

## World Christianity and Indigenous Experience

In this book, David Lindenfeld proposes a new dimension to the study of world history. Here, he explores the global expansion of Christianity since 1500 from the perspectives of the indigenous people who were affected by it and helped change it, giving them active agency. Integrating the study of religion into world history, his volume surveys indigenous experience in colonial Latin America, Native North America, Africa and the African diaspora, the Middle East, India, East Asia, and the Pacific. Lindenfeld demonstrates how religion is closely interwoven with political, economic, and social history. Wide-ranging in scope, and offering a synoptic perspective of our interconnected world, Lindenfeld combines in-depth analysis of individual regions with comprehensive global coverage. He also provides a new vocabulary, with a spectrum ranging from resistance to acceptance and commitment to Christianity, that articulates the range and complexity of the indigenous conversion experience. Lindenfeld's cross-cultural reflections provide a compelling alternative to the Western narrative of progressive development.

David Lindenfeld is Professor Emeritus in the Department of History at Louisiana State University. He has been researching cross-cultural religious interactions worldwide for nearly two decades and is coeditor, with Miles Richardson, of *Beyond Conversion and Syncretism: Indigenous Encounters with Missionary Christianity, 1800-2000* (2011). Lindenfeld is an active member of the World History Association and the Yale-Edinburgh Group on Missionary Christianity.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-83156-7 — World Christianity and Indigenous Experience  
David Lindenfeld  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

# World Christianity and Indigenous Experience

*A Global History, 1500–2000*

DAVID LINDENFELD  
*Louisiana State University*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-108-83156-7 — World Christianity and Indigenous Experience  
 David Lindenfeld  
 Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

**CAMBRIDGE**  
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
 New Delhi – 110025, India  
 79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108831567](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108831567)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108917643

© Cambridge University Press 2021

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2021

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

NAMES: Lindenfeld, David, author.

TITLE: World Christianity and indigenous experience : a global history, 1500–2000 / David Lindenfeld, author.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA : Cambridge University Press, 2021. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2020042270 (print) | LCCN 2020042271 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781108831567 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108926874 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781108917643 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Christianity and culture—History. | Conversion—Christianity—History. | Indigenous peoples—Religion. | Agent (Philosophy)

CLASSIFICATION: LCC BR115.C8 L555 2021 (print) | LCC BR115.C8 (ebook) |

DDC 270.089—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020042270>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020042271>

ISBN 978-1-108-83156-7 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-92687-4 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

## Contents

<i>List of Maps and Illustrations</i>	page vi
<i>List of Tables</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	viii
1 Introduction	I
2 Colonial Latin America: The Nahuas (Aztecs) and Their Neighbors	31
3 Native North America: The Colonial Northeast, the Cherokees, and the Sioux	50
4 Sub-Saharan Africa and the Diaspora	91
5 The Middle East	142
6 India	178
7 East Asia: China, Japan, and Korea	210
8 The Pacific	257
Conclusion: Reflections on Concentrated and Diffuse Spirituality	293
<i>Endnotes</i>	305
<i>General Bibliography</i>	400
<i>Index</i>	407

## Maps and Illustrations

2.1 Mexican indigenous languages	<i>page 39</i>
2.2 Facade and open chapel of the Parish of the Purisima Concepcion in Otumba, Mexico State.	49
3.1 Native North America	90
4.1 The Atlantic slave trade	131
4.2 South African language groups	141
5.1 The Middle East	176
6.1 India	208
7.1 East Asia	255
8.1 The Pacific	292

## Tables

7.1	Estimated numbers of missionaries, Chinese clergy, and Christians in China, 1590–1820	<i>page</i> 223
9.1	The varieties of concentrated and diffuse spirituality	297

## Acknowledgments

This book was roughly sixteen years in the making, as it involved my shifting of research fields from European to world history. A sabbatical in 2003 enabled me to accept a visiting fellowship at the Center for History, Society, and Culture at the University of California, Davis. Among those at Davis who provided helpful advice and encouragement in getting me started were John R. Hall and Jacob Olupona. In 2008, the Georgetown University Department of Theology provided me the opportunity for organizing a workshop on indigenous encounters with missionary Christianity, together with my Louisiana State University colleague in anthropology, the late Miles Richardson. Georgetown faculty members Peter C. Phan and Joseph Murphy were instrumental in providing this venue, with the help of Anh Q. Tran, SJ. The other participants contributed greatly to my understanding of the field: Saurabh Dube, C. Mathews Samson, Elizabeth Elbourne, Richard Fox Young, Sylvia Frey, and Anne Keary. This workshop led to the publication of a collection of essays, *Beyond Conversion and Syncretism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011).

A number of specialists in different cultural regions generously reviewed individual chapters and the articles that fed into them, providing invaluable criticism and advice along the way. Foremost was my longtime colleague and friend, the late John Henderson, an East Asian scholar with a broad comparative perspective, who reviewed most of the manuscript. Others included Katherine Benton-Cohen, Gibril Cole, Philip J. Deloria, Carter Findley, Susan Schroeder, Peter Sutherland, Joel Tishken, Catherine Wessinger, Deanna Ferree Womack, William Worger, and Richard Fox Young. The manuscript reviewers for



*Acknowledgments*

ix

Cambridge University Press provided many valuable suggestions as well. Cartographer Mary Lee Eggart provided invaluable assistance with maps.

For a book that deals centrally with religion, readers are entitled to know an author's upbringing, affiliation, and biases. Raised in the religions of my parents, namely Judaism and Quakerism, I found my way to Unitarian Universalism in the 1970s and have remained there ever since thanks to a vibrant church community in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The theme and approach of this book have been inspired by that faith, which finds human wisdom to be distributed among all cultures, with no one tradition having a monopoly.

Finally, I dedicate this book to my wife, Jerri Becnel, who has lovingly shared me with this project for most of our marriage.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-83156-7 — World Christianity and Indigenous Experience  
David Lindenfeld  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---