

EDITORIAL

2007 has been another significant year for the AASR. First, a successful continental conference was held in Gaborone, Botswana in July 2007, and the debates on religion, health and the HIV/AIDS were very stimulating and indeed generated scholarly interests among members of the Association. In this issue, we present to you some of the reports of that conference.

Secondly, the internal mobilization for funds to host the Botswana Conference clearly indicates that we have the capacity to generate more funds from members for the running of the Association. In fact, late in 2006, we have begun looking at modalities for this internal sustenance, not only for the conference, but also for the overall running of the Association. Once again, our appreciation goes to all members who donated towards the conference, and who also facilitated contacts with external agencies.

Thirdly, the transition in the editorial board that began in late 2003 is almost complete now with the bringing in of another African scholar, Dr Lovemore Togarasei as co-editor. It is our intention to follow this up by including more news from the African continent in subsequent issues. Our deep appreciation goes to Dr Jan G. Platvoet, one of the founding fathers of the Association and the first Editor of AASR Newsletter later renamed AASR Bulletin for his commitment to the Association, and the selfless service he has rendered to the collation, editing, publication and distribution of the Bulletin over the years. We continue to count on his support. In this issue, you will find his reflections about the Association and the duties of the officers.

This is a combined issue of numbers 27 and 28 for 2007. For a number of reasons, No 27 was delayed for a long time, and was eventually merged with the November 2007 issue. The editorial team has therefore worked hard to dispatch this combined issue as early as possible so that it could be received before the Christmas vacation.

Lastly, the Editors wish every member a peaceful, prosperous and fruitful 2008.



CONFERENCE REPORTS

Muhammed Haron & Lovemore Togarasei
University of Botswana

THIRD AASR CONFERENCE IN AFRICA

HEALTH, HEALING & THE STUDY OF THE RELIGIONS OF AFRICA

UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA,
GABORONE, 8-13 JULY 2007

Introduction

At the AASR business meeting in 2006, it was agreed by the executive and key members to hold the next international conference on the African continent. Although it was not easy deciding on a host country and institution, there was a general consensus particularly after Professor David Westurlund's visit to Botswana to consider the University of Botswana as a suitable host. The International Conference Committee (ICC) decided to give special focus on 'Religion and Health' with particular reference to HIV and AIDS that has ravaged communities in the Southern African region.

University of Botswana's Department of Theology and Religious Studies readily accepted to host the conference. A Local Organising Committee that consisted of members of the mentioned department was set up. It was chaired by Musa Dube with the assistance, among others, of Lovemore Togarasei, Fidelis Nkomazana, James Amanze and Muhammed Haron. Despite the difficulties such as internal financial constraints that the LOC initially experienced in organizing the conference, the conference was generally well managed.

The LOC in consultation with the ICC decided to accept all abstracts submitted. A fairly packed program was created with different sessions running over four days. As expected there were withdrawals of papers on the last minute and this meant that changes had to be made to the scheduled program.

THE PROCEEDINGS

Official Opening & Plenary Sessions

At the very outset it should be stated that it would be impossible to review and reflect the names and papers of all those participants who contributed towards the success of the AASR conference at the University of Botswana. The conference was officially opened on 9th July 2007 by Botswana's Minister of Health, Professor Sheila Tlou. The Vice Chancellor, the Dean and Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Humanities attended this official opening of the conference. The first plenary paper entitled "Professing, Engaging and Abstaining: Religious Studies in Africa and HIV and AIDS", was given by Professor Ezra Chitando of the University of Zimbabwe.

On the second day, 10th July, Professor Tinyiko S. Maluleke of the University of South Africa delivered the second plenary paper titled 'Men, Masculinities and HIV and AIDS.' Professor Maluleke touched upon the relationship between men and masculinities and argued that feminist writings have, in a sense, given rise to male consciousness and this has been evidenced by the increasing number of men magazines and organizations. He used Kumar's theoretical frame such as the power discourse to further explore his topic. The professor acknowledged the pluralist nature of masculinities and mentioned how certain factors – for example, war and violence – have influenced this phenomenon. Towards the conclusion he proposed, *inter alia*, a redefinition of manhood as a possible modality for future debates and discussions.

On the third day Professor Rosalind Hackett, who is affiliated to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA delivered the last plenary paper. Professor Hackett addressed the issue of 'Social Suffering: An Underworked Concept in Religious Studies'. Her provocative presentation analyzed and evaluated an under researched concept within the arena of Religious Studies. For her presentation, she drew upon the ideas of Arthur Kleinman and Veena Das who developed the concept in Anthropology and who demonstrated the impact of the concept on the causes of human suffering. Professor Hackett questioned the contribution of scholars from within the Religious Studies discipline to this field of inquiry and the challenges that it brings to bear in the African context where civil wars and diseases have damaged and destroyed many communities. She concluded by arguing that it is a viable concept for stakeholders who are seeking for a more humanistic approach to the twin subjects of religion and health.

The three plenary presentations stimulated the participants to further dwell on their deliberations and relate them to their areas of specializations. Many questions were posed in the respective plenary addresses and these generated very stimulating discussions.

The parallel sessions

There were several sessions with many presentations. However, instead of reviewing each and every session, we opted, in this report, to randomly select papers that had common thematic strands. There were over 60 papers, about 10% of these have been evaluated in this report.

African Religious Health Assets

This session had papers mainly from members of the Africa Religious Health Assets Programme (ARHAP) based at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. Very interesting papers were presented by Paul Germond, Tessa Dooms, Barbara Schmidt and Kipton Jensen. Their papers investigated the role of religious assets to health issues particularly HIV in southern Africa. They were mainly developed from recent researches carried out in southern Africa. One of the papers entitled "Transformations of the Traditional: The Impact of Modernity on Traditional Healers Conceptions of Well-Being", by Sepatla Molapo, investigated the practice of traditional healing in modern society.

African indigenous Churches, Health, Healing and HIV and AIDS

Three interesting papers were presented in this session. Nisbert Taringa of the University of Zimbabwe presented on a Zimbabwean African Independent Church prophetess who is said to be able to reverse some symptoms of HIV. The paper generated a lot of interesting debates on AICs and healing. Munetsi Ruzivo, also of the University of Zimbabwe, discussed the practice of healing in the Church of Johane Masowe in Harare. The third paper was from Obed Keatlotswe of the University of Botswana who examined the healing of HIV and AIDS patients by Diagelo among AICs in Botswana.

Biblical Studies and Healing

Three papers were also presented in this session. The first paper, by Lovemore Togarasei of the University of Botswana, reviewed how African scholars have used the Bible to fight HIV and AIDS. The paper looked at the methodological question and challenged African biblical scholars to move towards an 'HIV and AIDS method of biblical interpretation'. Gladys Ogedengbe conversed about 'Diseases and Healing in the Old Testament: A Paradigm for Anglican Communion in relations to HIV/Aids in Nigeria.' Acknowledging that there is no mention of HIV and AIDS in the Old Testament, the researcher examined the Anglican Communion's role in the reduction of the HIV and AIDS pandemic from the biblical context, and proposed that the Church be seen as an important vehicle to deal with the scourge. Caleb Ogunkunle discussed the practice of polygamy in the context of HIV and AIDS. This he did through an exegesis of Genesis 30: 1-24.

Conclusion

From the brief reviews of particular papers, it was observed that the papers covered a variety of issues related to the conference theme. Other themes that appeared on the agenda but are not reviewed in this report were the 'Academic Study of Religion' and 'Faith Based OrganIzations and their response to HIV/-Aids'. In addition, health and healing pertaining to other religious traditions such as Hinduism, Islam and the Bahai Faith were also discussed in some of the sessions.

Some of the papers were indeed of a very good academic standard, whilst there were others that need to be improved upon by the writers. Despite the shortcomings of certain papers, the conference undoubtedly brought together an array of specialists mainly from the African continent. This is in itself a positive outcome. It is, however, hoped that the thoughts that were disseminated and shared in Gaborone will be further investigated, explored, and debated in order to seek the necessary solutions to the social, religious and health problems that are faced by communities across the African continent.

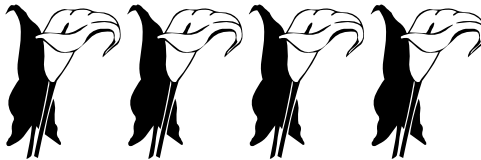
Damaris Seleina Parsitau
Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya

The AASR conference that was held in Botswana on 8th-13th July 2007 has come and gone but I must confess that for me as an upcoming scholar of religion from Kenya, it left a huge mark in my career both as an academic and researcher. As a young scholar, the meeting provided me with a rare chance of meeting my friends, mentors and respectable scholars in the field of religion. These scholars are not only mentors to me but also an inspiration and encouragement. I was able to form networks with some of them as I shared my academic experiences as a PhD candidate, a researcher, writer and lecturer. I also got to know a lot about what is going on in the world of Religious Studies in other parts of the continent as well as the western world. A few scholars who are more experienced in the field invited me to contribute articles to their journals and book chapters, a venture that is very exiting for me because I have a passion for research and writing.

The plenary sessions by Prof Ezra Chitando and Prof Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, and the opening ceremony by the Minister of Health, who is also an academic, were all as stimulating as they were challenging. The various sessions were equally remarkable although it was not possible to attend to all of them at the same time.

On the whole I had a great time in Botswana and I enjoyed myself thoroughly despite the chilly winter. Indeed it was a remarkable conference!! I think a lot of effort went towards the preparation of the conference, which was not without its challenges and to be fair to all, the conference was a huge success despite many odds. In my view the General Secretary, Dr. Afe Adogame, the Treasurer, Prof. James Cox, and the University of Botswana Organizing Committee did a superb job humanly speaking considering the financial constraints they all faced.

Despite the evident financial constraints emanating from a shortage of finances, a few scholars from the African continent were given travel bursaries and I, together with my other two colleagues from Kenya were recipients of such bursaries. However, this raises serious issues about the need to have a solid financial base for future conferences and is also a challenge to all members of the AASR to contribute to this noble organization. Nevertheless when I look back and reflect on the experience, it was a worthy experience and a huge eye opener for me.



Afe Adogame
University of Edinburgh

FROM THE DESK OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Dear Colleagues,

The end of year, 2007 is gradually upon us! It has no doubt been another eventful one for members in their individual capacities but also for AASR as a corporate organization. I am very delighted to celebrate with you the tremendous success of, and share some experiences from the 3rd AASR Conference in Africa & IAHR Regional Conference “*Health, Healing & the Study of the Religions of Africa*” hosted by the University of Botswana, Gaborone from 8-13 July 2007. I would consider this conference a very special, exceptional and experimental one, partly because, unlike earlier conferences in Harare, Nairobi and Accra, the Gaborone conference has been one nursed, planned and executed without an initial take-off grant. The successful planning and execution of this conference is largely owing to the collective resolve, magnanimity and determination of the AASR Executive, the Conference Local Organizing Committee (LOC), the International Conference Committee (ICC), but also of course the several members who contributed in one way or the other to its realization. Our profound gratitude goes to all who contributed to the huge success of this very historic event. Approximately 75 participants attended the conference with about 55 presentations structured in plenary and parallel sessions. The inter-disciplinarity which characterize the intellectual discourses and exchanges, coupled with the forging of new networks, renewing and strengthening of old, existing individual and institutional networks and cooperation, as well as the fascinating socio-cultural events are lucid indicators of the conference’s success.

Our deep appreciation to the LOC coordinated by Musa Dube and Love-more Togarasei, the entire Department Staff of Theology and Religious Studies for hosting the conference, the Faculty of Arts and University of Botswana authorities for granting us free space and congenial atmosphere. They all have demonstrated the reality and nicety of ‘African hospitality’. We owe deep thanks to the ICC for their tremendous efforts in securing some funding for limited bursaries that made the participation of a number of colleagues based in African universities possible. Generally, both the LOC and ICC defied, surmounted multiple financial hurdles and logistical challenges; through

their selfless service, sacrifice and laudable commitments ensured that the 'experimental' project became a reality.

Gaborone 2007 event would have ended as a mere 'dream' but for the financial support we received at a dire time of want, at a crucial point in which the conference execution hung in a delicate balance between annulment and postponement. The ICC was very optimistic and perhaps over-ambitious in their drive for financial sponsorship of the conference. Besides the conference Planning Fund, it was hoped that bursary would be made available to several participants from the continent. The first and greatest challenge the ICC faced was 'finance' as the AASR up till the end of 2006 had no corporate bank account or central purse. It will be recalled that the AASR Treasurer operated for several years without any physical handling of any monies. The Treasurer and General Secretary were successful in opening a corporate account with the Bank for Scotland for AASR; for which they are both signatories. Seeking for sponsorship became necessary to be able to generate money for implementing the conference plan. About forty-five (45) potential sponsors were contacted worldwide through formal letters and telephone calls in the quest for sponsorship. It was most disappointing and frustrating that, with only one exception, virtually all other prospective sponsors we approached dashed our hopes and expectations. The Prince Claus Foundation in the Netherlands deserves our special mention, commendation and gratitude for sponsoring one participant to the conference. The Foundation paid the economy airfare (c. €1,100.00) of one of the female participants from an African University. Ostensibly, this was a case of 'many (45) were approached, but only one heeded our call'.

This singular donation was nevertheless a far cry from our financial expectation. Owing to this unanticipated 'empty' feedback from several prospective sponsors, the ICC made very swift efforts in soliciting for further financial support from senior AASR colleagues and friends of the association. We are indeed appreciative of the prompt positive responses to our SOS message. The LOC, on behalf of the AASR, received financial support of four thousand dollars (\$4,000) from the Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAlA) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) through its coordinator, Ezra Chitando. We are indeed thankful to Ezra Chitando for this generous grant and additional sums (\$700) he kindly donated in support of other aspects of the event.

We owe many thanks to the IAHR for granting the conference the status of an IAHR Regional Conference and for supporting it with a 'seed' grant of \$500. We must not escape to mention the generous donation of many colleagues and friends of the association. AASR North America and AASR Europe rose to the occasion with financial support of \$700 and €1000 respectively. Individual donations included those from Jacob Olupona (\$500); Frieder Ludwig (\$500); Rosalind Hackett (\$200); Gerrie ter Haar (\$100); James Cox (\$100); David Westerlund (\$100); Jan Platvoet (€50). Our gratitude goes to members

(Yushau Sodiq, Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton, Diane Jonte-Pace and Kathleen O'Brien Wicker) and friends of AASR (Mary F. Comerford (\$200) who contributed to the appeal fund through our North American representative. On behalf of the AASR Executive, please accept our sincere gratitude for your kind gestures and generous support at a time the ICC was experiencing financial crossroads.

Nevertheless, in view of the limited funds generated through annual fees, conference fees and appeal fund, the ICC in consultation with the AASR Executive, used discretionary measures and devised a strategy to utilize the monies for planning and executing the conference. Some of these was set aside for the purpose of providing limited bursaries to a few eligible applicants based on a clear-cut criteria set by the ICC in conjunction with the AASR Executive. For instance, Professors and very senior colleagues were exempted from receiving bursary, while some selected young scholars benefited from limited bursary. Beneficiaries were expected to be fee-paying members: only those qualified who had paid their current annual dues in addition to the conference fees. Such applicants were encouraged to solicit for their own or additional funding before they can receive any subsidy from ICC. It was quite encouraging that many applicants made individual sacrifices indicating own contributions ranging between \$300-\$1000 each to their travel and boarding. Based on this, the ICC awarded an average of five hundred dollars (\$500) each to successful applicants. I am happy to inform you that the following AASR member-participants were recipients of limited bursary: Damaris Parsitau, Susan Kilonzo, Sussy Gumo-Kurgat (Kenya); Musa Adeniyi, Lateef Oladimeji, Caleb Ogunkunle, Danoye Laguda, David Ogungbile, Pius Abioje, and Gladys Ogedengbe (Nigeria), and Bolaji Bateye sponsored by the Prince Claus Fund. In addition, member participants from Zimbabwe received a \$300 joint bursary from the ICC.

We took the opportunity of the conference to convene a business meeting on 11th July, which was well attended by 29 members. The General Secretary chaired the meeting in the absence of the President and Vice-President at the conference. Below are some highlights from the meeting:

ZONAL REPORTS

North America

Teresia Hinga representing the regional representative remarked that the region presently had about 30 active members. The AASR- NA would hold its 15th Anniversary of AASR at the next AAR annual meeting in San Diego (November 17-20, 2007). Hinga is serving as African Series Editor of the Online Journal of the Blackwell Publishers. She encouraged members to contribute

papers to this online journal. The survey articles that were currently being reviewed for the journal had their focus on "Healing in African Belief Systems."

Europe

Gerrie ter Haar presented the report on behalf of the regional representative, Henk van Rinsum. She reported that van Rinsum would no longer be able to serve in that capacity due to personal engagements. It was reported that there were 30 fee-paying members and that each member with gainful employment was currently paying €60 (euros), student members were paying €40 (euros) while the fee for institutional affiliation was €25 (euros). Furthermore, she noted that until recently Europe region had been paying for the production of AASR Bulletin since its first issue in 1993.

West Africa

The representative of the region was absent from the meeting and sent in no report and letter explaining his absence.

Southern Africa

The Chairman expressed dissatisfaction that the region's representative, Johannes Smit, had not been functioning in this capacity since his appointment in 2005 and lamented that all efforts to contact him have so far failed, as he never responds to e-mail communication. Thus, no report could be given. The chairman read the only e-mail message sent by the representative shortly before the conference indicating his inability to continue to function. The Chairman remarked that AASR cannot afford to accommodate officers that exist only in name, but who are not prepared to function in their capacities.

Eastern Africa

The representative was absent at the conference (presently in the US) and thus no report. However, an East African participant raised the issue of whether members of the Kenyan Association for the Study of Religion (KASR) could also take on AASR membership. The issue was discussed and the house felt that the decision to be members of the AASR was an individual, local one to be addressed by members in that region. Both Kenyan Association for the Study of Religion and AASR are both affiliated to the IAHR, KASR as a national affiliate and AASR as a continental/global one. Each member of KASR who feels committed to AASR would need to join as a matter of individual interest and preference. A second option is for AASR members in Kenya to form an AASR national chapter.

Central Africa

The representative of the region was absent but sent a letter to that effect as he was presently in the US. The chairman noted that the representative nominated a colleague to represent Central Africa but communication problems made this unrealisable.

North Africa

There was no communication from the representative of the region. The Chairman noted that Ibrahim Boutchich had indicated his withdrawal from this position as he claimed to be too busy to carry on with the functions involved.

REPORTS BY NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Zambia

Austin Cheyeka reported on behalf of the country's representative. He noted that Zambia had 10 fee-paying members since 2004. The chairman praised Zambia AASR for sponsoring one of its members to the conference and enjoined other countries to emulate this initiative.

Zimbabwe

Ezra Chitando reported that the AASR Zimbabwe was doing well despite the prolonged Zimbabwean political-economic crisis, though it did affect meaningful, reasonable membership. Till date, members numbered up to eleven (11). Religious Studies scholarship in the region had been focusing on the religious studies' response to, and intervention in, the problem of HIV/AIDS. It was noted that members who attended the conference from Zimbabwe had traveled by road.

Kenya

There was no official report from the country. Damaris Parsitau reported that only five (5) members paid membership annual dues for the current year.

Nigeria

David Ogungbile reported a fee-paying membership of twenty (20). He reported that efforts were being made to expedite action for membership drive through some academic activities in the very near future.

Malawi

There was no official report from the country, although there was a participant from Malawi.

Botswana

Musa Dube reported a fee-paying membership of five (5). She remarked that the Department of Theology and Religious Studies had been helping and engaging in collaborative research activities.

REPORT FROM BULLETIN/INTERNET OFFICERS

AASR Bulletin

Jan Platvoet gave a progress report on the AASR bulletin, which had grown to about seventy (70) pages. He announced his stepping aside as Bulletin Officer, and Matthews Ojo taking over as the new Bulletin Officer. He remarked that the first bulletin issue produced in Nigeria was well done. He however noted that the contents of the Bulletin were too Eurocentric. He advised that more news and information from Africa be incorporated, and many more reports from various African regions.

Internet/AASR Website

Members noted the significance of the AASR internet website for information dissemination. Members were reminded that the AASR website contained two main sections: the 'public domain' and the 'members-only' section. Members were advised to continue to take advantage of facilities that would become available in the near future, such as a discussion forum and the search engine facility, but also the link pages to other related websites. As Platvoet will step down in 2010, when he turns 75, he suggested that the AASR should appoint a member now who is willing and able to succeed him as AASR WebMaster. It was advised that an assistant internet officer be appointed who is based in a university.

Members were enjoined to send useful information to Platvoet for posting on the AASR website and/or for publication in the AASR Bulletin. Inputs are particularly solicited from scholars based in Africa universities and research institutes. Such inputs could be in form of institutional profiles, membership directory in various institutions, current/recent research projects, the scholarly publications of members, brief conference reports, etc. Participants who were beneficiaries of bursary were particularly enjoined to write brief reports (500-1000 words) of their experiences at the Botswana conference and send these to the bulletin officers latest by August.

Platvoet was highly commended by the Chairman and the house for his selfless service, diligence and high commitment to duty as both the Bulletin Editor and Internet Officer.

ELECTION INTO VACANT OFFICES

Frans Wijzen (the Netherlands) was nominated and confirmed as the new regional representative for Europe following the resignation of Henk van Rinsum.

Obed Kealotswe (Botswana) was appointed and confirmed as the new regional representative for Southern Africa following the reduced performance of Johannes Smit (South Africa).

Lovemore Togarasei (Botswana) was appointed and confirmed as the co-Bulletin Officer following the retirement of Platvoet. Togarasei will assist Matthews Ojo who continues in office as Bulletin Officer.

PUBLICATIONS

Botswana Conference Papers

Members discussed the issue of publication extensively. Two suggestions came on the floor of the meeting. (i) that papers from the conference be produced as conference proceedings, in which case the local bulletin published at the University of Botswana should be considered as options for publication. This was to be organized by Togarasei and Kealotswe, both of the university, (ii) that papers undergo peer-review and those found publishable are to be published as an edited book and/or in a special journal issue. In this option, some papers would be considered as a Special Issue in the Religion in Contemporary Africa book series edited by James Cox and Gerrie Ter Haar for the Africa World Press. Additional papers might be published in scientific journals such as the journal *Religion in Africa*. Members were to be contacted via email and all would be required to vote on their desirability of either of the two positions. However, both options were to be pursued concurrently. Additionally, it was suggested that all papers presented at the conference will be assembled by the Internet Officer on the AASR website as E-Conference papers. This will only be accessible to members in the 'Members-Only' section.

Ghana Conference Papers

Members raised the issue of the publication of papers presented at the last AASR conference in Accra, Ghana. The Chairman noted that the President, Elom Dovlo and West African representative, Matthews Ojo who hosted the conference were not available to brief the house and answer questions relating to the issue. Some members noted with dismay that though some funds were made available by Jacob Olupona for the production of a conference volume, both officers did not appear to demonstrate any sign of commitment in making this possible. The Chairman promised to communicate member's feeling on the issue to them, and will communicate their responses on progress with the publication to members.

MATTERS ARISING: THE WAY FORWARD FOR AASR?

Leadership

Members expressed disappointment on the attitude of some principal officers, notably, the President, Elom Dovlo and the Vice-President, Grace Wamue, who were absent from the conference and meeting, but failed to send any letter

or messages explaining their inability to be present. Their absence gave members serious concern. The chairman remarked that their absence may not have been unconnected with private reasons or unavoidable developments.

Corporate Goals

The Chairman reiterated the concerns of the association in terms of its goals. Members were encouraged to go back and study the goals of the association as set out on the rear cover of each AASR Bulletin to be able to make meaningful comments. The comments could be in form of suggestions for the reordering of the goals to meet contemporary challenges and financial commitment/needs. Members were encouraged to intensify effort and think of certain policies in the areas of economy, development and any other concerns.

Assessment forms were distributed to members to give their appraisals for the conference, and make suggestions for further action to the Executive. The LOC was to assemble and evaluate the feedback forms and convey results to the AASR Executive for necessary action.

Membership dues

Each region was encouraged to come up with reasonable membership fees to be able to sustain the association financially. A financial policy would later be formulated for association's financial wellbeing.

Appreciation

Representatives of Kenya and Nigeria expressed appreciation to the AASR Executive, ICC and LOC for making it possible to have a successful conference. Togarasei, on behalf of the LOC, thanked all members for their understanding and contribution to this success.

Announcements

- (i) the next IAHR World Congress would take place in Toronto on August 17-22, 2010. The theme of the congress is 'Religion and Human Intervention'
- (ii) the Nigerian delegates led by David Ogungbile proposed to host the next AASR Regional Conference in Nigeria in 2009, a year preceding the IAHR 2010 Congress. Tentative conference themes suggested were (1) Religion, Migration and Globalization, (2) Religion, Politics and Sustainable Development in Africa, and (3) Culture, Society and Religious Studies in Africa. They promised to communicate details at a later date.



Irfan Ahmad
ISIM-Leiden University

ABDULKADER TAYOB'S
FAREWELL CONFERENCE
10.11.06, RADBOUD UNIVERSITY,
NIJMEGEN, THE NETHERLANDS

I met Prof. Abdulkader Tayob for the first time in Leiden in a seminar. What struck me, then a fresh PhD student, at first sight was his appearance. He had long Sufi-like hair and a trimmed beard. He wore an impeccable calmness – sagacious and quizzing at once. Later I had more occasions to interact with him. What fascinated me was his distinct approach, a fine synthesis of classical traditions of Islam and modern social theory with a sound empirical anchoring. I am thinking here specifically of his book *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa: The Muslim Youth Movement* (1995). More importantly, much like Chishti Sufis, his worldview bore a deep mark of creative crisscross, convergence and blurring of genres and scholarly traditions. Time passed quickly since my first meeting with Abdulkader *sahib* until I heard about the farewell conference to be held in his honour. The venue of the conference was an old building, previously a monastery, in the far southeast of The Netherlands. It lay in the vicinity of Radboud University, Nijmegen, where Abdulkader Tayob held the ISIM professorial chair.

The conference began with a welcome address by Asef Bayat, academic director of ISIM, on the wintry morning of November 10, 2006. Its theme, *Reflections on Muslim Intellectual History*, was a favourite interest of Abdulkader Tayob. The conference explored several facets of Muslim intellectual history. Each presentation was followed by a rich discussion, which indeed continued during coffee and lunch breaks. After the welcome address, Abdulkader Tayob made the first presentation. In a challenging paper titled 'The Meaning of Religion in the Islamic State', he argued that the meaning of religion (*din*) itself was transformed in the discourses of Islamic state during the twentieth century. To understand the dynamics of modern Islam, he stressed, we must take into account this radical hermeneutic shift. Tayob focused on Ali Abd al-Raziq's thesis that Islam separated the religious from the secular, and did not entail any specific state. In contrast, Rashid Rida argued for an Islamic state. However, he too made, if unwittingly, a distinction between '*ibadat* (worship) and *mu'amlaat* (social relations). In Tayob's reading, the apparently different meanings of reli-

gion in the discourses of al-Raziq and Rida shared a common ground. Tayob further argued that Rida's notion of the Islamic state indeed functioned as an insignia of Muslim identity.

Tayob's presentation was followed by Abdou Filali-Ansary's, director of the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilizations, London. Titled 'Being Serious about one's History', he urged for a historically embedded approach to Muslim traditions by Muslim scholars. Acknowledging the contributions early Muslim scholars made to historiography, Filali-Ansary underlined the need for embracing advanced methods and approaches developed in history in the modern west.

The nineteenth century rediscovery of Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldun by Muslim intellectuals was the theme of next paper, 'The Invention of Arab Tradition and Islamic Civilization' by Michiel Leezenberg, University of Amsterdam. He showed how the changing state formation and configuration of language and knowledge contributed to the renaissance in Turkey and the Arab world. The next presentation 'Rethinking Sharia: Javed Ahmad Ghamdi on Hudud' was by Khalid Masud, sometime ISIM academic director. Focusing on the novel reasoning and critical ideas of Pakistan's Javed Ghamdi, particularly those relating to Islamic crimes and punishment, he showed how a rational approach was emerging from within the Islamic traditions. Such an approach as Ghamdi's, Masud argued, questions the view that Islam is immobile.

After the lunch break, Mona Abaza from American University of Cairo, gave her paper 'Trafficking with *Tanwir*'. She depicted how *tanwir*, enlightenment, had become a fiercely contested idea in the Egyptian public sphere. While the state used it to discredit the 'dark' Islamists, the latter appropriated it for spreading their own notion of an Islamic enlightenment. The next paper 'Nurcholis Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, and their Intellectual Heirs', was by Martin van Bruinessen, ISIM chair at Utrecht University. In it, he deftly showed the blooming of an ecumenical, liberal Islam in the speeches and writings, *inter alia*, of Indonesia's Nurcholis Madjid. In particular, he elaborated on Madjid's new theological interpretation in favour of democracy, human rights, feminism and religious pluralism. Furthermore, he showed how transnational intellectual forces crucially informed Madjid's thought. In his presentation, 'Post-Islamism and the End of Ideology', Asef Bayat suggested a post-Islamist turn in the trajectory of Islamism. Critical to this turn, he emphasized, are the notions of rights and freedom. He further argued that post-Islamist intellectuals embrace modernity as hardware (technology) as well as software (ideas, attitudes). In the final paper, Roel Meijer, an ISIM fellow and historian at Radboud University, warned against the post-structuralist readings of radical discourses such as those of Osama Ben Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Critical of such readings, which describe these discourses as nihilistic, he stressed their continued political import. Focusing on the writings of Yusuf al-Ayiri, he argued how deeply political Ayiri's project was, especially his Communist-like assertion that *jihad* was a permanent revolution.

Following the individual presentations, the floor was open for a general discussion, which was equally engaging. To the idea of publishing a conference volume, each participant enthusiastically responded. The discussion, however, noted a major absence. A female Ph. D. student of ISIM pointed out that there were few women presenters and no paper on the gender issue. As the discussion drew to a close, the scene was set for the reception at which speeches were made and gifts presented. The tenor and themes of speeches varied – some were emotional, others nostalgic. Tayob's colleagues and friends remembered fondly the enriching and challenging times they shared. While some spoke about Tayob's intellectual prowess, others focused on his personal qualities. Asef Bayat remarked that he had never met such a 'cool' figure as Tayob. In his short but intense speech, Tayob thanked his colleagues and friends for making his and his wife's (Hawa) stay in The Netherlands rich and joyful.

By the time reception was over, it was pitch dark outside. The monastery lay far away from the town. Enveloped in darkness we left the old building, with the vast open field of crops and trees staring at us. As we walked, I wondered whether the 'cool' persona in Tayob *sahib* was the glimpse of a cosmopolitan Sufi.



TOWARDS JOB DESCRIPTIONS OF THE AASR EXECUTIVE

Jan G. Platvoet

Convener

AASR-Nominations Committee 2005-2010

An AASR-officer indicated in mid-2004 that he found his job ‘amorphous’.¹ He had received no guidelines as to what precisely he was expected to achieve for the AASR. He felt ‘beleaguered by lack of clarity of the job’s responsibilities’ and was unsure what he should do. Another felt ‘constrained [...] by the informal nature of our association’, and also ‘not clear what [she] ought to be doing’, and ‘hard put to explain, particularly to potential new members what exactly the association is about and what the benefits of belonging to this association are beyond receiving the newsletter’. The members of the AASR-Nominations Committee 2005-2010, of which I was asked to serve as convener, likewise felt a need for articulating what each AASR office entailed when they reflected on whom they might best nominate for the several AASR offices in the next quinquennial period 2005-2010. They felt that their efforts at this articulation might also assist the officers to move beyond a mere intuition of what their posts entail, and thereby to serve the AASR more efficiently.

This need for clarification of job requirements seems a problem in particular of the post-pioneering generation when it takes over from the founding members. The pioneers had enthusiastic but perhaps also rather idiosyncratic visions of what they wanted to achieve. They followed their intuition as to what the several offices entailed and creatively built the AASR from scratch. Though they adopted a constitution, they operated mostly in informal ways, with little explicit articulation, and perhaps also too little structural cohesion. As another AASR member recently remarked: ‘The third generation of most movements usually faces the challenge of deciding what kind of organizational structure is required to fulfil its mission. I think we are in the third generation right now in the AASR’.

So, perhaps the time has arrived for us to develop ‘job descriptions’ for the several offices in the AASR Executive. A first draft of them is offered below. It contains only tentative, at most preliminary guidelines for AASR officers. They

¹ This document was originally written in September 2004, when I had been appointed by the AASR President as convener of the AASR Nominations Committee 2005-2010. I have rewritten parts of it in order to reflect recent developments.

can certainly be improved upon. So they will need further discussion and ultimately perhaps formal decision by an AASR General Meeting to become the approved guidelines after which we expect AASR officers to function. Two big cautions must be sounded, however. One against the danger that such guidelines may insidiously become formal requirements that kill creative zeal. That, I fear, would soon cause more damage to the AASR than the present relative lack of articulation of what each office entails. What we need are dedicated officers who have the well-being and growth of the AASR at heart, who are inspired by its aims as set out on the rear cover of each AASR-Bulletin and know them by heart, and spend much time and creative effort in furthering them in the two periods that they usually serve in an office. The other is the danger that formalising the guidelines slips into the imposition of a hierarchy. That might easily marginalize those not in office, and cause them to feel of no use to the AASR, merely its consumers, not its contributors. The high degree of informality of the pioneer period, and its sense of office being a privilege to serve, and not a brief to rule, should continue to pervade the AASR in this post-pioneer period also.

AASR peculiarities

The AASR was founded in Harare in 1992. It was admitted into the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) in its 17th Congress in Mexico-City in 1995 as the third of its four continent-wide ‘regional’ associations: that of scholars of religions in Africa.² But it is also so far its one-and-only ‘global’ affiliate: of scholars of the religions of Africa in Africa, Europe, North America, Israel and Japan. These peculiar traits caused it to develop an executive, which is markedly different from that of other IAHR affiliates, nearly all of which are national associations.³ Though I wish by no means to imply and further a hierarchy, we may distinguish two concentric rings in the AASR-Executive, to wit:

= the AASR ‘inner executive’, which consists of the President, the Vice President, the General Secretary and the Treasurer. They constitute its ‘central steering and communication committee’, its ‘hub’;

² The other three continent-wide affiliates are the North American Association for the Study of Religions (NAASR), admitted in Rome 1990; the *Asociacion Latinoamericana para el Estudio de las Religiones*, (ALER), admitted also in Rome in 1990; the *European Association for the Study of Religions* (EASR), admitted in Durban in 2000. The IAHR terms them ‘regional affiliates’. Other regional affiliates are ASRSA (*Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa*), admitted in 1980; EAASR (Eastern African Association for the Study of Religions), admitted in Durban in 2000; and the *South and Southeast Asian Association for the Study of Culture and Religion* (SSEASR), admitted in Tokyo in 2005. ASRSA has, however, so few members outside South Africa that it is counted as a national affiliate by the IAHR.

³ In addition to its five ‘regional affiliates’, the IAHR has 36 ‘national affiliates’ since in Tokyo in 2005. For the full list of IAHR affiliates, visit: <http://www.iahr.dk/associations.htm>.

= the full AASR executive as a working body: the 'inner executive' together with the Regional Representatives, the Editors of the AASR-Bulletin, the Publications Officer, and the WebMaster or Internet Officer.

I will discuss the AASR offices in this order.

President

The President is 'the Chair' of two kinds of meetings. Firstly, of any General AASR Meeting: during the IAHR congresses, AASR-Conferences in Africa, and any other conference on the religions of Africa at which so many AASR-members are present that their presence justifies an AASR General Meeting, as was the case e.g. at Bayreuth in October 2001, in Legon in 2004, in Tokyo in 2005, and in Gaborone in 2007. Secondly, he or she chairs any meeting of the AASR-Executive, or part of it, at which he himself, or she herself, is present. He or she also finalises the agenda which the General Secretary has prepared for these meetings, makes announcements, introduces the various speakers and/or items to be discussed, directs the discussions, and summarises the conclusions, especially those by which a new policy or line of conduct is adopted for strengthening the AASR in some respect. He also takes care that they are duly noted down, and later checks whether they have been properly implemented. Apart from Chair, he/she is the AASR-President *ad extra* and *ad intra*.

Ad extra: it is he/she who, together with the AASR General Secretary, maintains close relations between the AASR and the IAHR: the world-wide, non-confessional academic body of scholars of religions of which the AASR is an affiliate since it was admitted in its 17th Congress at Mexico-City in 1995. He/she takes part on behalf of the AASR in the meetings of the IAHR International Committee twice in every quinquennial period, takes part in as many other IAHR meetings and conferences as possible, and remains in close touch with the IAHR-Executive, especially the IAHR President and General Secretary. In the past decade, the AASR has played a prominent role in the IAHR, and the AASR-President needs to cherish that tradition.

In addition, the AASR President may, and at other times should, formally represent the AASR towards any other external body where and when such a formal representation is necessary or expedient, e.g. towards a government, or towards a government office that may e.g. grant tax-exempt status to the AASR or one of its regions; or when the AASR applies for (large) subventions with (major) funding organisations for a conference, a series of summer schools, or some other of its core activities; or towards an academic journal, or publishing firm, when the AASR as such is involved.

Ad intra: in the internal affairs of the AASR, the President is especially the person who develops and directs policies by means of which the aims of the AASR are furthered by constant reflection on them, and by their pragmatic implementation in as far as the financial means, and the time, effort and input by AASR-members will allow. They are short term and long-term goals. As for the

short-term aims, the AASR has achieved the development of one fairly good means of internal communication and external promotion in the AASR-Bulletin.⁴ It should now develop others. One is a flyer for speedy external promotion, e.g. at conferences. It should detail the AASR, its history, its affiliation to the IAHR, its aims, its officers, the conditions of membership, and a membership application form. Another is a membership registration form. A third, a website for both external promotion and internal communication.⁵

But the matter that, fourthly, most urgently needs attention is the improvement of the AASR record of the organisation of AASR Conferences in Africa in the past decade. Article 5b of the AASR Constitution offers leeway not to organise an AASR Conference in Africa at all in a quinquennial period. It merely demands that the AASR 'endeavour to organise a major regional conference in Africa at least once every five years'. As a result, these most important conferences were given no great priority. They were organised only in the nick of time in each of the two quinquennial periods: in July 1999 in Nairobi, Kenya, and in February 2004 in Legon, Ghana.

I suggest that the AASR President takes care, first, that article 5b of the AASR Constitution is changed to the effect that in each quinquennial period at least one AASR Conference in Africa *must* be organised. Secondly, that it is organised within the first two years of his or her period of office. And thirdly, that the AASR will seriously endeavour to organise at least one other AASR Conference in each quinquennial period, but preferably aim for three: one in Southern, one in East, and one in West Africa every five years. Their planning and organisation should, in my view, be the top priority of the AASR President, and the whole AASR-Executive. After its election it should, therefore, at once make firm and feasible decisions about the whole period: when, where, and on what theme to hold the first of the three AASR conferences in Africa, and who are to organise it; and assemble a task force for settling in time where and when the two AASR conferences of that quinquennial period are to be held.

All this is not possible without, fourthly, significantly improving the financial health of the AASR. So, the AASR President with the Treasurer, and the Executive should see to it that each Regional and National Representative introduces, in a democratic manner by consultation, explanation and consent, an annual membership fee proportional to what is reasonable and feasible in the context of the economic situation of each region or nation. The several local AASR funds so developed should normally stay in the region or nation in which they are collected, be managed by the Regional or national Representative, and primarily, except for Europe and North America, be used for local AASR purposes. All Representatives, however, should send in a financial report to the

⁴ See below on its defects.

⁵ For details, see below and my e-mail message to AASR members in North America, dd. 19.08.04.

AASR Treasurer once a year to account for both the revenues in, and the expenditures from, that local AASR fund.

Fifthly, major AASR events such as AASR-conferences in Africa, and the need to assist AASR-members in Africa to attend them and other conferences or congresses, demand that the President, the Executive and the whole AASR be actively intent on soliciting funds for the AASR from whatever possible source. But one should be realistic and honest in this respect, for only some of us will be able to assist the AASR in a meaningful way at certain moments and opportunities. Appointing a fundraising committee may seem an attractive option and an easy way out, but is often counterproductive, for it is likely to cause all others to sit back and wait for 'them' to 'deliver', and look at them with reproach when they fail to do so.

I fear also that one of the laudable AASR-aims, that of establishing a well-endowed 'travel fund to enable scholars [from Africa] to attend academic conferences both in Africa and overseas', will prove to be at most a long term goal. It will more likely remain a utopian vision for ever, for the financial means of the AASR, by membership dues and fundraising, will likely continue to be small and to allow at most that some members are incidentally and only partially supported in their travels to academic meetings in Africa and overseas. This financial predicament of the AASR was duly noticed and discussed in the recent AASR conference at Gaborone, and it was even suggested there by some that it is time now, in view of the fact that universities in Africa can, and do, provide their staff increasingly with the financial means to attend conferences, that the AASR travel fund should be given a much lower priority than it has had so far, or even be removed from the list of AASR aims altogether.

It is, therefore, important that an AASR President develop a long-term vision of the future of the AASR. In what direction should it develop? How should the wide diversity of scholars of the religions in Africa, and of scholars of the religions of Africa outside Africa, be induced to join the AASR in the coming decennia? How can the different interests of these two constituencies – in Africa and outside Africa – be reconciled? How can they be made to cooperate towards the long-term common good of the AASR? And what can he or she and his or her team do during their terms of office to develop visions, and initiate policies, that will begin to translate such a vision into reality? There are very many scholars of the religions of Africa in and outside Africa who are not even aware of the AASR. For the AASR to become a vibrant and large association for many more of them, our present severe limitations will have to be overcome and a number of chasms will have to be bridged.

One limitation is that the AASR is very much an Anglophone association centred in Departments of Religious Studies with a vigorous tradition in Protestant liberal theology. It is generally perceived as restricted to Christian Religious Studies, i.e. to scholarship on the religions of Africa inspired by one of the several Christian theologies. A 'secular' scholar of the religions of Africa at-

tending an AASR conference may think he has strayed into a congregation of Protestant theologians at prayer when he finds that an AASR conference is scheduled to be concluded with a Christian service. A first chasm the AASR therefore needs to bridge is the cosmological and methodological one between religiously inspired and 'secular' disciplines in the study of the religions of Africa in order that AASR become a multidisciplinary, religiously and ideologically neutral, scientific association for the study of the religions of Africa 'on sound social scientific and historical principles'.⁶ It is only in such a non-confessional, academic association striving after empirically testable knowledge that historians, anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, archaeologists and other 'secular' scholars of the religions of Africa will also feel welcome and at home.

Other chasms are the numerous religious divides, e.g. between varieties of Protestant – liberal, orthodox, Pentecostal – scholars of the religions of Africa; between Protestant and RC, and Christian and Muslim, and between all these and scholars of the religions of Africa of again other religious persuasions. Another huge divide is the linguistic one between the Anglophone and Francophone academic communities in Africa and elsewhere, and between these and those of other language communities: Portuguese, Italian, Arabic, etc.

All three divides – cosmological/methodological, religious and linguistic – need urgent and sustained attention and sound policy development. Bridging the Christian-Muslim divide in scholarship on the religions of Africa should, however, perhaps have top priority at present. Muslim scholars of the religions of Africa should be encouraged to join the AASR and take part in its conferences as long as they respect that the AASR is an academic, non-confessional association. The AASR should not only be a methodologically and cosmologically inclusive, multidisciplinary association, but also be religiously ecumenical.

This lengthy description of the 'job' of AASR President may seem daunting and too big for any single scholar to shoulder in addition to his or her usual heavy load of teaching, supervision, administration, research and writing. It is, therefore, as much a task for his or her team as for him or her. Several of these tasks require that their day-to-day practicalities are run by particular other officers in the inner or outer circles of the AASR Executive, or even by others. Other tasks the President may delegate in order to achieve an equal workload for all AASR officers. The President primarily needs to develop a comprehensive vision and keep an overall view on who does what, and on developments in general. One to whom tasks may be delegated is the AASR Vice President.

⁶ Letter of Armin W. Geertz, IAHR General Secretary, dd. April 14, 2001, to Prof. Karma Oraon, President of the Indian Association for the History of Religions, in *IAHR Bulletin* 37 (December 2002): 11.

Vice President

The office of AASR Vice President is a virtually empty one at present. Its only function so far has been to be ready to take over from the President in the unlikely case that he or she dies or falls ill so seriously that she or he cannot complete her or his term of office. It is good, perhaps, to have such a 'President-in-waiting', but if that remains its only content, then that office will continue to be the 'amorphous' office by excellence, or very much a merely honorific position. There are other models in the IAHR. The IAHR itself has two Vice Presidents, but their position is clearly honorific and as empty as the AASR one. Most national IAHR affiliates have no Vice President. The British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR) has a President-Elect, who is groomed to take over in the next period. The BASR model provides for stability and continuity, for the President and President-Elect serve very much as a team. It has the added virtue of a fairly rapid 'turn-over' of officers, as an officer serves only one term in each of these two offices.

A change-over to another model, however, requires that article 6a of the AASR Constitution is changed. I suggest, therefore, that the AASR for the moment keep the office of Vice President, but explore a number of other options to give more content to it. The AASR President may delegate some, or one, of the short or long term goals of the AASR, enumerated above, specifically to the Vice President, or request that the Vice President assist an other AASR officer in new activity – e.g. the internet –, or in one that needs a rethinking and redirection – e.g. AASR publication policy –, or join the team of the editors of the AASR Bulletin in order that another AASR region be better covered. Or the Vice President may take charge of maintaining the AASR Register of Members, an important activity that has not yet been structurally attached to any specific AASR office.

General Secretary

The post of Secretary General is in my view, the pivotal post in the AASR (inner) Executive, and the AASR as a whole. Whereas the President presides over AASR-meetings, supervises the AASR in a general way and represents the AASR *ad extra*, the General Secretary has two important tasks: to take the minutes of the AASR general meetings as well as those of the AASR-Executive, and publish them in the AASR Bulletin; and to see to it that the decisions taken in them are executed. The latter means that the General Secretary is the officer who actually runs the daily affairs of the AASR. He must liaison both with the other three main officers of the AASR (inner) Executive – the President, the Vice-President and the Treasurer – and between them and the AASR full Executive: the AASR Representatives, the Editors of the AASR Bulletin, and the AASR Publications and Internet Officers; and through all these with the AASR members at large.

It is also a tradition in the IAHR that an affiliate is normally represented in the IAHR International Committee by its president and secretary. So, it is part of the task of the AASR General Secretary to join the AASR President in representing the AASR in any IAHR business and event, and to maintain close relations with the IAHR, and in particular with his counterpart, the IAHR General Secretary.

Because this office is so crucial, it must not be overburdened. The 2004 Nominations Committee, therefore, proposed that the post of Treasurer be separated from it again. It was added to it in 2000 in order that an AASR-financial policy be developed and the dispersed AASR-financial affairs be somehow supervised. Moreover, at some time in the future, maintaining the AASR-Register of Members may have to be relocated with the AASR General Secretary.

Treasurer

The AASR needs a separate officer in the AASR inner Executive to coordinate its financial policy and affairs, to keep a central account of its dispersed local funds, and see to it that an AASR financial statement is published once a year in the May AASR-Bulletin. One top priority has been achieved, to wit that the AASR-members in North America now follow the example of the AASR-members in Europe and like them pay a substantial annual membership fee for the sake of enabling the AASR to pursue its aims, especially that of furthering African scholarship on the religions of Africa. Till 2005, the European AASR fund was the sole financial backbone and mainstay of the AASR. The costs of the production and shipment of the AASR-Bulletin were till then paid from that fund, as well as considerable subventions to AASR Conferences in Africa, and to AASR publications. New activities, such as the development and maintenance of an effective AASR-internet site, have initially also been paid from the European fund, but clearly demand that the AASR develops considerably larger financial means by all AASR members in well-to-do nations paying the agreed substantial annual membership dues.

In addition, the AASR Treasurer should also promote that the AASR members in Africa pay an annual membership fee also, be it one that is feasible within their economies.⁷ However small that may actually be, it should cover, or assist in covering, the costs of regional AASR affairs, such as the distribution of the AASR-Bulletin and the organisation of regional or local AASR contacts. The AASR Treasurer should therefore communicate regularly with AASR Representatives about the introduction of the AASR annual membership fee. And once they have been introduced he should inquire what local AASR funds have

⁷ The AASR Executive decided in its maiden meeting at Tokyo that the 'flat rate' of the annual membership fee for AASR members in Africa was to be set at the local equivalent of US\$ 10 (cf. AASR Bulletin 23 [May 2005]: 9-10). It also decided that only fee-paying members were to receive the AASR Bulletin and to be granted access to the Members-Only Area of the AASR website (cf. AASR Bulletin 23: 19).

been developed from the membership fees, and perhaps also from fund raising, and request annual reports on revenues and expenditures from it.

Lastly, I suggest that the need to pay membership dues should be further emphasized and strengthened by the introduction of an article into the AASR Constitution – or if that is too stiff and formal, by the AASR General Assembly agreeing upon a generally accepted rule of conduct – that a member who has defaulted in respect of paying his or her membership dues for two years will, after two requests to pay the arrears, be struck from AASR Register of Member at the request of the AASR Representative of region or nation to which he or she belongs. As a result, she or he will no longer receive the AASR Bulletin, nor have access to the Members-Only Area of the AASR website, nor be entitled to any other AASR privileges, such as reduced AASR conference registration fees and assistance in costs of travel to AASR conferences, IAHR congresses, or other events relevant to the academic study of the religions of Africa.

The Representatives

The tasks of an AASR Representative are several. I see seven:

1. to serve as liaison between their region, or nation, and the AASR General Secretary and other Officers of the AASR inner and outer Executive, especially the AASR Treasurer, the Editors of the AASR Bulletin, the AASR Internet Officer, and with the AASR Publication Officer if an AASR publication is being planned or prepared;
2. to distribute the AASR-Bulletin to the members;
3. to use the promotional copies of the AASR-Bulletin and other means (e.g. a flyer) for actively promoting the AASR among scholars of the religions of Africa in their region by presenting promotional copies either to prospective members, or to libraries, or to publishers in the field of the religions of Africa;
4. to see to it that new members send in electronically the relevant details for their registration in the AASR Register of Members,⁸ pay their annual membership fee, are struck off if they fail to do so, and inform the AASR Web-Master in order that their access to the Members-Only Area of the AASR website be withdrawn;
5. to provide the Editors of the AASR Bulletin with copy for the AASR Bulletins by reporting on news, past and upcoming conferences, new publications, 'persons and posts', scholarship and fellowships, etc., in their region or nation, relevant to AASR members in their region or nation and elsewhere, and with copy for any of the other rubrics of the AASR Bulletins; and by encouraging AASR-members in their region or nation to do likewise, e.g. by reviewing a new book in our field for the AASR Bulletin. The purpose of this

⁸ For the ten point model to be followed, see above note 5.

is not merely to disseminate news, reports, announcements and reviews, but especially to show that the AASR in their region is alive and kicking;

6. to develop and administer a local AASR-fund by collecting systematically and continually the agreed annual membership fees from the AASR-members of their region and report on its revenues and the ways it was used once a year to the AASR-Treasurer;
7. to consult with other AASR members in their region about activities by which the AASR may be promoted in their region, such as conferences or panels organised on behalf of the AASR; or about how important activities of the AASR elsewhere, such as conferences, especially in Africa, may be supported.

These tasks, or their formulation, need to be modified, added to, or subtracted from, by individual AASR Representatives according to the special requirements of their region, and/or their own inclination on how to perform their job best. In the recent spate of comments from AASR members in North America on the memo I sent them recently on the subject of membership dues and the need to have an AASR internet site, several such complementary ideas emerged. In respect of AASR membership, it was remarked that perhaps 'a more formal way of indicating, measuring and nurturing real membership needs to be devised'.

In respect of membership dues it was proposed by one member that 'a structure [be established] to enable financial transactions to be conducted with some sense of appropriateness, and for conveying to where the collected dues are supposed to go to meet the needs of the association'. And by another, to 'set up the AASR [in North America] as a tax-exempt organization to be able to receive checks made out to the AASR either for dues or as separate 'charitable' (i.e. tax-deductible) contributions', and to develop 'a systematic plan for collecting [membership] dues'. A scheme was also proposed how they might be spent: 'Perhaps each region needs to be responsible for providing [remitting] a certain percentage of their dues and contributions revenue to the Treasurer. The role of the regional representatives is to forward funds on a regular (to be specified) basis to the Treasurer (International) with the rest to be administered by the regional representative and an active council of advisers made up of some set number of the members. There are also expenses that each region will incur for which some fixed percentage of the revenues is appropriately used. There should be a balance of some percentage of funds to be used for specific projects, whether [for] supporting the work of scholars in Africa or funding the internet project or whatever'.

Another member proposed as a cost reduction measure that 'the newsletter [be posted] electronically and several AASR members/officers [be designated] who would be responsible for printing out copies of the newsletter off the website, collating them simply with staples, and mailing them to members in their respective regions who require a paper version'.

With respect to the promotion of the AASR in North America, it was proposed that 'a formal membership registration form' be created, and that 'an agenda and platform for action' be developed. That might take the shape of 'an outreach program to get new members and to give current members some reason to be engaged in the organization'. An AASR research project on 'recent developments in the study of religion[s] in Africa' was proposed and to 'devote an issue of JAAR (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*)' to its outcome. It was also suggested that 'a good information piece [is needed] to acquaint potential members about the organization and a systematic plan to distribute the information and have some public gathering of members and interested parties'. One should 'flesh out how our association and its activities connects, if at all, also with [those of] other associations, where members are also engaged in the study of Africa and its religions'.

A specific pool of new members, one member remarked, were 'students doing their graduate work on (religions of) Africa here in the US'. The AASR could offer them 'a forum and network particularly in terms of mentorship. [...] Such students and emerging scholars of religions of Africa could also be given possibilities of sharing their research [with the senior AASR members acting as their mentors] and even of publishing it through the association'.

AASR Bulletin Editors

Many AASR officers and members have expressed appreciation for the quality of the AASR Newsletter in the past few years. For this reason, it was suggested that it should be renamed AASR Bulletin. I for one, however, am far from satisfied with its present content, for it only incidentally reflects the AASR in Africa, Ghana perhaps excepted,⁹ and had very little on AASR in North America except for AASR Bulletins 25 and 26. Despite efforts on my part to have it demonstrate that all AASR regions are alive and kicking, the contributions to AASR Newsletters/Bulletins have remained far too Eurocentric so far. Most of what is reported in them respects what is going in the study of the religions of Africa in Europe, and in particular in The Netherlands, and especially in Utrecht University. The latter happens to have developed a close link with the Department for the Study of Religions of the University of Ghana in the past few years, and that, and my own long-standing relation with Ghana and that department, account for Ghana being an exception to the general absence of Africa and North America from the AASR Newsletters, now AASR Bulletins. The fact that I was its sole editor from 2001 to 2003 is also to blame.

Prof. Matthews Ojo, Obafemi Awolowo University at Ile-Ife, Nigeria, has joined me in 2003 as Editor of the AASR-Bulletin. He is now taking part actively in editing the AASR Bulletin as is apparent from *AASR Bulletin* no. 21 (May

⁹ Cf. *AASR Newsletter* no. 18 (November 2002), 'Focus on Ghana, I', pp. 4-21, 30-35, 51-56, and *AASR Newsletter* no. 19 (May 2003), 'Focus on Ghana, II', pp. 40-52.

2004): 43-47. And he has produced and shipped AASR Bulletin 26. It is most fortunate that he has now been joined by a Co-Editor from Southern Africa, Dr. Lovemore Togarasei, University of Botswana, Gaborone. So, one may trust that that the AASR Bulletin will now become more 'Afrocentric', especially if AASR-Representatives and other AASR Officers, and the AASR members, especially the senior ones, in Africa become more active in supplying the AASR Bulletin Co-Editors with copy than they have done in the past few years. Many of them have never, or hardly ever, sent in copy for the AASR Bulletin despite appeals for it, and as a result their regions, and they themselves, remained invisible in the AASR Bulletin. If they remain inactive and leave the collection of copy to the Editors only, the AASR Representatives should see to it that a member is appointed in their region to serve as reporter to the AASR Editors about the AASR in their region. Only then may we be assured that conferences, symposia, and panels on the religions of Africa of interest to AASR members, are announced in time, and reported upon; and that new books are reviewed, scholarships and fellowship announced; that recent publications are sent in; that news about AASR members is reported; and that minutes of AASR meetings and activities in the regions are published.

Publication Officer

A brief history is in order here. The first AASR-Publication Officer was Dr. (now Prof.) David Westerlund. Together with Prof. Jacob Olupona, he edited the AASR-series *Religions of Africa*, between 1995 and 2000. African scholars in particular were encouraged to contribute to it. Four volumes were published with different publishers, to wit the proceedings of the IAHR conference at Harare in 1992, at which the AASR was founded,¹⁰ and monographs by Simeon Ilesanmi,¹¹ James Cox,¹² and Abdulkader Tayob.¹³ The AASR also sponsored a research report by James Amanze, *Islam in Botswana* in 1999 as the first of a projected second AASR series of research reports of small size. Dr. Simeon Ilesanmi was appointed Publications Officer in 2000,¹⁴ but has not been able to develop David Westerlund's significant work due in particular to a major shift in his field of study.

¹⁰ Jan G. Platvoet, J.L. Cox & J.K. Olupona (eds.) 1996, *The Study of Religions in Africa: Past, Present and Prospects; Proceedings of the IAHR Regional Conference at Harare, Zimbabwe, 1992*. Cambridge: Roots and Branches (= *Religions of Africa*, 1).

¹¹ Simeon Ilesanmi 1997, *Religious Pluralism in the Nigerian State*. Athens (Ohio): Ohio University Center for International Studies. (= *Religions of Africa*, 2).

¹² James Cox 1997, *Rational Ancestors: Scientific Rationality and African Indigenous Religions*. Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press (= *Religions of Africa*, 3).

¹³ Abdulkader Tayob 1999, *Islam in South Africa: Mosques, Imams and Sermons*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press (= *Religions of Africa*, 4).

¹⁴ Together with a 'Publications Committee' (cf. *AASR Newsletter* no. 14 [November 2000] 1, 22)? As far as I aware, no such committee was appointed.

Since 2000, however, three new series of publications emerged which are linked to the AASR in various ways. One is presented explicitly as an AASR-series, being published by the AASR Publications Bureau in Nigeria. However, it is limited to the study of the religions of Nigeria. It is *Religion in Nigeria*, directed by Prof. Joseph Kenny o.p. and Prof. Jacob Olupona.¹⁵ The second series has no such formal link with the AASR, yet breathes its spirit and pursues its aims in that it attempts to further explicitly opportunities for publication for African scholars of the religions of Africa and make their publications available outside and inside Africa. It is the series *Religion in Contemporary Africa* directed by Jim Cox and Gerrie ter Haar. It is published by Africa World Press in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, USA.¹⁶ ¹⁷ A third is the series *African Religions in Global Contexts*, directed by Prof. Jesse Mugambi of Nairobi University and published by Acton Press in Nairobi, Kenya, which has also several other series of publications by scholars of religions and theologians in East Africa. Acton Press negotiated permission with some North Atlantic publishers for an African edition of books on the religions of Africa in Africa and the 'diaspora' in its series *African Religions in Global Contexts*.¹⁸ It includes two volumes by Gerrie ter Haar.¹⁹ Acton Press has also published the revised and selected proceedings of the First AASR Conference in Africa, held in Nairobi in July 1999, at which the Eastern African Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) was founded.²⁰

This is an exciting spate of publishing initiatives in the field of the religions of Africa. All pursue explicitly a main aim of the AASR: to assist African scholars in getting their work published. In comparison with the series *Religions of Africa*, they have the distinct advantage of each being published by one publisher only. But, from the point of view of an integrated AASR publication policy, they have the disadvantage of being dispersed over three different series with di-

¹⁵ One volume has appeared in this series: Andrew Olu Igenozu 2003, *Polygamy and the African Churches: A Biblical Appraisal of an African Marriage System*. Ibadan: African Association for the Study of Religions (= *Studies in Nigerian Religions*, 1). For a review, see *AASR-Bulletin* 21 (May 2004): 43-45. On the series and the book, cf. also *AASR Newsletter* 15/16 (May-November 2001): 1, 5-6; 18 (November 2002): 27-28; 19 (May 2003): 32-33.

¹⁶ A James L. Cox & Gerrie ter Haar (eds.) 2003, *Uniquely African?: African Christian Identity from Cultural and Historical Perspectives*. Trenton (New Jersey): Africa World Press. A first volume has appeared in this series. On this book and this series, cf. *AASR-Newsletter* 19 (May 2003): 31-32.

¹⁷ A few more volumes have appeared in it recently. They have been noted in the rubric Recent Publications.

¹⁸ On Acton Press and this and its other series, cf. *AASR Newsletter* 14 (November 2000): 26-31; 15/16 (May/November 2001): 46-47.

¹⁹ Gerrie ter Haar 2001, *African Christians in Europe*. Nairobi: Acton Press (= Gerrie ter Haar 1998, *Halfway to Paradise: African Christians in Europe*. Cardiff: Academic Press); Gerrie ter Haar (ed.) 2001, *Religious Communities in the Diaspora*. Nairobi: Acton Press (= Gerrie ter Haar [ed.] 1998, *Strangers and Sojourners: Religious Communities in the Diaspora*. Leuven: Peeters).

²⁰ Jesse K.N. Mugambi & Mary N. Getui (ed.) 2004, *Religions in East Africa under Globalisation*. Nairobi: Acton Press, 267 pp., ISBN 9966-888-73-X.

verse foci. They seem to hold little promise for successful coordination by the AASR-Publication Officer. One may also wonder whether they are in need of being coordinated, and, if coordinated, what the AASR would gain from their coordination.

Another matter that needs attention is the formal link between the AASR and *Journal of Religion in Africa* (JRA) established in 2001 after the AASR General Meeting at Bayreuth, Germany.²¹ That link is as yet an empty one, and JRA has so far taken no move to provide some content to it. Moreover, none of the editors of JRA is a member of the AASR, and of the JRA eighteen-member editorial board, (only) seven are AASR-members (Adogame, Gifford, Hackett, Kastfelt, Ludwig, Tayob, and Westerlund). They are on its editorial board, however, not because they are AASR members but because of their different specialisations and proficiencies in the wide field of the study of the religions of Africa. Even so, the AASR-Executive, or an AASR Publication Officer, might perhaps 'mobilise' them to strive for a more satisfactory relationship between JRA and the AASR.

AASR needs also to reflect whether or not new options, such as electronic publishing and an AASR electronic journal, should be explored, and perhaps be developed. The AASR Executive clearly needs to reflect on the present confused but promising situation and devise policies for strengthening the AASR position in it.

Internet Officer/WebMaster

The AASR Executive decided in its maiden meeting in Tokyo that the AASR should develop its own internet site and appointed an AASR Internet Officer.²² As a result, the AASR website is now being developed into three parts: one about the AASR, accessible for the general public, with an online membership application form; one with privileged information, such as the AASR Bulletins, the online AASR Register of Members, the Calls for Papers rubric, the Scholarships and Research Grants on offer, information on research projects, E-publications and an electronic archive, etc., to which only fee-paying AASR members with a working e-mail address are granted access; and a Forums facility for internal communication. The part for the general public is now fully developed and well maintained; the second part is operational also, but is still being developed. E.g. older AASR Bulletins, and the electronic archive need to be included and/or expanded. The Forums facility will become operational, it is hoped, in the coming months.²³

²¹ Cf. *AASR Newsletter* no. 15/16 (May-November 2001): 10.

²² Cf. *AASR Bulletin* 23: 18-19.

²³ For progress reports, cf. *AASR Bulletin* 25: 13-16; 26: 18-20.

In conclusion

The aim of the draft is to stimulate critical institutional analysis by all members who have the interests of the AASR at heart. We need to reflect on what policies may best further the aims of the AASR in the coming period. The job descriptions outlined are offered for discussion in order that the AASR Executive may subsequently take decisions on them and an AASR General Meeting may approve formal guidelines that will serve as the parameters for each AASR office in the period 2010-2015. They are also my belated contribution to the AASR 'think tank', instituted by the President in 2000, of which I was appointed as convener,²⁴ but which I never convened, in part for private reasons, in part because a think tank runs the same risk as a fund raising committee. I apologise that this document has become so lengthy.

Bunnik, 20 September 2004 / 24 August 2007



²⁴ Cf. *AASR Newsletter* 14 (November 2000): 17; 15/16 (May-November 2001): 6, 9.

CONFERENCES AHEAD

EXPLORING RELIGIOUS SPACES IN THE AFRICAN STATE: DEVELOPMENT & POLITICS FROM BELOW

EDINBURGH, 9–10 APRIL 2008

CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY
CENTRE OF AFRICAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
& WISER, WITWATERSRAND UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE
FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH, SOUTH AFRICA

CALL FOR PAPERS

Conceptual Framework

Religious institutions have been at the forefront of human welfare for centuries. In Africa it is often difficult to untangle religious organisations from the agency of development. Religion, rather than declining, as had been predicted with the advent of secular development, is taking an increasingly central and vibrant role in African political and developmental life. The African case demonstrates how secularisation theories failed when they assumed that in a modernising context the non-secular would gradually recede from public life. In Africa the non-secular often pervades the spaces that the secular has singularly failed to address. Contemporary critiques of development theory assert that 'development' poses solutions to development problems in a peculiarly apolitical, antiseptic, neutral way. It fails to provide solutions that encompass all human needs; food security and shelter are materially important but so are a sense of community and belonging.

In Africa the 'faith' dimension is important and plays a significant role in promoting non-governmental public action. Religious organisations and faith communities have wide networks, social resources and often unique access to people who are poor, marginalised and excluded. Religious organisations represent a particularly significant component of civil society; and faith-based development has strong ethical foundations that become particularly important in the absence of alternative worldviews, social norms and political ideologies.

Aims of the conference

This conference aims to understand the role of religion within development and politics and develop our understanding of the role and position of religious organisations and actors within more traditional conceptualisations of public action and its relationship to the state in Africa. The focus will be on Christian, Muslim and traditional religious organisations and institutions in, for, and against the political and broader development processes in post-colonial Sub-Saharan Africa.

The conference aims to bring scholars and activists working on these issues in Africa, Europe or North America together in order to facilitate a conversation that deals with both theory and practice. The overall goal of the conference is to help people rethink how the political and social issues in Africa could be addressed more effectively.

The conference will be organised around the following themes:

1. *Filling the vacuum of the African state: tension or collaboration?*

This theme aims to explore the relationship between religious organisations and the African state. How do religious organisations define their role in the post-colonial state? How do religious organisations critique or plug the gaps in the so-called 'weak' African state? How do religious organisations cope with prejudices and forms of control from secular organisations?

2. *Faiths and development: religion and modernity*

This theme aims to explore the relationship between religious organisations and development. How do religious actors and ideas contribute to development in contemporary Africa? Can we speak of a unique 'religious' answer to development? How do religious organisations forge their own identity as development is becoming increasingly technical, technology-led and driven by agendas such as the Millennium Development Goals?

3. *Faiths and responses to health crises: the case of HIV/AIDS*

This theme aims to examine the major contributions religious organisations are making in the battle against HIV/AIDS. How do religious organisations negotiate the problematic relationships between public health, religious doctrine and political discourse? What role do different kinds of religious organisation play in providing healthcare? What is the relationship between religious organisations, the state and development agencies with respect to healthcare?

CALL FOR PAPERS

Abstracts should not exceed 300 words

All the abstracts should be submitted *not later* than 10th December 2007.

All the abstracts should be emailed to the Centre of African Studies at:

African.studies@ed.ac.uk

Successful applicants will receive an answer by 15 January 2008. Funding will be available for speakers from Africa. Information on how to apply for funding will be available on CAS website (www.cas.ed.ac.uk). Posters from postgraduate students are welcome and they will be displayed during the conference. For any questions, please contact the conference organisers or the Centre of African Studies in Edinburgh.

Conference organisers

= Dr Barbara Bompani, School of Social and Political Studies (SSPS), The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh – UK

E-mail: B.Bompani@ed.ac.uk

= Dr Maria Frahm-Arp, Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER), The University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg – South Africa

E-mail: frahm-arp@wiser.wits.ac.za



**THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF
RELIGION, NATURE, AND CULTURE (ISSRNC)**

**SECOND INTERNATIONAL MEETING
MORELIA, MEXICO, JANUARY 17-20, 2008**

CALL FOR PAPERS

Venue: Hotel Fiesta Inn, Morelia, Mexico

Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, Morelia campus

Theme: The Re-Enchantment of Nature across Disciplines: Critical Intersections of Science, Ethics, and Metaphysics

Scholars from diverse disciplines, members of the Society and those not-yet members, are cordially invited to submit papers, panels, or special workshops on this theme, or any other subjects pertinent to the intersection of and relationships among what can be understood in various ways as ‘religion’, ‘nature’, and ‘culture’. For further information on the Society, and the affiliated peer-reviewed

journal, which will publish high-quality work presented at this conference, see: www.religionandnature.com/journal/.

The theme of this conference provides focused opportunities to explore and evaluate both new and established links among increasingly specialized areas within this emerging and exciting interdisciplinary field. We seek to critically evaluate the notions of scientific disenchantment and religious or spiritual re-enchantment of nature, addressing the intersections between science, ethics, and metaphysics in environmental thought and behavior, religious worldviews, and spirituality.

We are pleased to announce the featured keynote speakers:

- Dr. Vandana Shiva, Research Foundation for Science, Technology, and Natural Resource Policy, India
- Dr. David Carrasco, Harvard University, USA
- Dr. Victor Toledo, UNAM-Morelia, Mexico
- Dr. Holmes Rolston III, Colorado State University, USA

We invite papers that demonstrate interdisciplinary and collaborative efforts to analyze pressing issues of biological, anthropological, religious, ethical, historical, philosophical, environmental, medical, linguistic, and political concern by producing new intersections of knowledge production. We also invite explicit critiques and evaluations of such interdisciplinary collaborations that identify the potential dangers and problems that may arise when crossing disciplinary, religious, and political boundaries.

Over the past thirty years, scholars have observed a potential paradigm shift from the disenchantment to a re-enchantment of nature, as scientists and humanists from diverse disciplines apprehend or construct values in nature, including those they construe as religious or spiritual. Contrary to the modernist idea of a secularized, disenchanted, and (often) meaningless world, contemporary environmentalisms have found in nature ultimate value and meaning. It may be that the Western (re)discovery of ethical and moral principles in environmental thought and behavior may generate a greater respect for nature, eventually leading to sustainable subsistence and conservation practices, a possibility about which we invite critical reflection and research.

At the 2008 meeting of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture in Morelia, Mexico, we seek to critically explore and evaluate the notions of disenchantment and re-enchantment of nature, asking questions such as:

- Does the moral story of the 'spiritual', 'the intangible', and 'the sacred' in contemporary environmentalisms present particular opportunities and/or dilemmas for the critical inquiry of religion, nature, and culture?
- What do current developments tell us about the relationship between science, religion, and environmentalism in the contemporary world?

- To what extent is the quest to save nature also a quest to save individual subjectivities from the presumed meaningless of the modern condition?
- Are we witnessing a renewal of eco-centric and/or religious worldviews, or did they never decline?
- What is the role of indigenous traditional knowledge and indigenous religions in the Western re-enchantment of nature?
- Does the re-enchantment of nature provide an answer to the problem of meaning?
- Can we, and if so, how can we conceptualize emergent relations between the ethical, the religious and the political in ways that do not fit the paradigms of disenchantment/re-enchantment?

Abstract Submission

Both individual papers (15 minutes) and full panels (1 hour and forty-five minutes) on these and related topics are welcome. Please also send suggestions you may have for less formal sessions involving workshops, roundtable discussions, film screenings, or other events. Younger scholars are particularly encouraged to suggest papers. The format for individual paper abstracts and session abstract is no more than 250 words. We suggest that session organizers provide their panelists with a list of questions to address in order to encourage integrated discussion. All paper and panel abstracts should provide three keywords. When sending your abstract, please include your highest academic degree, professional affiliation, and current status.

Deadline: The deadline for submitting papers and panel suggestions is August 1, 2007 but earlier submissions are helpful. Please send abstracts and panel proposals to: morelia@religionandnature.com

Accommodation: Hotel Information and Registration Information will be available soon on the conference website at: www.religionandnature.com/society.

For questions about the conference theme you may contact the Program Co-Chairs:

- Kristina Tiedje PhD, Faculte d'Anthropologie, Université Lumière Lyon 2, Campus Porte des Alpes, Batiment K, 5,avenue Pierre-Mendes-France, 69676 Bron Cedex, France.
E-mail: kristina.tiedje@univ-lyon2.fr
- Dra. Anuschka van't Hooft, Coordinacion de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, Universidad Autonoma de San Luis Potosi, Av.Industrias 101-A, Fracc.Talleres, 78494 San Luis Potosi, SLP, Mexico.
E-mail: avanthoof@uaslp.mx

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

SOCIOLOGICAL SPECTRUM, SPECIAL ISSUE

THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Co-editors

Christopher G. Ellison, University of Texas-Austin Darren

E. Sherkat, Southern Illinois University

Sociological Spectrum is seeking manuscripts for review for a special issue on 'The Sociology of Religion in the 21st Century'. This is an open call for papers, and all manuscripts will be peer reviewed. We are especially interested in articles which make connections to contemporary issues in the sociology of religion, and which engage research connecting religious factors with other social realms, such as politics, health, stratification, and social movements. The issue is co-edited by Christopher G. Ellison and Darren E. Sherkat. Submissions should be made to the editors using electronic format (Word or PDF), to both cellison@prc.utexas.edu and sherkat@siu.edu. Deadline for receipt of manuscripts for this issue is October 15th, 2007. The issue is scheduled to appear in August 2008.

Among the themes which might be considered are:

- *The role of religion in the changing American South
- *Religious responses to emergencies and disasters
- *Religious decision making and religious markets
- *New ethnic and immigrant religion in the US and beyond
- *Gender role ideology and practice within diverse religious communities
- *Implications of religious involvement for health and well-being
- *Religion and family processes and functioning
- *Role of religion in civic engagement, social movements
- *Religious actors in the non-profit sector, faith-based programs
- *Religion and contemporary politics
- *New religious movements in contemporary and comparative contexts
- *Trends in congregational or denominational growth and decline
- *Religion and stratification, educational attainment, and wealth
- *Comparative studies in sociology of religion.



Philomena N. Mwaura
Chairperson

REPORT ON THE FORMATION OF THE KENYA ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION (KASR)

In January 2007, the Kenya Association for the Study of Religion was formed (see attached minutes) and an interim committee formed to steer the association. This information was communicated to the General Secretary of the AASR, by Prof. Adam Chepkwony, the East African representative on the AASR executive committee. Since then Dr. Jan Platvoet raised the question of the relationship of the KASR to the AASR and IAHR.

After consulting him as well as Dr. Afe Adogame we have been advised to seek membership in the IAHR as well as being members of the AASR. We are not dissolving the East African Association for the Study of Religion but only constituting another association that will function better within Kenya.

We therefore appeal to the secretariat to discuss this matter and advice us on the issue of our relationship to IAHR and AASR, which we want to continue being members of. My search for the IAHR constitution has not been successful²⁵ and the AASR constitution does not provide an answer to our dilemma.

Dr. Sussie Kurgat will present our request to the [AASR] business meeting during the conference in Botswana.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE KENYA ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS (KASR), AT THE CARMELITE CENTER, NAIROBI, KENYA, 18TH & 19TH JANUARY 2007

Present

Prof. Joseph Njino, Dr. Philomena Mwaura, Hazel Ayanga, Prof. Adam Chepkwony, Dr. Susie G. Kurgat, Dr. Newton M. Kahumbi, Prof. Nehemiah Nyaundi, Mrs. Damaris S. Parsitau.

²⁵ The IAHR constitution may be found at <http://www.iahr.dk/constitution.htm>; and for IAHR by-laws visit <http://www.iahr.dk/by-laws.htm>

Preliminaries

Prof. Chepkwony, the East African Representative of the African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR), welcomed all present and briefly outlined the purpose of the short meeting. He explained that although EAASR was established some years ago, it has not been active due to a number of challenges, one of which has been communication. He impressed on the need to revamp and revitalise the association so that it can be as vibrant like other similar associations in other parts of Africa. He observed that the association can do a lot through research, publishing and networking with other related bodies. It has the capacity to draw membership from diverse backgrounds in the humanities, social sciences and physical sciences disciplines. He also communicated to those present that a committee is already in place to steer the association at the moment until a meeting of the full membership is called at a later date to ratify it.

The following are the members of the interim committee:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Dr. Philomena Mwaura | Chairperson |
| 2. Prof. Joseph Njino | Vice- Chairperson |
| 3. Dr. Newton Kahumbi | Secretary-General |
| 4. Dr. Hassan Nzovu | Treasurer |
| 5. Dr. Susie G. Kurgat | Rep. Maseno University |
| 6. Prof. Nehemiah Nyaundi | Rep. Baraton University |
| 7. Mrs. Damaris Parsitau | Rep. Egerton University |
| 8. Mr. Charles Moywaywa | Rep. Kenya Methodist University |
| 9. Mr. John Chesworth | Rep. St Paul's Theological College Limuru |

Thereafter Dr. Mwaura was asked to chair the rest of the meeting. After much discussion, the following decisions were made. It was agreed

1. That the association be named the Kenya Association for the Study of Religion (KASR).
2. That a meeting shall be called by March 2007 to discuss the way forward for the association.
3. That members are requested to pay their annual subscription of Ksh. 1000 in order to participate in the forthcoming AASR conference in Botswana in July 2007.
4. That Prof. Chepkwony informs AASR executive of the new developments.
5. That all members engage in a recruitment drive for new members.

There being no other business, the meeting ended amicably.

Pius Oyeniran Abioje
NASR General Secretary

NASR 28TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, AAU, 4-7 SEPTEMBER 2007

The 28th Annual Conference of the above named Association was held in Adekunle Ajasin University (AAU), Akungba Akoko, Ondo State, 4-7 September 2007. The theme of the Conference was 'Religion and Democracy in the 21st century Nigeria'. The chief host, Prof. P.O. Abiodun, the Vice Chancellor of AAU, declared the Conference open on the 5th September, 2007. At the opening ceremony, Venerable Professor Joseph Omosade Awolalu, the Founder and First President of the Association (1975-1979), and nine other prominent members were awarded the newly instituted Fellow of Academy of Religion. The names of the nine others who merited and received the award were: Prof. Ismail A. Babatunde Balogun; the Archbishop of the Catholic Diocese of Abuja, the Most Rev. Dr John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan; Prof. Razaq Deremi Abubakre; Sir Prince Chief Prof. Adelumo Peter Dopamu; Prof. Muslih Tayo Yahya; the late Rev. Fr. Prof. Emefie Joseph Ikenga-Metuh; Prof. (Ven). E. Ade Odumuyiwa; Prof. Ishaq Olanrewaju Oloyede; and the last but equally qualified Dr. Onah Odey.

The Conference was well attended by many scholars from Universities all over the six geopolitical zones of the Federation. Most of the papers presented were well-researched, expository, critical, comparative, inculturational, and so on.

The papers and discussions can be summarized as follow:

1. Religion has an important role to play in the war against corruption, if its spiritual and moral aspects are stressed and pursued by the leaders and all citizens.
2. President Yar'Adua's commitment to the rule of law, and his zero tolerance for corruption are indispensable to good governance and national development, and so, all religious leaders should support him, while public officers who cannot imbibe and uphold the virtues should resign their appointments forthwith.
3. For a genuine democracy to thrive in Nigeria, there should be no more than two or maximum of three political parties, so as to avoid confusing ordinary Nigerians.
4. The President and all well meaning citizens should ensure that religious and civic education are made compulsory, since religion has enormous influence on human life in society. It was generally held that compulsory religious education does not mean that the country adopts a particular religion, and so it does not violate the sanctity of the secular status of Nigeria.

IFRA GRANTS FOR FIELD RESEARCH

The French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA Nigeria), at Ibadan, has recently issued three separate offers of small grants for field research in West Africa by young Nigerian, West African and European doctoral and postdoctoral scholars. The calls for applications for them were posted on June 19, 2007, at the AASR website at

= <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=263> for 'West African Nationals'

= <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=264> for 'Young European Scholars'

= <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=265> for 'Young Nigerian Scholars'

The deadlines for application were 15 August 2007 for scholars from Europe, and 1 September 2007 for those from Nigeria and other West African countries.

As the deadlines are passed by the time of the publication of AASR Bulletin 27, and as the three texts were identical except for a few details, only one is reproduced below for general information.

IFRA Ibadan

DOCTORAL AND POST-DOCTORAL Field Research GRANTS FOR WEST AFRICAN NATIONALS

The French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA Nigeria) proposes small grants to assist young West African researchers to undertake field research in Nigeria in the social sciences and humanities. These grants are open to:

- doctoral students currently enrolled in a doctoral programme
 - or post-doctoral scholars having received their degree in the last two years
- Eligibility is restricted to West African nationals, with the exception of Nigerians, for whom another programme exists. Nigerians should enquire at: ifraibsecretariat@yahoo.fr

These grants are designed as partial funding to assist in the realization of fieldwork. Candidates should be able to show that they have other resources available. The amount requested may not exceed 1500 Euros.

The application must include the following:

1. Project Proposal: the Proposal must be a detailed, well-argued and clearly presented research project of around 5,000 words, excluding the bibliography and notes. It should be organised as follows:

- A. Title Page: Name of Project; Name, affiliation and contact of candidate; Period and Amount of Funding Requested; Names, Titles and contacts of two referees.
- B. Statement of Research Aims and Problematic:
- C. Historical Background and Discussion D. Methodology and Timetable
- E. Contribution and Pertinence F. Bibliography
2. Detailed Project Budget, including details of other sources of funding. Budgets must be realistic and reflect actual costs of research.
3. Curriculum Vitae
4. Two letters of recommendation. Referees letters must be confidential. In order to ensure this, they are requested to seal the letter and sign across the seal on back of the envelope. Unsealed/unsigned letters will not be accepted. Referees must include the project proposal title in their letter, and their comments should engage with the proposed project as well as the qualities of the individual applicant. For doctoral students, one of the letters must be from their supervisor.

All applications must be printed and delivered or sent *before the 1st of September, 2007* to: Dr. Ruth Marshall, Director – IFRA, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, U.I. P.O. Box 21540, Ibadan, Nigeria. Applicants may also send an electronic copy to: ifraibsecretariat@yahoo.fr, and ifra_ibadan@yahoo.fr

Requests for funding which do not respect these guidelines will not be considered. All applications will be considered on the basis of their individual scientific merit and may be submitted on any subject within the humanities and social sciences.

However, applicants are advised that IFRA research priorities will play a part in the selection of projects to be funded. IFRA research priorities for 2007-2009 are linked to current research programmes: ‘Violence and Conflict in West Africa: Governmentalities and War Machines’; ‘Governing West African Cities: Laws, Local Institutions and Urban Identities since 1945’; future projects: Migration in West Africa Past and Present; Indigeneity/autochthony as a Political Problem in West Africa; recent projects: Transnational Religious Movements in West Africa (with an emphasis on the comparative study of Islamic reformism and Pentecostalism).



POSTDOCTORAL OPPORTUNITIES

The National University of Singapore's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences invites applications for up to twenty Postdoctoral Fellowships (PDF) to be based in various departments/ programmes and to be affiliated with the six newly set-up Research Clusters: Global Cities, Cognition and Behavior, Health, Migration, Religion; Science, Technology and Society.

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The Fellowship will be tenable from August 2008 for a year. It is renewable, upon review, for a second year. Attractive remunerations and benefits will be offered.

The closing date for applications is *31 December 2007 *, for appointments to begin in August 2008. Applicants will be informed of the outcome by February 2007.

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*Interested applicants are invited to *email* their applications consisting of:

- 1) An application form at <http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/research/pfp.html>)
- 2) CV with complete list of publications
- 3) At least 2 letters of reference
- 4) A research proposal to fass_research@nus.edu.sg* with *subject title:

"Application for Postdoctoral Fellowship - Applicant's Name"*

If the reference letters are to be emailed by the referees directly, please email to fass_research@nus.edu.sg* with *subject title:

"Postdoctoral Fellowship - Reference letter for Applicant's Name"*

*Website: <http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/>



BRIEF NEWS ITEMS

Andrew F. Walls Centre for the Study of African and Asian Christianity:

The recently established Andrew F. Walls Centre at Liverpool Hope University supports research in the area of African and Asian Christianity (which may be in Diaspora). One purpose of the Centre is to provide a physical research base for scholars working in this area including the acquisition of relevant research materials, a process which is now underway. The Centre is named after Hope's Adjunct Professor of World Christianity, Andrew F. Walls, who has held chairs at Edinburgh and Aberdeen, and been a visiting professor at both Princeton and Yale. He is a scholar of great distinction whose contribution to this area of enquiry has been immense. The Centre is already home to a number of PhD research students, and plans are now advanced to expand the work of the Centre in various ways. These include the setting up of an annual lecture, the running of a regular seminar series and holding of a colloquium, the papers from which will be published. Liverpool Hope University is also able to offer a visiting fellowship in African Studies and has a scholar-in-residence programme. Details of these schemes are available from Professor Kenneth Newport (Assistant Vice-Chancellor).

Telephone: +44 (0)151 291 3510; E-mail: k.newport@hope.ac.uk

For further information, visit <http://www.hope.ac.uk/research/aac/index.htm>

Professor Gerrie ter Haar. The Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague was recently renamed Gerrie ter Haar's professorial chair. She is now Professor of Religion and Development, a unique position in which she will be specifically charged with investigating the relationship between religion and development. The change of name results from the wish of the Institute to situate the chair squarely within the field of development studies, thus increasing the ISS profile as Europe's leading institute in development studies, in which religion and development is a fast-growing area attracting worldwide interest.

Dr. Philomena Mwaura, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies of Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya, was the main lecturer in a PhD seminar on 'HIV/AIDS and Theology in Africa' on Monday May 21st, 2007, at IIMO, Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands. The seminar was organised by the departments of Intercultural Theology of Utrecht University, and of the Protestant University of Theology (PThU) at Kampen, The Netherlands. Dr. Mwaura lectured on 'Violation of Rights of Kenyan Women Living with HIV/AIDS through Stigma and Discrimination'. In her eloquent, soft spoken and fast delivered lecture, she analysed the highly ambivalent role of the Christian churches, and in particular of the RC church, her own church. The latter, on the

one hand, provides the best medical care for the sick afflicted with HIV/AIDS. On the other hand, however, it contributes much to their misery by reinvigorating the prevailing processes of their stigmatisation, marginalisation and social isolation by preaching a code of sexual morals that may easily cause those who have not yet been afflicted with HIV/AIDS to view those afflicted with it as sinners, and HIV/AIDS as a meet punishment for their 'loose' sexual behaviour, and to ostracise them on those religious grounds. The other lecturer was prof. Derrick Mashau, of Potchefstroom University, South Africa. His subject was 'When and Where It Hurts Most: Theology of Hope and Accompaniment in the Context of HIV and AIDS in Marriage and Family Life'. The responses were by PhD students, one from Utrecht University, and three from the PThU at Kampen. The organisers were Dr. Martha Frederiks, Director of IIMO, Utrecht University, and Dr. Volkert Küster, professor of Intercultural Theology at PThU, Kampen.

Damara Seleina Parsitau MA, Lecturer at Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya has been awarded a Visiting Research Fellowship at the University of Cambridge for six months from 1st October 2007 to 31st March 2008 under the theme of Religion and Public Culture in Africa. She will be based for those six months at the Centre for African Studies of the University of Cambridge, and research on a project entitled '*Arise oh Ye Daughters of Faith*'; *Women, Pentecostalism and Public Culture in Kenya*. She also hopes to use this golden opportunity to write up her thesis on *The Dawn of a New Dispensation: Pentecostal Christianity in Public Space in Kenya*, and hopefully develop new papers. She was also awarded a Visiting Research Fellowship at Edinburgh University in June-July 2006, where she researched on the 'Role of Pentecostal Christianity in Democratization in Kenya', a venture that has resulted in a publication entitled *The Holy Spirit in the Ballot Box: Pentecostal Christianity, Democracy and Development in Kenya*, forthcoming in 2007.

A NEW JOURNAL

JOURNAL OF AFRICAN DIASPORA: TRANSNATIONAL AFRICA IN A GLOBAL WORLD

This scholarly journal seeks to understand how African cultures and societies shape and are shaped by historical and current diasporic and transnational movements. The journal does not take 'Africa' as a bounded geographical entity and

the African diaspora as a single imagined community. It focuses on entangled histories, plural diasporas and transnational movements from, to and within Africa. These include the Transatlantic, the Indian Ocean, the Middle East as well as Europe and the former socialist countries of the European continent. By focusing on when and how diasporas are produced and lived, diasporic connections are claimed, and transnational engagements evolve, the journal fosters a view on the ways in which these movements are navigated by people, networks, communities and states in historical, political and socio-cultural terms. Providing an academic context for the interpolation of the ways in which diasporic and transnational movements reinforce, negotiate or negate one another forms the core of the interdisciplinary approach this journal fosters.

The journal invites submissions now. It publishes peer reviewed articles based on original research, short notes and communications, and book reviews. Occasionally it will produce thematic issues. It is the journal's policy to encourage publication by junior scholars and to provide a platform for discussion and exchange relevant to policy. The journal is bi-lingual and welcomes contributions both in English and French. All articles will have abstracts in both languages.

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ARTICLE

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ISLAMIC UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA:
A CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT
IN RELIGIOUS PLURALISM*Introduction*

In late 1999, the civilian government of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo made laws that liberalized the setting up of private tertiary educational institutions in the country. Before then, universities could only be established by the Federal and State governments. Although from the beginning of western education in Nigeria in the mid-nineteenth century, private institutions and individuals (Christian and Islamic organizations, business entrepreneurs and NGOs) could set up and operate elementary and secondary institutions, they were not allowed into tertiary education as previous military regimes sought to control all facets of development programmes in the country. Hence, the intervention of Obasanjo's regime in 1999 was a significant turning point in the history of higher education in Nigeria. Shortly after the opening up of higher education, it was mostly Christian churches and organizations that applied for and were granted charter to open universities. In fact, by 2001, about five universities owned by Christian organizations were already in operation. These were Babcock University (owned by the Seventh Day Adventist Church), Bowen University (run by the Nigerian Baptists), Madonna University (owned by the Catholics), Benson Idahosa University and Covenant University (established by two indigenous Pentecostal churches).

Surprisingly, Muslims and the Islamic constituency, which had from the late 1960s criticized the dominance of the elementary and secondary education in the country by Christian missions and organizations, did not respond enthusiastically as the Christians did. Interestingly, it was only in December 2004 that the first private institution owned by Muslims began operation. This institution, Crescent University, was largely the brainchild of an individual Muslim rather than any Muslim organization. It is difficult to understand the apathy of Muslims to setting up private universities despite the previous agitation for equality and religious balance in the educational sector. Bearing in mind the competitive religious landscape over the past three decades which has often manifested in open Christian-Muslim clashes, one needs to take into account the political im-

plication of either Christians or Muslims establishing and running their own institutions. If Christians continue to dominate higher education, this would likely threaten the existing fragile religious pluralism and peaceful co-existence in the country. This scenario is possible because Christian missionaries in the past have used the educational institutions for religious conversion: an issue which Muslims have not been happy about.

Indeed, the progress of Christian missions in the 19th century was achieved largely through the introduction of education. In this regard, the introduction of western education was exclusively due to the efforts of the Christian missionaries. For example, the Methodist established the first school in Badagry in 1842, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) established their own first school in 1843, while the Baptist Mission established its first Baptist school at Ijaye in 1854. The Roman Catholic Mission opened the first Roman Catholic Teacher's College (later changed to St. Gregory's College) in Lagos in 1876. Nothing of such came from Muslims until the 1960s. It is therefore this issue of Islamic tertiary education in Nigeria and its implication for Christian-Muslim relation within the very fragile religious pluralism in the country that this paper discusses.

Despite the rapid growth of western education in Southern Nigeria, the development of western education lagged behind in Northern Nigeria. Sonia Graham (1968) has noted the conflicting interests of the colonial administration that was ready to allow Christian missions to open schools in Northern Nigeria only if they would run secular curriculum, an option that was not acceptable to the missionary societies. Likewise, Fafunwa (1976) has suggested that the slow pace of education in the North was due to the hostility of some of the *emirs*, to Christian missionary activities, and probably to the indirect rule system, which played down educational activities in the North. In fact, under Percy C. Girouard, High Commissioner of Northern Protectorate (1907-08), the Indirect Rule system (a system of using traditional native authorities for governance under the superintendence of British colonial officers) was strictly applied to restrict the religious and educational activities of Christian missions.

In southern Nigeria, many Muslim parents were aware of the conversionist goals of mission schools. Nevertheless, they sent their children to schools because education was a major instrument for upward social mobility before and immediately after independence in 1960. By the late 1950s, Northern Nigeria leaders had realised the disparity in education development in the North compared to the South, and the student population and schools in the two regions. This later generated enthusiasm for western education in Muslim circles. Within the ranks of the orthodox Muslims, a number of organizations sprang up to develop western education from the Islamic perspective. Among them were the Ansar-ur-deen Society, the Ahmadiyyah Movement, and the Nawar-ur-deen Society, all of which later built schools where secular western education was accepted alongside Arabic and Islamic studies. However, the taking over of schools by

the state governments between 1971 and 1975 under the military regime retarded the progress of Muslims' intervention in western education. The East Central State government set the ball rolling by taking over all schools due to the general inability of the voluntary agencies after the Nigerian civil war (1967-70) to support the schools as they should. The background could be traced to the establishment of State Central Schools Board or other management organs of secondary education in 1968 in accordance with a recommendation in the Adefarasin Report which was a fallout of the 1964 teachers' strike.

Another advance of Muslim intervention in western education was the inclusion of Islamic Religious Knowledge in the curriculum of secondary schools. Muslim parents have argued that Bible Knowledge, later renamed Christian Religious Knowledge was taught to all students in schools irrespective of their religious backgrounds. As a result of agitations, by the mid-1960s, Islamic Religious Knowledge was added to the curriculum of secondary schools, though it was never as popular as Christian Religious Knowledge, and in fact, it was taken largely by Muslims. It was only in the 1980s, that Islamic Religious Knowledge gained some popularity as more teachers qualified to teach the subjects were employed into schools.

A Panoramic History of Islam and Religious Pluralism in Nigeria

Islam was first introduced into Northern Nigeria in the fourteenth century by traders from the Sahara region, and by the end of the fifteenth century it had taken roots. In the early nineteenth century, a *jihad* led by a Muslim cleric, Uthman dan Fodio, succeeded in islamising a large population in the North. The jihadists imposed Muslim rulers, called *emirs*, over the conquered people to ensure total adherence to Islam. Accordingly, J. D. Fage (1962) noted that in the 19th century the application of shari'ah and the administration based on it were intensified and the common people increasingly became Muslims. By the late nineteenth century, its impact on the political and social structures in the societies in Northern Nigeria where it was dominant was great. In fact John Paden (1973) has argued that the contemporary social and political configurations in Kano and in many other northern cities was rooted in the expansion of Islam in this region in the 19th century.

In the area of education, Islam made substantial progress largely in Qur'anic schools until the independence era when Muslim organizations, as already noted, ventured into setting up elementary and secondary institutions that operated a secular curriculum. Nonetheless, Islamic schools before the 1980s were fewer in number than Christian mission schools. A ratio 9:1 has been suggested for this disparity.

On their arrival in the North in 1899, the British preserved these existing religious integration and cultural unity, as a precondition for the success of colonialism. In subsequent decades, the Indirect Rule indirectly strengthened the religious powers of the *emirs*, and thus further widened the political influence of Is-

lam in the region. However, attempts by the British to extend the influence of the Muslim rulers over the areas not islamised or the 'pagan' peoples, as the British called them, generated crises. Christian mission work, which began in the first decade of the twentieth century in these areas, eventually produced a fervent anti-Islamic political movement from the 1950s (Kastfelt, 1994, Turaki, 1993).

After the amalgamation of the North and South to form Nigeria in 1914, different administrative policies were pursued by the British for the regions. Unfortunately, this arrangement provided political justification for the strengthening of the existing ethnic and religious differences. The North maintained an overwhelming Muslim population, while the East remained predominantly Christian. These different regional pulls have characterised geopolitics in Nigeria since independence in 1960.

Although population statistics are unavailable, Christians and Muslims each accounts for about 42% of the country's population of 140 million by the 2006 Census. It is generally accepted that Islam is dominant in North with about 80% of population as Muslims. On the other hand, Christianity is dominant in Eastern Nigeria and Christian and Muslims are likely to be roughly of equal population in Western Nigeria. Overall, Christians and Muslims will account for about 84% of the country's population, while the remaining will be adherents of African Traditional Religion.

Religious pluralism has been an issue of contestation in the country and particularly in the educational institutions. Some of the major Christian-Muslim clashes have originated from the schools. Among the contested issues in recent times are whether Muslim students can wear *hijab* (Islamic women head dressing) or whether Muslim can wear any dressing that reflect religious faith; how many periods can be set aside for the teaching of Islamic Religious Knowledge such that the subject can have a comparative stand like Christian Religious Knowledge; whether lectures can be held between 12 and 2.00 p.m. on Fridays, the period which is meant for the observance of Friday prayer; whether or not spaces can be set aside on college campuses as Muslim praying ground in addition to the mosques; whether a non-Muslim with appropriate qualifications can teach Islamic Studies to the generality of students, etc. These issues continue to generate tension and from time to time open clashes have resulted.

Islamic education in Nigeria: the latest development

With the above background, it should be noted that knowledge is universal, and educational institutions provide one of the major avenues of acquiring knowledge. Globalization has enhanced and will continue to enhance the role of education and in determining trends in economics development, particularly of developing nations. Access to knowledge therefore and the ability to harness it will increasingly determine who succeeds and who fails in the race for prosperity. Higher education has never been as important to the future of the emerging

new economy of the Nigeria state as it is now. While education on its own may not guarantee rapid economic development, sustained progress would be impossible without education. Therefore, considering the crucial role of tertiary education, it is sad to note that the total absorption capacity for fresh admission into Nigeria's universities each year is grossly inadequate when compared with the total number of students seeking admissions. For instance, a total of 1,184,384 candidates sat for the Secondary School Leaving Certificate in the country in May/June 2006. In 2007, 1,275,330 candidates sat for the same examination, whereas in early 2007 admission vacancies in all the ninety degree-awarding institutions (some Colleges of Education and universities) was still less than 20% of all the students who sat and passed the Secondary School Certificate. The Polytechnics and Colleges of Education running professional programmes even admit less than the universities. This is an indication of the growing need for private universities to increase the volume of admission to degree programmes each year.

On the above analysis therefore, the Federal Government of Nigeria in a bid to improve university enrolment, promulgated Decree No. 9 of 1999, which allows the establishment of private universities, provided the proprietors of such universities meet the requirements of the National Universities Commission (NUC), the body that regulates the standard of university education in the country. Among the requirements are meeting the minimum academic programme of the National Universities Commission, having a master plan for the university permanent site, having a minimum of N200 million as bank deposit before a private university can begin operation, having interim list of the vice chancellor and the registrar, having sizeable acreage of land, a satisfactory report of the visitation team of the NUC to verify the preparedness of the organization to start the university and the claims made in the application, and finally accepting that the institution being established will not reflect any religious bias.

With the promulgation of Decree 9, individuals and religious organizations embarked on the establishment of private universities. The liberal requirements for the setting up of private universities has indeed accounted largely for the upsurge in the number of universities in Nigeria, rising from 32 in 1999 to 48 by 2003 and rising to 55 by 2006. By early 2007, ninety universities were listed by the Joint Matriculation and Admission Board, the Federal Government organ charged with conducting matriculation examinations into universities and colleges in the country. Of these, twenty-four were Federal Government institutions, while there were twenty-five universities under the proprietorship of state governments, twenty-five were private institutions, while the remaining were Colleges of Education that offer degree courses. Of the twenty-five private institutions, fifteen are owned and/or operated by Christian organizations, while only three are associated with Islamic institutions. Others are run by secular organizations.

Partly in response to the number of universities founded by Christian organizations, Nigerian Muslims began to establish their own universities. As already noted, Crescent University, Abeokuta, was chartered in December 2004, but began operation in 2005. Next was Hikmah University, Ilorin. Funded by a business entrepreneur, it became operational in 2006. The third Islamic university, Fountain University, Osogbo established by NASFAT, a national revivalist Islamic organization, in early 2007, has not yet admitted students.

To this end and considering the pluralistic nature of Nigeria, it could be argued that Nigerian Muslims are waking up rather too late to the challenges of tertiary education in the country. It should be noted that these three universities are located in Yorubaland in Western Nigeria. To date, there has not been any such Islamic university in Northern Nigeria despite the overwhelming population of Muslims in this region. Perhaps, the state universities in this region, many of which are strong in Islamic and Arabic Studies, have distorted the vision of the Islamic leaders in this region.

Are these universities already mentioned Islamic universities per se, or universities established by Muslims but running secular curriculum? The concept of an Islamic university is not novel in Africa. The first university in Africa is Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, which is a typical Islamic university promoting Islamic values and culture. Other Islamic universities are found in Algeria, Libya, Sudan, Mali and Senegal. Considering the existing regulations of universities in Nigeria, it will be difficult or almost impossible to impose any Islamic tenets on students who do not profess Islamic faith or who choose to express any religious inclinations. While key officers of the universities could be Muslims, and while there may be mosques institutionalised in these universities, it may not be able to do more than these. At least to survive in the stiff competition among private universities, students of other faiths would have to be admitted and lecturers of other faith or no faith at all would have to be appointed to teach courses where qualified Muslims cannot be found.

However, one thing is sure: the emergence of Islamic universities in addition to the other private religious universities owned by different Christian missions will make a lot of difference in addressing the cancerous vices plaguing the university education in Nigeria. The universities established by Christian organizations have been insisting on promoting discipline and inculcating strong moral values in their students, it is expected that the Islamic universities will also toe the same line.

Challenges for the Muslim-owned private universities in Nigeria

Considering the unfolding scenario of private intervention in university education in Nigeria, there are a number of challenges facing the Muslim community as they get more involved in establishing universities. Firstly, Muslim organizations must strive harder to meet up the requirements of setting up of universities in the country and establish more universities in other regions of the country. In

act, an Islamic university is long overdue for Northern Nigeria. There is still the need for more universities by Muslims not only to challenge Christian dominance but to offer Islamic values as alternative measures to address the corruption in the public sphere.

Secondly, in the recruitment of teachers, Muslims need to take account of academic competence rather than faith in the recruitment of lecturers and aim to employ the best. This may mean that people professing other faiths be employed. Muslims and supporters of the universities should take this in good faith considering the need to ensure that the right academic environment is created.

Thirdly, with high salaries for Nigerian university teachers, many private universities are confronted with inadequate finances. To prevent that, tuition fees in most of the universities are set at a minimum of about ₦280,000:00 (\$2,205.00) per academic year. There are other fees for accommodation, utilities, development, etc. Really, these fees may be considered too high for an average Nigerian worker in the public service. Even some Muslims may not be able to get such money to finance their children education in the 'Islamic universities'. To this end, it is suggested that students of other faiths be admitted, if they apply and are qualified. More important, some forms of grants and scholarships must be put in place to attract qualified Muslim candidates. Closely related to the above is the issue of the law of the country, which does not allow any educational institution to impose any faith on students receiving instruction. Hence, authorities of the Islamic universities must learn to live with religious pluralism and recognise the religious rights of students.

Furthermore, now that the private Islamic universities are coming up four years behind private Christian universities, can these universities rise up to compete for popularity and excellence like the Christian universities or to overtaking them? In this regard, Muslims need to pay more premium to recognition and competence. Similarly, since most of these Muslim institutions are operating on their temporary sites, they need to raise funds to build structures on their permanent sites without further delay. It is unwise in this twenty first century for Muslims in Nigeria to expect or demand for any massive financial support from Arab countries in the Middle East to run their universities. To this end, there should be popular and massive Muslim support to finance these universities.

Equally important is that the liberalization of education and the laws governing the operation of universities may not allow the implementation of Shari'ah in these institutions in spite of the desire for it by large Muslim community. Really, if the universities are to achieve excellence they cannot operate as oasis of religious fundamentalism. Consequently, Muslims can concentrate on the challenge of linking these Muslim-owned private universities with existing well-known Islamic universities in other parts of the world, and thereby achieve global recognition.

Conclusion

The liberalisation of tertiary education by the Obasanjo's administration in 1999 brought an unprecedented growth in the number of degree awarding institutions in the country and stimulated major infrastructural development in the educational sector. However, as pointed out, the Christian constituency took up this challenge, while Muslims for about four years were undecided on how to respond to this challenge. Despite the fact that the emergence of private Islamic universities is welcomed as an expression of religious pluralism, a lot needs to be done to make them nationally and internationally recognised. To achieve this, more philanthropic Muslim individuals and organizations in the country are expected to contribute to the building and sustenance of these universities, and possibly finance the setting up of more Islamic universities.

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REVIEWS

Tabona Shoko
University of Zimbabwe

THE PRESUMED CAUSES OF DISEASE: FROM SPIRITS TO HUMANS

David Westerlund 2006, *African Indigenous Religions and Disease Causation: From Spiritual Beings to Living Humans*, Leiden: Brill, vii + 240 pp. ISBN 90 04 14433 1 (pbk), € 73.00 / US\$ 99.00.

The book

This book by David Westerlund is a historical and comparative study of African disease etiologies. It originated from a collaborative research project on 'African Folk Models and their Application' with colleagues at Uppsala University in 1980s, and it is an updated version of an earlier publication entitled 'Pluralism and Change: A Comparative and Historical Approach to African Disease Etiologies' (vii). As essentially a (religio-)-historical study, the book is primarily based on a systematic selection of five different peoples or ethnic groups from various parts of Africa, namely the hunter-gathering San of Southern Africa, the pastoralist Maasai of East Africa, the agriculturalist Sukuma of East Africa, the Kongo of Central Africa and the Yoruba of West Africa (3). The author explores the differences between their religions and cultures, the plurality within them, and the processes of change over a period of 100 years from the late 19th to the late 20th centuries.

The bulk of the material in this book is based, not on field research but on European mission archives and literature, that is on accounts by missionaries and travellers (9). Archives consulted include sources at Carolina Rediviva, University Library, Uppsala; White Fathers at Rome; and Catholic and Protestant archives in Birmingham, UK; in Brussels, Belgium; in Leipzig, Berlin and Bayreuth, Germany; in Chevilly, France; in Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, and Kampala in East Africa; in Ibadan, Ife, and Jos in West Africa; and in Cape Town and Durban in South Africa (vii-viii).

In his outline of the book, Westerlund first presents the religious aspects of illness causation among the San, Maasai, Sukuma, Kongo and Yoruba. Secondly he treats the issue why living human beings are also regarded as agents of sickness. Thirdly he proposes an eclectic historical analysis of the possible reasons for a gradual shift from spiritual beings to living humans as causes of afflictions. Such analysis pays attention to socio-historical factors as well as to wide socio-economic and political contexts. Finally he provides notes on natural causation in an appendix (9).

In chapter one, the author explicates the ethnographic background of the book. The San Bushmen or Basarwa's demographic size is tens of thousands. Although they share similarities in several aspects such as the hunter-gathering traditions, they also have considerable differences in their physical and linguistic aspects. E.g., some 'black' San in Angola, Namibia and Botswana are tall and dark skinned; other San in contrast are short

and yellow. This observation is authenticated by scholars such as H.J. Heinz who noted 'more differences between Bushmen tribes than there are resemblances' (26). Scholars also divide the San in terms of language, economy, and social and political structures (26-28). Linguistically they are classified in terms of the northern, central and Southern clusters. Economically the San include hunter-gathers but also farmers and cattle-herds. Socially they have a flexible group structure and egalitarian sex relations, and they are polygamous. Politically the San have varied tribes with institutionalised political officers (26-28). They are under the threat of extinction by colonialism and modernization.

The Maasai are found in Kenya and Tanzania. They comprise sections or tribes such as the Samburu and Arusha. The groups average 300 000 people. Economically they are pastoralists and agriculturalists. Socially they are patrilineal. On modernity they are conservative and have not converted to Christianity (28-30).

The Sukuma live in Tanzania. They are more than 2 million and speak a Bantu language. In terms of modernity, they have been exposed to Islam and Arabic influence but are slow to change. Economically they comprise both sedentary farmers and agro-pastoralists. Socially they live in homesteads numbering 200 to 300. They are patrilineal and exercise chieftainship (32-34).

The Kongo kingdom, now comprising Lower Congo (Zaire/DRC) and Republic of Congo, was originally founded in 1480s. Their population is about 4 million. They are divided in several groups or clans and speak dialects such as Sundi and Bwende. But they have basic cultural similarities. They live in both forest and savannah. Their economy is based on agriculture, hunting and fishing. Socially they are matrilineal and egalitarian. Politically they have sacred kingship or chieftainship (35-37).

The Yoruba are the most populous of the peoples studied in this book: they count some 30 million and live in South Western Nigeria but there also substantial indigenous Yoruba communities in other West African countries that include Benin and Togo. They are more united in terms of language than of culture. They regard the city of Ife as the cradle of the Yoruba societies. Their economy is sedentary and consists of farming and trade. Socially they are patrilineal. Politically they have sacred kingship. Modern influences have come from Muslims and Christians (38-40).

In chapter two, Westerlund discusses San beliefs about heavenly beings as agents of disease. Guided by classical scholars such as Passarge (1907), Verder (1912 and 1937), Dornan (1925), Bleek (1928), Lebzelter (1928) and Schapera (1930) and modern scholars like Marshal (1962, 1969), Lee (1967, 1968, 1984) Kohler (1971, 1978, 1978/9), Gunther (1975, 1975/6, 1979, 1986, 1999), Heinz (1975), Barnard (1979, 1988), Katz (1982) and Turner (1983), the author shows that the religions of the !Kung and other San differ from other African religions. They have an individual, amorphous and fluid character. But there are variations within San groups. San religion has no nature spirits, priests or religious functionaries. God, the Creator, and the lesser deity, and the spirits of dead humans are viewed as the agents of disease. One of God's attributes is that he is all-powerful. He is also regarded as the giver of good things such as food, as causing rain to fall and plants to grow, and as saving people from starvation and drought (45). But God is also conceived as ambivalent, as both constructive and destructive, as both good and bad (46). The lesser deity and spirits of the dead share certain attributes with God. Their abode is above the sky. San refer to them as 'heavenly beings', and believe they cause diseases and deaths. But whilst the !Kung attribute the primary cause of serious illness to spirits of the dead and indirectly to God through lesser deities, the Nharo, another San group, believe also that disease is caused by spiritual agents. God too causes the 'good death' of the el-

derly. But among the Ko, God is the source of healing (61). Overall, the hallmark of San religion is the trance dance that helps effect healing.

In chapter three the author portrays Maasai religion as monotheistic. He uses material from prominent authors such as Mecker (1904), Hollis (1905), Fuchs (1910), Focken (1914), Massek and Siddai (1974), Olsson (1975, 1982), Hauge (1979), Kipury (1983), and also Kimereri (1973), Benson (1974), Marari (1980), Landei (1982), Huskainen (1984, 1989) etc. God is said to be the ultimate cause of disease and death. He is associated with heaven/sky. He has male and female attributes. He is also anthropomorphic. His main attributes are: God is Omnipresent, Great/All Powerful, Creator and Sustainer, Transcendent/Immanent, Powerful/Eternal (68-69). Other spiritual beings have no room in Maasai religion. Their religion lacks sacred buildings, religious images, priesthood, ancestors, and the idea of an afterlife (65). The Maasai also believe that illness and disease may also be caused by natural means, empirical observable causes such as blood loss, lightning, volcanoes, strong winds (75). God is considered the ultimate cause of disease and death. Sin and illness are divine punishments. They also believe that other spiritual beings may also be agents of disease.

Chapter four presents Sukuma religion as centred on the cult of ancestors. Relying on scholars like Malcolm (1953), Tanner (1965), Wijzen (2000), Abraham (1967), Bosch (1930), Westerlund shows that Sukuma religion revolves around ritual sacrifices, invocations, dances, and libations (89). But ancestors are seen as agents of diseases such as infertility and misfortune. Whilst malignant ancestral spirits are held to cause madness, chiefly spirits are said to cause smallpox, plague, measles, cholera, rinderpest, etc. (93). Witchcraft and sorcery are thought of as agents of death. Sukuma ancestors are believed to cause illness and diseases for 'sin' due to incest, for failure to honour them, and to demand satisfaction for past grievances. Ancestors are viewed as ambivalent and to provide both good and bad, blessings and misfortune (95). As such the Sukuma venerate them with awe. But they are also a social phenomenon, for they are believed to appear in dreams and to possess women. In Sukuma religion, nature spirits are minor. They have no cult and some are of Muslim origin.

The Sukuma also share belief in a Supreme Being, *Mulungu* the Creator. He is said to be omnipresent, male, incorporeal and invisible (98). Although regarded as ambivalent, he is conceived as primarily good. He has no cult and is approached indirectly by petitions for rain and children, and at times of an epidemic, war or serious disease (99). Any case of disease is attributed to God. He is regarded as giver and terminator of life, master of life and death, and said to punish evildoers and to dispense good and bad.

Chapter five discusses Kongo spirits *Nkisi* as agents of disease. Using materials by Laman (1953, 1968), (Wing 1959) Buakasa (1973), Mahaniah (1982), Jansen (1978) and McGaffey (1986), the author depicts a people's firm belief in fetishes (*nkisi*), sacred objects associated with certain spirits. As in other religions, disease etiologies among the Kongo are related to religion but also to human and natural factors. The 'why me?' question is important. But whilst common and benign afflictions are associated with natural or physical causes, serious cases are attributed to spiritual and human agents. There are about 100 major *Nkisi* spirits associated with founders of the Kongo clan. Their functions are varied and are believed to include healing, protection, and guardianship (110). Serious or chronic illness is attributed to spirits such as Nkindi, Bunzi, Nakongo, Mbumba, Nkita, and Mbela (111-114). In the case of serious illness, the *nganga* (herbalist or diviner) has great authority in matters concerning the restoration of health.

The Kongo also practise a cult of ancestors. They are regarded as primarily benevolent. Paternal power is expressed in the father's curse and is thought to cause impotence. Chiefly spirits are associated with epidemics, fertility of women and fields, and twins' afflictions. There is little or no cult of the Supreme Being. Whenever it exists, his characteristics are traceable to Christian influence. Although he is viewed as Lord of life and death, he is not regarded as a major cause of disease.

In chapter six the author describes Yoruba religion as the most complex belief system in Africa. This is based on textual sources such as Bascom (1969), E.B. Idowu (1963), Morton Williams (1964), Awolalu (1970), McKenzie (1976), J. Dopamu (1977), Eads (1980), Lawson (1984), etc. The divinities (*orisha*) are its most conspicuous feature. Whilst God is viewed as the ruler, the divinities are said to be his intermediaries or 'ministers' (121). The Yoruba also practise the cult of ancestors and believe in spirits, sacred kingship and reincarnation. They also have elaborate cults with priesthood, rituals and festivals and sacred places (121). As in the case of the Sukuma and Kongo, both supra-human or human beings are thought to cause serious and protracted illness. God and ancestors may be understood as agents of disease. But divinities are viewed as the main spiritual causes of diseases.

God, Oludumare, is Almighty in Yoruba belief. He is also known as Olorun, 'owner of heaven'. His attributes are similar to the Christian God: he is said to be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent (124). He has no direct worship or cult. But God is believed to punish evil and to reward good. The divinities are the central focus. They have elaborate sacrifices, rituals and festivals and taboos in their honour. Some key divinities and their functions include the following: Ille, earth, is linked with natural forces (127); Shopona with dreadful disease as agent of small pox (128); Ifa with divination (131); Shango with lightning and thunder (134). Eshu is the trickster (133); Ogun is the god of iron, metal, steel and war (135); Yemoja is the water divinity (136); Oshun is the wife of Shango (137); Obatala is the arch-divinity associated with creative power (137); and Oduduwa is the wife of Obatala, ruler or progenitor of Ife (138); etc.

Some special features of Yoruba religion include the cult of ancestors. They also have *babalawo* priests (132), *egungun* masked dancers (144), *gelede* dancers when men masquerade as women (146). The reasons why spirits afflict men with diseases are said to vary: because they act as guardians of morality and good reputation; because humans failed to sacrifice, and for lack of proper burials (144). The next two chapters deal with living humans agents as cause of diseases.

In chapter seven the author treats the San and Maasai. San do not believe that living humans are agents who cause disease. Belief in witchcraft and sorcery was introduced to the San by contact with black people and are due to modernization. However, the San healing system is ambivalent. For instance, the 'Bushman revolver' that is believed to use invisible arrows and to result in 'soul loss' are regarded to rely on a supra-normal power equivalent to witchcraft (150).

As for Maasai, healers are human agents. The healers' or elders' curse is considered equivalent to witchcraft. Healers are thought of as semi-divine and semi-bestial (156). They are believed to utilize supra-normal powers. Maasai also believe that blacksmiths curse can cause afflictions and the 'evil eye' is fatal. Due to colonial influence, their beliefs are changing towards views based on modern biomedicine.

Chapter eight discusses witchery beliefs amongst the Sukuma, Kongo and Yoruba. The Sukuma believe in black magic and poison, classified as witchcraft and sorcery. The Kongo are said to practise witchery. The perpetrators, *bandoki*, are believed to affect re-

productive systems, sterility, miscarriage and death (173). The curse of fathers is also thought to be powerful. The Yoruba view witchcraft (*aje*) as causing afflictions of a psychosomatic nature. Sorcery (*osho*) is said to involve the use of body parts and to cause afflictions like barrenness, psychiatric disorders and other diseases such as cancer, rheumatism, elephantiasis, blindness, tuberculosis, smallpox, measles, leprosy, epilepsy and the inability to urinate (184).

Chapter nine discusses the factors of continuity and change. The author underlines the crux of his book that there has been a decline in attributing disease to spiritual beings and a subsequent increase in viewing living humans as agents of diseases. This is demonstrated by the data on the Sukuma, Kongo and Yoruba. This, he notes, is typical of many other parts of Africa (189). This position is exemplified by reputed scholars on Africa such as Middleton and Winter (1963), Victor Turner (1968) on the Ndembu of Zambia, P. Stanley Yoder on the Chokwe of South Western Zaire, Barnes-Dean on the Lugbara of Western Uganda, and also by Stadler (1996), Geschiere (1997) and Colson (2000) on various other parts of Africa.

Emphasising the shift from religious to human agents of disease, the author notes that the problems of witchery belief that mark this change have received increasing scholarly interest and attention. He further enumerates the possible causes for this change from attributing illness to religious agents to 'social causation'. Modern influences such as the expansion of Christianity and Islam in Africa that attacked indigenous religion brought a new dispensation. This was more pronounced with the Sukuma, Kongo and Yoruba than with the hunter-gathering San and pastoral Maasai. The San have had reputation of resisting modernity (192). In Sukumaland, however, political leaders despise traditional beliefs and practices such as occurred in the past, and in Kongo Catholic missionaries destroyed *nkisi* objects. Among the Yoruba both Christianity and Islam contributed to the undermining of the *orisha* (192-3). Also the introduction of modern education and health care brought about challenges to indigenous African religions. Overall the author identifies, in line with Terence Ranger, elements of an 'identity crisis' that emerge through attempts by political and religious hierarchies to create new identities (194).

Among the San and Maasai, the significance of natural causation, 'herbalists' and the use of 'secular medicines' are 'commoditized popular healing' but are also significant parts of the wider process of 'secularization' and 'individualization'(194). Among the Nharo and Arusha, who have been exposed to forms of socio-economic and other upheavals, an increase in belief in human causes of disease is found. The Nharo live in a state of economic dependence on white and black farmers. They experience socio-economic inequality, gender tensions and conflicts over property (195). But for the San, belief in witchery is 'not a Bushman thing' (195). They have few tensions over rights to land and property but they also allow 'free vent' through talking, shouting, singing and dancing (196).

In the case of the Sukuma, Kongo and Yoruba, what accounts for the increase in the belief that humans are agents of sickness and the decrease in attributing it to spiritual beings is that whilst urbanization weakened indigenous religions, political struggles and economic rivalry have increased witchery ideas and practices. 'The retreat of suprahuman beings as agents of disease has created, as it were, a vacuum that has been filled, in part, by supranormal humans' (198). Also post-colonial political leaders, Christian and Muslim leaders and missionaries' attempts to uproot 'witchery' as well as 'witch hunts' and cleansing movements such as Simon Kimbangu's generated insecurity and fears that

increased rather than suppressed fears of witchery. The cocoa economy has also intensified the existing etiology of witchcraft (202).

Finally the author refers to Mary Douglas' theory that increase in disparity in social relations will result in intensification of belief in and fear of witchcraft (202). He also concurs with Middleton that social tensions and competitions arise in situations where status is achieved rather than ascribed (203). Finally he also notes that belief in and fear of witchcraft is intensifying due to modern changes in broad regional, national and trans-national contexts such as new political elites, media, soccer (206).

Appreciation

The author's scholarly merit in the book is its methodological focus. He uses a religio-historical approach in the book. But he also uses an eclectic analysis and draws insights from other disciplines such as ethnography/anthropology. This supports what he himself calls 'multi- and interdisciplinary openness' (5).

A very interesting point is that the data analysed in this book are corroborated to a large extent by a number of empirical studies focusing specifically on African medical therapies. For instance in Zimbabwe which has not been covered in this study, scholars from a various disciplines such as Gelfand (1944), (1956), (1964), Gelfand *et al.* (1985), who was a medical doctor; Bourdillon (1987)'s anthropological approach; Chavunduka (1978)'s sociological analysis; Dahlin (2001)'s missiological study, and Shoko (2007)'s phenomenological method address the etiology of illness and disease of the Shona or their sub-groups. Also we agree to a large extent with the author's use of the San and Nuer to exemplify Mary Douglas' theoretical connection between increase in disparity and increase in witchcraft belief and fear. And Middleton's argument, adopted by the author that the intensity of witchcraft belief covers wider 'regional', 'national' and 'trans-national' contexts in politics, media and soccer, is interesting and justified.

However main sources of data the author used consist of studies of the San, Maasai, Sukuma, Kongo and Yoruba religions that are largely Euro-centric and secondary. Most of his scholars on Africa are based in European countries. The author concedes that the book is not based on field research. This tends to deprive the study of its empirical thrust that could be crucially important to the history of religions and to the study of religions in general. The problem of bias or presuppositions that obtain in the indirect accounts of authors of African indigenous etiologies are not easy to overcome.

The use of materials such as written by authors who have not been scholars, such as missionaries and travellers, may subject this work to criticism. The author mentions the problem of bias or presuppositions of authors who produced indirect accounts of African indigenous conceptions of disease causation. Some scholars have criticized Westerners, (but also Africans), for showing bias on the study of African religions.²⁶ Westerners encounter linguistic barriers and lack command of the cultural codes. As Idowu notes, Africans with requisite mind and necessary technical tools are better equipped to undertake studies on African religions.²⁷ However both Westerners and Africans have religious and political prejudices, albeit in different ways.²⁸

²⁶ Okot p Bitek, *African Religion in African Scholarship*, Kampala: Narobi, p. 1ff..

²⁷ Idowu, E.B., *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*, London: SCM Press, 1973, p. 106.

²⁸ Westerlund, D., *African Religion in African Scholarship: A Preliminary Analysis of the Religious and Political Background*, Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksel International, 1985, p. 44.

Besides a few quibbles, we applaud Westerlund's scholarship and contribution to the study of African disease etiologies. The book complements the body of extant literature on the subject by its multi-dimensional approach. It also contributes to knowledge and scholarship in the History of Religions.

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EAST AFRICA'S 'INTERNAL TERROR': WITCHCRAFT PANIC & OTHER RELIGIOUS RESPONSES TO AIDS

Felicitas Becker & P. Wenzel Geissler (eds.) 2007, *AIDS and Religious Practice in East Africa*; special issue of *Journal of Religion in Africa* 37, 1: 1-149.

Becker and Geissler have gathered in this special issue of *JRA* five of the ten papers, presented at a one-day workshop on 'Faith and AIDS in East Africa', which was organised by Paul Gifford (SOAS, London), Felicitas Becker (Simon Frazer University, Burnaby, Canada), and P. Wenzel Geissler (School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London) in October 2005 at LSE.²⁹ They are complemented by an introduction by the two editors and a 'conclusion' by John Lonsdale.

What struck me most in reading this collection was Heike Behrend's introduction to her paper on 'The Rise of Occult Powers, AIDS and the Roman Catholic Church in Western Uganda' (41-58). In the region of Tooro in Western Uganda, she found in 1998 an 'epidemic of internal terror', people responding to the stark increase of the number of the deaths from AIDS by 'complain[ing] that cannibals were killing and eating their relatives, friends and neighbours' (41). They said these cannibals first caused their deaths by bewitching them and then, after their burial, resurrected them in order to feast on their bodies together with other cannibal witches. Because they 'kill their victims twice', they were deemed worse than witches. Formerly said to be confined to a particular district only, they were now thought to be everywhere (41-42).

While most modern analyses attribute the rise of belief in occult forces in several parts of Africa primarily to 'the asocial greed necessary for accumulation in a capitalist market' (43), Behrens sides with Victor Turner in rather linking 'the rise of witch beliefs and accusations with high rates of morbidity and mortality' (44). Disease epidemics – smallpox in the past, AIDS now – create 'epidemics of representation': images of invisible violence attributed to witchcraft, sorcery, cursing, or other presumed occult forces

²⁹ For a report on this conference, visit <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=271>, or <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/LSEAIDS/pdfs/faith%20and%20aids%20report%20long.pdf>.

(44-45). As the AIDS epidemic is 'also an epidemic of poverty', it is inseparable from economic and political conditions (43),³⁰ and rising anti-Western sentiments.³¹ As a secondary rationalisation, the occult explanation is perfectly compatible with the medical view of AIDS, promoted by the government and Western NGOs, which few Ugandans nowadays deny (46). And it is strongly invigorated by 'the many Christian fundamentalist movements and churches [...] fighting occult (satanic) powers', for 'precisely the fight against the occult reproduces and strengthens [the belief in] the "enemy"' (44).

The link between AIDS and the witchcraft panic is, however, a dynamic one, says Behrens, for a paradigm shift may occur 'that leads, for example, to the interpretation of the epidemic as divine punishment, thereby reducing or even stopping witchcraft accusations' (45). Behrens devotes the remainder of her article to two RC lay organisations in Tooro: the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God,³² which viewed AIDS as punishment for sin – as did certain 'traditionalists' (47); and the Uganda Martyrs Guild (UMG), which started 'crusades' against non-Catholics in 1995 to 'free people from evil in abandoned places'.

These witch and cannibal hunts were at first violent, then were curbed by the RC hierarchy but remained full of the charismatic rhetoric of holy war. After a day of fasting and a night of singing and praying in church to become 'loaded' with the Holy Spirit, a UMG group would move through a village with bottles of blessed water from house to house till they 'sensed' the 'presence of satanic powers'. Upon which some younger members would fall into a hyperkinetic trance, identify the person to be 'cleansed', and expose the utensils of her or his 'nefarious work'. These were duly documented by being photographed, and then destroyed by being burned. The crusade was concluded with a mass in the local church (51-52). The accused were made to confess, to name other 'cannibals', and were 'cleansed' by being made to vomit and by being prayed over. These 'cleansing' rituals greatly reinforced the beliefs in cannibal witches. The few who refused to confess were declared 'mad' and ostracised. UMG grew fast because confessed 'cannibals' joined it *en masse* to forestall being accused again (52-54).

In the first paper, 'The Virus and the Scriptures: Muslims and AIDS in Tanzania' (16-40), Felicitas Becker likewise notes 'that the omnipresence of death in the age of has revived witchcraft fears and accusations' (29) among Muslims in the rural towns of Lindi and Mwarra near Dar es Salaam in southeast Tanzania. She saw it graphically expressed in an inscription above a roadside shop near Lindi, saying: *wachawi acheni ukimwi unatosh*, 'stop it, witches, there is enough AIDS already' (29). This 'radicalised witchcraft discourse' is, however, but one of the numerous religious responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic of the past two decades in East Africa discussed in this collection. Becker emphasises that 'most non-Muslim observers [...] overestimate the adherence of Muslims to codified religious prescriptions' (18) with regards to HIV/AIDS and devotes her paper to demonstrating that rural Muslims in southeast Tanzania do not adhere to a fairly united and fixed point of view. Instead, 'Muslims, like everybody else, muddle through' (18), view biomedical explanation habitually with scepticism and rather explain HIV/AIDS as

³⁰ Such as, in Tooro, economic depression, the ADF guerrilla war, the decline of local government, widespread corruption and struggles about land (57n5).

³¹ Condoms being suspected as having been infected with HIV in order to spread the disease for the purpose of a genocide, after which Westerners would take over the country again (47-48).

³² It is connected with a mass suicide, c.q. mass killing, in Kanungu, Western Uganda, in March 2000 (57n8, Behrend 2001).

due to 'changing times', and in particular to the disobedience of the young, and their own failure to transmit traditional values and norms to them (19-23).

Becker notes two Muslim positions in particular: that of the young wahhabist inspired *Ansuari Sunna* ('Fellows of the Way') reformists who wish to purify local Islam from *bid'a*, 'innovation'; and that of the traditional *Bakwata*³³ Muslims, organised in the Central Muslim Council of Tanzania, which was recognised as spokesman for Tanzanian Muslims by the government in 1967. Their use of Sufi chants at funerals, and their annual celebrations of the birthday of the Prophet and of the founders of the Sufi brotherhoods are denounced as *bid'a* by *Ansuari* reformists (23-26). Whereas *Bakwata* Muslims endorse the government campaigns of abstinence, faithfulness and condoms, *Ansuari* view AIDS as 'a pernicious western influence, caused by the failure of Muslims to adhere to the Qur'an and the ways of the Prophet'. They accuse the *Bakwata* Muslims of 'advertising fornication' for promoting the use of condoms (26-27). But they fail to take a clear-cut position on *uganga wa kitabu*, 'Qur'anic healing', in which e.g. *surahs* are being worn as amulets for protection against *uchawi*, 'witchcraft', or are drunk as medicines, even though these practices smack of *shirk*, 'idolatry'. However, they consider their use for witch-finding *haramu*, 'forbidden', and they condemned the wave of 'witchcraft cleansing' that swept through the region in the last few years, with very young 'witchcraft eradicators' invading the homes of respected *shehe* (clerics) in search for 'witchcraft utensils' (28-30).

Becker shows that individual Muslims pick their own courses in this muddled field of polemics pragmatically, e.g. by being sympathetic to both the reformist position and the Sufi tradition, but refusing to accept that condoms are *haramu* (31-33). Becker also notes that Muslims do not demonise the HIV virus nor the spirit world, but rather regard both as creatures of God; and that reformists adopt a scripturalist rationalism that sits well with an active affirmation of (biomedical) science as complementary with the Qur'an. And all are disillusioned with 'development' and modern times and regard *zinaa*, 'illicit sex', as a symptom of modern men turning away from God, HIV control programmes as endorsing it, and Muslim rules for the interaction between men and women as counteracting it (34-36).

The third contribution (59-83), by Hansjörg Dilger of the University of Florida, is about a very successful neo-Pentecostal mega-church with an apocalyptic, demonising worldview. It is the Full Gospel Bible Fellowship Church (FGBFC), founded in 1989 by Zachary Kakobe in Dar es Salaam. It claimed to have more than 120,000 members by 2000 nationwide, mostly young to middle-aged women who migrated to Dar es Salaam for jobs, and small entrepreneurs (65-66). FGBFC's mission is to save men from perdition by 'awakening' them to the 'fact' that they and the world are in the grip of Satan and his diabolic henchmen, such as mischievous relatives; or ancestors sending curses; or witches; or spirits such as *pepo*, *jinni*, or *shetani*; all of them being deemed to cause marital problems, trouble at work, infertility and even AIDS (67-68, 76-77). AIDS is regarded as 'a biblical disease sent by God himself as a punishment for humankind's sinful and immoral behaviour', which therefore can be healed only through God (68). This view allows FGBFC members 'to switch easily between biomedical and religious interpretations of HIV', and between the exorcism of a spirit and the removal of the HIV-virus (70-72). FGBFC's gospel of prosperity and healing by exorcist rituals matches the aspirations

³³ Acronym for *Baraza kunu la Waislamu Tanzania*, 'Central Muslim Council of Tanzania'.

of its increasingly individualist members for wealth and health; for detachment from kinship obligations by their integration into small, tightly knit, local FGBFC communities; and for palliative care of those that fall terminally ill with AIDS by having these local congregations provide them with all the care and support they need, including a decent burial (72-75).

The fourth contribution (84-115) is by Ruth Prince (University of Copenhagen). She examines the current polarisation of 'salvation' and 'tradition' among Luo Christians of Western Kenya in the face of 'the death of today', the increasing numbers of deaths by AIDS, especially of young males. The tension revolves more especially around the issue of *tero*, 'taking', the Luo term for 'widow inheritance', because AIDS has created many young widows, quite a number of which have joined the 'Saved' in order not to be 'taken'. As most Luo are Christians, the polarisation is not between 'pagan' and Christian Luo, but between the majority of 'traditionalist' Christians, who strongly favour that 'Luo tradition' – *chike Luo*: the body of ritual practices and rule that traditionally structure Luo kinship and social life – be observed, because it is believed to engender 'growth' (86-87); and the minority of 'born-again' or 'saved' Christians, who radicalise the absolute opposition which early (1904-) CMS missionaries created between Christianity and Luo 'paganism'. The East African Christian Revivals in the Anglican Church of the 1930s and 1970s further 'inflamed' this dichotomy by condemning 'traditionalist' Christians as 'backsliders', who 'follow the path of the devil' (96), and by demanding that they 'shed practices such as polygamy, widow inheritance, the use of African medicines and "witchdoctors", drinking alcohol and smoking' (93). The modern 'Saved' sharply oppose their 'speaking out [their sins] openly' (*waruok*, their term for 'salvation'), whereby they 'walk in the light', to the 'things of the earth' of 'traditionalist' Christians, which they condemn as *juok*, 'witchcraft', which in their view includes 'all practices that are imbued with ancestral power: ritual sacrifice, libations, spirit possession and ritual healing, as well as the use of plant medicines for the treatment of illness' (95). They regard the AIDS epidemic as partly the consequence of people backsliding into 'pagan', 'sinful' ways (86). Most recent converts to the 'Saved' are women, and quite a number of them are widows who have refused to be 'taken'. Prince discusses a few cases (89-91, 106-108).

Just as 'salvation' has radicalised in the course of the 20th century, so has *chike Luo*, 'Luo tradition'. It has been codified into a set body of 'authoritative rules, numbered and listed like laws' (101) since 1938 when Paul Mboya published his *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi* ('Luo Characters and Customs'). Since the 1990s, literature on *chike Luo* has proliferated. One book listed as many as 300 rules. Luo rules are also listed on the internet site www.Jaluo.com and dominate the weekly radio broadcast *Chikwe Luo* in which Luo 'elders' answer queries by listeners about *chira* (100-105). All warn of the deadly consequences of *chira*, 'leaving the rules': 'the death of today is the consequence of people leaving the traditions' (102).

Prince concludes her article by showing that, however sharply these 'two incompatible moral regimes' (87) are opposed, real life demands that even the Saved enter into negotiations at times and compromise; that traditionalist discourse about *tero* is not monolithic; and that 'tradition and Salvation as antagonistic bodies of rules and customs are tied to one another, and are equally modern phenomena' (109, 107-110).

The last contribution (116-144), by Jo Sadgrove (SOAS, London), is about 'keeping up appearances'. By it she refers to two (seemingly) diametrically opposite sets of sexual behaviour governed by peer group pressure among undergraduates at Makerere Universi-

ty, Kampala, Uganda with implications for HIV-prevention programmes. One is the 'born-again' status and its associated anti-condom Pentecostal version of ABC: 'abstinence, be faithful, Christ!' (126). For the 25 students Sadgrove followed closely,³⁴ the born-again status – by membership in the Kampala Pentecostal Church (KPC) – was very fashionable because it 'gets people entry into an increasingly significant social network, improves job prospects [...] and generally provides a social status, identity and "place to belong"' (131). Under peer group pressure – organised in cell groups of 5 to 10 KPC members who meet every Wednesday night for prayer and discussion – that status was publicly displayed in the cell meetings as well in frequently proselytising in canteens, classrooms and public fellowships at Makerere, which 'like the rest of Uganda is undergoing a born-again revolution' (125-126) and where 'the abstinence campaign [of the government] is highly evident around the campus' (120-121). But eleven – seven male, four female – admitted that they were wearing 'the mask of salvation' and 'talking the talk of salvation', for privately 'they were, or had been involved in sexual relationships since becoming born-again' (127); nor did some privately observe the ban on smoking and drinking. Reluctant to lose face in front of their peers (130), such dishonesty was acceptable to them 'as long as they were not discovered to be lying or hypocritical' (133). Six admitted to using condoms, and three female students 'admitted to actually de-toothing whilst being born-again' (128).

'De-toothing' is the promise of sexual favours, and withholding them as long as possible, e.g. by appealing to one's born-again status (125), which female students at Makerere use as a tool for extracting money and materials from men, analogously to extracting a man's teeth till he is left with none (122-123). In view of the difficulty of withholding sex after having received substantial gifts, and the concomitant risk of HIV-infection, de-toothing is a perilous commodities race for the latest mobile phone, or the most fashionable clothes (132), CDs and other luxury goods, and money and food and drinks (122), under peer group pressure, for it essential to maintain 'the visibility of success through being seen to own luxury items' (123). In view of the limited financial resources of university students, the males to be de-toothed are usually sugar-daddies, financially successful married men, referred to as 'twelve-month contracts', from which they extract residence fees, living costs and even cars (123-124).

Sadgrove concludes that in studies of Pentecostalism there is 'the very real need for a more critical analysis of the link between religious belief and behaviour'. Her study, she says, 'demonstrates the powerful and pervasive influence of the peer group in driving sexual behaviour on the part of the de-toothers, affecting how people talk about their sexual behaviour and in dictating how religious messages are received and mediated to define what is acceptable public behaviour for a born-again Christian' (137). She adds that it is 'the social rather than ideological aspect of the religious organisation that make it effective at mobilising its members to behaviour change' (138).

In their introduction, 'Searching for Pathways in a Landscape of Death' (1-15), the editors note that the papers gathered in this issue of *JRA* demonstrate that the AIDS crisis, far from paralysing African religious thought, has stimulated it: 'from witchcraft to Judaeo-Christian demonology, notions of every derivation are employed, developed and combined to make sense of AIDS and live in its presence' (5). But they conclude also

³⁴ The group studied by Sadgrove were well-educated, from well-to-do families and residents of the most expensive student hall on campus (127).

that ethnographers have attributed 'too much agency' to religious discourse and prescription in restoring social and epistemological order, for these papers also show that 'religious debates in contemporary African everyday life do not succeed in imposing a closed dogmatic order or fixed explanation' (5) despite the increasing rigidity of religious notions and prescriptions. These should not, however, be seen as 'a function of the decline of modernism' (8), for 'modernity' is a polysemous, ambivalent category, and 'every African response [to the AIDS crisis ...] could be said to embody a form of African modernity' (9), facing Africans with the enormous intellectual and moral challenge of e.g. reconciling religious and 'rational' (bio-medical) explanations of AIDS (9-11). The editors, as well as Lonsdale in his epilogue (145-149), follow John Iliffe in his guarded optimism about the future of the AIDS-epidemic in Africa: 'people's understandings [of AIDS] and practices change and advance quickly, and the recent availability of free antiretroviral treatment [...] is at present accelerating this process of learning and response' (11).

Hopefully, the academic study of the religions of Africa will contribute to that process, not just by the conference at Gaborone, Botswana, but also by further research of the academic quality as gathered in this issue of *JRA*, and by curriculum development. To further that process, a special bibliography on AIDS & Religions in Africa has been included in this bulletin below.



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 'This volume debunks the myths about the complicity of the West in inventing HIV/AIDS. Bongmba refocuses our attention on the grim and irrefutable data about the toll that many of the unwise and corrupt policies of African governments have taken on the lives of their politically weak and economically disenfranchised citizens. This book is a must-read for everyone who wants to know how to couple principled criticism with an intimate understanding of local context in the ongoing global effort to adequately and effectively respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, especially in Africa' (Simeon O. Ilesanmi, Wake Forest University).
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