

Elom Dovlo  
University of Ghana

## FROM THE CHAIR

It is about a year since the new executive for the AASR was elected at Tokyo. It has been a year of brainstorming to see how best we can move the AASR forward as can be seen in the report of the AASR General Secretary, Dr. Afe Adogame. He has managed to arrange meetings where some of us were able to meet and share ideas. We hope that having Afe and Jim Cox at Edinburgh will contribute to our decision making process and smooth organization. Please let us have your ideas especially regarding our suggestions in the Secretary General's report.

We hope this year we will be able to move beyond ideas into actions. I am happy to note the good efforts being made by Kathleen Wicker to get the North American membership reorganized, enlarged and active! We hope that other groups especially in Africa will become equally active and look forward to announcements of in-country programmes in the next AASR Bulletin. I also wish to stress the need for us to have a paid up membership to support the organizational and other expenses of the Association.

The Bulletin itself has seen much transformation and we note with anticipation the move towards including short articles and reviews. Our many thanks to Dr. Jan Platvoet and Prof. Matthews Ojo and for this! Jan and his team have also managed to improve our communication and image with the AASR Website at little cost to the AASR. I wish to extend our appreciation to them.

We hope that the year 2006 will be a very successful year to all members and the Association! I wish you a very Fruitful New Year!

Afe Adogame  
The University of Edinburgh

## FROM THE DESK OF THE SECRETARY

On behalf of the AASR Executive, we wish all members and friends of the Association a fulfilling season. I am glad to briefly report on some decisions of the Executive and on progress made thus far in the last two quarters of 2005.

### *AASR website*

As many of you are already aware, the AASR internet site was successfully installed and went live at its own address <<http://www.a-asr.org>> in August 2005. Our gratitude goes to Jan Platvoet for the tremendous effort in making this a reality. He deserves further thanks for generously accepting to manage the website until it is well developed. Many would confirm that the website is increasingly being improved into a professional

site with an impressive look; and abundant, current information on positions, conference announcements, new publications etc. It is hoped that members and the virtual public will avail themselves of the benefits and richness that the site provides. New applicants for AASR membership can now fill out the ten-point AASR Registration Form, available at: <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=21> and mail it electronically to their AASR Regional Representative, the Internet Officer and/or the General Secretary (e-mail details on the website).

From 2006, the website shall also include a Members'-Only page with privileged information (including the Bulletin) that will be accessible with a password by financial members only. Also from the first quarter of 2006 onwards, the Bulletin, as a hard copy, shall be made available upon subscription (only) at both individual and institutional levels. In the meantime, a special 'AASR Internet Fund' for the effective management and running of the new AASR website has been inaugurated. This was considered a realistic option to financing the website from our 'lean' purse. Donations towards this project are therefore welcomed from individual members, regional bodies, institutions and corporate bodies. To blaze this trail, donations have been thankfully received from Elom Dovlo (€100), Afe Adogame (€100) and Ezra Chitando (€50). Donations (cash/cheques) should be sent directly to Jan Platvoet, or through any member of the AASR Executive.

#### *Membership Dues*

With the exception of 2005, the deadline for the payment of Annual Membership dues will be the Fall (October/November) of each year. Individual and corporate membership will now be renewed on an annual basis with the payment of membership dues. Graduate students and the non-waged are encouraged to apply for membership at a reduced fee, usually 50% of the regular membership rate. The new dues should be effective for the upcoming calendar year. Members who are yet to pay their 2005 annual dues are advised to do same latest by 30 March 2006. The collection and collation of dues or other specified levies are the responsibility of National/Regional Representatives. Henceforth, only paid up members will be entitled to enjoy full membership rights and privileges. The AASR Executive shall review a member's status if he/she does not pay dues for two (2) consecutive calendar years or duly inform the AASR Executive about his/her situation. All incoming dues shall be allocated to the AASR Treasurer and to each AASR Region on the basis of a 40-60% formula.

#### *National Representatives*

Owing to the urgency to expand and consolidate Regional AASRs, as well as complement the duties of Regional Representatives (see AASR Bulletin 23 [May 2005], pp. 17-18), the Executive Council has nominated the following members as National Representatives in their respective regions. More nominations for national areas not yet covered administratively will follow shortly. Acceptance of appointments should be confirmed in writing to the AASR Executive.

WEST AFRICA: Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Ghana); David Ogungbile, Olajubu Oye-ronke, and Anthonia Essien (Nigeria).

EAST AFRICA: John Khamalwa (Uganda)

SOUTHERN AFRICA: Musa Dube (Botswana); Ezra Chitando (Zimbabwe); Marja Hinfelaar (Zambia); S. Kgatla (South Africa).

NORTHERN AFRICA: Ibrahim Boutchich (Morocco)

CENTRAL AFRICA: Felix Kaputu (DRC)

National Representatives are expected to assist the Regional Representatives in the following ways: the collection of annual/membership dues and fund raising in each respective country; collation of list of Departments and Institutes of Religious Studies or Theology in their respective countries; assist in the provision of names of potential members; establish a contact person in each Department or Institute; disseminate information at local levels; organize national programmes; and take up any other duties to be assigned by the AASR Executive.

*Special Focus on Africa:  
American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting 2006*

The American Academy of Religion (AAR) has selected Africa and African scholarship on religions as its 'international focus' for its November 2006 Annual Meeting in Washington, DC (USA). The AASR Executive is currently working with the Chairs of the African Religions Group and the International Connection Committee (ICC) of the AAR towards the planning of the 2006 Conference. A top priority in these consultations is to ensure that Africa, Africans and the AASR are well represented at this event. Most importantly, it is seeking all sponsorship possibilities for AASR members, particularly in Africa, to participate and present papers at the conference. Colleagues in Africa are therefore encouraged to look out and respond promptly to the call for papers to be announced in early February 2006. We shall endeavour to paste this information on the AASR website as well. This is a great privilege for Africa and African Religion scholarship and we MUST not standby and let it slip away!

*AASR 2007 Conference*

You will recall our earlier suggestion and call for proposal submission to host a major AASR Conference in Africa in 2007 (see Bulletin 23, p. 19). Following consultations, Musa Dube has indicated willingness to assume responsibility for organizing the 2007 meeting in Botswana (Southern Africa). The proposed conference theme is: **The Academic Study of Religion in Africa**. The AASR Executive will deliberate carefully on a detailed proposal and acquaint you in the first quarter of 2006 with developments and plans in this regard.

*In conclusion*

In conclusion, the AASR Executive has several other plans and new initiatives for the near future. These laudable tasks and vision can only be accomplished, however, with your unconditional support and cooperation. Please feel free to contact us with your vision, suggestions and constructive criticisms. To move AASR forward to greater heights is a non-negotiable task that must be done! We thank you for your support thus far and look forward to a more eventful year ahead. Have a great holiday!

**AASR INTERNET SITE**

Jan G. Platvoet  
AASR Web Master

**[www.a-asr.org](http://www.a-asr.org)**

As AASR Web Master, I am happy to announce that AASR has its own internet site now. A trial version of it went live at a temporary internet address on 8 August 2005. It was launched under its own domain name and internet address: <http://www.a-asr.org/>, on 25 August 2005. Great thanks are due to two IT-professionals, my son Radboud and his colleague and friend Martijn Elzinga, for providing the AASR with this important electronic means of publication and communication. They developed it this summer for the AASR at a much reduced price, e.g. by making use of GPL (General Public Licence, or 'open source') software and by 'hosting' (running) it on my son's private server. In addition, Martijn and my son are coaching me towards acquiring the IT-skills, which a web-master needs to run an internet site such as ours efficiently. My inexperience in this field and lack of time to acquire the necessary IT-skills speedily are the main obstacles at present towards the quick development of the site into the full-fledged electronic communication instrument which the AASR Executive has mandated me to procure for the AASR in its maiden meeting in Tokyo.<sup>1</sup>

*Why a-asr?*

Domain names must be bought and registered. [www.aasr.org](http://www.aasr.org) is for sale at the moment but its present owner demands a price for it far beyond the financial means of the AASR. Therefore we settled for a less appealing, but much cheaper solution, that of inserting a hyphen: [www.a-asr.org](http://www.a-asr.org).

*Four levels*

The AASR Executive has requested that the AASR internet site has three sections or 'levels': one that can be visited by the general public for finding out what the AASR is about; another that can be accessed by AASR-members only; and a third which will be exclusively used by the officers of the AASR. To these three a fourth level needs to be added. It is the one that is accessible only to the AASR Web Master(s) for managing the site, and to the IT-administrators for maintaining the software part of the site.

*'Static' and 'dynamic' parts*

Another important aspect of the site is that some of its parts are, or will be, 'static', while others will be 'dynamic'. The static sections are the parts on which information is posted as it is e.g. in the AASR Bulletin. They allow one-way communication only: the visitors to this electronic bulletin can read what is posted on it but need to employ other (e.g. electronic) means if they wish to respond to it. By contrast, the dynamic sections will enable two-way communication by inbuilt e-mail addresses, e-mail lists, internet

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<sup>1</sup> See AASR Bulletin 23 (May 2005): 19-20.

links and by forums. The first three are for responding to information, or for obtaining further information; and the forums are for discussing particular subjects, such research projects – e.g. the development of Islam in Tanzania, or that of Pentecostalism in Ghana, or that of the methodology of the comparative study of spirit possession in Africa or worldwide, etc. – or for preparing conferences, or collective book projects; and for any other project in the academic study of the religions of Africa. ‘Chat rooms’ and other kinds of instant communication facilities – of the MSN/Messenger type – are for the moment not aimed at, but may in due time become part of the AASR internet site if need for them arises.

### *The public level*

The part or level accessible to the general public, including AASR members, is the one part that is fully operational at this moment, even though its pages still sport the ‘Under Construction’ icon. It has mainly two kinds of pages: those that inform the general public about the AASR: its aims, history, constitution, present Executive, Publications, and the Membership Form which informs scholars and advanced students of the religions of Africa who wish to join the AASR what particulars to send in electronically, and to whom. It also informs them that an annual membership fee is due for all AASR members for 2006 onwards.

The other is the News rubric. I use it especially to post announcements on it, which need to be brought to the attention of AASR members at once because they often require that members interested in them respond to them at short notice because of a deadline close-by. Instances, which are, or were, posted in this rubric in late 2005, are:

- = the Cadbury Fellowships of the Centre of West African Studies of the University of Birmingham. The deadline for the 2006 fellowships was 1.12.05. For further information visit: <http://www.cwas.bham.ac.uk/staff/visiting.htm>;
- = a call for papers from the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, for a conference on Islam, Terrorism and African Development, 8-10 February 2006. The deadline for submission of abstracts was 31.10.05; for registration is 2.01.06. The person to contact is Dr. Afis A. Oladosu at [afism3@yahoo.com](mailto:afism3@yahoo.com);
- = the call for papers by Prof. Jacob Olupona for his panel ‘Locating African Indigenous Religions in a Global Space’; see below p.
- = the call for post-graduate research proposals on ‘Sharia Debates and their Perceptions by Christians and Muslims in Selected African Countries’ from Zanzibar University, sponsored by Volkswagen Foundation. The deadline was 16.12.05; the contact person is Dr. Abdulkadir Hashim Abdulkadir (e-mail: [abdulkadirhashim@yahoo.com](mailto:abdulkadirhashim@yahoo.com))
- = the call for applications for post-doctoral fellowships for 2006-2008 from the Irish Research Council of Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) with the deadline of 12.12.05. For further information visit the website of the IRCHSS at [www.irchss.ie](http://www.irchss.ie).
- = the call for papers from ASC, CODESRIA, ISIM and IIAS for an international conference at Dakar, Senegal, from 13 to 15 October 2006 on ‘Youth and the Global South: Religion, Politics and the Making of Youth in Africa, Asia and the Middle East’. The deadline for abstracts is 1.02.2006. Further information: Ms. Dr Manon Osseweijer (e-mail: [M.Osseweijer@let.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:M.Osseweijer@let.leidenuniv.nl)), or visit: [www.iias.nl](http://www.iias.nl). See also below, p

It should be clear from these announcements that it will pay for AASR members now already to occasionally visit the AASR website even though the site has but one level yet and is as yet only a static facility. Members have already understood this, as is clear

from the Site Statistics which keeps track of how many unique visitors have paid how many visits to the AASR website since 25 August. It shows that their numbers are steadily increasing, for on January 16, 2006, 677 visitors had already paid 708 visits to the AASR web site and had made 2.227 page impressions. In addition, the electronic version of the latest AASR Bulletin will be posted on the public section until the members-only section is operational.

*The members-only section*

This section will have four features: the full AASR Register of Members, as it is kept updated by the AASR Registrar; the most recent AASR Bulletin; the forums for discussing any AASR-related issue such as research, conference and book projects; and an electronic archive. To the latter AASR members may contribute prepublication versions of their recent articles in order that AASR members in Africa, whose university libraries cannot afford to subscribe to academic journals in our fields, may also read them. Forums and the electronic archive should in particular benefit postgraduate students in the religions of Africa preparing MA and Ph theses in African universities as well as young upcoming scholars in those universities specialising in particular religions, or subjects, or methodologies, or disciplines, or regions. They may use the forums to contact other, especially senior AASR members who have published on their particular subject and solicit their advice or criticism. Though the software part of the Forums has been installed already, the forums are not operational yet. That will be the case only after 'rubrics' have been defined for them and installed in them, i.e. after members have proposed to the Web Master that a forum be created for the discussion of a certain subject or issue.

AASR members will be able to access the members-only level through their names and/or e-mail addresses and a pass word granted by the Web Master. In line with the decisions taken by the AASR Executive in its maiden meeting at Tokyo (see AASR Bulletin 23: 16-19) and reiterated in this Bulletin (pp. ), access will be restricted to fee-paying members. It follows that AASR members who wish to use this facility need to ensure (1) that they pay their membership dues on time; and (2) that they have a working e-mail address and pass it on to the Web Master. Quite a number of AASR members, however, have never even registered their e-mail address in the AASR Register of Members – nor most other relevant particulars – or are registered in it with an e-mail address that is no longer operative. They are the following members

**Benjamin Abrahams**, 427 Gilbert Street, Boston, MA 02048, USA

**Rev. Ope Arowolo**, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Nigeria

**Dr Hazel O. Ayanga**, Dept. of Religion, Moi University, P O Box 3900, Eldoret, Kenya

**Mr. Joshua Otieno Ayiemba**, Dept. of Philosophy & Religious Studies, Egerton University, PO Box 536, Njoro, Kenya

**Rev. Peter Bartimawus**, Brownman Lutheran Seminary, PO Box 74, Yola Adamawu State, Nigeria

**Mrs. Molaji O. Bateye**, Dept. of Religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

**Prof. Ngwabi Bhebe**, Midlands State University, Gweru, Zimbabwe

**Prof. Michael F. C. Bourdillon**, Dept. of Sociology, University of Zimbabwe, PO Box MP 167, Harare, Zimbabwe

**Asst. Prof. Samuel Britt**, Furman University, Greenville, SC 29601, USA

**Ms. Marjorie Broward**, United Lutheran Theological Seminary-Paulinum, Private Bag 16008, Windhoek, Namibia

**Karen McCarthy Brown**, Drew University-Seminary, Madison, NJ 07940, USA

**Rev. Jacobus Lodewicus Cilliers**, PO Box 12, Kenhardt, 8900 South Africa

- Lilian Dube-Chirairo**, Dept. of Religious Studies, Classics & Philosophy, University of Zimbabwe, PO Box MP167, Mount Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe
- Rev. Joseph M. Y. Edusa-Eyison**, Trinity College, PO Box 48, Legon, Ghana
- Kip Elolia**, Norbert College, Dept. of Religion, De Perf, WI 54115, USA
- Dr. Victoria Enoch**, Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Jos, PMB 2084, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria
- Rev. Sister Anthonia M. Essien**, Dept. of Religious Studies & Philosophy, University of Uyo, PMB 1017, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
- Mrs. Elsie Adetoro Falaiye**, Edo State University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria
- Ina J. Fandrich**, 1127 S. 48<sup>th</sup> St., Apt. #2R, Philadelphia, PA 19143, USA
- Fr. E.J. Flynn**, Religious Studies LSSE, University of Zambia, PO Box 3, Lusaka, Zambia
- Dr. Mary N. Getui**, Department of Religious Studies, Kenyatta University, PO Box 43844, Nairobi, Kenya
- Mr. Nahashon Gitonga**, Kenya Methodist University, P O Box 267, Meru, Kenya
- Dr. Jocelyn Hellig**, Dept. of Religious Studies, Wits University, Private Bag 3, PO Wits, Johannesburg, 2050 South Africa
- Dr. Hugo F. Hinfelaar**, White Fathers, PO Box 320076, Lusaka, Zambia
- Rev. Obiora F. Ike**, Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace, PO Box 302, Enugu, Nigeria
- Dr. Paul John Isaak**, University of Namibia, Private Bag 13301, Windhoek, Namibia
- Levee Kadenge**, United Theological College, P Bag H97, Hatfield, Harare, Zimbabwe
- Mr. Paul Kollman**, 5342 S. University Avenue, Chicago, IL 60615, USA
- P.S. Koster-Toose MA**, Gouderakse Tiendweg 30, 2808 NN Gouda, The Netherlands
- Mr. Francis Kuria Kanja**, Dept. of Philosophy, Moi University, P O Box 3900, Eldoret, Kenya
- Mr. John Karanja**, Dept. of History, University of Nairobi, PO Box 30197, Nairobi, Kenya
- Mr. Paul Kinyanjui Thiong'o**, Dept. of Religion, Moi University, PO Box 70, Naromoru, Nyeri, Kenya
- Mr. Joseph K. Koech**, Dept. of Religion, Moi University, P O Box 3900, Eldoret, Kenya
- Mr. Andrew M. Kovulo**, Egerton University, PO Box 536, Njoro, Kenya
- Valentino Lassiter**, John Carroll University, Carroll Boulevard, University Heights, Ohio 44118, USA
- Dr. Gervase Atama Matua**, Dept. of Religious Studies, Makerere University, PO Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda
- Prof. Friday Mbon**, Dept. of Religious Studies & Philosophy, University of Calabar, PMB 1115, Calabar, Nigeria
- Kirstine Munk MA**, Center for Religious Studies, University of Southern Denmark, Odensee, Campusvej 55, DK-5230 Odense M., Denmark
- Jack, E. Nelson**, Temple University, P. O. Box 757, Sonoita, AZ 85637, USA
- Rev. William Nguku**, Kenya Methodist University, P O Box 267, Meru, Kenya
- Chukwudi Anthony Njoku**, Whelan Research Academy, P.O. Box 85, Owerri, Nigeria
- Mr. Thozi Nomvete**, University of Transkei, Private Bag X1, Umtata, 5100 South Africa
- J. Oguegbune-Okwuenu**, Federal College of Education, Obudu, Cross River, Nigeria
- Dr. Emmanuel M. Ome**, Department of Philosophy, University of Nigeria, ?????, Nigeria
- Ralph L. Parris**, Dept. of History, Bowie State University, Martin Luther King Building, Bowie, Maryland 20715-9465, USA
- Damaris Seleina Parsitau**, Dept. of Religious Studies, Egerton University, PO Box 536, Njoro, Kenya
- Dr. James D. Redington**, Arrupe College, P O Box MP320, Mt. Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe
- Prof. Robert Rogers**, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampden-Sydney, Sydney VA 23901, USA
- Mrs. Constance R. A. Shisanya**, Dept. of Religious Studies, Kenyatta University, PO Box 43844, Nairobi, Kenya
- Dr. Teresa Silva e Cruz**, PO Box 1993 CEA, Maputo, Mozambique
- Rev. Saul Kipkosgei Tanui**, St. Paul's Theological College, PO Box 18, Kapsabet, Kenya

- Dr. Matthew Mwangi Theuri**, Dept. of Religious Studies, Egerton University, P O Box 536, Njoro, Kenya
- Dr. Sr. Teresa Tinkasiimira**, Dept. of Religious Studies, Makerere University, PO Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda
- Rev. Dr. Aggrey Ayub Walaba**, Faculty of Education, Moi University, PO Box 3900, Eldoret, Kenya
- Prof. Charles Wanamaker**, Dept of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, Cape Town, 7700 South Africa
- Rev. Brandford Yeboah**, Dept. for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana, PO Box 66, Legon, Ghana
- Mr Pieter van der Zwan**, PO Box 685, Mellville, 2109 South Africa

All are requested to mail their current e-mail address to [jpplatvoet@hetnet.nl](mailto:jpplatvoet@hetnet.nl) together with the other particulars of the AASR Membership Form as posted on the AASR internet site ([www.a-asr.org](http://www.a-asr.org)).

#### *The AASR Executive-only section*

The purpose of this section is primarily to provide the AASR Executive with an easy and efficient means of communication for three types of exchanges: (1) for policy discussions, financial reporting, preparing for meetings and conferences, and conducting any other AASR business between the members of the AASR Executive; (2) from the AASR Executive to all AASR members or a specific group of them for notifying them on some subject matter by means of e-mail-lists; and from AASR members to AASR Officers. For these purposes, AASR Officers will have e-mail addresses that are linked to their offices, e.g.: [President@a-asr.org](mailto:President@a-asr.org); [GenSecretary@a-asr.org](mailto:GenSecretary@a-asr.org); [Editors@a-asr.org](mailto:Editors@a-asr.org); [RepresNA@a-asr.org](mailto:RepresNA@a-asr.org), etc. More importantly, however, the AASR Web Master cannot include into this communication system members who have no (working) e-mail address or fail to inform him when their e-mail address is changed. Members who wish to be included into this system are advised to keep the AASR Web Master informed about their current e-mail address.

#### *In conclusion*

The AASR Web master is most grateful for the initiative of the AASR President and General Secretary for initiating the AASR Internet Fund for the development and maintenance of the site, to which already Euro 250 has been donated. It is hoped that this fund will supplement the as yet meagre AASR regular funds from the member fees well enough for the site to be developed and maintained well.





## OBITUARIES

Ursula King  
University of Bristol

## GEOFFREY PARRINDER

30.04.1910 – 16.06.2005

Geoffrey Parrinder, who has died aged 95, will be fondly remembered as distinguished scholar, friend, colleague, and happy family man.<sup>2</sup> Through numerous writings, lectures, radio and television talks, his work with educational bodies and academic associations, he exercised a wide influence on the modern study of world religions in schools and universities, both in Britain and abroad. A towering academic figure with an impressive career, he always remained humble and kind, even a little shy, and never boasted about his academic achievements.

A tall, gaunt figure with a mass of hair and erect bearing, he always had a twinkle in his eye, an infectious smile, and a welcoming gesture towards guest and stranger. Family and friends knew him as a spirited, witty raconteur with a great love for stimulating conversation, whether pursuing an intellectual or political argument, or just small talk about the latest academic affairs.

Edward Geoffrey Simons Parrinder was born on April 30, 1910 in New Barnet, Hertfordshire, to a family of liberal and tolerant religious ethos. His father, from a practising Wesleyan Methodist family, worked for glove firms in the city of London and eventually set up his own business, going bankrupt in 1930. In 1919, the family had moved to Leigh-on-Sea where Geoffrey went to school until 16, when he started working as a booking clerk at the local railway station, his job for the next 2 ½ years. His family takes pleasure and pride in the fact that, after much effort and highly focused studies, he eventually rose from the position of a railway clerk to that of an internationally known professor with three doctorates (two from the University of London, one honorary doctorate from Lancaster University)!

He experienced an early vocation to become a Methodist minister and missionary to Africa, but his parents tried to dissuade him from this. Through a close family friend the young Geoffrey learnt early about different Christian groups and people of other faiths, especially Buddhism. During his time at the railway he qualified as a local preacher and then trained between 1929-1932 for the Wesleyan Methodist ministry at Richmond College in London. He soon responded to a call from the Methodist Mission House to serve in French West Africa by going out in 1933 to Dahomey (now Benin), after acquiring enough theology and French in Montpellier. This was the beginning of his formative experience of Africa where he worked on and off for 19 years.

It was Methodism that made Geoffrey Parrinder what he was. It led him to his initial vocation, provided his early training and launched him on his academic career by send-

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<sup>2</sup> This obituary was published at the IAHR internet site: [www.iahr.dk](http://www.iahr.dk). An extended version is also available in [pdf format 176KB](#) at [www.iahr.dk](http://www.iahr.dk).

ing him to Africa. It also gave him his strong Christian faith and fellowship that remained with him for the rest of his life. Methodists will claim him as one of their own, but as one of the internationally renowned religious studies figures of the twentieth century, Geoffrey Parrinder also grew far beyond his own church.

His missionary career in Dahomey and the Ivory Coast lasted from 1933-1946. In 1936, he returned to England to get ordained and marry Mary, a nurse met at a Methodist meeting some years before. A couple deeply devoted to each other throughout 69 years of married life, Mary and Geoffrey much enjoyed their growing family life with one daughter and two sons. When on leave in England in 1940, they could not return to Dahomey because of Vichy rule in France, and Parrinder then worked in the Methodist Circuit in Redruth, Cornwall (1940-1943), and in the French Circuit in Guernsey (1946-1949), with another spell in West Africa in between. During this time he took London BA and BD degrees externally, worked for an MA, MTh and PhD, based on pioneering empirical research on the indigenous religious beliefs of West Africa. His first book, *West African Religion* (1949), was soon followed by more research on religion in Ibadan, published as *Religion in an African City* (1953), which gained him a London University DD. Other important publications were *African Psychology* (1951), *African Traditional Religion* (1954), *Witchcraft* (1958), and *The Story of Ketu* (1956).

In 1949, he was appointed to the highly innovative Department of Religious Studies at University College Ibadan in Nigeria, first as a lecturer (1949-1950), then as senior lecturer (1950-1958), influencing many African students and making lasting friendships. In 1958, he obtained the new post of Reader in the Comparative Study of Religions at King's College, University of London. Awarded a personal chair in 1970, he was Dean of the Faculty of Theology (1972-1974) and retired after 19 years' work in 1977.

It is through his teaching, writing, radio and television talks that Geoffrey Parrinder exercised a wide influence on students, teachers and the general public. Best known among his former students is Archbishop Desmond Tutu who graciously wrote the foreword to a *Festschrift* published by former students, colleagues and friends for Parrinder's eightieth birthday in 1990.

Parrinder was a founder member of the British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR), acted as its Honorary Secretary (1960-1972) and subsequently became its President (1972-1977), and then a life member. He was also very active in the London Society for the Study of Religion (LSSR), whose President he was from 1980-1982, and in the London Society of Jews and Christians (LSJC), which elected him President (1981-1990), and then Honorary Life President (1990). Other important activities included the World Congress of Faiths and the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education of which he was a founder member and Co-President until 1987. He argued for the study of world religions at all levels of education and gave much encouragement to those working in schools and colleges.

He served on the editorial boards of several journals and gave many special lectures: the Charles Strong Lectures in Sydney (1964), the Wilde Lectures in Natural and Comparative Religion at Oxford (1966-1969), the Westcott Teape Lectures in India (1973). He was also a visiting professor at the International Christian University in Tokyo (1977-1978) and a visiting lecturer at the University of Surrey (1978-1982).

His publishing output was phenomenal. A bibliography of his writings lists 29 single-authored and six edited books between 1949 and 1992, apart from numerous

shorter works. He last wrote in January 2003 when he produced once more his report on 'Religion' for the *Annual Register of World Events*, which he had done for 45 years, the first and only person to do so.

As to the lasting contribution and originality of his research, his pioneering work on African religions probably ranks highest, but his wide influence is largely due to the many works he wrote on Indian religions, on Islam, and on comparative themes which appealed to a wide reading public. The much used textbook *What World Religions Teach* has been his best-selling title, and his first work, *West African Religion*, was in print for forty years while others have often been reprinted.

His memory and influence will live on in the people he touched through his presence, his work, his unstinting efforts at promoting dialogue, better understanding and closer collaboration between members of different faiths and cultures, and in advancing the study of religions as a significant subject area which deserves its rightful place in all educational institutions, from schools to universities. A service of thanksgiving for his life was held on July 4 at Orpington Methodist Church where he and his wife Mary worshipped for more than forty years. It was a life of many blessings, richly lived with and for others. It was a service that honoured a truly great and good man, blessed with a sense of abundance and a love of life, a man of learning, a man of family and many friends from many lands. Geoffrey Parrinder was a man of great compassion, kindness and a large heart who flourished as a human being and made others flourish around him. He is survived by his wife Mary, a daughter and a son, eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. One son predeceased him.

Rosalind I. J. Hackett  
The University of Tennessee

## AFRICAN MEMORIES

### E. GEOFFREY PARRINDER IN MEMORIAM

The first professor ever to give me one of his or her publications was E. Geoffrey Parrinder. The gift of this book proved more memorable than either of us could have anticipated. I remember the moment well in 1975—we had returned to his office at King's College, London after a class on Islam. I informed him that I was heading to Ibadan, Nigeria, to conduct field research for my M.Phil. He grabbed this unassuming black book off his shelf and handed it to me. I saw that it was entitled, *Religion in an African City* (1953). Professor Parrinder explained that it was the fruits of a team research project, which he led, to document the multi-religious landscape of the great Nigerian metropolis, Ibadan. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, he served as a lecturer in the newly formed Department of Religious Studies at the University of Ibadan (UI). He made it a point to tell me proudly that the department at UI, even though a daughter institution of the University of London, was named the Department of Religious Studies to reflect its more pluralistic setting. He also emphasized its antecedence to many other Religious Studies departments in Britain. Ibadan was, and still is, a huge bustling city where Islam, Christianity and traditional religions share space and negotiate power.

The famous book got packed with personal effects and shipped off to Nigeria. Not long after I arrived in Nigeria, the time came to go to the famed cargo shed at Lagos airport to retrieve the boxes. It seemed like an impossible task, wandering around in the chaos of boxes and spilled contents to locate one's own beloved belongings. On the verge of giving up, I suddenly espied, at eye level perched on top of a pile of boxes, the Parrinder book! I was overjoyed to find it and even more so, when I realized that it was a pointer to my boxes below! I did write to Professor Parrinder and let him know that his book proved to be more illuminating than he could have hoped for. I also took up the challenge that he tossed in my direction, back in 1974. 'Why don't you update the book?', he had said. I did in fact go on to do a study of religious pluralism for my Ph.D., only in the smaller south-eastern Nigeria town of Calabar, over on the other side of the country (*Religion in Calabar: The Religious Life and History of a Nigerian Town* [1988]). By that time, newer churches and religious movements abounded, making the mapping of the town's religious landscape a logistical challenge.

I found it admirable that a former Methodist missionary, turned professor, was so interested in traditional African religions, in addition to his expertise in Islam and Christianity. He had gone and interviewed Yoruba priests and visited shrines when in Ibadan. I learned from a Methodist colleague, who taught several years after he did at the *Ecole de Théologie* in then Dahomey (now Benin Republic), that Parrinder raised some eyebrows among the staff there by his interest in traditional religious belief and practice. It led him to write a very general, but eminently fair and useful, study, *African Traditional Religion* (1954). As quite possibly the first ever comparative work on this subject it constituted a landmark text, even though it was eventually eclipsed in popularity by John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy* (1970). *African Traditional Religion* has ensured scholarly recognition and even immortality for Geoffrey Parrinder throughout Africa. It spawned similar studies from the likes of E. Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (1973) (who served as head of department at UI, before going on to become 'Patriarch' of the Methodist Church in Nigeria), J. Amosade Awolalu (who also became head), and J. P. Dopamu, *West African Traditional Religion* (1979). I found that the mere mention of Parrinder's name in academic and religious circles in Nigeria had a cachet which opened doors for me, an unknown postgraduate student from Britain. I can perhaps claim that I learned how to name drop thanks to Geoffrey Parrinder! This is a vital skill in Nigeria, not least Africa as a whole. You are someone by virtue of whom you come from and who you know.

I am not sure how much Geoffrey Parrinder kept up on the religious news from Nigeria over the last three decades. When he was there, prior to political independence in 1960, Nigeria could vaunt itself as a fount of religious tolerance, something that Parrinder noted in his 1953 study. Not long after I arrived, in the 1970s the harmonious co-existence began to turn sour, with wranglings over the place of Shari'a in the new Constitution, and before long, deadly riots between Muslims and Christians, which tragically continue to the present day. I am sure that Parrinder would not have been happy to have learned that in recent years Muslim scholars broke away from the Department of Religious Studies at UI to found a separate department of Arabic and Islamic Studies (although Islam is still taught by the valiant Professor Joseph Kenny, a Dominican priest). Nor would he have liked to hear that courses on traditional religion no longer have the place in the curriculum they once had, and indeed their livelihood is threatened by those with more conservative Christian leanings.

Geoffrey Parrinder laid important foundations for many, not least me, because of his early African experience and publications. The study of African religions has naturally evolved considerably, and there is now a thriving African Association for the Study of Religion (<http://www.a-asr.org>), under the auspices of the International Association for the History of Religions. So it is the least we can do to pay our dues to our ancestors such as Geoffrey Parrinder. 'If we stand tall,' the Yoruba say, 'it is because we stand on the shoulders of many ancestors'.

J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu  
Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana

**KWESI DICKSON**  
1929 – 26.10.2005

The Most Rev. Professor Emeritus Kwesi A. Dickson passed away on Wednesday October 26, 2005. He died at the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra after a short illness. He was 76. Prof. Dickson was a Guan of the Efutu stock from Winneba in the Central Region of Ghana. Traditionally, past presidents [Presiding Bishops] of the Methodist Church Ghana have been buried on the grounds of the Methodist chapels in their towns or villages. Prof. Dickson was the 7<sup>th</sup> President of the Methodist Church Ghana and so he will be interred on the grounds of the Ebenezer Methodist Cathedral in Winneba, his hometown. Two months prior to his death, Prof. Dickson delivered the 170<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lectures of the Methodist Church Ghana in Accra. A couple of weeks later he was admitted to the hospital and just when friends and loved ones were expecting him to be discharged, the Lord called him home to glory. His contributions to Christian scholarship, the ecumenical movement, and church life in Africa and the world have been phenomenal.

Prof. Kwesi Dickson was educated at the oldest and leading Methodist mission boys' secondary school, Mfantshipim in Cape Coast, Ghana. After receiving basic ministerial training at the Trinity Theological Seminary (then Trinity College in Kumasi) in 1951, he continued his studies at the then University College of the Gold Coast (now University of Ghana). Following postgraduate studies at Oxford, Prof. Dickson was ordained into the ministry of the Methodist Church Ghana at the British Conference of 1957. He taught at the University of Ghana, Legon, for three continuous decades until 1989. During this period he also served the university as Head of the Department for the Study of Religions, Master of Commonwealth Hall, first Dean of Students, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Director, Institute of African Studies, Legon. During his long and eventful career as university teacher, Professor Dickson also served as visiting professor to several universities. These include the Union Theological Seminary, New York and his alma mater, Mansfield College, Oxford. On various occasions he stood in as adjunct professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, when the need arose. He was a fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences and served for two terms as its President.

Prof. Kwesi Dickson published widely in the fields of Old Testament studies, church and society, Christian mission, and African theology. When his colleague, the

Englishman Rev. Dr. Sidney G. Williamson died in October 1959, the onus fell on Prof. Dickson to edit his PhD thesis for publication. That manuscript subsequently appeared as *Akan Religion and the Christian Faith* (1965<sup>1</sup>, 1974<sup>2</sup>). In 1966, Prof. Dickson wrote a new 19-page introduction to J. B. Danquah's seminal work *The Akan Doctrine of God* (1968). In 1976 his inaugural lecture given as professor of the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Ghana was published under the title *The Human Dimension in the Theological Quest*. In that publication he draws attention to the need for theological thinking to be done by persons 'only in and through their presuppositions and their values'. In his words, 'a theologian is one who has thought through religion in terms of his existence' (p. 12). Prof. Dickson later put these ideas into action in his major work *Theology in Africa* (1984), which is still one of the most authoritative in the field. In 1991, that is, just after his induction into office as the President of the Methodist Church Ghana Conference, he published *Uncompleted Mission: The Christian Faith and Exclusivism*. The name 'Kwesi Dickson' became a household one among General Certificate of Education Ordinary and Advanced level candidates because of his series of standard textbooks on the Old and New Testaments that have been in use in African schools and colleges since the 1970s.

Prof. Kwesi A. Dickson combined an illustrious academic career with an outstanding ecclesiastical service. In 1989, whilst on sabbatical at the University of Swaziland, he was designated and subsequently elected President of the Methodist Church Ghana. He served for two terms in that capacity retiring in 1997. In the 1990s he was Chairman of the Christian Council of Ghana and is the immediate past President of the All African Conference of Churches. Prof. Dickson also served the Word Council of Churches in various capacities. He spoke impeccable English, was keen on phonetics, but was equally adept in his mother tongue, *mfantse*. For his pastime, he played Lawn Tennis regularly even in retirement. Prof. Dickson will be remembered as one of Africa's most outstanding Old Testament scholars, a theologian of international repute, churchman, musician, ecumenist and sportsman. He will be sorely missed within the theological academy, the church, and within the Legon Tennis-playing fraternity for distinguishing himself as an African Christian, theologian and social being of solid worth, humility and high moral integrity.



# REPORTS

Afe Adogame  
AASR General Secretary

## REPORT ON THE AD-HOC AASR MEETING, UNIVERSITY OF BAYREUTH, 26 SEPTEMBER 2005

An ad-hoc AASR meeting was held on 26 September 2005 on the occasion of the 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the German Association for the History of Religions (DVRG) at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, from 25 to 28 September 2005.

### *In attendance*

The meeting was attended by Elom Dovlo (President), Afe Adogame (Secretary), Jan Platvoet (AASR Bulletin Co-Editor/Internet Officer), Umar Danfulani (Member), Ezra Chitando (Member), Chibueze Udeani (Member), and Stefan Hoeschele (Member).

### *Quorum*

The meeting considered that though no quorum was formed either as an Executive or a General Meeting, it was nevertheless a significant forum to discuss and propose recommendations on several urgent, pending issues affecting the AASR. Consequently, recommendations from this meeting are subject to the ratification and approval of the AASR Executive. Thus, the purpose of this report is to acquaint the AASR Executive with the new proposals but at the same time get their suggestions, ratification and approval through the e-mail medium. As we would like to publish some of our recommendations in AASR Bulletin 24, which is soon going to press, your prompt responses, suggestions and approval will be greatly appreciated.

### *National Representatives*

There is an urgent need to appoint National Representatives to complement the duties of Regional Representatives. You will recall earlier suggestions (from Elom and Afe) in an email correspondence in this matter. Please look once more at them and send us immediately your nominations for National Representatives in the various regions.

### *Annual membership dues*

From January 2006, Regional and National Representatives are to work hand in hand to ensure prompt payment and collection of annual membership dues (see procedure for disbursement and allocation in attached file). Closing dates should be set for the renewal of membership and payment of membership dues annually. An annual renewal of membership status with the payment of dues was suggested after the model of several professional bodies such as the ASA and AAR who also follow this procedure. Any member who fails to pay his/her annual dues for two calendar years (without any concrete

reasons brought before the AASR Executive), stands to forfeit his membership status. However, any such a person who wishes to reapply for membership in future would need to state in writing why he/she should be reconsidered. In addition, one pre-condition for re-admittance is the payment of dues in arrears.<sup>3</sup>

#### *AASR 2007 Conference*

Regional or National AASR bodies are encouraged to forward a detailed proposal for hosting the forthcoming Conference in 2007. The Executive Council to suggest possible themes for AASR Conference 2007. Any member is free to come up with suggestions of a central theme for the Conference. We need to set out some deadlines and put machinery in motion for the planning and execution of this conference. Your ideas and suggestions will be warmly welcomed.

#### *Review of AASR cooperation with the Journal of Religion in Africa*

The AASR Executive is to contact the Management and Executive Editors of the Journal of Religion in Africa for discussion and clarification of its existing mode of cooperation. The aim is to forge new levels of relationship and cooperation that will be of mutual benefit and interest. In specific terms, we propose

- (i) an official AASR Representation on the Editorial and or on the Management Board of the Journal,
- (ii) a number of complimentary copies of each issue of the Journal for the AASR. The AASR Executive would use its discretion to donate this to AASR Regional/National bodies or specific institutions of religious studies in Africa that meets the criteria to be set by the Executive. For instance, the number of financial members in a specific institution or department might be one of such. In a little way, this will help to arrest the book famine facing our institutions in Africa.

#### *Management of the AASR internet site*

The effective management and running of the new AASR website depend largely on finance. The meeting considered establishing a special 'AASR Internet Fund' for that purpose through donations from individual members, regional bodies, institutions and corporate bodies. We considered this a realistic option to financing the website from our 'lean' purse. To set the ball rolling, the following donations were realised: Elom Dovlo (€100), Afe Adogame (€100) and Ezra Chitando (€50). All members are encouraged to please send in their individual and institutional donations and pledges (cash/cheques) towards AASR Internet Fund. Cash and cheques should be sent to Jan Platvoet, Afe Adogame or through any Officer of the AASR Executive or Regional Representative. Contrary to his earlier plan of early retirement from the management of the Internet website, Jan Platvoet has generously agreed to stay on until the construction and development process stabilizes.

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<sup>3</sup> Note from the Editor: In the e-mail discussions on this report between members of the AASR Executive this measure was found too severe and rejected.



*Beefing up activities on the African continent*

The meeting reiterated the urgent need to beef up academic programmes, research collaboration, exchange of scholarly works, conferences and symposia, and other scholarly activities on the continent.

*Associate membership*

Associate membership in the AASR, particularly by graduate students, should be encouraged. A graduate student application for associate membership should be accompanied with a recommendation by a financial AASR member. We should also work out the modalities for sponsoring graduate students to scholarly conferences and seminars at both national and international levels.

*Annual reports*

For smooth running of the organization, each AASR Executive member should forward a report annually. This will enable us assess our progress on a periodic basis as well as work towards improving our deficiencies at the same time.

Kathleen O'Brien Wicker  
AASR-NA Regional Representative

## REPORT ON THE AASR-NA MEETING IN PHILADELPHIA, PA, USA, NOVEMBER 19, 2005

A business meeting of the African Association for the Study of Religions in North America (AASR-NA) was held during the African Religions Group business meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) in Philadelphia, PA, USA, on November 19, 2005. Professor Afe Adogame provided an update on the goals and activities of the AASR to both members and others in attendance at the business meeting. Professor Kathleen Wicker encouraged old members to pay their 2006 dues and invited non-members to join our organization. She also informed members that the AASR would bring forward the name of Professor Elom Dovlo to the African Religions Group and to the International Connections Committee of the AAR as a potential invited lecturer at the AAR in 2006. The AAR has designated 2006 as a year for an African focus in the activities of the organization. The nomination was received positively. Other African scholars from the continent were also suggested as potential speakers during the ICC meeting that followed. Limited funds are available from the AAR for this purpose. The AASR-NA is prepared to support travel to the conference to invited speakers to the limits of our resources. Efforts are already underway in the African Religions Group to set up speaking invitations for invited scholars in order to defray the costs involved in travel to the conference.

Several additional discussions were held informally among members during the conference. The appointment of Professor Musa Dube of the University of Botswana as

the regional representative for Botswana was recommended. She has expressed a willingness to consider an invitation to host the 2007 meeting of the AASR in Botswana.

Dues will be sent to the Treasurer of the AASR Executive from the AASR-NA on a twice-yearly basis, (March and September) following the agreed 40/60% division of funds between the international and our region. Membership will be based on the calendar year. It should be anticipated that the funds we submit in March will exceed those sent in September, since the major dues campaign will be held October-December. Appeals for special funds beyond what is submitted semi-annually by the AASR-NA will be directed to the members and will not be the responsibility of the AASR-NA. The AASR-NA requests that the Executive submit to the members an annual projected budget, beginning in 2006.

The AASR-NA will apply to the AAR for Related Scholarly Organization status by their deadline in March.

Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton  
University of Virginia

**REPORT**  
**ON THE ARG SESSIONS**  
**AT THE 2005 AAR ANNUAL MEETING,**  
**PHILADELPHIA, USA, 19-22.11.05**

On November 19-22, the joint Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This year the meeting drew a record 9,900 attendees, scholars who came from all over the United States and Canada, as well as from overseas. As always, the AAR/SBL conference featured hundreds of paper sessions, roundtables, and workshops on a vast array of topics and themes in religious studies, not to mention a large book exhibit, special fora, musical performances, and social events. The annual meeting also provides an opportunity for colleges and universities with openings to interview prospective faculty. In an effort to expand its international scope, the AAR recently began highlighting a different region of the globe in the programming for each annual meeting. The 2005 international focus was Eastern Europe. The conference thus featured nine sessions devoted to religion in Eastern Europe, as well as relevant cultural events such as a performance by the famous Voloshky Ukrainian Dance Ensemble. A number of scholars from Eastern Europe received sponsorships to attend the conference. The international focus for 2006 will be Africa (see below.)

To date, the most popular type of session at the AAR Annual Meeting is the 'paper session' which consists of brief presentations (15-20 minutes each) by up to four panelists on a common theme. Usually, the presenters submit full-length versions of their papers in advance to the session respondent, who kicks off the discussion. Each session is sponsored by one of the many program units ("sections," "groups," or "consultations") that have formed over the years within the AAR to cultivate ongoing exchange among

scholars who share expertise and/or interest in a particular field or subject area within religious studies.

The African Religions Group (ARG) is one such unit. This year, we sponsored two paper sessions of our own, and co-sponsored a third. The first session titled, 'African Religions and the Neo-diaspora', featured the following papers: '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); and 'Up, Up Jesus! Down, Down Satan!: African Religiosity in the former Soviet Bloc' by Afe Adagome (Edinburgh University). Kimberly Rae Conor (University of San Francisco), chaired the session, and Jacob Olupona (University of California, Davis) served as respondent. Approximately 50 people attended this session which generated a thought-provoking discussion about the variety of levels on which "diaspora" is constructed and conceptualized—across continental boundaries; within Africa itself, and ultimately as a personal orientation.

Our second session was titled 'Issues in the Historiography of African Religions'. Historians as well as religious studies scholars and anthropologists contributed to this session, which featured the following papers: 'Religion in the Time of the Ancestors: Methodological Issues in the Interpretation of Pre-Colonial African Religious History' by Robert Baum (University of Missouri); 'Separating the Historical from the Mythical in Ese 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). Gwinyai Muzorewa (Lincoln University) chaired the session, which drew a crowd of approximately 60 people and generated an illuminating discussion that highlighted the contributions of a number of African scholars/activists to the historiography of African religions. Participants and audience revisited the insider/outsider dilemma, and arrived at the general consensus that this simplistic dichotomy must be problematized further.

The ARG co-sponsored a third session with the Afro-American Religious History Group on 'the African American Episcopal Church and Africa'. The AME, the first all-black Christian denomination in the United States, was founded in Philadelphia in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The following papers were presented: 'The Other African Methodists in Philadelphia: Zoar United Methodist Church' by J. Gordon Melton, (Institute for the Study of American Religion); 'The Loss of the African-Centeredness of the AME 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) chaired the session and Jualynne Dodson (Michigan State University) served as discussant. The session was not as well attended as the other two, in part, we surmise, because the panel took place on Sunday morning, when many potential attendees may have been in church. Nevertheless, a lively discussion ensued as Jualynne Dodson called for a broadening of historical and sociological perspectives to take into account the vital role that women played in the establishment and institutionalization of the AME movement. In conjunction with the session, we toured the original AME church, known as "Mother Bethel" which is located in the heart of historic Philadelphia, not far from the Convention Center. The site of Mother Bethel is the oldest piece of land continuously owned by African Americans in the United States.

*Looking Ahead to AAR 2006*

The ARG is eagerly preparing for the 2006 AAR Annual Meeting whose international focus is on Africa, as announced in the last two issues of the AASR Bulletin. The conference will take place in Washington, D.C., on November 18-21, 2006. It represents an excellent opportunity for members of the AASR. Please be on the lookout for the AAR Call for Papers, which will be available online via the AAR website on February 1<sup>st</sup>. Log onto the AAR website at <http://www.aarweb.org/> and click on 'Meetings' to access the call. Please note that proposals must be submitted **promptly**, by March 1. Limited funding is available to African scholars. There are more than 100 program units in the AAR, and each of them will contribute a paragraph to the call for papers. All units have been urged to feature sessions that highlight African themes and African scholarship, so read over the entire call carefully.

The ARG will be inviting papers on the following themes:

- 1) African indigenous religions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Topics may include the impact of neo-Pentecostalism, transnationalism and migration; women's participation and roles.
- 2) Religion and public life in Africa. We invite discussion of religion as it relates to politics, law, human rights, violence, peace-making, and globalization.
- 3) With the Ritual Studies Group we will co-sponsor a session on Ritual in contemporary Africa. Topics may include ritual, identity and community; ritual responses to AIDS and other crises; theorizing African ritual.
- 4) With the Religions, Medicines and Healing Group, we will sponsor a session on Religion and public health in Africa. Topics may include religion and the politics of health; faith-based initiatives in public health; mixed health-seeking strategies in Africa.

For more information about the 2006 AAR Meeting, feel free to contact Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton (Co-chair, African Religions Group): [chh3a@virginia.edu](mailto:chh3a@virginia.edu)



## AN ARTICLE

Abdulkadir Hashim  
University of Nairobi

### MUSLIM-STATE RELATIONS IN KENYA AFTER THE REFERENDUM ON THE CONSTITUTION

Religio-state encounter between Muslims and the Kenyan government since independence can be traced in three phases. The first phase commenced with Muslim efforts prior to the independence to entrench their religious status in the Constitution of Kenya. These efforts culminated in securing Muslims religious courts (Kadhi Courts) and establishing them in the Kenyan Constitution. The next phase started soon after independence when the whole of East African region embarked on reforming its personal laws. Kenya, like her neighbours, established commissions to review and reform marriage and succession laws. Muslims, among others, were in the forefront in opposing these reforms. As a result of political pressures, Muslims were exempted from these reforms. The third phase was triggered by the constitution review process that started in the year 2000 and was concluded on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2005 when Kenyans went to the ballot box for the referendum on the constitution of Kenya. A majority of Kenyans, including Muslims, rejected the proposed constitution. This paper will trace the trends of these events and explore the causes and its consequences.

#### *Background to the colonial constitution making process*

Before independence, Kenya was ruled by two monarchs, the Queen of England and the Sultan of Zanzibar. The coastal strip was under the reign of the Sultan who later sought British protection. The interior of part of Kenya was a British colony. The relationship between the British and the Sultan pertaining to the coastal strip was governed by a treaty that was signed on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1895. The agreement was entitled the '1895 Agreement between Great Britain and Zanzibar respecting the possession of the Sultan of Zanzibar on the mainland and adjacent islands, exclusive of Zanzibar and Pemba'. The pact declared that the coastal strip would still belong to His Highness the Sultan, though it would be administered by the British. This in turn assured that the subjects of the Sultan in the coastal strip would enjoy prosperity and freedom of religion and worship.

In early sixties, struggle for independence was looming in Kenya and fears emanated as to the future course of the country. The British administration favoured the up-country ethnic groups which led to a shift in power towards the uplands.<sup>4</sup> This led Muslims to solicit for self-rule along the 10 mile Coastal Strip which was championed by

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<sup>4</sup> Abdin Chande 2000, 'Radicalism and Reform in East Africa', in Nehemia Levtzion & Randall L. Pouwels (eds.), 2000, *The History of Islam in Africa*. Athens: Ohio University, 350.

the Mwambao movement.<sup>5</sup> Muslims were given assurances by the Governor of Kenya, Sir Evelyn Baring on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1958 that “the 1895 Agreement would remain the basis of the administration of the Protectorate”. Due to discontent with the situation, representatives of the Coastal people went to meet the Sultan of Zanzibar in May 1960. Their main concern was that if the coastal strip would become part of an independent Kenya, they would be subjugated by an upcountry government that would compromise their culture and religion.

At the request of the Sultan of Zanzibar, the British government appointed a Commissioner, James W. Robertson in September 1961 and charged him to report on the ‘changes considered to be advisable in the 1895 Agreement relating to the coastal strip, as a result of the course of constitutional development in Kenya’. In his report submitted to the British Government and the Sultan of Zanzibar<sup>6</sup>, Mr. Robertson recommended incorporation of the coastal strip into Kenya before independence subject to certain safeguards being given to the coastal people which should be entrenched in the constitution. The Sultan of Zanzibar was prepared to relinquish his sovereignty on the coastal strip on the condition that he would be assured that the religious persuasions of his subjects would be safeguarded as set out in the Robertson’s Report. On 8<sup>th</sup> October 1963 an agreement was signed by Duncan Sandays, Sayyid Jamshid, Jomo Kenyatta and Sheikh Muhammad Shamte to surrender the ten mile coastal strip to Kenya.

Among the safeguards included in the agreement was freedom of worship for all people living in the strip and more in particular for the citizens of Sultan and its future generations. It also provided that powers of the Chief Kadhi and other Kadhis should be protected and that they should judge according to Sharia in matters of marriage, divorce and inheritance. This paved the way for the Kadhi courts to be enshrined in the 1963 Constitution of Kenya. On 14<sup>th</sup> June 1967, the Kadhis’ Courts Act was promulgated ‘to prescribe certain matters relating the Kadhis’ Courts under the Constitution, and for purposes connected therewith and incidental thereto’. Some members of Parliament opposed the principle of separate courts and laws for Muslims. This was rejected on the ground that Kadhis’ Courts were provided in the Constitution hence an amendment to the Constitution would be required to effect the change.

#### *Post independent reforms on personal laws*

East African countries were dissatisfied with the state of their personal laws in the post-independent era. Colonial experience called for the need to restructure the applicable laws and remove the various forms of conflicts and discriminations that have been caused by the colonial legal set up. In Kenya, the Government set up two Commissions in 1967, one on the Law of Marriage and Divorce and the other on the Law of Succession. The terms of reference for these Commissions were ‘to make recommendations for a new law providing a comprehensive and, so far as may be practicable, uniform code applicable to all persons in Kenya, which will replace the existing law on the subject comprising customary law, Islamic law, Hindu law and relevant Acts of Parliament and to prepare a draft of the new law’. Several attempts were made to enact a Bill on mar-

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed study, see A.I. Salim 1970, ‘The Movement for “Mwambao” or Coast Autonomy in Kenya, 1953-63’, in Bethwell A. Ogot (ed.) 1970, *Hadith 2*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 212-228

<sup>6</sup> *The Kenya Coastal Strip: Report by the Commissioner*, Government Printers, Zanzibar, 1962.

riage and divorce drafted by the Commission but they all failed. The last Bill was forwarded to the House in 1979. The male dominated Parliament rejected the Bill on the ground that it was too western and gave too many rights to women.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the Commission on the Law of Succession drafted a Bill of the Law of Succession and forwarded it to the Parliament in 1970 but failed. However, the Bill was passed in the second attempt and paved the way for the Law of Succession Act 1972. Kenyatta kept the Bill pending his assent and 'thought it prudent not to hurt Muslim sensibilities or those of the majority of Africans'.<sup>8</sup>

The Commission on the Law of Succession was of the view that 'the existence of different laws of succession within the same territorial legal jurisdiction necessarily causes problems'.<sup>9</sup> The Commission cited defects found in the Islamic Law of Succession such as its 'failure to cater for non-Muslim relatives who cannot inherit the property of a deceased Muslim'. It further noted that 'The Mohammedan Marriage, Divorce and Succession Act (Laws of Kenya Chapter 156) considers marriage as the only basis for one's qualification to inherit in relation to Islamic Law of Succession'.

Muslims on the other hand opposed the Bill on the ground that according to the provisions of sec. 5 (1) 'Muslims were required to make wills in order for them to have their property devolve according to the Islamic Law of Succession'. They further pointed out that the Bill allows adopted children to inherit and provides for equal division of assets of the deceased among heirs regardless of their sexes. Due to political reasons, the Act remained inoperative until 1<sup>st</sup> July 1981 when it was gazetted. Thereafter, Muslims continued to campaign against the Act. In 1990, voices of multi-party politics were gaining momentum in Kenya. Moi's single party regime was facing a lot of opposition from several pressure groups. In this atmosphere, Moi wanted to 'win the hearts of the Muslims' and gain their support. Due to Muslim political pressures, Moi ordered in 1990 that Muslims be exempted from the application of the uniform Law of Succession Act and provided for the devolution of testate and intestate succession in accordance with Islamic law.

### *Constitution of Kenya review process*

Debates on reviewing the Constitution of Kenya started in mid-1990. They engaged political as well as religious circles. Main concerns of the stakeholders in various forums included the proper representation of marginalised ethnic groups, an equitable share of power and resources, and religious as well as gender equality. The review was geared towards the protection of human rights and ensuring people's participation with transparency and accountability. Public debates on the constitutional reforms exerted pressure on the government. Moi announced on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1995 of the Government's plan to invite foreign experts to draft a constitution but the idea never materialised.<sup>10</sup> Due to the lack of government's commitment to the review process, civic groups supported by op-

<sup>7</sup> Cotran, E, 1996, 'Marriage, Divorce and Succession Laws in Kenya: Is Integration or Unification Possible?', in *Journal of African Law* 40, 2: 202

<sup>8</sup> Mohamed Bakari, 1995, 'Muslims and the Politics of Change in Kenya', in Mohamed Bakari & Saad S. Yahya (eds.) 1995, *Islam in Kenya: Proceedings of the National Seminar on Contemporary Islam in Kenya*. Mombasa: Mewa Publications, 241

<sup>9</sup> *The Report of the Commission on the Law of Succession*, Nairobi: Government Press, 1980, para.37-38

<sup>10</sup> Draft Final report of the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission, 2004, p.13

position political parties pressured the government for a comprehensive review of the constitution. This resulted in the political parties commencing inter-party negotiations within the framework of the Inter-Party Parliamentary Group (IIPG) in August 1997.

On the other hand, the government reacted by enacting the Constitution of Kenya Review Act in 1997 to provide the legal framework for the constitutional review. The Review Act 1997 was rejected due to lack of due consultation with the stakeholders. This led to negotiations in Bomas of Kenya and Safari Park Hotel between June and October 1998 with the aim to identify an acceptable framework for the process. A committee of 12 persons was nominated by political parties, civil society, women and religious organisations. The result was that the Act was amended in 1998 to reflect the consensus reached during these negotiations. The various stakeholders could not agree however on the nomination of the commissioners. This stalemate resulted in two parallel review initiatives. The first was the Parliamentary initiative supported by the then ruling party KANU among others. The other was the Ufungamano initiative, backed by national religious organisations, opposition parties and the civil society.

The Ufungamano initiative appointed the People's Commission of Kenya to collect and collate views from Kenyans. The Parliamentary initiative established a Parliamentary Select Committee on the Constitution review to consider further the question of how to restart the stalled review process. The proposals of the Parliamentary Select Committee led to further amendments to the Review Act in 2000 that reflected due consideration to ethnic and social diversity during the selection of the commissioners. The Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC) was finally established in November 2000. In an effort to bring about the merger of the two processes, the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission mandated its chairperson, Prof. Yash Ghai to facilitate negotiations between the Ufungamano initiative and the Parliamentary Select Committee that led to a merger in December 2000. The review Act was again amended in May 2001 to incorporate the terms of the merger agreement. Membership of the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission accommodated ethnic as well as religious backgrounds. A striking feature is that one quarter of the commissioners appointed were Muslims. For the first time, in post-independent Kenya's history, Muslims were privileged to have such a representation in a statutory body.

The Constitution of Kenya Review Commission went round the country to collect and collate views of Kenyans on the constitutional review. Efforts of the commission culminated in the publishing of its recommendations in a report entitled 'The People's Choice' on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2002. The final Draft Constitution was adopted by the National Constitutional Assembly and was published on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2004 and verified and confirmed by the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission. Among proposals recommended by the document was devolution of power at the provincial and district level. It also provided for sharing of power between the president and the prime minister in running the affairs of the state. It further secured social and economic rights to the marginalised ethnic groups. With regard to Muslims' position, the Commission recommended retaining the status quo of the Kadhi's Courts as provided in the 1963 Constitution.

The recommendations presented by CKRC led to a lot of controversy that set an arena for political debates. The draft proposals went through several stages of discussions. Later, a Parliament Parliamentary Select Committee was established to present its proposals in the form of the Proposals of the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Re-



view of the Constitution of Kenya July 2005. As far as Muslims are concerned, the Committee adopted the proposals made by the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission. The government was dissatisfied with the proposals forwarded by both the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission and the Parliamentary Select Committee. In order to streamline these proposals, the government forwarded them to the Attorney General to be put them in 'a proper legal format'. Finally, the Attorney General published the Proposed New Constitution of Kenya on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2005. This brought the constitution review process to an end awaiting the people of Kenya to voice their views. The Electoral Commission of Kenya announced the date for referendum to be on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2005. Kenyans had the option of either adopting or rejecting the proposed constitution drafted by the Attorney General.

#### *Referendum on the Constitution of Kenya*

The release of the draft constitutions swerved opinions of Kenyans and divided their stand across the country. The referendum took a political profile and the atmosphere was set for political commotion. The government with all its machinery urged Kenyans to approve the proposed draft by the Attorney General. On the other hand, several Ministers appealed to their countrymen to reject it. Division of opinions did not spare the religious circles. Most Christian churches adopted a middle path by calling on its adherents to study the proposed constitution drafted by the Attorney General and make their 'own choice'. This included the Kenya Episcopal Conference (KEC) and the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK). On the other hand, the Kenya Church called on its faithful to reject the document. The Church had earlier on presented its views to the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission in a detailed document.<sup>11</sup> The Kenya Church pointed out that 'the personal laws of these two minority religions (Muslims and Hindus) cannot be given a constitutional recognition to the total exclusion of all other religions in Kenya and especially of the mainstream Christian religion which comprises over 80% of the population'. Muslims countered this argument by stating that 'the Constitution and laws of Kenya reflect the Judeo-Christian origins and beliefs of the colonial masters. Indeed the conduct of state is manifestly Christian in nature. Christian law is the basis for the practice of family law in Kenya'.<sup>12</sup>

The draft proposed by the Attorney General provided for a sweeping section in the constitution that established religious courts including Christian courts, Kadhi's courts and Hindu courts. Jurisdiction of these courts was however confined to the determination of matters related to personal status as may be prescribed by an Act of Parliament. The Attorney General's efforts to provide courts for all faiths served as a double edged sword in that on one hand it responded to the call of the Church of Kenya in treating all religions equally. On the other hand, the Attorney General managed to shrink the status of the Kadhis courts to avoid favouring the Muslims alone.

A majority of Muslims pleaded that the proposed constitution be opposed. This 'No'-stand, which was supported by the Majlis Ulamaa-Kenya,<sup>13</sup> came to the public for

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<sup>11</sup> The Kenya Church, Recommendations to the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission on the Proposed Draft Constitution of the Republic of Kenya, Nairobi December 2002

<sup>12</sup> 'The Muslim Position: A Response to the Kenya Church Concerns', Muslim Task Force on Constitutional Review, Nairobi, January 2003

<sup>13</sup> The Majlis Ulamaa-Kenya is an umbrella body of Muslim scholars that represents all the provinces of Kenya. A group of Muslim professionals visited South Africa in 2003 and benefited from

the first time and appealed to Muslims to reject the document. The Majlis Ulamaa-Kenya was officially inaugurated on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2005, after a culmination of efforts that brought together more than 300 Muslim scholars in the single biggest gathering of its kind in Nairobi from 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> April 2005. After a day long consultative meeting held at Jamia Mosque Nairobi, the Majlis noted: 'We are satisfied that, as it currently stands, the Wako Draft must not become the constitution of the country'.<sup>14</sup> Conversely, the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims adopted a middle stand by urging Muslims to go for civic education before making their informed choice.

*Reflections on the aftermath of the referendum*

The results of the Referendum were released on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2005. It proved that 57% of the Kenyan voters had rejected the proposed constitution. Muslim dominated constituencies in the Coast Province voted against the document by a margin of 80%, and that of Northern Eastern Province rejected it by a majority of 75%. The rejection of the proposed constitution has had repercussions beyond the document itself. Columnists in the daily newspapers analysed the results from different perspectives and noted that the government 'failed to study the mood of the people'. This was evident from the fact that even the strongest dignitaries surrounding the President had failed to deliver votes in their own constituencies. The Majlis Ulamaa-Kenya in a press release pointed out that 'apart from the outright danger the proposed constitution poses to the Kadhis courts, it did not reflect the wishes of Kenyans'. It further accused the Attorney General of 'mutilating the people's choice which had guaranteed the fundamental rights of Kenyans. Of particular concern were provisions regarding the devolution and rights of the minority and marginalised communities'.<sup>15</sup> The results of the referendum have reiterated the unified stand of the majority of Muslims against State policy similar to the case of rejecting the Law of Succession Act as mentioned above. The rejection of the proposed constitution was supported by Muslim leaders such as the Majlis Ulamaa-Kenya and the Chief Kadhi of Kenya, Sheikh Hammad Muhammad Kassim.

President Kibaki was forced to adopt unprecedented measures of dissolving his cabinet and suspending the parliament. In taking such a stern step, the President argued that he needed to reorganise his cabinet and assure its efficient running. He promised to appoint a new cabinet that would 'serve the interests of the country' within two weeks from 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2005. A notable feature in this political stalemate is the engagement of the Church by President Kibaki despite his earlier inclination not to involve religion in politics. The State House has opened its doors to seek consultation from the clerics in a bid to create a new look for the anticipated cabinet. Adherents of other religions may view this privilege as a State favouritism of fellow faithful. The head of the Catholic Church met the President and welcomed the initiative noting: 'The Church will be more than willing to share with the President on matters like this when called up-

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the experience of the Majlis Ulama in Transvaal, hence adopted it as a model. It has been established after a series of meetings between Muslims scholars and legal experts held in Nairobi between August and October 2003. Among its objectives is to bring Muslims in the country to be untied and issue Islamic verdicts (*fatawa*) on emerging contemporary issues

<sup>14</sup> *The Friday Bulletin*, Issue No.124, Shaban 05 1426/September 09, 2005-11-30 (a publication of Jamia Mosque Committee, Nairobi)

<sup>15</sup> *Supra* Note 11

on'.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, the Protestants under the umbrella of National Council of Churches of Kenya presented a memorandum to the President on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2005 advising the State on ways to come out of the ensuing stalemate.

During the referendum campaigns, the President promised the coastal people that he would tackle the teething problems facing the region. This included development programs such as the overdue establishment of a university and lessening the rigid procedures in obtaining documents of identity. After the referendum, the National Chairman of the Majlis Ulamaa-Kenya, Sheikh Khalfan Khamis, reminded the President 'to fulfil his promises made to Muslims and to other communities and urged him to ensure that his next government reflected the diversity of the people of Kenya'.<sup>17</sup> Incidentally, the Mombasa Anglican bishop Julius Kalu said: 'Coast people had been peaceful, loyal and patient for long time and it was time they were rewarded with significant ministerial positions and not just with being in the Cabinet'.<sup>18</sup> Muslim grievances have triggered the establishment of the Islamic Party of Kenya in January 1992. Subsequently, the government denied its registration on the ground of it being a religious party. This together with other factors led Muslims to go on rampage in Mombasa on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1992 paralyzing the whole city. Muslims have demonstrated since independence that their voice counts when it comes to policy issues affecting them. This has been reflected in the results of the referendum. The government is therefore expected to honour Muslim sentiments and discontinue the inherited legacy of disregarding their grievances. In a thanks giving speech to Muslims for their united stand in rejecting the proposed constitution, six Muslim MPs urged the President to ensure proportionate Muslim representation in the new cabinet and all sectors of the government so as to reflect their 30 percent of population in Kenya. Addressing the gathering, the former Heritage Minister, Najib Balala, said: 'the unity exhibited by Muslims in the referendum campaign showed that Muslims were a united force to reckon with'. He further warned 'from now never [to] ignore the power of the Muslims'.



<sup>16</sup> *Daily Nation*, Nairobi, Friday, December 2, 2005-12-02 p.1

<sup>17</sup> *The Friday Bulletin*, Shawwal 30 1426/December 02, 2005-12-02, p.1

<sup>18</sup> *Supra* Note 12, p.4

## CONFERENCES AHEAD

Jacob Kehinde Olupona  
University of California, Davis

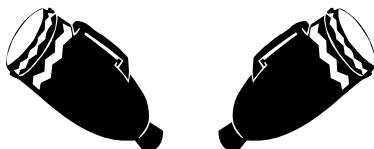
### PANEL PROPOSAL: LOCATING AFRICAN INDIGENOUS RELIGION IN A GLOBAL SPACE

Prof. Jacob Olupona, University of California, Davis, has received an invitation from the Sociology of Religion section of the World Congress of the International Association of Sociology to put together a panel on African Indigenous Religious Traditions. He will be proposing the following general theme:

There is a general concern among scholars that African traditional religions are fast disappearing and being replaced by more revivalist Islam and fundamentalist Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity. While it is true that indigenous rituals, ceremonies, and festivals in several regions of the continent are declining, at the same time forms of revitalization of indigenous traditions, especially given the influence of transnational and diaspora communities are taking place on the continent. It is also the case that African religious worldview, rituals, and belief systems such as witchcraft and 'magic' still hold sway in many places.

#### *Call for paper proposals*

Scholars are invited to examine various aspects of the transformation noticeable in indigenous traditions in the last and present centuries. From diverse methodological, theoretical angles and case studies, presenters are encouraged to examine the situations in their respective places and regions and to provide useful analysis of the state and status of the phenomena they investigate. We encourage a discussion of the local and global dynamics of indigenous religion in many places of the continent as it relates to how indigenous religion is lived and practiced in specific places. While we encourage specific case studies that explicate these issues, we encourage participants to draw larger lessons of conceptual and theoretical nature from their works. For further information, contact Prof. Jacob Kehinde Olupona at < [jkolupona@ucdavis.edu](mailto:jkolupona@ucdavis.edu) >



RELIGION, NATURE & CULTURE  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA,  
GAINESVILLE, USA, 6 – 9 APRIL 2006

The International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture (ISSRNC) will hold its Inaugural Conference at the University of Florida, Gainesville, USA, from 6 to 9 April 2006. ISSRNC aims to promote critical, interdisciplinary inquiry into the relationships among human beings and their diverse cultures, environments, and religious beliefs and practices.

*Call for paper and panel proposals*

The organizers are especially interested in proposals that explore the history of the scholarly inquiry into the above-mentioned relationships, and that reflect on where this increasingly interdisciplinary field should go from here. All papers and panel-sessions that cohere with the ISSRNC goal are welcome. These can include research grounded in at least four broad areas of inquiry, including:

1. *biophysical sciences* exploring the connections between humans and the living systems they depend on, including cognitive science, evolutionary biology, socio-biology, analyses of the role of natural science in religious thought, or critical reflections on the theoretical, philosophical, practical aspects of ecological science for religious traditions and ethical debates;
2. *social sciences* spotlighting by means of qualitative or quantitative analyses the role of belief systems in relations between humans and the environment, including research grounded in anthropology, geography, political science, psychology, or sociology. Other possibilities include analysis of human valuations and behaviours that impact the biophysical environment – i.e. studies of consumption, population, or political mobilisation – and the role of nature-related religion in environmental protection or restoration, conflict exacerbation or resolution;
3. *humanities* exploring the relationships between nature and humans in philosophy, literature (including sacred texts), art, and history;
4. *constructive and normative* exploring religious and ethical perspectives concerning human obligations to ecosystems and other living things, including research on religious and philosophical investigations of the human-nature interface, or ethical analysis or argument rooted in some aspect of nature religion or world religious tradition.

*Deadline, registration, and further information*

All paper and panel proposals should be sent to Laura Hobgood-Oster at [hoboster@southwestern.edu](mailto:hoboster@southwestern.edu) as soon as possible but no later than 15 January 2006.

Online registration and housing information will be available by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006 at [www.religionandnature.com/society](http://www.religionandnature.com/society).

For further information visit [www.religionandnature.com](http://www.religionandnature.com) or send an e-mail to: [<society@religionandnature.com>](mailto:society@religionandnature.com)

African Studies Centre (ASC)  
Council for the Development of Social Science in Africa  
(CODESRIA),  
Institute for the Study of Islam and the Middle East (ISIM),  
International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS)

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

# YOUTH AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH: RELIGION, POLITICS AND THE MAKING OF YOUTH IN AFRICA, ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST Dakar, Senegal, 13 - 15 October 2006

#### *Theme*

The dramatic demographic shift towards the young in many countries of the global South, particularly in Africa, the Middle East and South-East Asia, has led to important social changes, which analysts are just beginning to understand. The 'young generation' has been assuming a central, though frequently ambiguous, position in many places in the global South. While political economies change and the processes of globalization continue relentlessly, young people have become both agents and subjects in new, yet little understood ways in the interrelated spheres of religion, politics and culture. While many commonly refer to young people as the 'the future generation' and applaud youthful initiatives, others stigmatize or demonize the young as 'disruptive' agents, prone to radicalism, violence and recklessness. This is particularly the case in the context of sluggish economies, chronic un- and underemployment, the rise of global cultural imports and moral anomie, where the aims and energies of this exponentially increasing generation have often been frustrated. While there have been persistent public debates about 'youth at risk', there is also a tendency to see the youth as one of the principal problems in society, as evidenced by some of the reactions surrounding their unconventional and sometimes violent or criminal behaviour.

In many places, the ambiguous position of youth relates to the ambiguity surrounding their relationships with both adults and children. Indeed, 'youth' as a category of analysis cannot be taken for granted, since youth can be interpreted in a variety of ways, across space, time and context. Unlike children, youth might have the skills and ability to act independently. But unlike many adults, adolescents may not have vested interests in maintaining the status quo, and, therefore can be more motivated to promote change in the interrelated realms of politics, economics, religion and culture. The social positioning of youth must also take gender, class and culture into consideration, since these inflect questions of dependence, autonomy, youth identity and subjectivity. Despite their differences, the young do often share a certain kind of habitus, which relates to

their subjective experience of being young, and their often-fraught relationship with their elders and political and religious authorities. Although youth as a category has been described primarily for the urban situation, the distinction between urban and rural is becoming blurred. Youth as a category in 'rural' areas is an important topic to be considered too.

### *Aim*

The main objective of this international conference is to explore the young and their negotiation of the social, political, economic and cultural constraints they encounter within their environments. The conference hopes to contribute to a comparative analysis of youth cultures, subcultures and subjectivities in the societies of the South and to engage with the conceptual debates on youth cultures, religion, politics and violence, which have so far been largely formulated from research in Western Europe and North America.

### *Papers*

The conference wants to attract papers from different areas and settings in the global South that deal with comparable issues. It is proposed that papers focus on the role of youth and youth activities, or the construction of youth as a category. How do various states or other authorities construct youth? What strategies do the young deploy to realise their interests and aspirations? What kinds of religious and political ideologies, practices and cultural politics or nationalism do they embrace? And to what extent is the category of youth tied to or determined by urbanity, or can we increasingly speak of the rural making of youth as well? The papers should investigate these questions in specific fields like social movements, economics (street children, laborers, etc.), conflict and violence (riots, protests, civil strife, gangs and vigilantism), religion (from religious radicalism to unorthodox or alternative religious activities), and moral regimes for instance in the HIV/AIDS crisis.

### *Organisation*

The conference will be organized by the ASC, CODESRIA, ISIM and IIAS and will be held in Dakar, Senegal, from 13-15 October 2006. The Steering Committee convening this conference consists of a representative of each of the four collaborating partners: the ASC, ISIM, IIAS and CODESRIA. The Steering Committee will be assisted by a scientific advisory board consisting of the following persons: Dr. R. van Dijk (ASC) (chair), Dr. B.F. Soares (ASC), Dr. M. de Bruijn (ASC), Prof. J. Abbink (ASC), Dr. C. Cardoso (CODESRIA), Dr. E. Sall (CODESRIA), Prof. A. Bayat (ISIM), Dr. D. Douwes (ISIM), Dr. M. Osseweijer (IIAS), Prof. W. Stokhof (IIAS)

### *Procedures and logistics*

The three-day conference will bring together internationally respected scholars presenting cutting-edge insights from their current research. The conference will host three keynote lectures and will carefully select a maximum of 30 presentations. Selection of papers will be done on the basis of an even spread over the various regions of the South (Africa, Asia and the Middle East) and according to thematic match. Those who would like to attend the conference without presenting a paper are advised to contact the conference coordinator well in advance. Funds will be made available to invited speakers

from Africa, the Middle East and South/South-East Asia who do not have the resources available to cover their travel and accommodation.

Those interested in participating are requested to send a CV and an abstract of 250 words describing the main points of their paper, notably its central argument, the site of research, and the methodology employed to Dr. M. Osseweijer (Coordinator of Academic Affairs) at IAS, Leiden. The deadline for the receipt of abstracts and a CV is **1 February 2006**. The Scientific Committee will decide on submissions by April 1, 2006 and will notify applicants after this date. Papers are due by **1 July 2006** and the pre-circulation of papers will commence by **1 August 2006**.

For further information please contact: Ms. Dr Manon Osseweijer, Coordinator of Academic Affairs, International Institute for Asian Studies, P.O. Box 9515, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands (visiting address: Nonnensteeg 1-3, 2311 VJ Leiden). Phone: +31-71-527 2231; Fax: +31-71-527 4162. E-mail: [M.Osseweijer@let.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:M.Osseweijer@let.leidenuniv.nl); Internet: [www.ias.nl](http://www.ias.nl)

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

OR

### THEOLOGY VS RELIGIOUS STUDIES?

6-7 July 2006,

St Anne's College, University of Oxford

#### *Keynote speakers*

James Cox (Edinburgh), David Ford (Cambridge), Gavin D'Costa (Bristol), Kim Knott (Leeds)

#### *Theme*

The last ten years have seen a growth in the teaching of Religious Studies in higher education and the development of a large number of departments which combine Religious Studies with Theology in their titles. From the point of view of those teaching the subjects, this raises exciting possibilities but also potential difficulties. This two-day conference offers participants the opportunity to explore the evolving relationship between Theology and Religious Studies and to consider the challenges of, and strategies for, teaching both.

#### *Papers*

Papers are welcome on a range of topics including (but not limited to) the following: the Relationship between Theology and Religious Studies; the Future of Theology / Religious Studies; Teaching Theology (trends and methods); Teaching Religious Studies (trends and methods); the Place of Theology / Religious Studies in the University; the Effects of the RS A-Level / Higher Curriculum on Departments in the UK. The **deadline** for the call for papers is 31 January 2006.



*Further information*

Contact person is Darlene Bird < darlene@prs.heacademy.ac.uk >. See also:

[http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/events/prs/2006/07/06/theology and religious studies or theology vs religious studies.html](http://prs.heacademy.ac.uk/events/prs/2006/07/06/theology_and_religious_studies_or_theology_vs_religious_studies.html)

Rosalind Hackett  
University of Tennessee

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS ON RE IN AFRICA

The *British Journal of Religious Education* (BJRE) intends to further internationalize its contents and therefore calls for contributions from Africa. *BJRE* is an international peer-reviewed journal, which has a pedigree stretching back to 1934 when it began life as *Religion in Education*. In 1961 the title was changed to *Learning for Living*, and the present title was adopted in 1978. It is the leading journal in Britain for the dissemination of international research in religion and education and for the scholarly discussion of issues concerning religion and education internationally. It aims to promote and report research and scholarship in religious education and related fields such as values education, spiritual education and intercultural education insofar as they relate to the discussion of religion or religious traditions and movements. Contributions relating to the following are especially welcome:

- = research and scholarship on religious education as understood in the UK publicly funded school sector
- = international research and scholarship relating to religious education in the schools of plural societies
- = religious education in faith based schools
- = religious perspectives on education
- = childhood and religion in community and school settings

*BJRE* is published in association with the Society for Christian Education. It is published by Routledge. Its present volume number is 28; its frequency is 3 issues per year. ISSN: 0141-6200 for the printed version; ISSN: 1740-7931 for its online version. Contributions are welcome from researchers and scholars of any faith or none in all sectors of education (including higher education, schools, educational administration and inspection). Submissions from graduate students are welcome. For *BJRE* itself, visit <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/01416200.asp>. For instructions for authors, visit <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/authors/cbreauth.asp>.



## CONFERENCE REPORTS

David O. Ogunbile

Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

### 26<sup>TH</sup> NASR CONFERENCE 26-29.09.05, ILE-IFE

The 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions (NASR) was held in the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, between 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2005. The conference coincided with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Association. It was hosted by the Department of Religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, where it was founded thirty years ago. Participants were drawn from several universities in Nigeria.

#### *Theme*

The theme of the conference was 'Religion, Governance and Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'. The relevance of this theme hinged on the religious sensibilities of most Nigerians. Most importantly, since religion played decisive and dominant roles in Nigeria's political determinations and decisions, the Association used the conference to lend a voice to the debates on democracy, development and governance in Nigeria.

#### *Keynote address*

Professor Olatunde Lawuyi, of the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, examined religious values in his keynote address titled 'Religion, Governance and Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Critical Point of Disjunction', and indicated their relevance to governance. He presumed that 'when values are adopted, and are critically deployed into the process of governance, then there would be development'. He further argued that 'governance is an act, of the ruler over the ruled, and of the ruled towards the ruler, according to values and norms already stipulated by the society. What counts as rational are, hence, acts which at a given time are wholly contingent on local historical tendencies'. He stated further that religion needed to be sensitive to, and deal with the tensions between, the choice of the ideal and the real in a political context in which democratic values prevailed. The ruled needed to play a critical role in choice making, and progress would be made in the people gaining credit from their investment in ideas, leadership and material goods. Professor Lawuyi made two basic assumptions. First, that the best rules would normally come from within the ruled. Secondly, that the ideal choice would increase the social and economic capital of the people. From his analysis of Nigerian case, he pointed out that social groups, including religious, groups that are involved in, or play the game of, compensatory representation have descended to a level of conservatism, but unfortunately, no appreciable development has been made as acts of representation are used to silence and cover up sceptical attitudes. He emphasised, therefore, that there was the need for watchfulness

on the issues of representation. Professor Lawuyi concluded that certain paradigms must collide in order to be able to produce a meaningful development: the traditional and world religions, the political and the religious, the local and the universal at various situations and levels of experiences independently and collectively.

*Book launch*

As part of the opening ceremony, the Association launched its recent publication *God: The Contemporary Discussion*, a 542-page volume edited from the 2004 conference.

*Paper sessions*

The next two days were devoted to paper presentations under the following broad themes: Religion and Governance; Religion, Education and Development; Religion and Contemporary Social Issues; Religion and Contemporary Economic Issues; Religion, Communication and the Media; Religion and Gender; and Religion, Governance and Development. Presentations focused on the three main religious traditions in Nigeria, and covered various disciplinary approaches including historical, sociological, anthropological, ethical, philosophical, theological, feminist, phenomenological and comparative. Main issues that generated discussions and debates included corruption, human trafficking, child labour, religious leadership and their relevance in governance, religious institutions and their contribution to development, etc.

*NASR*

It should be noted that the membership of NASR has continued to grow as more universities and colleges of education were established that included the study of religion in their curricular either as a separate department or as of other humanistic disciplines.



Marloes Janson<sup>19</sup>  
ISIM, Leiden University

ISLAM AS RELIGION  
IN AFRICAN PUBLIC SPHERES  
16.06.05, UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS<sup>20</sup>

On 16 June 2005, an ISIM workshop on 'Islam as Religion in African Public Spheres' was held in Utrecht, The Netherlands. The workshop was organized by Abdulkader Tayob (ISIM Chair at Radboud University, Nijmegen) in collaboration with Karin Willemse (Erasmus University, Rotterdam) and José van Santen (Leiden University).

*Theme*

It explored how both the nation state and transnational trends change the nature of religion in new public spheres in Africa. The media through which these changes occur include ritual, telecommunications, education, and law. The major point of deliberation of the workshop concerned the ways in which Islam is represented as both a religion and culture in (inter)national, regional, local, and gendered public spheres.

*Papers*

Three invited speakers presented case studies. Gerard van de Bruinhorst (Ph.D. fellow at ISIM, Leiden) presented a case study on hajj-linked rituals in Tanzania where, increasingly, importance is attached in Swahili discourse to the 'standing-supplication' (*wuquf*) on the plain of Arafat rather than to the day of Sacrifice (*Eid ul-Adha*). For instance, a political demonstration of Tanzanian Muslims, held on 4 March 2001 in the capital Dar es Salaam, was modeled on the Arafat rituals that were being performed at exactly the same time in Saudi Arabia. Through this powerful religious metaphor of the sanctity of human life Muslim dissatisfaction with the national government, perceived as Christian, was expressed. Van de Bruinhorst concluded that policy makers should be aware of the polyvocal nature of religious rituals in order to prevent political clashes.

Dorothea Schulz (Free University, Berlin, and a visiting fellow at ISIM) presented a case study on Islam's 'female face' in Mali. Islam has a growing appeal among Malian Muslim women as a publicly articulated moral idiom. An increasing number of these women participate in neighbourhood groups in order to study the Qur'an and receive instruction in the 'proper' performance of rituals. While the increased public prominence of female preachers challenges conventional understanding of female religious practice, it has, however, not increased their political influence in the national arena. Females, on the contrary, use their appearance in the public arena to stress the importance of personal piety and individual responsibility in moral reform. Their public interventions should,

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<sup>20</sup> This report was first published in *ISIM Review* no. 16 (Autumn 2005): 61.

therefore, not be seen as merely a move towards greater public representation but rather as a manifestation of more complex, at times even paradoxical social dynamics.

Abdulkader Tayob examined the evolution of the meaning of the juridical notion of 'religion' in South Africa by means of a challenging study of the Constitutional Court's interpretation of religious values and practices in three landmark court cases since 1994. The first case dealt with the selling of liquor on Sunday, the second with corporal punishment in Christian schools, and the last case with the smoking of marijuana by Rastafarians. The court judgements revealed that a general approach religion is emerging in South Africa in which the distinction between its public and its private practice has become blurred. This has also affected the state's view on Muslim Personal Law as is illustrated by the recent official recognition of Muslim marriages. Due to the absence of representative official Muslim institutions in South Africa, issues of sharia remain the subject of civil rather than religious debate.

### *Discussion*

During the closing discussion, chaired by Van Santen, Tayob concluded that, contrary to what many Muslims believe, Islam is a particularistic religious tradition comparable to, for example, Christianity. Though 'religion' as such can be used as an analytical category, a distinction can however only be cautiously made between the religious and non-religious domains of public life. It is, therefore, more appropriate to speak about public spheres in the plural than in the singular, because while some public spheres are more religious, others are more political. But they may also coincide, as the cases dealt with in this workshop demonstrate.

Muhammed Haron

University of Botswana, Gaborone

THE BIBLE IN AFRICA  
SASNES/OTSSA CONFERENCE  
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL,  
19-23 SEPTEMBER, PIETERMARITZBURG, SA

### *Introduction*

The Old Testament Studies of South Africa (OTSSA) organized a back-to-back conference with South African Studies of Near Eastern Societies (SASNES) at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal from 19 to 23 September 2005. This kind of joint conference has been the trend for the past few years in order to attract scholars who specialize in the different disciplines and have them share their expertise on the areas of their specialization. This particular conference was attended by approximately 100 people, some of who came from other parts of Africa. In the past, the areas have been dominated by White, Afrikaner (male) scholars but this has changed in the past few years. The conference was attended by sizeable number of African male & female scholars, which is indeed a good sign for the future of the discipline(s). In fact, there is still a need to cultivate and nurture young Black scholars to pursue these areas.

The theme for this conference, which was organized by OTSSA and affiliate groups such as CEBITA & UBS (Africa Area), was 'The Bible in Africa'. Even though SASNES had no over all theme, it addressed specific sub-themes in the specific allotted sessions. Since a variety of papers were presented, the organizers slotted the papers into different parallel sessions and earmarked special plenary sessions where significant individual papers were delivered.

#### *Monday 19 September 2005*

The first two parallel sessions kicked-off at 14h00 and ended at 16h00. The session that this researcher attended was chaired by Prof. At Lamprecht. In this session three papers were presented. The first paper, which was power-point prepared by Gert Prinsloo, was titled 'SeOl to Yerussalayim to Samayim: Spatial Orientation in the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113-118). Prinsloo used the concept of space as the key towards understanding the relationship between a set of poems commonly regarded as an intentional collection.

The second paper was delivered by Philip Nel and focused on the 'Deuteronomistic Ideology of Land: From Experience to Abstract Metaphor'. In his paper he sought to provide a socio-cultural perspective on the way in which Israel conceived the homestead as its real estate in the Deuteronomistic tradition. And the third topic looked at 'Laban's Evil Eye: Cultural Beliefs and Conceptual Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible' and was prepared by Rian Kotze. He investigated the role of cultural beliefs in the production of figurative language in the Hebrew Bible.

After this interesting session, three separate plenary papers were delivered one after the other between 16h00 until 20h00. The first was by Hendrik Bosman who addressed the questions of 'Origin and Identity: Rereading Exodus as a Polemical Narrative Then (Palestine) and Now (Africa)', in which he attempted to engage with the problem: 'How does one appropriate the Book of Exodus theologically in a post-colonial Africa? In his closing remarks he related this to the South African context. The second was by Isabel Phiri and Jesse Mugambi respectively. The former addressed 'African Women Theologians Talk to African Biblical Scholarship and Bible Translation' and the latter tackled 'Some Problems of Authority in Biblical Interpretation', which included a critical scrutiny of the authority of the canon, inspiration, and texts etc. Much of what these two scholars raised could be related to Quranic scholarship – an issue that could have been incorporated as a sub-theme of the SASNES group. The last plenary paper was that of Johann Cook. He delved into 'Reconsidering Septuagintal Origins', which discussed the re-reading of the Aristeas Letter by Sylvia Honigman as well as two translated units, namely the Books of Proverbs and Ester.

#### *Tuesday 20 September 2005*

Between 9h00 and 11h00 four parallel sessions took place. The first two were organized by OTSSA and the other two by SASNES. The first two tried to address the issue of Bible Translations by raising the question of 'interdisciplinary approaches', posing such questions as: Which academic disciplines concern Bible Translation in Africa, and How? This researcher listened to the papers presented by Dr. Docrat, Dr. Jaffer and Prof. Hans van Rensburg. Docrat investigated 'The Concept of *Fiqh ul-Lughat* and the Lexicon of ath-Tha'labi', while Jaffer revisited 'The Meaning and Early Development of Quranic Exegesis,' and Van Rensburg interrogated the concept of '*Shura* (Mutual Consultation): Interpreting a Quranic Concept'. The papers led to an array of questions

and interesting issues were discussed particularly regarding the science of 'lexicography' and the age-old debate pertaining to the term shura.

These sessions were followed by one plenary paper that responded to the questions posed earlier on whether one can adopt an interdisciplinary approach to Biblical translation, and a plenary panel that gave special attention to 'Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa.' The mentioned plenary paper was addressed by Ronnie Sim and the plenary panel was organized by Prof. Suleiman Dangor. The panel consisted of two panelists and the chair as a co-presenter; the panellists were Muhammed Haron who addressed 'African (Muslim) Identity and/in the (Muslim) Media', and Lubna Nadvi who spoke about 'African Development and the (Possible) Contribution of Muslim NGOs'. Since both papers dealt with 'identity' and 'development', concepts that the chairperson intended to also address, he confined himself to the question of shari'a in African states. These inputs were well received and a lengthy debate ensued on the issues raised. Since the panellist were only limited to one hour it was somehow impossible to tackle a variety of significant issues that were addressed in the papers.

In the afternoon from 14h00 til 16h00 five parallel sessions took place. Three of these were organized by OTSSA and two by SASNES. At this point the researcher only participated in SASNES sessions that included papers of specific interest, in particular one by Nina Voges about 'The Position of Muslim Women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century', in which she endeavoured to answer the question as to who speaks on behalf of the Muslim women. And between 16h30 and 17h30 SASNES rounded off its series of papers with a colloquium on the Tuesday and another on Wednesday between 9h00 and 11h00. The theme of these two colloquia was: 'Challenging Female Embodiment – Wisdom, Law and the Text.' In the second of the two colloquia, Jacqueline Du Toit addressed that subject in 'In the Eye of the Beholder: Tradition, Text and Gender Identity'; it presumed that the female body is historically and culturally constructed and differentiated from that of the male. The paper thus tackled the western influences on the perception of female characters and commented on the question of current biblical relevance for African and South African female constituency.

#### *Concluding remarks*

Although it was a five day event, this researcher attended only the sessions organized by SASNES. He was able to benefit from the papers that were delivered and the specific issues that were raised. As indicated earlier, it would have been appropriate if SASNES had worked around a theme such as 'Translation of Sacred Texts' or 'Sacred Hermeneutics' that would have dove-tailed well with the theme selected by OTSSA for their specific sessions. In fact, some of the papers indirectly did so.

Be that as it may, it was also good to re-acquaint oneself with some of the specialists in the field, particularly Semitic Studies. However, it still pains one to observe that these fields are still dominated by White (male) specialists in South Africa. They, in this researcher's opinion, have not made a concerted effort to create a enough space for the emergence of a coterie of Black scholars to enter the fields and debate the themes that were on the agenda. Nonetheless, the presence of many scholars from other parts of the continent should act as inspiration to Black South Africans for they demonstrated that if South African Blacks are encouraged and supported, then they can and will make a difference to South African scholarship and the production of knowledge in Semitic and Biblical Studies.

## PERSONS & POSTS

**Dr. Afe Adogame**, AASR General Secretary, has been appointed Lecturer in World Christianity in the School of Divinity at New College, Edinburgh University. He received his PhD in History of Religions from the University of Bayreuth in Germany in 1999. Until his recent appointment to the Lectureship in World Christianity, he was Research and Teaching Fellow at the Department for the Study of Religion and Institute of African Studies, Bayreuth University from 1995-1998 and from 2000-2005. He was also on the teaching staff of the Dept. of Religions, Lagos State University, Nigeria between 1998 and 2000. His fields of research and teaching expertise include: African Christianity-African Initiated Churches and Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches; African Religions; Religion in the African Diaspora (African religious communities in Europe/USA); New Religious Movements; Religion, Migration and Globalization; Interpretation of Cultures; and Methods and Theory in the Study of Religion. He is author of *Celestial Church of Christ: The Politics of Cultural Identity in a West African Prophetic-Charismatic Movement* (1999); and co-editor of *European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa* (2004), and *Religion in the Context of African Migration* (2005). He belongs to a number of international professional bodies including the African Association for the Study of Religion, the British Association for the Study of Religion, African Studies Association, American Academy of Religion, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the German Association for the History of Religions. His most recent international awards/scholarships include as Senior Fellow, Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, Cambridge, MA, USA (2003/04) and the International Travel Award of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (2005). His e-mail address is now: [A.Adogame@ed.ac.uk](mailto:A.Adogame@ed.ac.uk)

**Dr. Asonzeh Franklin-Kennedy Ukah** has been appointed Research Fellow on the research project 'Local Actions in Africa in the Context of Global Influences' at the University of Bayreuth, Germany, till the end of June 2006. He is also helping Prof. Berner prepare another research project which is expected to start in June of next year. If it is approved and funds received, he will remain in Bayreuth longer than June 2006 as part of the new project.

**Dr. Tabona Shoko**, Lecturer in the Dept. of Religious Studies, Classics & Philosophy at the University of Zimbabwe has been awarded a Visiting Research Fellowship at ASC (Afrika Studiecentrum) at Leiden, The Netherlands, for three months from January to March 2006.

**Dr Ezra Chitando**, Senior Lecturer in the Dept of Religious Studies, Classics & Philosophy at the University of Zimbabwe has been promoted to Associate Professor in that university.

**Dr. Umar Habila Dadem Danfulani**, Department of Religious Studies at the University of Jos, Nigeria, is currently a visiting fellow at the African Studies Centre, Leiden, The Netherlands. On March 2, 2006, he will deliver a lecture entitled 'Interreligi-



ous Conflict in Nigeria: The Jos Peace Conference and the Indigene/Settler Question in Nigerian Politics', in which he examine why the problems arising between 'indigenes' and 'settlers' were a major contributing factor to the 2001-2004 clashes between Christians and Muslims in Plateau State when a large number of Christians and Muslims were massacred. This marked a turning point in the crisis and these events culminated in the declaration of a state of emergency in Plateau State, and subsequently to the setting up of the Plateau Peace Conference with representatives from the state's different ethnic groups. This presentation will consider how the indigene/settler issue was handled by the conference vis-à-vis the position of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the issue. It will also critically evaluate other issues discussed at the Plateau State Peace Conference and recommend ways of ensuring lasting peace through conflict prevention and resolution between Muslims and Christians on the Jos Plateau.

## SCHOLARSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS

Abdulkadir Hashim  
Zanzibar University

### CALL FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROPOSALS

## SHARIA DEBATES & THEIR PERCEPTION BY CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Zanzibar University announces the availability of two scholarships, each of up to three years duration, tenable by young persons who either wish to do, are currently doing, or have recently completed an MA or a PhD. The scholarships, whose purpose is to assist the awardees to enhance their academic skills and qualifications and to build up their network of academic colleagues, will support carefully designed and supervised projects of research, writing, presentation at conferences, and publication. Applications are invited for awards under this programme.

#### *The sponsor*

The sponsor is the Volkswagen Foundation of Hannover, Germany, under its new funding initiative on 'Knowledge for Tomorrow: Co-operative Research Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa'.

#### *Universities participating*

An award has been made under this initiative to Zanzibar University and five partner universities: the University of Cape Town, the University of Jos, the University of

Khartoum, Saint Paul's United Theological College, and, in Germany, the University of Bayreuth.

*The project and its stipends*

The title of the project under which the award was made is 'Sharia Debates and their Perception by Christians and Muslims in Selected African Countries'. Scholarship recipients, while they remain in good standing in the programme, will receive monthly stipends, funding for their research, supervision and mentoring by a multinational and multidisciplinary team of senior scholars, and sponsorship to international workshops and conferences attended by project participants from all partner universities.

*Qualifications required*

Minimum qualifications: admissible or admitted into an MA or PhD program or recently awarded a PhD in one of the humanities or social sciences; a demonstrated dedication to academic research and scholarship; prepared to define and carry through a research project falling within the project title; and willing and able to devote full time to work on this project while you remain in the programme.

*How to apply*

To apply: submit (1) a project proposal, (2) your CV, (3) a sample of your academic writing, and (4) two letters of recommendation from qualified academics who know your work, to the contact person by the deadline. Project proposals should not exceed five pages. They should include the project title, a brief introduction to subject to be researched into, a brief discussion of prior academic work on this subject, a detailed description of the research to be carried out, expected outcomes in terms of scholarly production, and a time-table for completing the whole. Proposals for projects on the following topics will be given special consideration:

1. historical and contemporary perceptions of Christians and Muslims on Sharia in Tanzania (including Zanzibar);
2. the history and current debates on Sharia in Tanzania (including Zanzibar);
3. women and Sharia in Tanzania (including Zanzibar).

*Deadline and contact person*

16<sup>th</sup> December 2005. No application received after close of business on this date will be considered. The contact person is Professor Abdulkadir Hashim, c/o Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), Zanzibar University, P.O. Box 2440 Zanzibar;

E-mail: < [abdulkadirhashim@yahoo.com](mailto:abdulkadirhashim@yahoo.com) >.

To expedite the process, applications by email are preferred or otherwise send your applications by speed post to: Abdulkadir Hashim P.O. Box 2779 Nairobi 00100, Kenya. Fax: +254 20 245566. All applications received by the deadline will be given serious consideration by the Local Project Team. Six candidates will be short-listed for interviews, which will be conducted in January 2006 by the Local Project Team. The two successful candidates will be notified the same day and must be prepared to attend an initial orientation session on the following day.

This is an equal opportunity project. Applications are invited from men and women of all ethnic groups and religious persuasions.

## CALL FOR PAPER PROPOSALS

Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut (KWI)  
(Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities)  
Essen, Germany

### INTERNATIONAL SUMMER ACADEMY ISLAM AND THE REPOSITIONING OF RELIGION Essen, Germany 16-30 July 2006

KWI, at Essen, Germany, convenes a Summer Academy from 16 to 30 July on 'Islam and the Repositioning of Religion' in order to 'explore the ongoing reconstructive and conceptual shifts of [the notion of] "religion" with respect to the formative and transformative processes of modernity related to Islam's presence in the contemporary scene'. The Summer School is supported by the Volkswagen Foundation. **Twenty awards for participation in this Summer School, covering travel and accommodation, are available** for advanced PhD candidates and recent PhDs, who received their degree after February 2001, whose research projects are relevant to the topic of this Summer School.

#### *The topic*

The convenors, Georg Stauth and Armando Salvatore, propose to look at the presence of Islam in the modern world as part of a wider process through which religious concepts have re-entered the political and cultural arenas of modern societies. Islam's presence in them represents the most challenging component in the current process of globalisation that includes the social re-location of religion. It has become the main vector of the transposition of religion from a private or secondary public sphere into the central political arenas and arsenals of collective representation. The convenors propose as work hypothesis that the role, perception and reconstruction of Islam has also legitimised other, non-Islamic 'public religions'. The aim of the Summer School is to 're-examine critically the new religious antinomies of modernity and generate awareness about the risks that might be linked to any lopsided redefinition of the political and cultural arenas of modernity by reference to a static notion of 'religion'.

#### *Requirements*

Participants are required to present empirical and theory-oriented research projects exploring the processes linked to the reformulation of religion in the continual interplay between Islamic and Western programmes of modernity. The projects may target religious and socio-political arenas worldwide, but in particular = the condition of post-coloniality and the various attempts of nation-states in societies with a Muslim majority to initiate Islamic policies and to link them to issues of economic and social development;

= the dynamics of unification of Europe, with Islam playing the role of a challenger that appears to question a long standing yet fragile balance between religious and secular ideas, practices and concepts;

= the condition of America 'between the two worlds', where religion becomes a tool for mastering the social machine of emancipation and recognition.

#### *Application procedure*

A complete application requires: a curriculum vitae; a statement of 1000-1500 words detailing current research interests and past research and writing related to the topic of the Summer School; and the names and addresses of two potential referees who are familiar with the applicant's work. The **deadline** is **March 1, 2006**. Application by e-mail is encouraged. Applications are to be sent to:

Dr. Armin Flender, Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut, Essen, Goethestrasse 31, 45128 Essen, Germany. Phone: +49.201.7204.213; Fax +49.201.7204.111.

E-mail: [armin.flender@kwi.nrw.de](mailto:armin.flender@kwi.nrw.de)

African Studies Centre, Leiden,  
& CODESRIA, Dakar

## MASTER'S THESIS AWARD

The African Studies Centre is an independent and multi-disciplinary centre undertaking research on Sub-Saharan Africa in the social sciences.<sup>21</sup> It aims to enhance the knowledge and understanding of African societies within the Netherlands and beyond and has established relations with universities and other institutes focusing on Africa, in particular with research schools in The Netherlands.

CODESRIA, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, is headquartered in Dakar Senegal. It was established in 1973 as an independent Pan-African research organisation with a primary focus on the social sciences, broadly defined. It is recognised not only as the pioneer African social research organisation, but also as the apex non-governmental centre of social knowledge production on the continent.

#### *The award*

This annual award has been set up jointly by the African Studies Centre (ASC) in Leiden, the Netherlands, and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) in Dakar, Senegal. It aims to encourage student research and writing on Africa, and to promote the study of African cultures and societies. It will be presented to a student whose Master's thesis has been completed on the basis of research conducted on Africa. The award may also be granted to any other final-year piece of work in the form of film, video or CD Rom that presents a clear analysis of an issue relating to Africa. (The term 'thesis' is also used to include these other forms of

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<sup>21</sup> An earlier version of this award, offered by ASC at Leiden alone at that time, was published in AASR Bulletin 21 (May 2004): 28-30.

scientific reporting.) The award consists of a prize of € 1000 for the winning thesis, the publication of the work in the ASC Research Report Series and the publication of an article by the winning author in CODESRIA Bulletin.

#### *Who can apply*

Any final-year student who has completed his/her Master's study with distinction (Dutch rating: 8 or more) at a university in Africa or the Netherlands can be awarded the ASC-CODESRIA Master's thesis prize. The thesis must be based on independent empirical research related to Africa in one of the subjects listed in the following section. It must have been examined within one year prior to the deadline for submitting manuscripts (see below). Work that has already won a prize elsewhere will not be considered for this award. The ASC and CODESRIA specifically encourage students from Africa to submit their theses for this annual competition.

#### *Subject of the thesis*

Any thesis thematically related to socio-geographical, economic, political, historical, juridical or anthropological issues or focusing on the humanities (with the exception of language, literature and/or semiotic studies) can be submitted.

#### *Where to submit a thesis*

Theses can be submitted to CODESRIA or the ASC (but not to both) depending on the following criteria:

- a thesis can be submitted to CODESRIA if it is written in English, French, Portuguese or Arabic and if its geographical focus is on Africa as well as on its migrant communities elsewhere in the world.
- a thesis can be submitted to the ASC if it is written in English, French or Dutch and if in terms of geographical focus, the subject is limited to Sub-Saharan Africa and its migrant communities elsewhere in the world.

From the submissions to both institutes, a shortlist will be drawn up from which the winning thesis will be selected by a joint jury.

#### *Quality of the thesis*

The ASC and CODESRIA seek to attract theses that demonstrate a high quality with regard to the subject matter of the research as well as the way the research has been conducted. The jury attaches importance to an original approach and insight, and the relevance of the research to a scientific understanding of the issues covered. In addition, the jury will consider the significance of the thesis with regard to development-related issues and its interest for the general public.

#### *How to submit a thesis*

If a student or his/her supervisor feels that a thesis merits an award because of its high quality and originality, the thesis should be submitted to the African Studies Centre Awards Committee or the CODESRIA Awards Committee. Every submission must include:

1. a letter of recommendation from the student's supervisor containing details about the educational institution from which the student has graduated, and the quality (awarded with distinction!) of the thesis; and

2. the thesis as well as a summary of a maximum of 500 words

Applicants based in the Netherlands are requested to submit two hard copies of their thesis. One will be returned to them afterwards and the other will be placed in the ASC or CODESRIA library. Those based in Africa are free to send an electronic version of their thesis by email. If a hard copy of the thesis is submitted, the applicant's email address must be included so that receipt of the thesis can be acknowledged by email. The application will not be processed if the submission is incomplete.

#### *Time schedule*

THE ANNUAL DEADLINE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF THESES IS 31 MAY 2005. The jury will announce its decision at the beginning of September and the presentation of the award will be made by the Director of the African Studies Centre during a formal ceremony in October. The winner will be invited to present his/her work at a seminar at an ASC-CODESRIA seminar in Leiden and may also be invited to do the same at a seminar or conference hosted by one of CODESRIA's member institutes in Africa. The decision of the jury is final and no correspondence will be entered into concerning this decision.

#### *The jury*

1. Jos van Beurden MA, research journalist (chair)
2. Prof. Eric Aseka (Kenyatta University), representative CODESRIA
3. Prof. Kwame Boafo-Arthur (University of Ghana), representative CODESRIA
4. Dr Rijk van Dijk (African Studies Centre), anthropologist
5. Prof. Sjaak van der Geest (University of Amsterdam), anthropologist
6. Dr. Gerti Hesselning (African Studies Centre), legal scientist
7. Mindanda Mohogu MA, economist
8. Dr. Cyril Obi (Nordic African Institute), representative CODESRIA

#### *Further information*

For queries regarding the submission of a thesis, please contact the secretary of the ASC Awards Committee, Ms Gitty Petit at: <[petitg@ascleiden.nl](mailto:petitg@ascleiden.nl)>, or the secretary of the CODESRIA Awards Committee, Ms Chifaou I. Josiane Amzat at <[chifaou@yahoo.fr](mailto:chifaou@yahoo.fr)> or at: <[chifaou.amzat@codesria.sn](mailto:chifaou.amzat@codesria.sn)>.



## BRIEF NEWS ITEMS

An **International Conference on 'The Arts, Man and Globalization'** was organized by the Faculty of Arts at the main campus of Ambrose Alli University, at Ekpoma, Nigeria from 15-18 November 2005. Keynote speakers were Prof. Klippies Kritzinger, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa; Prof. D.T. Adamo, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, and Dr. Hyaginus Ekwuazi, Director of the Nigerian Film Institute at Jos, Nigeria. The sub-themes of the conference were Gender Issues and Globalization; Religious Management and Globalization; Cultural Studies and Globalization; Linguistics, Literature and Globalization; Still Arts and Globalization; History, International Studies and Globalization; Modern Languages and Globalization; Philosophy and Globalization; Theater, Media Arts and Globalization; The Arts, Governance and Globalization. The committee organizing the conference consisted of Prof. Fred I. Emordi as Convener ([profemordi@yahoo.com](mailto:profemordi@yahoo.com)), Rev. Fr. Dr. John Onimahwo ([frjoni@yahoo.com](mailto:frjoni@yahoo.com)) as Conference Chairman, and the Conference Secretary, Anthony C. Oha ([oha\\_ac@yahoo.com](mailto:oha_ac@yahoo.com), [aaunconfartglo@yahoo.com](mailto:aaunconfartglo@yahoo.com)).

**ISIM cooperates in a new 'Islam in Africa' research project:** Karin Willemse, Assistant Professor at Erasmus University at Rotterdam, The Netherlands, reports in ISIM Review no. 16: 63 that the research project 'Islam in Africa: Globalization and Moving Frontiers' has been awarded funding from the NWO (Dutch Scientific Research Organisation) Programme 'The Future of the Religious Past' (2006-2009). Apart from Prof. Peter Geschiere (Amsterdam School of Scientific Research), Prof. Abdulkader Tayob (ISIM) and Dr. Karin Willemse as applicants, the research team consists of Dr. Guèye (Université Anta Diop, Senegal), Dr. Shamil Jeppie (Cape Town University, South Africa), and Dr. José van Santen (Leiden University, The Netherlands). The project focuses on the ways in which Muslims are engaged in the reconstruction of their identities in the context of different forms of globalisation and modernization. These dynamics are most tangible in Cameroon, Senegal, Sudan and South Africa, which serve as case studies in this project, in the struggles between nation states and in particular young Muslim citizens over the redefinition of the public spheres. The authority of religious institutions and the nation state to decide on how to interpret 'Muslimhood' in relation to modernity is much contested while the search for alternative identities is facilitated by access to the new media. The growing engagement of local Islamic communities in transnational networks circumventing the control of the nation state also impacts on the way in which the public sphere is redefined. Flows of goods, information, and migrants influence local ideas about 'tradition' and 'modernity', while the state tries to influence processes that are increasingly outside its control.

Prof. Adam K. arap Chepkwony reports on a **launch of three publications:** The Daystar University and the Ecumenical Symposium of Eastern Africa Theologians (ESEAT) have jointly launched publications on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2005. Daystar University launched two: an academic journal and a book of abstracts. Daystar is a Christian university located in Nairobi with another campus at Athi River not far from Nairobi city. It is among the fastest growing and popular tertiary institutions in Kenya. The journal, *Perspectives: An Academic Journal of Daystar*, shall be published twice a year and cov-

er a wide range of topics of relevance. The other publication is *Abstract: Masters Theses, 1978 – 2004*, a book which contains an impressive number of abstracts of theses written at Daystar University since 1978. The ESEAT on the other hand launched its first volume entitled *The Challenges and Prospects of the Church in Africa: Theological Reflections of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Nairobi: Paulines Publication, Africa, 2005) The common denominator of the essays in the volume is the search for an appropriate theological approach by the church in Africa to the perennial problems bedevilling the continent. The ESEAT is a group of ecumenical scholars who meet annually since 1989 to deliberate on issues of immediate concern on African Christianity. The first ten volumes from 1989 - 2000 were published by Acton Publishers, Nairobi, in its African Christianity Series. This series is known now as the ESEAT Series and shall be published annually by Acton Publishers, Nairobi. The occasion was graced by Professor Godfrey Nguru, Vice Chancellor of Daystar University, and Prof. Douglas Waruta, Chair of the Dept. of Philosophy & Religious Studies, University of Nairobi, who both gave moving addresses in support of the new publications.

The **Nijmegen Institute for Missiology** (NIM) of the Radboud University at Nijmegen, The Netherlands, celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chair for Missiology with a conference on Southern Christianity and its Relation to Christianity in the North on 28 October 2005. The keynote lecture, 'The Coming of Global Christianity', was delivered by Paul Jenkins (Pennsylvania State University). John Chesworth (St. Paul's United Theological College, Nairobi) was another of the invited speakers. He spoke about 'Challenges to the Next Christendom: Islam in Africa'. The four lectures, with other contributions, will be edited for publication by Frans Wijssen and Robert Schreier.

## REVIEWS

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### RASTAFARI REMEMBRANCE

Elijah Prince Williams & Michael Kuelker (eds) 2005, *Book of Memory: A Rastafari Testimony*. St. Louis (MO): Caribsound Ltd., pp. 425.

This book fills the void for primary Rastafari texts, not simply narratives or redactions of Rastafari by scholars and others interested in African-Diasporic religious tradition. Here is a book that articulates the Rastafari voice. It is an important read. Those who read and listen will have ample opportunity throughout the pages of the book to hear the Rastaman's voice. They will have ample opportunity to extrapolate the nature and significance of Rastafari in the construction of African-Diasporic memory and identity. There is considerable scope to understand the role Rastafari played in the development of authentic Jamaican consciousness in the colonial and post-colonial era. The memories recorded in the book show a nation struggling to define its own identity. The power



of the book stems from its witness to the radical juxtaposition of Rastafari consciousness and the history of oppression in Jamaica. It is pretty much oral tradition and memory, free from imposed extraneous theological, religious, anthropological, or socio-political constructs.

The book adds an important dimension to the study of African religions 'at home and abroad'. Rastafari remembrance of Africa and desire for repatriation to Africa/Zion, in the face of Jamaican Babylonian captivity, is a powerful resistance spirituality (mode of existence) that radically subverts the colonial order and its legacy in the Jamaican order. Africa is at the heart of the Rastafari eschatology; vision of the end. The gaze into the future is in dialectic with memory of the past.

The book is organized into three parts. Part I deals with foundations. Part II covers the period of 1966-1980. Part III is entitled the New Millennium. The three parts are followed by Acknowledgements: Notes on Book of Memory-Making, Endnotes and a Glossary of terms. The Foundation section, amongst other things, extrapolates some of the basic tenets of Rastafari. 'The Rastaman philosophy is about equal rights for each and every man no matter what color or creed...' (10). Jamaica is an exilic space for the Rastafari: 'In Jamaica here, that's where I live, where I stay at this moment, now repatriation is a must. That's what we're waiting for' (11). The reader cannot fail to note that the Coral Gardens incident, or 'insolence' to use the book's language, of April 11, 1963, is the critical event round which the Book of Memory revolves. Prince Elijah Williams emphatic assertion that Rastafari, as a religion, affirms life (68) must be interpreted against the background of the Coral Gardens affair in which Jamaican authorities tried to erase ('crucify') the Rastafari presence, or image, from Jamaican society. Rasta discourse is one of life. It is 'livity' (73). What distinguishes Rasta religion from others is that 'Rasta is the only religion telling people that they can live!' (87). 'The rest of the religion tells the people about dying' (87).

The memories shared in Part II cover a critical period in Jamaican history. They are set within the years following Jamaica's independence in the early 1960s to the end of Michael Manley's PNP (Peoples National Party) socialist experiment in the 1980s. The 'Nine Reasonings' in this section affirm that 'out of man cometh the word that is written in the book' (137). They highlight Marcus Garvey's charisma, Haile Selassie's divinity, the relationship between Michael Manley and the Rastafari movement, and Bob Marley's role in gaining Rastafari respect in Jamaican popular consciousness. Their major goal is to show the important relationship between 'right thinking' and memory-building in the Rastafari project. The task of Rastafari prophetic memory is to preach love, kindness, and long-suffering (231). It is the declaration of the word of truth: 'equality, rights and justice for every living structure that move unto the universal world' (234-5). Part II flows into Part III. The transition date is 1980.

Part III, The New Millennium, signifies the editor's theoretical definition of Rastafari as a millenarian religious tradition. (297). The themes of repatriation (return to Africa) and reparation (restoration of the victim to the position s/he would have been in prior to the disturbance of her/his situation) are not silenced, as some argue, in the Rastafari mind. Memory of the Coral Gardens affair, maintained through ritual process, helps to sustain Rastafari eschatological visions. Kuelker understands Rastafari to be a narrative of independence. The Coral Gardens murders and pogrom are part of that evolving and contested narrative of independence (297). Insight into the annual rituals of remembrance associated with the Coral Gardens affair makes him argue that 'Rastafari is not a

religion; it is a culture of I-n-I consciousness' (307). It is the manifestation of a collective, communal, egalitarian consciousness essential to the construction of a post-colonial Jamaican polity. Kuelker supports this interpretation with the argument that the 1963 Coral Gardens affair represents an event of sufficient sweep whose story cuts across nearly all of Jamaican society involving racism, class bigotry, the application of state power toward the denial of rights to citizens with the coordination of citizenry and support of media (337). The affair as remembered by Prince Williams and ritually observed annually by the Jamaican Rastafari community reflects the ongoing struggle of Jamaican society to renew itself from the 'bottom-up'. It shows the importance of Rastafari as an indigenous grass-roots movement in Jamaica.

The Rastafari movement shares common affinities with post-colonial struggles in Africa, the African Diaspora, and other parts of the world. This explains partially the movement's global dispersion from its Jamaican Mecca. The work put together by Prince Elijah Williams and Michael Kuelker shows the importance of Rastafari in the transformation of Jamaican society. This could only be possible since the movement, though organic to Jamaican society, received much inspiration from the memory of an African heritage. The proverb that those who remember their ancestors will live long is lived in the Rastafari narrative. The narrative shows the importance of memory, its relationship to ritual, mythos, social transformation, decolonization, the construction of independence, and national sovereignty. This book, a must read for Rastafari scholars and others, will be of great benefit to its immediate field, to the study of African religions 'at home and abroad', and to the wider field of religion.

Jan G. Platvoet  
AASR Bulletin Co-Editor

## THE WISDOM OF THE CHAMELEON

Ezra Chitando 2002, *Singing Culture: A Study of Gospel Music in Zimbabwe*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet (= NAI Research Reports, no. 121), 105 pp., ISBN 91-7106-494-X (pbk.), SEK 100,--.

### *NAI research reports*

Apart from full-length monographs, the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) at Uppsala, Sweden also publishes research reports varying in size from as short as 18 pages to as long as 170 pages. Between 1967 and 2002, it published 121 reports on a wide variety of topics of research into African societies, economic, social, demographic, political, and other. So far, only two of them dealt with a subject from the academic study of the religions of Africa: David Westerlund's 1982 report on *From Socialism to Islam?: Notes on Islam as a Political Factor in Contemporary Africa* (NAI Research Reports, no. 61, 62 pp., ISBN 91-7106-203-3, SEK 45,--) and Ezra Chitando's exemplary study of modern Zimbabwean culture of gospel singing which I review below.

### *NAI-research report no. 121*

Ezra Chitando, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Zimbabwe and Research Fellow at Bayreuth University, Germany, as well as AASR Representa-

tive for Zimbabwe, is deservedly becoming a key figure in the academic study of the religions of Africa through the considerable number of articles he has published in a wide variety of journals in the past few years.<sup>22</sup>

This booklet is another fine example of his methodologically sophisticated approach to the roles religious phenomena may play in public life. It is not a theological study of the culture of gospel singing within Zimbabwean churches as proclaiming Pentecostal beliefs, but a neutral, History of Religions approach to gospel singing as popular culture outside the churches and the social, political, economic and cultural functions it acquired in Zimbabwean society in the 1990s in addition to its religious functions within and without the churches. It is, therefore, a multidisciplinary study of modern cultural production, e.g. of identity construction as creative 'cultural creolisation' (11) and 'mobile and malleable [...] hybridity' (92). Against 'some Westerners and African cultural nationalists [who] have yearned for Africans to define themselves solely in terms of the [pristine] past' (96), Chitando argues that modern, gospel-singing Zimbabweans do so 'with the wisdom of the chameleon' (96), the one animal capable of looking forwards with one eye and at the same time backwards with the other. So modern Zimbabweans shape their identities both backwards and inwards by rooting them in the ancestral tradition and its rituals and music, and forwards by creatively blending these with inputs from colonial and global Christianity, and outwards by fusing all these with influences from other African countries, and musical styles from other parts of the world (5). His approach is therefore first of all a historical one.

The book consists of seven chapters, and is completed by a bibliography of six pages, a list of select interviews, and a discography. In chapter one (5-9), Chitando discusses the aims of his study, presents an overview of gospel music in Zimbabwe, and details the structure of the book. In chapter two (10-19), he explains his three main research methods: historical, sociological and phenomenological; discusses how to define 'gospel music'; and details how, and from what sources, the data for this study were collected, and to what limitations they are subject. Despite the many objections raised against phenomenology in recent years, he deems it useful for its 'insistence on descriptive accuracy, non-reductionism, and a sensitive treatment of religious phenomena' (13) by its 'bracketing questions of truth and authenticity' (12) and empathic approach.

Chapter three (20-48) presents an historical overview of music in Zimbabwe from the invention of the earliest musical instrument, the bow, some 30.000 to 15.000 years ago to the chimurenga songs against white settler rule, the euphoric songs of early independence, and the songs of protest of the 1990s. He emphasizes that change, openness to outside influences and fusion have always marked that history (25, 27). He also examines the changing position of women in music. In pre-colonial patriarchal religion and music, women were forbidden to touch the mbira and drums, yet could emerge as powerful mediums and healers, and participated actively in rituals by singing, clapping, ululating and dancing (23-25). Female musicians, however, had a difficult time in gaining a place in colonial commercial music due to notions defining urban space as an exclusively male domain and stigmatising towns as impure and dangerous, and women in them as 'stray, loose prostitutes' (34-38, 70-72). Even so, a few female musicians began to record their own music as early as the 1930s, and by the 1960s some, with the

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<sup>22</sup> For some of them see AASR Bulletins 14: 43; 15/16: 53-54; 21: 54, and below under Recent Publications.

support of the churches (71), took to playing the mbira, challenging the traditional male monopoly of it..

Chitando also notes that the chimurenga period (1970-1979) saw a 'decisive shift towards local music, [...] foster[ing] a unique national popular style', in which the vernacular was used very effectively as well as both Christian and indigenous religious ideas in songs of protest appealing to God/Mwari/Jehovah for deliverance from the evils of settler rule (41-43). After the elation of the 1980s, with songs hailing Mugabe as Zimbabwe's 'Redeemer' (43-45), songs of protest re-emerged in 1990, when the painful reality of the glaring disparity between the corrupt political elite and poor masses became ever more apparent and was worsened by IMF 'structural adjustment' and the AIDS pandemic (45-47). They sang of a 'paradise deferred' and a 'country in tatters', and in vain advised Mugabe that he was 'used up' and should go. Precisely because this music provided the leisure, solace and social commentary that the consumers yearned for, it prospered in this period of misery.

It is in this period, that gospel music exploded onto the public music scene. Its history, its emergence in the centre of the music market in the mid-1990s, and its themes are analysed in chapter four (49-69). Chitando identifies four factors explaining why gospel music moved from the margins of popular music market to its very centre. They were the fast growth of Pentecostalism, gaining adherents in particular among the young and upwards mobile of the urban working class and students in colleges and universities from the late 1980s (53-55); a change of attitude in two main, white-owned recording companies when they found out to their surprise in the mid-1980s that music with a Christian message and a danceable beat sold well (51-53, 55); the emergence of new recording companies owned by indigenous musicians with a direct stake in gospel music (55-56, 89); and a Christian public (83-86) receptive to gospel music by an oppressive social and economic environment (56-57). Themes dominating this gospel music are Christian salvation, the reality of HIV/AIDS as a pandemic of eschatological proportions, otherworldliness, economic hardship and political incompetence, the call for a 'born-again', upright life style, the demonization of indigenous religion, the 'prosperity gospel', a ecumenical attitude, at least towards other Christian denominations, and, despite the despondent times, a patriotic nationalism (57-68).

In chapter five, Chitando argues that the respectability of the Christian message enabled female gospel musicians to emerge in greater numbers in the music market in the 1990s than female pop musicians (71-75). Likewise, after 2000, gospel music in the indigenous languages by AIC choirs and youthful bands improved the general repute of these marginalized churches, of music by youth, and of the indigenous languages as vehicles of art (75-82). Lastly, in chapter, Chitando shows that the dominant position of Christianity in modern Zimbabwe, and in particular in its communication system, is a factor that prepared the ground for gospel music's emergence in the music market in the 1990s (83-86). He also discusses whether or not its rise is due to the gospel musicians 'lust for money'. He closes by emphasizing the fluidity of African cultural dynamics (90-94). In chapter seven, Chitando reiterates the need for a multidisciplinary approach to African cultural dynamics and emphasizes the vibrancy of the arts in Zimbabwe as an indication that 'while global media networks continue to beam images of total collapse, chaos and misery, Africans refuse to succumb to existential despair and paralysis' (96).

*Appreciation*

This is an exemplary study of an important subject. By its solid contextualisation of gospel music, it is able to shed light not only on it as a religious, but also as a cultural, social, economical and even political phenomenon. Chitando's analyses of all these aspects are persuasive except for gospel music's political function as voicing protest against a corrupt, incompetent and increasingly oppressive government. Even though Chitando makes much of the 'surprising sensitivity' (60) of gospel musicians in economic matters and of their 'radical desacralisation of the political office' (61), gospel musicians were harmless political opponents for Mugabe, for their radical otherworldliness forbade them entry into the political arena (62) and made them offer innocuous quietist consolation rather than astute political analysis (46, 74). Their own commercial success in times of economic tribulation even made the transcendental solace they offered suspect (86-89). I was also surprised how wearily Chitando treads this road of a multidisciplinary, contextualising approach to religious phenomena. It is apparent from his defensive use of 'phenomenology' against possible accusations of sociological 'reductionism' and his accusing fellow-authors in this field of various kinds of 'misleading reductionism', religionist and other (6-7, 10, 12-14, 24, 56, 59, 90, 95). It indicates that, compared to the generality of African scholars of religions, he is a pioneer in the all-round, contextual study of religious phenomena. Hopefully, this booklet will make his colleagues in Africa perceive the added virtues of his multidisciplinary approach and mitigate their insistence on religion's 'irreducibility' sufficiently to begin practise it also.

## DISCUSSION

Jan G. Platvoet  
AASR Bulletin Co-Editor

### APOLOGIES AGAIN!

In AASR Bulletin 23 (May 2005), on p. 64, I apologised for not having replied, due to pressure of other work, to Graham Harvey's response to my remark in AASR Bulletin 21 (May 2004), p. 51, that Harvey 'has a partisan interest in indigenous religions' and 'pushes the "new primitivist" approaches which Armin Geertz criticised'. I regret greatly that I must apologise again now for having failed to draft my reply, for exactly the same reason, or actually for two time-consuming reasons. One is that since October 2004 I am a member of a national Dutch accreditation assessment committee, which has since paid three-day visits to all thirteen Dutch academic institutions teaching theology and religious studies funded by the Dutch government. That job is drawing to a close. The report will be published in two or three months' time. The second reason is that the AASR Executive appointed me AASR Web Master and commissioned me to have the AASR internet site developed. It also implied that I had to teach myself, and be taught, the basics of HTML and XHTML-internet languages for managing and further developing that site.

I do, however, trust that I will be able to reply to Graham Harvey's response in AASR Bulletin 25. That I do not do so now in a half a page or so is because I feel that the 'dispute' between Harvey and me deserves a thorough investigation and a well-balanced response. All I can do now is to report on the few e-mail exchanges we had on this matter in November 2004. In one of these, on 15 November 2004, I wrote that

I am sorry that my concluding 'reservation' in my review of the four recent books on 'indigenous religions' (AASR Bulletin 21: 52) has apparently stung you. It was certainly not meant to be 'insulting'. Nor do I think it is 'damaging' to your work in view of the fact that if my allegation of your 'partisan interest in indigenous religions and modern neo-paganism' is correct, then you are one of quite a large number of colleagues, certainly in the AASR, who have more sympathy for your position than for my 'reservation' against it. I am only worried whether my allegation is indeed correct. This review had to be written in quite a hurry, and in ending it on the usual critical note I may have gone more by a 'distinct impression' than by solid textual evidence. So, I will have to review that, and perhaps also read your other publications to test my 'distinct impression'. Which means that I will either try to substantiate my 'reservation' and continue our debate, as you suggest, or publish an apology. But I fear that I may not be able to do that in AASR-Bulletin 22 in view of my present schedule of what I have to attend to.

To which Harvey replied on 16 November:

I'm less concerned with being called 'partisan' than with the word 'primitivist'. I've been called worse – 'theologian' for example! - and I really do contest that one. My recent article in *Numen* makes it clear that I think we need to find various more ethical and decolonialising research methods and positions. I'm happy to argue that modernity's science is as deeply entangled in polemics as any other 'tribal' view. It's only worse than other worldviews because it claims to be universally true and useful when in fact it is dangerously partisan. So, my version of being partisan is less worrying - except that the implication that might be read into your review [is] that because I've written a book on Pagans I might be doing something dubious in engaging with indigenous people and religions. My book on Paganism (and a more recent edited book about Researching Paganisms) are more careful to avoid being a theologian. I.e. I do not construct the religion as I would like it to be, I do not talk about my own practice except as a researcher... etc.

When I failed to trace Harvey's article in *Numen*, he graciously sent me an electronic copy of it on 25 November 2004 as well as his list of publications to date. At that point, however, the treadmill of the visitation process overtook me. Now that I am about to be released from it, I look forward to examine Harvey's publications and test whether his approach to the academic study of religions may, or should not in my opinion be viewed as 'primitivist'. I will report on that in AASR Bulletin 25.



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10. = 2004, 'Interpreting African Adventism: In Search of a Paradigm', in Gerald A. Klingbeil (Hg.), *Misión y contextualización: llevar el mensaje bíblico a un mundo multicultural*. Libertador San Martín, Entre Ríos: Editorial Universidad Adventista del Plata, 91-112
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- = 2004, 'Biblical Healing: The Craze in Contemporary Nigerian Society', in *The Nigerian Journal for Biblical Studies* 9: 300-309.
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