of the industrial city. (44)

Since the feuilleton serves so well to acquaint the reader with an unfamiliar urban setting, it seems a wise move for Ledóchowska to have used the feuilleton to reach an audience unfamiliar with African mission life. Ledóchowska used the feuilleton section to break the customs, people, and landscapes of the African missions down into an interesting story, providing her readers with short entertaining guides to the African experience. Indeed, Ledóchowska was a forerunner in expanding the scope of the feuilleton's function to areas beyond the urban streets. By using the feuilleton, she to created an index of experience for Europeans, who were unfamiliar with the uncharted scenes and cultures of Africa. *Mission Propaganda's* feuilletons were a key element in attracting the modern city-dwelling readership.

An example of a feuilleton in *Mission Propaganda* comes from the October 1914 edition in which Ledóchowska includes an article about three young African girls who were saved after a flood. The details of how the young girls are found are given: "I turned my boat in that direction and, oh heavens, it was scarcely believable—in indescribable holes, not even fit for animals, were human figures lying on each other" (4). The feuilleton goes on to describe intricately how the girls were later dressed, and how, in spite of limited funds, the mission was able to help them. The many details in this feuilleton serve to pull the reader into a random scene out of distant Africa. This African

feuilleton intrigues readers for many of the same reasons they are intrigued by the urban feuilleton. For the European reader, who knew little about the exotic landscapes, customs, people, and experiences of Africa, such feuilletons offered a “vicarious” African adventure, and enticed readers to commit time, effort, or money to the St. Peter Claver-Sodality.



### Section 3

Cultural Impact of *Mission Propaganda*: Missionary Zeal, Colonial Perceptions, and the “Recolonization” of Europe.

Up to this point I have focused primarily on formal aspects of *Mission Propaganda*; or in other words what it looked like and why it looked the way it did. I will now begin a more thorough examination of its function. I will show that Ledóchowska’s *Mission Propaganda* was not only unique in its layout and presentation, but also in its purposes and content.

While reading through editions of *Mission Propaganda*, I periodically came across articles in which the purpose of either the St. Peter Claver-Sodality or of *Mission Propaganda* itself would be stated. One such article stated, “[Der] Zweck der Sodalität ist die Ausbreitung des Reiches Gottes in Afrika, die Seelenrettung der Neger und die Befreiung der Sklaven” (Dec. 1914, 6). The primary goal was to free slaves and convert Africans to Catholicism. However, upon reading through *Mission Propaganda* it is apparent that, although it is not stated explicitly, there is an additional goal: to promote social reform among Europeans as well. Much of *Mission Propaganda*’s content deals with this topic. In this section I will center my discussion on both the stated and unstated goals of the St. Peter Claver-Sodality. I will first set a background by discussing briefly what some of the predominant beliefs were in Europe about colonizing and doing missionary work in Africa. Then I will compare the stereotypical European view of

Africans to the way they are portrayed by articles included in *Mission Propaganda*.

Finally, I will discuss how colonization and missionary work affected Africans and how Ledóchowska hoped to “recolonize” and convert Europeans with her work.

As more and more European powers staked their claims to Africa, Christianity and colonization were touted as functioning hand in hand. There were a number of ways in which this was supposed to work. One method was described by a missionary who submitted an article to *Mission Propaganda* with some suggestions on how to effectively establish a mission in Africa. He writes:

Den [...]Weg schlägt der Missionär ein, wenn er die Missionsstation auf einer Farm errichtet. Auf dieser Farm werden die Kaffern angesiedelt. Jährlich bezahlen sie dem Missionär eine Pacht von 20, 40 oder 60 Mark. Hier sucht nun der Missionär die Schwarzen zu bekehren. Solche Missionsfarmen bilden auch Stützpunkte der Zivilisation. Da der Missionär in materieller wie geistiger Hinsicht die Leute unter seiner Autorität hat, werden Ortschaften gebildet, die sich gut entwickeln. Es muß hervorgehoben werden, daß der Einfluß einer solchen Missionsfarm nie ohne Frucht ist. Sie räumt die heidnischen Gebräuche und die Zauberei aus dem Wege. (May 1915, 3)

This missionary is proposing a plan, which would have Christianization and colonization of Africa working in a symbiotic relationship. However, as the last sentence of the quote above might indicate, the relationship between European and African culture was often less symbiotic. Author David Cowles provides valuable insight into possible reasons for this in his book, *The Critical Experience*:

...Scholars assume that truth looks the same wherever you travel. But we

generally measure truth only by what looks the same as what our culture has. If another culture possesses what seems familiar, we proclaim it universal truth. We can accept Others because they are like us in their thoughts, behaviors, and responses to life. We stop at the similarities and avoid the implications of differences. As Western observers, we can then safely assume that if others do not come to Western civilization's truth, they are backward, heathen, pagan, undeveloped, or inferior. After all, our advanced culture has the technology to prove its superiority. (264)

Belief in the innate superiority of European culture over African culture was common among colonizers and missionaries alike. To colonize or civilize the Africans was often little more than an attempt to make Africans act like Europeans, or at least do what the Europeans wanted them to do. Even after colonization and Christianization, many Europeans felt that Africans were an inferior people.

The late 1800's and early 1900's saw the rise of many racist theories and dogmas, which influenced the attitude many people had toward both colonization and missionary work in Africa. Some were presented on theological grounds and others were backed by scientific "data". I begin by giving an example of the latter. *Social Darwinism* took hold in the minds of many intellectuals during the late 1800s. This theory taught that Europeans were part of a vastly superior race, and that people such as the black Africans were a totally different species, more akin to animals than to advanced human beings (Brewer 27). Darwin claimed that natural selection would eventually see to the extinction of such inferior races (See Darwin, *The Descent of Man*). Some Europeans even went so far as to assert that any humanitarian efforts on behalf of the Africans were misguided, because they would only prolong the suffering of a species already marked for extinction

(See Brehl).

Some used religion instead of (or in addition to) science as their grounds to justify slavery or poor treatment of blacks. These Europeans referenced the biblical “curse of Ham,” a commonly-held theory based on the account found in Genesis 9: 20-25:

20. And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: 21. And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. 22. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without[...]24. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. 25. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. (*The Holy Bible*, King James Version)

Black Africans were thought to have descended from those living in Canaan. Throughout the modern history of slavery, this curse was often referenced to justify slavery.<sup>3</sup> This made it easier to believe that blacks were naturally in a degenerate state.

Some Europeans seemed to view Africans as a people who had no hope of spiritual salvation. Based on her writings—as well as articles authored by others, that she chose to include in *Mission Propaganda*—Ledóchowska did not share such beliefs. In the April 1915 edition of *Mission Propaganda* she wrote, “Die Liebe rief einst diesen Kreuzzug ins Leben, Liebe zu Millionen armer Neger, die unverdienterweise der Gnadenschätze der hl. Religion und des auch für sie vergossenen kostbaren Blutes Christi nicht teilhaftig werden können” (1). Here she implies that black Africans are included in the people for whom Christ shed his blood, and proclaims love as the motivation for her

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<sup>3</sup> For as history of Christian views on slavery and the so-called “curse of Ham” see Goldenberg’s, *The Curse of Ham*.

work. In the October, 1914 edition Ledóchowska wrote:

Dem Heiligen Geist verdanken wir unsere Heiligung und das daraus hervorgeht, auch unseren Seeleneifer, diesen tatkräftigen Wunsch, dass auch die anderen, daß *alle Menschen* Gott erkennen und zur ewigen Seligkeit gelangen. Die Zunahme an liebe für die katholischen Heidenmissionen unter den Katholiken der zivilisierten Länder *ist also auch ein Werk des Heiligmachenden Geistes.* (1)

The key statement in this quote is “*alle Menschen.*” Ledóchowska believes that *all* devout Catholics can receive spiritual salvation. In another article she wrote, “Jesu Herz will sie alle umschließen, alle an sich ziehen, gleich welcher Nation und Rasse, alle will es nach des Lebens Kampf einziehen sehen in die ewige Heimat” (June 1915, 1). In her opinion, race does not exclude anyone from receiving heavenly rewards. Faith is the determining factor.

A priest serving in one of the African colonies wrote one of the most positive articles in *Mission Propaganda* about native Africans. His article appeared in the February 1916 edition. The article is titled “Wir sind ja Brüder”:

Das traute Bild der hl. Familie, deren Verehrung ja dieser Monat geweiht ist, erinnert uns an die schöne große Wahrheit, daß wir Menschen alle Brüder sind und in den Augen Gottes eine einzige große Familie bilden. Jesus Christus selbst, der uns “seine Brüder” nannte, hat uns gezeigt, in welchem Sinne er die Bruderliebe ausgeübt wissen will. [...] Üben wir alle Hirten-liebe und –sorge aus —besonders an den armen Negern Afrikas, den unglücklichen Kindern unseres himmlischen Vaters, die ohne unsere Hilfe auf ewig verloren gehen, denn wir sind ja Brüder! (3)

Although still expressing a belief in the fallen and unhappy state of the Africans, this priest enthusiastically asserts that Europeans and Africans are all part of the same “heavenly” family. This mindset toward Africans was promoted by Ledóchowska through *Mission Propaganda*.

While *Mission Propaganda* expresses positive views about the African people, it is apparent that Ledóchowska and her associates were not untainted by the racist ideologies of the time. For example, one repeat advertisement included in *Mission Propaganda* had the title, “Ich kauf ein Mohrenkind” (Jan. 1915, 5). Brewer wrote specifically about this advertisement:

The caption briefly outlines various prices for buying black children out of slavery, claiming them as a godchild, and purchasing the right to name them. Representing an effort to free black slaves by inviting donations, the advertisement nonetheless presents the black children as commodities.

When purchased out of slavery, the children become symbolic property in a Christian “marketplace” for donors. (34)

Although the purposes of slavery and missionary work are vastly different, the advertisement mentioned above still reveals a widespread European belief, even within the Sodality, that the life of an African can be directed as Europeans see fit, regardless of what the African might personally want. The practices mentioned in the advertisement can be linked, albeit loosely, to the mindset associated with slavery. In both cases a person’s personal identity is sold. Slave-traders sell the person into bondage, and the missionary effort described above sells a person’s name and religion.

In other articles, the African natives are represented as ignorant children that need to be taught, watched over, and guided in all steps of their development. An example is

found in an article submitted by a missionary in the December 1914 edition of *Mission Propaganda*. He writes, “Im Allgemeinen wird die Arbeit früh beendet. Die Kaffern haben dann nichts zu tun, laufen auf der Gasse herum und sind allen Gefahren ausgesetzt. Um sie diesen Gefahren zu entziehen, versammle ich sie in der genannten “Kirche” und unterrichte sie” (3). This missionary believes that without his oversight and instruction the Africans will just revert to wasting their time by loitering in the streets. In the same article the missionary writes:

Der Kaffer spricht sehr gerne und ist überaus neugierig. Wenn er den gewöhnlichen Gesprächstoff erschöpft hat, beginnt er von Religion zu sprechen. Mischt Falsches mit Wahrem und Wahres mit Falschem, macht dann daraus ein merkwürdiges Mischmasch, das keine Religionsgesellschaft als ihr Glaubensbekenntnis ansehen würde. (3)

This comment was made about new converts. It seems understandable that any new convert might not be able to clearly explain the doctrine of his new religion. However, the tone of this missionary’s comments suggests a lack of reasoning and a lack of intellectual sophistication. He implies that Africans make a mess of the doctrine because although they like to talk, they are unable to do so in logical manner.

Although Ledóchowska seems to have believed in some of the racist ideologies about the natural state of the African race, she also believed in the spiritual and social potential of black Africans to become just as enlightened as Europeans (Brewer 33). I have already discussed her beliefs about Africans’ spiritual potential. I will briefly mention a few examples from *Mission Propaganda* in which Ledóchowska and her associates try to demonstrate the social potential of Africans. Often, pictures of Africans dressed in a European manner would accompany descriptions of how these people could

become like Europeans. A caption below one such picture in the November 1915 edition said, “Dieses Bild zeigt uns, wie die schwarze Rasse auch der europäischen Kultur fähig ist” (8). The caption went on to say they could be taught “die katholische Religion, christliche Erziehung und sogar die Kunst.” The last statement “sogar die Kunst” really drives home the tone of the whole caption. It is implied that the readers would be surprised to discover that an African could be taught to appreciate art. When compared with the sensitivities to questions of race and equality of our day, these views seem racist, but it is important to recognize how very open-minded Ledóchowska was, given the culture in which she worked and lived. The idea that an African could attain any equality with a European socially or spiritually was uncommon. Ledóchowska tried to share her attitudes about Africans’ spiritual and social potential with more people through the articles in *Mission Propaganda*.

To this point I have discussed mostly how the Europeans viewed the Africans. I would also like to touch on how missionary work and colonization affected the Africans themselves. Ledóchowska was often harsh when speaking or writing about Europeans whose sole interest in Africa was their selfish greed or lust. She felt such people were detrimental to the Africans. In the February 1915 edition of *Mission Propaganda* Ledóchowska writes:

Der katholische Missionär [hat] heutzutage [...] mit dem Gifte schon zu rechnen, das die Europäer ins Land bringen und jetzt gar mit den Folgen des furchtbaren Weltkrieges!

Der Fluch der bösen Tat, das sittliche Verderben Europas will auch die Urvölker anstecken, die Neger, welche in ihrem Naturzustande jene Verbrechen nicht kennen, die ihnen die verdorbenen Europäer lehren.



Die Weißen können für Afrika “das Salz der Erde und das Licht der Welt” sein, wenn sie Bekenner der wahren Religion sind, aber sie können auch zum furchtbarsten Gifte werden, wenn es gottlose Kaufleute, Händler und “Goldmacher” sind.

In Afrika werden neue Eisenbahnstrecken gebaut. Diese Entfernungen [...] durchheilt jetzt ein jeder Kaufmann in einem bequemen Waggon in wenigen Tagen. — Wehe ihm und wehe den Völkern, zu denen er geht, wenn er nicht Gott im Herzen hat! Sie sind schlimmer als die barbarischen Krieger, das sie nicht die Leiber, sondern die Seelen töten und die Erntefelder in Brand setzen, die der Missionär mit seinem Schweiß begossen hat. (1)

This is very powerful language! Ledóchowska sees Catholic missionary work as the only truly legitimate reason for colonizing Africa. She mentions some of the technological benefits, such as the railroad, that colonization has brought to Africa, but is quick to interject that these new technologies are more often used to harm rather than help Africa. She sees the many traveling businessmen as a threat to the work that the missionaries have done among the Africans. She even chastises the Europeans for bringing their corrupted customs to Africa. These comments from Ledóchowska contrast starkly with much of the colonial rhetoric of the time. Many Europeans saw themselves as members of a highly sophisticated and refined culture, and viewed African culture as lowly and barbaric. Ledóchowska doesn't seem to believe that Europeans are superior in every way to Africans. In many of her articles she mentions her frustration with the degraded moral state of many Europeans.

Another example of Ledóchowska's criticism of European colonizers came

because some people apparently suggested that Ledóchowska might be better off leaving the Africans alone. She gave a response to this idea in a lecture entitled *Ein Hilfswerk für Afrika*:

Ja, da muß man eben unterscheiden, *wer* die Neger in Ruhe lassen soll.  
Wenn gewisse Herren Europäer nach Afrika ziehen, nur um dort die Neger zu knechten, ihnen das Beispiel der Sittenlosigkeit zu geben, als die Herren des Landes sich einzusetzen und den armen Negern die “Wohltaten” der Steuern aufzubürden, dann wären die Neger freilich besser in Ruhe gelassen. (20; emphasis in the original)

Ledóchowska had strong feelings about *who* should colonize Africa and *why*. Her intent was to elevate, free, and convert the African people. However, even missionary work had both positive and negative impacts on African society.

The St. Peter Claver-Sodality’s efforts in behalf of Africans definitely had some positive results. The freed slaves were fed, cared for, and educated. However, although no longer subject to the horrors of slavery, they usually were not returned to their families (Brewer 34). To this day, the question of whether colonial missionary work was beneficial or detrimental to the Africans is a difficult one to answer. David Cowles says it well:

We do not have direct access to historical events, but only people’s accounts of them: history for us is already a text. Moreover, no text can tell the entire story: every account reduces the infinite complexity of past events and ideas, excludes entire groups and events from consideration, and probably contradicts other accounts. (54)

There is always a different perspective to the story, which can give additional insight. Of

course some accounts can be given more credit than others. There are some factors to consider when examining conflicting reports about the same event or theory. We should try to remain objective as we read different accounts, keeping in mind that people writing for or against something generally have personal reasons for doing so, which may skew their view of events. We should also determine how narrow of a scope the person is writing from. Something that seems beneficial from a broader world-view might actually cause many problems on an individual and community level. *Mission Propaganda* gave one perspective on how Africans could be either helped or hindered by European influence. This perspective comes from Europeans. For this reason, it is important to also share an example of what Africans have said about the European colonization of Africa.

The comments of Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, who has written extensively about the effects of colonization, clearly illustrate the complexity of the issue. He said, “[The] African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans: [...] societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and beauty, [...] they had poetry and above all, they had dignity” (Achebe 157). However, Achebe is also quick to admit that African culture was by no means perfect. “We cannot pretend that our past was one long Technicolor idyll. We have to admit that like other peoples’ past ours had its good and bad sides” (Achebe 157). A.G. Stock expounded on this thought beautifully by speaking of the way Achebe portrays African culture:

From the standpoint of [Africa] the western world is itself the fabulous formless darkness. But [Achebe’s] instrument of interpretation is the same; his [Africa] is a civilization in miniature, and the chaos finds its way in though slight flaws in its structure, murmurs that might have remained inaudible if they had not found an echo in the darkness. (Innes 87)

This statement makes the point that although flaws in African culture might have existed, the presence of western culture amplified those flaws into larger cultural problems for Africa.

Much of what I have written up to this point has centered on the relationship between Ledóchowska's work and the African people. I will now discuss the unstated goal of the Sodality that I mentioned at the beginning of this section. Although *Mission Propaganda* contains many articles about the Christian colonization of Africa, it also has many articles that express a need for reform, or the religious *recolonization*, of Europe.

In the October 1914 edition of *Mission Propaganda* Ledóchowska made a statement about the general purpose of that publication. She writes, "Dieses Blatt soll in allen Katholiken den *Missionsgeist* wecken und den Seeleneifer bewirken, der da alle *Völker der Erde zum Reiche Gottes führen möchte*" (1). Ledóchowska not only had the conversion of Africans in mind, but the conversion, or *reconversion*, of Europeans as well. She mentions *all* people entering the "Kingdom of God". She makes no mention of race, or nationality—only religion.

Ledóchowska saw in many Europeans the vices of greed and selfishness, and she had little regard for the exploitive capitalistic ventures of colonial powers. Ledóchowska strove to link the need for moral and social reform in Europe with supporting Catholic missionary work in Africa. At one point she quoted a statement by Bishop Armand Josef von Gernoble, who said, "Durch Afrika wird Europa selbst, das kranke Europa, echt christlich und gesund" (*Was geht das uns an?* 23-24). In referring to this statement Ledóchowska implies that performing missionary work has a healing effect on those who proselytize as well as on those being proselytized. At another time she wrote the following:

Gerade weil wir hier zulande Gefahr laufen, den Glauben zu verlieren und Neu-Heiden zu werden, müssen wir alle unsere Kräfte aufbieten, denen, die ohne eigene Schuld Heiden sind, die Gnade des Glaubens zu verschaffen. Gott wird es uns im eigenen Land Vergelten. Wer eine Seele rettet, der hat seine eigene vorherbestimmt. (*Ein Hilfswerk für Afrika* 22)

Ledóchowska believes Europeans will be blessed spiritually by supporting the Catholic missions in Africa. She claims that one's own soul will be assured salvation through saving the soul of another.

In the December 1915 issue of *Mission Propaganda* Ledóchowska names off five specific ways that missionary work in Africa is connected with missionary work in Europe. She writes as follows:

Wie kann man das Missionswerk im eigenen Lande mit dem in Afrika verbinden?

1. Wenn uns die Leute so rege an der Missionsarbeit sehen, werden sie hingerissen. Sie werden lieben, was wir lieben, sie werden daran arbeiten, woran wir arbeiten.
2. Die wahre Missionsliebe entspringt aus der Gottesliebe, aus dem Verständnis der übernatürlichen Bestimmung des Menschen, aus dem Glauben an das ewige Leben der Seele und aus der Übernatürlichen Bestimmung des Menschen, aus dem Glauben an das ewige Leben der Seele und aus der Überzeugung, daß man das vergängliche Leben nach dem ewigen richten und einrichten muß.
3. Und wenn wir dann weiter mit unserer Missionsliteratur heranrücken, wenn wir den Leuten etwas zu lesen geben, was nicht gerade von Korn

und Kartoffeln, von Boden und Ackerbau und dergleichen spricht, sondern auf die hohe, übernatürliche, [...] so erweisen wir unserem Nächsten einen vorzüglichen Liebesdienst.

4. Und wenn unser Nächster, durch unsere Missionstätigkeit bewogen, etwas für die Heidenmission unter den Negern tun will, so [...] haben wir unserem Vaterlande einen Liebesdienst, einen Missionsdienst erweisen.
5. Was macht den Reichtum der menschlichen Gesellschaft aus? Der wert ihrer Bürger. [...] Laßt uns auch Gutes tun bei den heidnischen Negern, damit sie zur menschlichen Würde erhoben werden. (2)

Ledóchowska expresses a number of key ideas in these five points. She says that when Europeans turn their minds to helping support the African missions, they will also be more aware of God and religion in their own lives, thus improving their lives. She says that doing missionary work stems from a love of God and a desire to orient one's mortal life toward eternal life. She wants more Europeans to experience this love and desire. She also touts *Mission Propaganda* as uplifting reading material. Multiple articles within *Mission Propaganda's* pages advertise this idea as well by referring to it as "Anregende Volksschriften für unsere braven Soldaten" (Apr. 1915, 9) Finally, she writes that a nation's wealth is only as great as the quality of its citizens. She feels that missionary work will improve the character of the African people, but she also maintains that European nations will also be edified as their citizens become involved in missionary work and thus strengthen their own characters.

One of the major events of the time period that strained European society and motivated Ledóchowska in her work to raise spirituality among Africans and Europeans was World War I. Many of the articles in *Mission Propaganda* address this topic. One of

the major hurdles that Ledóchowska's Sodality faced was convincing Europeans that they should still support missionary work in time of war. In the June 1915 edition of *Mission Propaganda*, Ledóchowska writes what she believes many people use as an excuse not to contribute: "Jetzt ist Kriegszeit ... und da sollte man jetzt noch etwas für Missionen spenden, nein, da muß man erst wieder bessere Zeiten abwarten!" (1). In the same article Ledóchowska writes an argument in response to such excuses:

Ja, du weißt selbst, jedes gläubige Herz fleht in diesem schrecklichen Kriege [...] zur Quelle allen Friedens, sich bei ihm Hilfe, Trost und Kraft zu holen. Aber, christliche Seele, nicht nur in unserem teuren Vaterlande erheben sich bittende Hände um Frieden, nein, auch drüben in den Kolonien eines dunklen Erdteils dringt der Ruf aus tausenden gequälten Herzen zum Gottessohn empor, Hilfe und Erlösung aus harter Prüfung von ihm erwartend. Und Jesu Herz will sie alle umschließen, alle an sich ziehen, gleich welcher Nation und Rasse, alle will es nach des Lebens Kampf einziehen sehen in die ewige Heimat. (1)

In the above statement, Ledóchowska connected European suffering associated with the war and African suffering associated with slavery and spiritual *ignorance*. This link was vital to the Sodality's cause. The more Europeans could identify with the Africans, the more likely they were to get involved in the Sodality's efforts to send aide to Africa. Ledóchowska's views on spirituality in connection to race are also made clear in this statement. She believes salvation is accessible to ALL races.

In the April 1915 edition of *Mission Propaganda*, an article mentions the world war going on in Europe, and suggests a non-military battle that Europeans can win through supporting the African missions:

Wenn du mir sagst, dass die Soldaten für dich wider die Feinde streiten, so wisse, daß es einen Feind gibt, den die Armen für dich bekämpfen! Denn wenn sie etwas empfangen, dann beten sie und versöhnen dich mit Gott und befreien dich dadurch nicht von feindlichen Nationen, sondern von den Nachstellungen des Teufels und lassen nicht zu, daß der Böse heftig gegen dich aufrete und dir immerfort nachstelle. (3)

The writer of this article (listed only as hl. Chrysostomus) argues that a spiritual combat is taking place over people's souls, and asserts that the prayers of Africans who receive assistance through European donations ensure spiritual protection for the people who helped.

Some articles in *Mission Propaganda* used other methods to promote social reform in war-torn Europe. They would include stories of what the African natives thought about the great European war. The articles place the African natives in the role of naive sage. Depicted with childlike innocence, African natives share thoughts that instruct European readers. Here is an example from an article written by a Sister Isidora. The article is titled "Christliche Negerweisheit":

Neger [fragen] täglich mehrmals, ob die Europäer sich einander die Beleidigungen nicht vergeben könnten!—Das müssen wir, hochgebildete Europäer, uns von den Negern sagen lassen! ... Bald wird es heißen ... Afrika belehrt uns. (June 1915, 3)

In this article the Africans ask in a childlike manner why the European don't just forgive one another. Although the article still takes a condescending tone toward African natives, it is significant that the writer suggests Europeans could learn something



from the Africans' way of thinking about the war.

In the March 1915 edition of *Mission Propaganda* there is another article that is critical of the World War. The article depicts a conversation between a priest and a group of Africans. The Africans first ask if the war is over yet. The priest then responds by saying that wars can last a long time in Europe. This surprises them, and they tell the priest that wars are small and very short in Africa. They say, "Aber, da ihr doch alle reich seid, große Länder besitzt, alles tut, wie es euch beliebt, Geld machet, warum streitet ihr euch da noch? Ach! die Weißen!" The priest then explains, "Bei den einen ist es Hochmut und bei den anderen Bosheit, die das bewirken. Und dann, wenn der Krieg lange dauert, so ist das nicht zu verwundern, denn es gibt viele Soldaten" (3). The article uses this dialog to criticize the arrogance and cruelty that the author feels lies at the heart of war. Once again it uses the innocent comments of African natives to critique some European practices.

Although Ledóchowska did not author these articles herself, I still find it significant that a fair amount of the Articles included in her newspaper (*Mission Propaganda*) use dramatic dialogue to express ideas. It could have had something to do with Ledóchowska's affinity for drama (she wrote many dramas herself). I believe it had to do with trying to find a way to criticize Europeans in a way they would be receptive to. People tend to be more open to accepting criticism indirectly through a story, than to accepting it directly from a person writing to the audience. In a story, criticism is not forced upon the reader. Rather, a story invites its readers to discover its lessons themselves. Ledóchowska wrote much social criticism in this manner.

## Section 4

### Ledóchowska: A Woman for Women

Up to this point I have discussed Europeans and Africans in general as subjects of Maria Theresa Ledóchowska's work. I will now refine those larger categories down to a more specific group of people. A large percentage of Ledóchowska's work focused on women. In regard to Africans, she wrote extensively about freeing women from slavery and converting them to Catholicism. With respect to European women, they were her main audience and primary source for funding. She also offered European women a way in which they could become actively involved in a public forum. Although she cannot be classified with extreme feminists, she did seek to encourage mutual respect between genders. Ledóchowska used *Mission Propaganda* as one platform on which to pursue her objectives on behalf of both African and European women.

It is important to understand the status of women in society at the turn of the century in Europe. Although some avenues had been opened up to women—such as participation in missionary work—there were still many social restraints on what women could and could not do. Traditionally men have been reluctant to allow women to step out of the domestic sphere and become working, thinking, productive members of public society. David Cowles has an interesting insight about this topic:

All societies have viewed women as simultaneously above and below culture. In other words, most cultures idealize women as perfect spiritual beings; simultaneously these same cultures image women in the opposite

light as polluted inferiors or dangerous monsters. These stereotypes indicate that women are not *in* culture. Instead, in the past they have had little direct input in decision-making about public policy, and they have not had power to legislate and govern. (215)

Ledóchowska fought vigorously to enable women to be *in* the culture and not only above or below it.

In her youth, Ledóchowska struggled with a highly regulated lifestyle while being a lady in waiting to the Grand Duke and Duchess of Tuscany at the royal court in Salzburg. She once said, “That one is in this position leading a European slave-life is not so much their fault (the Grand Duke and Duchess) than that of the conditions and customs prevailing in our time” (cited in Walzer, 39). I find it interesting that she compares her life as a lady in waiting to that of a slave. This experience might have given her empathy with women oppressed by the male-dominant culture of Europe. It also might have created a connection in her mind between helping African women in slavery and helping to liberate women in Europe. Later in life she gave a speech in which she made this connection between European women and African women clear:

Gerade weil die elende soziale Lage so vieler Ihrer Schwester im eigenen lande Sie zur Aktion treibt, deshalb können Sie unmöglich gefühllos bleiben beim Gedanken an die afrikanische Frau [...] Das wäre keine echte Liebe zur katholischen Kirche und zur wahren Freiheit, die deren Vorteile nur für sich selbst, für den kleinen Kreis der eigenen Heimat beanspruchen möchte. (*Die Frau* 18)

Clearly Ledóchowska wants European women to expand their struggle for rights and freedom into Africa as well. She asserts that it is only natural for devout Catholic women

to want to extend the blessings of freedom, both physical and spiritual, to oppressed women living in Africa.

In the October 1914 edition of *Mission Propaganda*, Ledóchowska wrote, “Neben der Sklaverei war im Heidentum von jeher die unwürdige Stellung des weiblichen Geschlechtes der größte soziale Mißstand” (2). By comparing the societal treatment of women in Africa to slavery, Ledóchowska makes it clear how important this issue is to her. In the same article she gives an example of the injustice she is referring to:

In einem Alter wo das Mädchen sich noch keine Rechenschaft zu geben weiß von dem Unrecht, das man ihm antut, ohne es nur zu fragen, ohne Möglichkeit eines Widerstandes wird es von Vater dem Meistbietenden übergeben, wie eine gemeine Ware verkauft. Der gewöhnliche Preis beträgt 100 bis 200 Franken, ein Drittel von dem, was man für ein Pferd bezahlt. (2)

Although it would be easy to assume from the content of this quote that she is writing about girls being sold into slavery, she is actually writing about girls being married off by their fathers to the highest bidding suitor. It is such practices that she hopes to change by way of Catholic missionary work in Africa.

*Mission Propaganda* is full of stories about how conversion to Christianity not only saves Africans’ souls but also improves the social standing of women in their society. One such article appeared in the January 1920 edition. The article was titled, “Was tun die Missionäre für die Wilden.” The article lists a number of ways in which conversion to Catholicism is supposed to benefit the Africans. The final example has to do with how women are treated:

Zum Schluß noch ein Beispiel des sozialen Fortschrittes. Es ist

keine Übertreibung, wenn man die afrikanische Frau mit einem Lasttiere vergleicht. Der Heide verschafft sich eine Frau, indem er seinem Schwiegervater eine gewisse Anzahl Ziegen dafür gibt. Die Heirat ist also ein Kauf. Kaufen und Heiraten wird in der Sprache der Eingebornen durch dasselbe Zeitwort ausgedrückt. Die Frau wird das unumschränkte Eigentum des Mannes.

Und doch hört man versichern, dass die Sklaverei in Afrika aufgehört habe. Aber die bedauernswerte Lage der Frau kann nur durch die Abschaffung der Vielweiberei und Einführung der christlichen Ehe verbessert werden. Um die heidnische Frau zu heben, muß sie einem christlichen Manne angetraut werden. Dieser lernt im Taufunterricht, daß vor Gott Mann und Weib gleich seien, daß der Mann nicht nur Rechte, sondern auch Pflichten habe. Also arbeitet der Missionär auch für die Abschaffung der Sklaverei, wenn er den Heiden auf die Taufe vorbereitet.

(1-2)

Although this article specifically pinpoints social shortcomings in Africa, a fair amount of what is written can be applied to the treatment of women in Europe as well. Two such principles that stand out are that man and woman are equal before God, and that a true Christian man recognizes his *duties* to his wife as well as his rights. It is easy to expect, that upon reading such stories, the mostly female readership of *Mission Propaganda* might think of whether their own lives measured up to this ideal.

Ledóchowska's writings inspired women in Europe to become active in the cause of missionary work as well as—to some degree—the social liberation of women. In an essay entitled “Die Frau” she wrote directly to women:

Und nun komme ich zu dem eigentlichen Gegenstande dieser Schrift zu der ergänzenden Tätigkeit der Frauen beim Werke der Heidenmissionen. Denn auch hier wie bei allen andern Werken des Apostolates wird die Frau nicht länger eine müßige Zuschauerin sein. (5)

This statement functions as a rallying call for women to become socially engaged. They should no longer sit by while men carry out all the “important” work.

Ledochowska’s personal stories and experiences serve as an example to her readers. They model the perseverance and determination needed for women to become socially engaged in spite of male opposition. One example is in a feuilleton she wrote for the December 1914 edition of *Mission Propaganda*. The feuilleton is titled “Wie ein Vortrag zustande kommt.” She writes about arriving in Berlin eight days before she is scheduled to give a speech in a hall owned by the Catholic Church. Soon after arrival she is shocked to find out that her appointment to speak had been overlooked. One of the men who was supposed to organize the preparations for the speech said to her, “Unlängst fand, wie Sie wohl wissen werden, ein großer Vortrag eines Missionärs aus China statt. Darum wollen jetzt die Herren von einem Missionsvortrage nichts mehr wissen” (4). The women reading this article might have been able to identify with the feeling of having been brushed aside in such a manner. However, the speech turned out to be a great success. A priest, who had at first told Ledóchowska that he would have to leave early, got up at the *end* of the speech and said at the podium, “Ich freue mich herzlich über diesen Vortrag und danke im Namen aller der Frau Gräfin für denselben” (4). This story shows how Ledóchowska used courage, faith, and persistence in order to overcome male prejudice. I suppose that Ledóchowska wanted women who read this feuilleton to garner hope and courage, that they too could overcome many of the difficulties they faced as women

entering the male-dominated public sphere.

Although Ledóchowska was persistent, not all of her stories end in her overcoming male prejudices set up against her. Even when she experiences an occasional rejection, she provides women with an example to follow and be inspired by. I refer to another experience similar to the last I shared, but this one had a different conclusion. Ledóchowska wrote an article entitled “Aus meinen Erlebnissen” in the January 1916 edition of *Mission Propaganda*. In the story, Ledóchowska was once again trying to get a well-known priest and prolific writer to attend one of her speeches. She was warned in advance about this priest: “Sie wissen ja: Pfarrer Hansjakob ist ein echter Schwabe und noch dazu, sagt man, ein Weiberfeind.” Ledóchowska responds to this comment by laughing, and says: “O, besorgen Sie nichts. Mein moralischer Magen ist widerstandsfähiger als mein physischer. Ich kann auch Schwarzbrot vertragen. Das gehört bei uns zum Beruf” (5). When she arrives to speak with the priest he is very untrusting and treats her rudely. He asks her numerous questions and seems to want her to be able to prove that she is indeed the person who will speak. After some back and forth about this point Ledóchowska confronts the man about his distrust:

Ich würde Ihr Misstrauen verstehen, wenn ich Sie um ein Almosen gebeten hätte. Ich bitte Sie aber nur um Ihren Besuch bei meinem Vortrage. Wenn Sie meiner Bitte nachkommen wollen, so können Sie sich dann selbst überzeugen, ob ich und die Gräfin, die heute nachmittags sprechen wird, ein und dieselbe Person sind. (6)

The priest continues to be rude to her and says he has no time to come and even refuses to accept some copies of the Sodality’s literature to read on his own time. He says he is too busy and shows her the door. Ledóchowska then narrates:

Beim Hinuntergehen über die Stiege dachte ich mir: Jetzt trafen sich einmal zwei Menschen, die beide Zeit zum Schreiben, aber Beide nicht Zeit zum Lesen haben. So können sie eventuell beide über einander schreiben und keiner läuft Gefahr, daß der eine liest, was der andere schrieb. Hat auch sein Gutes. (6)

In this story, Ledóchowska still shows strength of character and uses humor and a quick wit to deal with the priest's rejection. She does not cower at the priest's abrasive comments, or express self-pity. She seems to be able to let the criticism roll off her back and not affect her vision of what she wants to accomplish. This dramatic dialogue serves as an indirect criticism of how women were often treated by men in Europe at the time, and is also another example of how Ledóchowska motivated and inspired women in the early 1900s.

One of the most direct ways in which Ledóchowska used *Mission Propaganda* to reach out to women was by encouraging them to actually join the St. Peter Claver-Sodality. Something that appealed to women about becoming part of the Sodality was that the members could remain in Europe while working to support the African missions. The Sodality did not actually send missionaries out but functioned as a support organization only. One article in *Mission Propaganda* described the Sodality in this manner, "Sie bedeutet für das afrikanische Missionswesen das, was die Heimatfront für eine kriegsführende Armee ist" (Jan./Feb. 1948, 3). Women who joined felt this way about the importance of the work they performed. In *Mission Propaganda's* December 1919 edition another article calling for new members described a woman's calling to become a "Hilfsmissionärin":

[Es] ist dem des hl. Josef, des Nährvaters Jesu Christi vergleichbar, denn



die Missionäre, diese Sendboten Jesu Christi nennen die St. Petrus Claver-Sodalität, deren Mitglieder die Hilfsmissionärinnen für Afrika sind, die Nährmutter der Missionäre und ihre sichtbare Vorsehung. (4)

This is a strong parallel to draw, but it shows that the members of the Sodality believed they were performing a vitally important service in the name of God, a service they compared to that performed by Joseph, the mortal steward over Christ.

Although Ledóchowska encouraged all women to become involved in supporting the Catholic African missions, joining the Sodality was not for everyone. An article in the February 1922 *Mission Propaganda* gave a passionate description of what it meant to become a Hilfsmissionärin:

Das größte Opfer ist wohl das Opfer seiner selbst...man lebt ja nur einmal, und das Leben soll doch für etwas Großes angewendet werden [...] Wie oft müssen ihre Augen vom Manuskript zum Satz wandern, und wie lange dauert es, bis ein ganzes Buch gesetzt ist. Und doch, wenn das Buch gedruckt ist und [...] nach Afrika gesandt werden kann, wenn Tausende aus dem Buche Nahrung für ihre Seele schöpfen, dann haben an all diesem Guten auch die Hilfsmissionärinnen teil, die die bescheidene Arbeit des Setzens vollbrachte. Wahrlich auch die Hilfsmissionärinnen erfahren die Wahrheit des Ausspruches Christi: “Wer immer sein Haus usw. Verlässt, der wird Hundertfältiges dafür erlangen und das ewige Leben besitzen.”

(4)

This was the type of faith and commitment that Maria Theresia Ledóchowska inspired in many women all across Europe. These women found, in the Sodality, a religious and a “feminist” cause they could unite behind. The Sodality provided a means to become

participants *in* the culture of their time. Some were given opportunities to be leaders in the Sodality. This is especially significant because during that time period leadership in society was almost entirely the domain of men. The women of the Sodality also gained some economic power by way of raising money for their cause. By working for women's rights of freedom in Africa, they were, therefore, also able to exercise more social freedom in Europe.

## Section 5 Conclusion

In this thesis I have analyzed only a few of the areas dealing with Ledóchowska and her work. I have mentioned her innovative use of newspapers to the Sodality's advantage. I have also discussed the contributions Ledóchowska made to the colonial mindset of her time through her religious and social work. Finally, I have touched on Ledóchowska's passion for supporting women as they struggle for freedom, recognition, and respect in a male-dominated world, be it in Africa or Europe.

Brewer has written about Ledóchowska's dramas, and now I have written about her newspaper, but there are many topics still left open for future research. Ledóchowska did not produce literature for European adults only. The Sodality also published literature for children. Other publications were translated into native African languages and given to Africans to read. No research has been done about the content and cultural affect of these texts. Another area of future research might include a deeper look into how actively the Catholic Church, and other religious organizations at the turn of the century, actually encouraged women to become involved in missionary work.

My aim in writing this has been to stimulate additional research about Maria Theresia Ledóchowska. She is such an important part of what was taking place in society during Europe's colonial period, and yet so little has been written about her from an academic standpoint. The topics I have discussed have shown that Ledóchowska was not only interesting, but offered an alternative view to much of the early 1900s literature dealing with colonial Africa and women's place in society. Her perspective deserves

scholarly study in order to more fully understand the cultural context of the time.

We only know as much about a period as we do about the people who lived, spoke, and wrote during it. The picture we have in our minds of any time period will always be incomplete. By discussing Ledóchowska's work I have pointed out a blank region in the cultural picture we have of her time period. With knowledge about Ledóchowska's work, our view of the past changes. We must reconsider some common notions about European culture at that time. True, Ledóchowska did have some racist opinions about African culture and people, but she was a missionary who believed in *spiritual* equality among all races, provided they accepted Catholicism. She was a woman who was able to make a mark as a leader in what was considered *a man's world*, and inspired other women to do the same. Finally, although her efforts are still susceptible to criticism, that they might have caused more harm than good, she was a European, who believed that Africa should be protected from the many commercial and national agendas of the day. Each of these qualities has merit alone, but to find them all in one person is especially unique. As the academic community continues to discover more about Ledóchowska's work, we will gain a deeper, and more complete, perspective on issues of colonialism, race, and feminism during the early 1900s.

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