CALL FOR PAPERS

CONVERTING SPACES:

Re-Directing Missions through Global Encounters

University of California, Santa Barbara
May 4th-6th, 2017
Keynote: Dr. Liam Brockey, Michigan State University
Presented by the Virgil F. Cordano Endowment in Catholic Studies in the Department of Religious Studies

We seek papers addressing the relation of space to conversion in the context of European global and colonial expansion from the sixteenth century onwards. We invite contributions that explore the relationship between “mission” and the conversion of spaces globally, focusing on how these spaces both converted and were converted by different contexts, people, and environments. We especially solicit papers that examine missions against the particular historical contexts and cultural environments into which they entered. We therefore encourage contributions that consider how Christian missions have been sent in different directions by the people they have sought to missionize, and consider how those who were the targets of conversion “indigenized” the spaces that were produced to convert them. We conceive of space broadly -- as sites or loci of interaction and exchange; as an effect of social practices within communities; as an ontological question (e.g., the relation of the metaphysical to the physical); and as an epistemological category bound up with producing order and legibility. What were the politics of this exchange, and how did the spaces shape transmission? Likewise, how did missionaries contribute to the creation of epistemological spaces (e.g. museums, archives, schools) in which the study of the “other” was institutionalized and bound to colonial taxonomies? What were the responses to missionaries by the “missionized”: how did buildings, hymns and texts serve as spaces of contestation and adaptation?

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:
Please send an abstract of 300-500 words along with a 1p CV to UCSBConvertingSpaces@gmail.com by February 17, 2017.

As an interdisciplinary conference interested in the ambiguity of Christian missions, conversion and inculturation, we welcome papers addressing the following themes:

- **Spaces of missionary/colonial knowledge**
  - The politics of archives and museums ranging from collection and preservation of, as well as access to materials. Missionary influence on educational systems and their curricula. We are
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especially interested in papers articulating approaches to decolonizing epistemologies of archives.

- Academic texts and conferences as sites for the creation or contestation of knowledge and policy for colonial powers.
- The Christian social-spatial imaginary in relation to conceptions of “mission fields,” “10/40 window,” “the Muslim world,” and similar (pseudo)geographical frames.

- **Material histories of the mission**
  - The spatial organization of the mission, including the relation of sacred space to sites of labor and production.
  - Political economies of missions, including commodity production, educational services, economics of charity, land and labor.
  - The indigenization of Christian art, architecture, relics, and liturgy.

- **The politics of enclosing and (de-)constructing borders**
  - Critical discussion of the relation of the spatial and directional qualities embedded in categories of “missionized,” “indigenous,” “native,” “local,” “reached/unreached”
  - Charting spaces -- how did mapmaking, census-taking and similar processes of inscribing legibility by missionaries contest existing understandings of place and community?
  - Differing ontologies: what were the modes, practices and understandings of “space” encountered by missionaries in different contexts. What were the limitations of their categories and epistemological assumptions, e.g., where “converts” understood themselves not as “either/or” but as occupying polysemous/ambiguous spaces.

- **Conversion and the Creation of ‘California’**
  - The transformation of indigenous lands into Spanish colonial and Catholic missionary spaces.
  - The politics of ‘conservation’ and its connection to cultural and territorial dispossession. The relation of history-making to history-writing and the authority of the ‘historian.’
  - Indigenous Californian evaluations of California history. What are the responses to California-textbook history? How was the land conceived of prior to Spanish missionary/colonial expansion?