



Figure 1 (opposite).
Brother Aegidius staging the
negotiation of a photographic
scene, c.1900–5. Congregation of
Mariannhill Missionaries Archives

Figure 2 (opposite).
Brother Aegidius collecting
artefacts, c.1904. Linden
Museum, Stuttgart

Auxiliary Modes of Collecting: Circulation and Curation of Photographs from the Mariannhill Mission in KwaZulu-Natal, 1880s to 1914

Christoph Rippe

Missionary photographs, their subjects and their objects

Between the 1880s and 1914, the photographic studio of the Catholic Monastery and Mission Mariannhill near Pinetown in what is now KwaZulu-Natal circulated a variety of photographic images targeting religious, as well as ethnographically oriented, audiences.¹ The photographs were taken mainly in the vicinity of Mariannhill's outstations in Natal and Griqualand East, with a few from Rhodesia and German East Africa. While some people were framed as exotic, 'traditional' and 'ethnographic', others were presented as evidence of the success of the 'civilising mission' in the form of dressed and productive African people in a European style.

Some white South Africans viewed Mariannhill Monastery as an equally exotic 'medieval monastic settlement' and, from its foundation, it was a well-known tourist destination, attracting local journalists and overseas visitors, including German aristocracy and personalities such as Mohandas Gandhi, Mark Twain and Rider Haggard.² As the essay in this volume by André Croucamp on the publications of the Natal Government Railways shows, this led to a continuous output of photographs into local media.³ A local and international clientele thus made demands on the photographic production at Mariannhill, but also provided pre-existing examples.⁴

In this essay I discuss the photographic production at Mariannhill itself, but also the negotiations and related dynamics between missionaries in South Africa and European audiences. I argue that this discourse eventually led to a change in imagery, from portraits

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2 For example, S.W. Powell, *Durban: The Sea Port of the Garden Colony of South Africa*, Durban: P. Davis, 1899.

3 Also see V.-L. Webb, 'Fact and Fiction: Nineteenth-Century Photographs of the Zulu', *African Arts* 25(1), 1992: 50–9, 98–9.

4 For example, J.F. Ingram, *The Colony of Natal: An Official Illustrated Handbook and Railway Guide*, London: Joseph Causton, 1895.