Divine Maps, Sacred Stories: 
Cartography and History in Religious Imagination

A Graduate Student Symposium  
Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto  
Jackman Humanities Building / 170 St. George Street / Toronto, Ontario  
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Religious maps and religious histories do not simply describe sacred times and spaces but, in some important sense, also produce them. This graduate student conference is dedicated to exploring the connections between religious actors, activities, institutions, artifacts, and environments that come to be through the imaginative processes of making maps and writing histories. How can we productively theorize the connection between map and territory, history and event, to advance the study of religion? What is the connection between landscape and sacroscape, chronology and hierophany? What are ways in which communities challenge the categories of landscapes and offer alternative cartographic systems? What factors are at play in the sacralization of particular maps or histories? What happens when these sacred models of/for reality are at odds with other forms of knowledge, including those of science and statehood? How have religious actors made creative use of maps and histories as tools of inclusion or exclusion?

Potential topics may include:

- Borderlands, land claims, and other disputed territories
- Terra Incognita, Utopia, ‘hidden’ religious kingdoms (e.g. Shangri-la, Prester John’s kingdom), and other imagined spaces
- Prophecies, visions, and other historical imaginings of past and future
- Imperial and colonial ambitions
- Scientific and sacred forms of knowledge
- Inventing traditions
- Mapping as/and classification
- Pilgrimage, travel narratives, and travel as allegory
- Inventing or locating the ‘other’
- Circulation and exchange of material culture and trade/gifts of sacred commodities
- Celestial and other-worldly map-making (and this-worldly stakes)
- Landscapes as agents in sacred narratives and religious histories
- Sacralizing time and space in oral and written cultures
- Nostalgia and alternative history
- Maps and the heterotopia
- Immigration, diasporas, homelands, and exile