

# NGG Autumn Conference 2019

## Religion and the Production of Difference

University of Groningen, The Netherlands

30 October – 1 November

### Call for papers – Deadline June 1

#### Global and Local Perspectives on Religion and Harmful Practices in International Development

In recent years we have seen a heightened concern to understand the prevalence and indeed existence of practices that may fall within a category of harmful cultural practices because they are deemed to be abusive. Female genital mutilation/cutting is one example. When Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf signed a one-year executive order to ban FGM in January 2018, Liberia joined a wide range of countries in Global South and Global North that banned FGM. European governments increasingly dedicate substantial amounts of development funding to end FGM and Child Marriage, the UK department for International Development and the Dutch government are cases in point. International organisations such as Girls Not Brides have been successful in agenda-setting and channelling funding to local organisations, shifting development aid configurations to focus on challenging harmful practices. The global donor commitment to reduce and end forms of violence against women is arguably at its strongest but clear answers as to why harmful practices continue to pervade are slow to emerge.

Religion is often talked about in local peoples explaining into the why of practices such as female circumcision and early marriage, yet theological research struggles to find strong links. Untangling how religion may feed into the wider ecology that sanctions different forms of violence against women and girls including cultural practices is not a new area of debate. While studies have been emerging exploring the relations between harmful practices and religion, research that focuses on exploring the myths around religion and cultural practices is almost non-existent. Understanding how and where religion influences the lives of practicing communities is critical in development.

This volume will take religion as the entry point into deeper exploration into the complexities of why practices seen from the outside and by many inside as acts of violence continue. The dominance of social norms that sanction even reward the observance of forms of female cutting or child marriage need to be better understood contextually. Taking religion as entry point also means looking critically at what religion is and does (as a concept) in the framing, problematizing and solving of the violent gender practices such as FGM and Early Marriage by religious and secular (development) actors.

We invite papers that explore the interrelations between religion and harmful practices in global and local contexts through the following lenses:

1. **Understanding religion and harmful practices:** invites papers that explore the interrelations between religion and harmful gender practices. Drawing on the attitude continuum (outlined in Longman & Bradley 2015) we invite papers that will sketch how religion, gender and harmful practices are entangled in particular contexts. Various case studies will address the question how and under which circumstances these entanglements change, contributing to the further legitimizing or challenging of harmful gender practices.

2. **Analysing the social life of global discourses on religion and harmful practices:** invites papers that are focussed more on a critical analysis of the ways in which harmful practices are framed, problematized and proposed to be solved by religious and secular (development) actors in the context globalized discourses of modernity. We are interested in papers that empirically trace the social life (Wilson 2006, Abu Lughod 2010) of dominant conceptualisations of religion, gender and harmful practices in their interaction with local conceptualisations in global north and global south. We also invite papers that draw on empirically research to reflect on the production of difference through 'exclusionary mechanisms' (Raemdonck and Roodsaz 2018) that are often part of development approaches to gender and sexuality.

The panel is a first step towards and edited volume on the theme. We therefore invite papers that are original contributions and of high quality as to be considered for publication as part of an edited volume. The panel will have a focus on discussing the papers focussed further developing them into book chapters for an edited volume to be published in 2020.

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Chia Longman, University of Ghent

The panel will be organised as part of the NGG Autumn 2019 Conference Religion and the Production of Difference

For more information on the conference and the general call for papers, please consult:

<http://www.godsdienswetenschap.nl/index.php?page=autumn-conference-2019>

Please send your abstract to [b.e.bartelink@rug.nl](mailto:b.e.bartelink@rug.nl) before June 1