

Elias Kifon Bongmba, ed., *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to African Religions*. Malden, MA et al: Wiley Blackwell, 2012. Xxi + 605 pp., ISBN: 978-1-4051-9690-1 (hbk), £129.00

The academic study of religion in Africa continues to grow, defying many challenges. One of the major stumbling blocks in the discipline has been the absence of scholarly literature. Whereas material on other aspects of religious studies, such as theory and method, has been developed in abundance, literature on the religions of Africa has been limited. The volume under review contributes significantly in this regard. It is a rich, informative and scholarly contribution to the academic study of religion in Africa.

One of the most satisfying dimensions regarding the *Companion* is its attempt to cover as many dimensions as possible. Part I of the book presents chapters that concentrate on methodological perspectives on African Religions. This includes essays on methodology in the study of African Religions (James L. Cox), postcolonial feminist perspectives on African Religions (Musa W. Dube) and religion and the environment (Edward P. Antonio). Chapters in this section provide helpful insights into some of the abiding challenges in the academic study of African Religions, alongside offering perspectives into emerging themes.

Part II, dedicated to interpreting religious pluralism, is equally informative. It includes chapters on “neo-traditional religions” (Marleen de Witte), Christianity in Africa (David T. Ngong), the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Christine Chaillot), Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in modern Africa (Matthews A. Ojo), African Initiated Churches in the Diaspora (Afe Adogame), Women in Islam (Penda Mbow) and Hinduism in South Africa (P. Pratap Kumar). The section confirms that the notion of “the three religions of Africa” (namely, African Traditional Religions, Christianity and Islam) as monolithic entities is not sustainable. Africa is characterised by radical religious pluralism (to paraphrase Jan G. Platvoet).

Part III is more diverse, focusing on “religion, culture and society.” It has chapters that include a focus on the arts (Ile-Ife, Suzanne Preston Blier, and Sufi arts in Senegal, Allen F. Roberts and Mary Nooter Roberts), religion, health and the economy (James R. Cochrane), religion, media and conflict in Africa (Rosalind I. J. Hackett), gospel music in Africa (Damaris Seleina Parsitau), religion and globalization (Asonzeh Ukah) and religion and same sex relations in Africa (Marc Epprecht).

This volume is a sound and effective addition to the literature on the study of religion in Africa. It covers most of the significant themes, addresses some neglected dimensions (for example, same sex relations) and is written in accessible style. It brings together some of the leading names in the discipline and makes an important contribution to the field. Given the limited publishing opportunities that most black African scholars based in Africa (outside South Africa) have, it will be strategic for similar projects in future to include more from this category. In addition, the voices of black African women scholars need to be amplified. Despite these remarks, the volume remains timely, impressive and relevant to the academic study of religion on the African continent and beyond.

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