

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE POUR L'HISTOIRE DES RELIGIONS

IAHR

IAHR BULLETIN 22

November 1992

Letter from the Secretary-General

Dear fellow-members of the IAHR,

So far there have usually been three issues of this bulletin each year, but the number is flexible. Here then is a further issue within the current year. The next one is planned for January and will carry the usual updating of the names and addresses of the officers of all the affiliated associations.

May I appeal to the secretaries of the national and regional associations to make sure that the latest information about the officers of their associations (either from last January, or in a later amendment) is correct. Some associations continue to give incomplete information. The standard is to list a President, a Secretary and a Treasurer. In some cases there may be variations from this. However, this list is the basis for the updated mailing list for the bulletin and it seems fair, except in very special circumstances, to send three copies to each association; hence the need for three named officers. It is only through these officers that the information in this bulletin is passed on further to the many members in each country. How you do this is up to you.

You may have noticed that the opening page of the bulletin usually has an "all rights reserved" notice at the bottom. This is because of the varied nature of the material sent to you in this bulletin. Some of it is information, or publicity, which has been sent in from external sources. Other material is related, on the other hand, to the internal business of the IAHR.

For example, this issue includes the minutes of the Executive Committee and of the Editorial Board of Numen. Clearly these are not for publication as such. However they are made available on this informal basis so that the participating associations all over the world may have as much insight as possible into what is going on. Please take some care over the wider distribution of such internal documents. It may be useful to share them with other committee members in your association, or at a business meeting, and possibly in a bulletin distributed to a known membership. Please use your good judgment over this. Of course, the "protection" (which facilitates openness) also covers any text which you send in for the bulletin on behalf of your own association.

With all best wishes
Michael Pye

IAHR BULLETIN 22
NOVEMBER 1992

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Meeting of the Executive Committee of the IAHR Wednesday,
September 16th, 1992, Harare, Zimbabwe

Present. Prof. Razaq Abubakre, Prof. Peter Antes, Prof. Armin Geertz, Prof. Michael Pye (presiding, at the request of Prof. Bianchi). Since the membership fell short of a quorum by one person it was decided to continue with the meeting on a consultative basis. It was recalled that a consultative meeting earlier in the year at Beijing had in fact easily attained the quorum.

1. Apologies. Apologies were received from the other current members. These were due partly to lack of travel funds and partly to illness.
2. The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted.
3. Report by Secretary-General. The S.-G. reported verbally on the Harare conference and possible future steps in Africa which must await the decision of the conference assembly. It was agreed that Prof. Salman Nadvi, as an Islamicist, should join the list of those invited to shape the concluding discussion (c.f. separate report). It was noted that both the Secretary-General and the Treasurer (Prof. Geertz) would be attending the meeting of CIPSH in Harare the following week.
4. Report by Treasurer. The Treasurer reported as follows:
 - (i) Current balances were US \$2105,85 £20316,72. The recent weakness of the pound sterling was a cause for concern, but the main factor for the IAHR was steady income from interest, which had been greatly improved since moving from the AMRO bank.
 - (ii) The use of \$1500 for conference support in Beijing and \$2000 (approx.) for conference support in Harare may be regarded as an extremely worthwhile investment in the regional diversification policy of the IAHR.
 - (iii) Subsidies received from CIPSH were all cut by 10% due to low funding from UNESCO.
 - (iv) Membership dues from affiliates were largely up-to-date (the details were considered) and a full statement of these would be ready for the January IAHR bulletin. It was noted that in a very small number of cases an alternative contribution would be arranged because of currency difficulties.
5. IAHR Endowment Fund. The general appeal fund was in process and in addition to commitments by the Netherlands and NAASR, contributions had been promised from Denmark (\$1000) and from Britain (\$500). A contribution is under active consideration in Germany.

6. Member Associations. There was a discussion about the relation between national and regional associations. It was felt that the further development of regional associations might help in the solution of various outstanding problems.
7. The name of IAHR. The position paper having been published, one response had so far been received, in favour of change, namely from the Nigerian association.
8. XVIII Congress. In response to a question it was recalled that the Congress is to be organised by means of a three-tiered structure:

Mexican organising committee (hosting)
International Congress Committee (for the IAHR)
Section and symposia conveners

The International Congress Committee, formed at the end of the Rome Congress has the following members: Prof. Peter Antes, Prof. Armin Geertz, Dr. Alessandro Lupo, Prof. Michael Pye, Prof Lawrence Sullivan, Dr. Yolotl Gonzalez, Dr. Isabel Lagarriga, Prof. Elio Masferrer.

9. Future conferences. Although preparations for the Paris meeting of the International Committee are not far advanced, it is expected that the meeting will take place, August 20-24, 1993, as planned. Similar expectations are held for the 1994 conference in St. Petersburg. The possibility of a conference in a Muslim country continues to be explored for 1996 onwards.
10. Agenda for International Committee (Paris 1993). It was recognised that considerable time would be needed for discussion of the name, and two sessions were therefore proposed, (a) general business, (b) the name.
11. Any other business. Two matters were discussed
 - (a) Language policy for conferences. It was suggested by Prof. Antes, further to representations from the German association, that the policy of specifying English, French and the language(s) of the host country should be related to the official sessions of conferences, while papers could in principle be held in any language.
 - (b) It was noted that the Secretary-General had been invited to meet an ad hoc committee of the American Academy of Religion on matters of mutual interest.

M.P.

Meeting of the Editorial Board of Numen
Friday, September 18th, 1992, Harare, Zimbabwe

Present: Prof. Razaq Abubakre, Prof. Peter Antes, Prof. Armin Geertz, Prof. Michael Pye (presiding, as Secretary-General of the IAHR) and Prof. Hans Kippenberg (Numen Editor).

1. Apologies. Apologies were received from one of the editors, Prof. Thomas Lawson, who was unable to attend due to lack of funds. (See also minutes of Executive Committee)
 2. Editors' Report. The detailed report by the Editors was received with approval and will be circulated to members unable to be present.
 3. Responses from the Editorial Board. The Editorial Board commended the Editors in particular with regard to the following points:
 - i) that efforts had been made to bring in the work of younger scholars,
 - (ii) that the number of pages had been increased,
 - (iii) that the number of issues per year had been increased from two to three.
- It was noted that there was a strong trend towards English. A further point of discussion was the relation of conference proceedings to Numen.
4. The draft contract with the publishers was discussed in detail as the sun set in Zimbabwe. In particular it was strongly felt by all that a percentage royalty should be part of the contract in order to assist with the travel costs of the Editors and Editorial Board. The Secretary-General was to pursue various points in further negotiations.
 5. Any other business. There being no other business the meeting was closed.

M.P.

A communication on the question of the Name

The propositions put forward by the IAHR Executive Committee indicate that the problem of changing the name or not has entered a decisive phase. The set of arguments presented by Peter Antes and Don Wiebe (which reflect the discussion we are witnessing at present) suffer from unnecessary superstition about a very conventional thing: the name of the Association.

There can be hardly any doubt that any name has a purely conventional character. Whatever we call an institution, it is the content of its activities which is the most important. But it would be a gross oversimplification to say that the name is of no importance at all. It has significatory undertones which may be different for two groups of people who need to be considered: those who are members of the Association and those who are outside it.

The members of IAHR simply know what their activities are and it is relatively unimportant what their organization is called. In other words, it is tradition which matters, and it is this tradition which constitutes the strongest argument against any changes.

Those from without the Association react quite differently. For them the name is not purely conventional since it is often the only source of knowledge as to what this organization is about and what its interests and activities are. Just to quote one example from my own experience: when I first contacted the IAHR I was a little astonished to learn that the activities there were strongly on the theoretical side and that historical problems were hardly ever discussed. In other words for an outside observer the name IAHR is completely misleading, since it is not perceived conventionally but literally: history should mean history y basta!

Now, those active in the Association are well aware of the discrepancy, and therefore argue for a change in order to create a more lucid image. Therefore, the question is, for whom is the name IAHR intended? If only for ourselves, no arguments for change would be valid. Unfortunately, it is the outside world which - to a great extent - is responsible for our "image", and consequently this name plays an important role in defining our place within various branches of research. Those responsible for research policies hardly ever care about the content of our activities, and are led or misled rather subconsciously by the magic of names. Let me quote just one example. A few months ago Poland adopted an official list of branches of knowledge functioning in this country. It covers fields as different as microelectronics and dance. But the study of religions is not included - it seems that theology (which, naturally, is on the list) took its place. This has serious practical consequences, since according to this list degrees are awarded, funds are distributed and research is carried out. It could be easily imagined what the position of the study of religion is now in this country!

This is a strong argument for changing the name of the IAHR. The IAHR is there not only for us, we have to bear in mind the context in which we function. To a great extent we are conditioned by the outside world.

JANUS DANECKI
Warsaw University
Oriental Institute

15 October 1992

Report on IAHR Harare Conference by Armin W. Geertz

The following report on the IAHR Regional Conference on the Study of Religions in Africa, held at the University of Zimbabwe (15 - 19 September, 1992) has been written by Armin Geertz and will also appear for wider distribution in the Scandinavian journal TEMENOS.

Marburg can be associated with two important events in the history of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR). In 1960, during the Xth Congress of the IAHR many issues and themes were debated which have had a lasting impact on the IAHR and the history of religions. 28 years later, the IAHR held a regional conference in Marburg in conjunction with the mid-term meeting of the International Committee of the IAHR. Whether that meeting will have as lasting an effect as the 1960 congress remains to be seen. But it is a fact that the 1988 conference has directly influenced the course of IAHR events since then.

The main theme of the Marburg conference was "The Institutional Environment of the Study of Religion". Various scholars from around the world reported on the institutional environment of the study of religion. Three areas were of particular interest, namely, Africa, the Islamic world, and China. Working groups were appointed to discuss the pros and cons of applying a policy of regional diversification. The groups presented their suggestions which were discussed and ratified by the International Committee. These suggestions were approved by the General Assembly in Rome in 1990, and since then, two significant events have occurred. The first was the regional conference this year which was held in Beijing--the second IAHR conference ever to be held in Asia and the first to be held in China. The second event, also this year, was the regional conference in Harare, which is the first IAHR conference ever to be held in Africa.

After the Marburg conference a small Working Group for the Expansion of IAHR in Africa was appointed to develop a network of contacts throughout Africa as well as Europe and the U.S. The group was composed of, among others Jan Platvoet, (Utrecht), Rosalind Hackett (Knoxville), Jacob Olupona (Davis, California), and Gerrie ter Haar (Utrecht). A major result of their efforts was the organization of this the conference at the University of Zimbabwe in cooperation with James Cox of the Department of Religious Studies, Classics & Philosophy at the University of Zimbabwe and the Executive of the Association for the Study of Religions of Southern Africa.

The group of about 42 participants represented five categories of scholars: representatives from the IAHR Executive Committee, members of the University of Zimbabwe, representatives from the Association for the Study of Religions of Southern Africa, individuals from the other nations of (sub-Saharan) Africa, and a

selected group of scholars in African religions from Europe and USA. 25 of the participants were from universities in Africa, 6 of which were from the University of Zimbabwe. The approach of the conference was to have African speakers discuss aspects of the study of African religions followed by responses from selected participants.

In the three addresses at the opening of the conference by Prof. G. L. Chavunduka, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe, Dr. Epraim Mandivenga, the Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies, Classics & Philosophy, and Prof. J. S. Krüger, the President of the Association for the Study of Religions of Southern Africa, it was strongly and unanimously stated that the conference in Harare was considered to be one of the first opportunities to truly participate in the wider network of Southern Africa, other African regions, and Western countries.

Michael Pye pointed out that the intercultural development of the IAHR demands more than the incremental accretion of new associations. It also requires reflection on the deep-lying assumptions we have about religion. Such assumptions vary considerably from culture to culture. Moreover in what can be considered to be a counter-critique of those who are opposed to the efforts of the IAHR to reach other regions of the academic globe, he said, "The intercultural extension of the work of the IAHR demands not less, but more clarity about its independence from specific religious standpoints."

Despite the shocking conditions which many of our fellow scholars face in Africa, i.e., the shortage of books, journals, encyclopedias, money, machines, even paper and postage, as well as isolation from scholars in other countries and the ever present danger of political persecution for simply reporting the results of an academic study of religion, this conference made it abundantly clear that there are scholars who are doing research and reflection on the study of religion which should warrant our respect and admiration. The papers which were read and the responses which were given witnessed a high quality and a willingness to exchange ideas and points of view and to explore the limits of human capabilities.

The following papers were read: 'Intercultural strategies and the International Association for the History of Religions: A policy statement' by Michael Pye; 'The academic study of religion in West Africa: Past, present, and future' by Jacob K. Olupona (Davis, California); 'South Africa's contribution to religious studies' by Martin Prozesky (Pietermaritzburg); 'The academic study of religion in Kenya: Historical roots, contemporary issues and future prospects' by Teresia Hinga (Nairobi); 'Theological education in the context of religious studies' by Ambrose Moyo (Harare); 'The Hindu diaspora: Challenge of the South African

context' by Anil Sooklal (Durban-Westville); 'Judaism in a post-apartheid South Africa' by Jocelyn Hellig (Johannesburg); 'Anthropological approaches to the study of African religions' by Michael Bourdillon (Harare); 'Methodological considerations relevant to the truth of African traditional religions: A phenomenological perspective' by James Cox (Harare); 'The study of African traditional religions in Southern Africa: Intercultural and mis-siological considerations' by Bongani A. Mazibuko (KwaDlangezwa); 'Some methodological issues in the academic study of West African traditional religions' by Friday Mbon (Calabar); 'The position of the academic and non-academic study of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa: Nigeria as a case study' by R. D. Abubakre (Ilorin); 'The academic study of Islam in Southern Africa' by S. Salman Nadvi (Durban-Westville); 'The Muslim Youth Movement (MYM) of South Africa: Challenging the ulama hegemony' by Abdulkader Tayob (Cape Town); 'Determining the core concern of the Karanga: A methodological study' by Tabona Shoko (Harare); and 'Doing Christian history and thought in an African context: Methodical considerations and applications' by Frans Verstraelen (Harare).

The concluding session dealt with the results of four working groups which paid attention to the relationship between the academic disciplines contributing to the study of religions in Africa; to the relationship between the academic study of religions in South Africa and Southern Africa; the relationship between the academic study in Southern Africa and in the West and East (anglophone) Africa, and between anglophone and francophone universities; and the relationship between the study of religions in sub-Saharan Africa to the world academic community as organised in the IAHR.

Academic issues which surfaced during the conference were especially methodological. It was not only a question of exploring new ways to study religion, but it was also a question of revising the older, European styles of approach and a question of establishing a dialectical relationship between Africans and those who wish to shed some of the preconceptions of the West. There was some disagreement on whether African scholars could claim an "African" identity and paradigm. White Africans and Africans in diaspora were against the pursuit of such a special identity. All were in agreement though that the study of religion must be neutral, unbiased, non-confessional, and peaceful, but it should not, however, remain a purely descriptive endeavor, rather it should address the significant philosophical problems of modern times. There was also an emphasis on taking the study of women in religion seriously and on doing something about the problem of sexism in scholarship.

Furthermore, there was general agreement that something must be done to alleviate the social, political, and economic problems

which African scholars face every day. Some of the solutions proposed were intensification of exchange programs within Africa and with the West, such as the Utrecht/Harare and the Ife/Tennessee programs; the sharing of resources, such as sharing extra copies of books and journals and participating in fund raising; the development of information networks, the establishment of a regular newsletter, and the publication of a running directory of scholars of African religions.

These proposals were concretized during the last moments of the concluding session when all those present established the African Association for the Study of Religions the goal of which is to develop and coordinate a network of scholars both within and outside of the African continent. For this continental association, a steering committee was elected consisting of the following regional representatives: Ephraim Mandivenga (Zimbabwe), Abdulkader Tayob (South Africa), Friday Mbon (Nigeria), and Teresia Hinga (Kenya). They will be supported by a liaison group consisting of Jacob Olupona (coordinator), Rosalind Hackett (treasurer), Gerrie ter Haar (newsletter editor), and David Westerlund (publications). The new association will establish a newsletter for its members and all interested parties. The Association for the Study of Religions of Southern Africa plans to organize a conference in Swaziland in conjunction with the continental association in 1994.

There are three publication plans for the proceedings of the Harare conference. A special issue of NUMEN will present selected articles, the selected proceedings with additions will appear in the Supplementa series, and the same edition will appear in Africa. Publication is slated for the end of 1993.

The conference was an exhilarating experience framed in the seductive framework of spring in Zimbabwe. I think the conference will have repercussions which will influence the course of the history of religions and contribute not only to the strengthening of the IAHR in Africa, but also to intercultural cooperation.

Tyloch Memorial Volume

LANGUAGE - RELIGION - CULTURE

A VOLUME IN MEMORY OF PROFESSOR WITOLD TYLOCH (1927-90)

(Prof. Tyloch was President of the Polish Association for the Study of Religions and a member of the Executive Committee of the International Association for the Study of Religions. Several of the papers appraise his own work and thereby provide a valuable documentation of aspects of the study of religion in Poland during recent decades. Ten of the papers are in English and two are in French.)

edited by

MIROSLAW NOWACZYK and ZBIGNIEW STACHOWSKI

and published by

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Warsaw 1992, 104 pages

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