

CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM MISSIONARY INTERACTIONS NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES

MiMoRA#3

Mission and Modernity Research Academy

3-10 November 2020

Leuven, Belgium



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The study of missionary work occupies a central place in the interdisciplinary body of scholarship on relations and exchanges between Christianity and Islam in pre-modern as well as modern times. Most notably from the 19th century onwards, missions became an essential aspect of the globalization and modernization of these two 'world religions'. Tying in with the increased recognition of the importance of studying religious cultures not separately but together in dynamic interaction, scholars from various disciplines discover the missionary encounter as a 'space' par excellence to observe and analyze Christian-Muslim interactions - which range from rejection and conflict to dialogue and mutual exchange.

Increasingly, missionary history is studied in its manifestation in the multiplicity of individual missionary encounters and personal narratives, challenging narratives of homogeneous missiology and casting new light on the reciprocal implications between missionary activities and non-Christian local cultures. This approach has been particularly fruitfully applied to the history of Christian missionary encounters with Islam. In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Protestant missionary societies and Catholic congregations became increasingly preoccupied with the practical and theological interaction with Islam, its peoples and traditions. This made tensions grow between the evangelizing objectives of the missionary endeavor on the one hand, and the awareness that some form of negotiation was a prerequisite to interaction with local groups and competing missionary actions on the other.

The scholarly interest in this history has resulted in a series of innovative studies that deal with Christian-Muslim interactions, dialogues and confrontations in colonial and/or missionary settings in Central and Northern Africa, West Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and other regions. Earlier studies of Christian-Muslim interactions were often very much grounded in traditional Christian missiological perspectives, focused on interreligious conflicts over contentious issues, or approached missionaries foremost as intermediaries for international relationships and as engineers of imagining the Islamic world. By contrast, the most recent strand of research is characterized by a keen attention to individual everyday contacts between Christian missionaries and Muslims, mutual impressions and imageries, and the relationship between these micro-level events and macro-level developments.

In the wake of this, scholars have also become interested in giving due attention to the ways in which Muslim communities themselves experienced and responded to Christian missionary endeavors, and of their various positions in their encounter with missionary work and writings in their different local religious, social and colonial settings. Research on Christian-Muslim missionary encounters should also be connected to the currently burgeoning field of inquiry into the presence and activities of Muslims as transnational actors in Europe, Muslim interactions and encounters with and in Western societies, and Muslim understanding of Christianity. Recent analyses of Muslim missionaries in Europe during the colonial age have shed light on a Muslim 'reverse' missionary movement as well: from Indian Ahmadi missionaries propagating their faith in Britain to Muslim missionaries introducing Islam and distributing Islamic literature in the United States as early as the 1890's. The missionary impulse was clearly not an exclusive prerogative of Christianity, but is also related to Islam: both are missionary religions by nature, although with different interpretations of what 'mission' entailed. How did Muslims use their Da'wa (missionary) strategies in their response to Christian missionary critical writings of Islam, proving Islam as a modern religion and converting Europeans to Islam?

RESEARCH ACADEMY

The study of Christian-Muslim missionary interactions in the nineteenth and twentieth century requires the breaching of the boundaries between disciplines, languages, scripts, archival heuristics, geographical and chronological specialisms; and, thus, the creation of an interdisciplinary scholarly dialogue. The aim of MiMoRA#3 is therefore to stimulate further critical study of the multi-lateral research on Christian-Muslim contacts and relationships in missionary contexts by setting up an international and multidisciplinary week-long research academy. We are seeking contributions for this conference and planned edited volume that offer reflections on topics such as (but not limited to):

PAPER TOPICS

- Reactions to Christian/Muslim missionary activities in the fields of education, literacy, health care, etc.
- Space-settings of Christian/Muslim encounter-interaction
- Muslim responses to (Western) Christian missions and their mutual contacts and polemics with indigenous (oriental) Christians
- The agency of Islamic activism in transforming the practices and thinking of Christian missionaries
- Muslim responses to Christian interventions into Islamic religious practice, such as the Christian-led translations of the Qur'an, inter alia in Yoruba (Nigeria) and Swahili (Zanzibar)
- The role of secular authorities in determining the modalities and limits of Christians/Muslim missionary (inter)action.
- Christian missionaries as actors in opposing and mobilizing anti-colonial nationalism and pan-Islamist movements
- The role/position of (local) converts from and to both religions in the Christian/Muslim encounter-interaction
- Ideas and practices regarding evangelization and proselytism; theological and practical preparations of missionaries for their encounter with Christianity/Islam
- How did nineteenth century Da'wa movements historically relate to Christian missiology, and what are the parallels and differences between both movements?
- Official policies adopted (by organizations, congregations, or church-wide) towards missionary contacts with Christianity/Islam
- Representations of childhood as an outcome of Christian/Muslim interactions and educational programs
- The use of audiovisual media (photography, film, radio) and printed works (magazines, books, ephemera) for promotional or polemical purposes
- (Case studies that focus on) influential personae, networks, publications, emblematic dialogues, conflicts, debates, etc.

PRACTICAL

MiMoRA#3 will take place at KADOC-KU Leuven (Leuven, Belgium) from 3 to 10 November.

In order to apply, please upload your research proposal (max. 1,500 words, including both your current research and, preferably, its link with collections held in Leuven), a CV (max. 1 page), and a letter of motivation (ca. 500 words) via the webpage www.kadoc.kuleuven.be/mimora.

The deadline for submissions is May 1st 2020. The selection of candidates will be based on the application file as well as on geographical and thematic criteria. Notifications of acceptance: May 25th 2020.

All participants will be offered accommodation (with a maximum of 9 nights). Participants from beyond Europe and North America will be able to apply for funding for travel costs.

A number of research papers will be selected for an edited volume within the series Leuven Studies in Mission and Modernity published through Leuven University Press (GPRC).

The conference language is English.

INFORMATION AND APPLICATIONS

www.kadoc.kuleuven.be/mimora

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