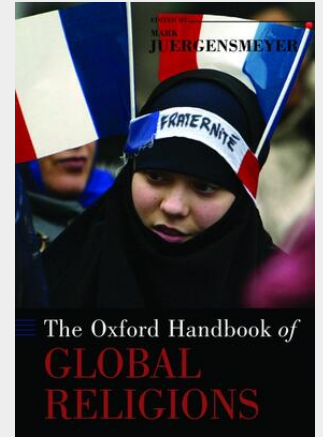


OXFORD HANDBK OF GLOBAL RELIGI

This is a reference for understanding world religious societies in their contemporary global diversity. Comprising 60 essays, the volume focuses on communities rather than beliefs, symbols, or rites. It is organized into six sections corresponding to the major living religious traditions: the Indic cultural region, the Buddhist/Confucian, the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim regions, and the African cultural region. In each section an introductory essay discusses the social development of that religious tradition historically. The other essays cover the basic social facts: the community's size, location, organizational and pilgrimage centers, authority figures, patterns of governance, major subgroups and schisms as well as issues regarding boundary maintenance, political involvement, role in providing cultural identity, and encounters with modernity. Communities in the diaspora and at the periphery are covered, as well as the central geographic regions of the religious traditions. Thus, for example, Islamic communities in Asia and the United States are included along with Islamic societies in the Middle East. The contributors are leading scholars of world religions, many of whom are also members of the communities they study. The essays are written to be informative and accessible to the educated public, and to be respectful of the viewpoints of the communities analyzed.

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