



10TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

Regional Conference · International Association for the
History of Religions

Spirituality, Gender and Agency in *African Religions*

GABORONE, BOTSWANA

28–30 July 2026

Hosted by the University of Botswana

WELCOME

Message from the AASR President

“This conference marks a milestone — the tenth gathering of scholars committed to understanding the profound and varied religious landscapes of Africa on their own terms.”

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the African Association for the Study of Religions, it is my honour to welcome you to Gaborone, Botswana, for our tenth biennial conference. That we have reached this milestone is a testament to the sustained intellectual commitment of our membership and the generosity of our partner institutions across the continent and beyond.

The theme, Spirituality, Gender and Agency in African Religions, reflects a deliberate convergence of three of the most generative axes of inquiry in our field. Questions of gender and spiritual agency are not merely contextual; they are constitutive of how African religious traditions are lived, contested, and transmitted across generations. We are pleased that this year's programme reflects both the breadth of regional scholarship and the depth of methodological innovation within the Association.

We extend our warmest thanks to the Local Organising Committee at the University of Botswana, whose expertise and hospitality have made this conference possible, and to the graduate grant awardees whose participation enriches our collective inquiry.

Prof. Damaris Paristau

President, African Association for the Study of Religions

Message from the Local Organising Committee

“It is our privilege to welcome the AASR family to Botswana a country whose motto, Pula, speaks not only of rain but of blessing, prosperity and life.”

On behalf of the Local Organising Committee at the University of Botswana, we extend a warm welcome to all delegates joining us in Gaborone for this milestone conference. We have worked to ensure that the academic programme is matched by the warmth of our hospitality and the richness of our local context.

The University of Botswana is proud to host a gathering of this significance. The Department of Philosophy, Theology and Historical Studies has been privileged to bring together scholars from across Africa and the global north for what promises to be an intellectually generative three days. Botswana's own scholarly tradition in religious studies, ethics, and African philosophy provides a fitting backdrop for the conversations that will unfold.

We look forward to welcoming you, and we hope that you will take the opportunity to experience not only the intellectual richness of the programme but also the warmth and hospitality of our beautiful city. Pula!

Rev. Dr. Tshenolo Jennifer Madigele

Chairperson, Local Organising Committee

University of Botswana, Gaborone

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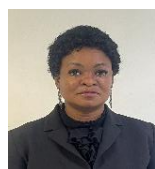
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Programme at a Glance



TUESDAY 28 July 2026	WEDNESDAY 29 July 2026	THURSDAY 30 July 2026
08:30–09:30 Registration 09:30–10:30 Opening Ceremony 10:30–11:00 Tea Break Photo Session 11:00–12:30 Parallel Panel Sessions I 12:30–13:30 Lunch PhD & ECR Networking Lunch 13:30–15:00 Parallel Panel Sessions II 15:00–15:30 Short Break 15:30–17:00 Keynote Address	09:00–10:15 Plenary Roundtable I 10:15–10:45 Tea Break 10:45–12:15 Parallel Panel Sessions III 12:15–13:15 Lunch 13:15–14:45 Parallel Panel Sessions IV 14:45–15:15 Short Break 15:15–16:15 PhD & ECR Special Session 16:30–17:30 Annual General Meeting 18:00 Reception Dinner	09:00–10:15 Plenary Roundtable II 10:15–10:45 Tea Break 10:45–12:15 Parallel Panel Sessions V 12:15–13:15 Lunch 13:15–14:45 Parallel Panel Sessions VI 14:45–15:15 Short Break 15:15–16:45 Parallel Panel Sessions VII 17:00–17:30 Closing Ceremony

Full session details including room allocations are listed in the Detailed Programme. All times are local Botswana time (CAT / UTC+2).

***Friday, 31 July 2026** *Optional Tourism Day Programme (see pg.20 for details)*

Full abstract book available at a-asr.org/2026
or via the QR code



TUESDAY · 28 JULY 2026

08:30 – 09:30

Registration & Welcome Coffee · *Foyer, Block 247*

09:30 – 10:30

Opening Ceremony & Welcome · *Lecture Theatre 01, Block 247*

10:30 – 11:00

Tea, Coffee & Conference Photograph

Parallel Sessions I · 11:00 – 12:30 · Block 247 (Meeting Room 03 · Classrooms 16–18)

Meeting Room 03	Classroom 16	Classroom 17	Classroom 18
Spiritual Ecologies and Worldmaking <i>Chair: Andrew Craig</i> Li'Tsoanelo Zwane — Ke Lekunutung le Molimo: The ocean as a sacramental, liberatory space Diana K. Lunkwitz* and Marceline Yele Lambiv — Pidgin-Speaking Mothers, the Soil, and Worldmaking in the Local-Planetary Crisis in Anglophone Cameroon Nelly Mwale — My Food is African: The Role of African Indigenous Women's Urban Backyard Gardens in Food Sovereignty in Lusaka, Zambia in Contemporary Times Siamisang Duanga Saudu — Spiritual Water and Gendered Practices: Religion, Power, and Household Water Management in Botswana	Healers, Witchcraft and Contested Authority <i>Chair: Amy Allocco</i> Juliet Chipo Sigauke — "Accused but Not Silenced": Gender, Professional Authority, and Witchcraft Accusations in Traditional Healing: Comparative Perspectives from South Africa and Zimbabwe Samuel Chikowero — Gendered Power? Male and Female Healers in MaDzimbabwe Cosmologies Afikile Candlovu — Accused From Healers to 'Witch Doctors': Colonial Misrepresentations of Sangomas in African Traditional Religion Karabo Rikhotso* and Clementine Nishimwe — When doing gender call for AIC's response: Hegemonic masculinities, Amazoni churches in Soweto-South Africa and the changing masculinities	Women's Spiritual Formation and Leadership Development in African Christianity: Beyond Marginalization Narratives <i>Chair: Satoko Fujiwara</i> Damaris Parsitau — Pulpit, Purse and Power or Altars of Influence? Money, Religious Authority, and the Contested Agency of Pentecostal Women at Kenya's Political Altar Marilyn Naidoo — Reflections on African Women: A lived Spirituality Itohan M. Idumwonyi — Exploring Women's Spiritual Formation and Leadership in Male-Founded Pentecostal Churches: An Ethnographic Study from Nigeria Mary Kihuha — Women, Intersectionality and Political Power in Charismatic Christian Movements in Kenya: (A Case of Rev. Teresia Wairimu of Faith Evangelistic Ministry and Margaret Wanjiru of The Glory is Here Ministry)	Marriage, Intimacy and Spiritual Power <i>Chair: Bidi Broderick</i> Charles Chukwudi Ugwunnadi — Female--Female Marriage, Spiritual Power, and the Politics of Intimacy: Reimagining Gender Agency in Igbo Indigenous Traditions Kuhle Nwabisa Zondeka — Till Death Do Us Apart: Women's Negotiation of Spiritual Agency Through Marriage in KwaShembe Chigozie Nwaka — She Who Keeps the Gate: Ndishi, Women, and the Gendered Negotiation of Moral Power in Atta-Nwambiri Tumisang Shirley Mthembo — Spirituality, Gender and Agency in African Religions

12:30 – 13:30

Lunch · PhD & Early-Career Researcher Networking Lunch · *Block 247*

Parallel Sessions II · 13:30 – 15:00 · Block 247 (Meeting Room 03 · Classrooms 16–18)

Meeting Room 03	Classroom 16	Classroom 17	Classroom 18
Spirituality, Gender Identity and Sexuality <i>Chair: Abirat Zakariah</i> Phillip Musoni — African Spirituality and Gender Identity: An Exploration of Shona Sayings and Proverbs Tendai Mangena — 'Single in this world but spiritually engaged': Chivanhu and myths on female singleness Themba Shingange — African Spiritualities and Religions on Gender and Sexuality Discourses Before and After the Advent of Christianity and Colonisation in Africa Joel Mokhoathi and Lindiwe Khuzwayo — Politics of Being and Vocation: Traditional healers' sexual identities in African Spirituality	Boundaries in Flux — Rethinking Religion and Politics from Africa <i>Chair: Barbara Bompani & Benjamin Kirby</i> Siphiwe Ignatius Dube — African Christian Nationalism: A Typology? Eva Spies — The Moral Making of the World: A Relational Approach to Religion and Politics in/from Africa Felix Kumah-Abiwu — Religion and Spirituality in African Political Spaces Faithful Oluokun — Religious Voices in Nigeria's Politics: Pentecostal Leaders' Public Discourse during the Buhari Era	Islam, Mysticism and Knowledge <i>Chair: Siwakhile Ngcobo</i> Shoayb Ahmed — Africa, Islam, and Spirituality: Expressions of Islamic Mysticism in South Africa Zahraa McDonald — Recognition of Learning from Islamic Education in Higher Education in South Africa Mohammed Mustapha Kannike Uthman — Islam and Gender Equity in Nigeria: Exploring Zakāh and Inheritance Frameworks for Economic Justice Tomilola Fadipe* and Ali Qadir — Adjudicating Spiritual Authenticity: A Critical-Realist, Mechanism-Based Method for Studying Mystical Claims	Engaging Adriaan van Klinken's Book — Decolonizing Christianities in Contemporary Nigerian Literature <i>Chair: Emmanuel Erhijodo & Zaynab Ango</i> Abel Ugba, University of Leeds Benson Igboin, Adekunle Ajasin University Nathanael Homewood, University of Minnesota Ibukunolu Isaac Oludude, Obafemi Awolowo University Nonki Motahane, University of the Free State Mariam Magaji, University of Abuja

15:00 – 15:30

Short Break

15:30 – 17:00

Keynote — Prof. Ezra Chitando: 'Spirituality, Gender and Agency in African Religions: Co-Creating Knowledge for Holistic Liberation' · *Lecture Theatre 01, Block 247*

An asterisk (*) indicates the presenting author for co-authored papers.

WEDNESDAY · 29 JULY 2026

09:00 – 10:15

Plenary Roundtable I — The Dialectics of Transformation: Elias Bongmba's Life of Scholarship (Chair: Nathanael Homewood) · *Lecture Theatre 01, Block 247*

10:15 – 10:45

Tea & Coffee

Parallel Sessions III · 10:45 – 12:15 · Block 247 (Meeting Room 03 · Classrooms 16–18)

Meeting Room 03	Classroom 16	Classroom 17	Classroom 18
Indigenous Traditions, Gender and Spirituality <i>Chair: Margaret Effungani</i> Donald Mark C. Ude — Taming the Gods: Brandishing Human Agency in Indigenous Igbo (African) Spiritualities Siphehlwe Hove* and Muchabaiwa Wonder — The Roles of Women in African Traditional Religion: A case study of the Varembe (Lemba) people in Mberengwa District, Zimbabwe Benson Ohion Igboin — Surnames, Gender and Identity in Pre-colonial Owan Traditional Religion King'asia Mamati — Fluidity of gender in the Sengwer indigenous peoples' spirituality in the Cherangany hills, Kenya.	Transnational Youth, Spirituality, Gender and Agency — African Migrant Religious Lives Across Home and Diaspora <i>Chair: Dominic Pasura</i> Nomatter Sande, Sarah Kazira and Dominic Pasura — Black British but Spiritually African: Youth, Religion, and Gendered Belonging in London and Birmingham Ntongha Eni Ikpi and Reggemore Marongedze , — Faith, Hustle and Hope: Spirituality and Economic Agency among Youth in Lagos and Harare Primrose Sibusisiwe Mlambo and Bernard Matolino — Johannesburg as Spiritual Crossroads: Migration, Xenophobia and Youth Religious Agency Dodeye Williams and Ezra Chitando — Gender, Spiritual Authority and Youth Agency in African Christianities Across Africa and the Diaspora	Literary and Musical Representations of Religious Agency in Gender and Sexuality <i>Chair: Adriaan van Klinken</i> Zaynab Ango — Representation and Appropriation: Islam and Queer Agency in Hausa Digital Novels Nonki Motahane — 'I had a million selves, too many to gather': Spirituality and Unsettled Diasporic Identities in Yaa Gyasi's Transcendent Kingdom Tsiidzai Matsika — When Women Speak: Feminising Political Vitality and Spiritual Renewal in Zimbabwean Politics Pharis Murangai — Analysis of Gendered Perspectives in African Religious Songs: A Case of the Kikuyu Ethnic Community	Christianity, Power and Agency <i>Chair: Doreen Sesiro</i> Lebogang Moeti — Nurturing as Purpose: Spirituality, Gendered Agency, and the Healing Practices of Christian Women at the University of Botswana Maria Frahm-Arp — Intersection of the Performance of Political Power and Christian Spirituality in the Lives of Women in Africa and Beyond Chukwudera Samuel Nwodo — Female Gods, Gendered Bodies: The Status of Women, Christianity and Queer Being(s) Andrew Leslie Craig — 'I feel, right in my innermost being, they are my sisters': Open Brethren Faith, Gender, and Indigenous Dialogue in Katanga, 1896--1936

12:15 – 13:15

Lunch · *Block 247*

Parallel Sessions IV · 13:15 – 14:45 · Block 247 (Meeting Room 03 · Classrooms 16–18)

Meeting Room 03	Classroom 16	Classroom 17	Classroom 18
Religion, Spirituality and Political Life <i>Chair: Siamisang Saudu</i> Adam Olowo — Beyond the Elitist Gaze: Spirituality, Agency, and Nigerian Politics Danoye Oguntola-Laguda — Engaging the Nexus Between Religion and Spirituality in Nation's Development and Growth: A Critical Analysis of Religious Activism in Nigeria Zorodzai Dube — Leveraging African Spirituality Towards an Alternative Pan African Economic Growth Edidiong Ibanga — Professional Bodies, Sacred Selves: Discourses of Spirituality in Women's Media Work	Cosmology, Philosophy and Spirituality <i>Chair: Nelly Mwale</i> Doreen Sesiro — Metaphysical Personhood and Gender in Botho Thought: African Cosmology Letlhogonolo Phiri — The Re-conceptualization of African Spirituality: Beyond Religion, Towards Cosmology Satoko Fujiwara — Questioning the Religion--Spirituality Divide: Methodological Reflections from Japanese Religious Studies Annalie Steenkamp-Nel — The Afrikaner's adjusting aperture: A multidisciplinary spiritscape	Lived Religion and Gendered Agency <i>Chair: Damaris Parsitau</i> Maryam Yusuf Magaji — Agency in Syncretic Spirituality: A Case of Ayo Andere, Priestess of the Ajon/Kpa Cult in North-Eastern Nigeria Fatuma Mwatamu — Salafi Islamic Education and Muslim Women Agency: A Case of Maahad Girls Training Institute in Nairobi, Kenya Alexander Paul Isiko — Competing Allegiances and Marital Contestations: Negotiating Male Agency and Pastoral Authority in Ugandan Neo-Pentecostalism Josephine Kanyiva Moses — Exploring Intersex Bodies in Theological Discourses: A Qualitative Analysis of Online Testimonies	Embodied and Gendered Agency in Indigenous Religions <i>Chair: Mary Kihuha</i> Philip Kwame Boafo — The Colour of Mediumship: Performing Self, Holiness, and Beauty in Ga Kple Religion Ibukunolu Isaac Oludude — Gender and Sexual Agency through Embodied Performance of the Ifá Sacred Narratives Thobeka Khubisa — Love, Power, and Spirit: Young Zulu Women's Use of African Indigenous Love-enhancing Artefacts in Negotiating Intimacy and Agency Banla Noela Kinyuy — Traditional Herbs and Metaphysical Beliefs: An Analysis of Gender Perceptions in the Bamenda Grassfields

14:45 – 15:15

Short Break

15:15 – 16:15

PhD & Early-Career Researcher Special Session – Prof Igboin Benson & Rev. Dr Traci West · *Lecture Theatre 01, Block 247*

16:30 – 17:30

AASR Annual General Meeting · *Lecture Theatre 01, Block 247*

18:00

Reception & Conference Dinner · *Moghul Restaurant, Block 130*

THURSDAY · 30 JULY 2026

09:00 – 10:15

Plenary Roundtable II — Special Panel Honouring Professor Gerrie ter Haar (Chair: Damaris Parsitau / Abel Ugba) · *Lecture Theatre 01, Block 247*

10:15 – 10:45

Tea & Coffee

Parallel Sessions V · 10:45 – 12:15 · Block 247 (Meeting Room 03 · Classrooms 16–18)

Meeting Room 03	Classroom 16	Classroom 17	Classroom 18
Spirituality, Agency and Public Life <i>Chair: Joseph Chita</i> Philipp Öhlmann — Spirituality and Agency in Tertiary Education: Insights from a Survey at the University of Botswana Learnmore Godfrey Chirunga — Economic Inequality and the Spiritual Regulation of Responsibility in African Religions John Mwangi — What Drives Christian Extremism in Eastern Africa? Case Study of Religious Cults in Kenya and Uganda Denzil Chetty — Digital Subaltern Spirituality: Mediated Charisma and the Reconfiguration of Religious Authority in African Online Religion	Tradition, Prophecy and Religious Agency <i>Chair: Itohan Idumwonyi</i> Christine Chemutai Chirchir — The Kipsigis Traditional Religious Conceptualization of Spirituality Theresa Mayer — "Doing prophet" in Kenya - Ethnographic and Praxeological Perspectives on Materiality and Agency Miriam Njoroge — Rūraacio and Spirituality: Embodied Tradition, Social Agency, and Identity among the Agikūyū of Kenya Frederico Carducci — Political Spiritualities and Prophecy within the Tokoist Church in Post--Civil War Angola	Indigenous Knowledge and Christian Encounter <i>Chair: Faithful Oluokun</i> Robert Owusu Agyarko — Idolatry or Inculturation? Christian Participation in Akan Libation Rituals Imeje Fidelis — Tracing Orisa West African Roots and Atlantic Legacies: Some Marginal Notes concerning Cosmology, Syncretism and Gender Richard Mulindwa — A Theological Exploration of African Traditional Conceptions of Spirituality in Buganda Culture: Engaging in Dialogue with the Anglican Church of Uganda Seyifunmi Damilola Bademosi* , Oghenekevwe Kate Jibromah* & Ajani Tunde Olanrewaju — Yoruba Spirituality in a Christianized Society: Reinterpreting Hell Today	Decolonising the Pedagogy of Migration and Religion <i>Chair: Abel Ugba</i> Abel Ugba — Towards a Decolonial Pedagogical Agenda for Migration and Religion Studies Dominic Pasura — From RASTAY Findings to Migration–Religion Pedagogy Dodeye Williams and Ntongha Ikpi — Teaching Japa: Religious Aspiration, Left-Behind Youth and the Limits of Push–Pull Migration Theory Ezra Chitando and Reggemore Marongedze — Kufambira as Curriculum: African Epistemologies of Mobility and Spirituality Bernard Matolino and Primrose Sibusisiwe Mlambo* — Teaching Ubuntu After Xenophobia: Postcoloniality, Precarity and the Limits of African Belonging Nomatter Sande, Sarah Kazira and Dominic Pasura — Teaching Digital Faith: African Youth, Online Religious Belonging and the Reconfiguration of Spiritual Authority

12:15 – 13:15

Lunch · Block 247

Parallel Sessions VI · 13:15 – 14:45 · Block 247 (Meeting Room 03 · Classrooms 16–18)

Meeting Room 03	Classroom 16	Classroom 17	Classroom 18
Faith, Development and Public Life <i>Chair: Philipp Öhlmann</i> Abirat Zakariah — On 'Chamballaziina Amanuu, Nima Angels, Yan' Bara, Ankura': Religious Authority, Gender, and the Challenges of Muslim Women's Preaching in Ghana Margaret Salli Effungani — Religion, Spirituality, and Development: A Trinitarian Development from Creation, Covenant, and Community in Elisha's Miraculous Oil (2 Kings 4:1-7) Jeffrey Haynes — 'Progressive' Pentecostalism, Spirituality and Development in Ghana Amos Muyambo* and Muyambo Tennyson — African Spiritual Economies of Kurombesa and Livelihoods in Zimbabwe	Ritual, Memory and the Spiritual Body <i>Chair: Federico Carducci</i> Klaus Geiselhart — Spirituality within Post-colonial Constraints? Ezequias Stover — Spirituality and Perception of Offence in Internet Advertising: An Analysis of the Reactions of Islamic, Christian and Animist Religious in Angola Salma Mahmoud — From Spirits to Genes: In Silico Analysis of Zār Rituals, Stress, and Women's Healing in Sudan Elijah Baloyi — Psycho-theological discussion on traditional taboo that forbids women and children to attend a funeral- a South African pastoral study	Spirituality, Gender and Women's Agency <i>Chair: Joel Mokhoathi</i> Abel Tabalaka — Promoting Relational Women Agency: A Botho Reflection Claudio Tomas — Existential Uncertainty and the Expansion of Healing Religions: Women's Spiritual Agency in Luanda's Urban Margins Assita Kone — Beyond Fragmentation: Feminine Generativity and Spiritual Agency in Africa Molly Manyonganise — Vengeance as Justice: Ngozi (Avenging spirit), Gendered Agency and Women's Inheritance Rights in Contemporary Zimbabwe	Peacebuilding, Conflict and Grief <i>Chair: Alexander Paul Isiko</i> Joseph Kwadwo Asuming — Peacebuilding Initiatives of Women in Religious and Chieftaincy Institutions in Ghana Itzhak Weismann — Sufism and Resistance: The Spiritual Dimension of Emir 'Abd al-Qadir's Struggle Against the French Occupation of Algeria Emmanuel Edafe Erhijodo — Of Oil and Hell: Ethnopoetic Testimonies of Grief in the Niger Delta Maria Ericson — Cultural violence and non-violence in post-apartheid and post-TRC South Africa: perspectives from South African Women's Theology

14:45 – 15:15

Short Break

Continued on Next Page...

Parallel Sessions VII · 15:15 – 16:45 · Block 247 (Meeting Room 03 · Classrooms 16–18)

Meeting Room 03	Classroom 16	Classroom 17	Classroom 18
Spiritual Abuse and Gendered Harm <i>Chair: King'asia Mamati</i> Simbarashe Munamati — 'I need to get inside you for you to be healed.' Proliferation of Sexual Penetration as a Healing Conduit for Women and Girls in Zimbabwe's Churches Oghenekevwe Kate Jibromah*, Olatundun Abosede Oderinde & Seyifunmi Damilola Bademosi* — Prophets, Pastors, and Predators: Spiritual Abuse and the Exploitation of Women in African Pentecostalism Thokozile Mbaya — Faith as Resilience: Perspectives of Anglican Women in a Gender-based Violence Context of Cape Town Kelebogile Thomas Resane — Sexual Abuse in Contemporary South African Sangoma Practices: African Spiritual Trajectories in Initiation Sites	Pentecostalism, Embodiment and Power <i>Chair: Paul Williams</i> Siwakhile Ngcobo — Pentecostal Spirituality and the Politics of Embodiment: Gender and Sexuality in African Pentecostalism Godwin Bassey Okon — Genderization of Pulpit Roles in Nigeria's Pentecostal Space: Opinionizations and Justifications among Church Leaders in South-South, Nigeria Maserole Christina Kgari-Masondo — Agency, Gendered Behaviour, and Spiritual Contestation: The Experiences of an African Woman Church Founder in South African Pentecostal Townships Samuel Letang — Botswana Pentecostal Spirituality: A case study of Rev Drew Monageng	Women, Leadership and Religious Authority <i>Chair: Ibukunolu Oludude</i> Peace Nkiru Michael — The Influence of Gender Socialization on the Expression of Spiritual Agency Ntobeko Dlamini — Inkosazana YamaWeseli: The Neglected Story of Reverend Nikiwe Mbilini—The First African Woman Ordained in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa Carolyn Chepng'eno — Pastoral Leadership: Reclaiming Agency among Unmarried Kenyan Women Clergy Hundzukani Khosa — Inequality With Regards to Male and Female Spouses in the Presbyterian Church In South African in Leadership Positions	Migration, Diaspora and Spiritual Circulation <i>Chair: Philip Bofo</i> Bidi Broderick — The Role of Religion and Spirituality in Diasporic African and African Caribbean Communities in the UK Piotr Cichocki — Extending the Socio-Spiritual World: The Digital Circulation of Vimbuza among Performers, Researchers, and Spirits Gloria Adichie — Esemplastic and Eclectic Gendered Spiritual Imaginations: Lolo Uchechigeme Okwu-Kanu and the Reimagination of Biafran Nationalism
17:00 – 17:30 · Closing Ceremony & Handover · <i>Lecture Theatre 01, Block 247</i>			

Keynote Speaker



PROF. EZRA CHITANDO

UNIVERSITY OF ZIMBABWE, ZIMBABWE

Ezra Chitando is a professor of religious studies at the University of Zimbabwe and extraordinary professor at the Desmond Tutu Centre for Religion and Social Justice at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. He also serves as the World Council of Churches regional coordinator of ecumenical HIV and AIDS initiatives and advocacy for Southern Africa. His research includes the intersection of religion and health, sexuality, development, security, peacebuilding, gender, politics, climate change, disability, and others.

Tuesday 28 July, 15:30 *"Spirituality, Gender and Agency in African Religions: Co-Creating Knowledge for Holistic Liberation"*

Located within the debates on decolonising knowledge in Africa, this paper highlights some major themes in discourses on spirituality, gender and agency in Africa. In the first instance, it acknowledges the radically plural character of spirituality in contemporary Africa. The paper proceeds to highlight the impact of colonising approaches towards African spirituality. The main part of the paper is a co-creation process that is aimed at bringing out the dynamic interplay between spirituality and gender, as well as the call to decolonise knowledge for holistic liberation.

Plenary Roundtables

Plenary Roundtable I

Chair: Nathanael Homewood, University of Minnesota

Discussants:

- Adriaan van Klinken, University of Leeds
- Biko Mandela Gray, University of Houston
- Damaris Parsitau, Calvin University
- Ezra Chitando, University of Zimbabwe
- Jill Olivier, University of Cape Town (Delegated presentation)
- Abraham Waigi Ng'ang'a, Liverpool Hope University

Wednesday 29 July, 09:00 *"The Dialectics of Transformation — Elias Bongmba's Life of Scholarship"*

This panel explores the intellectual, institutional, and global impact of Elias Kifon Bongmba, whose career exemplifies a sustained engagement with transformation as both a scholarly method and a lived commitment. Bringing together perspectives from colleagues, former students, and collaborators, the roundtable highlights Bongmba's extensive publication record and his role in shaping key conversations in religious studies and African studies, including his contributions to the study of religion and conflict, reconciliation, and social justice. Equally central to this discussion is Bongmba's record of academic leadership, mentorship, and generosity of spirit. As the former President of the AASR, he has demonstrated a commitment to community-building within and beyond the academy, performing extravagant acts of mentorship and kindness. This roundtable will celebrate Bongmba's achievements within a broader dialectical framework, inviting each of us to reflect on how scholarship can serve as a catalyst for intellectual, social, and institutional transformation.

Plenary Roundtable II

Chair: Abel Ugba, University of Leeds

Discussants:

- Ezra Chitando, University of Zimbabwe
- Barbara Bompani, Università di Parma
- Adriaan van Klinken, University of Leeds
- James Leland Cox, University of Edinburgh
- Joram Tarusarira, University of Groningen
- Damaris Parsitau, Calvin University
- Afe Adogame, Princeton Theological Seminary
- Corey Williams, Leiden University

Thursday 30 July, 09:00 *"Religion, Power, and Human Flourishing — Celebrating the Intellectual Legacy of Professor Gerrie ter Haar"*

Organised by the AASR, this panel honours and celebrates Professor Gerrie ter Haar's monumental accomplishments in the academic study of African religions. This panel will bring together colleagues, collaborators, and emerging scholars to reflect on ter Haar's pioneering insights into African religious epistemologies, the political agency of religion, and the role of spirituality in public life. Through thematic papers, tributes, and a roundtable discussion, the panel will highlight the enduring impact of her work on both academic scholarship and socio-political practice.

Graduate Grant Awardees

Thanks to the generosity of our funders and sponsors the AASR is pleased to provide a limited number of conference grants to support graduate student participation. The 2026 awardees are:

Joseph Kwadwo Asuming

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, GHANA

Paper title: Peacebuilding Initiatives of Women in Religious and Chieftaincy Institutions in Ghana

Joseph Kwadwo Asuming is a Lisa Maskell PhD Fellow at the University of Ghana and a recipient of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Doctoral Dissertation Research Fellowship. His doctoral research examines the role of religion in peacebuilding during Ghana's Fourth Republic, with particular attention to the contributions of institutional actors within Christianity, Islam, and African Indigenous Religions. Joseph Kwadwo Asuming is currently a student research exchange participant at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Germany, under the Erasmus+ programme. His research interests include religious peacebuilding, interfaith and ecumenical relations. He has presented at international conferences, including IAHR (Kraków), AASR (Abuja), SSAS (Bern), and SSSR (Minneapolis). His work bridges scholarship and practice in fostering peaceful, pluralistic societies.

Stover Eduardo Ezequias

LISBON UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE/KATYAVAL BWILA UNIVERSITY,
ANGOLA

Paper title: Spirituality and Perception of Offence in Internet Advertising: An Analysis of the Reactions of Islamic, Christian and Animist Religious in Angola

Stover Ezequias is a researcher in Communication Sciences at ISCTE – Lisbon University Institute, affiliated with LIACOM and the ESCS-IPL Research Centre, and an Assistant Professor at Katyavala Bwila University, Angola. He holds a Master's degree in Marketing from the University of Lisbon and a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Management from Katyavala Bwila University. His research focuses on advertising, media, and religion. His expertise covers the intersection between advertising and religion, understanding how religious groups view marketing and advertising strategies in the current communication context.

Chepng'eno Carolyne

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA, SOUTH AFRICA

Paper title: Pastoral Leadership: Reclaiming Agency among Unmarried Kenyan Women Clergy

Chepng'eno Carolyne is a PhD student in Religious Studies at the University of South Africa. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Religion and a Bachelor's degree in Education Arts from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. Chepng'eno Carolyne's research interests include African women's theology, religion and social change, religion and culture, indigenous knowledge systems, environmental justice, and the intersections of faith, gender, and social transformation. She actively engages in scholarly discussions aimed at advancing inclusive, contextually grounded theological and social research in Africa.

Charles Chukwudi Ugwunnadi

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY, UGANDA

Paper title: Female–Female Marriage, Spiritual Power, and the Politics of Intimacy: Reimagining Gender Agency in Igbo Indigenous Traditions

Charles Chukwudi Ugwunnadi is a PhD candidate in Moral Philosophy (Ethics) at Makerere University. His research interests lie at the intersection of African Indigenous Religions, gender, sexuality, and the regulation of intimacy. Charles Chukwudi Ugwunnadi holds a First Class Bachelor's degree in Philosophy, Religion and Cultural Studies from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and a Master's degree in Moral Philosophy (Ethics). His doctoral research examines female–female marriage in Igbo society as a spiritual, social, and political institution that challenges Western heteronormative frameworks and contemporary legal regimes. Drawing on African philosophy, religious studies, feminist and queer theory, his work explores how spiritual power, kinship, and gender agency are negotiated within indigenous traditions. He has published and presented on sexuality, ethics, bioethics, and human rights in African contexts and is committed to decolonial scholarship that foregrounds indigenous epistemologies.

Miriam Wambūi

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, KENYA

Paper title: Rūraacio and Spirituality: Embodied Tradition, Social Agency, and Identity among the Agikūyū of Kenya

Miriam Wambūi is a Project Management Professional (PMP), Wikipedia Editor, trainer, scholar, and digital cultural curator, and is currently a PhD student at the University of Nairobi. Her work explores the intersections of African religion, spirituality, and culture from an anthropological and interdisciplinary perspective, with particular emphasis on symbols, rituals, rites of passage, identity formation, and collective memory. Miriam Wambūi specialises in Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Digital Humanities, Comparative Religion, Church History, New Religious Movements, and Religion and Health. Professionally, she serves as a Cultural Associate and Project Lead at a consulate in Nairobi, where she oversees programme implementation, capacity building, and strategic development, drawing on extensive experience in local and international NGOs and diplomatic missions.

Abirat Zakariah

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, GHANA

Paper title: On 'Chamballaziina Amanuu, Nima Angels, Yan' Bara, Ankura': Religious Authority, Gender, and the Challenges of Muslim Women's Preaching in Ghana

Abirat Zakariah is a PhD student in the Study of Religions, specialising in Islamic Studies, at the University of Ghana. Her research focuses on the lived realities of Muslim women as religious peacebuilders, building on her sustained academic interest in Muslim women's religious agency and leadership. Abirat Zakariah holds both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in the Study of Religions from the University of Ghana. Her MPhil thesis examined religious authority through the experiences of Muslim women preachers in Accra, analysing the challenges and prospects they face in exercising religious

leadership. Her doctoral research extends this work by investigating Muslim women's engagement in peacebuilding initiatives, contributing to scholarly conversations on religion, gender, and conflict transformation in contemporary African contexts. Through her research, she seeks to illuminate the often-overlooked contributions of Muslim women to religious peacebuilding.

Kuhle Zondeka

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Paper title: Till Death Do Us Apart: Women's Negotiation of Spiritual Agency Through Marriage in KwaShembe

Kuhle Zondeka is a feminist scholar completing a PhD at the University of Cape Town. Her doctoral research examines bodily surveillance in ecclesiastical contexts, using the Methodist Church of Southern Africa as a case study. She holds three degrees from the University of Cape Town in politics, gender studies, and criminology. Her research centres on women across historical, political, and social contexts. Currently working as an Advocacy Officer, Kuhle Zondeka's professional experience focuses on advancing human rights in South Africa. Her broader research interests include gender, the body, race, and political sociology.

Li'Tsoanelo Zwane

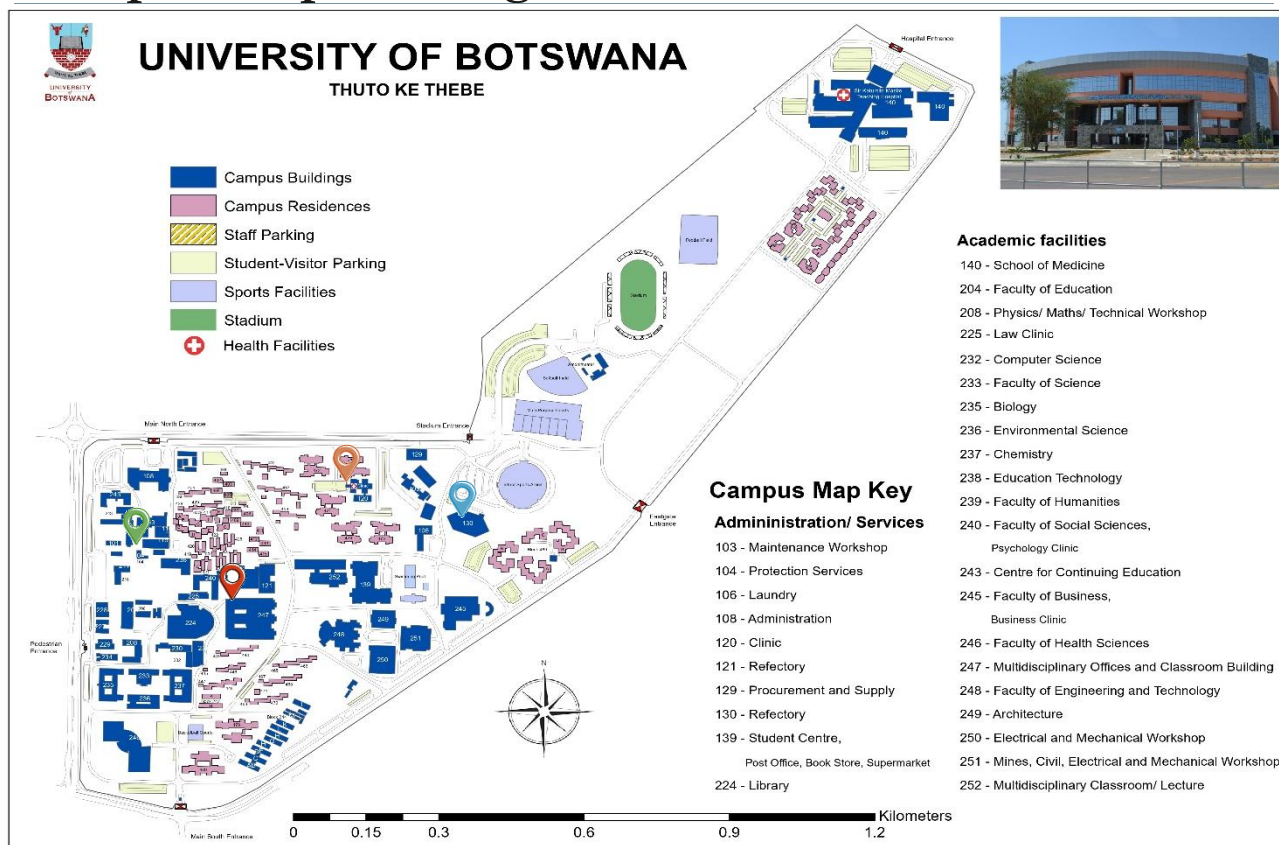
UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

Paper title: Ke Lekunutung le Molimo: The Ocean as a Sacramental, Liberatory Space

Li'Tsoanelo Zwane hails from Gugulethu, Cape Town, South Africa. Her educational background includes a Bachelor of Education (Cum Laude) degree from the University of the Western Cape, a Bachelor of Education (Hons) degree from the University of Cape Town, and a Master of Philosophy degree (Cum Laude in the dissertation), also from the University of Cape Town. She is currently pursuing doctoral studies at the University of the Western Cape. Her doctoral research examines inculturation hermeneutics and counter-colonial ritualistic practices within St John's Apostolic Faith Mission. Her research interests include land expropriation, African metaphysics, African Indigenous Knowledge Systems, African moral philosophy, ritual healing, gender and spirituality, and critical race interrogations of conquest. Li'Tsoanelo Zwane is also a Lecturer and teaches Ethics, with a focus on African moral philosophy, metaphysics, and moral discourse on economic justice, particularly in relation to colonial conquest and land expropriation. She is a practising Sangoma, Gabela, and Death Doula.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Campus Map & Navigation



KEY LOCATIONS

Main Conference Venue	Block / 247 – marked with red drop pin
Registration Desk	247 Foyer, Ground Floor — open 08:00–17:00 daily
Main Auditorium	Block 247 / 001 — plenary sessions and keynotes
Session Room 1A	Block 247 / 16
Session Room 1B	Block 247 / 17
Session Room 1C	Block 247 / 18
Toilets	Ground floor and first floor, Block 247
Accessible Toilet	Block 247 Ground floor
University Refectory	Block 247 Ground floor — lunch provided here
Dining Room B	Block 247 — PhD & ECR Networking Lunch (Tuesday, 13h15)
Reception Dinner	Moghul, block 130 — Reception Dinner (Wednesday, 18h00) – marked with a blue pin
Campus Café / Canteen	Moghul, block 130 Executive Catering, Block 121
ATM	Student Centre or In front of the Library
Campus Health Clinic	UB Clinic/ Block 120 – marked with an orange pin
Campus Security Office	Block 104 – marked with a green pin

DIGITAL MAP

Scan the QR code for a larger PDF map of the University of Botswana campus or visit:
<https://www.ub.bw/sites/default/files/2022-05/UB-MAP2.pdf>



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

LOCAL TRANSPORT

Gaborone has no formal public bus network serving the university area. Taxis and ride-hailing apps are the most practical options for delegates.

Ride-hailing apps

inDriver and Yango are widely used in Gaborone. Both available on iOS and Android.

Local taxi (approx.)

Campus → CBD: BWP 10–15 · Campus → Airport: BWP 100–150

Airport Transfers

Airport transfers will be available during designated arrival and departure windows.

Please note that transfers will only be available within these scheduled windows. Delegates arriving or departing outside these times will need to make their own transport arrangements.

Arrival Transfers

Airport transfers will operate during the following times:

Monday, 28 July: 09:00–18:00

Tuesday, 29 July: 07:00–13:00

Airport Meeting Point: Outside the terminal building (pick-up area).

Arrival Drop-off Locations: On Monday, delegates will be dropped off either at their accommodation or at the university, as requested. On Tuesday, all delegates will be dropped off at the university.

Departure Transfers

Airport transfers will operate during the following times:

Thursday: From 17:00 onwards

Friday: 07:00–12:00

University of Botswana Meeting Point for Airport Departures:

Please note that on Thursday and Friday, all departure transfers will leave from the university.

Parking area next to Block 247:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/XXJbMRLvdZ3wiGiE6>

Please note that only one 14-seater vehicle will be operating. You may need to wait for the driver while another journey is in progress. The journey between the airport and the conference venue/accommodation takes approximately 30 minutes each way (around 1 hour for a return trip). Contact details are provided if you need to find out where the driver is.

Contact details: Onkutlwile Reid – The Quantum (+267 78 912 074)

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

On-campus accommodation	University of Botswana Student Residences — booked directly through the office responsible for accommodation.
Rate	BWP 240 per room/night (non-sharing) · BWP 120 per person/night (sharing)
Accommodation contact	Annah Loeto · loetola@ub.ac.bw · +267 355 2245 (During working hours)
Emergency (out of hours)	Tshenolo Madigale · madigale@ub.ac.bw · +267 71 424 847 Abel Tabalaka · tabalaka@ub.ac.bw · +267 71 715 128

MEALS & REFRESHMENTS

The following catering is provided by the conference as part of your registration:

Tea & coffee	Provided at all morning tea breaks — 247 Foyer
Lunch	Provided on all three conference days — Block 247
PhD / ECR Networking	Tuesday 28 July, 13:15–14:00 — Block 247

NEARBY DINING OPTIONS

On Campus	Moghul, Block 130 — open from 08:00 Executive Catering, Block 121 — open from 08:00
Nearest food court	River Walk, approx. distance 2,5 km, mall with different restaurants and grocery shops
Recommended local restaurants	Main Deck Restaurant, Main Mall, Plot 1109, Gaborone, Botswana
	Studio Café Gaborone, Sekgoma, Gaborone, Botswana
	The Patio Café & Deli, 421 Mokgosi, Gaborone, Botswana
	The Daily Grind, Plot 133 Independence Ave, Gaborone, Botswana
	Two, Six Seven Restaurant, Plot 64861 Riverwalk, Botswana
	Cin Cin, Plot 133 Independence Ave, Gaborone, Botswana

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Medical, Emergency & Safety

CAMPUS HEALTH SERVICES

Campus Clinic location	UB Clinic / Block 120, University of Botswana
Opening hours	Monday–Friday 08:00–16:30 · Weekend: On call service at +267 72 800 421
Clinic phone	+267 355 2396
After-hours / urgent	Contact campus security (below) for after-hours medical assistance
Nearest hospital	Sir Ketumile Masire Teaching Hospital, Plot 4775 Gabarone, +267 373 5000/1
Hospital emergency	+267 373 5600/5601

If you have a medical condition that conference staff should be aware of in the event of an emergency, please inform the registration desk on arrival.

EMERGENCY SERVICES — BOTSWANA

Police	999
Ambulance	997
Fire & Rescue	998
General emergency	112 (from any mobile phone)
Campus Security	+267 355 2396 / 4599 — 24 hours

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

Medical emergency

Call 997 (ambulance) or ask a member of conference staff to call immediately. First aid kits are located at the registration desk and at the AV desk in each session room. Campus clinic contact details are above.

Lost property

Report lost items to the registration desk. A lost property log is maintained throughout the conference. The University of Botswana accepts no liability for personal items left unattended at the venue.

Personal safety concerns

Contact campus security on [+267 355 2396 / 4599] at any time. If you feel unsafe or witness an incident, please report it immediately to a member of conference staff or security personnel. The conference organising committee takes the safety and welfare of all delegates seriously.

Harassment or misconduct

The AASR is committed to providing a safe and respectful conference environment. Any concerns regarding harassment or misconduct should be reported confidentially to the AASR General Secretary: a.asr9295@gmail.com

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Local Information, Accessibility & Communication

GENERAL LOCAL INFORMATION

Currency

Botswana Pula (BWP). Notes in denominations of 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 Pula. Check the current exchange rate before travel.

ATMs

Student Centre or In front of the Library. Standard international cards accepted at most ATMs.

Electricity

220–240V / 50Hz. Plug type: Type D (large round 3-pin) and Type G (UK 3-pin square).

Mobile networks & SIM cards

Main providers: Mascom, Orange Botswana, BTC Mobile. SIM cards available at the airport and major shops. Bring your passport to register a SIM. Data packages available on all networks. E-sims are a good alternative.

Wi-Fi at venue

Network: UB_Conference
Password: AASR2026

Weather in July

July is Botswana's dry winter season. Expect warm, sunny days (18–25°C) and cool evenings (5–10°C). Light layers recommended for evenings and air-conditioned venues.

Language

Official languages: Setswana and English. English is widely spoken throughout Gaborone.

ACCESSIBILITY

Access needs

Delegates with specific access requirements are encouraged to contact the LOC in advance. Every effort will be made to accommodate individual needs. Tshenolo Madigele ·
madigeletj@ub.ac.bw OR Abel Tabalaka ·
tabalakaab@ub.ac.bw

Accessible toilets

Block 247 Ground floor

COMMUNICATION & SOCIAL MEDIA

Conference hashtag

#AASR2026

WhatsApp helpline

+267 71 424 847 — available during conference days 07:00–21:00

General enquiries

madigeletj@ub.ac.bw
tabalakaab@ub.ac.bw
aasrbotswana2025@gmail.com

Website

a-asr.org

Bluesky

[@aasreligions.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/aasreligions.bsky.social)

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/aasr9295>

LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/aasr/>

Tourism Options – Friday, 31 July

We are pleased to offer a curated Tourism Day Programme, providing participants with an engaging introduction to Botswana's rich cultural heritage, history, and natural environment.

The morning itinerary includes visits to key sites in and around Gaborone, such as the **Matsieng Footprints**, the **Three Dikgosi Monument**, and the **Main Mall**.

In the afternoon, participants may opt to join a **game drive at Mokolodi Nature Reserve** (scheduled for 16:00), followed by a **sunset dinner at the Mokolodi Bush Kitchen**.

Time: 08:00–20:00 (flexible/partial participation possible)

Cost: USD 50 / BWP 500

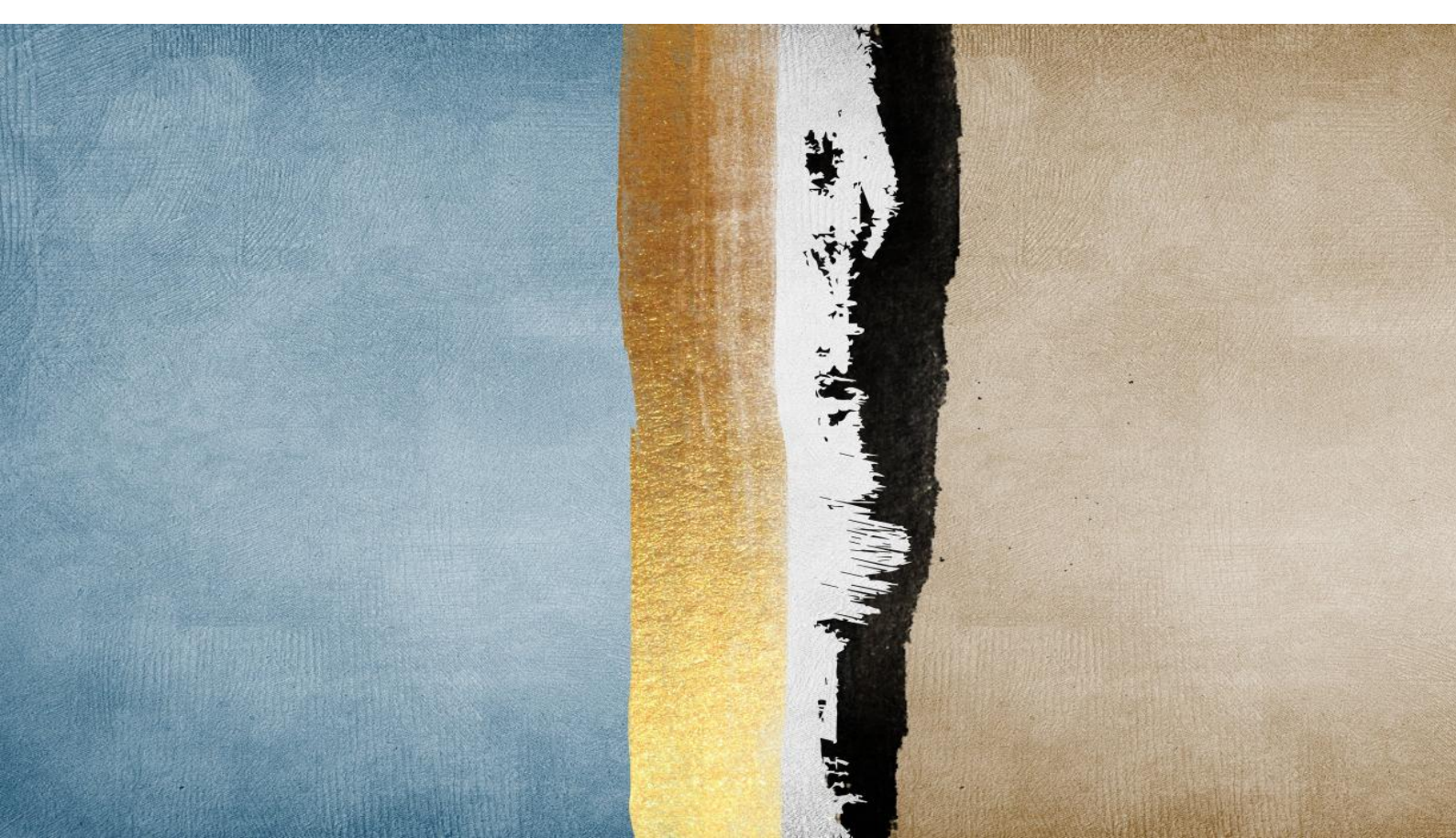
The fee includes transport, entrance fees, and refreshments. Lunch and dinner are at participants' own cost.

Registration:

Please register your interest by **30 June 2026** by contacting:

Dr Philipp Öhlmann

✉ ohlmannp@ub.ac.bw



Spirituality, Gender and Agency *in African Religions*

10TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE
28-30 JULY 2026 · GABORONE, BOTSWANA
Hosted by the University of Botswana



a-asr.org

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*The
Spalding Trust*

