
Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme



A Companion to Early Modern Catholic Global Missions

Jason Dyck

Volume 42, Number 3, Summer 2019

Situating Conciliarism in Early Modern Spanish Thought
Situier conciliarisme dans la pensée espagnole de la première
modernité

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1066386ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1066386ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Dyck, J. (2019). Review of [A Companion to Early Modern Catholic Global Missions]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 42(3), 231–233. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1066386ar>

© All Rights Reserved Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2019

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

Shakespeare contributes to a renaissance in modern and contemporary Asian art. *Shakespeare and Asia* is a timely collection—bridging Western literature and Asian artistic creation.

SONG MING

Shanghai University of Finance and Economics

Hsia, Ronnie Po-Chia, ed.

A Companion to Early Modern Catholic Global Missions.

Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 80. Leiden: Brill, 2018. Pp. x, 488. ISBN 978-90-0434994-0 (hardcover) €190.

As a result of European expansion overseas, Christianity developed into a truly global religion in the early modern period. Missionaries established the Catholic Church around the world with the help of local aids and informants, thus becoming religious representatives of an international institution and political agents of their respective kingdoms. *A Companion to Early Modern Catholic Global Missions* provides a comparative framework for understanding this complex relationship between Catholic missions and European empires. Edited by R. Po-chia Hsia, this volume of fourteen essays brings together diverse and often isolated mission historiographies on the Americas, Asia, Africa, and the Islamic world. By studying the spread of Catholicism across distinct geographic regions, the *Companion* demonstrates that there were “different histories in globalization” (5) for both missionaries and missionized alike.

In a brief introductory essay, Hsia suggests that two general forms of evangelization emerged among Catholic missionaries. “American” and “Asian” models shaped local strategies and methods, reflecting a clear difference in how European empires were established in the eastern and western hemispheres. In the Americas, Christianization took place in the wake of conquest and colonial subjugation, especially in Spanish and Portuguese possessions. By way of contrast, the spread of the Catholic Church in Africa and Asia was often restricted to small coastal strips of land where missionaries depended on the support of local rulers for survival. Hsia also notes that the interests of European empires created “exclusive missionary territories” (6) and that Catholicism had greater success when it interacted with non-monotheistic religions. While these

opening comparisons serve as a useful framework, a review of the meanings of “mission” and “missionary” in the early modern context is unfortunately absent. Europe was just as much a mission field as anywhere else in the world, where popular missions to Catholics became a common occurrence by the seventeenth century.

The *Companion* is divided into five parts, four of which are organized by geography. The first deals with the Americas with essays by Mark Christensen (Mexico), Aliocha Maldavsky (Andes), Guillermo Wilde (Paraguay), Anne McGinness (Brazil), and Dominique Deslandres (New France). All the major mission fields are covered, but early evangelizing efforts in the Caribbean are entirely ignored. There is only one chapter by Alan Strathern in the second part, which focuses on all Sub-Saharan Africa. The third part concentrates on the Islamic world with essays by Adina Ruiu (Ottoman Empire) and Christian Windler (Persia), regions outside of European control that have been understudied in mission history. In the fourth part, Ines G. Županov (South Asia), Tara Alberts (Vietnam), M. Antoni J. Ucerler (Japan), and R. Po-chia Hsia (China) primarily deal with Jesuit activity in various parts of Asia, but a sustained discussion of Spanish missionary efforts in the Philippines is not included. The final part consists of essays by Fred Vermote on missionary finances and Christoph Nebgen on the European origins of missionaries, both of which entirely focus on the Society of Jesus.

Several long-held assumptions about Catholic missionaries are complicated by the comparative framework of the *Companion*. Accommodation policies are normally associated with Jesuits working in Asian contexts, but Maldavsky rightly points out that similar practices were employed by the mendicants in the Andes. While missionary tasks are often gendered and portrayed as men’s work, Deslandres argues that this was not the case in New France. French laywomen and nuns supported conversion efforts in colonial Canada and even became missionaries to indigenous peoples. It is taken for granted that mendicants and Jesuits spread disease and doctrine everywhere they went around the world. This was clearly the case in the Americas and several islands in the Pacific, but according to Strathern, Europeans were the ones who “died like flies” (177) in Africa. And contrary to contemporary assumptions of evangelization, Ruiu demonstrates that non-Christians were not always the target audience of Catholic missionaries outside of Europe. In Constantinople,

Jesuits ministered to the Christian community as an extension of Catholic reform, cautiously avoiding any efforts to convert the Muslim population.

Although the missionary work of European mendicants and Jesuits is the primary focus of the *Companion*, several authors acknowledge the evangelizing efforts of non-Europeans. Christensen refers to indigenous people as “spiritual conquistadors” (27) in Mexico, Wilde notes that the Guaraní wrote sermons in Paraguay, Strathern highlights the role of local proselytizers in Africa, and Županov references the work of Brahman catechists in India. It is false to assume that only ordained Europeans in religious garb spread the Christian gospel in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Indigenous peoples performed missionary roles as preachers and teachers, and in several notable cases were even recognized as martyrs. These aspects of global Catholic missions are not sufficiently treated in the *Companion* and deserve more attention in future research.

Each essay includes a brief survey of mission historiography specific to the geographic region under discussion, although there are no accompanying maps of mission zones or images of religious artwork, both of which would have served as helpful visual aids. The *Companion*, despite a few minor shortcomings, will be welcomed as a useful tool for scholars seeking to expand their understanding of mission history and for undergraduate students enrolled in world history courses. The global spread of Christianity was an integral part of the early modern period, and one that is better understood when historiographic silos are broken down. This is exactly what the *Companion* offers, and it does not disappoint.

JASON DYCK

Trent University Durham

Keizer, Joost.

Leonardo's Paradox: Work and Image in the Making of Renaissance Culture.

London: Reaktion Books, 2019. Pp. 232 + 65 ill. ISBN 978-1-78914-069-9 (hardcover) £25.

In his latest book, Joost Keizer explores Leonardo da Vinci's lifelong fascination with words and images. Examining the artist's notebook writings and annotated drawings alongside his oeuvre, Keizer argues that it was the ongoing assessment