

Translating Colonialism?

Global Networks of Bible Translation and their Cultural and Linguistic Impact

Westminster College, Cambridge, 7-8 Nov 2024

We are inviting abstracts for short presentations by PhD/postgraduate students at the *Translating Colonialism* conference. Presentations may take a number of formats, including speed talks (10 mins), posters or pictures with invited responses, or structured conversations with peers or senior researchers. These will be part of a dedicated postgraduate session attended by all conference participants.

Please send your 150-word abstract + a short CV to globil-conference2024@bristol.ac.uk before **15 May 2024**. For selected participants travel costs and accommodation (1-2 nights) will be covered as well as mentoring and participation in the conference + conference dinner. Up to four bursaries will be available.

At the beginnings of the 19th century, Christianity was not a majority religion except in Europe and its settler colonies. By century's end, it had become a world religion, with Biblical texts translated into over 500 languages by 1914. Missionary translation networks, accordingly, were a significant factor in cultural and linguistic change on a global scale – transformations that were often accompanied by colonial violence, cultural destruction, and language death. While the 'Global Bible' aspired to universality, the ways in which it was made, used, read, and received or rejected were culturally and locally specific. It was both an instrument of colonial power and a mass-marketed product of missionary linguistics and ethnology; for the converts, it was also a source of cultural and religious self-understanding.

This conference uses the 'Global Bible' as a lens for the study of global transformations, missionary networks, colonial knowledge, the clash of cosmologies, and Indigenous self-understanding. Its aim is to cover perspectives from a broad range of disciplines – history, linguistics, missiology, religious studies, anthropology – and regions, with special attention to the role of global majority actors and perspectives as well as to the contribution of Bible societies. The main period we will be considering is the long 19th century, but earlier and later translations and networks will be relevant for understanding these global developments.

Potential topics for discussion can include:

- Indigenous translators/language teachers/informants and their agency in colonial settings
- Translation problems, linguistic innovation, and the redefinition of cultural core concepts
- Biblical universalism, confessional segmentation, and religious syncretism
- The mapping of the world's languages through missionary networks
- Bible translation as a lens for the study of Indigenous languages, cultures, and religions
- Circulation of knowledge within and between missionary translation networks
- The 'Global Bible' as a marketable object and an instrument of power
- Relations and perceived hierarchies between languages: metropolitan/Indigenous, Biblical/profane, classical/vernacular, literary/popular
- International relations between different Bible societies, and the role of foreigners (e.g. Germans in British networks) as well as global majority converts within them

This conference is organized as part of the project *Global Bible: British and German Bible Societies Translating Colonialism, 1800-1914* (GloBil) hosted by Universität Münster / University of Bristol in partnership with Cambridge University Library and funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).