



# SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

The ISA RC22 Sociology of Religion's official newsletter

June 2025 | Issue 30

## Highlights of the Month

### Mid-term Conference Global Flows and Reconfigurations of the Sacred

RC22 and the Department of Sociology,  
South Asian University, New Delhi

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### RC22 in Rabat – Highlights & Save the Date!

Mar Grier

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### Podcast: Sociology In

Bandana Purkayastha

# STEP INTO THE NEWEST RC22 SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION NEWSLETTER

Dear RC22 Members,

It is a pleasure to share the June 2025 issue of the RC22 Sociology of Religion Newsletter, a testament to the scholarly vitality that defines our Research Committee. The pages that follow bring together new empirical insights, theoretical interventions, and community announcements drawn from every corner of our international network.

We open with news of our forthcoming Mid-Term Conference, “Global Flows and Reconfigurations of the Sacred,” organised in collaboration with the Department of Sociology at South Asian University, New Delhi. Session proposals are welcome until 10 July 2025 (23:59 IST), and the conference itself will convene on 5–7 February 2026, followed by a field outing on 8 February. We warmly encourage members to contribute novel perspectives on transnational spiritual practices, digital circulations of sacred knowledge, sacred economies, health intersections, and related themes.

Our calendar continues with Professor Renée de la Torre’s webinar, “Varieties of Re-enchantment: Nature and Spirituality in Contemporary Societies,” scheduled for Thursday, 19 June 2025 at 16:00 CET. Drawing on qualitative research with neo-pagan practitioners in Guadalajara, this lecture promises a nuanced exploration of domestic altars and lived religion. Participation is free, though advance registration is essential.

Looking beyond June, the full programme for the 5th ISA Forum of Sociology in Rabat is now available online. We invite all members to consult the schedule and plan their participation in what promises to be a rich gathering of global sociological expertise.

This issue also showcases compelling scholarship from our community: an ethnography of “spiritual hustling” among young Pentecostals in Harare, a study of Indian Muslim women’s everyday negotiations of marginalisation, and methodological reflections on African Indigenous religions. Newly released or forthcoming volumes on African spirituality, megachurches, Indigenous-religion methods, gender equality around the Baltic Sea, and the decolonising manifesto Theory Reimagined expand our collective bibliography. In the public sphere, the Sociology In... podcast series and the limited-edition Walking a Fine Line podcast continue to broaden our engagement.

These initiatives thrive on the dedication of RC22’s members. We extend sincere thanks to everyone whose contributions animate this newsletter and invigorate the wider life of our committee. Your commitment not only advances our field but also sustains the collaborative spirit at the heart of the ISA

Warm regards,

**Daniel Valdez**

Online Communication Manager  
ISA RC22 Sociology of Religion

# RC22 IN RABAT – HIGHLIGHTS & SAVE THE DATE!

Dear colleagues,

As the ISA Forum in Rabat approaches, we're delighted to invite you to join an inspiring and wide-ranging programme from RC22 – Sociology of Religion. This year's sessions tackle crucial contemporary issues including pluralism, gender, migration, ecological crisis, digital transformations, and the emotional dimensions of religion in public life.

Together, we'll explore how religion continues to shape – and be shaped by – a world in crisis. From grassroots resistance to institutional change, from spiritual care to planetary imaginaries, the panels hosted by RC22 will offer space for deep reflection, engaged dialogue and new collaborations.

## SAVE THE DATE!

After our **RC22 Business Meeting (Tuesday, 8 July | 15:00–16:45)**, we'll meet for an informal drink and get-together. The location and the exact hour will be announced during the meeting – we'd love to see you there!

As part of this year's rich RC22 programme, we especially want to highlight two key sessions, both organized by our programme coordinators, which address central themes of the Forum and our research committee:

### Monday, 7 July | 15:00–16:45

Keynote – Guarding the Sacred: Muslim Custodians of Judaism in an Inter-Religious Strife? Aomar Boum (UCLA & Université Internationale de Rabat)

A powerful reflection on memory, interreligious coexistence and the politics of the sacred in North Africa.

### Wednesday, 9 July | 19:00–20:30

Religion in the Anthropocene. Chairs: Olga Olivas & Titus Hjelm

This session will host a collective conversation on the ecological, spiritual, and political challenges of our time – in direct dialogue with the Forum's core theme.

RC22 sessions will run from Monday 7 July at 09:00 to Friday 11 July, offering a vibrant and intellectually rich journey through the many ways religion intersects with today's most pressing social dynamics. Our panels will explore a wide range of themes – from politics and protest, to gender and religious authority, to migration, embodiment, health and spiritual care. Special attention will also be given to how religious and spiritual practices are lived, narrated and mediated in everyday life – including in digital environments and ecological imaginaries. Many of these sessions are the result of fruitful collaborations with other Research Committees, such as Biographical Research, Social Movements, and Health, reflecting RC22's strong commitment to interdisciplinary and cross-cutting dialogue.

We look forward to an intellectually vibrant and warm gathering in Rabat.

Warm wishes,

**Mar Grier**

President, RC22 – Sociology of Religion  
International Sociological Association

# RC 22 SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

AND THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, SOUTH ASIAN UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI

## Mid-term Conference

### GLOBAL FLOWS AND RECONFIGURATIONS OF THE SACRED

5, 6 and 7 February 2026

Globalization, the development of transport and communication networks, and the incessant flux of people worldwide have transformed religious and spiritual landscapes across the globe. Beliefs, practices, and sensibilities about the sacred have travelled, adapted, and been reconfigured sometimes supported by states and institutions, sometimes met with resistance or backlash. These processes have given rise to new forms of religious expression and practice, while also reviving or reshaping existing traditions.

Such movements are uneven and deeply contextual. In some cases, they foster a renewed South-North and South-South dialogue and cultural exchange; in others, they generate polarization, marginalization, and moral contestation. Science, technology, and media increasingly mediate these flows, reshaping how sacred knowledge is produced, circulated, and legitimized in contemporary societies.

This conference seeks to explore how mobility, displacement, and globalization are reshaping orientations towards the sacred, and what new social, cultural, and political configurations emerge as a result. We invite session proposals that reflect on these transformations from a sociological perspective.

#### Themes

- Transnational flows of spiritual practices (e.g. yoga, meditation, pilgrimage)
- Religious diasporas and new ethnoscapas
- Glocalization and the reconfiguration of religious traditions
- Religious diversity and pluralism in a globalized world
- Secularization and its contested trajectories
- Spiritualization of therapies and therapeutization of spiritualities
- Lived religions in cultural contexts
- Religion or spiritual ecology
- Interreligious dialogue and cultural diplomacy
- Media, digital platforms, and the circulation of spiritual knowledge
- Sacred economies and the commodification of religion
- Body, gender, and new spiritual subjectivities
- Science, health, and religion in context
- Moral controversies and religious alliances across the globe

Additional themes proposed by session organizers will also be welcomed and considered.

We welcome contributions from scholars at all career stages. Proposals must be submitted by **10 July 2025, 23:59 IST (Indian Standard Time, UTC +5:30)** and session organizers must be members in good standing with RC22.





# CONFERENCE TIMELINE

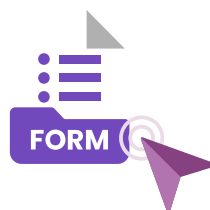
## IMPORTANT DATES



### Conference Venue:

**SOUTH ASIAN UNIVERSITY  
(A SAARC INITIATIVE)  
NEW DELHI, INDIA**

To propose a session, please complete the Google Form linked via the icon below and submit the required information.



For further information, please contact Dr. Sumedha Dutta (South Asian University, New Delhi) at: [sdutta@sau.int](mailto:sdutta@sau.int)

# 5TH ISA FORUM OF SOCIOLOGY

Access the 5th ISA Forum programme by clicking the image below.



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# Highlights from the RC22 Community

## “FAITH IT, TILL YOU MAKE IT”: PROSPERITY GOSPEL AND SPIRITUAL HUSTLING AMONG YOUNG PENTECOSTAL CHRISTIANS IN HARARE.”

Taru, J. & McNeill, F. G



Pentecostal charismatic churches that preach the prosperity gospel in Zimbabwe have attracted a youthful membership. In the context of a deeply uncertain economic future, young Pentecostal Christians devise performativity strategies for optimizing their chances of converting the prosperity gospel into material prosperity. These strategies include sartorial elegance in adorning counterfeit suits, the performance of obedience, and the use of social media technologies. The picture that emerges is a complex and at times contradictory one in which the potential realization of upward spiritual and social mobility rests, ultimately, on the transformative and volatile nature of value. Data for this project was collected in Harare through ethnographic research and interviews over a year-long period.

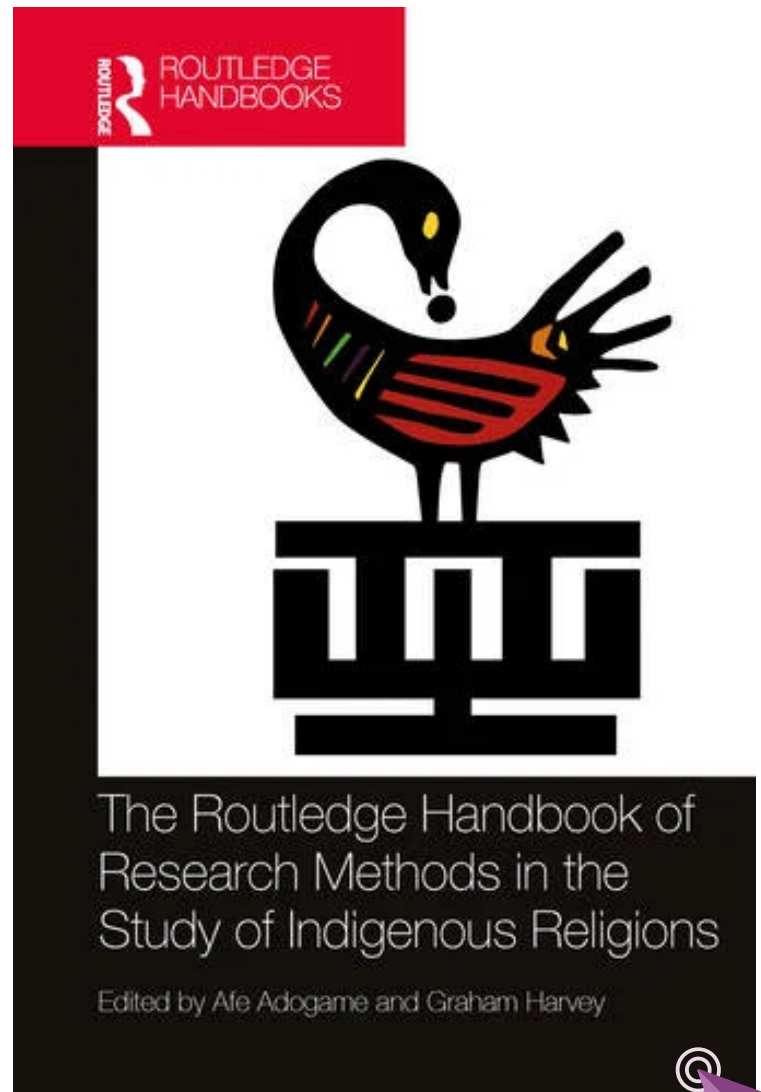


# ‘AFRICA’

ADOGAME, A. & HARVEY, G. (EDS.)

Igboin, B. & Taru, J.

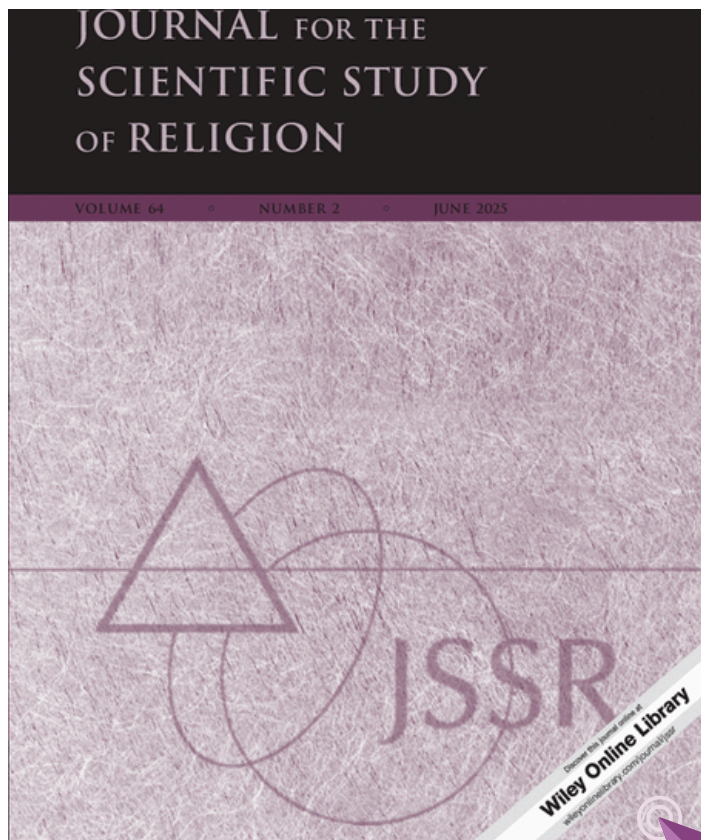
Religion is a complex phenomenon whose study has generated a bricolage of controversies. African Indigenous Religions (AIRs) have not been spared the methodological controversies that have engulfed attempts at understanding and studying religions generally. As lived religions, AIRs encompass the complexity and situatedness of social practices of African social worlds; practices that distinguish them from other faith traditions and also provide context for their relationship with others. In this chapter, we chart the historical and decolonization trajectories of the study of AIRs and show their implications on the discipline in Africa. We critique the usage of the term African Traditional Religions (ATRs) when referring to AIRs, and how such usage impacts the methodological challenges of the study. We argue that African social worlds must be defined beyond the social science perception of the social worlds that obliterate the spiritual entities and actors. Without the spiritual entities, the African world remains defectively understood. This is the context under which AIRs were first studied with colonial methodologies, epistemologies, and political goals that objectified African belief systems.



# TO TEACH THE BODY WHAT IS NOT GOOD: TIME, SPACE, AND EMBODIMENT IN RELIGIOUS TREATMENT FOR DRUG ADDICTION

Olga Lidia Olivas-Hernández, Thomas J. Csordas,  
Olga Odgers Ortiz

This article forms part of the special issue  
“Religion and Bodies,” coordinated by  
Korie Little and Nancy T. Ammerman.



From a cultural phenomenology approach, this paper analyzes the experiences of spiritual warfare lived in an Evangelical Rehabilitation Center. The ethnographic study was conducted in Tijuana, B.C., Mexico. The discussion focuses on three paradigmatic cases, allowing us to analyze the transition from “life in addiction” to the experience of transforming desires, which also implies a process of subjectivity. We argue that desire is a bodily phenomenon with palpable somatic manifestations. However, in an existential sense, desire is also the corporeal link between spatiality and temporality. We maintain that the corporeal subjectivity of addiction defines spatiality and temporality in a way that is particularly susceptible to formulation in religious discourse, leading to a transformative shift in orientational self-processes of being in the world, where an existential struggle becomes spiritual warfare, simultaneously on the scale of embodiment and in a cosmic struggle between good and evil.

# RELIGION AND HEALTH. INTERSECTIONS, TENSIONS, AND CHALLENGES.

URUGUAYAN JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY – DOSSIER

Verónica Giménez Béliveau, Olga Lidia  
Olivas-Hernández, Juan Scuro (coords.)

The intersection of religion, spirituality, and health in Latin America presents a rich and complex field of study, both in terms of theoretical frameworks and empirical research. This dossier examines the various dimensions and meanings at the intersection of religious and spiritual practices with the processes of defining and caring for health. The relationship between spirituality, religion, and health is diverse, reflecting the cultural and political specifics of the communities where they develop, from traditional approaches to emerging or innovative forms. This relationship is also dynamic, showcasing tensions and evolving interactions, as well as the reinvention, revitalization, and resignification of particular religious and spiritual orientations that influence how health and wellness processes are managed.

El cruce entre religión, espiritualidades y salud en América Latina ofrece un campo de estudio de gran riqueza y complejidad, tanto en sus formulaciones teóricas como en relación con las investigaciones empíricas. El presente dossier busca explorar las múltiples dimensiones y sentidos en el cruce de las prácticas religiosas, espirituales y los procesos de definición y cuidado de la salud. La relación entre espiritualidades, religión y salud es diversa, reflejando así las particularidades culturales y políticas de las comunidades en que se desarrollan, desde enfoques tradicionales hasta formas emergentes o innovadoras.

La relación entre estos ámbitos es además dinámica, lo cual refleja tensiones y articulaciones cambiantes entre ellas, así como procesos de reinención, revitalización y resignificación de orientaciones religiosas y espirituales específicas desde las cuales se gestionan procesos de salud y bienestar.





# “GENDER INEQUALITY, DEPRIVATION AND SECLUSION OF INDIAN MUSLIM WOMEN: REFLECTIONS ON THE ‘INTERSECTIONALITY’ OF MARGINALIZATION”,

Md. Intekhab Hossain

The number of Muslims in the world is projected to increase rapidly to about 2.8 billion in 2050, expecting to rise from 23% of the current world population to 30% in 2050 (Pew Research Centre, 2015). In light of this, there are already almost a billion Muslim women, making up 12% of the population around the world. In the case of India, mainstream society knows little about Muslim women’s lives, their diversity, their religious and constitutional rights and socio-legal movements, among them, those concerning liberation, equity and justice. Their under-representation in public life contributes to the inadequacy of data on their social life in the 21st century.

Women from marginalized communities are often under-represented in research, a fact which reveals how their lived realities are ignored in the academic community. Likewise, the global political discourse that frequently engages with Muslim women has a long and inglorious stereotype of depicting them as a passive, secluded and oppressed entity. The outcome of the present study, however, contradicts many of the prevailing assumptions, offering an entirely different interpretation of reality on the ground. This article delves into the contemporary profile of Indian Muslim women through the anthropological lens, presenting the intricate and diverse ways in which they face marginalization while grappling with the demands of daily life. This piece further reveals how they negotiate feminism’s boundaries through their social and political activism, presenting themselves as prominent figures in the public sphere by combating racial and cultural prejudices. Their participation is relevant because it challenges the stereotypes of women as ‘passive’ and/or ‘inferior’ which are pertinent in light of the increasing gendered Islamophobia towards Muslim women on a global level. Finally, it aims to clarify the accusations against Islam in the context of women’s rights and feminism today.



BRILL

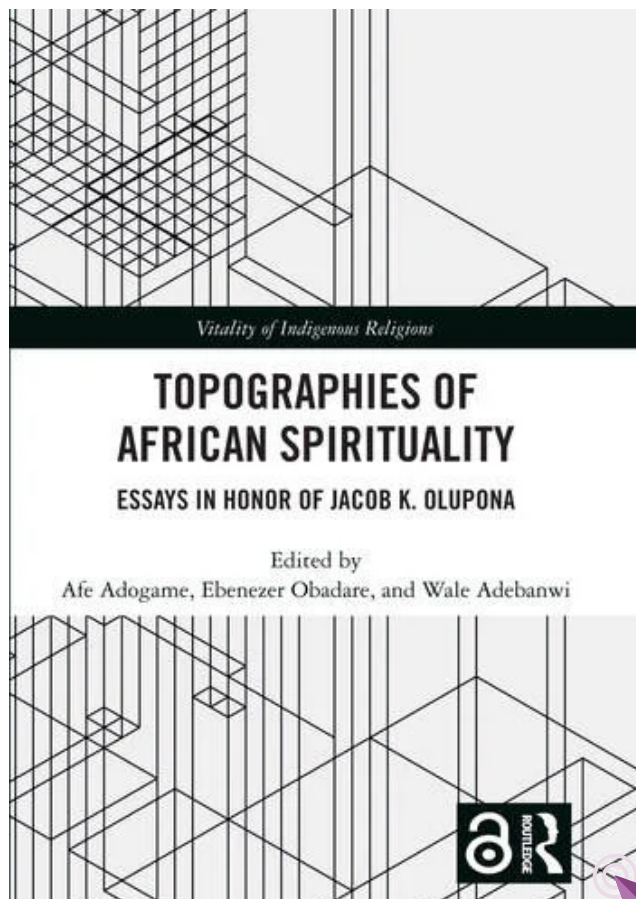


# BOOK

## ANNOUNCEMENTS!

### Topographies of African Spirituality Essays in Honor of Jacob K. Olupona

Edited By Afe Adogame, Ebenezer Obadare, Wale Adebaniwi



This book explores African spirituality inside and outside of religion, investigating African traditions and perceptions in the study of spirituality across Africa and the African diaspora. It provides an interdisciplinary reflection on key issues in the field and sheds light on everyday experiences. In particular, the volume celebrates the work and mentorship of Professor Jacob K. Olupona, a leading figure in the study of African spiritualities, religions in Africa, and methodological approaches to the study of religion. With chapters by an impressive range of scholars from institutions across Africa, Europe, and North America, this book makes a valuable empirical and theoretical contribution to the development of African religious studies.

# The Routledge Handbook of Megachurches

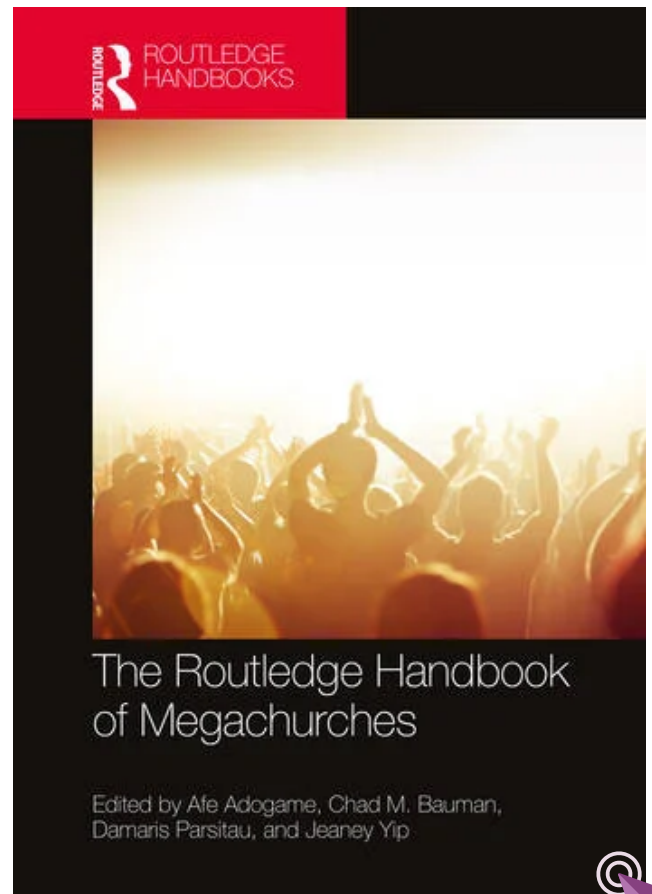
Edited By Afe Adogame, Chad M. Bauman,  
Damaris Parsitau, Jeaney Yip

The Routledge Handbook of Megachurches provides a survey of global megachurch phenomena, with an international slate of authors introducing existing and emerging research on a wide variety of relevant topics.

Over the past decade, the field of megachurch studies has matured and become global in its scope and orientation. The Handbook offers 33 chapters by top scholars in the field, focusing in particular on:

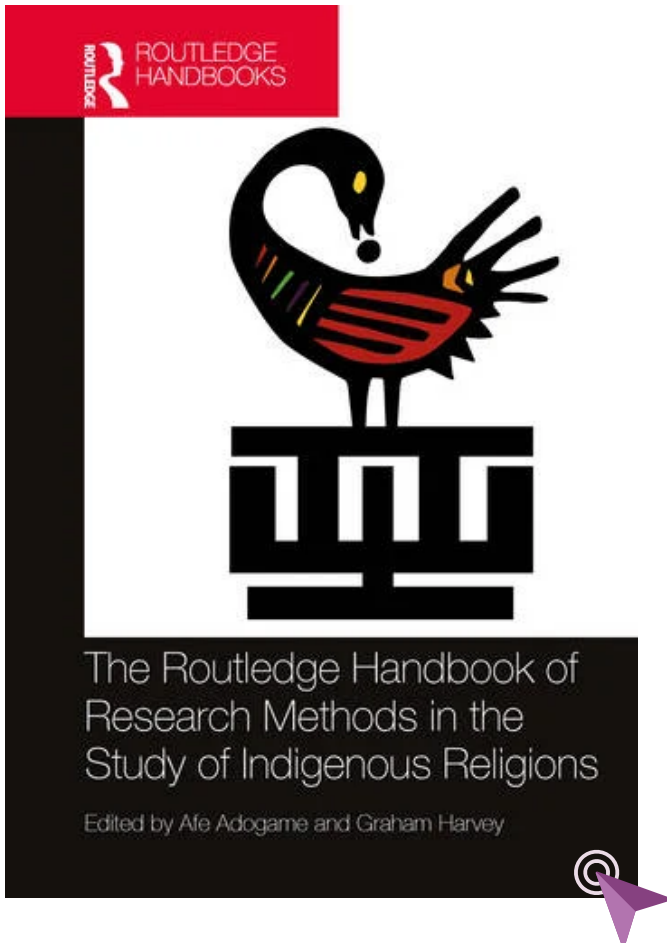
- The location, demographic nature, and transnational connections of megachurches.
- Megachurch worship, hermeneutics, and theology (in theory and practice).
- Megachurch institutional dynamics.
- The various ways that megachurches have both influenced and been influenced by their social contexts in terms of class, age, gender, sexuality, and pop culture.

The Handbook's interdisciplinary orientation makes it essential reading for sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists, media specialists, pop culture observers, business strategists, leadership consultants, marketing analysts, scholars of religion, and Christian historians, theologians, and missiologists. Experienced scholars of megachurches will gain valuable insight into aspects of megachurch research beyond their own specializations. Scholars new to the field will find the chapters useful as signposts for where to begin their own academic exploration. Christian pastors and laypeople will learn more about this increasingly prominent and influential form of their faith.



# The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Indigenous Religions

Edited By Afe Adogame, Graham Harvey



Exciting developments in research among, with and by Indigenous scholars and communities are enriching a wide range of disciplines, methodologies and trans-disciplinary conversations. This growing field offers important insights and provocations about methods and approaches. Key issues such as relationality, decolonisation, research ethics, pedagogy and collaboration necessarily require improvements both in scholarly description and in scholarly practice. Similarly, critical themes for Indigenous people intersect strongly both with recent scholarly “turns”, such as embodiment, gender, performance, place, ontology, and materiality. The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Indigenous Religions reflects on appropriate approaches and methods with over 28 chapters by a team of international contributors. The Handbook is divided into three parts:

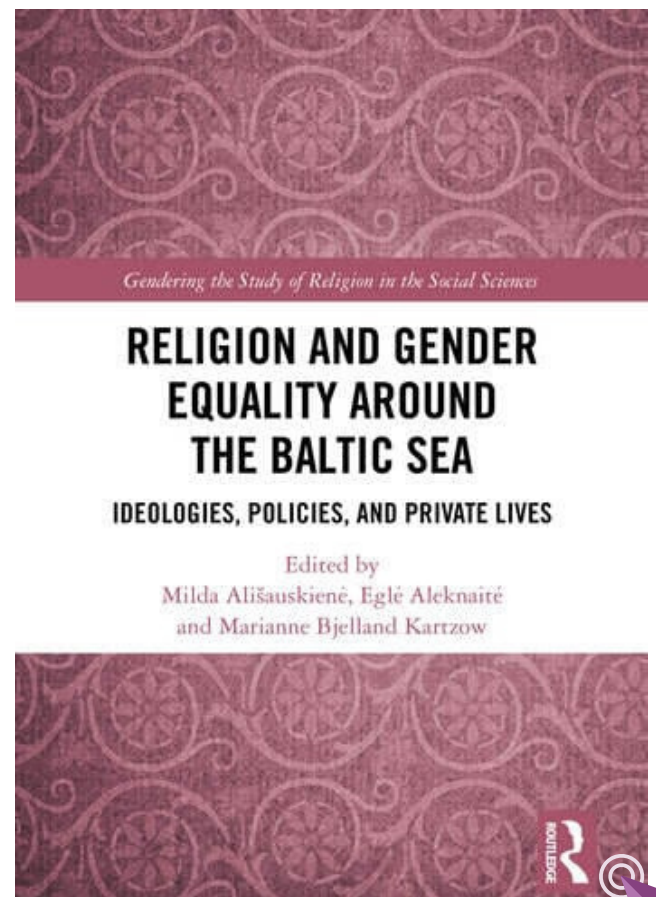
- Core themes and critical issues in research and debate about Indigenous Religions
- Disciplines and methods, focusing on ways in which researchers gain and share understanding about Indigenous religions
- Recent scholarship about broad regions of the world

Within these sections, central issues, debates and problems are examined, including cosmology, diaspora, bodies and materiality, witchcraft and divination, ritual studies, ethnography and fieldwork, heritage studies, ecology, feminist methodologies, decolonial methods and Indigenist methods, research ethics, activism, health, and peoplehood, kinship and relations. The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Indigenous Religions is essential reading for students and researchers in religious studies and Indigenous studies, and the handbook will also be very useful for those in related fields such as sociology, anthropology, history and politics.

## Religion and Gender Equality around the Baltic Sea Ideologies, Policies, and Private Lives

Edited By Milda Ališauskienė, Eglė Aleknaitė,  
Marianne Bjelland Kartzow

This volume aims to rethink the intersections of gender and religion, as well as the secular and religious, in implementing and challenging gender equality at individual, institutional, and societal levels in the regions around the Baltic Sea. Acknowledging the diversity of societies and the significance of socio-historical contexts, the empirical data discussed in this book draw attention to the under-researched region of post-socialist Baltic states. The analyses presented in the chapters are based on fieldwork carried out in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Norway. This volume includes sociological, anthropological, historical, political science, and theological perspectives and covers five broad research areas: a shifting concept of gender equality and its developments in Baltic and Nordic countries; a diversity of developments within religious groups related to issues of gender equality and the negotiation of competing gender ideologies; inter-religious developments and gender equality; the role of religions in the construction of public discourse on gender equality; and religious socialization, focusing on the promotion of religious gender models through socialization and public education.





# SOCIOLOGY IN

**Bandana Purkayastha**

**Vice President, National Associations**

**ISA. (2023-2027).**

As the ISA Vice President for National Associations, I have been developing a to promote decolonization practices and better understanding of sociologies around the world. These are podcasts on sociology In different countries, and are meant for general audiences. Sociology In...Japan, Algeria, USA, Ghana, the Arab world, Israel, Bangladesh, and Phillipines have been released. Others, including Turkey and India, are in the queue.

To hear the podcast, please click on the image



## WALKING A FINE LINE: VOICES OF HINDU WOMEN IN THE US

A limited-edition podcast series, supported by the Asian Pacific American Religious Research Initiative. In this series, we delve into the lived, religious experiences of women who identify as Hindu in the United States. Our aim is to provide a platform for these women to share their stories, addressing their absence in mainstream conversations and institutions often shaped by exclusionary politics



# Theory Reimagined: Voices of Sociologists from Around the World.

Rianka Roy, Anjana Narayan, Melanie Heath and  
Bandana Purkayastha (co-editors).

## Just Published...

As scholars we are eager to get beyond the bounds of knowledge generated in Western Europe and North America, yet we continue to teach classical theory by featuring (mostly white male) scholars from this region. Since the Euro-American perspectives are powerful, around the world, sociological theory focuses on the same theorists.

This book is an attempt to decolonise social theory: to rethink theory by focusing on theorists from other regions, chosen by scholars who live and work in countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. We feature the selections and presentations of sociologists from Brazil, Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Poland, South Africa, Singapore, and Tunisia.





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Sociology of Religion

# RC 22

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2023 – 2027

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