

Translating Wor(l)ds: Christianity across Cultural Boundaries

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Translating Christianities (2015) and *Translating God* (2017)

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From Sabine Dedenbach-Salazar's introduction

This volume unites articles which are based on presentations given at two colloquia held at the University of Stirling: "Translating Christianities" and "Translating God".¹ Whilst the first one aimed at a general discussion of the transmission and interpretation of Christianity across different fields and disciplines, the second one focused on the translation of the word *God* and related terms, into several languages, in a number of, mostly colonial, settings.

Despite their more general and more specific themes respectively, the contributions to both dealt with the translation of culture in the context of religion, often imagined as a rather straightforward enterprise which implies a uni-directional process undertaken to obtain a transference of a message into a different (kind of) language, providing explanations and interpretations of diverse content and form. Our studies show that these processes are bi-directional or even multiple because all works studied give evidence of how the authors resorted to different cultural traditions and languages and interrelated them.

Thus the contributions to this book are varied and manifold, but all deal with a form of translation, be it linguistic and/or cultural. They have in common that they - directly or implicitly - describe and analyse much more than the translation of a situation, experience or text; rather, they explain how content is conveyed and which factors play important roles in this process of interpretation and explanation, which has one main objective: that of communication. Some of our studies are directed towards an analysis of the word and its translation in linguistic terms, and all of them focus on experiences, attitudes and objectives reflected and pursued in the translation of culture(s).

They draw on different disciplines, from philosophical, literary, ethnohistorical and linguistic angles, highlighting the processes of translation within and across cultures,

¹ "Translating Christianities", December 2015, was organised by the editor of this volume (see < <http://www.translatingchristianities.stir.ac.uk/past-conferences/translating-christianities/> >) and "Translating God", May 2017, by the editor, with Brian Murdoch and Stephen Penn (see < <http://www.translatingchristianities.stir.ac.uk/files/2015/10/Translating-God-Colloquium-4-5-May-2017-Schedule-and-Abstracts-01-05-17.pdf> >).

from the Early Middle Ages, via the colonially dominated 16th to early 20th centuries, to today's 'modern', post-colonial world. The papers show that similar methodological and ideological challenges have to be confronted when transposing Christian ideas into other cultural spheres, be it in a literary, missionary or contemporary university context. The studied works and con/texts interpret the orthodox way of the understanding of Christianity, even by deviating from it, and they try to convey and communicate worldviews and religious concepts for recipients beyond the authors' inter/intra-cultural boundaries. By using different methodological tools, the contributors show the manifold and innovative ways in which this field of the translation of culture can be approached.

Thus these articles give evidence of how the missionaries of colonial empires contributed to unorthodox ways of implementing their faith and knowledge, creating individual ways of contextualising their interpretations in the Christian world, and at the same time they appropriate it for their own purposes. When taking a superficial look at the protagonists, they seem to be in agreement and concordance with the Christian enterprise and objective, but a closer analysis shows that particular creative ways of interpreting their religious beliefs can almost be seen as 'alternative', some even as 'subversive', interlacing different religious worldviews. Our contributions analyse translation approaches used by certain authors, in their sociopolitical contexts, and in the transmission from one, often less powerful language and culture to another, hegemonic one. Their perceived and real inequality is due to the political constellation of colonial or post-colonial, or even quasi-colonial situations. Some contributors use mainly linguistic evidence to show that translation is always also the outcome of the social production of knowledge; others emphasise the situational contexts to explain how the authors/translators they studied tried to connect different cultural experiences and universes, to bridge the gap between 'their' language and culture and those of the 'others', and the contributors highlight the role the author/translator had or wanted to assume in this effort.

The first part of the book addresses mission: languages, experiences and translation approaches. Here the contributions about the translation of *God* explore how the concept of deity was conveyed to other cultures and languages, mostly in a colonial context. The articles about systems of knowledge study how the sources intended to translate Western knowledge into different cultural situations and languages, thereby revealing their own cultural and intellectual background. Another contribution analyses women's contributions to the missionary enterprise and how they became empowered through their agency. In the second part of this volume, on literature and scholarship, two articles present how religious experience was re-created in fiction and the authors crossed cultural boundaries in their lives and works. The final contribution discusses critically from the scholarly angle how religious studies have been created and taught in different academic settings and traditions and what the future challenges are.

Mission: Languages, Experiences and Translation Approaches

Brian Murdoch

God and the Goths: Translation Techniques for the Germanic Tribes

This introduction offers a simplified model of the various linguistic strategies for translating basic Christian terms in the earliest written Germanic languages, specifically loanwords, loan-translations and loan-meanings. All of these can be problematic in terms of cross-cultural interference. Examples are considered primarily from Gothic and Old High German, with selected examples of basic Christian vocabulary, and with particular reference to words for the three members of the Trinity. The intent is to offer possible comparisons for the translation of Christian terms in chronologically or geographically more remote cultural contexts.

Frauke Sachse

Mendicant Perspectives on Translating Christian Conceptualisations of Divinity into Sixteenth-Century K'iche'

The Highland Maya language K'iche' was among the first Amerindian languages to be used in the Christian conversion following the Spanish conquest. Missionaries produced a rich corpus of doctrinal literature which allows us to study the creation of Christian discourse and the processes of translation. This paper will explore Dominican and Franciscan traditions of translating Christian concepts of divinity including God, the Trinity, and the Devil. Both orders had different perspectives on translation which reflect in the written record. While the Franciscan sources show a preference for introducing neologisms, Dominican writers strategically accommodated terminology from K'iche' ritual discourse. I will argue that the latter practice favoured the survival of Precolumbian conceptualisations of divine agents.

Pär Eliasson

Christological Marathi in *Cristanchi Sastrazza Cathexismo* (1778)

This article analyses the theological language of a bilingual Catholic catechism from 1778, written in Portuguese and a Marathi dialect from northern Konkan. The Portuguese title of the catechism is *Cathechismo da Doutrina Cristam* and the Marathi title *Cristanchi Sastrazza Cathexismo*. The author is unknown. More specifically, I analyse terms and phrases used for expressing ideas about Christology in the Marathi text, and try to find potential points of encounter with religious language of influential Hindu traditions in the Marathi speaking region in western India, especially with *Jñānesivari* and the non-dualistic Vārkarī (Vaisṇḍava) movement on the one hand and *Gurucaritra* and the three-headed god Dattātreyā on the other. The catechism apparently follows an already established praxis of rendering Christian theology in the sister languages Marathi and Konkani. One criterion for choices between (1) Indic words, (2) Portuguese loan words and (3) Marathi paraphrase for various theological concepts, seems to be its efficiency to communicate the intended meaning without provoking misunderstandings due to association with ideas belonging to worldviews incompatible with the intended one.

Gwilym Colenso

***uNkulunkulu*: Bishop John William Colenso and the Contested Zulu God-name in Nineteenth-century Natal**

Bishop Colenso's advocacy of *uNkulunkulu* as the Zulu God-name can be viewed within his radical conception of Christian conversion. Some missionaries in Natal objected to the use of *uNkulunkulu* on the grounds that the cultural inferiority of the African dictated that a Zulu word should not be used for the Christian God. More sophisticated objections were advanced by Colenso's fellow missionary, Henry Calloway, on theological and ethnographic grounds. The debate continued into the twentieth century. I will argue that differences over the Zulu God-name reflected different views on the place of the African in the evolving colonial order in Natal.

David Moore

The Wanderings of *Altjira*, Christianity and the Translation of Sacred Words in Central Australia

German missionaries working in Central Australia were cultural translators who had a strong grounding in philology, a discipline which developed in Germany to a high standard throughout the nineteenth century. The missionaries aimed to translate the Bible and hymnbook containing Luther's Small Catechism, hymns and prayers, into the Aranda language. Their adoption of *Altjira* for 'God' was radical considering the literalness of their translations and their wariness of syncretism. Soesilo (2007: 176) maintains that "the acceptable translation of divine names is an area of debate in Bible translation in many areas of the world" as "there are missionaries and Christian workers who think that adopting local divine names can lead to confusion and syncretism". Given concerns about syncretism and considering that Kempe usually borrowed Latin terms for key theological terms, it is surprising that he chose *Altjira* as the term for 'God'. Over time *Altjira* has changed meaning and is now different from the one prior to European settlement of Australia. Changes in meaning are also found in other languages, where meanings have diverged in different ways.

Sabine Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz

Recontextualising the Sacraments: Diego González Holguín's Construction of Christian Vocabulary in Colonial Peru

In 1608 the Jesuit missionary-linguist Diego González Holguín published a comprehensive Spanish-Quechua dictionary which covered all aspects of life and also included a wide range of words which refer to Christian and Andean beliefs. Although he situated himself in a by then established Christian Andean tradition of the translation of religious concepts, he also used innovative translation methods, reinterpreting Andean and Christian words in an unorthodox way. Through the analysis of his translation methods light can be shed on the process in which religions are constructed. For this I will examine the translations of the term 'sacrament'. Whilst the word itself is transmitted into Quechua as a loanword, in more detailed explanations the author uses extensions of meanings and metaphorical expressions. Thus, for example, a certain aspect of the sacraments is translated in the context of healing/poisoning; another instance is the relation of the Holy Communion to the

powerful royal Inca travel provision. González Holguín's translation approach shows how Christian religion could be integrated into the Andean worldview.

Roxana Sarion

Matías Ruiz Blanco's Reconceptualisation of Carib Practices and Traditions in his *Conversion de Piritv de indios cvmanagotos, palenqves, y otros* (1690)

This article examines the Franciscan Fray Matías Ruiz Blanco's reconceptualisation of particular Carib practices and customs and the conveyance of the Christian faith, as theorised by him in his work *Conversion de Piritv de indios cvmanagotos, palenqves, y otros* (1690). The main aim is to analyse whether the so-called 'pacific evangelisation' project undertaken by the Franciscan missions in Píritu served, in fact, the assimilation and acculturation of the indigenous peoples under the Spanish empire, despite its seemingly conciliatory initial purpose. Consequently, this article enquires how Ruiz Blanco interpreted and conveyed Carib knowledge systems according to Christian structures. For this, I will first examine the process of evangelisation on the eastern coast of Venezuela in relation to the spiritual conquest dynamics of the Americas during the 16/17th centuries. I will then provide examples of the way in which Ruiz Blanco 'demonised' manifestations of Carib practices, which he made comprehensible to his fellow missionaries by establishing associations with his Christian mentality and clerical training. Finally I will study Ruiz Blanco's translation of the *doctrina cristiana* according to principles which were not always aligned with the orthodox guidelines imposed by the Third Council of Lima (1582-83).

Alison Jasper

Narratives of Female Genius in the Mission Field: Five Case Studies in China

This article considers five case-studies relating to women missionaries in China at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries: Lucy Soothill, Eleanor Harrison, Mildred Cable, Annie Torrance and Jessie Emslie. In this article, the term 'female genius' is used to identify the creative, imaginative and embodied agency exercised by women in the kind of conditions of male normativity that were so powerfully described by de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* as "oblique" to the "absolute vertical" of androcentric and patriarchal society. In their roles as missionaries and missionary wives, these five women were recognised in colonial society and took on responsibilities that would have been more difficult to assume in their homelands. Nevertheless they remained, in de Beauvoir's sense, "oblique". The aim of this paper then is precisely not to suggest that these women should just be accounted as missionaries or missionary theologians in the conventional male dominated sense which invokes a particular form of academic or institutional qualification. Equally their lives do not have to be seen as exemplary in every sense; they were inevitably marked by the same contexts in which they were entangled howsoever much they sometimes crossed their limits. What is proposed instead, is that rather than simply considering how far they conform or deviate from a male, colonial norm, we also try to frame and present what they achieved on their own terms, as creative, imaginative and embodied female geniuses.

Literature and Scholarship

Sarah Irving: *Nathan der Weise* in Jerusalem: Elias Haddad's Re-appropriation of Tolerance in Mandate Palestine

In 1932 Elias Haddad, a teacher at a German orphanage in Jerusalem, published the first Arabic translation of Gotthold Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*. The play is famous as a call for interfaith tolerance and recognition of the place of Jewish people in European societies. But what might its publication in Mandate Palestine signify, at a time of rising tensions between local Arabs and Jewish immigrants? I explore Elias Haddad's translation and paratextual materials, arguing that they show continuities from other expressions of Jewish belonging in the Levant, and challenge stereotyped notions of Arab attitudes in interwar Palestine.

Fiona Darroch

"*Ou libéré?*" Vodou and Haiti: Speaking the Language of Resistance, Remembrance and Freedom in the Writing of Edwidge Danticat

This paper analyses how vodou is embedded in the history of Haiti; it is central to the language, literatures, and narratives of the 1791-1802 Saint Domingue revolution. Referring to the writer Edwidge Danticat and scholar of religion, Brent Plate, it engages with the ways in which a new language of religiosity, which prioritises the senses, can be creatively transcribed. This language of religiosity is in contrast to a European and Christian use of the term 'religion' which has a tendency to segregate the political and the religious, the spiritual and the material, the body and the mind. The language of religiosity used here is instead guided by a female historiography of Haiti and the goddess Erzulie.

Richard Roberts

Theological Revisionism and the Recomposition of the Religio-spiritual Field

The fraught and contested relation between 'theology' and the 'critical' study of 'religion' invites contextualisation and clarification. The disjunction traceable in historical terms to Kant's *Streit der Fakultäten* (1798) and the debate between F. D. E. Schleiermacher and Wilhelm von Humboldt on the place of theology in the newly-founded University of Berlin has now become increasingly problematic in Anglo-America. Above all in the United Kingdom these tensions are embedded in a centralised and commodified tertiary education system much influenced by the goal of producing market-worthy human identities through controlled socialisation enabled through techniques of human resources management (HRM). In the United States the exigencies of the academic labour market likewise impinge upon the direction and advocacy of theory in a distinctive way. In this setting the terms 'theology', 'theory' and 'critical' function as signs, the actual signification of which is less than obvious. This encoding is decipherable when they appear in a recent key overview of the debate. In an era of pervasive crisis alternative strategies are required if the study of 'religion' is better to serve the full range of legitimate demands made of a subject area that draws upon both the humanities and social sciences. We will then outline an alternative strategy taking as its starting point the problematic juxtaposition of the global and the local.