

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE POUR L'HISTOIRE DES RELIGIONS

IAHR

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SUPPLEMENT TO NO. 32

Note that this supplement contains the current Constitution of the IAHR dating from 1990, while Bulletin 32 contains an older version.

Constitution of the IAHHR

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS L'ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE POUR L'HISTOIRE DES RELIGIONS

CONSTITUTION

As accepted and confirmed by the General Assembly of the IAHHR at its Xith International Congress held in Stockholm on August 22nd 1970 and amended by the General Assembly at the XIIth International Congress held in Lancaster on August 22nd 1975 and the XVIIth International Congress held in Rome on September 1st 1990.

ARTICLE 1

The International Association for the History of Religions (abbreviated, from its English title, to IAHHR), founded in September 1950 on the occasion of the VIIIth International History of Religions Congress, is a worldwide organization which has as its object the promotion of the academic study of the history of religions through the international collaboration of all scholars whose research has a bearing on the subject.

ARTICLE 2

The IAHHR seeks to achieve this object:

- (a) by holding regular international congresses and occasional symposia and colloquia;
- (b) by publishing the proceedings of such congresses and meetings;
- (c) by assisting the formation of national and regional associations of historians of religions;
- (d) by encouraging and sponsoring publications of general interest to the study of the history of religions: e.g. an international review, bibliographical bulletins, monograph series;
- (e) by taking all appropriate steps to encourage and further the academic study of the history of religions.

ARTICLE 3A

The IAHHR is constituted by national or multinational (regional) societies for the academic study of religions. These are such

societies as are now members and such societies as apply for membership and, on recommendation of the Executive and International Committees (see below), may be admitted by the General Assembly at future International Congresses.

ARTICLE 3B

To the IAHHR may be affiliated.

(a) International associations for the academic study of particular areas within the history of religions;

(b) Individual scholars for whom there is no appropriate national or regional society. Affiliation is effected by the application to the Executive and International Committees and by approval of the General Assembly.

ARTICLE 4

The work of the IAHHR is carried out through (a) the General Assembly; (b) the International Committee; and (c) the Executive Committee.

(a) The General Assembly of the Association meets at each international congress and is composed of all members of constituent societies of the association present at that congress. The general assembly may take action only on matters referred to it from the International Committee, and it may refer any matter to the International or Executive Committees for consideration and report.

(b) The International Committee is composed of:

- (1) Two representatives each of the constituent national and regional societies, except that there shall not be more than two representatives from any one country;
- (11) The Executive Committee (see below);
- (111) Up to four individual members co-opted by the International Committee on the recommendation of the Executive Committee;

(c) The Executive Committee is composed of a President, two Vice-Presidents, a General Secretary, a Deputy General Secretary, a Treasurer, and six other members. The officers in particular, and the members of the Executive Committee in general, shall be chosen in such a way as reasonably to reflect various parts of the world where academic study of religion is pursued in its various disciplines. A Nominating Committee, appointed by the Executive Committee, shall submit nominations for the next Executive Committee to the members of the International Committee by mail not more than twelve months and not less than nine months prior to each international congress. Members of the International Committee may propose alternative nominations not less than one month prior to each international congress. The International Committee at its meeting just preceding the General Assembly, shall elect the Executive Committee and shall report this to the General Assembly.

The members of the Executive Committee shall hold office for one quinquennial term each and be subject to re-election, but not more than two-thirds of the Committee shall be carried on from one term to the next, and no one member shall serve in the same office more than two terms. In the event of the death or resignation of any serving officer of the Association, a suitable replacement may be nominated after consultation among the remaining officials, and shall serve, subject to the written approval of a majority of members of the Executive Committee, until the next quinquennial congress.

ARTICLE 5

The Executive Committee, or at least the President, General Secretary and Treasurer of the Association shall, if possible, meet at least once a year for the transaction of such necessary business as may arise between congresses. The General Secretary shall circulate the minutes of such meetings to all members of the Executive Committee. A meeting of the Executive Committee requires a minimum attendance of five of its members.

ARTICLE 6

The International Committee shall meet on the occasion of each congress, between the meeting of the Executive Committee and that of the General Assembly, and more often if necessary. Its reports to the General Assembly require a minimum attendance of ten members of seven national associations.

ARTICLE 7

The resources of the IAHHR consist of:

- (a) annual contributions paid by the constituent societies, affiliated societies and individual members, the amount of which is assessed by the Executive Committee; and
- (b) grants, donations and other sources of revenue.

An audited report will be submitted to the International Committee at every international congress.

ARTICLE 8

The Constitution may be modified only by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the International Committee.

REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1990-1995

Michael Pye, Secretary-General, IAHR

INTRODUCTION

The five years which have elapsed since the XVth International Congress (Rome 1990) have seen various interesting and important developments for the IAHR. These will be noted briefly below. For further information, reference may be made to the IAHR Bulletins which have been sent from time to time to the affiliated national associations.

In addition, an abbreviated version of the writer's introductory paper for the Regional Conference held at Harare (1992) is appended below. This paper touches on various organizational questions of continuing interest. In particular I emphasise the need for the IAHR to remain independent of religious standpoints, while at the same time being open to receive financial support from various quarters. I also emphasise the need for specialists in the study of religion to develop not only an international but also an intercultural perspective.

The integrity of the IAHR is of great importance in the contemporary academic world. It is the only religiously neutral, widely international body devoted to the study of religion in all its aspects. Through coherent organizational arrangements it makes truly intercultural fructification possible. It must be appreciated however that the organizational arrangements do not just happen by themselves. Since the IAHR has no permanent, full-time secretariat, the helpful goodwill and support of colleagues all around the world is crucial, if a smooth flow of arrangements is to be maintained. The affiliated associations are therefore called upon to ask not so much what they receive through membership, but what they can contribute to the future development of the IAHR. This is not just an economic question, though the funding of participation from countries which do not have adequate research budgets is important. Contributions to the work of the IAHR can also be made in terms of the flow of information, the readiness to share in and facilitate decision-taking, and the demonstration of steady, long-term loyalty between the various affiliated associations.

This report refers in its detail to the last five years, since the Congress in Rome 1990. However, since the writer is just completing a second (and final) five-year term of office as Secretary-General there are some general points made below which refer to the whole ten-year period.

CONFERENCES

The following conferences have been sponsored or co-sponsored by the IAHR since the XVI Congress held in Rome 1990:

1991 Burlington, Vermont, USA

1992 Beijing, China

1992 Harare, Zimbabwe

1993 Paris, France

1994 Brno, Czech Republic

1995 Mexico City, Mexico

The Executive Committee met annually, at Burlington, Harare, Paris, and Brno. The International Committee met at Paris.

Of these conferences it will be seen that one was in the United States, two were in Europe, one was in China, one was in Africa, and one is now being held in Latin America.

The conferences in China and in Zimbabwe may be considered to have been of great historic significance for the IAHR, as they were the first ever to have been held in these areas. The same applies to the current congress in Mexico. Although the IAHR has always been a strongly international body, its meetings have usually been held in Europe or North America (with Japan and Australia having provided notable exceptions). The conference in China followed the reconstitution and affiliation of the Chinese Association for the Study of Religions. The conference in Zimbabwe for its part was the birthplace of a new regional association for the whole of Africa, namely the African Association for the Study of Religions, the affiliation of which is on the agenda for the General Assembly at this Congress.

During the last ten years it has been IAHR policy to hold or co-sponsor one meeting each year, whether it be the major quinquennial Congress, a Regional Conference (Beijing, Harare) or a Special Conference (Paris, Brno). During the last five years there has in fact been one conference more than was strictly required. This occurred because of the special significance of the meetings at Beijing and Harare. In future it will be desirable to maintain as far as possible the rhythm of one designated conference per year, at which the Executive Committee would normally hold its annual meeting. It is also very desirable to encourage a wide range of locations, as this makes it possible for scholars from various continents to participate more easily. This diversity of participation is most important for the enrichment of the discipline of the "history of religions" or the "study of

religions".

In this connection I would draw attention to the importance of holding a future conference in a country where there is a major Muslim presence. Indonesia and Turkey come to mind. Since the General Assembly in Rome, the Indonesian association has been affiliated to the IAHR. With respect to Turkey, correspondence has been proceeding for some time. Of course there are also other suggestions and plans for conferences currently under consideration. I draw attention to Indonesia and Turkey simply because of the importance which such locations could have in developing further the intercultural base of the IAHR.

The overall pattern and sequence of conferences is important as a matter of policy because it is through varied participation, and through the dispersal of responsibility to various national groups which work together with each other, that true international strength is achieved. The IAHR has never sought to extend its interests from a powerbase in one particular country. Its strength lies in true internationalism and true interculturalism. The Congress here in Mexico is organized along very different lines from the one held in Rome. This is excellent. There is no need to be afraid of such differences. On the contrary, they are to be welcomed.

At the same time, with over thirty different countries now participating, it is important to maintain some cohesion. For this reason the annual sequence of conferences is important, through which the members of the Executive Committee can be in touch with colleagues of different countries. It is also of great value that the International Committee can meet at least once between the major Congresses. During the last ten years the International Committee has met in 1988 (Marburg) and in 1993 (Paris). Each time it has been able to take decisions of far-reaching importance without waiting for the quinquennial congress. I strongly recommend to the incoming Executive Committee that this pattern be maintained, and that the next meeting of the International Committee be held in 1998.

It will be seen from the above considerations that the conferences of the IAHR are not just miscellaneous events but important parts of a continuing policy which has the welfare of the association at its heart.

JOURNALS

(1) Numen

The journal Numen is the flagship publication of the IAHR and much gratitude is due to the current Executive editors, Professor Hans Kippenberg (Bremen) and Professor Thomas Lawson (Kalamazoo) for

their excellent work in maintaining a high standard of interesting contributions. For some years now the Editorial Board of Numen has been identical with the Executive Committee of the IAHR. This has the extremely important advantage of enabling an annual meeting of these bodies to take place. It is to be expected that as this pattern becomes more firmly established, the Editorial Board will be able to contribute more fully to the welfare of Numen, without prejudice to the executive freedom of the two Executive Editors (which it appoints). The Executive Editors have also been assisted, at their own wish, by Dr. Brigitte Luchesi (Bremen) and Dr. David Ede (Kalamazoo), and their contribution is gratefully acknowledged here.

During the period under review, the long-standing arrangements with the publisher of Numen, E.J. Brill of Leiden, have been formalized by means of a contract. This provides a secure framework for all parties. In addition it provides for a modest contribution towards ensuring the regular meetings of the Editorial Board, and thereby also of the Executive Committee of the IAHR. The contract is between the publishers and (through the Secretary-General and successors in office) the IAHR. All in all, these arrangements are a most welcome development.

(2) Science of Religion

The IAHR has an indirect relationship with the bibliographical journal Science of Religion, which for many years was published by the Free University of Amsterdam. With the retirement of its leading editor, Drs. R Emmelt Bakker, the continuation of the journal has been ensured so far by a publishing venture in Cambridge (England) named Roots and Branches. Although the journal is non-profit-making, it is appropriate to note here that the present writer is one of the current editors and owners. This involves rather a lot of work. However it seemed better, in spite of the challenges posed by technological change, especially in connection with information retrieval, to try to keep the journal alive.

Apart from having a very low subscription price, Science of Religion is distributed free of charge to a large number of institutions world-wide, which might not be able to afford it. This has been made possible by a modest publication grant donated by the UNESCO-related CIPSH, to which the IAHR is affiliated. It must be reported, unfortunately, that the grants made by CIPSH have been cut drastically in recent years, and indeed that future funding by CIPSH may run along quite different lines. The economic future of Science of Religion is therefore under review.

(3) Other journals

Several IAHR-affiliated associations throughout the world publish or sponsor their own journal. Three such journals which have been

established recently are:

Method and Theory in the Study of Religion (Canada/NAASR),
Revue pro Religionistku (Czech Republic), and
Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft (Germany).

It is urgently desirable to find ways of making such representative journals better known. This would contribute greatly to the mutual understanding between specialists in the field in different countries, and in different scientific cultures. In this way the profile of the IAHR itself, on the very basis of its intercultural variety, could be strengthened. The matter could be pursued in connection with an individual corresponding membership of the IAHR, or in the pages of Numen, with the assistance of Science of Religion or Religion: Current Contents (Turku, Finland), or with a further development of the IAHR Bulletin. I commend this task to the incoming Executive Committee.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

The IAHR does not have its own series of proceedings. Rather, in keeping with its relatively decentralized form of organization, the publication of proceedings is the privilege, and as far as possible the responsibility of associations which host conferences. Of the conferences mentioned above, the proceedings from Rome, Burlington, and Beijing have now been published.

The main volume of proceedings from the Rome Congress was edited by Ugo Bianchi (+) and published by "l'Erma" di Bretschneider, Rome. Papers from the Mithraic panel of the Congress were published in a separate volume entitled Studies in Mithraism, edited by John Hinnells, "l'Erma" di Bretschneider, Rome 1994. These papers were also correctly acknowledged as having arisen in connection with the Congress and may therefore be regarded as an additional volume of proceedings.

It is not clear in what form other papers from particular panels at Rome have been published without appropriate reference to the IAHR. There is reason to believe that such activity has taken place in at least one instance. The opportunity may be taken here to point out that the option to publish proceedings of IAHR conferences lies in the first instance with the organizers on the basis of the mandate extended by the IAHR. This does not affect the rights of individual authors. However it is not appropriate for conferences (which in various ways involve hard work for many people) to be plundered for independent publications without permission by or reference to the IAHR.

The Burlington proceedings were edited by Luther Martin under the title Religious Transformation and Socio-Political Change, Mouton/de Gruyter, Berlin 1993 and are on display at this Congress.

The Beijing proceedings appear under the title Religion and Modernization in China; Proceedings of the Regional Conference of the International Association for the History of Religions held in Beijing, China, April 1992 (ISBN 0 9525772 0 8). The editors are Dai Kangsheng, Michael Pye and Zhang Xinying. The majority of the papers have already appeared in Chinese translation in the journal Shijie Zongjiao Ziliao (ISSN 1000-4505) (1992/4 and 1993/1).

It is hoped that the proceedings of the Brno conference will also be on display at the current Congress.

It is anticipated that the proceedings of the Harare conference will be published in early 1996 by the University of Zimbabwe Press. The title will be The Study of Religions in Africa; Past, Present and Prospects. The editors are Jan Platvoet, Jim Cox and Jacob Olupona, and enquiries may be made during the Congress to the last named.

THE NAME OF THE ASSOCIATION

At the General Assembly in Rome the Executive Committee and the International Committee were requested to set discussions in motion with a view to making a recommendation for a change of name for the association. This was done, partly through a series of position papers and correspondence distributed in the IAHR Bulletin and partly through informal discussions at conferences. For example, Ugo Bianchi presented his recently printed position paper orally at the meeting in Brno. In Paris (1993), the recommendation for a change of name was voted on and passed in the International Committee. It therefore comes before the General Assembly during the Mexico Congress for a final decision.

For various reasons it is important to notice that a change of name would not mean that a new association has been founded. This would be quite a different matter. The IAHR, in accordance with its own constitution, is empowered to make changes to that constitution. This is what would be taking place in this case. The association would continue to be the same association, with the same affiliations and the same rules, but with a new name.

As Secretary-General I would like to point out that I have not adopted any public position on the matter of a change of name. When the issue was raised in Rome, I made it clear that I regarded it as my function to facilitate the discussion, not to adopt a position. The late Ugo Bianchi, as President, felt a different responsibility, namely to defend the title of the association of which he was the president. I found this position to be quite acceptable. In this way, I believe that the officers have each played their respective roles. The arguments have been presented, on both sides, right up to the printing of the Congress Bulletin, which includes a statement from the Belgo-Luxembourgeois association against any change. (A similar statement was received

recently from the Luxemburg-based institution "Homo Religiosus", but this has not been reproduced because this institution is not itself an affiliate body of the IAHR.) The interest, and the genuine concern, has been great. The discussion has been open, detailed, and courteous. Now it has come to the time when a vote will be taken. It will be important that the decision, whichever way it goes, is respected by all parties and is positively assumed by the incoming president and other members of the Executive Committee.

The precise resolution before the General Assembly will be found on the agenda sheet.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The IAHR currently has informal relations with various other organizations which are active in the general field of religious studies or the study of religions. Due to the pressure of work these relations have not been developed as much as they perhaps could be. This is an area for further exploration.

During the last few years particular attention has been paid to relations between the IAHR and the American Academy of Religion (AAR), many of whose members are internationally active, not least at the meetings of the IAHR. Here, too, it would be desirable to clarify and maintain constructive relations. Academic associations can be quite different in character, and in the case of the AAR and the IAHR the main differences are fairly clear. Firstly, the AAR is a national (US) organization with a permanent office in the USA, while the IAHR is an international and polycentric organization, whose offices move in accordance with electoral changes. The IAHR is a supra-national organization, to which national associations may seek affiliation. However, affiliation has not been sought by the AAR, and indeed for various reasons might not be appropriate. Secondly, while the IAHR is dedicated specifically to the historical or empirical study of religion, the AAR, quite clearly and extensively, includes theological or religiously committed studies within its range. If these differences can be understood and respected it may be possible to work out more coherent forms of liaison, and this would be very desirable in view of the number of scholars involved on both sides. Currently, no clear proposals for the development of appropriate structures have been advanced. It may be that some will emerge in the future, as interest increases. Such proposals should in no way be detrimental to the current North American affiliates to the IAHR. Indeed the latter might seem to be the appropriate channel for such arrangements.

The IAHR has one formal relationship in addition to that with its own affiliate bodies. It is in turn affiliated to the Conseil International pour la Philosophie et les Sciences Humaines (CIPSH), which is a UNESCO-related body.

As a result of this affiliation to CIPSH modest travel grants have been received, over a period of many years, which have benefited participants travelling from economically weak or particularly distant countries. Without going into individual details here, it is important to understand that these grants have been of particular importance in establishing the intercultural base spoken of earlier, in connection with the sequence of conferences. Unfortunately, the mode of funding from UNESCO via CIPSH is in process of change, and it is quite possible that grants will not be available in future in the same way. Thus the new Secretary-General will have a new task in this respect.

The affiliation of IAHR to CIPSH is important however in another way, namely in that it provides an institutional reference point beyond the IAHR itself. Through this affiliation the IAHR understands itself to be called to the highest standards of independent scholarship, as espoused by the other member associations of CIPSH, and at the same time to be broadly aligned with the aims of UNESCO in the promotion of international and intercultural exchange. Although CIPSH is an association of learned societies in the "humanities", the proposed change of name for the IAHR would not affect its affiliation to CIPSH in any way, and would simply be a matter for report. This point was checked, just in case, during the last General Assembly of CIPSH in 1994.

IAHR BULLETINS

The IAHR Bulletin series was introduced in 1986 and has now been running for 10 years. Though the Bulletin may seem to be slight in size, it has served the purpose of getting basic information to the officers of affiliated associations throughout the world at appropriate moments. Usually, three copies have been sent to affiliated associations, to the president, secretary and treasurer, respectively. Since these offices change, the flow of information also takes a different direction. Very few people have a complete set of these Bulletins. In some countries the contents are made known to the general membership, but this has not always been the case.

If the proposals for an individual corresponding membership are carried forward the natural result will be for the IAHR Bulletin to be sent to all those on the mailing list, at cost, whether they are officers from time to time or not. I understand that the incoming Secretary-General (who will be elected unopposed) intends to continue with the publication of the Bulletin, though the format may be revised to reduce postal costs. This would mean that all long-term individual members will have a regular and direct source of information about the IAHR.

Please note that formal announcements about the IAHR are also made from time to time in Numen.

FORMAL MEETINGS AND ELECTORAL PROCEDURES

As mentioned earlier under "conferences" the Executive Committee has met once each year since 1985. The International Committee has also met, for the first time between congresses, in 1988 and in 1993. These regular arrangements, brought in since 1985, have proved to be invaluable. They assist the ongoing development of policy in response to the interests of member-associations.

The Executive Committee consists of twelve members, of whom six are office-holders. It is not possible for all the various countries to be "represented" on the Executive Committee, though of course some balance is desirable. The International Committee is the representative body, and ultimately provides the democratic base for the IAHR. The International Committee elects the Executive Committee at the quinquennial congress. The results are reported publicly to the General Assembly.

During the period 1989 - 1990 and the period 1994 - 1995 the electoral arrangements have been carried out with great care. This has led to increased interest in the democratic process within the IAHR. Thus in 1990 the membership of the Executive Committee was electorally contested, and the same process is taking place now in 1995. I consider the transparency and correctness of electoral processes to be of the greatest importance. The rules are set out in the Constitution.

I hope that the combination of

(a) a regular flow of information through the Bulletin
(b) regular business meetings of the Executive and International Committees (with advance notice of agenda and detailed minutes) and
(c) the correct application of electoral procedures
will be regarded as one of the significant legacies to the IAHR from the ten year period 1985 - 1995.

THE SECRETARIAT

The IAHR does not actually have a "secretariat". While procedures have been rationalized to some extent, many of the remaining inadequacies, which are painfully obvious to this writer, are to be explained by the sheer amount of work involved. It must be remembered that the officers of the IAHR all have their ordinary professional work to do. Tasks carried out on behalf of the IAHR are voluntary, honorary, and additional. Limited secretarial support by the universities of Marburg and Lancaster has been available, and is indeed gratefully acknowledged. However, the amount of work is increasing all the time. Important practical questions of organization and funding must therefore be tackled by the incoming Executive Committee.

OUTLOOK

During recent years the IAHR has seen a number of interesting new affiliations, a radical broadening of its geographical base, an increase in the number of meetings throughout the world, and a rationalization of its organizational procedures. The increase in structured activity means however that there is much more work to be done on a regular basis, especially by the officers.

Looking ahead, it would seem that a period of stabilization is now required. Whatever the outcome of the vote concerning the name, the association will continue to stand for the international, religiously independent study of religions. It would not be desirable for the association to take off, unpredictably, in quite different directions, confusing its role with that of religious bodies or interreligious bodies. In general, the understanding of the aims of the IAHR has been relatively clear in recent years. Both those who prefer to keep the present name of the IAHR and those who are in favour of a change of name are in fact in broad agreement about these aims. Should there be a change of name, continuity in the present patterns of activity will be all the more important to maintain the integrity of the association. This in turn requires reasonable continuity in the membership of the Executive Committee.

THANKS

Finally, I should like to express my heartfelt thanks to all those, both in the professional and in the private sphere, who have given me patient and understanding support in the carrying out of my tasks.

MP (Marburg, July 1995)

Intercultural strategies and the International Association for the History of Religions (by Michael Pye)

Edited version of a paper presented at the Regional Conference of the IAHR held at Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1992. This paper, although it is a personal statement, is reproduced here because of its relevance to some of the issues frequently discussed in connection with the IAHR. It is due to appear later in the Harare proceedings.

1) International and intercultural

The rather long title of this short paper contains the two words "international" and "intercultural", and in short my argument is that the International Association for the History of Religions requires not only an international perspective but also an intercultural one. This may sound simple and easy enough to friendly and open-minded people. Yet it contains an important requirement for the organization of international relationships in scholarship which is not always easy to realize. While thinking about what is happening at the level of practical organization, about which I shall give at least a few details, it is important to reflect also on the assumptions which influence our work, sometimes leading to distortions, sometimes guiding it for the good development of the subject.

The International Association for the History of Religions (usually known as the IAHR) has consisted, since its formal inception in 1950, of a number of affiliated national associations. Having this character, it is also able to be affiliated in turn to the International Council for Philosophy and the Humanities (usually abbreviated as CIPSH, from the French name), which is an agency of UNESCO. This latter body meets once every two years, the next meeting being here at Harare in a few days time. In fact it was as a result of a contact made at the last assembly of CIPSH that the planning of this regional conference of the IAHR was set specifically in motion.¹

As we all know, this is the first regional conference of the IAHR to be held in the whole of Africa, ever. You will perhaps excuse

¹This contact was between Mr. David Kaulem of the University of Zimbabwe and myself. The arrangements were excellently developed by Dr. Mandivenga and Dr. Cox in Harare and by Dr. Platvoet and Prof. Hackett on behalf of the IAHR. Others have of course also contributed, both from Africa and from further afield. Background perspective was also given by the liaison process set in motion by the International Committee of the IAHR at its conference in Marburg, 1988, under the guidance of Dr. Jan Platvoet, c.f. Pye 1989a, 16.

me for linking this event with the fact that this year has also seen the first regional conference of the IAHR to be held in China; and that was only the second IAHR conference in the whole of Asia. The Beijing conference also owes a great deal to the CIPSH, for without the CIPSH-funded participation of Chinese scholars at the major congresses held at Lancaster (1975), Winnipeg (1980), Sydney (1985) and Rome (1990), it would not have been conceivable. The CIPSH also funded IAHR attendance at a crucial meeting in Mexico in 1990, which created the basis for the proposal to hold the XVII quinquennial congress in Mexico City in 1995. The XVII Congress will be the first IAHR conference to be held in Latin America, ever. These events represent an unprecedented regional diversification of the IAHR. It is here that the difference between "international" and "intercultural" begins to bite. We are seeing developments which mean more than simply that some further countries are added to the list of affiliated associations.

There were in fact several new affiliations at the last General Assembly and they were indeed important ones. There will probably be more at the next General Assembly in Mexico. Extension of this kind is of course most welcome, although the effect on the practical management of IAHR business should not be underestimated. Communications become more complex. The International Committee becomes larger. More people would like their conferences to be called IAHR conferences, though at present the limit is normally one per year between the major congresses. The funds for sponsoring those who keep the lines of communication open, already insufficient, become hopelessly overstretched. In spite of the difficulties, however, goodwill breeds more goodwill, and so the positive developments continue. All of this leads to new patterns of interaction between scholars in our field. In this way the international development may, and probably should, lead to an intercultural development in the study of religion.

Intercultural work and methodological independence

The intercultural development of the IAHR demands more than a straightforward, incremental accretion of new associations. It demands thought. Above all it demands reflection about the deep assumptions which influence our view of religion. Now we all know that "religion" is a European and consequently a "western" word, and that we should not heedlessly inflict it on cultures where mental and social patterns have run differently for many centuries. People say, for example, that there is no such thing as religion by itself, separated from the rest of life, in the Islamic world, or that Hinduism is not so much a "religion" as a "way of life", or that Buddhism and Confucianism (each very different from each other) are not really religions at all, rather a kind of spiritual path or moral philosophy respectively. I do not want to pursue these arguments here. I would assert however that the term "religions" in the name of the IAHR is certainly not wedded to a limiting view of the nature of religion. The "history of religions"

as pursued by specialists from many countries has in fact usually taken a very wide view of the phenomena to be considered.

To take a naive limiting view of the field would simply be bad scholarship. To adopt a limited view of religion intentionally, on the basis of a normative judgment about what is to count as true religion, or as good religion, would be to adopt a confessional standpoint. This however is inimical to good scholarship in the "history of religions", except in so far as it can be temporarily disregarded for the purposes of enquiry. This point has been argued many times before, and indeed there seems to be wide agreement about it in IAHR circles. However here I wish to make the link with organizational strategies, as follows. The intercultural extension of the work of the IAHR demands not less, but more clarity about its independence from specific religious standpoints.

Methodological independence from specific religious standpoints, on the other hand, does not require that those who participate in IAHR activities should themselves personally be irreligious in their lives as a whole. We all know that there are excellent specialists in the study of religion who in their personal lives have a sincere faith, whether in the religion which they mainly study or indeed in the religion of their family or community. Nor does methodological independence require that they should normally work in institutional contexts which lack all relation to the contextual religious tradition of their country.

These are subtle matters but they are not insoluble riddles. To give an example, there are in Turkey today ten universities which have faculties of Theology, that is, Muslim Theology. The curriculum and research activities of these ten faculties follow a common pattern, and among the various subjects pursued, which are determined on the basis of Islamic assumptions, there is included the field of comparative religion. Those who work in the field of comparative religion know that the wider institutional context is defined by Islam, and they also know that the subject-matter into which they research is diverse, and largely non-Islamic. There is no reason why such researchers should not be Muslims, even devout Muslims. The question is simply, can and do they achieve a clear and balanced view of that which they study? My impression is that they do.

In practice this is often easier with regard to religions other than that of one's own dominant tradition; that is, when the attempt is fairly made. The reason for this is obvious. The study of religion within one's own dominant tradition is more likely to lead into the polemical clash of theological viewpoints. This is evident in all the main streams of the theistic tradition, Judaism, Christianity and Islam alike. However it is not intrinsically connected with theism, in spite of the effects of the idea that God is "a jealous God". The phenomenon is not unknown elsewhere, for example in Buddhist studies where confessional allegiance often

determines research activity. Yet here too, there is no insuperable problem for Buddhists who wish to study various religions which are not Buddhist. It is simply a question of reflecting clearly on methodological assumptions and intentions.

Thus participants in IAHR activities may be drawn from societies or institutions which are predominantly, for example, Buddhist, Christian or Muslim. There is no question of any kind of "purism" being applied here. Whether the research work which is carried out is good or mediocre, whether it is well balanced, informative and illuminating, or hopelessly biased and distorted, will show up at the conferences. The IAHR itself, not being a religious organization, is in principle neutral in these matters. It is commonly said that neutrality can never be achieved, and this may be so, in organisations as well as in individuals. But it is a question of intention, and this why it may be said that the IAHR is in principle neutral. We appeal to the neutrality of the organization in order to promote the possibility of our cooperative work, both internationally and interculturally.

Independence and funding

The neutrality of the IAHR does not mean, on the other hand, that it is inimical to religion. The IAHR may be described accurately as non-religious, but not as irreligious. Nor does it mean that religious bodies may not support it, for example financially, with grants for travel and conference costs, or by giving hospitality to conference participants, especially when they come from countries with economic difficulties. Any such support can and will be most gratefully received. The only proviso is that the procedural neutrality of the IAHR be respected. However there should be no difficulty in reaching an understanding about this with the leading religious and cultural authorities of a country in which a particular conference is held. In this connection the affiliation to CIPSH is also helpful, for it is clear that UNESCO agencies are not supposed to be doing the work of any one religion over against another. This is true even though complex relations are maintained with a wide variety of other organizations from around the world. There is no question of some kind of suicidal "purism" on the part of the IAHR as is sometimes supposed.

There is therefore no intrinsic difficulty about the supportive sponsorship of IAHR conferences by religious bodies. Naturally some care needs to be taken in this regard. It would not be at all desirable for the IAHR to be taken over by a particular religious body. In any particular region of the world, some sympathetic support by the dominant religious community, Islamic, Christian, or other, would seem to be quite appropriate. It will be understood that in another region cordial relations will also be maintained where possible with the representatives of a different tradition. In the case of smaller groups active in inter-religious work it is preferable for funds to be derived from at least two different

religious bodies in cooperation. This would be the perfect way to show that the procedural neutrality of the IAHR is respected. While full courtesy and respect should be a matter of course, there can be no question of the international, academic cooperation which is encouraged by the IAHR being distorted, not to mention dominated, even in appearance, by the religious programme of one particular group. But those who wish well for the work of the IAHR will understand this from the start.

It is well known that some religious bodies themselves like to fund conferences on religious subjects. In this regard it may be pointed out that, as far as my information goes, such conferences have not usually been about the history of religions or the comparative and theoretical study of religion which goes with it. Rather they have addressed questions of interreligious dialogue or directly theological questions such as "God". While these matters are interesting in themselves and of great importance to many people, they may be regarded as providing indirect rather than direct subject-matter for the IAHR. However there is no need for an exaggerated "purism" on the part of the IAHR in this regard. It would surely be appreciated if religious bodies with a sincere interest in the relations between peoples and between religions would cooperate in sponsoring studies in the real history of religions.

There is of course the difficulty, with which researchers are sometimes confronted, that the representatives of religions do not always wish to be informed about the real history of religions. This arises simply because not all religious claims can stand in an equal relationship to the factuality of cultural and social history. This is well known to most of those who participate in the conferences of the IAHR, but not understood by many religious believers. Again, this does not mean that the IAHR is an irreligious body. Moreover most researchers into religion, while being interested in facts, will respect the sensitivities of religious people, which themselves amount to facts of great interest.

It is necessary to be as clear as possible about such matters at an international, organizational level in order to create the forum which is needed for the intercultural exploration of religion.

Intercultural perspectives and the shape of religion

The study of religion as a historical, cultural and social phenomenon takes on a sharp new interest when we realize, through serious attempts at academic cooperation, that deep assumptions about the very shape of religion diverge considerably from culture to culture. Thus Chinese, European and Latin American assumptions about what the field of investigation is, and what questions are to be asked about it, are not identical. The present conference in Zimbabwe will surely play an important role both in making explicit

and theorizing about African perspectives on these matters.

It is hardly for me to expatiate on what these African perspectives might be, surrounded as I am by African and non-African experts. However I do hope that a mere contrapuntalism between African and Euro-American standpoints can be avoided. For this reason I should like to illustrate the underlying question by looking abroad to China and to Latin America, however briefly. I will then conclude with a few thoughts and questions addressed to the African situation.

In China one of the long-running assumptions about religions is that they are plural and yet somehow related to each other. This assumption has been expressed for many centuries in the phrase "three teachings" (san-jiao). Now in some cases this phrase has been used to express a religious position which might otherwise be called, in European vocabulary, "synthesism". It would also be rather like the assertion of religious "pluralism" as a good thing, which is the way that some people have used the word pluralism lately, though it would be better to keep "pluralism" simply to refer to a situation in which there is more than one religion. To return to China, people have often felt that the "three teachings", namely Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, are facets of a single harmonious truth. Hence the further succinct expression "the three teachings are one", which has found favour at various times. Note however that there have been different versions of "three teachings" theory, that is, there have been different ways of viewing the relationships between the three major traditions in China, some leaning more to Confucianism as the final meaning, for example. Thus the phrase "three teachings" suggests something more than a religious position as such. Rather it has been used to indicate the very parameters of discussion about religion in China. This may be seen clearly from its use in the title of a short treatise ascribed to the first ruler of the Ming dynasty, "Treatise on the three religions". In fact it does not exhaust the parameters of discussion because apart from the three major traditions mentioned, Chinese thinkers and administrators have also attended to the nature and function of state religion on one hand and of various minority sects on the other hand, the latter usually being regarded as obtrusive and troublesome.

It will be clear from this that the shape of the matters normally taken into account when religion is considered in China is simply not the same as it has been in Europe. In the latter case the main assumptions about religion which have shaped theoretical discussion have been set by Christianity in its Catholic and Protestant forms, by the dialectically related critique of and disaffection with religion, i.e. secularism in various forms, and more recently by the renewed activity of alternative religious forms, especially Asian-derived cults and New Age spirituality.

Now of course there has been much interaction in modern times

between Chinese and Euro-American theory of religion, notably via the thought not only of Marx but also more recently of Weber. Yet even when western sociologists are adduced, the view of religion as seen within China may still have its own accentuation. Chen Zemin, for example, giving a paper at the recent IAHR regional conference in Beijing, wrote on "The post-denominational unity of the Chinese protestant church". He made use of a typological schema listing ecclesia, denomination, established sect, sect, cult, and new religion, deriving from Weber and Troeltsch via Richard Niebuhr, Howard Becker, Liston Pope and Milton Yinger. At the same time he wrote:

"Religions are like trees. As they grow they bifurcate or trifurcate and branch out into a number of organized groups that bear some resemblance to, and preserve the identity with, the mother trunk, and yet keep on differentiating until at the end they tend to become something mutually exclusive or antagonistic to each other. Attempts at reunion often seem difficult, if not fruitless".²

Now this metaphor has its own force. Of course it refers to religious separation and conflict. But it does not speak only of schism and section. It implies firstly organic elaboration, and only later an articulation so profuse that unity can no longer be regained. This is not the place to review the details of church affairs in present-day China, which is Chen Zemin's interest. But note that speaking later of the ideal of church unity in the Chinese context he goes on to say:

"We have learned to move carefully and slowly onward, and guard against hastiness, coercion, artificial uniformity, proselytism, and schismatic division. The cardinal virtue, the essence of Chinese culture, is "peaceful unity of opposites". We are endeavouring to achieve church unity by virtue of this virtue."³

This is a programmatic view on his part, and not an analytical observation; it follows the description and analysis of the details. However it is quoted here to show that the organic, integrative assumption underlying the tree metaphor with which he began is reinforced at the end and regarded as a Chinese way of viewing things.

Turning now to Latin America, we find a situation very different from China in that the dominant languages in which reflection about religious phenomena largely carried on, are European-derived. The

²Dai, Pye, Zhang 1995; page numbers not known at time of writing.

³Ibid.

dominant religious tradition, but, as is well known, by no means the only one, is also European-derived. It may be admitted that some significant questions in the sphere of reflection about religion are akin to those familiar in Europe, e.g. the assessment of secularisation as a process of erosion against a dominant Catholic church. The debate over liberation theology, which is a question for inner-church polemics rather than for the external analyst, is less dramatically relevant in Europe but nevertheless easily understood. The religious studies specialist however, as observer and analyst, will notice a different set of parameters which determine the very field of study. Put most broadly, these relate to the political story of the conquest, the imposition of Catholicism, and the attempted subjugation and partial reassertion of previously existing religious life. The indigenous development and the incursion from without of new religions has of course complicated this relationship. For the observer and analyst this has resulted in a fascinating range of materials for research. Moreover, and this is the more important point in the present argument, Latin American investigators have a characteristic view of religion. This is formed partly by the materials: indigenous, catholic, new, and the mutual interactions between these. It is also formed by the two main intellectual approaches which have been brought to bear. One of these is Catholic theology, especially as directed towards missiological and pastoral questions. The other is social anthropology as directed towards both general questions of social change and in particular towards study of the numerous minorities of Latin America, whether these be of indigenous, imported or mixed race.

The work of researchers coming from these two directions, is interactive in varying degree. Indeed no intellectual anthropologist in Latin America can avoid some awareness of the bearing of Catholicism upon his field of study, and likewise the best Catholic researchers into their fields of interest tend to become anthropologists. The combustion produced by this interaction has led to the production of significant contributions to the study of religion. But what is the shape of the religion which thus becomes the object of study?

A fine case study of religion in the Peruvian Andes may be found in Manuel Marzal's work La transformación religiosa peruana (Lima 1983), in a key chapter of which the formation and the overall characteristics are set out. The three main stages of formation according to Marzal are: the stage of intensive Christianization, the stage of struggle against idolatries, and the stage of the crystallization of Andean religion. For present purposes the slightly problematic characterization of the second stage, doubtless so named by Marzal to capture the point of view of the Christianizing church in post-conquest times, will be overlooked. The main point is that present phenomena are the result of interaction between two systems which were in conflict. The "current Andean religious system" (el sistema religioso andino

actual) is viewed under four numbered headings, namely: (1) Andean beliefs, (2) Andean rites, (3) the forms of religious organization, and (4) ethical norms. This in itself amounts to an interesting set of dimensions or aspects of religion; however it would lead too far afield to compare it with other attempts to define such. Rather, I should like to draw attention to the sub-categories which Marzal provides in this case under beliefs and rites, namely, for beliefs, (a) the Andean pantheon, and (b) beliefs and myths, and for rites (a) rites of transition, and (b) festive rites. Even this summary typology of headings and sub-headings is instructive. The fact that "ethical norms" (las normas eticas) is given as one of four major categories is suggestive of the author's Catholic provenance, for it may be suspected that in the Andean religious system other subjective aspects are of comparable importance. By contrast Marzal's anthropological openness to his material is evidenced by the sub-categories adduced for beliefs and rites (see above), which are typical features of primal religion in that they relate specifically to a culturally defined community. Now it should not be overlooked that Marzal's work is immensely detailed and valuable, this particular book being complemented by many other published studies. The interesting point, for the present argument, is that the parameters of his theoretical summary as stated here, in both its diachronic and synchronic aspects, are defined by the historic tussle between a religion with universal claims and considerable power and the religious system of a specifically defined society which, though poor in resources, has turned out to be not without resilience. The resultant picture is not the religion of Europe, and not the religion of China.

Conclusions

The purpose of setting out these examples, however briefly, is to show that in actual studies carried out within a major region or continent, the shape of religion as viewed by perceptive specialists is affected by the major relevant historical determinants. This is a simple point, though it would appear that not all researchers are really aware of it in themselves. More often people seem to assume that the model prominent in their own region of the world is the normal state of affairs. This illusion is not necessarily the result of narrow-mindedness. Rather it occurs because the differences are blurred by structural similarities and historical overlaps which are also themselves real. Thus religious pluralism has been and is known in other countries as well as in China. The long-term interaction of intrusive and indigenous religious systems, including the production of new forms, is also known outside Latin America. To fail to recognise this would be to succumb to mere exoticism, sheer desire for difference. But the avoidance of exoticism should not leave our senses paralysed. The Chinese phenomenon is not the Latin American. The same may of course be argued for other parts of the world: Indonesia, India, the Middle East, and indeed Africa with its very significant internal variations. Though recognizable, the

shape of religion is not the same everywhere. And the shape of religion in the place where it is frequently perceived by the researchers concerned has a strong influence on the subsequent theories.

Thus the intercultural challenge which arises through the increasingly broadly based activities of the IAHR is that we should reflect with increasing care on those very simple, deep-seated models of religion which we tend to carry with us, influenced as they are by all the historical determinants which continue to exercise their force. They are not necessarily inappropriate with respect to those phenomena to which they specifically relate. Yet the comparison with neighbouring or even far-distant models may help us in the process of critical refinement. Traditional distortions may be corrected. New dimensions of religion may appear before our very eyes, which had previously been disregarded.

Does this relate also to Africa? Is there, for example, a special three-cornered relationship between Islam, Christianity and traditional religion from which there is no escape, even when we seek to elucidate and explain innovation and a more variegated pluralism? Are possession and prophecy the forms without which, in many regions of Africa, nothing moves? If not these, what is the deep-seated frame of reference, in all its simplicity, which informs the cultural insider's reflection on African religion? Or what are they? For Africa is many.

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