

Mixed Messages
Materiality, Textuality, and Missions

Jamie Scott and Gareth Griffiths

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Reviews

'The role of Christian missions in the imperial projects of Europe is a topic of growing importance across a wide range of disciplines - from history to cultural studies, from post-colonial literary theory to anthropology - though it is still too often seen in monovalent terms, as providing an ideology of cultural domination. The central theme of this excellent collection of papers is that adequate narratives of mission elude reduction to those grand narratives of empire, modernization and capitalism that are associated with them. It is not just that missions emitted mixed messages, but that their texts and artefacts - splendidly analysed in several chapters here - were often so rich in surplus meaning that they were readily appropriated by converts to purposes of their own. A particularly valuable feature of Scott and Griffiths' book is that its studies of Christian missions in Africa, India, the Pacific and North America are complemented by chapters on Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu mission in the West. The historical study of mission thus offers a vital path into a deeper understanding of the transnational dynamics of culture in our own day'. - J. D. Y. Peel, School of Oriental and African Studies

'In *Mixed Messages - Materiality, Textuality, Missions*, Jamie Scott and Gareth Griffiths have brought together an impressive array of outstanding specialists for a highly original set of readings in missionary discourses. The scope of the book is remarkable: it takes in aspects of the cultural history of missions around the world, from Africa and India to Australia and North America; it is by no means restricted to Christian missions, but includes such especially topical issues as the development of the Islamic mission in the United States. The assorted essays draws their panache and the original appeal of their readings from the focus on the material side of the missionary impact and from an intense questioning of the interpenetration of missionary discourses with further important agendas, such as imperialism, (post-)colonialism, print cultures, education and wider cultural issues. Particularly everyone with an apparently final and fixed verdict on missionary work should read this book: it realigns, complicates, subverts, even blurs clear-cut, simple perspectives, eventually replacing them by considered, highly reflective insight and appreciation'. - Klaus Stierstorfer, Universitaet Duesseldorf

'This is an interesting, original, well-informed and erudite collection describing the missionary work of all the major religions in the world'. - Hena Maes-Jelinek, Emeritus Professor of the University of Liège

'This provocative collection of essays by some of the best scholars in their respective fields is a rich fusion of literary criticism, history and social anthropology with mission studies. Taking materiality and textuality as their key themes the writers make important contributions to a lively and growing body of scholarship on missions. Essays explore the nature of conversion and its relation to outward and physical signs; the power of print and texts in the making of identities; the role of documents in regimes of colonial control and anti-colonial movements of liberation; and the importance of mission work to imperial self-definition. Treating the metropole and colony as part of the same analytic field the collection illustrates the centrality of missions in modern history not simply as a reflex of imperialism but as a movement which Ohad its own dynamic and which quickly transcended the framework of its transmission. As such *Mixed Messages* furthers understanding of an enormous series of religious shifts throughout the Twentieth Century which have left an increasingly secular North facing a vibrantly religious South'. - David Maxwell, Senior Lecturer in International History, Keele University, Editor of the *Journal of Religion in Africa*

'Some of the most empirically rich and contingent as well as painfully human history I have read in a long time'. - Susan Thorne, Associate Professor of History, Duke University

Description This collection of essays looks at missions, their complicity in European colonialism, and their postcolonial aftermath. It examines the spread of Christianity, ranging over the anthropological, textual, historical, and geographical dimensions of mission enterprises, with topics as diverse as the influence of mission printing and record-keeping on traditional life in Africa to the role of missions in changing styles of dress in India. Also, uniquely, the collection includes essays analyzing the role of proselytizing in Islam,

Hinduism, and Buddhism, as well as American liberal democratic capitalism. The volume is interdisciplinary, focusing on textual and material aspects of missions. Like Griffiths' earlier ground-breaking books in postcolonial studies, and Scott's well-known interdisciplinary work on missions and postcolonial literatures, this collection will be fascinating to scholars in postcolonial/cultural and mission studies and be useful as a teaching tool as well.

Contents

Master Narratives of Imperial Missions; *J.L. Cox*

Inventing the World: Transnationalism, Transmission and Christian Textualities; *I. Hofmeyr*

The Missionary Writing Machine In Nineteenth-Century Kwazulu-Natal; *N. Etherington*

Mixed Messages: Imperial Adventures and Missionary Tales; *G. Griffiths*

Books and Bodices: Material Culture and Protestant Missions in Colonial South India; *E.F. Kent*

Landscapes of Faith: British Missionary Tourism in the South Pacific; *J. Samson*

Penitential and Penitentiary: Native Canadians and Colonial Mission Education; *J.S. Scott*

Da 'Wa in the West: Islamic Mission in American Form; *J.I. Smith*

The Spread of Buddhism in the West: Missionary Work and the Pattern of Religious Diffusion; *J.W. Coleman*

'In Every Town, Country and Village My Name Will Be Sung': Hindu Missions in India and Abroad;

K.K. Klostermaier

Articles of Faith: International Relations and 'Missionary' Scholarship; *J.M. Beier*

Afterword: Global Conversions; *P. van der Veer*

Author Biographies

JAMIE SCOTT is an Associate Professor of English and Geography at York University, Ontario, Canada.

GARETH GRIFFITHS is Professor of English at the University of Western Australia. He is the author of a number of seminal texts on postcolonialism such as *The Empire Writes Back* (Routledge, 1990), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (Routledge, 1995), *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (Routledge 1998), and *African Literatures in English* (Addison-Wesley, 2000 textbook).

