James V. Spickard is Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Redlands, where he teaches social theory and research methods. Afe Adogame is Assistant Professor in the Religious Studies Department/Center for the Study of World Christianity, University of Edinburgh, where he teaches Religions in Africa and the Diaspora. Religion Crossing Boundaries. Transnational Religious and Social Dynamics in Africa and the New African Diaspora is the eighteenth volume in the series Religion and the Social Order reflecting from a sociological point of view the patterns and structures of religious phenomena and changes occasioned by the transnational economy, globalization, and migration.

If in the last two hundred years the patterns of migration and driving economy have been the peoples of the North Atlantic nations moving and settling in colonized countries of the southern hemisphere, in recent years a major change has taken place in the structure of global society with respect to the nature of migration. In the past, there was little or no substantive interchange on the part of the settlers to imbibe the culture and religious traditions of their new found land in the southern hemisphere. The settlers had come with a new religion and “civilizing culture” destined for the natives of the new found land. Nowadays, however, the predominant pattern has been for people to move and settle in Western countries while maintaining still very close contact with families and people back home. They also come with their own version of the new religion received previously from the settlers back home. It is precisely in the religious front that a very substantive interchange in global migration is taking place today: the meeting of received religion and culture of people from the southern hemisphere with those of the host countries in the North Atlantic world has been described as globalization from the margin. One of the places where this phenomenon is most evident is in religious exchange between Africa and the West. While some negative effects of this interchange may grab headlines, there have also been extensive positive interactions, not least among African peoples, especially with respect to Pentecostal and allied religious movements. The editors of this book have assembled articles that illustrate the variety of these interchanges.

Broadly speaking, the book is divided into three parts, namely, Part I: Transnational Dynamics in African Migration; Part II: Transnational Dynamics within Africa; and Part III: Wider Implications of Transnational African Religions. It has twelve chapters in all written by authors who are real experts in this emerging religious phenomenon of interchanges. William H. Swatos, Jr., (General Editor of the series, Religion and the Social Order – an Official Publication of the Association for the Sociology of Religion) opens the book with a well articulated preface entitled Real Globalization: Everything is Local. The two editors James V. Spickard and Afe Adogame begin the topic with a very detailed introduction of about twenty-eight pages. The authors of the preface and introduction to the volume all appeared to agree on one point: “What happened at the end of the twentieth century was that the everyday life-worlds of “ordinary people” around the world began to incarnate the global concept … We went from the global as academic principle to the global as life-world in less than fifty years” (p. vii). Taking up this discussion from African experience, almost all the articles published in this volume discuss the topic from two important vantage points: exchanges between and within Africa – in respect to both Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity and native African expressions of religious experience – and the life-world of persons of African descent now living at least part of their lives outside Africa. These two points happened within Western Christianity and hegemony with which this encounter takes place. No less important, however, is the influence of the encounter also between Africa and other parts of what once were conceived as the “Third World” and the West. What is unique in these encounters is the speed in which they are taking place and with which they are changing our concepts of the world and different peoples, cultures and religious traditions that we meet along the way. Very significant also is the African feature of these encounters, especially in religious phenomena.
Contributors to this volume present these religious phenomena (especially of Pentecostal/Charismatic experience) as a form of globalization and trans-nationalism taking place in many ways today (though from the margin), some of which are certainly unique to the African situation. Africa is thus not merely a passive recipient of global pressures. It is a site of religious creativity that has had considerable effect on the outside world. Contributors to this volume discuss the trajectories of this emergent global religious phenomenon with focus mainly on African Christianity (Pentecostalism and African Independent (Initiated) Churches (AICs)).

But as the editors noted in their introduction, the volume recognizes its one-sided focus on African manifestation of Pentecostalism (and Christian movements of AICs), which is, however, understandable because of the extreme historical, cultural, religious, social and linguistic complexity of the continent. Since Africa had its traditional religious heritage before the advent of Christianity and Islam in the continent, attention should have been devoted to the universal significance of the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and how it has influenced and been influenced by outside religions, especially Islam and Christianity (cfr. p. 2). More significantly, the volume should have incorporated, at least in some way, the same manifestations of religious interchange taking place in the mainline Churches – between Catholics or the Anglicans of African descent now residing in Europe and the Christians of their host countries in the West, where indeed a true globalization from below is taking place today. One needs to attend religious worship in African chaplaincies in the Western nations to confirm the reality of this emerging religious interchange. Added to this is the influence of emergent theological reflection in Africa on traditional Christian theology and thought. Some of the leading concerns of African theologians and authors, such as culture, human development, liberation, poverty, and oppression, are viable theological categories that are already enriching the traditional themes of systematic theology and pursuit of mission. In that respect, inculturation and liberation trends in African theology have become very important in contemporary theological development. These interchanges are all influencing in a great way the contours of Christian movement today. Again, the growth and global influence of each of the three religious heritages of Africa, ATR, Christianity, and Islam, could be better grasped against the backdrop of mutual influence and exchange at various historical epochs. This fact, fortunately, is pointed out in the last chapter of the volume by Marleen De Witte (cf. p. 272). This is a volume that no one who is interested in the emerging religious reality in Africa and indeed in the Christian missionary movement today would like to miss reading. – Francis Anekwe Oborji.