

IHSS Research Seminar Program 2023

**“Failed missions and global circulation of emotions:
Ippolito Desideri in eighteenth-century Tibet”**

Dr Linda Zampol D’Ortia

Chair: Dr Kristie Flannery

Co-convened by Dr Kristie Flannery & Dr Killian Quigley

Tuesday 7 March 2023, 12-1pm AEDT

To be held in room 460.3.01 and online via Teams

Abstract: This paper illustrates the impact that missionary failure had on the work of Italian Jesuit Ippolito Desideri (1684–1733), before and after his mission in Lhasa (Tibet), in the eighteenth century. To do so, it analyses both Desideri’s letters and his magnum opus, *Notizie Istoriche del Thibet* (Historical Notices of Tibet), a four-book text describing his travels, the peoples he met, and their religions. It will start by considering the tensions in the Society of Jesus and in its Goan Province, that surrounded the (re)opening of the Tibetan mission, and the expectations of its failure in light of past missionary failures. It then highlights how Desideri’s statements regarding the peoples he met, and the description he made of their religions, are a response to this feeling of defeat that he had met in India. Desideri’s later representations of Catholic Christianity as a global entity, and their ties to his own perceived failure in Tibet, are the focus of the following section. The paper concludes analysing Desideri’s proposed solution to missionary failure, and how its economy of salvation was fuelled by a global (and cosmic) circulation of emotions which was meant to explain God’s unwillingness to convert the world yet.

Bio: Linda Zampol D’Ortia is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow at the Gender and Women’s History Research Centre in the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, and at the Department of Asian and North African Studies of Ca’ Foscari University of Venice (Italy). She holds a BA in Japanese studies (Ca’ Foscari) and a MA in Religious Studies with a focus on Asian religions (University of Padua). She obtained her Ph.D. in Religion and History from the University of Otago in 2017, with a dissertation titled “The Cape of the Devil: Salvation in the Japanese Jesuit Mission Under Francisco Cabral (1570–1579).”

Linda’s interests include early modern Catholic missions, intercultural contacts, religious dress, encounters between Christianity and Asian religions, and missionary failure. Her current project, “Emotions as Practice in the early modern Jesuit missions in the Asia-Pacific” (EMOPractices), approaches the XVI-XVIII-century Asian enterprises of the Society of Jesus through the lens of emotions. By analyzing manuscript letters from six early modern Jesuit missions, it aims to reveal the previously disregarded role of Jesuit emotional practices and their impact on the creation of stereotypes of peoples of the Asia-Pacific region.

