

An Examination of the Impact of the Basel Mission's Missiology and Missionary Strategies on Female Literacy: A Case Study of the Longheu Girls' School (Formerly the Basel Charity School)

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Abstract

This research focuses on the connection between the missiology of the Basel Mission and the strategies for the promotion of literacy among women through a case study of the Longheu Girls' School located in a Hakka village near Hong Kong. Established within the Basel Mission's broader evangelical activities among Hakka communities, the school provides an important institutional context for investigating how religious objectives were translated into educational practices for girls and women. While existing scholarship has explored Protestant missions in China, Hakka Christianity, missionary education, and women's schooling, relatively limited attention has been paid to the ways in which missiological ideas shaped the specific educational practices through which female literacy was promoted. This study examines missionary correspondence, annual and school reports, archival records, missionary publications, and relevant Chinese-language historical sources. Through thematic and interpretive analysis, the study investigates how literacy, Bible reading, female education, Christian womanhood, vernacular instruction, and local evangelization were articulated within the Mission's educational discourse and institutional practices. The study argues that female literacy was closely connected to the Basel Mission's evangelical objectives rather than functioning merely as an incidental outcome of Western-style schooling. The Longheu Girls' School developed through interaction among missionary objectives, Hakka linguistic and social contexts. The case thus shows the intricacies involved in the interplay between religion and literacy, showing how the missionary schools were able to increase women's literacy while at the same time perpetuating Christian ideals concerning gender and morality.

Keywords: Female Literacy; Missionary Education; Hakka Christianity; Local Evangelization