

Jacob Kehinde Olupona  
AASR-President

## FROM THE CHAIR

I am glad to present to you this issue of our newsletter, now renamed AASR-Bulletin. It comes after a very successful meeting of our Association in Ghana, as is apparent from the reports in this bulletin. The regional meeting brought together a fairly large number of scholars from Africa, Europe and America to deliberate on the question of religion and social transformation in West Africa. We used the occasion of the conference in Ghana to celebrate the contributions of the older Ghanaian scholars for their contributions to the field of religious studies: Kwesi Dickson, Asare Opoku, Mercy Oduyoye, John Pobee and Christian Gaba were recognised by our Association. Jan Platvoet part of whose work was on the Akan of Ghana was among the group we honoured. The occasion was a memorable one for the younger scholars who listened attentively as we recalled the great achievements of these men and women.

I thank the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Ghana and Professor Dovlo for hosting this meeting.

As required by our constitution, I appointed a committee to prepare the ground work for the election of the next committee of this association to take place in Tokyo next year. I would like to thank Jan Platvoet, Ulrich Berner and Oyeronke Olajubu for putting together a strong slate for the upcoming election. I am sure we will have a smooth transition come next year.

Have a nice summer!



Jan G. Platvoet

AASR-Nominations Committee Convener

# NOMINATIONS

## AASR-EXECUTIVE 2005-2010

### *Nominating Committee*

Prof. Jacob Olupona, AASR-President, has requested that Dr. Oyeronke Olajubu (University of Ilorin), Prof. Ulrich Berner (University of Bayreuth) and Dr. Jan G. Platvoet, AASR-Bulletin Co-Editor, serve as Nominating Committee and prepare the official nominations for the AASR-Executive for the period 2005-2010 on behalf of the current AASR-Executive. In the past two months, this committee has intensively screened senior AASR-membership to see who might serve best in what post and be elected to it in the AASR meeting during the 19th IAHR Congress, 24-30 March 2005, in Tokyo, Japan.

### *The nominations*

After extensive discussions by e-mail and consultations with some other senior AASR members, the committee unanimously agreed on the following nominations for the several posts in the AASR-Executive 2005-2010:

President:	Prof. Elom Dovlo, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana
Vice-President:	Dr. Grace Wamue, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya
General Secretary:	Dr. Afe Adogame, Bayreuth University, Germany
Treasurer:	Dr. Jim Cox, Edinburgh University, Scotland

### Representatives

East Africa:	Prof. Adam arap Chepkwony, Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya
Southern Africa:	Prof. Jannie Smit, University of Durban-Westville, South Africa
West Africa:	Prof. Matthews Ojo, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria
Europe:	Dr. Henk van Rinsum (Utrecht University, The Netherlands)
North America:	Dr. Kathleen O'Brien Wicker (retired; Claremont [CA], USA)

- Publications Officer: pending approval by the incoming AASR-Executive, it is proposed that this post be 'shelved' for the time being
- Internet Officer: pending approval by the incoming AASR-Executive, it is proposed that this post be instituted; a suitable candidate is being sought
- AASR-Bulletin: Prof. Matthews Ojo (Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria)  
Dr. Jan G. Platvoet (retired, Bunnik, The Netherlands)

Ex Officio Members: to be appointed by the new AASR-Executive

The Nominating Committee is grateful that all nominees named above have formally indicated that they are willing to stand as the official candidates for their several posts in the upcoming elections.

*Rules for the elections*

The following provisions in the AASR-Constitution are relevant for the elections in Tokyo in 2005:

- 6 a): Regional representatives may also hold additional office on the Executive Committee.
- 6 b): The officers shall be elected for a five-year period. They shall be eligible for one more term.
- 6 d): Both the Executive and members may propose candidates for office. Each candidate for a particular office must be supported in writing by at least three AASR members. The list of candidates must be made public in an AASR-Newsletter before the elections are due.
- 7 a): Elections shall be held at the IAHR Congress. The AASR members then present shall be held to represent the total body of the AASR members. However, members who cannot travel to the congress may exercise their voting right either in writing by sending in their votes in sealed envelopes to the AASR election committee (these envelopes would be opened and counted only after the members present have cast their votes). Or they may delegate, in writing, their votes to AASR members that attend. These members would then cast, in addition to their own vote, as many extra votes as they have been authorized.
- 7 b): Nominations would be handled by a nominating committee appointed by the Executive Committee. Nominations would be sent by AASR members either directly to the President or to the Regional Representatives who would then pass them to the Nominating Committee. The Nominat-

ing Committee would publicise the names of the candidates prior to the general meeting.

*How to nominate 'counter-candidates'*

These rules allow AASR-members to propose their own candidates for all the posts in the AASR-Executive on three conditions. Two are explicitly mentioned: each nomination is to be signed by three AASR-members, and the names of the candidates are to be 'publicised prior to the general meeting'. The third condition is implied only: members who wish to propose candidates should make sure that their candidates are willing and able to serve in that office if they are actually elected. The rule on publication implies that the names of 'counter-candidates' must be forwarded through the AASR-President or Regional Representatives to the Convener of the Nominating Committee, Dr. Jan G. Platvoet, before 15 November 2004 in order that they may be made public in AASR-Bulletin 22 (November 2004). That bulletin will reach AASR-members no later than January 2005.



Dr James L Cox  
AASR General Secretary

**MINUTES**  
OF THE AASR-GENERAL MEETING  
6<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2004 AT LEGON, GHANA

During the 2nd AASR Conference in Africa, held also as an IAHR Regional Conference, on the theme: 'The Role of Religion in the Socio-Cultural Transformation of West Africa', the AASR held a General Meeting at 6th February 2004 at 2:15 pm at the Government Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), Legon, Ghana.

*Members of the Executive Committee attending*

Professor Jacob Olupona (Chair), Dr Grace Wamue (Vice-President), Dr James Cox (Secretary and Treasurer), Dr Jan Platvoet (Newsletter co-editor), Professor Rosalind Hackett (Ex-officio member of the Executive), Professor Gerrie ter Haar (European Representative), Dr Umar Danfulani (West African Representative), Dr Matthews Ojo (Newsletter co-editor), Professor Abdulkader Tayob (Ex-officio member of the Executive).

*Apologies:* Professor Ulrich Berner.

*Welcome*

The President, Professor Jacob Olupona, declared the meeting open at 2:15 pm. He welcomed members of the Executive Committee and 30 of the delegates that were attending the 2nd AASR Conference in Africa. He expressed a special thanks to the organisers of the Conference from the University of Ghana at Legon and to the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) that had helped to sponsor the event.

*Minutes*

Minutes of the last General Meeting held on 5 October 2001 at Castle Thurnau, near Bayreuth in Germany, were printed in the AASR-Newsletter No. 16 (November 2001).

*President's report*

Professor Olupona reported that \$21,000 (U.S.) was raised for the current conference. The bulk of it (\$10,000) had been donated by the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) in the Netherlands through Professor Tayob, ISIM Professor at the University of Nijmegen in The

Netherlands. The University of California at Davis had donated \$5000, with the IAHR contributing \$2000. The remainder was given by ICCO (Interchurch Organisation for Development Co-operation) in The Netherlands through Prof. Ter Haar.

The President informed the meeting that he had sent a proposal to the Ford Foundation to assist with further work of the AASR, particularly in its role of capacity building in Africa. The response from the Ford Foundation has been highly encouraging, and a number of suggestions were made. It was indicated that the amount to be applied could be up to \$170,000. The main focus of the grant will be to hold summer schools in Africa for advanced postgraduate students. A number of African universities or institutions will be identified as hosts for the summer institutes. In addition, part of the funding will be for assistance with the newsletter and publication programme.

Professor Olupona announced that Prof. Simeon Ilesanmi has asked to be replaced as AASR Publications Officer and that the nominations committee has been asked to consider a replacement. The situation amongst North American members has not been encouraging. Members are not paying fees regularly and little contact is being maintained there.

Following the President's report, general affirmation was given to his efforts to seek funding from the Ford Foundation for capacity building among young scholars in Africa. On a separate point, it was suggested that instead of a publication officer, the AASR might benefit from an internet officer, since communication and dissemination of information is much more efficient and affordable through the electronic media. Professor Hackett, in particular, voiced the need for an AASR website. Professor Olupona indicated that this will be considered.

#### *Secretary-Treasurer's Report*

The General Secretary and Treasurer, Dr James Cox, thanked the newsletter co-editors for their very important role in communication among AASR members. He particularly thanked Dr Jan Platvoet for his efforts to solicit articles for the newsletter and to develop it as the most important source connecting members to one another. Dr Cox indicated that he had been working on establishing national representatives in southern African countries. Dr Johannes Smit had accepted the role of overall southern Africa representative, but because countries in the region were organising their own membership and had committed to raising local funds for meetings and distribution of the newsletter, it seemed reasonable to contact individual representatives. Thus far, Dr Ezra Chitando had agreed to be the national representative in Zimbabwe, Mrs Seratwa Kuswani for Botswana, and Dr Maria Hinfelaar for Zambia. However,

very little has yet been done to establish links among the national representatives.

Dr Cox thanked those on the Executive Committee and individual members for their work in helping to maintain communication amongst a diverse international membership. He suggested that the next step would be for more national representatives to be appointed to work closely with the regional representative. He also urged that the national representatives should be responsible for setting a local membership fee, which could be used for occasional national or regional meetings and for distribution of the newsletter. Dr Cox indicated that he had received just one financial report during the past year, that from Professor ter Haar, the European representative. This had been published in the AASR Newsletter No. 19 (May 2003).

#### *Reports from the regions*

**Europe:** Professor Gerrie ter Haar, the European Regional Representative, reported that the financial situation in Europe is very healthy. She drew the attention of the meeting to the fact that European members currently are carrying the financial burden for the whole of the AASR. She indicated that some funds will be able to be used to help support some members from Africa to attend the IAHR Congress in Tokyo at the end of March 2005. She stated that new members are joining each year in Europe, many of them African PhD students. The cost for membership in Europe is 60 Euros for those in full employment and 30 Euros for students and unwaged. In addition, funds are paid by libraries which subscribe to the AASR-Newsletter.

**West Africa:** Dr Umar Danfulani, the West African Representative, reported that a publication series has begun in Nigeria called 'Studies in Nigerian Religion'. This has produced one volume to date, *Polygamy and the African Churches; A Biblical Appraisal of an African Marriage System* by Dr Andrew Olu Igenzoa of Ile-Ife. Dr Danfulani indicated that he wants to encourage wider participation in the AASR throughout Nigeria.

In general discussion, a suggestion was made that there should be two West African representatives, one located in Nigeria and another in Ghana. It was further noted that there had been almost no participation by Francophone countries.

**East Africa:** Dr Grace Wamue, the Vice-President of the AASR, agreed to report on the situation in East Africa. She noted that Dr Adam Chepkwony, the East African Representative, had been working hard to maintain communication within Kenya and in distributing the newsletter. She noted, however, that the situation in East Africa resembles other regions, where it is difficult to recruit members beyond national boundaries. She reported that thus far a membership fee has not been established or collected in East Africa.

*AASR-Newsletter report*

Dr Jan Platvoet reported that the newsletter had been being expanded to include more than reports and announcements with the inclusion of book reviews and contributions of a more scholarly nature. However, he noted, it remains heavily Eurocentric in its contributions. He, therefore, is seeking more participation from African members, particularly in writing book reviews, reports on conferences and meetings and providing news of events in the regions. Dr. Platvoet added that the sheer work of printing and distributing the newsletter internationally might favour moving the newsletter also into an electronic format, particularly if an AASR website could be established.

In discussion that followed, most members present spoke for the continuation of a paper version of the newsletter. Dr Platvoet indicated that this would continue, but that where it is difficult to distribute the printed version, and also very slow, the electronic version could be of great benefit. There was general agreement that due to the increasingly scholarly nature of the newsletter, it would be better to refer to it as the AASR Bulletin rather than a newsletter.

*IAHR 2005*

Professor Gerrie ter Haar, who is the Academic Programme Co-ordinator for the IAHR 19th World Congress to be held in Tokyo from 24-30 March 2005, urged African members to form panels and to submit proposals. She announced that the theme of the conference will be 'Religion: Conflict and Peace' and indicated that the deadline for the panels had been extended to the end of March 2004. She explained that if individuals want to submit proposals, this could also be done. The programme committee would be organising these into sessions around similar themes.

In discussion that followed, members asked about funding to attend the conference. Professor ter Haar indicated that the IAHR is developing a fund to assist those from Africa to attend, but this will be limited. She urged members to begin working immediately on identifying sources to fund Africans to attend.

*Date of next AASR-meeting and Any other business*

The President announced that the next meeting of the AASR will occur during the IAHR Conference in Tokyo, when there will be an election of officers. The President expressed his personal thanks to those who had helped to make the current conference possible, particularly Professor Elom Dovlo, Prof. Abdulkader Tayob, and Dr Matthews Ojo. The President declared the meeting closed at 3:15 pm.



## CONFERENCE REPORTS

Matthews A. Ojo  
Obafemi Awolowo University,  
Ile-Ife, Nigeria

### 2ND AASR-CONFERENCE IN AFRICA UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, GHANA 5-8 FEBRUARY 2004

#### *History & funding*

The AASR was founded at a 'IAHR Regional Conference' at the University of Zimbabwe in Harare in 1992. The AASR organised its First Conference in Africa in Nairobi in 1999. During that conference, the East African Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) was founded. Now the AASR has met for its Second Conference in Africa in the University of Ghana from 5 to 8 February 2004. It was meet that it did so in Legon, for Professor Elom Dovlo of the University of Ghana has developed a strong AASR 'chapter' in Ghana in the past few years which by now counts twenty-one members. Like those at Harare and Nairobi, this conference too was recognized officially by the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) as an IAHR Regional Conference, and granted financial support by the IHAR on that title. Significant financial support was also received from the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) at Leiden, The Netherlands, through Professor Abdulkader Tayob, who organised the conference on behalf of the AASR together with Profs. Elom Dovlo and Matthews Ojo. The University of California at Davis also contributed a considerable sum through Prof. Jacob Olupona, AASR-President. So did, lastly, ICCO (Interchurch Organisation for Development Co-operation) in Zeist, The Netherlands, through Prof. Gerrie ter Haar.

#### *Participants and papers*

Some forty participants were drawn from UK, USA, The Netherlands, The Gambia, Nigeria, Kenya and Ghana to explore the role of religion in the social and cultural transformation of contemporary West African societies. That was done in five key-note addresses, by Profs. Jacob Olupona, Kofi Asare Opoku, Brigid Maa Sackey, Matthews A. Ojo and Abdulkader Tayob, and in five panels in which some twenty papers were presented.

The conference was opened with a keynote address by Professor Jacob Olupona of the University of California, Davis, USA, and AASR-President. He discussed the relationship between the practice of religion and scholarship in religion in the African context. In his address, Prof. Asare Opoku focused on the understanding of African Traditional Religion in contemporary Africa, and especially as he understands it. In the third, Prof. Sackey analysed how gender relations have developed in Ghanaian society in recent decades and especially what opportunities Ghanaian 'independent' churches offer for female religious leadership. Dr. Matthews A. Ojo analysed the role which Pentecostalism plays in the present socio-cultural transformation in West Africa in his lecture, whereas Prof. Abdulkader Tayob examined how one might think globally about Islam in Africa.

In three of the five panels – on 'Religion, Conflict & Violence', 'Religion and the State in Contemporary West Africa', and 'Religion in Contestation' – papers were presented on the various aspects of the violence and strife that have resulted from recent religious radicalism and the contestation between religions in West Africa in recent decades. In another panel on 'The Study of Religion in Local and Global Contexts', the response of scholars of religions to violence as a local and global phenomenon was explored, as well as the globalisation of localised religions. Lastly, a panel was devoted to 'Religion as Source of Values'.

### *Appreciation*

Overall, the scholars at the conference offered a multidimensional understanding of these issues. By providing case studies and comparative studies reflecting on the globalising effects on religions and religious developments in West Africa they revitalised the discussion of the role of religion, positive and negative, in the social and cultural development of modern Africa. Some papers, however, approached religious violence mainly in mainly moral and moralistic terms which prevented their authors from contextualising and analysing these unfortunate clashes and grasping the messages communicated through violence.

The conference also included a tour of selected places of interest in Accra, a get together in which Prof. Olupona honoured Ghanaian scholarship in the study of the religions of Africa, and a general meeting of the AASR. A report on the latter is included in this AASR-Bulletin. The keynote addresses and a selection of the revised papers are presently being prepared for publication.



Oluwafemi Abosede Okunlola  
Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary  
Ogbomosho, Nigeria

## REFLECTIONS ON THE AASR CONFERENCE AT ACCRA

I heard about the AASR through Dr. Matthew Ojo who gave me the AASR-Newsletter and after studying the aims I found them worthwhile. Having attended the AASR Ghana Conference in February 2004, I can say the organisation is living up to the aims it set out to achieve. The conference was a blessing to me as a scholar. I gained friendship, research contacts, research resources, information, knowledge and additional reasons to live a focused purposeful life. Through these contacts, I have received help, information and resources in my research area. First, I met many international scholars. It was a great privilege to rub mind with reputable scholars such as Jacob Olupona, Rosalind Hackett, and James Cox. There were others scholars whom hitherto I have only known through their writings. It was also a time of happy reunion with Mama Mercy Amba Oduyoye and other women from the circle of African women theologians. Moreover, the conference opened my eyes to possible solutions to problems of religion plaguing Africa. For example, I found useful Rosalind Hackett's proposal on being 'a caring scholar'. Various other solutions to stepping down religious violence were also of interest to me.

However, I came out of the conference still considering a number of issues. For example the relationship between the practice of religion and scholarship in religion that was discussed at the conference is still occupying my mind. Also, the gap between Africans' passionate practice of religion and the obvious slow rate of socio-political and economic development in the continent still bug my mind. Issues raised on African womanhood have made me to be more resolute to focus the rest of my academic research life on this field. Above all, I came out of the conference filled with hope. I gained most especially from the personal discussions between sessions with senior scholars. I received professional counsels that are helping me focus my vision. For example, Olupona's contribution and assistance to helping younger scholars is quite appreciated.

On the social side, I am quite impressed by the good organisation of the conference. GIMPA, the venue of the conference is a nice, well-run place, which makes one aware that very soon the face of Africa will change for good. I enjoyed the hospitality of the hosts, especially Dr. Elom Dovlo. I enjoyed the good food, the parties, the nice dance, etc. I found it quite thoughtful of the or-

ganisers of the conference and the leaders of AASR the gesture of appreciating the pioneering African scholars of religion such as John Mbiti, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, Kwesi Dickson, etc.

In sum, I believe that the conference achieved all the aims of AASR as listed at the back cover of the Newsletter. And lastly, I appreciate the financial support granted us to attend the conference. Definitely without the grant, I would not have been able to attend.

David O. Ogungbile  
Obafemi Awolowo University  
Ile-Ife, Nigeria

## THE AASR GHANA CONFERENCE IMPRESSIONS & REFLECTIONS

### *New people, new knowledge, new information*

The subject of the Ghana conference, held between February 4 and 8, 2004, was a timely one, for religion continues to have a great impact on the socio-political space of the West African region. It continues to redefine the socio-cultural spaces of individual communities in the region. The processes of transformation, functional and dysfunctional, were dealt with in ways that illuminated the reality of our lives in contemporary African societies.

### *Information and pre-conference communications*

The use and efficiency of communication particularly through the electronic mail was excellent. Without it, most of us who participated in the conference would not have got the opportunity to participate. I also wish to commend the efforts of the organizing committee and their understanding of the inadequate situations that hinder our productivity, which they had to condone at crucial times.

### *About the presentations*

Most of the presentations reflected the diverse religious sensibilities of the peoples in the West African countries by the use of case studies. These, it was noted, employed diverse perspectives such as those of theology, sociology, anthropology, phenomenology, philosophy and history. The presentations focused on such issues as the interrelationship of religion with politics, culture, education and educational institutions, gender and gender relations, peace, peace-keeping and peace-building; on the effects of religion on cultural and national identity; on ethno-religious crisis and violence; on ecology and environment, and on contemporary social issues such as HIV/AIDS.

Three interesting points ran across the presentations. The first is that Islam and Christianity remain the competing religions in the sub-region and that they have always been responsible for so many crises and violence in these communities. The second is that African indigenous cultures and religions are very rich in human values and that they possess ingredients that facilitate peaceful and meaningful living which is capable of instilling communal solidarity. The third is that a process of borrowing and incorporation assists self-appreciation, understanding and socio-cultural development. However, where Islam and Christianity in their competitive manner have such power on people, they encourage disaffection, social dislocation and disintegration.

The conference provided me with knowledge about the people of other societies in West-Africa. The interaction with other scholars has helped me to initiate collaborative academic work. The plenary sessions and other presentations were weighty, well focused and full of adequate knowledge about the African continent. They have really benefited the conference tremendously. Above all, I see this conference as an introduction to a greater things in my academic pursuit and it is hoped that this will continue.

Hajj Mumuni Sulemana  
 Dept. for the Study of Religions,  
 University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana

## RELIGION & TRANSFORMATION IN WEST AFRICA<sup>1</sup>

The main objective of the conference was to explore the relationship between social and cultural institutions and religious practices in contemporary West African societies. Twenty papers were presented covering a wide spectrum of topics and countries. The conference participants debated public policies, dress codes, sharia, and gender issues.

The first keynote address was delivered by Prof. J.K. Olupona who emphasized the need for a clear-cut methodology for the academic study of various religious traditions. He pointed out that thematic studies of religious traditions, rather than studies on particular faiths, would bring the field further. He also advocated that religious leaders play a role in not only bringing about a democratic renaissance in West Africa, but that they work towards sustaining these democracies. Desmond Tutu's role during the Apartheid and post-Apartheid political developments in South Africa served as a case in point. He em-

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<sup>1</sup> This report was originally published in *ISIM Newsletter* 14 (June 2004), p. 55. It is included in the AASR-Bulletin with permission of the author.

phasised the urgent need for religious leaders to be active in social issues such as corruption, indiscipline, abuse of power, and ensuring good governance and rule of law.

Abdulkader Tayob brought to the fore the need to distinguish between a scholar of religions and a religious leader in another keynote address. He was of the conviction that the two perform different roles in society. He made it explicitly clear that, as a scholar of religion, Desmond Tutu is not his role model. However, he was quick to add that most participants will disagree with him. He dwelt on the problem of Muslim representation in government. In Ghana, for instance, there is always the problem of which body represents Muslims at the national political level. Currently, there is a struggle between the office of the national Chief Imam (spiritual leader) and the Federation of Muslim Councils, the legitimate mouthpiece for Sunni Muslims in dealings with the government. He further dealt with the emergence of Islamic reformist movements and the Islamic ideological debate about the state. He is of the conviction that the Islamic state has failed.

Another theme that generated much discussion was the dress code in some Nigerian universities. Muslim female students began wearing face veils, leaving some university authorities with the problem of identification of female students during examinations and official university activities. To overcome the problem some universities came up with a dress code, part of an attempt by university officials to curb the global renaissance of Islamic movements, especially after the introduction of sharia in Northern Nigeria since the reintroduction of democracy. This development was surprising to Ghanaian participants because Ghanaian tertiary female students prefer western fashion, which is seen to be incompatible with the African culture. Yet, at the same time, there is also an upsurge of the use of the veil by Muslim female students in the tertiary institutions in Ghana.

The implementation, structures and problems of sharia in Northern Nigeria generated a great deal of discussion (presentations by Muutasim Dawood and Lateef Mobolaji Adetona). Lateef argued that the sharia was becoming an issue in the Southwest, especially among the Yoruba in Nigeria where independent sharia committees are emerging under the supervision of the Supreme Council for sharia. Eventually sharia laws will be implemented at the federal level.

The conference was supported by the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM), the University of California, Davis and ICCO, Zeist, The Netherlands. More than thirty scholars from The Netherlands, the United States, Britain, Nigeria, The Gambia, and Ghana, participated in the conference.

Dapo F. Asaju  
Lagos State University

## THE 1884 CONGO CONFERENCE AT BERLIN THE PARTITION OF AFRICA & ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN MISSION TODAY

The third International Interdisciplinary Conference of the African Christian Diaspora in Europe<sup>2</sup> was organized under the auspices of the Council of Christian Communities of an African Approach in Europe (CCCAAE) in conjunction with Humboldt University, Berlin; Rostock University and the Academy of Mission at the University of Hamburg.<sup>3</sup> The CCCAAE has been described as 'a new venture which attempts to network between such different traditions as Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox, Evangelicals, Pentecostal-Charismatic, Sabbatarians, Spirituals and AICs, build bridges with the indigenous European Churches, and focus on inclusion, not exclusion, in the spirit of Christ'.<sup>4</sup>

The Berlin conference was the third in a series of three Europe-wide consultations on the emergent and accelerated intercontinental migration in the context of globalisation, the significance of African migration to Europe and the implications for mission. Previous consultations included those at Leeds (UK) in 1997; Västerås (Sweden), Glay (France), Hamburg (Germany) in 1998; and Cambridge (UK) in 1999. Members of the Conference Planning Committee included Rev.Dr. Roswith Gerloff (Leeds) (Consultant), Prof.Dr. Andreas Feltdtkeller (Berlin), Dr. Afe Adogame (Bayreuth), Rev.Dr. Kingsley Arthur (Berlin), Pastor Peter Mansarey (Berlin), Prof.Dr. Klaus Hock (Rostock), Rev.Dr. Joseph Kabongo (Geneva), Pasteur Dominique Kounkou (Paris), Pater Josef Rohmeyer (Berlin), Pasteur Dibudi Way-Way (Brussels), Rev. Dr. Andreas Heuser (Hamburg), Lelo Matundu (Brussels), Deacon Alimamy Sesay (Berlin), and Dieudonne Tobbit (Berlin).

The conference drew from about twenty countries, a hundred and twenty participants - African and European historians of religion, sociologists, anthro-

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. also Afe Adogame 2004, 'Conference Report: The Berlin-Congo Conference 1884: The Partition of Africa and Implications for Christian Mission Today', in *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, 1-2: 186-190.

<sup>3</sup> This report derives from the Reflectors Reports at the conference by Fr. Josef Rohmeyer, Dr. Dapo Asaju, Dr. Deidre Crumbley, Dr. M. Fischer and Dr Hubert Van Beek.

<sup>4</sup> AASR Newsletter No 18 (Nov. 2002): 39; see R. Gerloff 2001, 'Religion, Culture and Resistance: The Significance of African Christian Communities in Europe', in *Exchange* 30, 3: 276-289.

pologists, theologians, political scientists, missiologists, Church leaders and practitioners from various parts of the world, including Europe, Africa, Asia, America, Latin America and the Caribbean. Three major languages – German, English and French – were used during the conference. The translators were efficient in facilitating flow of communication during the proceedings.

The conference specifically focused on the African migrant communities in Europe, the problems of migration, identity, racism, sexism and the impact of their new religious traditions on the indigenous European populations. On a wider note, the conference addressed the crucial question of how the European and African churches will meet the prevalent challenges of humanism, secularism and post-modernism. It examined this from the symbolic perspective of the Berlin–Congo conference of 1884 where the partition of Africa among European nations was decided, a development that resulted in the subsequent colonisation of the African continent.

The choice of Hirschluch – 40 kilometres east of Berlin – as venue, was not accidental. In many of the presentations, the symbolism of meeting so near to the place where Africa was divided up by the colonial powers served as a powerful paradigm. ‘By linking the conference with the historical epoch after the Berlin Congo Conference of 1884, and the partition of Africa among European nations, the organizers intended to set a symbolic sign by serving as an interface between scholars in this field and religious practitioners: academia and grassroots pastors, oral and literary history and theology, European indigenous and African Christianity’. This is a commendable pragmatic approach of dialogue and interaction between the academia and the ecclesia in a collaborative effort to address a common goal. This was reflected in the conference organisational mode, the program planning and other related activities and events. It was particularly invigorating to have serious academic sessions side by side with religious activities. This is a departure from the common trend of secularism prevalent in Europe and its academic studies.

The programme consisted of plenary and five parallel group sessions in which various papers were presented on a wide range of subjects related to the central theme. The presentations were grouped under the following sub-headings: historical aspects, socio-political aspects, missiological aspects and practical consequences. Broadly, the papers presented dealt with the following issues: historical review and perspective of the Berlin Conference of 1884 and the partitioning of Africa among the various European powers; the historical and socio-political consequences of the partition of Africa for the continent and the African diaspora, highlighting issues such as migration, racism and sexism; the local, regional, national and global effects and consequences of the partitioning on the religious, social, economic and political life and structure of the African communities and nations today, with implications for migrant African



communities in the European diaspora; the political role of the Christian mission in the colonisation of Africa, as well as into the paradigm shift in mission today locally and globally.

Other related issues included the deconstruction of colonial mission and the challenges of new missiological approach in African Christianity today; the roles of charismatic Christianity in reshaping the religious scene in Africa, with particular focus on Pentecostal churches, African Instituted Churches (AICs) and charismatic renewal in conservative evangelical churches; the trans-national networks of indigenous missionary enterprises in Africa in special relation to reverse-mission by Africans in Europe. There were also papers dealing with the status and mental images of Africans in the diaspora; the need for re-definition and self-definition, and the implications of these for missions in Europe; gender issues related to the Biblical as well as the colonial Christian presentation of women, and the role of women in churches in the diaspora. There was discussion on the contemporary methods and models of doing missions in the diaspora context. The reports presented by various African religious groups in different countries in Europe can be placed under this category. In addition, there were case studies such as the presentation on the Christian involvement in the Rwanda genocide and the implications for Christian missions in crisis-ridden developing contexts and an assessment of the missiological challenges posed by the emergent HIV/AIDS in Africa. Dr. Jonathan Bonk also presented his latest work on Dictionary of African Biography at the conference.

In discussing the above issues, the conference explored a new understanding of faith and its contribution towards overcoming racial and cultural barriers, as well as promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue in a polarised and secular world. The quality of the papers was generally high, and discussions were rich and lively. Unfortunately, the tight time schedule for each presentation was sometimes insufficient. This also posed a problem for translators who often had difficulty coping with the accent and speed of some presenters. Had conference participants been provided with printed copies of the papers prior to presentations, the effect of this frustration would have been minimised. It is noted and appreciated, however, that the conference had a tight budget that constrained the provision of this facility.

Participants and CCCAAE delegates presented reports from Germany, Belgium, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland and Denmark on the experiences, achievements and difficulties faced by member churches on the mission field. One fall-out of these reports is the fact that there is an increasing proliferation of churches of African origin among migrant communities. The membership of the Council of African Churches in Berlin for instance has grown from 3, when it began five years ago, to 40 today. Some conscious efforts are being made to reach the German communities. In Belgium,

an assembly of 200 diasporic churches recently came together in Brussels. These churches are varied denominationally, yet bound together with a common sense of mission. The Netherlands reports another remarkable progress in migrant missions. With a migrant population of two million, the Africans constitute about 120,000, while the total number of Christian migrants from all parts of the world totals about 800,000. These are formed under major groups that network on a regular basis - SKIN (with 54 member churches, 35 being African) and GATE (Gift of Africa to Europe). These churches tackle problems of drug addiction, crime and racism.

There are reports of mounting official constraints posed to migrant churches by host governments in Europe. Such are manifested in laws that restrict the use of space for church services. There was also a report on the social and racial discrimination against Africans and, by implication, African churches, in the United Kingdom. It was noted that Government is not only increasingly becoming post-Christian, it is also devising new ways and reverting to old methods of persecuting Africans who are generally suspected to be asylum seekers and criminals. This anomaly has implications for the success of African mission among the indigenous British population. In Italy, where immigration is a recent phenomenon, there is a remarkable growth of the protestant minority in this Roman Catholic dominated country. New strides have been taken to bring churches together in mutual co-operation for mission. The 'Being Church Together' project is making good impact in this direction. Reports were also given on Denmark and Switzerland both of who have increasing number of African Diaspora Christians. They play active roles in Evangelical as well as Pentecostal churches. In Denmark, with about 8000 Africans, mostly Ghanaians, the number of African diaspora churches has grown from 1 in 1993 to 9 in 2003. The Conference of African Churches in Switzerland has 35 member churches, but faces the challenge of pastoral/theological training for some of the congregations.

On the whole, it was evident that churches co-operate ecumenically and some have official recognition with their respective governments. Some organisations are actively involved in mission work among asylum seekers, prisoners and rehabilitation centres while others are involved in consultation, counselling services to new African migrants in Europe. Some are involved in training programmes for foreign pastors. For instance, some Africans in Germany have benefited from theological training programmes at the Mission Academy in Hamburg and the Theological Institute of the United Evangelical Mission in Essen.

Participants were informed about the inauguration of a database on African churches in Germany at the University of Bayreuth. Interested persons of the public were enjoined to visit the growing site for information on African re-

ligious communities in Germany. Generally the reports were well taken and discussed. They raised hopes of a greater impact of African Diaspora churches in Europe but failed to demonstrate successful impact upon host communities in Europe. Mission in the Diaspora should go beyond mere gathering of Africans living abroad (replicating the home church models), but a practical interaction and sharing with indigenous host communities, a renewed evangelisation building on a return mission.

The conference was not all of academic brainstorming. Efforts were made to balance the academic, the spiritual and social aspects of the interaction. Participants were taken to a Protestant Church (Bartholomäuskirche) in Berlin, to share in an ecumenical service with typical African charismatics, treated to an African buffet, and met with representatives of the German mission. A reconciliation service was held in the Hirschluch Chapel, where white participants (symbolically representing Europeans) admitted, confessed and renounced the errors and perceived ills committed by their racial kin who were colonialists and missionaries in Africa. It was a symbolic gesture meant to address the spiritual guilt of whites against Blacks in the colonial and missionary era. An African representative responded on their behalf pronouncing forgiveness and reconciliation. He also confessed the sins of Africans against some white missionaries who came to Africa. This was followed by a reciprocal pronouncement of forgiveness by a white representative. The event evoked high emotions and it was unanimously felt that the action was spiritually potent and significant as an act of reconciliation. The confessional statements and responses were documented and circulated as a historical document. A similar reconciliatory move was, however, not arranged between whites and Asian participants, for similar experiences on the Asian colonial and mission fields.

There was an excursion to historical sites in Berlin, which were relevant to the colonial history of Germany as well as to the historic partitioning and colonial administration of Africa. On the penultimate date at the end of the conference, an entertainment event was organised where many participants presented various aspects of their cultures, including the launching of Roswith Gerloff's book *Mission is Crossing Frontiers*.<sup>4</sup> The Conference Secretariat under the leadership of Peter Mansarey, was well organised and equipped with bilingual staff to attend to endless enquiries from participants. The conference organisers displayed remarkable organisational acumen in the planning and execution of the conference. The venue was excellent, conducive to academic and spiritual reflection and concentration. A publication of some of the interesting papers of the conference is being planned.

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<sup>4</sup> Roswith Gerloff (ed.) 2003, *Mission is Crossing Frontiers: Essays in Honour of Bongani Mazibuko*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications.

Matthews A. Ojo  
Obafemi Awolowo University,  
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## CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA BIRMINGHAM, 19-23 APRIL 2004

An international conference on Christian-Muslim Relations in Contemporary Africa, hosted by the Centre for the Study of Islam & Christian-Muslim Relations, University of Birmingham, England, was held from 19 to 23 April 2004. Scholars researching both religious traditions and drawn from Africa, Europe and the United States examined issues from historical, political, religious and contextual perspectives in the five-day conference.

Three major perspectives emerged from the discussions. First, the situations of violence and conflicts characterizing Christian-Muslim relations, as found in Nigeria and Sudan, have arisen partly from historical legacies of colonialism, ethnicity, and geopolitics that have created divisions and cleavages among the people. These contradictions of the past continue to haunt Africa till the present time. Second, in the situation where religious space is contested, as in Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Rwanda, the Muslim communities have recently sought to address imbalance in religious representations in the political sphere or have attempted to challenge the perceived discrimination. The third perspective is that of accommodation and toleration as found in Tanzania during and after President Julius Nyerere era. This was partly expressed in Rwanda when Muslims shielded Christians from killers during the genocide of 1994. The emphasis of unity and common agenda for development, and the absence of fundamental groups seems to have promoted this situation.

On a general note, it was suggested that in those conflict or threatening situations, scholars must look beyond religious beliefs, institutions and persons, and focus on the grassroots response to the failure of the centralized state in Africa, and to contemporary international events as major factors promoting religious conflicts and violence. In his closing remarks, Prof. Sigvard von Sicard, the convener of the conference, called for continuing attention and research on varieties of responses to Christian-Muslim relations, and support for organizations such as Project on Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA) and Muslim-Christian Commission for Peace, Development and Conflict Resolution (TUWWAMUTA) that seek better understanding among Christians and Muslims in the continent.

**CONFERENCES AHEAD****CALL FOR PAPERS****AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY  
IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

**NORDIC AFRICA INSTITUTE, UPPSALA, SWEDEN,  
29-31 OCTOBER 2004**

Many of the African societies underwent considerable economic, political, social and religious changes during the last decades of the past millennium. As a consequence of economic crises and reforms such as the structural adjustment policies numerous governments were forced to reduce many of the social services including subsidized or free education and health care. Consequently, the significance of religious organizations such as former mission churches and other NGOs increased in this area. The early 1990s also marked a turning point in many African countries with the political reforms and transition to multi-party system. In many cases the churches played an important role in catalysing political change. Mainline churches and newer movements have both supported and opposed the ruling governments to varying degrees. Religious pluralism and dynamics have taken different manifestations in different countries as regards national political processes and ethnicity. Also, the worsening AIDS pandemic with its social and demographic consequences has posed challenges to the African governments as well as the civil society including religious organisations. Today it is hard to call into question the fact that the church is an important social factor in the civil society in Africa.

At the same time the mainline churches have faced challenges created by other forms of Christianity as well as by other world religions such as Islam. The past few decades have witnessed an unprecedented growth of independent churches, Pentecostalism and other trans-national and global forms of charismatic Christianity in many parts of Africa.

The conference focuses on various forms of contemporary religious phenomena in Africa with special emphasis on Christianity. Religion is understood here broadly to include various forms of Christianity together with its dynamics with other religions as well as with indigenous African practices. Religious beliefs provide not only ontological explanations for human existence but religious ideas and practices may also be symbolic constructions of the world and

responses to the world. Religious beliefs, experience and participation may therefore reflect as well as influence social, economic and political currents in the society. One could regard such phenomena as ways of grappling with for example politics, ethnicity, tradition, modernity, morality, money and AIDS.

The study of these phenomena could therefore mean examining ethnic, regional, class and gender conflicts in religious terms or examining religion as a social protest. It could mean examining how religious practices are connected to specific forms of sociality, power, historically motivated struggles and gender. It might be argued that it is for such reasons that Pentecostal and other charismatic churches and movements attract many followers in Africa today. Contemporary studies of religion are therefore engaged also in global processes and networks, in transnationalism and localization.

The conference welcomes both theoretically and ethnographically informed contributions on these and closely related themes. The aim is to attract contributions from scholars of different disciplines such as anthropology, religious studies, sociology and political science. Preference will be given to contributions from Nordic and African scholars. Paul Gifford, SOAS, will be one of the keynote speakers.

Due to limitations of space and funding, the number of papers that can be accepted will be limited to 20. Abstracts of the papers to be presented should be sent to Päivi Hasu by e-mail, mail or fax no later than 21 May 2004, and they should not exceed 500 words. The authors of the accepted abstracts will be notified by e-mail and airmail by week 26. Complete papers should be received no later than 17 September 2004. The papers should be original and unpublished since Nordic Africa Institute will publish a selection of revised papers.

#### *Venue and financial arrangements*

The conference will take place at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, Sweden. Participants will be accommodated at a hotel close to the institute. The organisers will provide accommodation and food for all participants who present papers. No per diems will be paid. NAI will partly contribute towards the travel expenses incurred by participants from Africa and the Nordic countries. For more information, please contact:

= Päivi Hasu, Research Fellow, Nordic Africa Institute, P.O. Box 1703, 751 47 Uppsala, Sweden. Phone: +46-18-56 22 31 (direct); Fax: +46-18- 56 22 90; E-mail: Paivi.Hasu@nai.uu.se

= Karolina Winbo, Administrator, Nordic Africa Institute, P.O. Box 1703, 751 47 Uppsala, Sweden. Phone: +46-18-56 22 51 (direct); Fax: +46-18- 56 22 90; E-mail: Karolina.Winbo@nai.uu.se

# IAHR CONGRESS TOKYO 24-30 MARCH 2005

The 19th quinquennial World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) will be held in Tokyo, Japan, from 24 to 30 March 2005. The AASR is an affiliate of the IAHR since 1995 when it was admitted at the 17th IAHR Congress in Mexico-City. For earlier announcements, and extensive description of this congress in Tokyo, see AASR-Newsletter 19 (May 2003), pp. 14-20, and 20 (November 2003), p. 11. This announcement provides only information not published before, on the venue, the congress secretariat, the forms to be submitted, the sub-themes, the abstracts of papers, various types of accommodation, and financial assistance.

### *Venue*

The congress will be held in the Takanawa Prince Hotel, Shinagawa, Tokyo, Japan. Its address is:

Takanawa Prince Hotel, 13-1, Takanawa 3-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 108-8612, Japan.

Telephone: +81 (3) 3447-1111; Fax: +81 (3) 3473-1113;

E-mail: [tkn-cst@princehotels.co.jp](mailto:tkn-cst@princehotels.co.jp);

Internet: [www.princehotels.co.jp/takanawa-area](http://www.princehotels.co.jp/takanawa-area).

### *Congress Secretariat & Registration*

The Congress Secretariat has set up a Registration Desk through a convention agency. Registration forms and paper proposals should be sent along with registration fees no later than 30 September 2004 to:

Registration Desk IAHR 2005, c/o Japan Convention Services, Inc.,

Daidoseimei Kasumigaseki Bldg, 18F

1-4-2, Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan 100-0013

Fax: +81 (3) 3508-1695;

E-mail: [iahrreg@convention.jp](mailto:iahrreg@convention.jp)

Till 30 September 2004, the registration fee is ¥33,000 (approximately US\$ 300); after that, it is ¥39,000 (app. US\$ 350). It may be paid by credit card by indicating the card number, name of holder, date of expiration and amount to be charged, and submitting these by e-mail, internet, fax or ordinary to the Registration Desk; or by electronic bank transfer to:

Sumitomo-Misui Banking Corporation, Hibiya Branch

Account number: 8135928; account name: IAHR Tokyo 2005

*Forms*

The three Forms, for Registration, for Accommodation, and for Proposal(s) for Paper(s), may be downloaded from the following two internet sites:

<http://www.iahr.dk>

<http://www.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/iahr2005>

*Theme and sub-themes*

The general theme of the congress is: Religion: Conflict and Peace (see AASR-Newsletter 19: 17-19). Its five sub-themes are:

= *The Religious Dimension of War and Peace*

Today, religion is often considered a root cause of war. The question is whether this is indeed so. Is religion an obstacle to, rather than an instrument for, peace? It is important to investigate in what ways religion may contribute to either war or peace. This should be done both at an ideological and a historical level. What meanings and values have religions attributed to the ideas of war and peace? And in what ways have they put such ideas into practice in past and present times? These long disputed problems need to be examined and considered anew at the beginning of the 21st century.

= *Technology, Life, and Death*

Religion can be seen as a system that mediates nature to humanity. In fact, religions have produced various systems of ideas and practices according to which people live and die in their natural environment. Such systems inevitably reflect the technological resources of their time and place. Contemporary innovations in techno-sciences and -industries are not only destroying indigenous religious systems of knowledge, but also introducing new questions concerning the human body, natural environments, humankind's and nature's life and death, that are often problematic. Addressing these unprecedented difficulties is one of the tasks confronting scholars today. In view of the long history of religions, it is also an urgent task for scholars of religion.

= *Global Religions and Local Cultures*

Some religions show a tendency to universal expansion, attempting to transcend the cultural and regional limits in which they originally emerged. At the same time, religious traditions are deeply rooted in particular regional cultures. The so-called world religions have to integrate themselves in a local culture and become indigenous in a sense, in order to fully actualise their universal aspirations. The combined processes of globalisation and localization (globalisation) of the contemporary world necessitate revising traditional dichotomies and terminologies, such as world religions and ethnic religions, monotheisms and polytheisms, and others.



*= Boundaries and Segregations*

Religions offer epistemological schemes to understand, evaluate, and order objects, events and humans in the world. Drawing clear lines between 'us' and 'others', inner and outer groups, etc. is one important function religion may assume. Today, however, the drawing of boundaries and the creation of segregation should be examined in relation to the universalist claims of human rights. In fact, religions have often recognized the importance of particular distinctions among humankind, for example those of men and women, and as a result legitimised certain forms of discrimination. In some cases, religious groups, despite advocating the fundamental equality of humankind, have nevertheless deemed certain people or groups to fall outside this category – to be inhuman, in other words – thus justifying aggression towards that which is deemed external to society. These aspects and functions of religion need reconsideration from a wide perspective.

*= Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*

Methodological reflection is a continual task in the study of religion. The complex interplay between method and theory in the human and social sciences plays an integral role in academic reflection and scholarly debates related to it. In recent decades, it seems that under the influence of sister-disciplines as well as because of other factors, the study of religion has witnessed remarkable changes and developments in the fields of method and theory, in comparison with earlier eras. Further evaluations and discussions need to be carried on in order to refine methodological reflection and debates. These debates are even more compelling, in the light of the main theme of this congress.

*Abstracts*

Abstracts must not exceed 150 words and should be in English. They may be sent by ordinary mail or by fax provided they are typed (handwritten texts are not acceptable); or by e-mail, or by using the on-line form on the internet site of the congress. If an abstract is sent by e-mail, no attached file should be sent, and the e-mail should be sent in 'text format' only.

*Accommodation*

Accommodation ranges from luxury hotels and more economical hotels to home stays. Several religious groups make facilities available for guests from overseas, and a number of private citizens have volunteered to house a guest during the Congress. As the number of these accommodations is limited, those interested should contact the Congress Secretariat as soon as possible.

*Financial assistance*

If an applicant for assistance is invited to participate in a panel, symposium, or roundtable during the congress, the application may be submitted by the organ-

iser of those events. The AASR, as an IAHR-affiliate, may recommend a few candidates from African countries for assistance. Others may apply individually. Assistance is supplementary: applicants must acquire also funds from other sources. Assistance will be granted in addition only to participants from weak currency countries, who present an original paper which has not been previously published and is up to the standards of academic journals. They must also have completed the registration procedure, paid the appropriate fees, and submit the required abstract before 30 September 2004. Application forms for financial assistance should reach the Congress Secretariat no later than 31 July 2004. The Congress Secretariat together with the IAHR-Executive will decide on the awards on the basis of the quality and originality of the proposals. Awards will be paid at the time of the Congress in Japan in Japanese Yen. Further inquiries should be directed to the Congress Secretariat.

## PERSONS & POSTS

**Dr. Musa Dube** has been appointed Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Scripps College, Claremont, California, USA. Dr. Dube hails from Botswana and obtained degrees from the University of Botswana in 1988, the University of Durham, England, in 1990 and more recently her PhD from the University of Vanderbilt at Nashville, Tennessee, Ohio, USA. Her publications include: 'Scripture, Feminism, and Postcolonial Contexts', in *Concilium* 4 (1998), and *Towards a Post-Colonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis [Missouri]: Chalice Press, 2000). Among the books she edited are: *HIV-AIDS & the Curriculum: Methods of Integrating HIV-AIDS in Theological Programs* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2003); *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001); and (with Gerald O. West) *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories, and Trends* (Leiden, etc.: Brill, 2000). Kathleen O'Brien Wicker writes about her successor: 'She is a real powerhouse. Most recently she had been World Council of Churches Theological Consultant for Africa on HIV-AIDS. She has travelled around the continent setting up and training groups on how to deal with the disease in their communities. She will return home this summer to complete that project and then be back in the fall.'

**Dr. Kathleen O'Brien Wicker** has retired as Professor of Religious Studies at Scripps College at Claremont, California, USA. She obtained her PhD in 1966 from Loyola University in Chicago. Her fields of study are New Testament and Early Christian Literature, and African Indigenous Religions and African Christianity. Her publications in the latter field include: (with Kofi Asare Opo-

ku), 'Sacred World and Sacred Text: The Mehu Healing and Retreat Center in Ghana', in Vincent L. Wimbush (ed.) 2000, *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures*. New York: Continuum, 625-649; 'Mami Water in African Religion and Spirituality', in Jacob K. Olupona & Charles H. Long (eds.) 2000, *African Spirituality: Forms, Meanings and Expressions*. New York: Crossroad, 198-222; 'Conversion and Culture: A Comparative Study of the Conversions of Paul and of Two Twentieth-Century African Christians', in Adela Yarbro Collins (ed.) 1998, *The Bible and Culture: Ancient and Modern Perspectives*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 357-391 (= Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series). She is now editing a volume of papers from a conference on the Global Future of Feminist New Testament Studies, held in the spring of 2003; and another, with Kofi Asare Opoku, on Mami Water cults in West Africa.

**Prof. Abdulkader Tayob** will deliver his inaugural address as ISIM-chair in the Faculty of Arts of the (Roman Catholic) Radboud University at Nijmegen, The Netherlands, on 10 September 2004. ISIM (the International Institute for the Study of Modern Islam) is located at Leiden University, The Netherlands. It has four chairs: Prof. Asef Bayat, who is also ISIM Director, in Leiden University, Prof. Martin van Bruinessen in Utrecht University, Prof. Annelies Moors in the University of Amsterdam, and Prof. Abdulkader Tayob in the Radboud University at Nijmegen. The title of his chair is: Social Process in Modern Islam. The title of his address is: Reading Religion and the Religious in Modern Islam. Concurrently with Tayob's address, a conference on 'Islam and Public Life in Africa' will be held from 10 to 13 September 2004 at Berg en Dal, near Nijmegen. Like earlier conferences, supported by ISIM, mapped the experiences of Muslim societies in diverse contexts, so this conference too will review how in Africa, where religious discourses are an inescapable facet of public life, Islamic discourses reflect varying contexts, local and global, social and political.



# SCHOLARSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS

## ASC-AWARD FOR STUDENTS RESEARCHING THE SOCIETIES OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

### *ASC*

The African Studies Centre (ASC), at Leiden, The Netherlands, is an independent and multi-disciplinary centre undertaking research on Sub-Saharan Africa in the social sciences. It aims to enhance the knowledge and understanding of African societies in the Netherlands and beyond and has established relations with universities and other institutes focusing on Africa, in particular with research schools in the Netherlands.

### *The award*

This annual award has been set up by the African Studies Centre in Leiden, the Netherlands and aims to encourage student research and writing on Africa, and to promote the study of African cultures and societies. It will be presented to a student whose Master's thesis has been completed on the basis of research conducted on Africa. The award may also be granted to any other final-year piece of work in the form of film, video or CD Rom that presents a clear analysis of an issue relating to Africa. The award consists of a prize for the winning thesis and the publication of the work in the ASC Research Report series. In addition, a stipend is available to cover the costs of a possible period of follow-up research.

### *Who can apply*

Any final-year student who has completed his/her Master's study with distinction at a university in the Netherlands or in Africa can be awarded the ASC Master's thesis prize and stipend of €1000 and €3000 respectively. The thesis, in Dutch, English or French, must be based on independent empirical research related to Africa in one of the subjects listed in the following section. It must have been examined within one year prior to the deadline for submitting manuscripts (see below). Work that has already won a prize elsewhere cannot be considered for this award. The ASC specifically encourages students from Africa to submit their theses for this annual competition.

*Subject and quality of the thesis*

Any thesis thematically related to socio-geographical, economic, political, historical, juridical or anthropological issues or focusing on the humanities (with the exception of language, literature and/or semiotic studies) can be submitted. In terms of geographical focus, the award is limited to Sub-Saharan Africa and its migrant communities elsewhere in the world. The ASC seeks to attract theses that demonstrate a high quality with regard to the subject matter of the research as well as the way the research has been conducted. The jury attaches importance to original approaches and insight, and the relevance of the research to a scientific understanding of the issues covered. In addition, the jury will consider the significance of the thesis with regard to development-related issues and its interest for the general public.

*Subject of the follow-up research*

Once an award has been granted, the author will be invited to submit plans for a specified period of follow-up research. The subject of that research must comply, both in thematic as well as in geographical terms, with the above-mentioned limitations. Separate guidelines have been drawn up concerning the follow-up research proposal and the budgeting of the €3,000 award.

*How to submit a thesis*

If a student or his/her supervisor feels that a thesis merits an award because of its high quality and originality, the thesis should be submitted to the African Studies Centre Awards Committee. Every submission must include: a letter of recommendation from the student's supervisor containing details about the educational institution from which the student has graduated, and the quality of the thesis; and the thesis as well as a summary of a maximum of 500 words. Applicants based in the Netherlands are requested to submit two copies of their thesis (on paper). One will be returned to them afterwards and the other will be placed in the ASC library. Those based in Africa are encouraged to send their thesis by email. If a hard copy of the thesis is submitted, the applicant's email address must be included so that receipt of the thesis can be acknowledged by email. If this submission is incomplete, the application will not be processed.

*Time schedule*

THE ANNUAL DEADLINE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF THESES IS 15 MAY. The jury will announce its decision at the beginning of September and the presentation of the award will be made by the Director of the African Studies Centre during a formal ceremony in October. The winner will be invited to present his/her work at a seminar at the ASC. A date will be set for submitting a follow-up research proposal if the candidate is interested in accepting the sti-

pend reserved for that purpose. The decision of the jury is final and no correspondence will be entered into concerning this decision.

*The jury*

Jos van Beurden MA, research journalist (chair); Dr Rijk van Dijk (African Studies Centre), anthropologist; Prof. Sjaak van der Geest (University of Amsterdam), professor of anthropology; Mindanda Mohogu MA, economist; Dr Klaas van Walraven (African Studies Centre), political scientist; Marieke van Winden (African Studies Centre) (secretary), from whom more information may be obtained or to whom queries regarding the submission of a thesis may be directed at < winden@fsw.leidenuniv.nl >. Or write to:

African Studies Centre, PO Box 9555, 2300 RB Leiden, The Netherlands;  
Phone: + 31 (0)71 527 3358; Fax: +31 (0)71 527 3344.

See also: <http://asc.leidenuniv.nl/award/>

## ISIM FELLOWSHIPS

The International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM), at Leiden University, invites applications for ISIM PhD and Post-Doctoral Fellowships from candidates in Anthropology, Sociology, Religious Studies, Cultural Studies and Political Science with an MA or (recent) PhD who are competent in academic English. Conducting and promoting interdisciplinary research on contemporary social, political, cultural and intellectual trends and movements in Muslim societies and communities, ISIM welcomes research proposals which are informed by a social science perspective and fit in with the research profile of ISIM or are related to the research programmes of the four ISIM chairs at the Leiden, Amsterdam, Utrecht and Nijmegen Universities. ISIM research programmes and projects include: Islam, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere; Muslim Cultural Politics; Debating Family Dynamics and Gender; Islamic Family Law in Everyday Life; the Cultural Politics of Domestic Labor; The Politics of Representation in Muslim Societies; Islam and the Public Sphere in Africa; Religion, Culture, and Identity in a Democratic South Africa; Socio-Religious Movements and Change in Muslim Societies; etc. ISIM Fellowships are awarded twice a year. The deadlines for application are 1 March and 1 September. ISIM PhD Fellowships are tenable for four years; ISIM Post-doctoral Fellowship are tenable for two years. They include a monthly stipend, office space, personal computer and telephone on ISIM premises in Leiden, travel expenses for fieldwork, no tuition fee. Further information may be obtained from: <http://www.isim.nl>, or ISIM Secretariat, PO Box 11089, 2301 EB Leiden, The Netherlands, E-mail: [info@isim.nl](mailto:info@isim.nl); Phone: +31 (71) 5277905.

# AASR-REGISTER OF MEMBERS UPDATES

## EAST AFRICA

### Maina, Newton Kahumbi, Dr.

2. Lecturer
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4. Phone: 254-2-810901-19/ 811622 Ext. 57461 (Office); 254-2-0722-371457 (cell phone); 254-2-810759/811242 (fax)
5. E-mail: nkahumbi@avu.org; nkahumbi@yahoo.com
6. B.Ed. Arts (1988, Kenyatta University); M.A. (Islamic Studies) (1994, Kenyatta University); PhD (Islamic Studies) (2003, Kenyatta University)
7. Islamic Studies: History of Islamic Civilization and Religion, Introduction to Qu'ran & Hadith; Modern Islamic Reform Movements, Islamic Philosophy etc.
8. (1) The Interface Between Islamic Orthodoxy and Sufism; (2) The Role of Women in Maulidi Festivities; (3) The Role of Women in Conflict Management and Peace Making; (4) HIV/AIDS Syllabus in Kenya's Schools and the Role of Religious Education Teachers.
9. Organisation of Social Science Research in Eastern & Southern Africa; Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians; East African Association of Study of Religions
10. = 2001: "Understanding Islamic Fundamentalism", in *African Ecclesial Review*, December 2001 Vol. 43 Number 6, 279-295.  
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## REVIEWS

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Andrew Olu Igenozu, *Polygamy and the African Churches: A Biblical Appraisal of an African Marriage System*. Ibadan: Africa Association for the Study of Religions, 2003, 304 pages, ISBN 978-36862-0-8, pbk, N1,000.00, \$15.00 and £10.00.

### *The book*

This book is the first in the series on Studies in Nigerian Religions published by the African Association for the Study of Religions. It attempts a theological and biblical discussion of the practices of monogamy and polygamy in the context of the Church in Africa. It presents an exhaustive study of the biblical background and social contexts of monogamy and polygamy, and also provides responses of various Christian denominations – Protestant and Catholic faith communities, African nationalist churches, and the new Pentecostal and Charismatic movements - in Africa to the practices.

Problems have been associated with the practices of monogamy and polygamy following the introduction of Christianity in Africa in the early nineteenth century, and by the insistence of Western missionaries that monogamy was the only form of marriage acceptable to the Church, and that converts or intending converts already in polygamous relationship must divorce other wives and remain with only one before they could be fully accepted into the fellowship of the Church. This was a revolutionary message that conflicted with African marriage system in which polygamy was judged to be good, desirable, sustaining certain enviable status, and accepted by all.

In the first three chapters, the author introduces the practice of polygamy. The premium placed on children either as a natural product of marriage or as economic labour is central to the practice of polygamy in Africa. Other factors include the need to overcome the shame associated with infertility or childlessness, to lessen the burden of chronic illness of a wife, the quest to maintain esteem and status in the traditional society as a person of power and wealth, in cases of ‘widow succession’, and in the modern times, the maintenance of multiple homes due to frequent job transfers of men to distant places.

Problems first arose when Western missionaries attempted to use the marriage form of monogamy already cultivated for centuries in the West as the basis of evaluating marriage in the traditional African society. Hence, they im-

posed various rules not sanctioned by Scriptures on African Christians. Among these were that only the first wife of a polygamist was the rightful wife and could take the holy communion; that the convert should send away all other wives and keep only the first; that the wives could be given communion since they were judged to be innocent, while the husband was denied the same. The first significant official position was adopted in the Lambeth conference of 1888, which forbade baptism to those men in polygamous relationships, though in certain cases the wives could be baptized. This decision with some modifications became the standard applied to polygamous relationships in many Protestant denominations in Africa.

However, at the 1988 Lambeth conference, the official Anglican position changed when the decision was made that 'a polygamist who responds to the Gospel and wishes to join the Anglican Church may be baptized and confirmed with his wives and children...' (p. 35). Although the decision was more sympathetic than that of the 1888 Lambeth conference, yet it did not answer all questions pertaining to the status of polygamists in the church. In some cases, they were still excluded from holding church offices, and treated as if they have broken some 'God-given' rules.

In contrast to the stand of Protestant churches, the African Indigenous Churches such as the African Churches, which arose from 1888, and the Zionist and Aladura churches from the 1920s accepted the practice of polygamy by insisting that polygamy was practiced by the pious in the Old Testament times, and the Scriptures never expressly forbid it.

The author devotes nine chapters (4 to 12) to the biblical perspectives of marriage, monogamy, and polygamy. Various perspectives of marriage from the Creation accounts particularly in Genesis, and from the perspectives of the Patriarchs, the classical Prophets, the Wisdom literature, the Gospels and the Epistles are discussed to prove that God instituted marriage to be monogamous, and that instances of polygamous marriages that came later were departures from the ideal. In the thirteenth chapter, Igenzoa summarizes his argument by insisting that from the biblical perspective, monogamy was the ideal marital union enjoined by God, but polygamy was allowed because of the imperfection of humanity. However, the author suggests a more sympathetic and redemptive pastoral approach to polygamists in the churches in Africa.

### *Appreciation*

Although the exegeses of the various texts are excellently done, yet this enterprise was done from the Western scholastic and cultural perspectives as few African authors on this matter were examined. In fact, no direct single document was consulted that was directly favourable to polygamy as a traditional African practice. Besides, the author's interpretations in many instances seek-

ing to justify monogamy call for further reflection since there is no single outright biblical disapproval of polygamy. Although the prophets compared the marital relationship between a man and his wife with the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, the practice of polygamy was common in ancient Israel and in the Graeco-Roman society, bearing in mind that Apostle Paul even in the first century A.D. commanded bishops and deacons to be monogamous. Hence, a major questioned unanswered was why was polygamy never ruled out in principle and practice in ancient Israel?

Apart from describing concubines as of inferior status to wives, the ancient practice of concubinage needs further explanation, because of the likelihood that it could confuse African Christians who have similar term, but not the same practice, in their cultures. At times, arguments are too stretched out and unconvincing. For example, to the author 'You shall not commit adultery' in the Ten Commandments partly prohibits polygamy (pp. 129-31). This is illogical unless it is assumed that polygamous relationships do not begin with mutual consent of the partners. Moreover, the author sometimes draws unnecessary conclusions. For example, after pointing out that polygamy was practiced in ancient Israel till the post-exilic period, he still argues that the incidence of polygamy was rare in ancient Israel (p.150).

All in all, Igenozu has provided a fresh assessment of biblical views on marriage, monogamy and polygamy, and has also taken account of the problems confronting the Church in Africa on these issues. Although not all questions pertaining to the practice of polygamy among African Christians have been answered, yet the author has put forward enough biblical evidence for the continuing debate on polygamy in African churches. The book is strongly recommended to theologians, church leaders, scholars of African Christianity and Anthropology, and those seeking an understanding of the marriage system in Africa.

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Oyeronke Olajubu, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere*. Albany [NY]: State University of New York Press, 2003, 172 pp., ISBN 0-7914-5886-5, pbk, no price stated.

*The book*

This book is informed by the continuing engagement of gender studies with religion. It is based largely on the author's doctoral thesis. Oyeronke Olajubu examines in it the interplay of gender and power relations in the Yoruba society, and further discusses the implication of this interplay for women's roles in Yo-

Yoruba indigenous and Christian traditions. Written from a feminist perspective, the book attempts a re-interpretation of traditional scholarly sources on women's role and status in the religious traditions with the intention of addressing the marginality of women previously entrenched through patriarchal perspectives. The central thesis of the book is that an analysis of past and present sources shows that women play central and vital roles in both indigenous Yoruba religion and Christianity.

The author draws on a wide range of oral sources to provide historical, phenomenological and ethnographic interpretations of the status and roles of women in the Yoruba religious sphere. Among these sources are cosmological myths and cultic rituals. The author argues that in traditional Yoruba religion, gender construction is fluid and is modulated by age, personal achievements, ritual contexts, and other circumstances. Specifically, female roles in Yoruba religion are often negotiated and manipulated as the female moves from being a daughter to a wife and then to a mother, and possibly a widow. She also suggests that the myths about Yoruba goddesses such as Osun (the goddess of waters), Oya (the goddess of wind and storms), and Otin (the goddess of defence), reflect various models of women empowerment and active participation in rituals. These instances indicate that both males and females play complementary roles in traditional Yoruba society.

Furthermore, various Christian traditions in Yorubaland have wrestled with gender relations because women constitute a large proportion of their membership. The western mission-founded churches such as the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church, are generally male-dominated, hence offered little room to women for participation and access to leadership. For example, mission education that was used in the 19th and early 20th centuries as tools for conversion, largely filled up the curriculum of the 'girls only' schools with domestic science thereby denying professional opportunities to women. Contrariwise, the Aladura churches (established from the 1920s by Africans principally to contextualise the Christian message within the African context) created more avenues for participation and leadership for women. For example, there are specific leadership roles for women, some women were and are founders and leaders of Aladura churches, while the gifts of healing and prophesy provide space for women's active participation and leadership in ritual settings. The Pentecostal and Charismatic churches founded mostly from the 1970s with a modern elitist ethos are ambivalent regarding the status and roles of women. Although there are no prohibitions based on anatomy, yet some Pentecostal churches relegate women to the background while others provide equal access to leadership. This paradox arose because a fusion of selective biblical and Yoruba cultural paradigms operates in these churches.

*Appreciation*

Although Olajubu's methodology of selective interpretation of oral sources could be questioned, yet she is able to produce much in-depth analysis. The selective approach to sources, however, does present a problem of generalisation in certain parts of the author's conclusions. One key issue that requires further reflection is why group solidarity offers women more active participation in religious traditions, while they are denied similar participation as individuals. Lastly, the provision of a map of Nigeria specifying some towns mentioned would have been helpful to the readers.

In brief, Olajubu has made an in-depth study of oral sources pertaining to gender and power relations within Yoruba religion and culture. Moreover, her book provides an opportunity to consider Yoruba gender practices in various socio-historical contexts. Certainly, Olajubu has provided enough evidence for a feminist interpretation of ethnographic data, and consequently she has boldly rejected the marginalisation of women in the Yoruba religious sphere. Definitely, the book is a remarkable investigation into gender relations in an African context. The book is highly recommended to scholars of African Religion, Religious Studies, Anthropology, and those seeking an understanding of Yoruba society and religion.

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## BEYOND 'PRIMITIVISM': 'INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS'

Jacob Kehinde Olupona (ed.) 2004, *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity*. New York, etc.: Routledge, xiv + 348 pp., illustrations, index, ISBN 0-415-27319-6 (hbk); 0-415-27320-X (pbk).

Graham Harvey (ed.) 2000, *Indigenous Religions: A Companion*. London, etc.: Cassell, XII+302 pp., integrated bibliography; indices of Subjects, Authors, Nations, Peoples and Groups, ISBN 0-304-70448-2, pbk

Karen Ralls-MacLeod & Graham Harvey (eds.) 2000, *Indigenous Religious Musics*. Aldershot, etc.: Ashgate, XI+225 pp., list of figures & music examples, [list of] recordings, CD Information, index, CD (= SOAS Musicology Series), ISBN 0-7546-0249-4 (hbk).

Graham Harvey (ed.) 2002, *Readings in Indigenous Religions*. London, etc.: Continuum, X+371 pp., integrated bibliography; indices of Subjects, Authors, Nations, Peoples and Groups; ISBN 0-8264-5101-2 (pbk).

*'Indigenous Religions'*

These four publications are about 'indigenous religions'. They embody an important semantic shift in acceptable scholarly terminology. While earlier designations of the native religions of pre-colonial societies of Africa and elsewhere as 'savage' or 'primitive' have long been abandoned as denigrating because they are replete with Western ethnocentric cultural and scholarly biases, the ameliorations of the latter as 'primal' or 'archaic' come in for similar criticism now, as do even the seemingly neutral 'traditional' and 'preliterate'.

These four volumes are about three issues: (1) methodology as demanding reflexivity: scholars must 'bend back' upon themselves to examine their *etic* (analytical) categories as culture-bound concepts in order to constantly purge Western(-Christian) biases and semantic and conceptual *emic* limitations from them; (2) the peculiar traits distinguishing 'indigenous religions' – though immensely diverse – as a group from the other religions of humankind, more especially from Christianity and the other major religions of the 'axial age', the study of which has so far virtually exclusively determined scholarly notions of 'religion'; and (3) to particularise and contextualise the study of indigenous (or 'ethnic') religions and follow up their numerous rapid and incisive transformations till this very moment: the post-modern era of population explosion, ecological devastation, generalised literacy, the worldwide web, globalisation, Huntington's 'clash of civilisations', and the rise of the 'First Nations' uniting into the Fourth World Movement to reclaim their 'unceded' territories and sovereignty from e.g. the USA.

*Beyond primitivism*

This volume contains twenty-two papers delivered at a conference at UC-Davis in March 1996, and a preface and introduction by Jacob Olupona, organiser of the conference and editor of the book. He emphasises that there is no single modernity, that of the colonising and Christianising, now globalising and secularising, West. There are numerous modernities, e.g. those of the indigenous peoples throughout the world which respond in their own way to the challenges and opportunities of the multi-faceted modern era. It is, he argues, even a key characteristic of modernity to be 'multiple', as is apparent both from the many different analyses of it by scholars, several of which are summarised by him, and from the numerous different ways in which distinct cultures adopt, adapt, synthesise or resist it (1-7). The volume contains four methodological papers, and eighteen ethnographic ones.

In the first of the methodological papers, Naomi Janowitz finds the root of the biases in modern theories on ritual as 'exotic, bizarre, nonsensical, or absurd' (23) in the pagano-papist legacy of Protestantism. It bequeathed its virulent anti-ritualism to nearly all theories about ritual from Tylor to Tambiah, on



the basis of the theological dichotomy of 'true religion' *versus* 'false magic' which Protestants read into the Hebrew bible. Janowitz re-examines Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern scapegoat rituals in order to demonstrate that the Jews did not make good Protestants, for they performed them in ways that were no different from Hittite and Babylonian scapegoat rituals, and none considered these rituals as 'magic'. The second paper, by Armin W. Geertz, is in my view the focal article of this volume. It examines the history of 'primitivist' concepts in Western scholarship on indigenous religions. Geertz does not limit that history to the 'social Darwinism' of Victorian scholars like Müller, Spencer and Tylor, who qualified indigenous religions as 'savage' and 'primitive' (48-49). He shows that 'primitivism' had both a long prehistory in European and American thought (38-46), and continues till this present day in the several forms of modern and post-modern primitivism: in modern art (e.g. Picasso), the hippie movement, Eliade and Turner at the University of Chicago, the neo-shamanism of anthropologists turned healers like Castenada, Harner, and Stoller, and feminist and artistic primitivisms (52-61). Geertz's inclusion of Eliade and Turner among the 'primitivists' provoked heated discussion throughout the conference (9). In the third paper, David Chidester discusses the contribution of Max Müller to 'imperial comparative religion' by examining his correspondence with the South African scholars Bleek and Callaway. In the fourth paper, Charles Long takes the concept of the (religions of the) 'axial age' of Karl Jaspers to task as excluding 'the vision of the vanquished' and providing an ideological justification for Western hegemony.

Among the papers discussing single indigenous religions, it is perhaps no surprise that only one indigenous religion in Europe is discussed: that of the Saami in the northern-most parts of Scandinavia, who suffered centuries of persecution as sorcerers and devil-worshippers from the Christian clergy. Yet, says Rydving, the most important opposition was not between Saamis and Christian clergymen, but between the Saami themselves. He distinguishes five positions among them: traditional activists; passive traditionalists, neutralists, passive Christians, and Christian activists (105-106). But it does come as a surprise that this volume contains only one discussion of an African indigenous religion: Flora Kaplan's of sacrifice in Benin religion (181-199). She emphasises 'the Benin neither eschew modernity nor abandon tradition' (192). Church attendance is popular, but it is combined with some form of ancestor worship at home and with participation in the ritual life of the Palace, for the Oba 'constitutes the living symbol of Benin ethnic identity' (192). Seven papers, however, are devoted to indigenous religions in the Americas. One is Karen McCarthy Brown's on Vodou among the Haitian community of New York (164-171). Because of the 'relentlessly racist stereotypy' reviling Vodou as 'replete with fear, lust and violence' and to be feared, Haitians who serve Vodou spirits de-

veloped the habit of having a public and a private religion. McCarthy Brown notes especially the emergent transnationalist character of Vodou, 'parallel ceremonies being performed according to the same ritual calendar in Haiti and New York', and people, goods, and much money being exchanged between them (168-169). In addition, 'New York Vodou altars have begun to collect the spirits of Cuban Santería and the implements of healers from West Africa' (171). Three of the other six papers are John C. Mohawk's on the history of the intellectual oppression of indigenous religions by Europe (111-117); Alfredo Lopez Austin's on the guidelines for the study of Mesoamerican religions, in which sincere affiliation with the public Christian religion is combined with 'a refined polytheism [that] is easily adaptable to the Christian dualism' (122); and David Carrasco's paper on a Maya religious text which likewise shows that despite the 'radically asymmetrical relations of power' (130) and 'the crushing experience of European domination' (133), the Maya both sought 'the spiritual knowledge of the Spaniards' and kept 'their own religious habits alive' (135), e.g. in the rituals of the *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) (133-138). In the remaining three papers, Chris Jocks, himself a Mohawk, discusses recent clashes between Iroquois Longhouse people and Quebec provincial police in 1990 over a golf course to be built on their sacred burial grounds; Bruce Lincoln examines religious conflicts in twentieth century Guatemala; and Helen McCarthy reports on the conflict over 'sacred mountains' in California between the original Indian inhabitants and New Age believers.

Of the remaining papers, six deal with indigenous religions in Asia. One examines modern developments in a Chinese indigenous religion, the cult of Earth Mother; another the response of popular religions to modernity in Japan; a third how the Ainu in the north of Japan have negotiated their religious identity in the past decades; a fourth how shamanism in Korea is now no longer viewed as 'superstition' but is respected as 'religion'; a fifth how the Mandaya of south-east Mindanao in the Philippines maintain their religion in the face of encroaching Christianity and Islam; and a sixth how the Vāddas (aboriginal 'forest people') of Sri Lanka were defamed by historians and anthropologists as 'wild men' but actually worshipped the same guardian gods as the Sinhala Buddhists and Tamil Hindus and have vanished as a people by being drawn into hegemonic Sinhala Buddhism. Lastly, three papers deal with developments in Oceania, one discussing cargo cults in Melanesia; another how Christianity and indigenous religions 'merge' in Papua New Guinea; and the third that the Hawaiian *lei* (necklace of flowers) is actually an 'invention of tradition' by white settlers.

Despite the paucity of material on Africa, the book is greatly recommended, for it provides much food for thought on methodology and many models for the study of how indigenous religions fare in Africa's modernity.

*Indigenous religions and their musics*

The indigenous religions of Africa are much better represented in the two volumes edited by Graham Harvey, and the musicological volume which Karen Ralls-MacLeod and he edited. In *Indigenous Religions: A Companion*, five of the sixteen chapters respect sub-Saharan Africa. In one, Fiona Bowie discusses the belief in witchcraft and healing among the Bangwa of Cameroon; in another, Platvoet examines an account of spirit possession among the Takyiman Bono of the Gold Coast, now Ghana, by Rattray; in a third, Berel Dov Lerner argues that Mary Douglas was right in dumping the myth of primitive piety, and Evans-Pritchard correct in representing the Azande as a secular, barely religious society; in a fourth, Olu Taiwo discusses the 'ontology' of the return-beat in Yoruba music; and in a fifth, Jim Cox examines the characteristics of indigenous religions in modern Zimbabwe.

In the musicological volume, three of the ten contributions are about music in African indigenous religions. Malcolm Floyd discusses its role in Maasai religion; Peter R. Cooke presents a magnificent case study, and recording of the music on the CD-Rom that goes with the book, of possession and healing in Busoga, Eastern Uganda; and Platvoet examines the 'curing dances' of the San in the Kalahari of Namibia and Botswana, in which they chase off God and the deceased as unwanted aliens and source of evil.

In *Readings in Indigenous Religions*, published to 'widen and deepen debates initiated or developed in *Indigenous Religions: A Companion*' and to improve methodologies (1), sixteen texts are included which Harvey considers 'classic' (1) despite their very recent dates of publication: only one dates from 1960; three from the 1980s; and the other twelve are all published between 1992 and 2001. Three deal with indigenous religions in Africa. One is Margaret Thompson Drewal 1992 chapter, 'The Ontological Journey', from her book *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency* (Indiana University Press), in which she examines Yoruba funeral rituals as an 'ontological journey' and criticises Eliade's notion of cyclical time. The other is Edith Turner's personal narrative of her part as a healer in a 1985 spirit possession, in which she, having been 'medicated', saw the *ihamba* (hunter spirit), which was to be exorcised from a patient, 'with my own eyes emerge out of the flesh of her back [as] a large grey blob about six inches across, opaque and something between solid and smoke' (162) and dissolve, while the main healer 'captured' it as a tooth (also *ihamba*) in a can. Edith Turner, widow of Victor Turner, pleads for an 'anthropology of experience'. She intends to engage in a 'dialogue with other anthropologists who have had such experiences in order to build up a reliable body of data on spirits' (164) as actually existing and medicines as actually working (165). The

third is another article by Berel Dov Lerner, in which he makes the same point as in his contribution to the earlier volume.

For lack of space, I must desist from indicating the wide range of studies of indigenous religions outside Africa. They too offer a wide variety of models, methodologies, and incite much debate, on how to study them in their most recent developments and contexts, and so are of great interest to scholars of religions, in Africa and elsewhere. But I also have reservations, for Harvey, as editor, clearly also pursues his own agenda. He has a partisan interest in indigenous religions and modern neo-paganism. His purpose is to 'aid and abet' dialogue with them, promote 'joyous participation' in them, and engagement with the struggle of the First Nations of the Fourth World movement. Though many of the points he makes are historically and methodologically correct, he clearly pushes the 'new primitivist' approaches which Armin Geertz criticised.

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