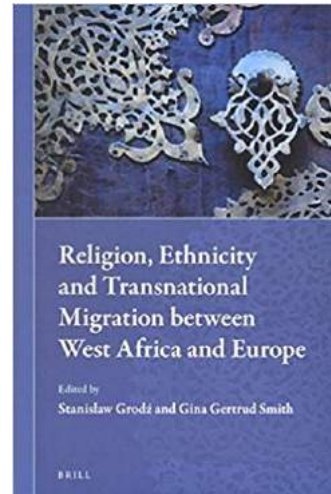


## *Book Reviews*

Stanisław Grodź and Gina Gertrud Smith, eds. *Religion, Ethnicity and Transnational Migration between West Africa and Europe*. Leiden and Boston: E.J. Brill, 2014. Pp. xi+236. Hardbound. ISBN: 9789004270367.

The question of migration from Africa to Europe has come under the spotlight for several reasons during the past few years and consequently it raised many concerns not only by host countries but also by countries where these migrants were in transit. Two concerns that troubled host countries were the migrants' respective religious and ethnic identities. For these host nations, both issues were and remain critical for, at least, two reasons. The one is that the host country's government—influenced invariably by right-wing groups—is paranoid about the importation of religious extremist elements. The other is that they, at times, are not very comfortable in hosting certain ethnic groups that they might consider troublesome. These responses are usually based upon the information they receive from their informants who are either researchers or policy makers that are—superficially—familiar with the countries from whence the migrants originate.

Stanisław Grodź and Gina Gertrud Smith's co-edited work, which is the fifteenth volume in Brill's edited series on "Muslim Minorities," emerged as a result of a joint workshop—with a few other European institutions as partners—that was held in 2011 at the Lublin-based John Paul II Catholic University. The book developed out of the Danish National Research Foundation professorship project; an academic venture that was operative between 2007 and 2012. The editors, who wrote the introduction (pp. 1–11), hail from two different institutions; while Grodź is based at the mentioned university in Lublin, Smith is associated with the University of Copenhagen



where the Centre for European Islamic Thought—the workshop’s major sponsor—is based.

According to these two editors, they brought together a group of mainly European researchers to explore and investigate transnational migration from West Africa to Europe. They opine that this has been an under-researched area. One can concur with this sentiment since much of the research gave a great deal of attention to migrants from mainly majority Francophone speaking Muslim countries located in North Africa as well as others from Southwest Asia. Though studies dealt with migration from Africa to Europe and vice versa, specific themes such as this seem to have been neglected.

In fact, the editors revealed that one of their research objectives was to explore how migrants’ experiences influenced the situation in their homelands. They, however, realised that this was rather a difficult task that should be further investigated. Even though one cannot fully go along with the view that the migratory movement from South to North is “a religious movement,” one does agree with the fact that factoring in religion—alongside ethnicity—as a critical variable in these studies is important. It is indeed true that when these migrants are on the move, they take along with them their religious identity and wherever they settle they bring about unforeseen socio-religious changes in both the host country and the homeland where they were born and raised (p. 3).

Research projects that have only given their attention to “migration” as a variable seem to have yielded important results, but the outcomes of their analyses were somewhat bland and tasteless. Added variables such as “religion” and “ethnicity” enhance and spice up the project’s results in various ways. The outcomes offer a rich set of discerning data that are not only valuable for social scientists undertaking this research as illustrated in the essays collected in this edited work, but also extremely useful for the host countries’ policy makers and other stakeholders.

For this edited work, the editors gathered socio-anthropological essays that did not neatly fall within the scope of “Muslim minorities” as expected. One was of the view that all the essays would cover that theme, but after a careful reading one noticed that many of the essays were woven into other religious communities too and consequently should have appeared under a different series; perhaps one that covered “religious pluralism” instead.

Leaving that aside and having gone through the opening chapter that was penned by the well-respected Africanist, Afe Adogame who belongs to a crop of West African scholars who have made an indelible mark in the European academic arena, one is immediately struck by Adogame’s rhetorical question that appears first in his lengthy title: “Reinventing Africa? The Negotiation of

Ethnic Identities in the New African Religious Diaspora” (pp. 12–36). Dipping into his essay, one realised the reason for posing it. Dealing with African communities implies that one has to grapple with various identity markers and this in itself is a challenge, hence Adogame’s concern with the issue of negotiating African ethnic identities outside the continent and in this case in Europe where they form part of the new African religious diaspora communities.

Adogame, who has completed various studies on African Christian communities, is quite familiar with the Europeans’ stereotypical notions of Africans who have been boxed in as if they come from one country on the continent. There have, in fact, been many occasions—and this is rather hilarious—when some non-Africans assume that Nigeria—with its huge population and diverse ethnic communities—is located in the same neighborhood as Mozambique that also has an array of ethnic and religious groups. Some of them, for example, even seem to think that Nigeria’s Hausa speakers belong to the same communities as Northern Mozambique’s Makua speakers! While one may forgive them for their ignorance, one cannot help emphasising that policy makers and others should make it their business in learning about Africa and its disparate communities; they should be aware that African communities have different identities nationally, ethnically, and even religiously.

It is an established fact that though “identity” may be regarded as a problematic and a contested variable, one cannot counter the argument that it is not a useful analytical category in studies such as these. There is little doubt that its inclusion adds value to these research outputs. So, one concurs with the way Adogame went about unpacking his arguments and highlighting the problems associated with African ethnic identity and citizenship within the European context. Since Adogame’s main focus is, however, on Africa’s Christian diaspora communities, one is of the opinion that he should perhaps have reflected this in the chapter’s title.

In her interesting chapter, the book’s co-editor, Gina Gertrud Smith addressed the issue of “Self-Identification and Othering among the Senegalese Fulfulde Speaking People and Others” (pp. 37–62). In her opening paragraphs, Smith drew one’s attention to the statistics as captured by different sources. All social scientists, who have been involved in studying a country’s census, are cognisant of the fact that the available statistics are usually debatable. In this instance, she revealed the problems that Senegalese encountered; this is not much different from other African countries where the census results have always been inaccurate and contentious; whether it is the religious or the ethnic data, questions have been raised. And if it is not the variables that were

debated, then it is the results that were questioned. One can only say that this is indeed a recurrent problem across the continent.

Setting the census aside, one observed that Smith made ample use of Gerd Baumann's grammar of selfing and othering as an applicable theoretical frame for her study. She notes that the Fulbe-speaking communities, who are adherents of the Tijani Sufi order, are mostly tolerant towards others. However, when she compared them with others elsewhere in the country and in France where some of them settled, she recorded to what extent the selfing and othering impacted upon their relations. The Fulbe speaker, who was brought up in a predominantly Muslim environment for much of his/her early Senegalese life, usually encounters a very different experience while residing in predominantly non-Muslim secular surroundings in France. She provided some relevant case studies to underscore the processes of selfing and othering; these became quite manifest when Haalpulaar communities socialised and interacted with others who came from different ethno-religious communities.

Etienne Smith pursued an ethnographic study that zoomed in on "Religious Pluralism and Secularism between Senegal and France: A View from Senegalese Families in France" (pp. 63–97). Unlike his namesake, Smith examined the views of Serer and Jola migrants in France and assessed their opinions regarding religious pluralism and secularism. He showed how these different groups adapted to their circumstances in France and to what degree they compared the two environments where Muslims formed part of a religious minority and the Christian Senegalese migrants merged with the predominantly French Catholics. Both experienced the qualitative differences in their host environment. Smith evaluated religious pluralism at the grassroots level and compared this to the experience from above (that is, the state level).

Smith's fascinating stories revealed the diverse issues that materialised as a consequence of the process of socialisation. Some encounter religious intolerance and others experience racist tendencies and intra-religious differences because of theological issues. Those who come from the Maghreb see themselves to be "better" Muslims as compared to those West Africans who come from the sub-Saharan regions or vice versa. Smith's study also showed the extent to which the French lifestyle and attitudes rubbed off on those who de-emphasised and pushed aside religion as one of their identity markers.

Moving away from France to neighboring Spain, one came across a different site and variant insight of migrants. Tilmann Heil's engaged study probed the challenges of "Dealing with Diversity and Difference in Public:

[and he questioned whether there were] *Traces of Casamançais Cohabitation in Catalonia?*” (pp. 98–122). He deliberately made use of the public space as convivial space; one where individuals or groups interacted and negotiated the spaces through dissimilar social methods such as living with difference that involved both harmonious and engaging experiences. He basically explored how sharing and using public spaces in places such as Spain’s Catalonia and Senegal’s Casamance exposed certain ways of living and socialising.

Heil’s study of the public convivial space offered a fair insight into what it meant to socialise in the streets where migrant communities meet and interact with host communities. His findings suggested that the Senegalese migrants (i.e., the Casamançais), who came from the same domicile in their motherland and took along their religio-cultural baggage to their host location, were guided by their own inherited backgrounds that were shaped by certain cultural and religious plural attitudes.

The research lens by Monika Salzbrunn zoomed in on two related migrant communities that held onto their socio-cultural and religious ties in Europe and North America respectively. She demonstrated how “*Senegalese Networks in Switzerland and USA [operated]—[and] How Festive Events Reflect Urban Incorporation Processes [in these communities]*” (pp. 123–44). Compared to Heil’s convivial space, Salzbrunn illustrated to what extent the Senegalese Murids occupied the public space differently in Switzerland’s Lausanne and the USA’s New York.

In New York, the Senegalese Murids claimed the open space with their annual parade performance, and in Lausanne, they did so through the Festive Arenes event. Though these public events differed from each other, the Murids negotiated and adapted themselves to their socio-cultural and political locales. Salzbrunn briefly discussed a conference that they organised in Geneva and underlined that they were aware of the powerful networks that existed in their diaspora settings.

Miriam Schader moved the focus to Germany where she assessed “*Religion as a Resource for the Political Involvement of Migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa in Berlin*” (pp. 145–67). Schader’s research question for this project was whether religion could be a resource to overcome these (socio-cultural-cum-religious) barriers and voice political issues that concerned them as migrants from Africa. The question was constructed taking into account the USA context where it assisted those who vied for political participation and those who entered the country as relatively new immigrants.

Schader, however, was alerted to the fact that religion could also act as a barrier to integrate and participate. Moreover, she observed that Africa’s Christian groups did not face much difficulty compared to Africa’s Muslim

groups. She, furthermore, indicated that these difficulties might be attributed to their traditional theologies and personal differences. While one finds Schader's findings quite interesting, one wonders why she referred in her title to sub-Saharan Africans. She could have restricted herself to particular communities, as was the case in other chapters in this collection.

Martha Frederiks, who wrote "Religion, Ethnicity and Transnational Migration between West Africa and Europe: An Epilogue" (pp. 219–29) for this edited text, teamed up with one of the co-editors, Stanisław Grodź, to look at the Netherland's Ghanaian community. Together they perused the migrants that travelled "Between Ghana and the Netherlands: [with the eyes set on the] Ghanaian Muslims Engaging in Interreligious Relationships" (pp. 168–90).

The two surveyed how Ghanaians—who had a good sense of interreligious relations in Ghana—adapted as migrants to their Dutch surroundings; a setting where they not only had to negotiate their West African identity as Ghanaians, but also act out their religious identities as Christians and Muslims. Their joint research argued that neither of the Christians and Muslims from Ghana encountered major problems in Netherland's religious pluralist environment; unlike other migrant African communities, they blended in to their circumstances.

And José C. M. van Santen, which complemented the previous co-authored chapter with its focus on the Netherlands, examined "Fulani [i.e., Cameroonian Fulbe] Identity, Citizenship and Islam in an International Context of Migration" (pp. 191–218). Van Santen's study first provided a detailed backdrop of this tribal community in Africa generally and in Cameroon in particular. He showed that the Cameroonian Fulbe communities appeared to be "private" communities that mixed and socialised, but they did so very reservedly; this is particularly so among the elite who were economically mobile as compared to others.

Van Santen drew reasonable conclusions when he said that the differences between the host country's nationals and the Fulbe immigrants were political rather than religious. Like other Europeans, West Africa's Muslims are stereotyped because of their adherence to Islam. Van Santen and other researchers opined that it would take a while for both communities to find common ground; with this observation, one cannot disagree at all.

In winding up this review, one should say that the editors apart from having brought together a good cadre of researchers put together a volume that assisted in offering fresh insights into the status of immigrants—in this case the West Africa migrants—to parts of Europe (and to the USA). As indicated earlier in this review, the edited text should have appeared in a

different series since the focus was not on “Muslim minorities” as such. Nonetheless, it remains an important study that should be of interest not only to those in the fields of African studies, religious studies, and ethnic studies, but also be considered an invaluable text for those in migrant studies. Moreover, since much stress has been laid by the academia to adopt and pursue inter-disciplinary approaches, one can argue that this work crossed those boundaries that yielded a useful study.

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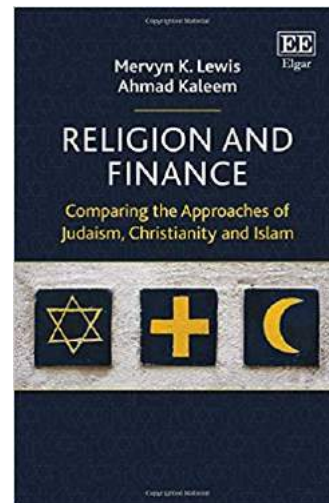


Mervyn K. Lewis and Ahmad Kaleem. *Religion and Finance: Comparing the Approaches of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019. Pp. xviii+248. Hardbound. ISBN: 978 0 85793 902 9. Price: Not listed.

Religion and finance are two different worlds that rarely mix together. However, this book takes you on a journey that looks at the economic issues from the lenses of three Abrahamic religions and explores how religion shapes the ethics, morality, and economic behaviour of individuals and society. The book is authored by emeritus Professor Mervyn K. Lewis of the University of South Australia and Ahmad Kaleem of Central Queensland University, Australia. Professor Lewis is not new to Islamic banking and finance. His research embraces a wide range of topics including monetary economics, global finance, and Islamic finance.

Kaleem is also an active researcher in the area of Islamic banking and finance.

The authors commenced the book with discussing the global financial crisis of 2008 and highlighting the misconduct by the banks that caused it in the first chapter titled “Defining the Issues in Religion and Finance.” They also explained how banks used “regulatory arbitrage” by indulging in highly



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