The Transnationalization of Religion through Music  
  
International Conference - October 16th to 18th, 2014  
  
Faculté de musique, Université de Montréal  
  
Conference Languages: French/English  
  
Organizing Committee:  
  
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The transnationalization of religion refers to the relocalization of  
beliefs, rituals and religious practices beyond state lines, in real or  
symbolic spaces, with  
the help of new imaginaries and narrative identities (Capone 2005).  
Although the analysis of religious transnationalization has revealed the  
various ways religion  
transcends borders, the role of music in this process is rarely  
addressed. Yet this role is essential in the transnationalization of  
universal religions like Islam  
and Christianity. Music also contributes to the migration of local  
religions, neotraditionalist movements, and cults associated with a  
particular area, such as Haitian  
Voodoo, Cuban Santería, or Brazilian Candomble. Such musical phenomena,  
far from being new, gave birth to early religious globalizations (Irving  
2010). For example,  
in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Jesuits used baroque music to  
establish Roman Catholicism in China (Picard 2002), in Ethiopia (Damon  
2009) and in the Andes  
(Carme 1989).  
  
During the 20th century, the emergence of new means of transportation  
and communication accelerated musical transfers, which took place on a  
more global scale.  
As a result, transnational religious repertoires are today extremely  
diverse: African American gospel (Williams-Jones 1975), Japanese  
Christian rock (Stevens 2004),  
Swedish Muslim hip hop (Ackfeldt 2012), Hindu music in Martinique  
(Desroches 1996), Tanzanian Christian Choirs (Barz 2003), and Papua New  
Guinean Pentecostal hymns  
(Webb 2011).  
  
The transnationalization of religion through music is historically  
linked to evangelism, slavery, and colonialism; it is also a by-product  
of the migration of the  
musicians, the circulation of song books, and the spread of recordings  
in physical and other forms: records, tapes, CDs, DVDs, radio,  
television, and the Internet.  
In all these situations, rhythms, melodies, lyrics, repertoires, dances,  
and instruments convey meanings that redefine worldviews, religious  
identities, rituals,  
prayers, and modes of divine presence.  
  
By studying musical mobility and its reception in local contexts, this  
conference aims at understanding how music "migrates" along with  
religions, how it contributes  
to the construction of plural societies, and the fundamental role it  
plays in the creation and recreation of ideas, identities, and religious  
practices in a  
transnational context.  
This will make it possible to highlight misunderstandings and ambivalent  
musical postures, which are the products of transnational processes and  
which are created  
through various religious, aesthetic, or political choices. By bringing  
together musicologists, musical historians, ethnomusicologists,  
anthropologists, and  
sociologists of music, this conference will shed new light on a  
phenomenon mainly studied from a religious point of view.  
  
Four themes will be explored:  
  
1. Transnationalization from a historical standpoint. Is the concept of  
transnationalization relevant in describing the early stages of  
religious spread, or  
should it be replaced by the concepts of globalization or  
internationalization? The transnationalization of religion as a process  
has greatly changed since the  
beginning of the 20th century and should be examined through a musical  
lens, payiincreasing migration of musicians. The examination of these driving  
forces will reveal whether such changes are truly original or  
recurrences of older phenomena.  
While we will be primarily concerned with the diachronic dimension of  
the phenomenon, it will also be possible to model processes that  
reappeared under similar forms  
in various contexts and periods of history.  
  
2. New areas of fieldwork, new areas of study. The transnational nature  
of the music studied leads researchers to carry out fieldwork in both  
locally-based and  
multi-sited fieldworks (Marcus 1995). Although participative  
observation, interviews, and life story approach are still relevant,  
researchers sometimes need to  
corroborate their findings with second-hand sources, written or oral. In  
some instances, they must combine urban and rural surveys, while  
"cyber-fieldwork", now  
unavoidable, sets various methodological problems. Addressing these  
issues will renew the way fieldwork is perceived in the social sciences.  
  
3. Process analysis. The goal of this theme is to clarify the process of  
religious transnationalization by examining the reception,  
appropriation, creation and  
distribution of musical practices and objects. The identification of the  
various forms and functions affecting music during this process should  
also be considered,  
as exemplified by the sacralization of secular music (or vice versa).  
The migration of musicians and their routes and networks are also of  
interest, as is the  
evolution or non-evolution of aesthetic values.  
  
4. Poles and scales of identification. Research has shown that religious  
transnationalization involves a double process: the homogenization of  
local worship practices  
and, concurrently, the reassertion of local identities (Hervieu-Léger  
2001). From specific examples, an area for research might be how the  
conjunction of music and  
religion takes part in the standardization or diversification of the  
world. How the transnationalization of music is responsible for the  
creation of multiple  
identities is also a question that should be addressed.  
Comparing musical parameters with musicians' discourses will reveal how  
each musical dimension is associated with the different aspects of  
identity, such as religion,  
  nationality, ethnicity, and affiliation with imagined communities.  
  
By focusing on phenomena of musical transnationalization in the specific  
contexts of religion and the diversity of global practices and beliefs,  
this conference  
will provide an opportunity to combine a vast array of fields and to  
compare works that are both historically and geographically distant.  
  
Proposal Submission Guidelines  
  
Each proposal, in French or English, should include:  
  
· Author's last and first name;  
· Author's institutional affiliation (please specify if you are a  
student); · Author's mailing address, phone number and e-mail; ·  
Author's biography (up to 150 words);  · Author's degrees by field, in  
reverse chronological order (up to 5); · Author's recent positions, if  
relevant, in reverse chronological order (up to 5); · Author's recent  
publications, in reverse chronological order (up to 5); · Presentation  
title; · Presentation abstract (750-1000 words) divided into three  
parts:  
subject (topics addressed), methodology, and conclusions; · Selected  
bibliography (mandatory).  
  
Lectures must last 20 minutes. Files should be sent as e-mail  
attachments (Word format) to [info@oicrm.org](mailto:info@oicrm.org). The deadline is December  
1st, 2013.  
  
The abstracts will be evaluated anonymously by a jury of international  
experts.  
  
The OICRM will award two travel scholarships to the best applications  
from students living outside Montreal.  
  
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