

The Missionaries of Yesteryear are kept alive - New attraction for Gerlingen Missionary House

Translated into English from the German text of Mr. HANS-DIETER FRAUER (epd)

Gerlingen/Germany (epd). Wilhelm Maisch (1878 - 1924) was the head of the Basel China-Mission. The skilled cabinetmaker, carpenter and joiner enlisted - affected by his religious parent's house and the evangelical youth work of his hometown Gerlingen (nowadays: county Ludwigburg) - in 1897 for the training in the house of Basel Mission (Switzerland). He left in 1904 for Hoschuwan in the south of China.

There he soon turned out to be the leader of the Basel China-Mission. He managed to involve more and more Chinese in (at this time from Europeans affected) mission work and so to get through to more and more Chinese. Because of his prosperities Maisch was elected in 1911 for District Praeses. He continued his work up to his first homeward journey in 1920; during his outward voyage he died in the age of 46 years on the 2nd of July 1924 because of cardiac insufficiency.

Johannes Rebmann House in Gerlingen depicts the work of missionaries from this town. The house is named after the famous pioneer missionary Johannes Rebmann, who discovered in 1848 the snow covered Kilimanjaro in East Africa. Rebmann also was born in Gerlingen. No other comparable community in Württemberg emerged in 18th and 19th century a similar high number of missionaries than the at that time pietistic characterized farmer's and vine dresser's village.

The presently known 23 missionaries from Gerlingen were busy in Africa, India and China. They didn't work as preachers, but also as teachers, linguists, translators and discoverers. Besides that they were often - ahead of the times - also development workers: So Johannes Zimmermann had agriculturally equipment with him when he traveled to nowadays Ghana; Rebmann operated as bricklayer, and the India missionary Rudolf Höhn founded a Brick yard factory to give work and living to the because of their Christianity ejected Hindus.

In their hometown Gerlingen's missionaries were often forgotten soon after their departure - except for Johannes Rebmann. But at the places where they had acted they nowadays are still present. Eg. in Odumnase, Zimmermann's former area of activities, you find since 1972 a church that is named after him. The reminding first name "Zimmermann" is to date popular, and according to statements from Odumnase every other is proud of his name.

Gerlingen's activities according "its" missionaries were at least pushed from Zimmermann's places of activities: Requests from Ghana in the late 70th of last century were the initiative for a Gerlingen "Research group for Homeland history" to go on a search for their traces. You can marvel at the impressive results of their efforts in Johannes Rebmann House.