
THE
AFRICAN
ASSOCIATION
FOR
THE
STUDY
OF
RELIGIONS



STEERING COMMITTEE

Chairperson: Prof. Jacob Olupona, University of California, Davis, African-American and African Studies Program, Davis, California, 95616, U. S. A.

Regional Representatives



East and Central Africa: Dr. Mary Getui, P. O. Box 52979, Nairobi, Kenya. Fax. 254- 2- 726976

North America: Dr. Simeon Ilesanmi, Laurance S. Rockefeller Fellow, Center for Human Values Princeton University, Louis Marx Hall, Princeton, NJ 085449, USA

West Africa: Dr. Umar Danfulani, University of Jos; Prof. Friday Mbon, University of Calabar, Nigeria.

Southern Africa: Prof. Abdulkader I. Tayob, Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town, Private Bag,

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Europe: Prof. Gerrie ter Haar, Dept. of Anthropology, Utrecht University, P.O Box 80140, 3508 TC Utrecht. The Netherlands.

The editors of the newsletters welcome any contributions and comments. Please submit entries to Gerrie ter Haar or Abdulkader Tayob, or any of the regional representatives who will pass them on. We would prefer, wherever possible, your contributions on computer disk format. E-mail messages may be sent to tayob@humanities.uct.ac.za. The information supplied in the Newsletter is accurate to the best of our knowledge. We, however, do not take responsibility for errors and omissions.

CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Jacob K. Olupona

BEFORE THE NEW MILLENNIUM. As we get close to the next millennium, I seize this opportunity to congratulate the members of the AASR for the progress we have all made in putting the name of our association on the world map. We have all worked very hard to promote the objectives of this association and we deserve to applaud ourselves for this achievement.

As we begin a new era, we view the future with hope and assurances that we will achieve even greater heights in the next millennium. There are many challenges facing us in the next year. First, we need to build a stronger financial base for our programs. While our colleagues in Europe have done very well in fundraising, the United States has poorly supported us in our projects. The second challenge is our publication series. Dr. Westerlund has informed us that he intends to step down next year when we meet in Durban. We need a new editor that will continue the work he has successfully pioneered. Third, we need to reactivate our programs in West Africa, and spearhead the creation of national associations in places such as Liberia and Sierra Leone and possibly in the French speaking countries. The success of the conference in Kenya is an indication of what needs to be done in West Africa.

Another challenge facing us is how to improve the partnership between African universities abroad. At a time when few African countries pay attention to the training and development of faculty and students, scholarly exchange in the form of sabbatical leave and graduate training has dwindled. What can our association do to redress this situation? Lastly, another challenge is how to organise more regular regional meetings in Africa. In response to this, I intend to call for a West African regional meeting in either Nigeria or Ghana in 2001.



MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR 1998/99

Simeon Ilesanmi

I am using this medium to remind all AASR members in general, and those in North America in particular, to pay your membership dues for the 1999/2000 academic year. The current amount for faculty members is \$50.00 and \$25.00 for students. These dues help defray the cost of printing and publishing the newsletter as well as support the travel and publication funds for our colleagues in Africa. Please make your check or money order payable to "AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS" care of your regional treasurer/representative. Those in North America should send theirs to: Simeon O. Ilesanmi, The University Center for Human Values, Princeton University, Louis Marx Hall, Princeton, NJ 08544-1006, USA.

SPECIAL APPEAL from Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton, Department of Religious Studies, BO25 Cocke Hall, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903(chh3a@virginia.edu).

As you register for the IAHR congress in Durban, I ask you to consider making a donation to assist African scholars who would also like to participate, but lack the necessary means. In July, I had the good fortune to attend a conference in Nairobi that was organised by the African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR), a regional affiliate of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), and hosted by Kenyatta University's Department of Religious Studies. The presenters were all African scholars who addressed a wide array of topics related to the conference theme, "The Religions of East Africa, and Their Study in the Age of

Globalisation." I had the privilege of learning about the exciting, original research being done by many young East African scholars.

I was also made aware of the serious financial, and sometimes political, constraints under which they work. For example, the average junior faculty member in Kenya earns roughly \$200 per month (in addition to a housing allowance of \$150). While such a salary renders a lecturer "better off" than most of his/her compatriots, it severely curtails opportunities for professional development. Kenyan universities have few funds available for research, so scholars struggle to finance fieldwork and conference travel on their own. As well-educated adults with regular incomes, university faculty have many demands on their pocketbooks. Most assume responsibility for school fees and meet other expenses for members of their extended families, in addition to providing for their own children. Throughout much of Africa, scholars are similarly hard-pressed, and will find the cost of travelling to Durban, let alone paying for room and board, prohibitive.

More than thirty Africa-based scholars who are currently slated to present papers in Durban, will be unable to do so without financial assistance. As participants in the first IAHR Congress held in Africa, please do what you can to ensure that the voices of African scholars will be heard during this important event taking place on their own soil. The panels and deliberations of the Congress will be greatly enriched as a result.



NEWS

THE FIRST AASR
CONFERENCE IN AFRICA.
NAIROBI 27-30 JULY 1999.
IMPRESSIONS FROM NAIROBI,
BY DR. MARY GETUI

Early in 1997 the Department of Religious Studies Kenyatta University was invited by the African Association of the Study of Religions (AASR)

through Jan Platvoet, Vice-President of the association to host the first AASR Conference. A local organising committee was set up to see to matters such as identifying the venue, date, theme, keynote speaker, paper presenters and respondents, participating individuals and institutions, and working out a budget which was to be used to raise funds.

The date of the conference was initially set for 5-8 January 1999 but due to a late confirmation of availability of funds, there was a shift to 27-31 July 1999. The change of date was not convenient for some of the key participants, necessitating a search for alternative participants, which proved to be quite hectic. This is not unusual considering the busy and long determined schedules of scholars. It is further noted that some participants were prevented from attending due to health and other emergency reasons. Despite these hitches, the number of papers presented was generally well received by the high attendance of participants, if the heated and inexhaustible plenary discussions are to serve as the point of reference.

The theme of the conference " The Religions of East Africa, and Their Study in the Age of Globalisation " was relevant, for various reasons. The contemporary East



African religious scene is dynamic, lively and complex, with a history that cannot be overlooked on religious persuasion, practice, teaching, interaction and even interest. For example, the so -called emerging religious movements are a phenomenon that calls not only for scholarly attention but sheer acknowledgement and knowledge. Like other social sciences, the study of religion seems to begetting dwindling interest and attention in the school system not just in Kenya but globally. The conference raised issues that could explain the reasons for this situation, and more importantly, for recognition of the study of religion as essential in society. Globalisation is another phenomenon that is the centre of interest from various perspectives. The conference served to provide religious and East African perspectives on the subject.

The coming together of scholars of religion from Kenya, the East African region and guest scholars from other parts of the world representing public, private, religious and secular institutions was an enriching experience; not just because of the interaction during the conference but also because of the individual and institutional networks that were established. Of special mention is the interest to found an East African Association for the Study of Religions with the intention of applying for affiliation to the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) and possibly participation of some scholars from East Africa in the IAHR Congress in Durban in August 2000. The process towards these realisations is already underway. That the scholars from East, West and Southern Africa took time to address some housekeeping matters with regard to strengthening the study of religions in the continent cannot go unacknowledged.

A book arising from the revised, resubmitted and accepted papers for the publication is expected by August 2000. It will no doubt provide a resource not just for academic purposes but for general consumption by those interested in the study of religions of East Africa. Publishing it in East Africa will make it available and (hopefully)

affordable to a wide audience. During the conference, many publishers displayed their books. The publishers and many participants benefited from the sales and the general interaction on some of the resources available in Kenya.

There are many individuals and organisations that gave generously of their resources towards the success of the conference: -

- 1) Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development (Els van der Plas, Director)
- 2) International Association for the History of Religions (Prof. Armin Geertz, IAHR Secretary -General).
- 3) African Association for the Study of Religion (Prof. Gerrie ter Haar, AASR Treasurer for Europe).
- 4) Nederlands Genootschap voor Godsdienstwetenschap (Prof. Gerrie ter Haar, NGG- Secretary).
- 5) Kenyatta University

The conference is looked at as a contribution and continuation of the Global dialogue on the study of religion, which should be promoted and strengthened, not just in East Africa, but by all who are interested in the study.



PARTNERSHIP OF AFRICAN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN EUROPE, CAMBRIDGE

A conference of African Christian Communities in Europe was held at Westminster College, Cambridge, UK from 16 to 20 September 1999. Black African, white European, and Asian delegates came from Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and

Britain, with warm greetings from groups in France and Sweden who were unable to be present on this occasion. Participants included church leaders, both from African Instituted and the established churches, lay Christians and researchers. Three scholars were invited from the African continent (South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya) and they participated fully in the proceedings. The conference was a continuation of consultations held in recent years in Leeds, Västerås (Sweden), and Hamburg.

The theme of the Cambridge conference was 'Open Space: The African Christian Diaspora in Europe and the Quest for Human Community'. Included in the programme were regional reports and the discussion of issues such as immigration and asylum, religion and identity, racism and the criminal justice system, social exclusion and the empowerment of women, and the issue of mission and evangelism in Europe both among Africans and the indigenous community. Formal papers included emergent theologies of AICs in Britain, the Gospel and African religion: a space for belonging, the task of developing intercultural hermeneutics, and the quest for space in the global and spiritual marketplace by African religions in Europe. The both pastoral and research findings will be published in the *International Review of Mission*, Geneva 2000.

The conference resolved to found an organisation to be called The Council of African Christian Communities in Europe. An international working group, representing France and Holland as well as those present at Cambridge, was established, with the task of working out the technical and legal details involved in forming such a Council. It is intended that this group will meet for the first time in Belgium in November. It is hoped that the Council will have an important role of mutual support and advocacy for the diverse African communities existing throughout Europe.

For further information: Dr Roswith Gerloff, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT; e-mail: r.gerloff@leeds.ac.uk.



A STANDARDS GENERATING BODY FOR RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Chrissie Steyn

In accordance with legislation, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) has been given the responsibility to develop and implement a National Qualifications Framework for the nation. One of SAQA's responsibilities in this regard is to assist with the establishment of Standards Generating Bodies for all the different fields of study in all sectors of our society.

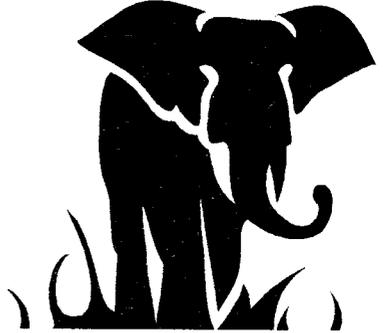
Such a body is therefore also necessary in the field of religion. The Christian theologians have opted to have their own SGB and it is possible for each of the other religions to choose to have such a body to ensure quality in their qualifications. However, such a body is also necessary for Religious Studies in which all religions are studied in an academic and phenomenological way.

A process has recently been set in motion which will hopefully soon culminate in an SGB for Religious Studies. This will include multi-religious studies on all levels wherever it occurs in the country, from the foundational phase in primary school to the level of doctoral studies at universities.

Nominations for suitably qualified persons to serve on such a body will be called for soon. Interested readers are invited to contact Dr Chrissie Steyn of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of South Africa if they require further information

or if they want to make a contribution in this regard. Her e-mail address is steynhc@alpha.unisa.co.za and her telephone is (012) 429 4341.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE



Dr. James L. Cox has been appointed Reader in Religious Studies in the Faculty of Divinity of the University of Edinburgh. His new address is: University of Edinburgh, Faculty of Divinity, New College, Mound Place, Edinburgh EH1 2LX, U.K. E-mail: <J.COX@ed.ac.uk>

Ms Grace Wamue obtained her doctorate from Kenyatta University, Nairobi. The title of her Ph.D thesis was: Gender roles and status of Agikuyu women: a religio-cultural approaches.

PUBLICATIONS

Baldick, Julian. *Black God : The Afroasiatic Roots of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Religions*. 1998.

Borer, Tristan Anne. *Challenging the State : Churches As Political Actors in South Africa, 1980-1994* (A Title from the Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies) . 1998

Gadalla, Moustafa. *Exiled Egyptians: The Heart of Africa*. Tehuti Research Foundation; 1999. ISBN: 0965250962.

Ibumando, Suruba; Georgette Wechsler, et al . *By the Grace of God : A True Story of Love, Family, War and Survival from the Congo*. 1999

Insoll, Timothy. *The Archaeology of Islam (Social Archaeology)*. Timothy Insoll / Paperback / Published 1999.

Rahman, Fazlur. *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism*. Edited with an Introduction by Ebrahim Moosa. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000. ISBN 1-85168-204-X

Ray, Benjamin. *African Religions: Symbol, Ritual, and Community*. Prentice Hall; ISBN: 0130828424

Spear, Thomas; Isaria N. Kimambo (Eds). *East African Expressions of Christianity*. (Eastern African Studies (London, England). Ohio University Press, 1999. ISBN: 0821412744

Westerlund, David & Ingvar Svanberg (eds.), *Islam Outside the Arab World*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1999.



FOCUS ON INSTITUTIONS

The CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION (CSR) s an integral part of the newly formed Graduate School of Humanities at the University of Cape Town. The CSR is committed to research and teaching which will contribute to public life in local, regional, national and continental contexts.

The CSR is dedicated to an open, plural, intercultural, and interdisciplinary study of religion in all its forms; the in-depth study of African religious traditions; the creative and critical analysis of religion as a force in personal, social, economic and political life; and the promotion of quality education and research in the study of religion as a vital contribution to the transformation and development of South Africa. These goals will be implemented through a number of degree programmes that focus on the broad theme of religion, culture and identity. The broad theme reflects the various research projects of the faculty members and institutes presently housed in the Department of Religious Studies at UCT. In the first instance, the theme will be explored in core courses team-taught by faculty members of the CSR. These core courses will provide the thematic, methodological and theoretical foundations for all students who choose to pursue degrees in the CSR. Additional courses continue this focus within the established areas of specialisation: African Studies, Christian Studies, Comparative Studies, and Islamic Studies.

Three research institutes are located within the CSR, and through it are linked to the wider inter-disciplinary context of the Graduate School. Each Institute is also a centre for publication.

CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ISLAM

The Centre for Contemporary Islam, founded in 1996, exists to co-ordinate and publish research and to disseminate information to the broader public concerning the contemporary world of Islam. It does its research within the interdisciplinary environment of UCT and the Graduate School of Humanities, as well as with other Institutions, both nationally and internationally. The CCI's two major outputs are The Journal for Islamic Studies and the Annual Review of Islam in South Africa. The CCI is directed by Abdulkader Tayob. (www.uct.ac.za/depts/religion/cci.htm)

RESEARCH INSTITUTE ON CHRISTIANITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The vision of RICSA is to be an African Institute at UCT, researching the changing role of Christianity in South Africa. Its research foci include Christianity and the social history of South Africa, Christianity and Africanisation, the arts and transformation, and public policy. RICSA has also done commissioned research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and members of the South African Parliament. Its work is disseminated through its publications, including the Journal of Theology for Southern Africa and SA Outlook, and through its web site (www.ricsa.org.za). RICSA is directed by Profs. John de Gruchy and James Cochrane.

INSTITUTE FOR COMPARATIVE RELIGION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Established in 1991, ICRSA is dedicated to an open, diverse, intercultural and interdisciplinary study of religion in the context of a changing South Africa. Its current research areas include comparative religion, focussing on bibliographies, comparative history and occasional thematic studies and reports; religion education, focussing on curriculum development, teaching and learning methods, as well as developing international networks through workshops and publications; and African religions, focussing on the development of resources for the recovery and analysis of the indigenous heritage of Africa. ICRSA is directed by Prof. David Chidester.

The CSR at the University of Cape Town offers a wide variety of programmes and ways of studying for qualifications. Its goal is to relate the studies of its students directly to the research programmes of its staff. Because the latter frequently undertake research for institutions in the wider society, the work of students will also be related wherever possible to the rapidly changing realities of national and international contexts. The research institutes in the CSR offer students many opportunities for hands-on research experience in the real world of client-based

research, as part of a research team, and under the leadership of well-known, established researchers. Different styles of involvement are possible in the CSR, according to the needs of students and their prior qualifications.

Full-time, part-time, intensive block seminar, short-term and audited course models provide a rich palette of options for degree and non-degree students. Each programme offered is structured to ensure the best training for every student in the CSR, drawing on staff from the Department of Religious Studies, colleagues from other UCT departments and neighbouring universities, and invited persons from other sectors of society. Many modules, intensives and short courses will also be available on a not-for-credit basis for those who wish to upgrade or develop their skills in their professional work-places where religious behaviour and commitments influence their environments and activities. Students who do not have the normal university requirements, but who have achieved degree equivalency through other institutions are encouraged to apply.

Contacting the CSR: Centre for the Study of Religion, University of Cape Town, Private Bag X-01, Rondebosch 7701. +27 +21-650-3452 (voice), +27 - +21- 689-7575 (fax); e-mail: ursula@humanities.uct.ac.za; www.uct.ac.za/depts/GSR

UPDATES

IAHR CONGRESS IN DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA, 5-12 AUG
2000

With over 120 panels and symposia submitted on a great variety of topics from a stimulating range of academic perspectives, the IAHR Durban 2000 World Congress is looking good! The cultural diversity of the participants will match well the pluralism of the South African context. African participation will undoubtedly exceed

that of all other Congresses combined. We have over 50 African scholars slated to attend from both inside Africa and further afield. We are still working on funding possibilities to ensure the attendance of as many Africa-based scholars as possible.

Many of the panels have African content, and there are several strong panels on South Africa involving South African scholars and government officials. The South African Academy of Religion has generated seven panels which will be integrated into the main programme.

Two of our five keynote speakers will speak on African issues. Professor Abdullahi An-Na'im (Emory University, USA formerly of Sudan) will address religion and human rights in terms of Africa and the Islamic world. Professor David Chidester (Univ. of Cape Town) will treat religion, religious education and public policy in South Africa. There will also be African scholars on the plenary panels.

The congress venue is the world-class and award-winning International Convention Center with fabulous African decor. The hotels can cater to all tastes and needs--ranging from budget to 5-star. Nearly all of them are situated on the beach front within a short walk from the Convention Centre. There will be tours to local points of interest and religious institutions. Additional tours are being organised to take account of more specialised interests, such as rock art, eco-tourism, Zulu history, etc.

FOR DURBAN UPDATE AND PROGRAM DETAILS, SEE:

<http://web.utk.edu/~rhackett/durban.html>

For general information on the Congress and reduced registration rates for Africa-based scholars, please see <http://www.udw.ac.za/iahr> or contact the Congress Director, Professor Pratap Kumar, velia@iafrica.com. Rosalind I. J. Hackett (Prof.), Program Chair (rhackett@utk.edu).

IMPORTANT NOTICE: THOSE COMING TO THE IAHR:DURBAN PLEASE READ THIS

Delegates to the IAHR Durban congress can now deposit the congress related fees in to the following bank account directly. Although we still accept checks and credit card modes of payment, in order to lessen the administrative and other delays in transacting those payments, the secretariat will prefer payments directly into the Bank account given below and send us the deposit slip either by fax or ordinary mail.

Name of Account: IAHR: Durban 2000
Name of Bank: First National Bank, South Africa
Branch Name : Durban North, Broadway Branch
Branch Code: 220426
Account No: 62010873017



THE AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS promotes the academic study of religions in Africa and the study of the religions of Africa more generally through the international collaboration of all scholars whose research has a bearing on the subject.

The **AASR** aims to stimulate the academic study of religions in Africa in the following ways:

- by providing a forum for multilateral communications between scholars of African religions;
- by facilitating the exchange of resources and information;
- by encouraging the development of linkages and research contacts between scholars and institutions in Africa, as well as between scholars in Africa and those overseas;
- by developing publishing opportunities particularly for scholars based in Africa;
- by establishing a travel fund to enable African scholars to attend academic conferences both in Africa and overseas;
- by organizing conferences in Africa on topics relevant to scholars of African religions and panels on the religions of Africa in conferences held outside Africa;
- by establishing a newsletter as the major medium of communication between scholars of African religions around the world;
- by creating a directory of scholars in the field of African religions.