

**A**nthropologist Devaka Premawardhana arrived in Africa to study the so-called explosion of Pentecostalism, the spread of which has indeed been massive. It is the continent's fastest growing form of Christianity and one of the world's fastest growing religious movements. Yet Premawardhana found no evidence for this in the province of Mozambique where he worked. His research suggests that much can be gained by including such outliers in the story of global Christianity, by shifting attention from the well-known places where Pentecostal churches flourish to the unfamiliar ones where they fail.

In *Faith in Flux*, Premawardhana documents the ambivalence with which Pentecostalism has been received by the Makhuwa, an indigenous yet historically mobile people of northern Mozambique. The Makhuwa are not averse to the newly arrived churches—many relate to them powerfully. Few, however, remain in them permanently. Pentecostalism has not firmly taken root because it is seen as one potential path among many—a pragmatic and pluralistic outlook befitting a people accustomed to life on the move.

This religious phenomenon parallels other variable historical developments, from responses to colonial and postcolonial intrusions to patterns of circular migration between rural villages and rising cities. But Premawardhana primarily

attributes the religious fluidity he observed to an underlying existential mobility, an experimental disposition cultivated by the Makhuwa in their pre-Pentecostal pasts and carried by them into their post-Pentecostal futures. *Faith in Flux* aims not to downplay the influence of global forces on local worlds but to recognize that such forces, “explosive” though they may be, never succeed in fully capturing the everyday intricacies of actual lives.

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## **Contemporary Ethnography**

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