



**CALL FOR PAPERS**  
**Spatializing the Missionary Encounter.**  
**The Interaction between Missionary Work and Space in Colonial Settings.**

While research on colonial architecture and space has found a broad academic interest during the past several decades, research on the architectural staging and spatial implications of the worldwide expansion of religion has found much less concern. Nonetheless, the development of colonial empires in the nineteenth and twentieth century went hand in hand with a missionary revival sending Christian missionaries to every corner of the world. As those missionaries generally were in closer contact with the local population than colonial officials, studying their spatial practices and strategies offers high potential for analysing the dynamics of intercultural interaction in the imperial encounter.

However, up until today only a small number of the studies attempting to interpret these missionary spaces have fully realised this potential. First of all, missionary architecture is in general studied as an isolated phenomenon, ignoring the manifold ties it had in the nineteenth and twentieth century with colonial, and later national, regimes. Secondly, the analyses of this architecture often are based on rather obvious or one-sided interpretational schemes. Sometimes for example missionary spaces are merely read as products of the thoughtless export of Western models (neo-gothic, modern, etc.) Other researchers then have investigated how missionaries have formally adapted Christian art in an effort to open up a dialogue with the groups they tried to convert.

Yet, in both approaches, with their focus on the formal language and decoration of architecture, missionary space is only analysed as a décor for human action. With this workshop we want to explore the possible lines of a more nuanced analytical scheme to study this interaction between missionary work and space. Critical in this scheme is an approach to missionary architecture and space not so much as a backdrop for the missionary encounter, but as an essential part of this encounter in itself. Moreover, we explicitly call for papers that explore the roles of the different actors involved in creating meaning and performing practices in these spaces. Instead, most studies up until today have almost exclusively attributed agency in these spaces to the missionaries. Only seldomly are converts, converts-to-be or other 'non-missionaries' discussed as co-producers of this architecture.

More specifically, we see three main fields of enquiry. The first questions how and with what intent missionary work brought about spatial and architectural structures. The second research question around which we want to bring together papers, focuses on the both everyday and extraordinary practices that missionary spaces dictated or made possible. A third line of analysis will be concerned with the both received and contested meaning(s) revealed and created by missionary spaces.

In general, the scientific committee welcomes all papers that shed light on the complex and plural realities surrounding the interaction between missionary work and space in colonial settings. The workshop focuses on missionary work of all denominations in colonial settings between roughly 1800 and 1960. We aim at bringing both an overview of existing research and exploring new ways of studying this interaction. Papers exploring new methodologies are particularly encouraged. We explicitly strive to include research coming from a multitude of disciplines (architectural history, history, mission history, anthropology, geography, cultural studies). Based on the proceedings of this workshop a publication will be prepared.



The conference will take place at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium), **22 – 24 November 2007**.

Please submit a 250 words abstract along with a c.v. by **31 December 2006** to [Bram.Cleys@asro.kuleuven.be](mailto:Bram.Cleys@asro.kuleuven.be). If your proposal is accepted, final papers are due for pre-circulation on 31 October 2007.

Scientific Committee:

Prof. dr. Bruno De Meulder (Dept. of Architecture, Urbanism and Planning, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven)

Prof. dr. Jan De Maeyer (KADOC – Documentation and Research Center for Religion, Culture and Society, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven)

Prof. dr. Nicholas Bullock (Department of Architecture, University of Cambridge)

Dr. Sabine Cornelis (Department of History, Royal Museum of Central Africa)

Prof. dr. Johan Lagae (Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Ghent University)