

Elom Dovlo
AASR-President
University of Ghana

FROM THE CHAIR

On behalf of the new team of executives, I wish to thank you for the confidence reposed in nominating and electing us into office as the new leaders of the AASR. I particularly wish to register appreciation to the team that is handing over to us, led by Prof. Jacob Olupona, for their pioneering work in setting up the AASR and building it up as an international organisation. Many of them will remain active in the leadership and organization of the Association. We are indeed grateful to them for accepting to do so.

We are also proud that some former leaders of the AASR are now the top executive of the International Association for the History of Religions, IAHR. We congratulate Prof. Rosalind Hackett and Prof. Gerrie ter Haar on their election respectively as President and Vice President of the IAHR. We wish them very successful tenures. We are indeed glad, judging from the email traffic from them that they are retaining a strong and active interest in the AASR.

The various elections took place in Tokyo. We are grateful to Prof. Gerrie ter Haar, Prof. Masaru Ikezawa and the Japanese Association for the Study of Religions for securing travel grants for many of us from Africa to be present at IAHR Congress. The Conference gave us the opportunity to hold our general meeting and confer on matters of the AASR. It is my hope that in the near future the AASR will be able to hold its own Congress in addition to meeting during IAHR Congress.

As reported by the Secretary General, Dr. Afe Adogame, in this issue, the new executive held its maiden meeting in Tokyo. Some of our plans and visions for the AASR have been recorded by him in his report. Our vision is that the Association will expand both in Africa and abroad beyond its current English-speaking domain. This is only possible if we are able to generate commitment through frequent and relevant activities of national and regional associations and networking between different regional bodies. We are happy that plans to set up a website are far advanced under the leadership of Dr. Jan Platvoet, and thank him and all those working towards effective communication and information flow to and from members through the Internet.

Indeed, I look forward to working with such a formidable team of executives, new and old. We all look forward to your support through your active involvement at both local and global levels. Do pass on suggestions, advice and caution that would help us to further develop and make the AASR enrich the study of the religions of Africa and her Diaspora.

AASR GENERAL MEETING

James Cox
ASSR General Secretary
University of Edinburgh

MINUTES OF THE AASR GENERAL MEETING 26 MARCH 2005, TAKANAWA PRINCE HOTEL, SHINAGAWA, TOKYO, JAPAN

Those Present: Girishou M Kirika (Kenyatta University), Joed Ehrlich (Brill Publishers), Mukengeshayi Matata (Oriens Institute for Religious Research in Japan), Kaumba Lufunda (University of Lubumashi, DRC), Elom Dovlo (University of Ghana, Legon), Afe Adogame (University of Bayreuth), T. Jack Thompson (University of Edinburgh), Funso Afolayan (University of New Hampshire), Julius Adekunle (Monmouth University, New Jersey), Philomena N. Mwaura (Kenyatta University), Felix Ulombe Kaputu (University of Lubumashi, DRC), Newton Kahumbi (Kenyatta University), Ruth Muthei (Kenyatta University), Constance Shisanya (Kenyatta University), Danoye Oguntola Laguda (Lagos State University), Paul Gifford (School of Oriental and African Studies, London), P. Pratap Kumar (University of Kwazulu Natal), Oyeronke Olajubu (University of Ilorin, Nigeria), Kathleen O'Brien Wicker (Scripps College, Claremont, USA), Rosalind I. J. Hackett (University of Tennessee), Rebecca Ganusah (University of Ghana, Legon), Amidu Sanni (Lagos State University, Nigeria), Abamfo Atiemo (University of Ghana, Legon), Thillay Naidoo (University of Kwazulu Natal), Johannes Erasmus (University of Stellenbosch), Selaelo Thias Kgatla (University of Limpopo), Ignatius Swart (University of Stellenbosch), Musa A. B. Gaiya (University of Jos), Adam K. arap Chepkwony (Moi University), Ulrich Berner (University of Bayreuth) Jacob Olupona (University of California, Davis), Grace Wamue (Kenyatta University), James Cox (University of Edinburgh), Teresia Hinga (DePaul University), Gerrie ter Haar (Institute of Social Studies, The Hague).

Welcome

The President, Prof. Jacob Olupona, called the meeting to order at 7:37 pm. He welcomed all those present.

Apologies

Apologies had been received from Dr Jan Platvoet, Dr Umar Danfulani and Prof. Matthews Ojo.

Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting, held 6 February 2004 in Legon, Ghana, were printed in the AASR Bulletin 21 (May 2004). The Minutes were approved as printed.

Matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda

The President reported on the Ford Foundation Project. He indicated that a preliminary proposal had been submitted, but that the Ford Foundation had asked for revisions and clarifications. This is still in progress and the proposal has not yet been re-submitted.

President's report

Prof. Olupona referred to the past thirteen years that he has served as President of the AASR, since its founding in 1992, as a period of development and growth of the Association. He drew specific attention to the founding of the East African Association for the Study of Religions in 1999 and to further developments in West and Southern Africa. In particular, he noted that several books have been published in Nigeria with the encouragement of Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions and the African Association for the Study of Religions. He also drew attention to the very successful conference held in Ghana in February 2004. Although the AASR has been limited financially and has had certain geographical constraints, the President drew attention to the success of the Association through its conferences, publications and scholarly Bulletin. He expressed a warm thanks to the Association for its support over the past thirteen years and expressed his firm support for it in the years ahead.

Vice-President's report

Dr Grace Wamue, the AASR Vice-President, reported that she had been able to attend the West African Regional Conference in Ghana as a representative of the East African Region and also as a member of the AASR Executive Committee. She indicated that the strong relationships among the African regions were vital for the association. She also noted that the publication of the volume from the first AASR Conference in Africa, held in Kenya in 1999, had been published by Acton Press under the title, *Religions in Eastern Africa under Globalization*. Dr Wamue expressed thanks to Dr Jan Platvoet, Prof. Jesse Mu-

gambi and the Prince Claus Fund in The Netherlands for making this publication possible. She stated that she had enjoyed working with the previous Executive and looked forward to continuing the efforts of the AASR in the years ahead.

General Secretary's report

Dr James Cox began his report by drawing the attention of the meeting to the main purposes of the AASR as stated in its Constitution: 1) to promote the academic study of religions in Africa and 2) the study of the religions of Africa more generally through the international collaboration of all scholars whose research has a bearing on the subject. The Secretary suggested that these two aims had been held at the forefront of the work of the Association since its founding through regional conferences, publications and the AASR Bulletin. He drew particular attention to the growth and development of the Bulletin, particularly to its increasing status as an academic publication. This had been signalled by the change of name from a Newsletter to a Bulletin, to indicate that it includes not only relevant announcements, but substantial articles, comments and book reviews. The Secretary paid tribute to the work of the Bulletin Editors, Dr Jan Platvoet and Prof. Matthews Ojo, for the work they had accomplished in keeping the Bulletin operating, and to the Regional Representatives for their efforts in distributing the Bulletin. The Secretary expressed particular gratitude to the President, Professor Jacob Olupona, for his support and guidance of the AASR over the past thirteen years. (The meeting expressed its appreciation with applause.) Finally, Dr Cox drew attention to the continued challenges in the regions where lines of communications often were difficult, various monetary systems were in operation and the sheer problems of transportation could be overwhelming. He reiterated his suggestion of previous meetings that national representatives should be chosen to co-ordinate activities in specific countries and to report to the regional representative. Finally, he thanked the Association for the opportunity to serve it as its Secretary.

Treasurer's report

The Treasurer, Dr James Cox, indicated that he had received a report from the European Regional Representative, Prof. Gerrie ter Haar, but that he had received no other reports. He suggested that recent discussions with the outgoing North American Regional Representative, Prof. Teresia Hinga, and the incoming North American Representative, Prof. Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, were addressing the North American situation and that proposals would be forthcoming through the new Executive Committee. Dr Cox also noted that plans were under discussion now for fees within the African regions through the appointment of national representatives. Dr Cox presented the 2003-2004 figures from Europe to the meeting as follows:

(all figures in euros)	
Balance as of 31-12-02	2.354.57
Income from 1-1-03 to 31-12-03	<u>1.910.13</u> +
	4.264.70
Amount expended 1-1-03 to 31-12-03	<u>808.55</u> -
Balance as of 31-12-03	3.456.15
Breakdown of accounts	
Savings account	3.250.00
Current account	<u>146,52</u> +
	3.396.52
Breakdown of Income	
Membership fees	1,760.13
Newsletter Subscriptions	<u>150.00</u> +
	1.910.13
Breakdown of Expenses	
Production of Bulletin 18 and 19	777.75
Bank Charges	<u>30.80</u> +
	808.55

Reports from the Regional Representatives

East Africa: Prof. Adam Chepkwony reported that the organisation of the AASR in East Africa had been slower than he would have liked, but that the Bulletin was being distributed. He noted, however, that, although he had hoped to introduce the payment of membership fees in the region, this had not occurred yet. As a result, he had no funds to distribute the Bulletin apart from his own resources. Outreach into East African countries, other than Kenya, had been minimal.

Southern Africa: There was no official representative present from Southern Africa, although Dr Thillay Naidoo reported that the Association for the Study of Religions in Southern Africa (ASRSA) had been meeting regularly. Dr Cox reported that no further progress had been made on coordinating communication between the AASR Regional Representative and the national representatives that had been named earlier.

West Africa: There was no official representative present from West Africa. Prof. Olupona reported that he had made several trips to Nigeria and progress was being made in establishing communication across the region. Several members present from Nigeria indicated that there had been difficulties distributing the Bulletin in some parts of the country. No reports of problems were registered from members from Ghana.

Europe: Prof. Gerrie ter Haar reported that the European members of the AASR had been paying their membership dues faithfully. This had made it possible for the AASR to provide a number of bursaries for Africans to attend

the IAHR Congress in Tokyo. She indicated that the African participation in the Congress as a whole had been remarkable. The European Region had also been funding the Bulletin.

North America. Prof. Teresia Hinga noted that the North American Region had received funds but had been limited by not having a proper bank account for transmission of the funds. She indicated that this problem was being addressed. A drive for new members was also being organised.

The President thanked the Regional Representatives for their hard work over the past years.

Report of the Bulletin Editors

The General Secretary reported that he had received an email from Dr Jan Platvoet who indicated that efforts had been made to have AASR Bulletin 22 produced in Nigeria, but this had failed because of problems in transferring in time the funds for its production in Nigeria to Prof. Matthews Ojo. As soon as that has been arranged properly, however, the production and shipment of the AASR Bulletin will be transferred to Ile-Ife. He had also suggested that that new Executive Committee consider the appointment of an Internet Officer, who may or may not be different from the current Bulletin Editors.

Election of Officers

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Prof. Ulrich Berner noted that the nominations for officers had been printed in the AASR Bulletin 21 (May 2004). Members of the Nominating Committee included himself, Dr Oyeronke Olajubu and Dr Jan Platvoet. In accordance with the Constitution, counter-candidates could be sent to the Bulletin Editor within six months, or in this case, by 15 November 2004. Prof. Berner reported that no counter-candidates had been proposed. He then listed those who had been nominated and who were thereby elected for the period 2005-2010:

- President: Prof. Elom Dovlo
- Vice-President: Dr Grace Wamue
- General Secretary: Dr Afe Adogame
- Treasurer: Dr James Cox
- Representatives from the Regions:
 - = East Africa: Prof. Adam arap Chepkwony
 - = Southern Africa: Prof. Jannie Smit
 - = West Africa: Prof. Matthews Ojo
 - = Europe: Dr Henk van Rinsum
 - = North America: Dr Kathleen O'Brien Wicker
- Publications Officer: Pending
- AASR Bulletin Editors: Dr Jan Platvoet and Prof. Matthews Ojo

The President, Professor Olupona, thanked the Nominating Committee for its work and in the absence of further candidates accepted the Report and declared those listed elected as the new Executive Committee of the African Association for the Study of Religions for the period 2005 to 2010. The President invited Prof. Elom Dovlo, the newly elected President to address the meeting. Prof. Dovlo indicated that he was extremely honoured to have been elected President and noted with gratitude the work of the previous President and the outgoing Executive Committee. He indicated that there remain challenges to be faced by the Association which the new Executive Committee will be addressing. He said that he hoped that the members of the new Executive Committee that were present at the IAHR Congress would meet before the Congress concluded.

Any Other Business

There was no further business.

Date of the next meeting

Prof. Olupona indicated that the new Executive Committee would be exploring another conference in Africa between the conclusion of the IAHR Tokyo Congress and the next IAHR Congress in 2010 at which the a General Meeting would be held. Professor Olupona invited the members to attend the Reception hosted by the AASR following the General Meeting and declared the meeting closed at 8:35 pm.



AASR EXECUTIVE 2005-2010

During the 19th IAHR congress at Tokyo, Japan, from 24 to 30 March 2005, the AASR members participating in that congress met to elect a new AASR Executive for the period 2005-2010. The AASR Bulletin Co-Editors have requested that the officers of the new AASR-Executive introduce themselves to the AASR members by a brief bio-bibliography and a 'mission statement' setting out what they aim to achieve in the particular office entrusted to them for the AASR in the coming five years.

AASR President

Prof. Elom Dovlo, a Ghanaian, is the new AASR President. Prof. Dovlo studied in the University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana, in which he received the B.A. Honours in 1976, and the University of Lancaster, England, where he was awarded M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in respectively 1979 and 1983. Since 1983, he has been a lecturer in the Department for the Study of Religions in the University of Ghana, where he rose to become an Associate Professor of Religion in 2000. He was Head of the Department from 1998 to 2000 and is currently Vice-Dean of Arts. In addition, he is an adjunct lecturer in the African Christianity Programme jointly hosted by Akrofi-Christaller Center for Mission Studies & Applied Theology, Akropong, Ghana and the University of Pietermaritzburg, Natal, South Africa. Dovlo's fields of research include the Comparative History of Religions, New Religious Movements, Patterns of Christian Ministry in Africa, Religion in the African Diaspora, and Religion in Public Life. He has written and published extensively in these areas. Prof. Dovlo has received a number of fellowships including the Japan foundation Fellowship with residency at Komazawa University, Tokyo, Japan; the African Humanities Institute Fellowship, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, USA; IIMO at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands; and so on.

He writes: 'I am grateful for the opportunity to lead the new team of executives. We look forward to expanding the membership of the AASR to non-English speaking countries worldwide. I will also work towards increasing the collaboration between colleagues from different countries and regions through joint research, projects and publications. I will encourage colleagues in Africa especially to explore local sources for funding their activities. This will be possible when some of our activities are directed to the public domain. National associations and members should therefore, apart from participating in regular academic conferences, also become relevant to their society through workshops and public/open lectures that address the state of religion in their countries and region. I hope we will be able to break new grounds and dimensions in the

study of religion in Africa by formulating and applying methods that allow African systems of epistemology into our discourse. I hope that during our tenure, the new levels of networking envisaged will unite members and continue to build up the membership and international status of the AASR’.

AASR Vice President

Dr. Grace Nyatugah Wamue hails from Kenya. She is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya. She is currently seconded as administrator to the Directorate of Self-Sponsored Programs as a deputy director in the same University. Her 1999 Ph.D is on the subject of Gender, Religion and African Culture, in which field she has numerous other publications. She teaches the same subject at Kenyatta University and has done extensive research on African Religion and Culture, especially on its impact on contemporary issues, in particular the *Mungiki* movement in Kenya. Currently, she is working on African indigenous rituals and symbols of peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction. Besides participating in both local and international academic forums, she is a member of several organizations that enhance gender and religion in Africa, such as the Eastern African Association for the Study of Religions (EAASR), of which she is the President; the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians; the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT); African Women in Research and Development (AAWORD); Third World Organization for Women in Science (TWOWS); and the Association of Women in Science and Engineering (AWSE).

She is grateful to the members of AASR for giving her yet another opportunity to serve in the capacity of Vice President. She hopes that her energy, intellect and time will be utilized to the utmost for the time she is in this office. As Vice President, her vision for AASR is to strengthen the Association through research, networking and sharing news and views. Her primary objective is to enhance the growth of its members intellectually both within and outside Africa. She would like to work as much as possible towards a broader participation in the AASR in the un-utilized regions of our continent. Finally, while congratulating the in-coming committee, she takes this opportunity to acknowledge the out-going executive for the teamwork spirit it demonstrated in the last five years. This would not have been achieved without the wise leadership and guidance of the out-going President, Professor Jacob Olupona.

AASR General Secretary

Dr. Afe Adogame is a Nigerian who received his PhD in History of Religions from Bayreuth University, Germany, in 1998. Since 2000, he has been Research & Teaching Fellow in the Department for the Study of Religion and Institute of African Studies of Bayreuth University. His special fields of teaching and research include: African Religions; African Instituted Churches, Pente-

costal/Charismatic Movements; African Diasporic Religions; Religion, Migration and Globalization; New Religious Movements; and Methods and Theory in the Study of Religion. He received a number of awards including as a Senior Fellow at the Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions (2003/04). He is a member of several other professional associations including Nigerian Association for the Study of Religion; African Studies Association; American Academy of Religion; British Association for the Study of Religions; German Association for the History of Religions; and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.

He wishes to thank the AASR for appointing him to the position of General Secretary. He deems it indeed a great honour to serve the organization in this capacity. AASR would need to overhaul its membership structure and expand Africa-wide geographically. He looks forward to an AASR that will be centrally concerned with charting new intellectual paths, creating and providing academic opportunities particularly for young African scholars at local and global levels. It is imperative on AASR to harness all resources at its disposal to stimulating network, information flow, intellectual exchanges and collaboration in a way that will bridge the gulf between scholars, researchers and institutions within and beyond the continent. His interest is also to pursue a slight shift from a conference-driven to a project-driven association, in a way that will evince its public role and relevance in a developing continent. He is confident that it will be possible to achieve these goals with the team-work disposition of the new AASR Executive and the support of the AASR members.

AASR Treasurer

James L Cox, Treasurer of the AASR, is Reader in Religious Studies and Head of the Religious Studies Subject Area in the University of Edinburgh. From 1993 to 1998, he directed the African Christianity Project in the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World in the University of Edinburgh. His prior academic posts have been in Westminster College, Oxford, the University of Zimbabwe and Alaska Pacific University. He has published broadly in the fields of indigenous religions and methodologies in the studies of religion. Currently, he is President of the British Association for the Study of Religions, and from 2000 to 2005 served as General Secretary and Treasurer of the AASR. He is a founding member of the AASR and served as the local organiser of the IAHR Regional Conference from 10 to 13 September 1992 at the University of Zimbabwe, Harare, at which the AASR was founded.

The Treasurer's post over the next five years will become increasingly important as the various regions become organised and begin collecting membership dues. The North American members plan to recruit new members and organise funds. This will complement the already active programme existing in Europe. Within Africa, each region is developing plans to collect membership fees to assist with dissemination of the AASR Bulletin and to sponsor projects

within the regions. Problems of differing currencies continue to plague these efforts, and it is likely that the regional co-ordinators will work with national representatives to make collection of local fees possible. The role of the Treasurer is not to hold funds, but to receive reports from the regions and convey these in a co-ordinated fashion to the Executive Committee and to the members at large. This will require a close working relationship with all members of the Executive Committee, but particularly with the General Secretary, the Regional Representatives, the Bulletin Editors and the new Website Manager.

AASR Representative for East Africa

Prof. Adam Kiplangat arap Chepkwony is a Kenyan and currently an Associate Professor of Religion at Moi University in Kenya. He did his undergraduate work at Houghton College, Houghton, New York, where he obtained his BA degree in 1976. For a Master degree in Religion, he went to Asbury Theological Seminary and graduated in 1978. Prof. arap Chepkwony's teaching career began in 1978 as a teacher in a secondary school. In 1981 he did a one year Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. Thereafter he taught at a Teacher Training Institution from 1981 to 1989, when he was appointed a Tutorial fellow at Moi University, Department of Religion. At Moi University he has taught and supervised students in the area of Comparative Religion with special emphasis on African Religion. In 1997, he graduated with Doctor of Philosophy degree in Religion from Moi University. He also has a Higher Diploma certificate in Psychological Counseling which he obtained in 2003. He served as the Head of Department from 1997 to 2003 and currently as an External Examiner of Makerere University in Uganda. He has published several articles in journals and chapters in books as well as entries in encyclopedia. He is presently the chairperson of Dialogue in Religion and Science Group at Moi University, Kenya; the contact person of African Association of the Study of Religions, and the Chair of Ecumenical Symposium of Eastern African Theologians.

AASR Representative for Southern Africa

Prof. Johannes (Jannie) A. Smit is Professor of Religion and Social Transformation in the School of Religion and Culture, University of Durban-Westville, South Africa. He obtained his BA, BTh, Lic.Theol and MTh at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, in respectively 1979, 1982, 1983 and 1987; and D.Litt at the University of Durban-Westville in 2001. He teaches Religious Literature, Culture and Social Transformation; and Social Systems Hermeneutics. His fields of research include South African Source Texts; Southern African Religion; and Culture Encyclopaedia. He is a member of the New Testament Society of South Africa (NTSSA) and Secretary of its Subgroup Hermeneutics; SAVAL (& ICLA); and the Association for the Study of Religions in Southern Africa (ASRSA); and Editor of the journal *Alternation: International Journal*

for the *Study of Southern African Literature and Languages*. His publications include: 2001, (with Johan van Wyk), 'Literary Studies in Post-apartheid South Africa', in Abebe Zegeye & Robert Krieger (eds.), *Culture in the New South Africa after Apartheid: Volume 2* (Cape Town: Kwela Books & History on Line); 2001, 'The Language of the Other', in *Alternation* 8, 2: 70-106; 1999 (with Pitika Ntuli), 'Speaking Truth to Power: A Challenge to South African Intellectuals' in *Alternation* 6,1: 1-20.¹ Prof. Smit consented to take over as AASR Representative in 2001, when Prof. Isabel Apawo Phiri, Director of the Centre for Constructive Theology, School of Religion & Theology, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, resigned as AASR Representative for Southern Africa. In 2004, Prof. Smit agreed to serve also as such, together with local representatives in Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Zambia, for the period 2005 to 2010.

AASR Representative for West Africa

Prof. Matthews A. Ojo received his B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria) in 1979 and 1981 respectively, and his Ph.D. degree from the University of London in 1987. He has been teaching in the Department of Religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University since 1982, and since 2003 he has been Head of the Department. He is also an adjunct professor in the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho, Nigeria. His fields of teaching and research include: Christianity in Africa; New Religious Movements; History & Sociology of Christian Missions; Religion and Politics in Nigeria; and Religion and the Media in Africa. He has received a number of fellowships: to the University of Edinburgh, Scotland; Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, USA; and School of Oriental and African Studies, London. In 2002, he was a Visiting Professor to the Harvard University Divinity School, Cambridge, USA. Prof. Ojo's association with the AASR dates back to 1994 when he attended the African Christianity conference in the University of Zimbabwe, as a nominated delegate of AASR. Further associations with Professors Olupona, Hackett, and Cox deepened his interest and brought active involvement in AASR. Prof. Ojo is glad to serve as the West African representative, and also as the AASR Bulletin Co-editor. He looks forward to putting in his best and work with other officers of AASR to achieve the goals of the association.

AASR Representative for Europe

Dr. Henk J. van Rinsum was trained as a historian and anthropologist at Utrecht University. He worked for many years at the International Office of Utrecht University which involved him in linkages with universities in Africa, in

¹ These bio-bibliographical data have been culled from the AASR Register of Members.

particular in Southern Africa. He defended his Ph.D.-thesis, *Slaves of Definition: In Quest of the Unbeliever and the Ignoramus*, in 2001 at Utrecht University. Its subject is the process of imposition of colonial identities on Africa, both in the field of religion and of academia. More recently, he has shifted his attention to the field of religion and philosophy and the challenges posed by recent developments in biotechnology, genomics, etc. One outcome is an article he and Godfrey Tangwa, from Cameroun, published in *Third World Quarterly* 25 (2004) 6: 1031-1043, on DNA, genomics and the challenges (and dangers) they pose for Africa. It is his considered view that research in religion and ethics, as developed in the Study of Religions, needs to be brought to bear too on (bio)technological research in universities and industry, especially in Africa in view of its numerous food and health problems. As AASR Representative for Europe, Henk van Rinsum will work towards ensuring that the AASR functions as a platform that enables African scholars to participate fully in the discussions that take place in academia on the role of religion and ethics in our globalising world.

AASR Representative for North America

Dr Kathleen O'Brien Wicker has recently retired from Scripps College at Claremont, California, USA, at which she taught for over thirty years in the areas of ancient classical studies, feminist biblical studies, African indigenous religions and African Christianity. Her research in Ghana has focused on Mami Water devotional practice, on which she published in a volume edited by Jacob Olupona, and another, with Kofi Asare Opoku, in a volume edited by Henry John Drewal. She and Professor Opoku have also published a study on a healing shrine of the Prophet of an indigenous Christian church in Ghana in a volume edited by Vincent Wimbush. She has also written articles on ancient traditions about Ethiopian Moses (ed. Vincent Wimbush) and a comparative study of conversion in Paul and two modern Africans (edited by Adela Yarbro Collins). Dr. Wicker's first goal as North American representative of AASR is to regularize the status of AASR-NA as a tax-exempt organization under the U.S. Tax Code. This process was begun under Jacob Olupona and Teresia Hinga and should be concluded soon. This status will enable the AASR in North America to be more effective in fundraising. Another goal is to increase AASR membership in North America, including expansion of membership to Canada and Mexico. A larger and more diverse membership will allow the AASR in North America to contribute more to the general projects sponsored by the AASR and to increase the vitality of its activities and programs. Thirdly, she plans to regularize and hopefully increase North American contributions to the AASR at large, in addition to undertaking fundraising efforts for the organization. Fourthly, she will work with members of both the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and its African Religions Group and with the African Studies Association (ASA) to hold annual meetings of the AASR-NA in conjunction with

their national meetings. It is highly likely that the bulk of North American AASR membership will come from those who already belong to these organizations. At AAR and ASA annual meetings, AASR-NA will conduct its business and try to develop strategies for strengthening both AASR-NA and the international organization. AASR-NA will also organize programs, including a lecture series related to African issues in the U.S., as was recommended by the Executive in Tokyo for all regions, to be delivered annually at our meetings. Dr. Wicker looks forward to working with the AASR Executive and also with regional representatives and members around the world to implement the visions of the founding members and to expand the effectiveness of the AASR globally.

AASR Bulletin Co-Editor

Prof. Matthews A. Ojo is also AASR-Representative for West Africa. For his bio-bibliography, see above.

AASR Bulletin Co-Editor

Dr. Jan G. Platvoet is a retired scholar of religions. He served as Senior Lecturer in the Comparative Study of Religions from 1991 to 2000 at Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands; and as Lecturer in the study of preliterate religions, especially those of Africa, in the KTU (Roman Catholic Theological University) and the Faculty of Theology of Utrecht University, in Utrecht, The Netherlands, from 1969 to 1991. His publications are mainly on the indigenous religions of the Akan of Ghana and the San of Namibia and Botswana; on the comparative study of spirit possession; on ritual studies; and on the history and methodology of the academic study of religions, in particular in The Netherlands. He was also seconded to the University of Zimbabwe, at Harare, Zimbabwe, between 1985 and 1989 for teaching courses on African Traditional Religions and on the history and method of the study of religions. Dr. J.L. Cox and he were commissioned by the International Association for the History of Religions to organise the Regional IAHR Conference at Harare in 1992 at which the AASR was founded. He served as AASR Vice President from 1995 to 2000, and as AASR Bulletin Co-Editor from 2000 to now. He also maintains the AASR Register of Members. He has recently been appointed AASR Webmaster and been commissioned to develop an AASR internet site. His goal in the period 2005-2010 is to see to it that the AASR Bulletin, while maintaining its present standard, is transferred to a new team of editors led by Prof. Matthews Ojo in order that he may take leave of this and any other assignment in the AASR Executive.

AASR Publication Officer

Prof. Jacob K. Olupona is Professor and Director of African American & Black Studies Program in the University of California-Davis, One Shields Avenue, 2201 Hart Hall, Davis, California 95616, USA. He is a founding member of the AASR and served as its President from 1995 to 2000, and from 2000 to 2005. He obtained a BA in 1975 from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and an MA and PhD in 1983 from Boston University, USA, and a D.D Hon. in 2000 from Edinburgh University, U.K. He teaches History of Religions; and African Religion, Christianity and Islam in Africa. His fields of research include: African Immigrant Religious Communities in America; Yoruba Religion in West Africa; Translation and Interpretation of Ifa Divination Texts; and Religion and Politics in Nigeria. He is a member of the Editorial Board for the revision of *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. He edited *African Spirituality: Volume 3 of the World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of Religious Quests* (New York: Crossroads Press, 2000); and *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity*. London/New York: Routledge, 2001.² In 2001, Prof. Olupona established the AASR Publications Bureau in Ibadan, Nigeria, directed by Prof. Josephy Kenny o.p., which aims to publish books on religion, culture and society by AASR-members and other Nigerians. In 2003, Andrew Igenzo's *Polygamy and the African Churches* was released as the first title in the 'Religion in Nigeria' series.³

AASR Internet Officer ad interim

Dr. Jan G. Platvoet. For his bio-bibliography, see under AASR Bulletin Co-Editors. Platvoet regards his office as AASR Web Master expressly as foundational, i.e. as only a commission to develop a multi-functional AASR internet site in the coming two years. After that development period, it is to be handed over to another AASR Web Master, preferably to one posted in a university which is willing to maintain it for the AASR. The AASR internet site he aims at should serve not only a modern means of informing the academic community at large and the general public about the AASR, but also as an efficient means of communication and cooperation between AASR members and between the officers of the AASR Executive. It should facilitate the exchange of ideas, projects in, and products of, the study of the religions of Africa by means of mailing lists, discussion forums, and an electronic library accessible to AASR members only. Fase 1 of the AASR internet site should be live by late 2005. If sufficient funds are available, it should be fully operational by late 2006. See also below the AASR General Secretary's report on the decisions taken by the new AASR Executive in respect of the AASR internet site.

² These bio-bibliographical data have been culled from the AASR Register of Members.

³ See AASR Newsletter 19 (May 2003) 32-33.

OTHER AASR NEWS

Afe Adogame
AASR General Secretary
University of Bayreuth, Germany

THE MAIDEN MEETING OF THE NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The newly constituted AASR Executive Committee wishes to thank the entire AASR membership for reposing their confidence in us to steer the AASR ship in the next five years. We are indeed grateful to the immediate past AASR Executive Committee for establishing a solid foundation to which we shall strive to build upon. We hope that with our team spirit together with your cooperation we shall be able to carry the association to greater heights. A maiden meeting of the new Executive Committee was held on the 28th March at the Takanawa Prince Hotel, Tokyo, Japan. Members shared a common view that the opportunity provided by the XIXth World Congress of the IAHR be used to already brainstorm on a plan of action how and in what way(s) to move AASR forward during our five-year tenure. Following a careful appraisal and review of **the** AASR scope of activities, achievements and perennial problems, the Executive Committee came up with the following suggestions and recommendations for the further advancement and realization of AASR's mission, vision and objectives.

Membership subscription

Finance was highlighted as one of the teething problems facing the association and thus the AASR Executive resolved on a total overhaul of the AASR membership structure. It commended the untiring efforts and financial commitments (annual dues) of European members of the association in general and Gerrie ter Haar as European Representative for the past thirteen years in particular, that has largely facilitated the production and distribution of the Bulletin since inception. It was noted also that two members based in Africa were sponsored to the IAHR Congress in Tokyo from these funds.

It was therefore resolved that the association must harness ways of strengthening its financial base in the new dispensation. One way is to change its loose subscription status in a way that makes all individual and institutional members, in Africa and beyond, to be financially responsible to the Associa-

tion. This is in compliance with Article 4(a) of AASR Constitution.⁴ In this regard, individual and institutional subscription will henceforth be introduced in Africa. It was suggested that a ‘flat rate’ membership fee, the equivalent of 10.00 USD, will be paid by all members in African Universities/Colleges/Institutes. This translates roughly to about 100,000 Ghanaian Cedis, 1,000 Kenyan Shillings and 1,500 Nigeria Naira for instance. The several AASR regions in Africa are expected to set an equivalent annual membership fee in their own contexts. Such dues will be kept locally by each region and may be used for regional programs, other incidental expenses or as to be directed by the International Executive Council. At the end of every year, regional representatives are expected to furnish the AASR Secretariat with financial reports in order that the AASR Treasurer may publish an annual financial report in the AASR Bulletin.

The introduction of ‘Student Membership and Dues’ was also given immediate approval. The rates to be introduced shall vary between students in Africa and those studying abroad. For instance, interested students in Europe, USA and elsewhere outside Africa would be expected to pay higher membership dues than their counterparts in African universities.

Membership Drive

In a bid towards expanding the membership of the Association, a comprehensive list of staff members of all departments and institutes of religious studies/theology, and other departments and institutes specialising in the religions of Africa, shall be compiled on a regional basis. A letter of introduction stating the Association’s aims and objectives, major activities, privileges of members shall be sent based on the extensive address list. A common membership application form shall be sent with the general letter to all. Local and regional academic associations shall be encouraged to seek affiliation to the AASR.

Consolidation of Regional AASRs in Africa

The meeting deliberated on the urgency to establish, expand and strengthen the geographical and membership scope of the association to include Central and Northern Africa. It also considered ways of consolidating other Regional AASRs (Southern, Western and Eastern Africa) in order to make them more effective and efficient. It was agreed that one strategy of consolidation should be a shift from the sole emphasis and reliance on regional representatives to the appointment and encouragement of national representatives to taking up complementary roles to that of regional representatives. It was noted that such col-

⁴ Article 4a reads as follows: ‘Members are required to pay an annual membership fee. Its amount will be fixed at the general meetings of the AASR. There are reduced rates for students and the non-salaried. The proceeds will be used to cover the costs of the Newsletter and to support the travel and publication funds for African scholars’.

laboration between regional and national representatives would go a long way in strengthening and ensuring the smooth running of the regional bodies.

Central Africa

Following preliminary consultations with three Central African participants at the AASR General meeting in Tokyo, Prof. Felix Ulombe Kaputu (University of Lubumbashi, RDC) was appointed as Acting Representative for Central Africa. He was mandated to carry out a feasibility study towards the formation of an AASR Central Africa. This involves compiling a comprehensive list of Universities/Colleges/Institutes with departments of religious studies and theology; as well as names and (email) addresses of their staff members. He is also to use his personal and institutional contacts to work out modalities for this formation. He was given a period of three (3) months to present a progress report to the AASR Executive Committee.

Northern Africa

The meeting resolved to make contacts to colleagues in North African Universities/Colleges/Institutes with special emphasis on religion, with the aim of setting up a regional AASR in North Africa. It was agreed that Prof. Ibrahim El Kadiri Boutchich (Morocco), who attended and indicated interest in the association at the Tokyo general meeting was to be contacted for further discussion in this regard.

Southern Africa

The meeting remarked the unprecedented silence from Johannes Smit, the Southern African Representative and noted that this does not augur well for the progress and development of the Association. It expressed shock and disappointment that all three South African colleagues – Ignatius Swart, Johannes Erasmus (Stellenbosch), S. Kgatla (Sovenga) who attended the AASR general meeting – claimed not to know their representative (Johannes Smit) nor to have had any prior contact with him. It was agreed that Johannes Smit will be contacted immediately to explain his past and future role in the AASR and present a progress report for the Southern Africa. In order to strengthen and consolidate AASR Southern Africa, the meeting suggested that other Southern African colleagues including Kumar Pratap (Durban), Ezra Chitando (Zimbabwe) and Musa Dube (Botswana) should be contacted for their assistance and contribution to strengthening the association in the region. This initiative was also to be extended to East and West Africa where the regional representatives were noted to be somewhat inefficient at one time or the other in recent past.

AASR website

The meeting confirmed the nomination of Jan Platvoet as Internet Officer. He was mandated to liaise with an Internet expert and work out the modalities for

establishing an AASR website as soon as possible. He is required to present a proposal to the Executive for consideration in the next months. Due to the present financial base of the association, it was recommended that AASR could commence with a 'free website' and afterwards engage a fee-paying one. Membership application forms shall be made available on the webpage and can be downloaded by interested persons. While several segments of the webpage shall be available for public viewing, the structure of the site shall also include a 'Members-Only page' and an 'Executive Members-Only page'. The earlier will be a forum for sharing privileged information among 'dues-paying members only', while the latter is to facilitate communication within the executive body. In this regard, the AASR Bulletin (from the November 2005 issue) will no longer be distributed freely but be obtained through individual and institutional subscription only. The Bulletin will also be included in the 'Members-Only' page and so will require a password for access and viewing. All dues-paying members shall be provided with a password which gives them access to the 'Members-Only' page. In addition however, they will continue to receive hard copies of the Bulletin until decided otherwise.

Publication Officer

The meeting unanimously confirmed the nomination of Prof. Jacob Olupona as the new AASR Publication Officer. His appointment was based on his tremendous interest, initiative and individual financial support towards publication of manuscripts of AASR members.

AASR Conference

The meeting approved the idea of a major AASR Conference in Africa and an AASR Regional Conference in-between the five years interval of two IAHR Congresses. This is expected to ensure more frequent AASR general assemblies as opposed to one in every five years. It will also facilitate mutual interaction and exchange among members at both intellectual and personal levels. The year 2007 is set aside for the first experiment. The venue of the meeting will be decidedly based on the strength and feasibility of proposals received from individual AASR regions. A letter is to be sent out requesting the various regions to submit detailed proposals to host the AASR major conference in 2007. In addition to the major conference, the meeting also discussed the issue of a regional conference. The meeting deliberated also on the special focus to be accorded to 'Africa' at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in 2006; and examined the conspicuous place and role of AASR in it. It was proposed that an AASR regional conference could take place between the ASA and AAR meetings. On this point, the North American Representative indicated that Professor Vincent Wimbush of the Institute for Signifying Scripture had expressed interest in possibly hosting a meeting of the AASR at his Institute in Claremont at some time in the future.

Toward a project-oriented AASR

The meeting mooted the idea of a shift from a ‘conference-directed’ to a ‘project-directed’ AASR. The association is to exploit the potentials of self-initiated and joint scientific projects, at both individual and corporate levels, with organizations such as CODESRIA and AAU. The Association was to initiate projects that will have direct impact on the public, local communities and the African society at large. It shall seek partnership with other organizations to carry out African based developmental initiatives and projects. An initial step is to create public awareness and enlightenment through public lectures or symposia on topical issues within and outside the continent.

Documentation of thesis and dissertations in African Universities

The meeting suggested that there is an urgent need to document the theses and dissertations emanating from all departments of religious studies and theology of African universities, and other departments relevant to the study of the religions of Africa. These departments will be contacted for comprehensive lists. It is expected that such a data bank of research topics and project titles will form an invaluable resource to both African and non-African scholars and researchers of the religions of Africa. AASR will also begin to consider the publication possibilities of recent theses and dissertations of young African colleagues (AASR members) on a systematic basis.



Gerrie ter Haar
AASR Representative for Europe, 1992-2005
ISS, The Hague, The Netherlands

AASR EUROPE FINANCIAL REPORT 2004

Balance as of December 31, 2003	€ 3.456,15
Income from membership fees and subscriptions to the AASR Bulletin	€ <u>1.740,00</u> +
	€ 5.196,15
Amount expended from 1.01.04 to 31.12.04	€ <u>699,74</u> -
Balance as of December 31, 2004	€ 4.496,31

Breakdown of accounts:	
savings account	€ 4.389,26
running account	€ <u>86,78</u> +
	€ 4.476,04

Breakdown of expenses:	
AASR Bulletin 20 and 21	€ 680,90
Bank charges	€ <u>18,84</u> +
	€ 699,74

During 2004 a total amount of €1.100 was transferred from the running account to the savings account. No reverse transfers were made in 2004. The savings account gives at present an interest of 1%, which gives us an annual extra of about € 35 to € 40. The interest is credited every year by the end of February. Hence, the latest interest period ran from 1.3.04 to 1.3.05 crediting the account in March last with € 36,48.

Comments

Looking back at the previous years, the income of AASR-Europe has gone up every year. For example, compared to 2003, we had in 2004 almost € 1.000 more in the coffers at the end of the year. Looking ahead: in 2005, AASR-Europe faces serious expenditure. In addition to the costs of the production of the AASR Bulletin, two Kenyan colleagues were enabled to attend the Tokyo Congress; and money will be made available for starting the AASR website.

CONFERENCES AHEAD

Afe Adogame & Ezra Chitando
University of Bayreuth, Germany

RETHINKING AFRICAN RELIGIONS: REFLEXIVITY & THE CRITIQUE OF RELIGION

BAYREUTH, GERMANY, 25-28 SEPTEMBER 2005

The 27th Biannual Congress of the DVRG (German Association for the History of Religions) will be hosted by the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Bayreuth from 25 to 28 September, 2005. Its theme will be: 'Religion and Criticism: The Critical Potential of Religions and Religious Studies'. Dr. Afe Adogame and Dr. Ezra Chitando, University of Zimbabwe, but currently a Humboldt Research Fellow at Bayreuth University, will organize a panel with the title: 'Rethinking African Religions: Reflexivity and the Critique of Religion'. They describe its proposed content as follows: 'The historiography and trajectories of African Religions as an academic discipline has largely benefited from the interdisciplinary approaches, critical perceptions and analyses of European and African scholars, positivism and postmodernism (radical empiricism), relativism and essentialism; developments that straddle the dialectics of power, the insider and outsider dynamics, explanation and interpretation, particularity and generalizations, old and new cognitive schemes. At the same time, a difference can be made between those who are sympathetic to the religion and those who are very critical about it. These very different brushes have produced different strokes in our conceptualization of African religions. However, this leaves open the questions: Upon which interests do our critical perceptions of African religions depend? To what extent are adherents of the various indigenous African religions self-critical and self-reflexive about their religious tradition? How do our personal judgments on and categories of African religions shape academic studies and debate? What kinds of cognition are conveyed for instance by post-modern radical empiricism? To what extent has the academic study of African religions been shaped by insider and outsider perspectives? What new theoretical and methodological perspectives can be explored to enhance a critical study of African religions in an increasingly globalizing age?

Interested participants are invited to submit a topic and short abstract proposal (max. 250 words) for consideration in the proposed panel on African Religions on or before June 30, 2005. Topics and abstracts should be emailed to: < afe.adogame@uni-bayreuth.de > & < chitsa21@yahoo.com >. For more general information on the DVRG conference, see: http://www.unibayreuth.de/departments/religionswissenschaft/dvrg2005/index_english.html.

Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton
University of Virginia

ARG-SESSIONS

AT THE AAR ANNUAL MEETING, PHILADELPHIA , USA, NOVEMBER 2005

The 2005 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) will take place in Philadelphia, U.S.A., from November 19-22. The African Religions Group (ARG) of the AAR is delighted to announce that it will sponsor two panels of its own, and co-sponsor another with the Afro-American Religious History Group. The panels – referred to as ‘paper sessions’ by the AAR – are designed to address themes, topics, and methodological issues of concern to scholars of religion in Africa from an array of disciplines.

The first session the African Religions Group will offer is titled, ‘African Religions and the Neo-diaspora’. The papers to be presented at this session are as follows: ‘The Multi-dimensional Conceptualization of the African Diaspora’ by Isabel Mukonyora (Western Kentucky State University); ‘West African Sufis in the Americas’ by Yushau Sodiq (Texas Christian University); ‘Up, Up Jesus! Down, Down Satan!: African Religiosity in the former Soviet Bloc’ by Afe Adagome (University of Bayreuth). Kimberly Rae Conner (University of San Francisco) will chair the session, and Jacob Olupona (University of California, Davis), will serve as respondent.

The theme of the second session sponsored by the African Religions Group is ‘Issues in the Historiography of African Religions’. Historians as well as religious studies scholars and anthropologists will contribute to the session. The papers are ‘Religion in the Time of the Ancestors: Methodological Issues in the Interpretation of Pre-Colonial African Religious History’ by Robert Baum (Iowa State University); ‘Separating the Historical from the Mythical in Ewe Ifa: the Sacred Poems of Ifa’ by Keisha Armorer (Temple University); ‘Living on the Threshold: Liminality and the Globalization of Christianity’ by Frederick Lampe (Syracuse University); and ‘“Engaged Insiders” in the Study of African Religions: Prospects and Challenges’ by Ezra Chitando (University

of Bayreuth). The session will be chaired by Gwinyai Muzorewa (Lincoln University) and Sandra Greene (Cornell University) will serve as respondent.

A third session, co-sponsored with the Afro-American Religious History Group focuses on 'the African American Episcopal Church and Africa'. The A.M.E., the first all-black Christian denomination in the United States, was founded in Philadelphia in 1794. A tour of the original A.M.E. church, known as 'Mother Bethel' is being organized in conjunction with the session. Papers to be presented are as follows: 'The Other African Methodists in Philadelphia: Zoar United Methodist Church' by J. Gordon Melton (Institute for the Study of American Religion); 'Africa and the Idea of the Heathen in A.M.E. Missions' by Sylvester Johnson (Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University); 'The Loss of the African-Centeredness of the A.M.E. Churches' by Ralph Watkins (Fuller Theological Seminary); 'A Trans-Atlantic Relationship: Orishatukeh-Faduma and the AME Church' by Moses Moore (Arizona State University). Valerie Cooper (University of Virginia) will chair the session. Jualynne Dodson (Michigan State University) will respond to the papers.

Because many AASR members based in North America will attend the Philadelphia conference, a meeting of the AASR-NA is being scheduled for Friday, November 18, when participants will be arriving in preparation for the beginning of the formal AAR conference program on Saturday. Contact Kathleen Wicker for further information: kwicker@scrippscollege.edu.

Another important opportunity concerns the 2006 AAR Annual Meeting's international focus on Africa, which was announced in AASR Bulletin 22 (November 2004): 6-7. Mary McGee and Elias Bongmba will meet with members of the African Religions Group to continue planning for the 2006 meeting. We invite input from all AASR members. Send your suggestions to Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton (chh3a@virginia.edu) or Kip Elolia (Eloliak@esr.edu), the co-chairs of the African Religions Group.



CONFERENCE REPORTS

Gerrie ter Haar
Chair, Academic Program Committee

IAHR WORLD CONGRESS, TOKYO, 24-30 MARCH 2005

The XIXth IAHR World Congress that took place in Tokyo from 24-30 March 2005 has proved a great success, both in terms of content and from the point of view of participation. Almost 1,600 people registered for the Congress (with many more coming in for the day), from 63 different countries, representing all continents. Among them was a large contingent of African scholars, both from sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa. From sub-Saharan Africa, there were three participants from the Democratic Republic of Congo, one from The Gambia, four from Ghana, eight from Kenya, eight also from Nigeria, and seven from South Africa. From North Africa, three participants came from Egypt, two from Morocco, and one from Tunisia, amounting to a remarkable presence of thirty-eight scholars from Africa. Combined with scholars with a professional interest in the study of religions in Africa from other continents, they made up for a significant presence of scholarship concerning Africa in the Congress, a presence which was also reflected in the AASR business meeting, about which is reported elsewhere in this Bulletin.

A number of interesting panels pertaining to Africa were held during the course of the Congress, providing evidence of the interest in this field in and outside Africa. The subjects ranged from contemporary issues, such as religion, conflict and peace-building in Africa, religion and human rights, the resurgence of *shari'a*, and religion and the media, to more classical issues such as power dynamics in African-initiated churches, ritual and healing in Africa, and the religious roles of women, to mention only a few. One African scholar, Professor Ebrahim Moosa, originally from South Africa and currently based in Duke University in the U.S., had been invited as one of the five keynote speakers who addressed the audience in a plenary session, in this case on the important and exciting subject of 'Technology, Life and Death'. In passing I may note that all (revised and/or reworked) keynote speeches and responses will be published next year in an edited volume to be published by Brill, itself a member of the AASR.

During the Congress, as is habitual, a new IAHR Executive was elected. Rosalind Hackett was duly elected as the new IAHR President. Her main task

will be to steer the organisation into the 21st century, during which the public role of religion is likely to gain ever more prominence. Other AASR members were also called to duty in the new IAHR Executive, including myself as Vice-President and Pratap Kumar as Deputy Treasurer. Below is the full list of members of the IAHR Executive that will serve till the next IAHR Congress in the year 2010 (venue not yet known).

President:	Rosalind I. J. Hackett (USA)
Vice-President:	Gerrie ter Haar (The Netherlands)
Vice-President:	Akio Tsukimoto (Japan)
General: Secretary:	Tim Jensen (Denmark)
Deputy General Secretary:	Ingvild Sælid Gilhus (Norway)
Treasurer:	Gary Lease (USA)
Deputy Treasurer:	Pratap Kumar (South Africa)
Membership Secretary:	Abraham H. Khan (Canada)
Publications Secretary:	Brian Bocking (United Kingdom)
Internet Officer:	Francisco Diez de Velasco (Spain)
Member without portfolio:	Morny Joy (Canada)
Member without portfolio:	Alef Theria Wasim (Indonesia)

One of the tasks – or should one say, duties – of the AASR, both as is individual members and as a body, will be to maintain the dynamic and growing presence of African scholarship in the IAHR Congresses. With the new AASR leadership elected at the AASR business meeting in Tokyo and the active support of the members, there should be plenty of chance to explore new avenues and opportunities.

Newton Kahumbi

Dept. of Philosophy & Religious Studies
Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya

XIXTH IAHR WORLD CONGRESS

TOKYO, 24-30 MARCH 2005

This Congress was held under the auspices of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies (JARS) and the Science Council of Japan in cooperation with other associations. It took place between 24th to 30th March, 2005 in Tokyo, Japan. The theme of the Congress was *Religion: Conflict and Peace*, with five sub-themes: Religious Dimensions of War and Peace; Technology, Life and Death; Global Religions and Local Cultures; Boundaries and Segregations; and

Method and Theory in the Study of Religion. The congress brought together thirty-five national and four regional member associations from the five continents and over 1700 scholars of religion from all over the world. About twenty scholars from Africa who were sponsored by AASR attended the Congress. These were from seven from Kenya, nine from Nigeria, and four from Ghana. Others were from South Africa, Congo, Europe and North America. In short, AASR was well represented.

There were five plenary sessions, that covered the Congress sub-themes, and organized panels (sessions), that were conducted concurrently every day. Each organized panel (session) carried diverse topics (themes) on papers that were pertinent to and presented in the session. There was an average of sixty organized panel sessions each day and over 350 panels overall, although some panels were cancelled for one reason or another.

The IAHR World Congress is a prestigious meeting of scholars from all over the world. This was true of the Tokyo Congress. It brought together various cultural and religious perspectives from different parts of the world. It was an important forum and avenue for scholars and students of religion, academics, researchers and other interested parties and participants to:

- Share and exchange ideas;
- Learn from one another;
- Deepen their knowledge and understanding of religion;
- Develop an appreciation of our religio-cultural differences and diversity;
- Appreciate the importance of religion in various aspects of human endeavour;
- Develop contacts with participants and scholars from other parts of the world for future research endeavours.

The Congress setting and organization was excellent. The Congress venue was the prestigious Takanawa Prince Hotel – a complex chain of three hotels – which is one of the biggest hotels in Tokyo. This hotel offered excellent convention facilities that were used for the Congress. Indeed the Organizing Committee of the Congress did a marvellous job!

Apart from paper presentations in various panels, the Congress offered a cultural program with various receptions; film showing and discussion; symposia; reports and discussions; lectures; round table discussions; concerts; exhibitions of art and books; and excursions to various Japanese sites of religious significance.

Within the context of a reception, AASR held a general meeting on 26th March that was addressed by, among others, the outgoing President Prof. Jacob Olupona; the incoming president, Prof. Elom Dovo; Secretary Dr. James Cox and regional representatives who gave reports about the activities of their respective regions. The presence of representatives from Congo (DRC) was hailed as a good and encouraging step towards incorporating Francophone Africa,

hitherto un-represented, into the membership of AASR. In this meeting the need for members' commitment to the activities of AASR was underlined and that it is the policy of AASR to give a free hand to the regional branches to chart their own directions. Evidently, from the reports of the regional representatives, Europe has been the most vibrant regarding membership subscription and indeed, it gave financial support to two members from Africa to attend the Tokyo Congress. On the contrary East Africa has been moribund, since the launch of East African Association for the Study of Religion in 1999.

On behalf of my colleagues from Kenya, I would like to sincerely thank the entire organising Committee of the Congress for a work well done. Special thanks go to Prof. Gerrie ter Haar of the Congress Academic Program, and an executive member of AASR, whose recommendations for financial support enabled many of us to attend the Congress.

Adam K. arap Chepkwony
Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

SOCIAL & RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES IN TOKYO DURING THE XIXTH IAHR WORLD CONGRESS, 24-30 MARCH 2005

Apart from the excellent academic programmes and the intellectual exchange of knowledge at the plenary and at the sessions, the XIXTH IAHR Congress offered its participants another face of Japan and her people. The social and religious aspects of the Japanese people are exciting and full of lessons to many and those of us from Africa in particular. The Japanese are hospitable and friendly people. The presence and address of Prince Mikasa during the opening and the closing session of the congress epitomized this aspect. It was an honour for the participants to see and hear him share his wisdom with the congress participants as he has done before since 1958. This gesture of warmth was evident even in the street, shopping centres and in sub-ways when ordinary Japanese come forward to assist the participants in various ways as need arose. The Japanese religious communities similarly extended their generosity by providing beautiful facilities for accommodation at affordable prices at the Homestay. These facilities were excellent contrary to the impression most got from the

brochures. The only difference from any hotel was the absence of beds and instead participants slept on the floor in traditional Japanese style. In itself the experience was worthwhile and for those from Africa, it was but a reminder of how many of our people live. The services at the facilities at the Homestay such as food (where served), leisure facilities, communication and information plus friendly services made our stay very comfortable and enjoyable.

The spirituality of the Japanese is most interesting. For countries where there are constant antagonism and suspicion among religions and even among denominations of same faith, the Japanese provide a model of how religion can co-exist in harmony with each other. The religions of Japan, that is, Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism do not only tolerate each other but in some way are perceived as one religion or even practiced simultaneously. For example, Japanese worship both *kami* and *hotoke*, respectively the Shinto and Buddhist equivalent of God. According to Prince Mikasa's opening address for XIXth IAHR World Congress at Tokyo in 1958:

The object of worship of the Japanese Buddhist is *hotoke*, and as far as Buddhism is an imported religion, it would be logical to presume that *hotoke* and *kami* must be quite different. Nevertheless, it has become quite customary for the Japanese to link the two, and the term *kamihotoke* is in common use (Prince Mikasa, 1958).

The Prince further explains that although the two terms from the two different religions are contradictory, it is not so in Japan. Instead, he argues, 'there are a number of Japanese who pray, without the slightest compunction, simultaneously to both *kami* and *hotoke*' (*ibid.*). For many, this is amazing and a lesson for Africa and the West where frequent conflicts and hatred among different religions is openly witnessed.

Finally, it was interesting to see how Japanese have preserved their culture over the years. One aspect of culture that is evident is the language. Japanese have maintained their language and very few Japanese can communicate in English. In that way, Japanese have managed to integrate their language with modern technology. It was not difficult to see things that are uniquely associated with Japanese culture and religions beautifully blended with technology. The traditional Japanese family and public bath system for example, is still in practice. However, the practice is supported by high technology and the sophistication of modernity. Similarly, the Japanese traditional foods, dress, architecture and festivals are among the few practices that were observed. Interestingly, it was the season for traditional Cherry Blossom Festival during the congress period and this was celebrated with pomp and glory in Tokyo. The Japanese attitude towards work can not go unmentioned. It was evident that Japanese are hardworking people and this value which is associated with their traditional religion. Shintoism has indeed borne fruits.

In conclusion, Japan had a lot to offer to the participants of the XIXth IAHR world congress held in Tokyo. Apart from the knowledge the participants shared, the environment served as a living spring of good lessons and a model of future life.

José C.M. van Santen
Leiden University⁵

ISLAM AND PUBLIC LIFE IN AFRICA

NIJMEGEN, THE NETHERLANDS,
10-12 SEPTEMBER 2004

A three day conference on Islam and Public Life in Africa was organised at Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, from 10 to 12 September 2004 to mark a special occasion, that of Prof Abdulkader Tayob delivering his inaugural address as ISIM⁶ Chair at this university on September 10, 2004. The convenors of the conference (Abdulkader Tayob, Karin Willemse, Benjamin Soares and José van Santen) chose this theme because religious discourses – Islamic ones included – are an inescapable part of public life in Africa and reflect the various local and global, social and political contexts. The conference aimed to build on previous meetings supported by ISIM for the purpose of mapping the experiences of Muslim societies in different contexts in Africa and comparing them historically and cross-regionally.

Whereas Tayob's inaugural address focused on 'Reading Religion and the Religious in Modern Islam', the conference examined Islam and Public Life by means of a few broad themes: Muslim discourses in relation to the state; Muslim personal law in inter-personal relations and the way these have been institutionalised; the presence of religious symbols in cultural practices like dress, architecture, and cuisine; and the way transnational movements and influences play a part in the identity and self-understanding of the various Muslim communities.

⁵ E-mail: Santen@fsw.leidenuniv.nl

⁶ The International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) is an interdisciplinary research institute with chairs in the four participating universities of Leiden, Amsterdam, Utrecht and Nijmegen.

The first session dealt with Public Life. In the first paper, rich with historical details, Goolam Vahed questioned the perception that South Africa's Muslims constitute a monolithic fabric and explained their divisions along class, gender, ethnicity, language and beliefs. The 'rainbow nation' concept put forward by Nelson Mandela in the first decade of the post-apartheid encouraged Muslim communities also to seek their own identities and to use the new freedoms of a democratic state and its liberal constitution for pursuing their distinctive rights. Vahed showed the complexity of the Islamic discourse by leading us through the impact of changing political and economic conditions since 1994, and by exploring change as well as continuity, conflict – by a description of the *Pagad* (People against Gangsterism and Drugs) movement – as well as harmony among Muslims, and between Muslims and the wider society. A growing African Muslim population complains about alleged Indian and Malay Muslim racism, exploitation, and the unfair distribution of *zakaat*. Due to the 'radical' face of Islam, there is a tendency to treat the assertion of Islamic identity with suspicion, misgivings, anxiety and fear, which results in its turn in the construction of boundaries between men and women, Muslims and non-Muslims, Islam and secularism. Vahed concluded that is up to Malay and Indian Muslims to bridge the race and class divide. His paper provoked numerous questions for future analyses: where does a deepening commitment to Islam lead us, and what does it tell us about the post-apartheid society? Who – in a context that is still racist – has control over Islam and how do the many young active Muslims fit in the conservative forces, or do they represent new forms of progress?

Cheikh Anta Babou discussed the rapid expansion of the *Murid* movement, by origin a rural movement, in the cities of Senegal, Europe and the United States. He did so by looking at the public life of two major cities, Dakar and Saint Louis. As the movement is ever more becoming an organization of traders and merchants, he focused on rural-urban migration. Migrants give new religious meanings to the public space by their celebrations of religious festivals like pilgrimages, festivities, art works, the rediscovery and invention of holy sites, and the naming and renaming of the public space. All this may also be regarded as cultural production and a form of imperialism of the *Muride* in the diaspora. In the context of Senegal it is after all one rival confession amongst many. It was argued that Anta Babou's approach was a *Murid*-centric one, for *Muride* expansion is merely part of a competition for identities within cities that are pre-eminently connected to a colonial, so French identity. Even though descriptions from within such as Anta Babou's are very valuable, nevertheless it is in a final analysis the broader context that needs to be addressed.

In a paper with the expressive title 'Sit local, think global', Roman Loi-meier described the *baraza* in Zanzibar, the veranda or parlour for receiving visitors and by extension meaning council, reunion or assembly. It was most intriguing to discover the importance of this phenomenon of people transform-

ing these ‘parlours’ into defined public spaces, which are bound by a set of rules that are accepted by all. Though *baraza* are physically situated in the public space and are publicly known, they are in a way semi-public because they are defined by informal membership and not automatically open to everyone. They may not even be recognized, as the innocent passer-by may easily regard the people who sit down in it as a group of idle men, chatting and gazing, while in fact they are the basic institution for the formulation of ideas and the propagation of political and religious programmes. Loimeier concluded that support of and by a *baraza* is the condition for any convincing political programme.

In another session dealing with reform, Shamil Jeppy – who has been a visitor of ISIM on earlier occasions – and Mohammad Bakari dealt with reform by focussing on reformist individuals, respectively Omar Abdullah, a Muslim humanist of the Comores and Dr. Daoud Mall alias Joseph Perdu. The latter was a Baha’i missionary who preached Muslim modernism in South-Africa. He became part of the Arabic Study Circle, an elitist Muslim discussion group founded in the early 1950 in Durban, South Africa. Describing this figure – whose national identity was unknown but who nevertheless was considered an erudite and cosmopolitan Muslim intellectual – Jeppy showed how one person with a particular Baha’i exegesis of the Qur’an gradually led members of his audience to entertain ideas about the continuation of prophethood (*nubuawah*), i.e. the Baha’i religious belief that a new revealed messenger is required for ‘every age’. Both papers made clear that diverse traditions of learning, individual passions and persuasive personalities may meet in one person and shed light on personal and religious identity, friendship and commitment. These histories read like novels and show how particular groups deal with modernity, how they promote Islamic knowledge, who is allowed to produce such knowledge, and how discourses in particular regions get shaped. They also show that seemingly simple narratives cope with complicated layered issues about group-identity and how claims about that identity are made.

In the session on conflict, the role of youth in the resurgence of *shari’a* in Nigeria was discussed by Amidu Sanni. In Northern Nigeria, already a ‘*shari’a* caliphate’ in the 19th century, the campaign for the restoration of *shari’a* law courts in 1999 was primarily organised by youths serving as agents and promoters of the campaign through organised associations and pressure groups. In addition, these youths were engaged in many violent and bloody conflicts over the *shari’a* issue since 1999. Though in the discussions the audience agreed with Sanni’s conclusion that no purpose would be served by branding Muslim youths agitating for the *shari’a* and indeed for political reform as fundamentalists or supremacists, no connection was made in the paper with the state’s failure that may lie at the base of the explosions of violence. Many questions remained unanswered, because ‘youths’ needs to be specified: they must get an age, a name and a background, if one aims to analyse their role in conflicts—an

important topic in all societies as we also experienced recently in Dutch society.

Hamza Mustafa Njozi's central concern was to examine three interlocking issues concerning 'Power and Public Policy in Tanzania from 1964-2004': (a) how do perceptions about the Islamic threat and the need to combat it influence the formulation of a wide range of public policies; (b) how has the implementation of those policies served to deepen Muslim resentment and generated a negative attitude towards the government; and, (c) how has Muslim opposition to those policies served to harden and confirm the initial perceptions about the threat. Stepping backwards in history author started with the most draconian law – in his opinion – that was ever passed in Tanzania, 'the Prevention of Terrorism Act'. It was promulgated after 9/11 and renders superfluous any lip service about respect for human rights. He then focused on selected events to underline his point, namely that Muslims in Tanzania since colonial times have always been brought under State control because they were regarded as a political danger and have often been denied their rights. In the discussion a range of questions that remain to be analysed in Tanzanian society as well as elsewhere came to the fore: due to what events does a 'war on terrorism' fall on fertile ground?; why and when are Muslims considered as a threat and denied political power?; what are the colonial and post-colonial circumstances that cause Muslims to be viewed as a political danger, as in Tanzania?; and where and when will Muslims be found as merely 'agents of change'?

Despite visible presence of *buibui*⁷ clad women in the public domain in Kenya not many serious attempts have been made to document social and political participation of Muslim women. Hassan Mwakimako, therefore, attempted to do so by interrogating specific Muslim women about how they had entered the public sphere and contributed to the configuring of not only Muslim politics but also national constitutional discourses during the process of constitutional review popularly known as *Bomas*. Four Muslim women participants during the *Bomas* process were selected for interviews to represent varied interests including NGO's, professional guilds, mainstream Muslim groups and ordinary citizens. Even though Mwakimako's effort to include women's voices and discourses in the multiple histories of Muslims in Kenya met with sympathy from the audience, questions remained as how to include them analytically. Participants concluded that we need to consider this issue, not only because there is – as Mwakimako stated – attention for women in the modern and post-modern discourse, but also because fundamentalist discourses – of all walks of life – themselves use women to draw boundaries for defining who is 'the other', who is a good Muslim, and what is the right behaviour, etc. So more elaboration is needed to find out what we exactly mean by 'women' and which women. How

⁷ The long, black gown that is worn as a veil by Muslim women in East Africa..

do we need to analyse the voices Mwakimako gave to women? And how do women relate to gender? For women – Muslim women included – are as heterogeneous a group as are Muslims.

A final and most intriguing session dealt with public communication. In the contribution of Cheich Gueye – another scholar who has kept in close touch with ISIM – the *Muride* brotherhood stood central again as a group that is internationally filling in the gaps of what is regarded as a globalising and dominating world economy. Gueye convincingly argued that New International Communication Technology (NICT) is, on the one hand, an instrument for integrating Touba, the ‘ideal’ Muride city, with the rest of the country and, on the other hand, a means for gaining a broader international presence. The importance of NICTs in the Muride capital, and within the brotherhood, makes them a barometer of social change in Senegal. Moreover, these technologies facilitate understanding of a cultural plan that is both endogenous and universalist. NICT’s broaden perspectives, widen horizons, awaken consciousness, provide new opportunities for stronger relationships and make distance unimportant. Gueye argued that they have the potential to allow one to liberate oneself from one’s body, one’s race, one’s nationality and one’s personality, and to communicate as pure spirits. Murides have adopted them in a unique manner by incorporating them in their operations and in promoting their religious message. Due to NICT the Murides re-centre themselves, symbolically and actually, on the holy site of Touba, navigating the interplay between the two spheres to enhance and legitimize a sort of nomadic life of the faithful. A process of re-territorialization and reconstruction by NICTs also establishes new group limits and embellishes, symbolically and concretely the symbol, that is Touba.

Hamadou Adama also considered communication to be vital for religious organisations. He focused on the way Islamic communication was institutionalized in post-colonial Cameroon. It was initially the new independent state – classified by Adama as dictatorial – that controlled the media in order to completely gag them and render them incapable of criticising the regime. As Cameroon inherited a secular constitution from the colonial powers, communication over the radio had to be done in official languages, while especially in the Islamic northern part of the country the (Western) schooling rate – i.e. people who spoke English or French – was low. Adama describes the tension between those Muslims who had received scholarly training in the Islamic religion but were unable to communicate in Western languages, and those who were secularly trained but faced serious difficulties in translating the Qur’anic corpus in the correct manner. This gap has long been exploited by the public authorities: radio programmes were nothing but plain and unattractive pale carbon copies of the blind reading of the Qur’an. It is only since the 1990’s, when multi-party politics was formally permitted, that new Islamic organisations developed radically different approaches for using the media positively to serve Islamic interests and open up the Muslim community to a wider audience. However due to

the boredom of formal Islamic communication, the Muslim audience had already begun to look for substitute products, which has led to the massive marketing of audiocassettes with sermons of charismatic marabouts. These widely and indirectly contest political interference in the conception, orientation and exploitation of the Islamic message as disseminated by the media, and still attract a larger audience than others means of communication. In short, an opinion on Cameroonian Muslim communities can never be made by judging only Islamic communication in the media.

Most papers contradicted the often expressed assumption that African Muslims follow models developed in Asia and the Middle East in politics. The conference made clear once more that the public space is filled with multiple Islamic voices, cultural practices, and identities that are continuously influenced and (re)constructed by national and trans-national movements and various means of communication.

Adam K. arap Chepkwony & Hazel O. Ayanga
 Department of Religion,
 Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

LEADERSHIP CRISIS IN KENYA EATWOT CONFERENCE, NAKURU, KENYA, 30.04-1.05.05

Twenty scholars from nine different universities in Kenya met at St. Mary's Pastoral Center, Nakuru, between 30th April and 1st May 2005 to discuss issues related to leadership in Kenyan society. They met as members of Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) Kenya Chapter which has been meeting annually for the last fifteen years to reflect on issues affecting third world countries. Twenty papers were presented, exploring in a sober manner the leadership roles played by politicians, church leaders, media and youth. The group pointed out that leadership is not confined to the above. Rather, leadership is a responsibility of everybody. In that sense, it was unfair for people to point their fingers at politicians, church leaders or the media when they themselves fail to demonstrate good leadership qualities in their various positions as parents, teachers, civil servants, security officers, businessmen and women among others.

Nevertheless, it was observed that political leadership in independent Kenya has failed to be an inspiration for, and model of, acceptable leadership. A leader, it was observed, should provide clear and undisputed leadership to the majority who expects a lot from their wisdom. The wrangles and disputes

among the ministers and parliamentarians in Kenya does not augur well with the people who look up to their chosen leaders for development. It was suggested that political leaders in this country should embrace the philosophy of enabling leadership which would enable the people to participate fully in decision making process on matters affecting their lives.

Churches too, it was noted, are to blame for failing to provide responsible leadership to its adherents and to the nation in general. The churches do not seem to have the moral authority to point fingers at the state for inequalities, corruption, and injustice in leadership when church leaders have also failed to live up to expectation. The gender inequalities in the churches in particular are a glaring failure, which makes mockery of the message of Christ. The fact that women are not in leadership positions in most churches was cited as discrimination against women.

It was also noted that the media are a vital tool for influencing leadership in society. The media offer critical challenges to politicians and church leadership making them more responsive to the needs of society. It was observed that although the media are often blamed for presenting sensational and negative news, it is the people themselves who shape the media. A society that does not appreciate positive and progressive information and instead enjoys negative news receives exactly what they want. However, the media cannot be exonerated from highlighting leadership values and characteristics that are not constructive. Yet the media have a great responsibility on their shoulders. What they say is often taken as the truth. Many people base their choice even of leaders on what the media portray.

With regard to the training of future leaders, the meeting wondered how the youth are expected to become responsible persons without good role models and with no proper leadership training in place. Presenters suggested the need to revisit African traditional structures, which clearly set the values that the community expected from its leaders. Among the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin, for example, there were specific leadership structures, which required a long period of training. In these two communities, as in others, leaders were expected to have certain qualities. They were expected to be peacemakers, reconcilers and mediators. During the training period, these values and qualities were inculcated in the youth. Leaders were trained by the people to be servants of the people. This is contrary to today's leaders who are self-centered, power-hungry and money-propelled individuals. It was agreed that the hope for effective, dynamic and transformational leadership in Kenya today lies in the integration of traditional African values and biblical teaching such as wisdom, humility and caring for those who are called upon to be leaders. Besides, Kenya's hope lies in the youth, but they need proper role models and training now if they are to take positions of responsible leadership in the future.

PERSONS & POSTS

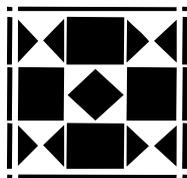
Dr. Afe Adogame, Research/Teaching Fellow of the University of Bayreuth, Germany has been appointed a full-time, permanent Lecturership in World Christianity by the School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK. He will be a core staff- member of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non- Western World (CSCNWW). His appointment takes effect from September 2005

Dr. Benjamin Simon is now teaching Systematic Theology and Missiology at Makumira University College near Arusha, Tanzania. His address is: P.O. Box 55, Usa River, Tanzania.

Mr. Abel Ugba has become a Lecturer in journalism and media studies in the School of Social Sciences, Media & Cultural Studies of the University of East London. His address is: School of Social Sciences, Media & Cultural Studies, University of East London, 4-6 University Way, London E16 2RD, UK

SCHOLARSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS

Na'eem Jeenah and **Hameed Agberemi** have been granted brief fellowships by the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM, Leiden, The Netherlands) for research on Islam in Africa at ISIM. Jeenah spent the period of 15 January to 1 April 2005 at ISIM for research on 'Political Islam in South Africa and its Contribution to the Discourse of a *Fiqh* of Minorities'. Agberemi arrived on 31st January and also stayed to 1 April 2005 for research on 'Islamism in Southern Nigeria'.



OTHER BRIEF NEWS

Adam K. arap Chepkwony
Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya

**A DRS GROUP
(DIALOGUE IN RELIGION & SCIENCE)
AT MOI UNIVERSITY, ELDORET, KENYA**

Chairperson : Adam K. arap Chepkwony (Associate Professor of Religion)

A Dialogue in Religion and Science Group (DRS) has been established at Moi University. The group has assembled a core group of participants, both professors and students, from the academic community of Moi University representing the disciplines of religion, anthropology, botany, physics, chemistry, sociology, and language. Its aim is to promote the public understanding of the critical value of a science and faith dialogue in Africa. The group comes together to explore topics such as the integration of science and religion and its relation to development and sustainability; the holistic health care techniques of indigenous practitioners; and the need for traditional healers and Western-trained medical scientists to collaborate in the face of contemporary challenges. Beginning with basic overviews of meaning, purpose, and methods in science and in religion, public lectures address the roles that each have played in Africa, and explore the potential for a contemporary interface between religion and science for the future. Broadly advertised and promoted events are held at various locations each month to support extensive outreach to the public-at-large, scholars, medical doctors, and traditional healers, both within and outside of the university community. DRS also supports collaborative public lectures with other institutions. An annual national conference is organized to promote membership development and outreach. Public events are enhanced by the performances of Moi University's traveling theater group which uses drama, dance, music, and poetry to encourage positive approaches to, and endorse the benefits of, science-faith considerations. DRS also sponsors essay competitions for secondary and university students on topics relevant to objectives of the group. A bi-monthly newsletter and conference proceedings shall be published to disseminate local and international news and activities in science and religion. The group is sponsored by Metanexus Local Societies Initiative, Philadelphia, USA, and Moi University in collaboration with the Department of Religion.

THE INTERNET

Olov Dahlin

Department for the Study of Religions
University of Gavle, Sweden⁸

A FASCINATING VISIT: TWO SWEDES IN GHANA , MARCH 2005

Åke Tilander, a colleague, and myself visited Ghana for a week in mid March 2005 for further developing cooperation with some institutions and to establish new relationships. The journey was very successful in that regard. But we also had some fascinating and surprising experiences.

In the past three years, our department has given courses through the Global Development Learning Network (GDLN, www.gdln.org), an international learning network. This organisation, initiated by the World Bank, has established Distance Learning Centers (DLCs) in roughly fifty developing countries around the globe. The University of Gavle is a program partner within the network, which means that we for instance are able to give courses. Through video-conferences we hold lectures and give seminars with Swedish students and students at DLCs in Africa. The courses we have given so far are: *Religion and health in a global perspective*; *The meeting of cultures and religions in a global perspective*; and *Jungian psychology*. They are 10 credits courses and imply half time studies. The partner contributing most has been the DLC in Accra, Ghana, but we have also given the courses in collaboration with the DLCs in Dar es Salaam, Kampala and Addis Ababa.

One of our aims in visiting Ghana was to meet the staff and students at the DLC in Accra, which is located at the Ghana Institute for Management and Public Administration. It is situated in the vicinity of the University of Ghana in the northern outskirts of Accra. The coordinator and acting director of the centre is Mrs Vivian Attah. She does a remarkable job in leading and controlling the activities of the centre since the tragic, early death of the former director, Mr. Kwabena Darko.

It was a great experience to see what the world looked like outside the door of the video-conference room, which for three years we saw only from the inside. It was also very nice to meet the students, both the present and former ones, in actual life, and not merely as images moving on screens or as individuals behind e-mails. We brought Swedish peculiarities, such as *sill*, *kaviar*,

⁸ E-mail: odn@hig.se

knackebröd and *pepparkakor*, in order to have cultures really meet. The reactions were diverse ...

One of our students in the 2002 course of The Meeting of Cultures, William Obeng Asante, had already invited us by e-mail to his home in Akim Swedru outside Oda, a small town situated some 150 kilometres to the northwest of Accra. William had also informed me in advance that his wife had delivered her first baby, a boy, and that they had decided to name him Olov! It was only during our visit to their home that we realised that they actually call him by that name. I felt greatly honoured, of course. William had implemented the idea of pluralism and the meeting of cultures in his family life by baptising Olov both in the traditional and in a Pentecostal Christian fashion. (I suppose this is common also among people who have not followed our courses.) All is documented on a video-tape.

Our visit was a great event in the lives of this family and they had prepared for our visit in various ways. This we were prepared for. What we had not expected, however, was that we were going to be installed chiefs during our visit. Accompanied by loud music from a stereo, we were dressed up in the traditional multi-coloured *kente* cloths, were given sandals to wear and were placed on chiefs' stools. After a number of photos had been taken and video-film shot, we were kindly asked to get up and dance. Of course we could not let them down and since this apparently was part of the procedure, we did our best. I believe the family had a great time. The event was finalised by our consumption of the traditional festive dish *fufu* (a porridge made from the meal of cassava and meshed plantains, formed to beautiful plain buns, served with a stew of beef and fish), overlooked by the family members. Not to forget, we were given new names, in my case *Nana Dasebre*, meaning 'Grandfather We Are Weary of Thanking You'.⁹ After this experience I realised what William had meant when he in advance had wished us a tumultuous welcome to Ghana. In a letter I received recently William declared that next time we come to Ghana we will be carried around in Oda shoulder high.

Another of our primary aims was to meet professor Elom Dovlo at the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Ghana. We had only met through e-mails and seen each other in a video-conference, as he held a much appreciated lecture in one of our courses. Elom gave us a clarifying overview of the plurality of religious traditions in Ghana and we discussed ways of continuing and further developing cooperation between our departments. We intend, for instance, to apply for grants which enable both students and staff at our two departments to make exchange visits. Elom has, together with Mrs Vivian Attah at the DLC, been an important resource for a student of ours who is presently on a scholarship in Ghana studying interactions of different religious

⁹ See J.C. Christaller, *Asante-Fante Dictionary*, Basel: Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, 1933², 66.

traditions in the Osu area of Accra. Two more students are on their way to Ghana for field studies.

At the Christian Council of Ghana we met Dr Nathan Samwini, who is a leading figure in a project called PROCMURA, which stands for the Project for Christian-Muslim Relation in Africa. Christian councils all over Africa have joined in this project which aims at improving the relations between Christians and Muslims. Dr Samwini is a very interesting person. He was raised in a traditional context, but converted to Islam being only around 10 years of age. Then in his 20s he converted once again, this time to Christianity. He did, however, write his PhD in Islamic studies in the UK. This was intentionally done, in order to be able to communicate with Muslims in a dialogue manner. In collaboration with Dr Samwini we are planning to give a basic course on Islamic studies through the DLC in Accra next semester. The course would be open for anyone to attend, but is specifically targeted to the fieldworkers of the PROCMURA project, that is Christians who are going to meet and make relations with Muslims in Ghana.

I believe that if the religious departments at universities in Africa were aware of the possibilities for international communication and education through GDLN, we would be able to have a great exchange and participation. We could develop common courses and seminars with students and teachers in various African countries. At the moment there are Distance Learning Centres in the above mentioned English-speaking countries and, in addition, Namibia. There are also centres in French-speaking countries, but Swedish students are in general not that good at French.

A NEW INTERNET JOURNAL
GEFAME:
AFRICAN STUDIES JOURNAL
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The Editors of *GEFAME* are pleased to announce the publication of *GEFAME*, a new web-based journal of African studies. *GEFAME* is an online journal that promotes scholarly communication. The journal is based at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA. *GEFAME* is intended to facilitate the exchange of ideas and work among Africa-based scholars and scholars outside the continent of Africa. To be published approximately twice a year, *GEFAME* is a peer-reviewed journal.

It is also announced that the journal *Passages: A Chronicle of the African Humanities*, originally published by Northwestern University's Program of African Studies, is reappearing as a web-based publication, *Passages*, in association with GEFAME. *Passages* is not peer-reviewed; rather it provides a site for documentation, commentary, discussion, and experimental and provisional writings. In early 2005, the passages site will include a searchable archive of the eight issues of the original journal.

GEFAME may be found at: <http://www.hti.umich.edu/g/gefame/>

Passages may be found at: <http://www.hti.umich.edu/p/passages/>

For more information, you may contact: < apaulos@umich.edu >.

Frans Wijzen
Radboud University, Nijmegen

ESAP: ELECTRONIC SUPPLY OF ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

The ESAP (Electronic Supply of Academic Publications) project aims at building a web-community for universities in East and Central Africa. It is maintained by the International Association of University Presidents, in cooperation with the International Federation of Catholic Universities. It provides a possibility to supply academic publications to and from universities in developing regions by means of the internet and an e-learning environment for the enhancement of academic staff members in the use of electronic scientific resources on the internet. The academic publications can be consulted free of charge. The idea behind the project is that there is no need for younger universities in Africa to copy the older universities and their libraries in Europe. The university of the 21st century will be to a large extent a virtual university. Participants are the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Makerere University, Uganda Martyrs University, University of Dar es Salaam, Sokoine University of Agriculture (Morogoro), St. Augustine University of Tanzania, University of Zambia and the University of Zimbabwe. The address is: www.fiuc.org/esap

Afrika Studiecentrum
Leiden, The Netherlands
Asc@ascleiden.nl

ASC WEB DOSSIER

ON

ISLAM IN AFRICA

The Library, Documentation and Information Department of the African Studies Centre Leiden has compiled a web dossier on Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa, which can be found on our website at:

<http://www.ascleiden.nl/Library/Webdossiers/IslamInAfrica.aspx>

The dossier was compiled to coincide with the conference on 'Islam, Disengagement of the State, and Globalization in Sub-Saharan Africa' held in Paris on 12-13 May 2005, which was organized jointly by the African Studies Centre and the Centre d'Études d'Afrique Noire in Bordeaux. The dossier begins with background information about the conference and then provides a list of titles on Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa and publications by the conference participants. These sections are based on the ASC library's collection and contain titles of books and articles published over the last two decades. Each title links directly to the corresponding record in the online catalogue that provides details about the title as well as abstracts of articles and edited works. The dossier concludes with a number of web resources on Islam in Africa.



REVIEWS

Oyeronke Olajubu
University of Ilorin, Nigeria

THE RELIGIONS OF EAST AFRICA

Jesse N. K. Mugambi & Mary N. Getui (eds,) 2004, *Religions in Eastern Africa under Globalization*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 267 pp., ISBN 9966-888-73-x.

The book

This book is a compilation of papers read at the first AASR Conference in Africa and IAHR Regional Conference, which was held at Nairobi from 27 to 30 July 1999. The contributions deal with the religions of Eastern Africa and their study in the present era of globalisation from a variety of perspectives.

The introduction by Jesse Mugambi presents a compendium of challenges to the practice of religions in the fast changing societies of Africa which it is imperative for the Study of Religions to face. They include the polemic relationship between secular culture and religion, and the pernicious contact of African cultures with imperialist civilizations. The secularist theory that urbanization, c.q. development would eventually nullify religion is not new (Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx) and Mugambi identifies it as a significant challenge for the study and practice of religion in Eastern Africa. This theory is usually cited to support the superiority of reason over emotions, secularity over spirituality and science over religion. However, current trends in religion compel a re-appraisal of this theory because despite the rise in scientific knowledge and awareness, religion continues to exert its influence on the human race, especially in Africa. Mugambi advocates a conception of development that is humanistic because 'externally imposed development produces an incurable dependency syndrome' (17). The potentials of bodies such as NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) and the African Union in attaining African humanistic development are highlighted.

Chapters two and three focus on African Religion. In chapter two, A.B.T. Byaruhanga-Akiki presents African religious experience as an integral part of the global religious experience of human beings. Accordingly, Akiki postulates that the universe is divine property and that the most important thing in life is love and not faith. The journey of life progresses through three environments: the womb, the earth and the spirit world. This paper anticipates a new human tradition where there is unity beyond religion, race and nations. The paper sub-

scribes to notions of globalization by proposing a world religion through diverse methods. In chapter three, Adam arap Chepkwony examines the challenges emanating from teaching African religion in tertiary institutions in East Africa at undergraduate, Master and Doctoral levels. Experts in African religion in some institutions are identified, yet the paper acknowledges the paucity of such experts. Chepkwony also notes that private Universities, funded by Christian bodies, do not value African religion on its own merits but rather perceive it as a stepping stone towards Christianity. The import of this observation is significant in an age of globalization due to the link between Christianity and Western culture/civilization.

Chapters four to seven and ten present a rich array of experiences and activities marking the development of Christianity in East Africa. In chapter four, Zablon Nthamburi provides a historical account of the first advent of Christianity in East Africa from 1498 with Vasco Da Gama till 1729. This attempt however fizzled out before the 19th century, mainly because of the failure to involve the local people. He identifies the growth of revival movements in East Africa with marked features such as equal rights for women and men, and an administrative pattern similar to what exist in East African traditional communities. Similarly, Fidon R. Mwombeki, in chapter five, divides the history of Christianity in East Africa into four epochs: from the 7th century, led by individual Christian missionaries but frustrated by the arrival of Islam; from the 15th century, led by Portuguese explorers and traders; from the 19th century, led by mission societies from Europe and America; and the contemporary setting wherein Africans have taken over responsibility for the church. The paper submits that evangelism and ecumenism are the catalyst for the growth of Christianity in East Africa. Also noted are the challenges for the growth and relevance of Christianity in East Africa, which includes a lack of conducive environment for theologians and academics in the study of religions and the need for the social integration of Christianity into the people's worldview. Chapter six, by Philomena Mwaura, focuses on the African Independent Churches (AICs) and the establishment of a new African identity. According to Mwaura, globalization poses a challenge to the AICs to re-unite themselves if they are to remain relevant. Three types of AICs are identified: nationalistic, Spirit/Zionist/Messianic, and the newer Pentecostals/Charismatic churches. Challenges for AICs include church stability at the death of a founder/leader, ecumenism and the electronic media. Therese Tinkasiimire examines in chapter seven the emergence and development of New Religious Movements (NRMs) in Uganda, indigenous as well as imported ones. The example of Bisaka, the founder of an indigenous NRM is cited. Bisaka postulates that for God to unite all peoples, He will do away first with the Bible because the Bible was written and supplied by Europeans in order to divide Africans. Again, the Christian doctrine of Trinity is replaced by the Quaternity, which comprises the creator, the son of God,

the holiness of God and the power of God. The paper asserts that the NRMs are a threat to the established churches in Uganda.

Chapter ten by Francis Inanga focuses on the Unification Church (UC) founded on 1st May 1954 by Reverend Sun Myung Moon. We are told that Moon also established the Assembly of the World Religions on November 15th 1985 to foster a spirit of co-operation and understanding between people of different religions, and that he travelled extensively, preaching the revival of the true spirit of Christianity i. e. the spirit of love, forgiveness and unity. UC claims to be present now in one hundred and eighty-five nations. The paper submits that all humans could be traced to one single woman whom science named 'Mitochondria Eve'. It narrates that UC-missionaries arrived in East Africa in 1975 and registered as a social service activity to gain entry; that one of them was shot dead by military police in Tanzania; and that UC has branches now in Kenya in several towns, and is active also in Uganda and Tanzania.

Chapters eight, nine, eleven and twelve examine some aspects of other religions in East Africa, while chapter thirteen focuses on secularism and New Religious Movements (NRMs). In chapter eight, Hassan A. Mwakimako examines the positions of leadership of Muslims in Mombasa and how these are influenced by pre-colonial forms of leadership in the same community. Mombasa is reported to be an ancient port-town ruled by Queen Mwana Mkisi. It was also an important strategic and commercial center for the Arabs, Portuguese and British at different times. The tensions produced in leadership tussles by these diverse identities are analyzed in the paper. For instance, there was tension about who was *mwenyeji* (an insider) and who was *mgeni* (an outsider). Contested religious identity, based on various claims of indigeneity, was also part of the social discourse of difference. In sum, individuals became leaders based on their knowledge of communal history, wisdom, communal rituals, sacred rites, and the ability to respond positively to communal problems.

The Bahá'í faith in East Africa is the focus of Mark Perry in chapter nine. It began in Iran in 1884 by Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892) but got to Kampala in East Africa in 1951. An early convert, Enoch Olinga, spread it from there not only to other parts of Uganda, but also to West Africa. It has no clergy nor rituals of admission, but requires converts to demonstrate an understanding of its basic tenets. They are that Bahá'u'lláh is God's messenger to humanity in this period of human social evolution; that his mission is unique in religious history; and that he brought a set of laws that converts to the Bahá'í faith should follow. In 1961, a Bahá'í House of Worship was opened in Kampala. Though the period of rapid expansion was over by then, Perry writes that 'today each country in East Africa has a Bahá'í community with its own National Spiritual Assembly' and numerous local ones, as well as schools, training institutes, development projects and health programmes. By 1998, the Bahá'í had a membership of

155,000 in Kenya, and a presence in Makerere and Kenyatta universities by Bahá'í scholars offering courses and lectures on their faith.

Chapter eleven by Kennedy Otsola examines the Arya Samaj, a movement started by Dayananda Sarasvati (1824-1883) in 1875 in what is now India. The basic teachings of this religious movement include belief in one God, and that communion with Him can be attained through deeds, knowledge, and devotion. Others include belief in the truth of the Vedas, rejection of Brahmanic control of Vedic religion, and the unity of the peoples of the world. Life celibacy is highly recommended. The caste system is rejected. Arya Samaj presence in East Africa began as early as 1883, for among the Punjabi who came to construct the railway were Arya Samaj members. But formal presence began only in 1903 when forty people began to meet in a home in Nairobi. In 1916, a stone Vedic temple was built there, as well as a girls' school. Four more Vedic temples were built in Nairobi between 1929 and 1967. The movement is fully democratic and has a women and a youth wing.

In chapter 12, O.M.J. Nandi deals with the history, membership, beliefs and practices of the Hare Krishna movement, founded in New York in 1971 by Swami Prabhupada. In that same year he started it also in East Africa by sending one of his initiated disciples, Bhagavan Goswami, to Nairobi because of its sizeable Indian community. Nairobi now has the largest ISKON temple in East Africa, while other towns have smaller ones depending on the number of resident Hare Krishna devotees. They are nearly all Kenyan Indians, and predominantly female. A very few are Africans, who have either taken to celibate life, or are the 'casual employees of the Indian ISKON members'. Though ISKON keeps aloof of Islam, rejects the Hindu caste system, and identifies Christ with Krishna, it is eager to have dialogue with these religions. African converts to Hare Krishna will, however, remain very few, says Nandi, as long as Kenyan Indians cultivate their ethnic isolation, do not translate ISKON scriptures into Kiswahili, and fail to actively promote Hare Krishna.

The book is concluded by Aylward Shorter's analysis of the rise of secularism in the urban parts of East Africa. He attributes it, not to the Enlightenment, but to urbanisation and consumer materialism. Even though full churches create an illusion of high church attendance, it is very low among the poor and the young whom the struggle for life disposes to massive religious indifference. It is the affluent who go to church regularly, but that practice too, says Shorter, exposes them to economic rationalism and secularism. The powerful media also spread secularist consumerism by serving commercial purposes and being unsympathetic towards religion, if not biased against it. Shorter is no fan, therefore, of neo-Pentecostal Faith-Gospel crusades that aggressively promote the 'gospel of prosperity' and preach that failure to acquire it is due to lack of faith or personal sin. He regards it as a religious form of economic rationalism and a child of modern secular materialism. He holds the same is true for 'cosmic religion', the basic psychological posture people adopt in the face of the

mysteries of life and death. It underlies all organised religion, but is particularly prominent in 'New Age', cults of Eastern origin, and indigenous 'African religion'. The 'disembodied values' of the latter survive not only in Christianity and Islam, but also 'in the secular outlook of urban dwelling Africans'.

Appreciation

I am appreciative of a rich and educative compilation on religion in contemporary parlance as this book is. Articles in it bring to the fore concerns about the influence of religion on other human endeavours and how these sectors impact on religion. In addition, they confirm the similarities and differences in Africa's experiences of Christianity. Whereas NRMs exist and flourish all over Africa, their typology and characteristics differ from region to region but the main concerns remain the existential imperatives prioritised by Africans, such as success, defence from unseen enemies, and procreation. Also worthy of mention is the historical dimension of some of the articles in this volume, which allows adequate contextualization in a global context. Again, the book points toward the pertinent need for ecumenism within and outside the academia to foster religious understanding. The prescription for a unified religion by some of the articles however remains a formidable challenge in my opinion.

Jan G. Platvoet
AASR Bulletin Co-Editor

RELIGION & POLITICS IN AFRICA

Stephen Ellis & Gerrie ter Haar 2004, *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa*. London: Hurst & Company, 263 pp., ISBN 1-85065-735-1, pbk. (= Hurst Series in Contemporary History and World Affairs, 1)

The authors

The authors of this book have travelled extensively in Africa in the past two decades for the purpose of observing current political practices and the role of religion in it. Stephen Ellis is a Senior Research Fellow of the African Studies Centre at Leiden, The Netherlands. In 1999, he published *The Masks of Anarchy* on the religious dimension of the civil war in Liberia. Gerrie ter Haar is professor of Religion, Social Change and Human Rights in the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague, The Netherlands. Apart from her *Spirit of Africa*, on the healing ministry of Milingo (1992), and *Halfway to Paradise*, on African Christians in Europe (1998), she edited three volumes: *Strangers and Sojour-*

ners, on religious communities in the diaspora (1998), and, together with J.J. Busitil: *The Freedom To Do God's Will: Religious Fundamentalism and Social Change* (2002); and *Bridge or Barrier: Religion, Violence and Vision for Peace* (2004). She is currently preparing a volume on witchcraft beliefs and accusations in contemporary Africa.

The book

The book has an introduction and nine chapters. In the introduction, the authors explain why they have written this book. It is because African politics cannot be understood without the serious study of modern African religious thought, for it 'provides [Africans] with a means of becoming social and political actors' (2). Moreover, many Africans regard the spirit world as the ultimate source of all power (4).

The authors opt, in chapter 1, for a Tylorian operational definition of religion as 'belief in the existence of an invisible world, distinct but not separate from the visible one, that is home to spiritual beings with effective powers over the material world' (14). Religion thus defined includes for Africans belief in the possibility of effective communication with that 'parallel universe' (75). Because of that belief, they easily impute 'to politicians the ability to manipulate mystical powers' (16). The authors define politics as debates and activities about 'who gets what, when, and how' (15, 20). In their study of religious thought in Africa, they follow an *emic* approach by conceding to African believers 'the right to express matters in terms they [themselves] think appropriate' (18), including 'their perception that the invisible world is real' (17). Traditional religious ideas have an impact on modern African politics in ways that are difficult to discern for Westerners, e.g. in religious activities, or in activities Westerners deem superstitious (21). By appealing to Ranger's 'dynamic model' of religious exchange of ideas about spirits over vast regions of Africa in both precolonial and modern times, the authors adopt a unified view of (sub-Saharan) Africa: whereas Europe and the West (199n33) share the heritage of Enlightenment, Africa takes a religious worldview. Political authority was based on it both in the past and the present. The authors also follow Horton in viewing religion as a system of explanation, prediction and control.

In chapter two the authors detail their sources of information about the beliefs most Africans share. One source is stories told at night time and rumours circulated by *radio trottoir*, 'pavement radio'. They are tales about spirits and witches, about magicians causing men's penises to vanish with a single look, and about the clandestine trade in human body-parts. These rumours reflect what African publics find believable and entertaining. They consist both of plausible stories about fist fights in a cabinet meeting in Ghana as well as rumours that are implausible according to the canons of Western science, e.g. that a head of state has been 'doctored' and is now is 'invulnerable to bullets'. These rumours also identify persons held responsible for life's misfortunes, as

do scapegoat mechanisms and witchcraft accusations. They may result in frightful forms of self-policing. They are plausible to Africans because they fit into existing mental frames of reference by means of which Africans attempt to understand the world and events. Like religion, rumours too constitute a system of explanation. A second group of sources are the locally produced chap-books, videos featuring people possessed by spirits or attacked by witches, and the testimonies of personal religious experiences, such as that of a journey into the world of spirits. The authors hold that they reflect the growing 'preoccupation of Africans with how power is exercised in their societies', and that they function an oblique criticism of misgovernment. A third group are miracle stories of healing, of apparitions by the Virgin Mary, and by Jesus Christ himself, and of healers who died and returned to life charged with the task of healing and casting out devils. A fourth kind are the rags-to-riches stories about people who suddenly became wealthy, famous and powerful; and a fifth the popular stories attributing AIDS to witches, or to people in power, or to the West. In all these sources, fact and fiction are difficult to disentangle. The authors regard them as 'biospiritual modes of explanation' with moral implications, about which people keep an open mind, because their truth or falsehood cannot be established, but which they are also inclined to believe because they are consonant with their religious outlook.

Chapter three is on 'spirits'. It first tells the story of Evangelist Mukendi's visit to the under-water-world beneath Kinshasa where 'witches' and fallen angels are said to feast on human flesh, to have universities and airports, to fly in and out to Europe and the US, to be ruled by women, and to promote the evil above ground which Mukendi repudiated as 'satanic'. The authors then refer to various beliefs about the spirit world in modern Africa, such as those of the Mami Water (mermaid) cults, the AICs and pentecostal churches, the Sufi brotherhoods, and the 'Christian healer', Emmanuel Milingo, former Archbishop of Lusaka, Zambia. They note a fundamental change in the perception of spirits in the 20th century from mainly morally neutral spirits in traditional societies to mostly evil demons to be exorcised in modern urban Africa. The authors regard spirit possession as a religious term, expressing the perceived communication of believers with the spirit world by spirits assuming human form in some of them. They summarise the theory of I.M. Lewis about 'central' possession as legitimising established power, and 'peripheral' possession as attempts to improve one's marginal position in society. It shows that spirit possession often served political goals. The authors provide examples of how African politicians have used belief in spirits for political purposes, publicly, e.g. at election time, as well as privately by consulting religious specialists.

Chapter four is on secrets, secret societies and arcane spiritual power in Africa. Kenneth Kaunda was a devout Christian and moderate socialist but secretly had two Indian gurus on his payroll who wielded much influence in his entourage. Many heads of state in Francophone Africa belong(ed) to Freema-

son or Rosicrucian societies, whereas those of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Togo, Benin and Central Africa are rumoured to have been, or to be, involved in (neo-)traditional indigenous cults and 'secret societies' and to have committed killings for ritual purposes. Some heads of state were said to possess powers similar to those attributed to witches, to practise sexual perversities, and to appoint 'marabouts' with an evil reputation into high positions. Politicians court religious leaders with mass following in order to try to exert influence over them.

In chapter five, on 'power', the political use of religion by two Ghanaian heads of state and by their political opponents is mentioned first. *Osagyefo* ('Redeemer') Nkrumah was rumoured to have been addicted to bloody rituals, and J.J. Rawlings was 'Junior Jesus' to some, and 'Junior Judas' to others. In Mobutu's Zaire and Samuel Doe's Liberia, likewise, rumours about them drinking blood ritually to stay in power were rife. They manifest 'a widespread preoccupation with evil', as do the theologies of evil of the charismatic churches, and the epidemics of witchcraft accusations in, e.g., the Congo, where parents accuse their own children of being witches. Protection from evil is constantly being sought in new churches, 'medicines', healers, and spiritual leaders deemed to have access to spirits or spiritual powers, among them female ones, e.g. as heads of AICs, or as female Muslim sheikhs in Senegal. They may also be drawn into politics directly, as were the prophetess Alice Lakwena in Uganda, the healer Mary Akatsa in Kenya, *Osofo* Vincent Kwabena Damuah in Ghana, and Rev. Canaan Banana in Zimbabwe. When African states were forced by IMF and the World Bank in the 1990s to introduce democracy, many former dictators managed to stay in power by encouraging the belief that they possessed great spiritual powers of a sinister, satanic, intrinsically vicious kind, e.g. by associating with marabouts and magicians. The new freedom of press was also used by some religious leaders to express political critique in religious language.

Chapter six, on wealth, opens with the 'confessions' of a Nigerian Christian convert that he had been taught occult skills of money-making, had used them to cheat people, and had accepted money for casting deadly spells. The authors propose that wealth, credit and capital, are, like spirits, not visible to the naked eye, and are viewed in Africa, like spirits, as neither inherently good nor bad, but as belonging to nature and its fertility, and so are 'presumed to have an important religious element, since they involve the creation of new life' (120). Their sudden drain or increase are explained as theft or trickery by fellowmen, or as involving evil pacts with Mami Water, or other dire ritual bargains involving payment of human life-force to the spirit world. To counter such suspicions in Africa's 'wild economies', wealth must be legitimised, by laundering it, as Houphouët-Boigny did by building St. Peter's basilica in Yamoussoukro, or by godly banking, as do the Mourides of Senegal and the

Pentecostal churches of the prosperity gospel type. In Africa, the authors conclude, a volatile material world is mirrored in a confused spirit world.

In chapter seven, on morality, the authors argue that in Africa societies were ruled by a sense of justice flexible enough to allow the absorption of even radical innovations. That dynamism was frozen by the introduction of law in the colonial era. As a result, the feeling that justice is lacking is translated into spirit idiom, more in particular in that of 'witchcraft', a concept used uncritically by anthropologists, who thereby assisted in the construction of 'witchcraft' as a social fact. As the belief content of witchcraft accusations is non-falsifiable, witchcraft accusations are impossible to refute, for they refer to a belief rather than to an action. The authors warn against 'culturalist' legislation in Cameroon empowering the state to prosecute alleged witches, and similar proposals in South Africa, as directly contrary to classical precepts of law. They find evidence in languages and tracts that politicians who came to power by coups were widely assumed to have done so with the assistance of sinister spirits, and some to have required a 'blood sacrifice'. They also discuss the bonds of moral solidarity between close relatives, and their (ab)use by politicians for mobilising imagined communities, such as 'tribes', for political purposes. These bonds and clientelist politics also underpin the phenomenon of corruption, increasingly widespread because of poverty, states which cannot be relied on to provide basic necessities, and the need, therefore, to maintain wide networks of personal connections, also in the spirit world.

Chapter eight is on 'transformations', changes that dramatic and radical as to require re-categorisation. The authors distinguish between personal transformations by 'techniques of the self', and collective ones by social engineering. Examples of the first are born-again Christians and members of new Islamic movements, but also spirit possession, shamanism, rebirth and mystical experiences of travel through space and time. Examples of the latter include Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement in Uganda in the late 1980s. Modern secular states, totalitarian as well as democratic, discipline their subjects by impersonal, bureaucratic means of social engineering and by the modern communication media. People form their subjectivities at the point where state control and 'techniques of the self' meet. The authors attribute to religion a 'redoubtable capacity to manage change at both individual and social levels' (172), which they say was central in governance in Africa in precolonial times and is salient now. The authors wonder whether in the years to come personal and social transformations will be managed in Africa by scientific and economic elites working through bureaucracies and the media, or through neo-traditional religious elites invoking a mythical golden age.

Chapter nine is on histories, e.g. that of the social scientific analysis of the religions of Africa which, say the authors, has habitually considered perceived spirits merely as translations of secular forces and oversociologised them. Because it considers the practices and beliefs of African religions irrational and

fails to study their specific contents, it is unable to grasp their meaning, and understand how they function as political instruments. The authors reject interpretations of religious revival in Africa by anthropologists as due to globalisation and 'millennial' capitalism. They also dismiss analyses of events in Africa based solely on theories about developments in Europe and North America; but also interpretations in terms of an authentic, timeless Africa. The collapse of formal history in parts of Africa allows religion and conspiracy theories, e.g. about Satanists spreading AIDS, and about the machinations of the great powers excluding African nations from their rightful place in the world, to step in to provide connections with the past, and models of the place of Africa in the world order, and to reconfigure available resources for a successful life today. The authors see the religious field of Africa as 'chaotic', 'wide open to entrepreneurs' without 'any sense of moderation or checks and balances'(190). Even so, they hold that 'the current religious renewal in Africa may be read in part as an effort to end this spiritual confusion by creating new patterns of stability' (191). Shifts in its religious worldview as well as in thinking about power are needed for new institutions to develop, as occurred in earlier European history. The authors discern serious obstacles for such a development, because African elites and their foreign partners have little incentives to change the present state of affairs, and African spiritual knowledge stands little chance of validation by modern scholarship. Islamic revivalism has brought religion into the heart of political debate. The role of religion in the African political scene is part of a wider trend of reaction to Western modernisation and an aspiration to connect to local traditions.

Appreciation

These summaries cannot do justice to the book but show that it is an important publication, with which the authors must be congratulated. On its back-cover, it is correctly praised by others as 'fascinating, insightful and timely', 'wide-ranging and thoroughly-researched', and 'required reading for anyone concerned with Africa today'. It is also very well written, with notable (and debatable) one-liners, such as '[In Africa] spiritual power is a vital political reality' (106). It is also innovative, in the sources it uses, and in its broad approach to religion and religions in Africa, conceptually by including beliefs in witchcraft, 'medicines', and other 'magic', which other authors regard as mere superstition, as valid and important material for the academic analysis of religion in Africa (and anywhere else); and comparatively by demonstrating that developments in a wide range of religions in Africa exhibit important similarities that need to be analysed in an identical manner.

Its major virtue, however, is, I hope, however, as yet embryonic. It should, I suggest, stimulate much debate, for it needs to be read critically and to be tested thoroughly before we accept its outspoken theses and implied suggestions as validly established academic knowledge. Let me briefly indicate a few

points for debate. One is that a defining trait of this book is that it is thoroughly 'panafricanist', not in a political or ideological, but in an academic sense. Its deliberate scope is the whole of Africa south of the Sahara, and it brushes aside as irrelevant Africa's cultural, religious, political and numerous other diversities, in particular in matters of worldview. I happen to disagree. Their taking 'Africa as a single arena' (21) causes them to present or suggest generalities, particularly in the matter of religion and politics, as true for the whole of Africa by incidental examples from particular parts, periods or developments of, c.q. in Africa. One example is their expansion of the 'vital force' theology, invented in the 1940s by a Franciscan friar, trained in Neo-Thomistic scholastics, Placide Tempels, into a constitutive part of religion in all of Africa: 'the notion that every living being contains a life-force has been recorded over many decades from all parts of Africa' (94). Such a statement rhetorically collapses a very specific and contingent development into a generality of such a large scope that it, first, can hardly be tested, and secondly repeats an invented tradition and contributes to an emerging ideology, c.q. theology. Another example is their claim that in precolonial Africa 'religious specialists functioned as checks and balances in systems of governance [and] ensured that power was not abused' (189); but that 'colonisers sought to separate religion from power, and church from state' (190). The first part is not supported by e.g. the political history of Akan societies in what is now Ghana before 1896; and the second ignores the diversities and intricacies of the several colonial systems in Africa between 1870 and 1960, and the metropolitan state-church systems in Europe informing them.

Curiously, the book is also 'Eurocentric'. Its central thesis that Africa is religious, and that its religiosity plays a foundational role in African politics, is mirrored in the thesis that Europe/the West is heir to the Enlightenment and has banned religion from the public sphere. Though there are, of course, marked differences in the roles religions play in public affairs in Africa and in the West, the dichotomy upon which much of this book rests, e.g. in its opposition of the roles of law and bureaucracy in Europe to that of justice as the 'living law' in (precolonial) Africa (142-149), does injustice to the complexities of both the history and present state of affairs in both Africa and Europe.

I mention only two more points. In a few places in their book, the authors reproach other Africanists of failing to perceive that they are as much believers of 'invisible realities', such as 'capital', 'credit', 'wealth', 'markets' and 'democracy' (115-116, 177, 195), as Africans are believers of 'spirits' or 'witchcraft', for they are all 'mental constructs': 'products of the human mind that are themselves invisible but in which they believe' (48). Indeed, all human notions, whether directing and governing human social or religious behaviour, and whether they are abstract concepts or in some other way articulate, or inarticulate and even subliminal notions, do all have in common that, as psychical processes in human minds, they are invisible. As such, however, they are em-

pirical, for they are the raw material of all human societies, cultures, religions and histories, and the verifiable object of the academic disciplines investigating them. For these invisible psychological realities are expressed and made manifest in numerous ways by means of behaviour, words, writings, dress, buildings, institutions, and in numerous other ways. Religious notions, however, involve a double invisibility: the psychological, yet empirical and verifiable one which they share with all human notions constituting human mental worlds; and the transcendental, meta-empirical one that believers postulate for their notions of God, gods, spirits, the Holy Spirit, souls, ancestors, which can neither be verified nor falsified by neutral, non-believing, sympathetic observers, not even when believers postulate them to be 'manifest' in observable, tangible form, as in 'witches', 'medicines', etc.. So, it is incorrect to imply that faith in God and 'faith in credit, an entity no more visible than the deity' (131), are comparable phenomena (116, 177, 195). They are not. And terming statistical probability 'the theology of modernity' (132) is not an apt, but a misleading metaphor.

Lastly, Islamic radicalism has since 9/11 put religion in 'the heart of the political [and academic, JP] debate' (195). It is on the slipstream of this event that this book proposes a similar place in the academic study of the religions of Africa for their role in African politics. I am not sure that the authors have been entirely successful in achieving this aim, for much of the 'proof' they adduce for their thesis remains, at least for me, as intangible and insubstantial as the rumours, conspiracy theories and beliefs in which they are contained.

AASR REGISTER OF MEMBERS UPDATES

Ellis, Stephen, Dr

2. Senior researcher, Afrika Studie Centrum
3. Afrika Studie Centrum, Postbus 9555, 2300 RB Leiden, Netherlands
4. Phone: +31.71.527.3362; Fax: +31.71.527.3344
5. E-mail: ellis@ascleiden.nl
6. BA (1975, Oxford); Dphil (1981, Oxford)
7. History and politics of Africa
8. Conflict in West Africa, history of Madagascar.
9. Co-editor of African Affairs
10. = 2004 (with G. ter Haar), *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa* (London and New York: C. Hurst and Oxford University Press.
= 2004, 'Africa's Wars: The Historical Context', in *New Economy* (Institute for Public Policy Research - IPPR) (Sept. 2004):144-147.

= 2004, 'Interpreting Violence: Reflections on West African Wars', in Neil L. Whitehead (ed.), *Violence*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press; Oxford: James Currey, 107-124.

Ihle, Annette Haaber, Dr.

2. Post. Doc
3. The Carsten Niebuhr Department, University of Copenhagen, Snorresgade 17-19, DK-2300 S, Copenhagen, Denmark (office); Ørevadsvej 32, DK-2400 NV, Copenhagen, Denmark (private)
4. Phone: +45 (35) 32 89 00 (office); +45 (38) 28 18 34 (private)
5. E-mail: ahi@hum.ku.dk
6. MA African studies (1992, Centre of African Studies University of Copenhagen) M.Sc. Social Anthropology (1997, Institute of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen), Ph.D. (2004, Faculty of Humanities, University of Copenhagen)
7. Islam in Ghana; Islam and social mobilisation; Islamic education, youth; Anthropology of the Middle East
8. The Constitution of Islamic Identities in Private Schools for Muslim Children
9. Association of Researchers of Islam in the West; Nordic Network of Researchers of Islam in Africa (on its way)
10. = 2004, *Its all about Morals: Islam and Social Mobility among Young and Committed Muslims in Tamale, Northern Ghana*. Copenhagen: Faculty of Humanities, University of Copenhagen.

Karang, Matthew Muriuki, Mr.

2. PhD. student, SOAS, University of London
3. Consolata Fathers, 3 Salisbury Ave., London N33AJ, England
4. Phone numbers: 020-83432235 (home); 07950171564 (mobile)
5. E-mail: matthewkarangi@yahoo.co.uk
6. BA Philosophy (1991, Consolata Institute of Philosophy, Nairobi, Kenya); BA Theology (1996, MIL, Missionary Institute, London, England); Certificate Parapsychology & Religion (1999, Faculty of Education, Sao Paulo, Brazil); MA Religious Studies (2000, Assuncao, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil); Certificate Human Growth & Development & Counselling Skills (2002, Institute of St. Anselm, England), PhD in view (September 2005, SOAS, University of London)
7. Philosophy, Theology, Study of Religions, History
8. African Traditional Religion(s); Religion and Gender; Myth and Gender Making; Social Inequality and Religion; Religion and Power; Postcolonial Theories and Development in Africa; Religion and NGOs; African Philosophy and African Philosophers; Stratification and Poverty/Religion and Poverty in the world today; African Theology and Cosmologies

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Njino, Joseph Kariuki, Ph.D.

2. Associate Professor in Religion
3. Social Science Education Department, Western University College of Science and Technology, P.O. Box 190, KAKAMEGA, 50 Kenya.
4. Phone: +254.562.0724, +254.734.450740; Fax: +254.532.062004
5. E-mail: fnjino@yahoo.com
6. B.Ph., B.Th., (1972-1978, St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary 1972-8), BA., MA (1985), PhD (1987, Pontifical Urban University, Rome, Italy).
7. Social Ethics; Science and Religion; Canon Law; History of Religions; African Religion and Philosophy; Philosophy of Religion.
8. Ethics, Religion and Science; Religion and Current Social Issues; Religion and Human Rights.
9. Member of Association of Third World Studies (ATWS), Member of International Catholic Movement of Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (ICMICA), Member of Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC), Member Canon Law Society of Eastern Africa (CLSEA), Member of ATIEA (Association of Theological Institutions in Eastern Africa)
10. = 1988, *Institutes of Consecrated Life: Religious and Secular*. Eldoret (Kenya): Amecea Gaba Publications.
 = 1992 (Co-Author) *Communicating the Gospel Message in Africa*. Eldoret (Kenya): Amecea Gaba Publications.
 = 2004, 'Challenges of Christian Marriage: Homosexuality as the Case in Point', in *African Ecclesiastical Review* 46: 339-365.

Opoku, Kofi Asare, Prof.

2. Professor of Religious Studies
3. LaFayette College, Easton, PA 28042, USA (office); 616, Parsons Street, Easton, PA 18042, USA (private)
4. +1 (610) 330.5183 (office); +1 (610) 250.9317 (home)
5. E-mail: opoku@lafayette.edu
6. BA Hons (1959, University of Ghana); BD (1962, Yale University Divinity School); 1963-1964, University of Bonn, Germany; STM (1965, Yale University Divinity School)
7. Geography; Theology & Ethics; African Culture; African Traditional Religion; African Religions in the Americas; Islam; the Qur'an; African Cultural Institutions
8. African proverbs; Akan culture; African religions in the Americas; indigenous churches in West Africa

9. AAR; African Studies Association (USA)
10. = 1978, *West African Traditional Religion*. Accra & Singapore: Far Eastern Publishers.
- = 1991 (with Kim Yong-Bock & Antoinette Wire), *Healing for God's World: Remedies from Three Continents*. New York: Friendship Press.
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Jan G. Platvoet
CO-EDITOR'S NOTE

Other than I announced in AASR Bulletin 22 on p. 39, my reply to Graham Harvey response to my review in AASR Bulletin 21 does not appear in this number due to pressure of other work and lack of space in this issue. It will appear in AASR Bulletin 24 (November 2004). I apologise for the delay.

