

Overview

The history of early modern missions is perhaps one of the fields in which the rise of global history has had the most significant impact. Considering a multiplicity of actors and locales, Christianity itself is increasingly understood in the plural. Simultaneously, these “local religions” did not exist in splendid isolation but interacted on different scales.

In this workshop, we seek to provide a space for comparison and discussion of cross-regional entanglements, fostering exchange about the different concepts and methodological approaches employed, such as correlation, similarity, and proximity. The workshop at the same time retains and pursues a specific focus on (West Central) Africa. Bringing the scholarship on Kongo Christianity into dialogue with case studies from other regions can contribute to redressing the imbalance in current discussions of early modern Christianities and mission history, in which Sub-Saharan Africa is still underrepresented.

By including interdisciplinary participants, we hope to contribute to a critical reflection on how colonialism shaped the study of religion, exploring intersections between attempts at de-centering the history of Christianity and debates about decolonisation and pluralization in global Christianities today.

Conference Venue

Fürstenzimmer
Schloss Hohentübingen
Burgsteige 11
72070 Tübingen

Organisation

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Images

Asti, B. de (ca. 1750). *Missione in prattica*. Biblioteche Civiche Torinesi, Turin. <https://bct.comune.torino.it/gallerie/missione-prattica>.

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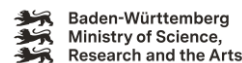
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Unknown (Ethiopia) (ca. 1504-1505). *The Virgin and Child with the Archangels Michael and Gabriel*. Getty, Los Angeles. <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/109D2E#full-artwork-details>.



Funded by the Platform “Global Encounters”.

With funding from the:

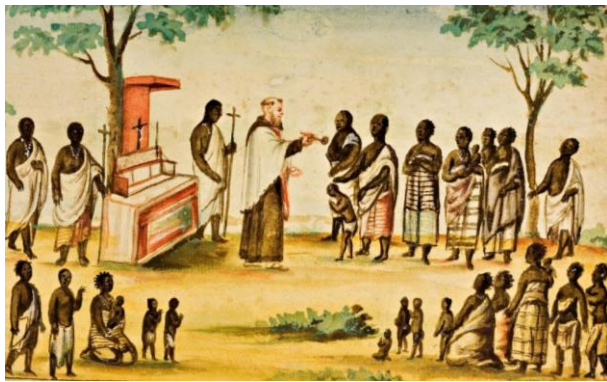


International Workshop Proximities, Entanglements, Comparisons

Kongo Christianity and the History of Early Modern Missions (30–31 March 2026)

Faculty of Humanities
Institute of Modern History





Programme

Sunday, 29 March 2026

18:30 Get together & dinner

Monday, 30 March 2026

09:00-09:30 Johannes Gradel/Christina Brauner (Tübingen): Introduction

09:30-11:00 Keynote I

Olivia Adankpo-Labadie (Grenoble): Comparing Ethiopia and Kongo? New Approaches to the History of Christianity in Africa during Early Modernity

Comment: Antje Flüchter (Bielefeld)

Coffee

11:20-12:30 Panel I: Rituals and Sacraments

Emese Muntán (Vienna): Baptismal Rituals between Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islam in Early Modern Ottoman Europe

Tomás Motta Tassinari (Fiesole/EUI): Jinganga Missionaries: Religious Accommodation and Political Subjugation in Angola (1575–1681)

Chair: Michael Schüßler

Lunch

13:30-14:40 Panel II: Language and Translation

Sebastian Dom (Ghent): The *Congrégation du Saint-Esprit*: French Missionary Linguistics in the Lower Congo (19-20th c.)

Simon Siemianowski (Tübingen): Lost Translations? Tracing the Life, Death, and Afterlife of Linguistic Materials in the Jesuit Missions in Mexico

Chair: Julia Rebholz

14:50-16:00 Panel III: Gender

Nadine Amsler (Basel): Gender and Class in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Catholicism

Johannes Gradel (Tübingen): The Queen with the Capuchin's Beard: Gender and Rank in Capuchin-Kongoles Relations (1640s–1710s)

Chair: Monique Scheer

Coffee

16:20-17:30 Panel IV: Un/Freedom

Florian Ambach (Innsbruck): Capuchins and Anti/Slavery in West Central Africa. Tracing Practices across Places and Scales within an Ambivalent Spectrum

Xenia von Tippelskirch (Frankfurt/Main): Catholic Mission and Enslavement in French Louisiana

Chair: Nadja Klopprogge

17:30-19:00 Keynote II

John Thornton (Boston): Kongo's Catholic Church vs the Counter Reformation: Acceptance and Rejection

Comment: Renate Dürr (Tübingen/Berlin)

Conference dinner



Tuesday, 31 March 2026

09:15-10:30 Panel V: Law and Legal Practice

Marco Cavarzere (Venice): Canon Law and Church Institutions in Early Modern Kongo. A Roman Perspective

Luisa Stella Coutinho (Frankfurt/Main): Converting Women, Shaping Empire: Gender, Law, and Christianity in Early Modern Japan (1540s–1630s)

Chair: Boris Nieswand

Coffee

10:50-12:00 Panel VI: Governance and Empire

Christian Windler (Bern): Catholic Company Churches: Capuchins in Madras and Discalced Carmelites in Bombay

Giacomo Mastrogregori (Barcelona): "Without Interfering with State Interest or Matters of War": Capuchin Missionaries and Portuguese Colonial Authorities in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century

Chair: Frederike Schotters

Lunch

13:00-14:00 Roundtable Discussion: Christianities Past and Present – Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Panelists: Katharina Wilkens (Religious Studies, Tübingen), Sebastian Pittl (Theology, Tübingen), Gilbert Dotse Yigbe (German Studies, Lomé)

Chair: Christina Brauner

14:00-14:15 Johannes Gradel/Christina Brauner: Closing Remarks