

Eleonora Hof

Re-imagining World Christianity: Challenging Territorial Essentialism

In spring 2013, while visiting Kenya and Tanzania, I attended an English language church service in Moshi, a town at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro. The service was led by an enthusiastic, extrovert pastor, who was most happy to welcome visitors from abroad. His strong accent was unmistakably from the southern United States. Worship started with songs that were well known to me, since they were all favorites from the contemporary evangelical worship scene and written by well-known worship leaders such as Michael W. Smith and Matt Redman. Moreover, these songs were accompanied by startling visuals in bright colors in a powerpoint presentation. The sermon was a solid expository preaching on Hebrews accompanied by reading from the archaic sounding, not revised King James Version. A handful of Tanzanians were present, but most of the attendees were expatriates. I asked about possible relationships with other congregations in Moshi, but apparently they did not fancy any connections with other churches. We left the church feeling on the one hand welcomed as guests, but on the other hand confused about what we just had witnessed.¹

It is the goal of this article to use this particular story which took place in a specific locality as a tool to scrutinize and critique prevalent conceptions of World Christianity. In addition, I will use this story to argue for an imaginary of World Christianity which includes the continuing missionary presence of the western world in the Two-Thirds Worlds in the topography of World Christianity. Only by consciously expanding our framework will it be possible to pair careful analysis with a plea for resistance. Resistance is here taken as attending to issues of power and injustice and identifying patterns that need to be addressed in order to promote change. The abundance of similar stories like

¹ See for a photo essay of the church service <http://www.flickr.com/photos/28938702@N05/sets/72157636573708553/>, 19 February 2014.

the one I have recounted shows that by no means do we live in a postmissionary time,² as has been advocated by some scholars.³ Instead, one witnesses a continuing influx of missionaries who are “planting churches” without any regard for local theologies, ecumenical cooperation or local ownership. In the practice of the church in Moshi, a considerable amount of the common knowledge and practice of ecumenical circles is negated. It has been the merit of Robert Wuthnow, a sociologist of religion, to point out the sheer size and quantity of American foreign missionary endeavors.⁴ Yet, in some influential missiological works, the effects of these American efforts are downplayed or ignored. For example, Lamin Sanneh, well-known for stressing the infinite translatability of the Christian faith,⁵ emphasizes how non-western Christianity is advancing “without Western organizational structures”.⁶ Granted, Wuthnow is not a missiologist and explicitly claims not to aim to make a contribution to the field of missiology, but it is nevertheless regrettable that his valuable insights to this field have not been extensively discussed by missiologists.⁷

² See Robert Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches* (University of California Press: Berkeley 2009).

³ See Roland Löffler, “Introduction: Robinson Crusoe Tries Again or: Werner Ustorf’s Way of Developing Missiology into a Research Concept of Global and Pluralistic Christianity,” in: Werner Ustorf, *Robinson Crusoe Tries Again: Missiology and European Constructions of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ in a Global World 1789-2010*, edited by Roland Löffler (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: Göttingen 2010), *Research in Contemporary Religion* 9, 7-20, here 9; Bert Hoedemaker, *Met Anderen tot Christus: Zending in een Postmissionair Tijdperk* (Boekencentrum: Zoetermeer 2000).

⁴ Roughly 40.000 U.S. citizens were employed as full-time missionaries in foreign countries in 2001. In addition, 350.000 U.S. citizens undertook a short term mission trip (ranging from between two weeks and a year). U.S. churches spent \$3,7 billion on foreign ministries; cf. Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith*, 23.

⁵ See Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll 2009, 2nd rev. and ext. ed.), *American Society of Missiology Series* 42.

⁶ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?: The Gospel beyond the West* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids 2003), 3. See for the further agenda of Sanneh: “I have decided to give priority to indigenous response and local appropriation over against missionary transmission and direction, and accordingly have reversed the argument by speaking of the *indigenous discovery of Christianity* rather than the *Christian discovery of indigenous societies*” (10, emphasis in the original).

⁷ The absence of any substantial discussion has been noted and lamented by Robert Priest. Robert Priest, “Robert Wuthnow and the Global Christianity Paradigm”. (<http://www.missiology matters.com/2012/10/28/robert-wuthnow-and-the-global-christianity-paradigm/>, 23 April 2013).

Three Imaginaries of World Christianity

The emerging field of World Christianity is in its most basic form the study of the Christian presence and witness on a global scale.⁸ This field of study follows its own presuppositions, agendas, claims and interests and is therefore by no means a neutral and value-free endeavor. In order to develop my own working definition of World Christianity, I propose a schematic overview of three ways of imagining World Christianity. These imaginaries are value-laden and provide each a different lens for interpreting data on Christian presence and witness.

The first imaginary could be characterized by the implicit or explicit dominance of the West. World Christianity is imagined as the exotic and unfamiliar branch of Christianity. The West is therefore tacitly omitted from the world in World Christianity. This usage is comparable to the concept of world music,⁹ which designates everything that is exotic and does not belong to the mainstream.¹⁰ A tell-tale sign of (unconscious) West-centrism is that non-western theologians and theologies are labeled “native” or “indigenous”. These adjectives are reserved for non-western, non-normative and non-mainstream theologies. As a result, the normativity of western Christianity remains unchallenged since there is no conceptual framework available for engaging in this task.

The second imaginary is characterized by the emphasis it places on a geographical ordering of the world in World Christianity, plotting Christian presence visibly on the map of the world. An example of this is the popular evangelical image of the 10/40 window, the area between ten degrees and forty degrees north. Included in this window are North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, China, India and South-East Asia.¹¹ Plotting “unreached people

⁸ See Dale Irvin, “World Christianity: An Introduction,” in: *The Journal of World Christianity* 1 (2008), 1-26.

⁹ The analysis and criticism of the construction of world music runs remarkably parallel to the criticism leveled against this imaginary of World Christianity. See John Connell / Chris Gibson, “World Music: Deterritorializing Place and Identity,” in: *Progress in Human Geography* 28 (2004), 342-361.

¹⁰ See Namsoon Kang, “Whose/Which World in World Christianity?: Toward World Christianity as Christianity of Worldly-Responsibility,” in: Andrew Walls / Akintunde Akinade (eds.), *A New Day: Essays on World Christianity in Honor of Lamin Sanneh* (Peter Lang: New York 2010), 31-49. Kang cites the work of Mark Noll as a representative of this view; see Mark Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove 2009).

¹¹ See Luis Bush, “The AD2000 Movement as a Great Commission Catalyst”, in: Jonathan Bonk (ed.), *Between Past and Future: Evangelical Mission Entering the Twenty-First Century* (Pasadena: William Carey Library 2003), Evangelical Missiological Society Series 10, 17-36, here 21.

groups” on the map of the world is also an indication of this geographical approach. The website of the Joshua Project provides an abundance of maps which charter these “unreached people groups”.¹² The material on their webpage can be seen as the evangelical-conservative version of this second imaginary, which does not explicitly address the root causes of continued western dominance. In academic textbooks, the geographic approach can also be found, but it presents itself in contrast with the first imaginary. The dominance of the West is rejected since the West is treated as “just” one of the geographic regions where Christianity is present. This approach is characterized by its attempt to avoid the West-centrism that plagued the first imaginary.¹³

The third imaginary moves beyond the other two approaches by attempting to avoid the West-centrism of the first imaginary and the geographical reductionism of the second imaginary. Instead, it emphasizes the importance of transnational ties in the shaping of World Christianity. Foregrounding transnational ties enables a keen attention for the way power relationships are shaped. It also highlights the complex character of these transnational connections and therefore actively resists reductionism.¹⁴

These three imaginaries can be perceived in a chronological order in which the second imaginary gained dominance after the first imaginary. I have the impression that at this present moment there might be, at least in academia, a shift taking place from the second imaginary towards the third, given the growing interest in transnational ties in the shaping of World Christianity. Yet the observation of such a shift is tentative. As becomes clear from the literature cited, all three perspectives are also simultaneously present.

Challenging Territorial Essentialism

The second imaginary of World Christianity, as it presents itself in academic literature, is, in my opinion, plagued by a number of difficulties, which prohibit sustained interaction with the continuing reality of missionary encounters.

¹² See <http://joshuaproject.net/great-commission-maps.php>, 8 October 2013.

¹³ See Dyron Daugherty, *The Changing World of Christianity: The Global History of a Borderless Religion* (Peter Lang: New York 2010); Sebastian Kim / Kirsteen Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion* (Continuum: London 2008).

¹⁴ See for representatives of this view the following works: Hilde Nielssen / Inger Marie Okkenhaug / Karina Hestad Skeie (eds.), *Protestant Missions and Local Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Unto the Ends of the World* (Brill: Leiden 2011), Studies in Christian Mission 40; Charles Farhadian / Robert Hefner (eds.), *Introducing World Christianity* (John Wiley: Malden 2012).

I use the analytical tool of the category of “territorial essentialism”, a term coined by Dorottya Nagy, to outline the reasons for the deficiency of this imaginary.¹⁵ I identify three consequences of adopting the second imaginary. Territorial essentialism is defined as the naturalization of a given territory by making it the primary lens of interpretation. This naturalization can take place through the unwarranted emphasis on a certain locality such as a country or a continent. Naturalization is complete when it is hardly possible to acknowledge the necessary contingency of this locality.

I will outline the logics of territorial essentialism with reference to the second imaginary of World Christianity. Nagy criticizes the authors of a standard textbook on World Christianity for succumbing to “continental narrowness”, given their essentialization of the continents.¹⁶ I add to Nagy’s observation that their cartography does not adequately reflect the European hegemony which leads to the present continental divisions.¹⁷ The easy acceptance of the current continental division as “just so” fails to do justice to the power dimensions that played a decisive role in imagining the continents. The fallacy of naturalism needs to be countered by an emphasis on the contingency of continental divisions. The acknowledgment of contingency creates room to investigate the possibility of unjust power relationships.

After having outlined the nature of territorial essentialism, I now proceed to specify in more detail why this approach is unhelpful in the analysis of World

¹⁵ See Dorottya Nagy, “Where Is China in World Christianity?,” in: *Diversities* 12 (2010), 70-83, here 74. See also her dissertation on Chinese migrant communities in Hungary. Dorottya Nagy, *Migration and Theology: The Case of Chinese Christian Communities in Hungary and Romania in the Globalisation-Context* (Boekencentrum: Zoetermeer 2009), Mission 50. The terminology of “territorial essentialism”, which Nagy coined for missiology, surfaces as well in another discipline, namely media studies. Interestingly enough, the usage here seems to be quite similar to our present purposes. Andreas Hepp, *Cultures of Mediatization*, transl. Keith Tribe (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 139.

¹⁶ See Kim / Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion*. The essentialization of the continents shows itself primarily in the outline of the book which is structured according to the division of the continents. In a private conversation, Kim repudiated the charge of essentialization of the continents because the book shows a sustained concern for stressing transnational ties and the importance of denominational differences which cut across continents.

¹⁷ See Ali Mazrui, “The Re-invention of Africa: Edward Said, V. Y. Mudimbe, and Beyond,” in: *Research in African Literatures* 36 (2005), 68-82, here 74-75. Roughly the same observation could be made about Christianity as a world religion. There is nothing natural about the present division of the major world religions, as Tomoko Masuzawa has argued. Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago 2005).

Christianity. Here I take territorial essentialism to be an essential characteristic of the second imaginary of World Christianity, and my criticism will therefore extend to this imaginary as a whole. First, this imaginary lends itself too easily to a triumphalist narrative. Second, it reduces the complexities of World Christianity to a level playing field, leaving no room for critiquing unjust power relationships. Third, it gives rise to imagine missions as “working among” certain nations, religions or ethnic tribes, whereby these entities become bounded wholes.

In the first place, a triumphalist narrative celebrates the growth of Christianity across the globe as a way of avoiding complicated questions about the entanglement of mission and (neo-)colonial realities. Ironically, the continuity of missionary encounters is written out of the story of World Christianity. By continually stressing local agency and local theologies, there remains less room to challenge the not-so-local aspects of neocolonial influence. A triumphalist narrative of World Christianity has the capacity to function as a “quick fix” that takes recourse to bypassing continued missionary efforts. Then World Christianity provides a celebratory narrative with a happy ending. Although I am clearly overstating matters here, this narrative runs like this: “After we got through the ugly and nasty colonial period when missions and empire were harmfully entangled with each other, we finally entered the state of postcolonial bliss where non-western forms of Christianity are flourishing.” If local agency becomes a dogma, there is hardly any room left for analyzing this type of neocolonial missionary encounters, an example of which I have recounted at the beginning of my paper.

Second, when Christianity is interpreted primarily through the category of country, continent or ethnic tribe, the danger is that all these forms of Christianity are considered to be on the same level. The characteristics of Christianity in Africa or Christianity in North America are then the objects of study. Structural inequalities and power differentials are consequently difficult to account for.¹⁸ A complicating factor is that theologically speaking, there is indeed a fundamental equivalence among Christian communities. According to the image described in the letter to the Ephesians, all are reconciled in one body with Christ as its head.¹⁹ Moreover, Christian faith is polycentric. There is no definitive Christian heartland and it is always a possibility that Christian

¹⁸ See also Wuthnow, *Boundless Faith*, 2.

¹⁹ The Ephesian vision has gained popularity through the work of Andrew Walls; see Andrew Walls, “The Ephesian Moment: At a Crossroads in Christian History,” in: Andrew Walls, *The*

presence disappears in a certain context.²⁰ Yet, when this principle is taken out of its context, it might seem as if there is no potential for resistance, since Christian presence and witness flows freely. The potential for resistance should not be located in a different theological way of interpreting the fundamental equality of World Christianity. Instead, it could be located in aiming at bringing together both the theological fundament of unity in Christianity on a global scale and attention to real and harmful inequalities and the abuse of power.

Last, the geographic conception of World Christianity could easily give rise to, continue or encourage a common way of speaking in mission organizations about working “among” a certain ethnic tribe, religion or nation.²¹ It is precisely the preposition “among” that is problematic, given that it carries with it an association that peoples are bounded wholes with a stable and definable identity. This approach cannot account for diversity, conflict and ambiguity within the perceived cultural or ethnic blocks. If one opts for a non-territorial framework of interpreting World Christianity, it becomes clear that the interpretation of the world according to the concepts of boundedness and self-containedness is not adequate.²²

Cross-cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith (Orbis Books: Maryknoll 2002), 72-81.

²⁰ See Andrew Walls, “Christianity in the Non-western World: A Study in the Serial Nature of Christian Expansion,” in: Andrew Walls, *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll 2002), 27-48; Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in Transmission of Faith* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll 1996).

²¹ For example: mission among Buddhists; among Muslim peoples; among the unreached (people groups). See Kevin Greeson, “Church Planting Movements among Muslim Peoples,” in: *Church Planting Movements* (2011). (<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/church-planting-movements-among-muslim-peoples>, 7 October 2013); Oluseyi Ige, “Overcoming Practical Barriers to Serving among the Unreached”. (<http://svm2.net/abandonedtimes/overcoming-practical-barriers-to-serving-among-the-unreached/>, 7 October 2013); Charlie Fletcher, “Dark Clouds and Silver Linings: Mission among Buddhists”. (<http://www.ridley.edu.au/index.php/blog/post/dark-clouds-and-silver-linings-mission-among-buddhists/>, 7 October 2013); <http://usa.ntm.org/>, 7 October 2013.

²² Dale Irvin detects this way of reasoning in discourse about “the rural, the village, the countryside, or even the nation”. Dale Irvin, “The Church, the Urban, and the Global: Mission in an Age of Global Cities,” in: *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 33 (2009), 177-182, here 179. See also the analytical work of Kathryn Tanner: Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Fortress: Minneapolis 1997).

Alternative Topographies

I locate myself within the emerging third imaginary of World Christianity. As this framework begins to show its contours, I want to contribute to this type of understanding World Christianity by writing missionary encounters into the story of World Christianity and by providing an alternative topography. I argue with Claire Brickell that more attention should be paid to contemporary mission efforts. Here, the field of geography might provide us with important clues for interpreting the reordering of the world in World Christianity.²³

Thus far I have outlined three different conceptions of World Christianity and I have argued how territorial essentialism is impeding the analysis of currents within World Christianity. I would like to add the gendered nature of World Christianity to the equation, and use gender awareness as a critical tool in deconstructing masculinist readings of World Christianity. As has been remarked by Philip Jenkins in an often quoted statement on the first page of his book *The Next Christendom*: “If we want to visualize a ‘typical’ contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria, or in a Brazilian *favela*.”²⁴ A typical Christian is apparently a woman, yet little analysis has been carried out on how this affects World Christianity. In her important study, *World Christianity as a Women’s Movement*, Dana Robert calculates how World Christianity is, in terms of statistics, a women’s movement.²⁵ This means that conversion rates of women to Christianity are high and that the majority of Christians worldwide are female.²⁶ She therefore calls for the sustained inclusion of the gender factor in World Christianity. She rightly considers it problematic that the experience of women within contemporary Christianity remains under the radar since it is subsumed under the larger interpretative framework of World Christianity. I consider the study of gender within World Christianity a distinct field of inquiry, in line with the

²³ See Claire Brickell, “Geographies of Contemporary Christian Mission(aries),” in: *Geography Compass* 6 (2012), 725-739.

²⁴ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford University Press: Oxford 2011, 3rd rev. and ext. ed.), 1-2.

²⁵ See Dana Robert, “World Christianity as a Women’s Movement,” in: *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30 (2006), 180-188. See also: Dana Robert, “Women in World Mission: Controversies and Challenges from a North American Perspective,” in: *International Review of Mission* 93 (2004), 50-61.

²⁶ Robert does not attempt to provide the percentage by which women outnumber men in World Christianity. Her evidence is constructed from various and piecemeal sources which prohibit providing more exact data.

analysis of women and mission, a field which has recently witnessed an upsurge in interest. These studies have mostly taken a historic angle.²⁷ In addition, a mission theology is being developed from a feminist perspective.²⁸ Furthermore, there has been an enormous investment to broaden feminist concerns beyond first-world matters.²⁹ Yet, I still detect a gap in literature, and this gap concerns the gendering of World Christianity. The 2013 study by Adriaan van Klinken of masculinities in African Christianity will likely spark further interest in this topic.³⁰ In addition, Namsoon Kang has argued for the priority of gender justice within contemporary Christianity. However, her work has a strong normative bend, which I support in itself, but which pays less attention to the actual dynamics of contemporary World Christianity.³¹

We are therefore left with few clues about what is happening in contemporary mission encounters. We do have some predictions concerning the import of conservative gender roles from North America and the controversies following in its wake, but these are often motivated by fear rather than solid analysis.³² What I have witnessed in my encounter in Moshi, Tanzania, could indeed confirm a conservative dynamic given that patriarchal values are an integral part of the preaching of this particular American pastor: in his sermon, the pastor assigned to himself the primary responsibility for leading the church.

²⁷ See Susan Smith, *Women in Mission: From the New Testament to Today* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll 2007); Gunilla Gunner / Karin Sarja, "Paradoxes and Challenges: Gender Perspectives in Mission History," in: Volker Küster (ed.), *Mission Revisited: Between Mission History and Intercultural Theory: Essays in Honour of Pieter N. Holtrop* (LIT Verlag: Münster 2011), Contact Zone: Explorations in Intercultural Theology 10, 119-126; Mary Taylor Huber / Nancy Lutkehaus (eds.), *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor 1999); Fiona Bowie / Deborah Kirkwood / Shirley Ardener (eds.), *Women and Missions: Past and Present: Anthropological and Historical Perceptions* (Berg: Providence 1993).

²⁸ See Katja Heidemanns, "Missiology of Risk?: Explorations in Mission Theology from a German Feminist Perspective," in: *International Review of Mission* 93 (2004), 105-118; Letty Russell, "God, Gold, Glory and Gender: A Postcolonial View of Mission," in: *International Review of Mission* 93 (2004), 39-49.

²⁹ See Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Feminism in World Christianity," in: Arvind Sharma / Katherine Young (eds.), *Feminism and World Religions* (State University of New York Press: Albany 1999), 214-247.

³⁰ See Adriaan van Klinken, *Transforming Masculinities in African Christianity: Gender Controversies in Times of AIDS* (Ashgate: Farnham 2013).

³¹ See Namsoon Kang, "The Centrality of Gender Justice in Prophetic Christianity and the Mission of the Church Reconsidered," in: *International Review of Mission* 94 (2005), 278-289.

³² See the section on gender and sexuality in Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 231-235.

Moreover, it became clear that his wife's role was to be in charge of the women's and children's ministry.

How then can we go about finding a way to use gender as a critical tool in order to refine our understanding of World Christianity? Is it true that the prevalent stories of travelling, sea voyages and exploration provide us with a masculinist script, as Kwok Pui-lan suggests?³³ Drawing on insights from diasporic³⁴ and borderland discourses,³⁵ I argue that the interpretation of World Christianity will be different if instead of these masculinist scripts, pointers of a female (diasporic) subject will be employed. Consequently, the trope that is used in assessing World Christianity shifts from attention to travelling and exploration towards the storyteller. Storytelling provides room for negotiation, displacement, ambivalence, rupture, and continuity, and the strategies of identity negotiation. By its very nature it disrupts complacent narratives of bounded identities based upon the conflation of ethnicity and a specific geographic location.

Returning to Mount Kilimanjaro

How could this specific church in Northern Tanzania, with which I started this paper, inform and shape our understanding of World Christianity? Here, I will develop further the issue of spatiality and argue that "missionary geopolitics" play a formative role in this story.

The study of spatiality has recently witnessed an upsurge within religious studies, theology in general, missiology, postcolonial studies and the study of World Christianity.³⁶ Within missiology one can detect a shift from interpreting texts to interpreting places.³⁷ This attention to the spatial dimension has a profound potential for resistance since it enables to focus on the imaginary that underlies specific spatial constructions. Taking postcolonial theory

³³ See Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Westminster John Knox: Louisville 2005), 46.

³⁴ See Nagy, *Migration and Theology*.

³⁵ See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Aunt Lute Books: San Francisco 1987).

³⁶ For an analysis from the perspective of religious studies: Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge 2008). For an analysis from a theological perspective: John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place* (Ashgate: Aldershot 2003).

³⁷ Marion Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony: Salvation, Society and Subversion* (T&T Clark: London 2011).

into account, one could assert that: “There is no better place to locate and test postcolonial theory than in the streets of the postcolony.”³⁸ Analytical space cannot remain disconnected from what is actually happening on the streets. I will therefore focus on this particular street, in this town at the feet of Mount Kilimanjaro, on a specific Sunday morning. The brand-new church, located in one of the more affluent parts of town, is characterized by the absence of local languages and of any form of local leadership structures. It engages in a form of unmaking of history by neglecting the prior history of Christianity in Moshi through its deliberate act of eschewing all ecumenical contacts.³⁹ This contested place, where history is repressed and future continuity is uncertain, nevertheless does not float in space without connections. A decisive continuity with colonial approaches to mission is witnessed, given the lack of regard for local agency, theology and leadership. Here, in the streets of the postcolony, colonial attitudes are hauntingly present. It is precisely because of this continuing presence, which is by no means unique for this particular locality, that I have attempted to write this story into the concept of World Christianity.

The close reading of this particular locality ties in with a concern for “missionary geopolitics”. This term, coined by Brickell, writing from the perspective of geographical studies, emphatically inserts the missionary within the discourse on religion, (trans)nationalism and migration.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the figure of the missionary does hardly feature in this field of research, which might be explained by the fact that missionaries elude categories of migrants, such as migrant workers, expatriates, business elites and students. Inspired by Brickell, the study of “missionary geopolitics” provides a necessary and timely field of inquiry. For the particular context I have been reviewing, the town of Moshi at the feet of Mount Kilimanjaro⁴¹ acquires additional meaning. The Kilimanjaro region has historically served as a site of pervasive colonial fantasies of a supposedly African essence and has proved to be an influential symbol of the exotic nature of Africa. It is a contested site with dense layers

³⁸ Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, “Postcolonial Mission: Oxymoron or New Paradigm?,” in: *Swedish Missiological Themes* 95 (2007), 503-528, here 511.

³⁹ See for a short overview of the history of Christianity in Moshi: Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2000), 540-551.

⁴⁰ See Brickell, “Geographies of Contemporary Christian Mission(aries)”, 728.

⁴¹ The town of Moshi serves as an operating base for trekking tours to Kilimanjaro and hosts therefore many tourists before or after their trek. Mount Kilimanjaro dominates the city skyline when weather is clear.

of meaning.⁴² This observation is confirmed by other mission agencies who ascribe special meaning to the mountain.⁴³ A historic constellation which pairs exoticism with discovery and adventure is part of the legacy of the mountain area. Given this legacy which has infused the region with meaning, desire and fantasy, I argue, with Kang, for a “geopolitical sensitivity”. This sensitivity serves as a tool to discover “alternatives to theological/cultural/geopolitical imperialism and appropriation”.⁴⁴ It is exactly here where the category of resistance comes to the fore again.

In this paper I have focused mainly on developing analytical tools in order to scrutinize contemporary missionary encounters within World Christianity. I have argued that these encounters should not be written out of history by maintaining the fiction of a post-missionary time, but instead should be seen as an integral (albeit for many undesired) part of World Christianity. This makes World Christianity a space that is all the more contested, where migration in many forms, including that of foreign missionaries as western agents, exerts considerable influence and continues to generate polydox forms of witness and encounter in highly complex settings.⁴⁵

Esta historia de una misión de iglesia en Tanzania dirigida por misioneros norteamericanos va a servir como herramienta para explorar, criticar y ampliar los imaginarios frecuentes del Cristianismo Mundial. La primera idea nos recuerda que Occidente deja fuera al resto del mundo cristiano al mantener la normatividad teológica occidental. En segundo lugar, existe un imaginario geográfico que interpreta el mundo cristiano de acuerdo a las divisiones continental/área. La última idea subraya los lazos transnacionales y su complejidad y quiere estar atenta a la manera en que se forman las relaciones de poder. El esencialismo territorial, que es una estrategia

⁴² François Bart / Milline Mbonile / François Devenne (eds.), *Mount Kilimanjaro: Mountain, Memory, Modernity* (Mkuki na Nyota Publishers: Dar es Salaam 2006).

⁴³ See for a contemporary example of the lure that Mount Kilimanjaro provides the 2013 trekking tour to Mount Kilimanjaro by the organization of “Climbing for Christ”. See for another contemporary example the 2013 Kilimanjaro Trek organized by Mission Africa to raise awareness and support for their mission. In this instance, Mount Kilimanjaro serves as a representation for the whole of the continent (<http://www.missionafrica.org/uk/opportunities/54/climb-kilimanjaro-2013>, 10 October 2013).

⁴⁴ See Namsoun Kang, “Out of Places: Asian Feminist Theology of Dislocation,” in: Jione Havea / Clive Pearson (eds.), *Out of Place: Doing Theology on the Crosscultural Brink* (Equinox: London, 2011), 105-128, here 126.

⁴⁵ See for an exploration of the subjects of polydox trajectories within contemporary Christianity the work of Marion Grau: Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony*.

común en las dos primeras discusiones, dificulta el estudio de la totalidad del cristianismo a nivel mundial. Esto es definido como la naturalización de un determinado territorio, usando ese territorio como objeto principal de la interpretación. Estos tres problemas relacionados desde esta perspectiva se pueden analizar entendiendo que el esencialismo territorial podría dar lugar a un discurso triunfalista, desde la perspectiva de este cristianismo mundial, que entiende una igualdad de condiciones en las distintas geografías, y puede llevar a considerar a las culturas como realidades acotadas. Utilizando el género como categoría crítica, nos ponemos como reto imaginar un cristianismo mundial, cambiar los intereses y explorar las narraciones de historias. Éstas proporcionan espacios de cierta ambivalencia para el desplazamiento, la ruptura, la continuidad y las estrategias de negociación de identidad. En conclusión, propongo una revisión de la geopolítica de los misioneros a la luz de la continua presencia misionera de Occidente.

The story of a church service in Tanzania led by American missionaries is used as a tool to explore, critique and expand prevalent imaginaries of World Christianity. The first imaginary tacitly leaves out the West in World Christianity by continuing western theological normativity. Second, there is a geographic imaginary that interprets World Christianity according to continental / area divisions. The last imaginary stresses transnational ties and their complexity and is attentive to the way in which power relationships are shaped. Territorial essentialism, which is a common strategy in the first two imaginaries, nevertheless hampers the study of World Christianity. It is defined as the naturalization of a given territory by using it as the primary lens of interpretation. Three problems connected to this strategy are discussed: territorial essentialism could give rise to a triumphalist discourse, it imagines World Christianity as a level playing field, and it can lead to consider cultures as bounded wholes. Using gender as a critical category, tropes of imagining World Christianity are challenged, shifting attention from travelling and exploration towards storytelling. Storytelling provides room for ambivalence, displacement, rupture, continuity and the strategies of identity negotiation. In conclusion, I argue for a sustained emphasis on missionary geopolitics in the light of the continued missionary presence from the West.

Die Geschichte eines Gottesdienstes in Tansania unter der Leitung von amerikanischen Missionaren wird als Mittel verwendet, um vorherrschende Vorstellungen von Weltchristenheit zu untersuchen, kritisieren und auszuweiten. Das erste Imaginäre schließt stillschweigend den Westen aus der Weltchristenheit aus, indem eine westliche theologische Normativität weiterverfolgt wird. Zweitens gibt es ein geographisches Imaginäres, das die Weltchristenheit nach kontinentalen, geographischen Unterscheidungen interpretiert. Das letzte Imaginäre unterstreicht transnationale Verbindungen und ihre Komplexität und zeigt ein feines Gespür dafür, wie Machtverhältnisse gebildet werden. Territorialer Essentialismus, eine häufige Strategie in

den beiden ersten Imaginären, behindert das Studium der Weltchristenheit. Er wird als die Naturalisierung eines bestimmten Territoriums durch seine Verwendung als vorherrschende Interpretationsperspektive definiert. Drei damit zusammenhängende Probleme werden diskutiert: Territorialer Essentialismus kann zu einem triumphalistischen Diskurs führen; er kann die Weltchristenheit so darstellen, als ob gleiche Voraussetzungen für alle bestünden; und er kann dazu führen, dass Kulturen als geschlossenes Ganzes gesehen werden. Der Gebrauch von Gender als kritische Kategorie stellt Metaphern, wie Weltchristenheit vorgestellt wird, in Frage, indem die Aufmerksamkeit von Reisen und Erforschung zum Erzählen hin verschoben wird. Erzählen schafft Raum für Ambivalenz, Verlagerung, Bruch, Kontinuität und Strategien der Verhandlung von Identitäten. Zum Schluss plädiere ich für die Betonung der missionarischen Geopolitik angesichts der fortdauernden missionarischen Präsenz des Westens.

Eleonora Dorothea Hof is a PhD Student at the Protestant Theological University in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She is currently writing her dissertation about a theology of mission in the age of World Christianity.

Christianity from Judaism to Constantine: Crash Course World History #11. The Historical Origins of Christianity Walter Williams Tapvideo com. African Origins of Christianity by Rev. The Origins of Christianity. Transcription. Hi there my name's John Green, this is Crash Course: World History and today we're going to talk about Jesus. This is a Roman coin from around the time Jesus was born in the Roman Empire, and it calls Augustus, the emperor, the son of God. So let's just state at the outset that in 4 BCE, being the son of God, or at least being the son of a god was not such an unusual thing. Essentialism is a movement whose time has come. To read more about Greg McKeown or ESSENTIALISM, please visit Crown Publishing Group at www.crownpublishing.com. for our productivity and our ability to muscle through every task or challenge the world throws at us. Yet, for capable people who are already working hard, are there limits to the value of hard work? Is there a point at which doing more does not produce more? Previous (History of Chinese art). Next (History of Ethics). The history of Christianity concerns the history of the Christian religion and the Church, from Jesus and his Twelve Apostles and Seventy Disciples to contemporary times. Christianity is the monotheistic religion which considers itself based on the revelation of Jesus Christ. In many Christian denominations "The Church" is understood theologically as the institution founded by Jesus for the salvation of humankind. This understanding is