

Studying Religion *from Africa*

Call for contributions to a roundtable at the [IAHR Congress](#) in Krakow, Poland, 24-30 August 2025

Jointly organised by the African Association for the Study of Religions and the Africa Working Group of the German Association for the Study of Religions

The overall theme of the IAHR Congress 2025 being “Out of Europe”, this roundtable facilitates a conversation about what it means to study religion, not from a Eurocentric perspective, but from Africa. Too often, the African continent has been a place where empirical data about religion have been collected, simply to be analysed and theorised with the help of Western concepts and theories. This problematic, colonial model of knowledge production needs to be interrogated and transformed, not the least in the light of current debates about decolonising academic scholarship, and calls for theorising from global South contexts and perspectives. Hence, in this roundtable we ask: what does Africa contribute to the study of religion more generally, not just in terms of rich empirical data but also, and more importantly, in terms of critical concepts, innovative methodologies, and cutting-edge theories? How can such African-centred approaches to the study of religion inform and enrich the study of religion in other parts of the world, including Europe? And how does our own positionality as academics – in terms of geographical origins and location, disciplinary training, (non)religious standpoints, gender, etc – affect and shape the ways in which we think about these questions?

We recognise that such questions are not entirely new, but that they have generated longstanding conversation, with key publications such as

- The volume edited by Jan Platvoet, James Cox and Jacob Olupona, titled [The Study of Religions in Africa: Past, Present and Prospects](#), which is based on the proceedings of the regional conference of the International Association for the History of Religions, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, 1992 (Roots and Branches, 1996).
- The volume edited by Frieder Ludwig and Afe Adogame, titled [European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa](#) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004).
- The volume edited by Afe Adogame, Ezra Chitando, and Bolaji Bateye, titled [African Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa: Emerging Trends, Indigenous Spirituality and the Interface with Other World Religions](#) (Ashgate, 2012).
- Birgit's Meyer's article "[What Is Religion in Africa? Relational Dynamics in an Entangled World](#)", in the *Journal of Religion in Africa* (2020).

We invite participants to this roundtable who revisit some of these earlier conversations about the above questions, reflecting on them in the light of current discussions about decolonisation while acknowledging the changing dynamics of religion, and the study thereof, in Africa, the African diaspora, and in the global academy.

Expressions of interest

We welcome expressions of interest for participating in this roundtable, and we especially encourage early-career scholars to apply.

The IAHR Congress allows for physical attendance only, which we realise is a hindrance for participation, especially for scholars based on the African continent.

If you would like to be part of this roundtable, but cannot physically participate, please do write to us anyway, so we can think about other ways of continuing this conversation in the future.

Expressions of interest, of up to 250 words, should give an indication of the angle you will take to approaching the above questions, and of the contribution you want to make to the roundtable discussion. Please also include a short biographical statement.

The expressions can be sent to [Dr Anne Beutter](#) and [Dr Adriaan van Klinken](#) by 26th July 2024.