

Praenotandum June 2019: This article was published in *AASR Bulletin* 35 (November 2011): 28-38, as 'Reflections on Toronto 2010, I'. Its follow-up was never written. Therefore I drop 'I' from the title. In these 'reflections' I attempt to further analyse IAHR globalization in the past few decades in order to uncover the Eurocentrist centre-periphery power relationship that vitiates IAHR internationalization, as Gerrie ter Haar and I already contended in the AASR proposal that the IAHR Executive be restructured.¹ Don Wiebe's request (in an e-mail of 12 May 2019) that I explain my views on NAASR's naturalism caused me to revise this article. The revisions are mostly minor, but several footnotes (1-3, 5, 9-11,13, 19-22, 26-27, 41, 44-45, 48-49, 51-55, 57) have been added. I also add information on Herbert Schneider's role in the foundation of IAHR and in the organisation of the XIth IAHR congress at Claremont, California, in 1965 on pp. 7-8.

Jan G. Platvoet

REFLECTIONS ON TORONTO 2010

The 20th quinquennial IAHR Congress met at the University of Toronto, Canada, from 15th to 21st August 2010. It was a milestone in the history of the academic study of religions worldwide, and a great event for me personally.

Criticism, however, is also due. I report and reflect on this congress as a participant in the congress, and as AASR delegate, together with Afe Adogame, to the meeting of the IAHR International Committee (IC) on Wednesday 18 August 2010. In that meeting, the AASR proposal to restructure the IAHR Executive into four functional triads (Platvoet & ter Haar 2010) was extensively discussed and rejected. AASR had proposed that reform to promote the active involvement of all elected IAHR officers in the government of IAHR, and thereby enhance the integration of IAHR affiliates worldwide, and redress, to some degree at least, the grave Eurocentrist centre-periphery imbalance that presently [2011] obtains in the IAHR.²

IAHR has globalized greatly since the late 1980s in the sense that it expanded worldwide, as we have duly indicated in our analysis (Platvoet & ter Haar 2010: 15-20). But, by not actively involving all its elected Officers, the IAHR Executive has so far forestalled that its 'outlying' new affiliates obtain a real share in the government of the IAHR. Thereby it not only precludes their full integration into the IAHR, but also frustrates its own globalisation. Our aim was, therefore, to decrease somewhat IAHR's Eurocentrism and to further its globalisation.

IAHR congresses 1900-2010

Toronto 2010 was the second time an IAHR Congress was held in Canada. IAHR met there for the first time in 1980 when it convened at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg for its 14th congress. That congress was organised by Peter Slater and Donald Wiebe. The 2010 congress at Toronto was organised by Wiebe. He did a perfect job.

Toronto 2010 was the third time IAHR convened in North America. IAHR had met already in Claremont, California, for its 11th congress in 1965 (cf. Schneider & van Proosdij 1968). At that time IAHR had just begun to go global cautiously. In 1965, IAHR consisted of national affiliates only – eleven in Europe: Austria, Belgium, England, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Hungary,

¹ Cf. Platvoet & ter Haar 2010.

² And to this very day, 2019!

The Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden; and five outside Europe: Israel, Japan, USA, South Korea and India (Bleeker 1968: 5).

Till 1965, IAHR congresses had therefore been held in Europe only.³ By then, historians of religions had met already nine times in Europe. For, though IAHR was founded in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, in 1950, IAHR congresses officially include also the six ‘ancestral conferences’ (Pye 1995: 7) of scholars of the History of Religions in European universities between 1900 and 1950. Before their meeting at Amsterdam, they had convened at Paris, France, in 1900; at Basel, Switzerland, in 1904; at Oxford, UK, in 1908; at Leiden, The Netherlands, in 1912; at Lund, Sweden, in 1929; and at Brussels, Belgium, in 1939.⁴ After its foundation at Amsterdam in 1950 at the 7th History of Religions/IAHR congress,⁵ IAHR met again at Rome, Italy, in 1955; at Marburg, Germany, in 1960;⁶ in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1970; in Lancaster, UK, in 1975; and in Rome, Italy, in 1990. Lastly, the 21st IAHR Congress will be held again in Europe: in Erfurt, Germany, in 2015, August 23-29.⁷ That will bring the number of IAHR congresses held in Europe, from 1900 to 2015 to thirteen out of twenty-one.

So far IAHR convened eight times outside Europe. It met three times in North America: in Claremont in 1965; in Winnipeg in 1980, and in Toronto in 2010; twice in Asia: in Tokyo, Japan, in 1958 and 2005; and once in Australia: in Sydney in 1985; in Latin America: in Mexico City in 1995; and in Africa: in Durban, South Africa, in 2000. These congresses demonstrate that IAHR has expanded worldwide. After 1980, it had gradually become a global organisation.

Even so, despite its worldwide spread since 1965, and especially since 1980, IAHR is still very much a solidly Eurocentric organisation. To demonstrate that a few remarks are in order. In this article, they are restricted to the parts played in the IAHR by European scholarship in religions, especially as organized since 2000 in the EASR, the European Association for the Study of Religions; and in North America by NAASR, the North American Association for the Study of Religions. At the time [2011], I planned to examine the positions of scholarship in religions in Africa, Latin America, and Asia in the IAHR in a follow-up article. Unfortunately, I never came around to write it.

Europe's central position

Europe – more narrowly Protestant Northwest Europe – is clearly not only the place of origin of the academic study of religions, but has so far also remained its heartland. That is reflected in the fact that (NW) European scholars of religions have held all the crucial positions in the IAHR Executive from 1950 till now.⁸ And they will most likely continue to stay in power for some time to come for a number of subtle mechanisms that need to be uncovered.

One is that at present [2011] twenty-three European national associations for the academic study of religions are affiliated to the IAHR and thereby constitute close to half of the forty-eight IAHR member societies worldwide. A brief review of their history is in order.

³ Except for the quite special 9th IAHR congress in Tokyo in 1958.

⁴ Till 1950, ‘the organisation [of historians of religions in Europe] was a rather loose one. At the close of a congress members used to nominate an organising committee to prepare the next one. In 1950 a permanent organisation was shaped, which was at once affiliated to Unesco’ (Bleeker 1968: 5).

⁵ IASHR, International Society for the Study of the History of Religions was the name adopted at Amsterdam in 1950. At Rome, in 1955, it was changed to IAHR, International Association for the History of Religions..

⁶ Cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/past.html>.

⁷ Cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/newsletter/2011/congress.html>

⁸ Cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/holders.html>

Scholarship in religions in Europe, as organised in the IAHR in 1950, was for the greater part an offshoot of Protestant liberal theology as taught in faculties of (Protestant) theology in state universities in North and North-West Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For a small part it consisted also of scholars of (ancient) religions posted in faculties of arts in universities in France, Italy and Belgium. Those in France taught mostly at the *Collège de France* and the *École pratique des hautes études* in Paris since 1880. They founded *La Société Ernest Renan pour l'Histoire des Religions* in 1919. It joined IAHR in 1950 at its foundation at Amsterdam. Those in Italy were pupils of Raffaele Pettazoni (1883-1959), in 1924 the first professor of History of Religions at the University of Rome (*Sapienza*). They founded the *Società italiana di storia delle religioni* in 1951. Pettazoni served as IAHR Vice-President from 1950 to 1955,⁹ and IAHR President until his death in 1959. The *Société belgo-luxembourgeoise d'Histoire des Religions* was the Belgian affiliate from 1950. It was disaffiliated in 2010 by its IAHR membership being declared lapsed (Jensen 2010: § 4.5).

After Vaticanum II, the academic study of religions began to develop cautiously in universities in Europe's RC countries. But in as far as it did develop, it remained mostly under the aegis of the liberal RC *theologia religionum* that had newly emerged, whereas IAHR affiliated academic scholarship of religions in North and North West Protestant Europe rapidly secularised and cut its umbilical cord with Protestant liberal theology. It therefore took three decades, and integration into the EU, before a few academic associations for the study of religions from the RC countries of Europe began to join IAHR. In 1995 the Spanish Association for the Sciences of Religions, founded in 1993, was admitted; in 2000, the Austrian Association for the Science of Religions, founded in 1996, was (re-)affiliated; in 2005 the Greek Society for the Study of Culture and Religion, founded in 2003, joined; and in 2010, the Portuguese Association for the Study of Religions, founded in 2008, was affiliated.¹⁰ An Irish Association for the Study of Religions has been founded in 2011 and has applied for IAHR affiliation in 2015.

Meanwhile developments in affiliation to the IAHR had occurred in Central and Eastern Europe. The Polish Society for the Study of Religions, 'the only association of this type in socialist countries' till 1990, had already been affiliated to the IAHR in 1970. It organised the important IAHR conference at Warsaw in 1979 on the methodology of an 'objective, non-confessional study of religions' (Tyloch 1984: 10).¹¹ After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the reunion of Germany in 1990, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, several other societies for the study of religions were founded and affiliated to the IAHR. The revitalised Hungarian Association for the Academic Study of Religions reconnected to the IAHR in 1990; the Czech Association for the Study of Religions, founded also in 1990, was admitted in 1990; the Slovak Association for the Study of Religions, founded in 1992, was affiliated to the IAHR in 2000; the Ukrainian Association of Researchers of Religions, founded in 1993, was admitted to the IAHR in 2000; the Esto-

⁹ And as Acting President from 1950 to 1955 after the death of Gerardus van der Leeuw on November 18, 1950.

¹⁰ (4.06.2019): APER (Associação Portuguesa para o Estudo das Religiões) may be defunct already. It did nominate Steffen Dix as its delegate to the EASR 2010 General Assembly at Toronto (<http://www.easr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2010-Call-for-General-Assembly.pdf>). But APER does not appear in the latest list of EASR members by country 2014-2017 (<http://www.easr.eu/membership/number-of-members-by-country/>). Nor is APER mentioned in the current list of IAHR member societies (<http://www.iahrweb.org/members.php>).

¹¹ Poland is now, in 2019, no longer the 'socialist' country it was in 1979. It has been thoroughly re-catholicised, religiously and politically, for the time being. It would be of great interest to investigate whether, and if so, how the post-1989 political developments have affected the composition of the membership of the Polish association for the study of religions, and what position(s) its members now take in the methodology of the academic study of religions.

nian Society for the Study of Religions, founded in 2006, was admitted in 2010; as was the Latvian Society for the Study of Religions, founded in 2009.

Another reason for European supremacy in IAHR is EASR: the European Association for the Study of Religions. It is an IAHR 'regional' affiliate of a special kind – as are all IAHR regional member societies, as I will show below. EASR was founded in Cracow, Poland, in May 2000 by thirteen European national IAHR affiliates.¹² It was affiliated to IAHR in Durban in August 2000. Having been founded by IAHR national affiliates in Europe, 'group membership' is the normal mode of EASR membership, as it is with IAHR. All members of these thirteen founding affiliates, and of the eleven other associations that have joined EASR since 2000,¹³ are therefore automatically EASR members, on condition that those who joined after 2000 are themselves IAHR national member societies or have applied for IAHR affiliation.¹⁴ The Turkish Association for History of Religions also joined EASR in 2004.¹⁵ All TAHR members are therefore also EASR members by group membership. EASR therefore has twenty-four member societies now.¹⁶ EASR and its 24 affiliates therefore constitute over half of the current forty-five IAHR national and regional affiliates.¹⁷ They are the strongest 'power block' in the IAHR.

'Europe' is even stronger when we take into account that IAHR is currently constituted by forty-five 'member societies', and four 'affiliated associations',¹⁸ terminology – approved at Toronto despite my protests – indicating two different kinds of affiliation to the IAHR: a traditional one with full rights and duties, and a new one with curtailed rights and duties.

'Constituent member societies' are the forty national and the five regional IAHR affiliates:¹⁹ EASR for Europe, NAASR for North America,²⁰ AASR for Africa, ALER for Latin America,²¹ and SSEASR for South and Southeast Asia.²² They are defined in article 3a of the IAHR Consti-

¹² Article 4 of EASR constitution also provides for individual membership. Cf. <http://easr.org/home/constitution.html?PHPSESSID=590b847e14afa792906aed3a5685ea64>. But 'where membership of the appropriate affiliated national association is possible, individual membership will not be appropriate' (<http://easr.org/membership.html>).

¹³ <http://easr.eu/associations.html>

¹⁴ Cf. art. 4.5 of the EASR constitution at <http://easr.org/home/constitution.html?PHPSESSID=45573d6a56c4e5ce4446948a63d05e8f>

¹⁵ <http://easr.eu/associations.html> (In anticipation of Turkey joining EU?)

¹⁶ For the list, cf. <http://easr.org/member-associations.html>

¹⁷ For the list, cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/associations.html>

¹⁸ Cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/associations.html>

¹⁹ As a model of IAHR corporate membership, 'regional' affiliates emerged in the 1990s. Like IAHR national member associations, they were conceived in spatial terms, primarily those of continents: Incidentally it was also used for 'regions' smaller than continents but bigger than nations (e.g. the defunct EAASR for East Africa). Despite its explicit ambition to be an association for scholars of religion in Southern Africa, the Association for the Study of Religions in Southern Africa (ASRSA), has always been counted as merely the IAHR national member society for South Africa, most likely because it was admitted to the IAHR in 1980, before the model of 'regional' member societies was invented.

²⁰ Cf. below.

²¹ ALER was founded in Mexico City in 1990 and affiliated to the IAHR in 1995. Its members are scholars of religions posted in Latin American universities and scholars of the religions of Latin America posted in universities in Europe and the USA. It holds congresses every two years: in 1992 and 1994 in Mexico; in 1996, in Bogota, Colombia; in 1998, in Buenos Aires, Argentine; in 2000, in Padua, Italy; in 2002, in Lima, Peru; in 2004, in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, México; in 2006, in Sao Paulo, Brazil; in 2008, again in Bogota, Columbia. It also organised Latin American Colloquia on Religion and Society in 1999, in Mexico City, and in 2001 in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain. In 2007, it organised the 5th International Conference on Religion and Society in Sevilla, Spain, together with the Asociación Andaluza de Antropología (ASANA). More than 500 scholars from all over Latin America and Spain participated in its 2006 congress at Sao Paulo. In that congress 370 papers were read (cf. <http://iahrdk/conf/ALER2004>).

²² http://iahr.dk/wsn/s_marcos_report2.html

tution²³ as ‘societies and associations for the historical, social and comparative study of religions’. As ‘constituent members’, they are entitled to send two delegates with speaking and voting rights to the IAHR-IC meetings;²⁴ and their members have speaking and voting rights in the IAHR General Assemblies that are held at the close of each quinquennial congress.

National member societies, however, have these voting rights since 2005 on condition they have paid up IAHR annual dues; as have their members in the General Assemblies. Regional member societies, however, have speaking and voting rights in IC meetings and General Assemblies without having to pay annual IAHR dues. The IAHR Executive has exempted them from the payment of annual dues by setting theirs at \$0,00.²⁵ The origin of the general exemption seems to have been a request by EASR in 2000 (?) that it be absolved from IAHR annual dues, because EASR members already pay them. When it was indeed exempted for this reason by the IAHR Executive, the IAHR Executive seems to have decided that the other IAHR regional affiliates should be exempted from annual IAHR dues also, even though the relations of all other IAHR regional member associations to the IAHR national member societies in their own regions, c.q. continents, differ fundamentally from those of the EASR to its member associations, as I will show below for EASR and NAASR.²⁶ The explicit stipulation in article 7b of the IAHR Constitution that voting rights are dependent upon ‘annual payment of IAHR membership dues’, has therefore been nullified by the IAHR Executive itself in respect of its five regional member societies. I should add, however, that one of them, the North American Association for the Study of Religions (NAASR) did always pay IAHR annual dues, for reasons I will explain below. But EASR (Europe), AASR (Africa), ALER (Latin America) and SSEASR (South and South-east Asia) have never paid annual dues so far.²⁷ I suggest they should pay them, and that the latter three in return be given a greater share in the direction of the IAHR than they have now.

Whereas national and regional IAHR member associations are multidisciplinary societies in which any religion may be studied as well as any subject, issue, field, topic, theme or approach relevant to the study of religions, ‘affiliated associations’ are defined in article 3b of the current IAHR Constitution as ‘international associations for the study of particular areas within the academic study of religions’.²⁸ They are therefore mono-disciplinary or monothematic scholarly associations and in principle, and at least potentially, if not actually, international societies, as is the IAHR. They ‘may be adopted as affiliates to the IAHR’.²⁹ In terms of their juridical status within the IAHR, they have been equated, in article 3b of the IAHR Constitution, with individual scholars affiliated to the IAHR,³⁰ even though at present [2011] IAHR has only one such mem-

²³ Cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/constitution.html>

²⁴ Except for the Canadian Association for the Study of Religions, and La Société québécoise pour l'étude de la religion, which each may send one delegate only and have each one vote only.

²⁵ E-mail message from Brian Bocking, IAHR Treasurer 2010-2015, dd 26.11.2011

²⁶ Those of AASR with NASR, the Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions, and ASRSA (Association for the Study of Religions in Southern Africa) were to be examined in the follow-up of this article, as were those of ALER with national member societies in Latin America, and those of SSEASR with those in Asia.

²⁷ Nor has the EAASR (East African Association for the Study of Religions). It was founded in May 2000 and admitted as its sixth ‘regional member association’ to the IAHR at Durban in August 2000. IAHR management never discovered that EAASR had become defunct in the very year it was admitted into the IAHR, precisely because it was exempted from annual dues.

²⁸ Cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/constitution.html>

²⁹ <http://www.iahr.dk/associations.html>

³⁰ Cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/constitution.html>

ber,³¹ from Australia, pending negotiations about the re-affiliation of the Australian Association for the Study of Religions (also AASR!) to the IAHR.³² By tradition this virtually empty category of individual scholars affiliated to the IAHR has been exempted from annual IAHR dues. Affiliated associations have likewise been exempted from IAHR annual dues, again in contravention of art. 7b of the IAHR Constitution. Yet they are entitled to send one delegate to attend the IAHR IC meetings, be it without voting rights, though their delegates will be granted speaking rights upon request. Their members have no voting rights in IAHR General Assemblies.³³

Four such 'international associations' were admitted as 'affiliates' to the IAHR for the first time at Toronto. They were ESSWE, European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism;³⁴ IACSR, International Association for the Cognitive Science of Religion;³⁵ ISORECEA, International Study of Religion in Eastern and Central Europe Association;³⁶ and ISSRNC, International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture.³⁷ ESSWE and ISORECE, however, have a membership and a field of study that belongs quite clearly to the ambit of European academic scholarship in religions. They fortify the overall position of the EASR in the IAHR. So does IACRS, and to a lesser degree, ISSRNC.

It follows that EASR and its affiliates have therefore an absolute majority in terms of the numbers of votes that may be cast in the IAHR IC meetings: they hold fifty out of the total of ninety-eight votes. The dominant position of European scholarship in religions in the IAHR is, however, even further strengthened and consolidated by a number of other subtle processes.

One is that EASR annual conferences³⁸ have since 2003 become the favourite meeting place and time for the IAHR Executive for its four annual meetings in between the IAHR quinquennial congresses. Having met already in May 2001 at Heeze, The Netherlands, the IAHR Executive gathered again in May 2003 during the 3rd EASR conference at Bergen, Norway; in September 2004 during the 4th EASR conference in Santander, Spain; in September 2006 during the 6th EASR conference at Bucharest, Rumania; in September 2008, during the 8th EASR conference in Brno, Czech Republic; and in September 2009 during the 9th EASR conference in Messina, Italy. And it will meet again in August 2012 at Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden, during the 11th annual EASR conference.³⁹

Another is that this circumambulation of Europe by the IAHR Executive ties in neatly with another crucial series of IAHR meetings in Europe: the mid-term meetings between IAHR congresses of the IAHR-IC and the IAHR Executive. IAHR-IC and the IAHR Executive met in Marburg, Germany, in 1988; in Paris, France, in 1993; in Hildesheim, Germany, in 1998; in Bergen, Norway, in 2003, and in Brno, Czech Republic, in 2008.⁴⁰ No venue and time have as yet been

³¹ Jensen 2010: §4.6; <http://www.iahr.dk/associations.html#individual>. Applications for IAHR individual membership are considered only if a scholar of religions cannot join a national or regional IAHR member society in his or her nation or region.

³² Cf. Platvoet & ter Haar (2010: 16n11) and footnote 42 below for why AASR broke away.

³³ Cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/procedures.html>, Rules 1b, 5b, 5c, 15a.

³⁴ <http://www.esswe.org>

³⁵ <http://www.iacsr.com/Home.html>

³⁶ <http://www.isorecea.net/>

³⁷ <http://www.religionandnature.com/society/>

³⁸ http://easr.eu/past_conferences.html

³⁹ I am grateful to Tim Jensen, IAHR Secretary General, for checking for me the places at which the IAHR Executive met between 2000 and 2011, and will meet in 2012 and 2015.

⁴⁰ Note that in addition, the IAHR Executive met at Brno, Czech Republic, in 1994; at Aarhus, Denmark, in 1996; at Turku, Finland, in 1997; at Brno, Czech Republic in 1999; and at Heeze, The Netherlands, in 2001.

set for the IC and IAHR Executive meetings in 2013. But it is unlikely that the IAHR Executive and IAHR-IC will meet outside Europe in 2013.⁴¹

Conferences at which the IAHR Executive meets become automatically IAHR Special or Regional Conference and receive subvention on that title.⁴² Since 1950, therefore, the IAHR Executive has so far always circumambulated Europe except for the eight IAHR congresses that were held outside Europe.⁴³ And it also convened outside Europe on six other occasions: in Burlington, Vermont, USA, in August 1991 (Pye 1991: 2); in Harare, Zimbabwe, in September 1992 (Pye 1991: 5; 1992; 1996); in Wellington, New Zealand, in December 2002; in Ankara, Turkey, in September 2007; and, most recently, in Thimphu, Bhutan, in 2011.⁴⁴

Lastly, the first EASR General Secretary Tim Jensen (2000-2004) has served as IAHR General Secretary since 2005 and will continue to do so till 2015.⁴⁵

Despite the impressive globalisation drive set in motion by Michael Pye at Marburg in 1988 (cf. Platvoet & Ter Haar 2010: 15-20), complaints that IAHR remains solidly Eurocentric therefore have foundation in fact.⁴⁶ IAHR is Eurocentric by habituation, by EASR voting power in IAHR-IC meetings, and by IAHR poverty. IAHR is financed by quite tiny annual corporate membership dues, which are levelled moreover only on its national member societies. The income derived from them is grossly inadequate both to bring in non-European members to the annual meetings of the IAHR Executive in Europe, and for its European members to travel to meeting places outside Europe.⁴⁷ European and non-European IAHR officers – except those from North America – therefore hardly ever have met face to face at the annual meetings of the IAHR Executive between the congresses. The other modern means to involve them are moreover only sparingly used. As a result, the non-European officers have little or no share in the direction of the affairs of the IAHR.⁴⁸

North America

Developments in North American scholarship in religions have in their own way contributed to

⁴¹ June 2019: IAHR-IC did indeed meet again in Europe in 2013 at Liverpool Hope University during the BASR/EASR conference, 3-6 September 2013; cf. <http://easr.org/member-associations/einzelansicht/article/2013-easr-annual-conference-in-liverpool.html> ; and <http://www.hope.ac.uk/religionmigrationmutation/>: click through to Timetable which lists on Wednesday 4 September, 15.00-17.30: IAHR International Committee Meeting (Eden Building Complex 109). Cf. also: <http://www.hope.ac.uk/religionmigrationmutation/#sthash.6JbQEfwN.dpuf>. And in 2018, it met again in Bern, Switzerland, on June 19 during 16th EASR Annual Conference, 17-21 June; cf. <http://www.easr2018.org/program/>

⁴² Cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/past.html> for the list till 2008

⁴³ Tokyo 1958; Claremont 1965; Winnipeg 1980; Sydney 1985; Mexico City 1995; Durban 2000; Tokyo 2005; Toronto 2010.

⁴⁴ My criticism of IAHR circumambulating Europe has been heard, however, for the IAHR Executive met at UCT, Cape Town, South Africa, on August 1st, 2014 during the 6th AASR Conference in Africa, 30 July-2 August, 2014.

⁴⁵ He was elected IAHR President at Erfurt for the period 2015-2020.

⁴⁶ Strong criticism of IAHR Eurocentrism was voiced at Sydney in 1985 by the Australian Association for the Study of Religions, which disaffiliated for this reason from the IAHR; and at Rome in 1990 by Sung-Hae Kim (1994: 897). She was the 'Coopted Observer' in the IAHR Executive from 1985 to 1990 to meet that other fierce Australian criticism, that of the dismal gender imbalance in the IAHR Executive. In 1992 at Harare, Martin Prozesky (1996: 244) and other African scholars of religions (Hackett 1993: 64-65, 67) were also critical of Western 'unconscious methodological imperialism'.

⁴⁷ Jensen, IAHR General Secretary, reported in the IAHR-IC meeting at Toronto as Acting Treasurer that members of the IAHR Executive on average contributed US\$ 10,000 per year in 2005-2010 to the IAHR funds by having their universities cover the costs of their travel to and fro IAHR conferences and business meetings, or by paying them from their own pockets (Jensen 2010: §4.3).

⁴⁸ It takes a separate article to demonstrate that Tim Jensen as Secretary-General (2005-2015) and President (2015-2020) has significantly reinforced IAHR Eurocentrism.

IAHR Eurocentrist centre-periphery imbalance. North America has become the second major region in the academic study of religions since the 1960s. But it should be noted that the history of North American scholarship in religions, in as far as it was and is affiliated to the IAHR, has been marked in the past few decades by combat over matters of methodology between, on the one hand, the religiously inspired scholarship in religions in the vein of (Protestant) liberal theology, claiming 'autonomy' for History of Religions because of the *sui generis* nature of religion(s), and on the other hand the empirical, contextualising, social-scientific and humanistic approaches that do not privilege religion(s) as object of study and reject that religions ought to be exempted from the usual rules of research when they are studied.⁴⁹

Concern about religiously inspired scholarship of religions has been a recurring feature at IAHR congresses. At the Claremont Congress, Bleeker, IAHR Secretary General from 1950 to 1970, stated that 'the IAHR has always drawn a sharp borderline' between its own 'purely scientific' research and that of e.g. the World Council of Churches and the World Fellowship of Faiths (Bleeker 1968: 4-5). Yet, History of Religions was special for Bleeker, for it studies 'phenomena [...] born from man's encounter with the Holy'. Man therefore has a 'spiritual nature'. And 'religious people all over the world participate' in a *religio perennis*. Religions therefore have 'a transcendental origin' in revelation (Bleeker 1968: 8-9).

In his plenary lecture during the Claremont congress, Wilfred Cantwell Smith explicitly demanded that religious inspiration underlie academic scholarship in religions. He wrote: 'If religion is anything at all, it is something that links the present moment to eternity'. It 'introduce[s] the devotee to something [...] beyond all time'. 'Not to understand this is to have no feel for religious life at all'. Like Eliade, he regarded the study of religions as a 'cosmic' task: it must make the public see that 'every time a person anywhere makes a religious decision, at stake is the final destiny and meaning of humankind' (Smith 1968: 62, 64, 65). He defined 'comparative religion as the study of man in his religious diversity. Through it, a person is striving to become conscious of himself in his fragmented relation to transcendence' (Smith 1968: 72). In another plenary lecture at Claremont, R.N. Dandekar, considered man an 'essentially religious' being. 'Religion is for him a psychological and sociological necessity. Man as a finite being instinctively yearns for the Infinite'. Dandekar deemed 'irreligion [...] positively unnatural' (Dandekar 1968: 90).

This set the scene for the battle over methodology in the academic study of religions between, on the one hand, the religiously inspired scholarship in religions promoted by the American Society for the Study of Religions (ASSR) and the American Academy of Religion (AAR), and on the other hand the naturalist views of the North American Association for the Study of Religions (NAASR). NAASR championed 'the development of a genuine scientific/scholarly approach to the study of religion, free from religious influence' (cf. Martin & Wiebe 2004). At Rome, in 1990, Wiebe called for 'the prohibition of religio-theological debate and discussion' within the IAHR; for 'the clear demarcation between being religious and studying religion'; and for 'unabashed secularised scholarship' that has 'broken free from submission to transcendental authority' (Wiebe 1994: 906-907). Religion should be examined as a historical and cultural datum in exactly the same way as any other historical and cultural data are studied (McCutcheon 1996: 11).

NAASR champions the methodology that was first outlined and promoted by Werblowski in his famous Marburg Statement (cf. Schimmel 1960). Werblowski rejected Bleeker's position that 'the value of religious phenomena can be understood only if we keep in mind that religion is ulti-

⁴⁹ Cf. Platvoet 1994

mately a realization of a transcendent truth'. Acceptance of that truth should therefore be part of the foundation of the (academic) study of religions. Werblowski stipulated, against Bleeker, that '*Religionswissenschaft*⁵⁰ understands itself as a branch of the Humanities', i.e. as an 'anthropological discipline, studying the religious phenomenon as a creation, feature and aspect of human culture'. He demanded that 'awareness of the numinous or the experience of transcendence [...] be studied like all human facts, by the appropriate methods'. Discussion of the absolute value of religion should be relegated to theology and philosophy of religion, and be excluded from the study of religions (Schimmel 1960: 236-237).

ASSR was founded in 1959 and admitted to the IAHR in 1960. ASSR scholars held prominent posts in the IAHR. Herbert W. Schneider (1892-1984) was a founding member of the IAHR. At the IAHR congress at Amsterdam he read a paper in section XI, Phenomenology, on 'The Creation of New Mythologies in Nineteenth Century America and their Historical Significance'.⁵¹ He was instrumental in establishing the link between IAHR and CIPS (*Conseil International de Philosophie et Sciences Humaines*) of UNESCO in January 1951.⁵² He attended the Rome 1955 congress as one of the two delegates of the Committee on History of Religions of the American Council of Learned Societies to the IASHR-IC.⁵³ The ACLS Committee on History of Religions was the IAHR national affiliate for the USA till 1959 when ASSR was founded. Schneider delivered an address as UNESCO delegate at the Rome congress. He was elected Member of the IAHR Executive,⁵⁴ and served as such from 1955⁵⁵ to 1965. He organised the 11th IAHR Congress at Claremont, California, in 1965. Mircea Eliade was IAHR Vice President from 1970 to 1975, as was Joseph M. Kitagawa from 1975 to 1985. Lawrence E. Sullivan served as the first IAHR Deputy Secretary General from 1990 to 1995. ASSR, however, was disaffiliated from the IAHR in 1995 on charges of 'exclusive membership' (Pye 1991: 2), that is of restrictive admission of members (Geertz 1996: 30-31). It seems to have been disbanded in 2004. No traces of it are found on the internet anymore.

NAASR was founded in 1985, during the 15th IAHR congress in Sydney (McCutcheon 1996: 3). It was affiliated to the IAHR in 1990. When AASR had been expelled in 1995, NAASR was 'the only organization from the United States that enjoyed such affiliation'.⁵⁶ That is: NAASR, though an IAHR regional member association for North America, replaced ASSR as the IAHR national affiliate for the USA from 1995 till 2010. It is for this reason that NAASR paid annual dues to the IAHR.

The struggle between AASR/AAR and NAASR is reflected in a way in the history of IAHR congresses in North America also, for only one took place in the USA, that in Claremont in 1965, and two in Canada: those in Winnipeg in 1980, and in Toronto in 2010. However, though it is perhaps tempting, in retrospect, to regard Winnipeg 1980 as the beginning of a battle for suprem-

⁵⁰ *Religionswissenschaft* is the German term for the academic study of religions.

⁵¹ Bleeker, C.J., G.W.J. Drewes & K.A.H. Hidding (eds.) 1951, *Proceedings of the 7th Congress for the History of Religions, Amsterdam, 4th-9th September 1950*. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 183-184

⁵² Schneider was a Fulbright Fellow to France in 1950. He lectured at several French universities, and was an Eranos Lecturer at Ascona, Italy, from 1952 to 1957; cf. <http://archives.lib.siu.edu/?p=creators/creator&id=350>

⁵³ Cf. *supra*, footnote 5 on the change of name, from IASHR to IAHR, at the Rome congress in 1955.

⁵⁴ [Pettazoni, Raffaele, e.a. (eds.)] 1956, *Atti dell'VIII Congresso Internazionale di Storia delle Religioni*. Firenze: G.C. Sanzoni-Editore, 6, 43-45, 79, 84, 85; for Schneider's obituary, cf.

<http://www.nytimes.com/1984/10/24/obituaries/herbert-w-schneider-a-professor.html>

⁵⁵ Though he at first abdicated from this position for some time because it was incompatible with his post at CIPHS/UNESCO.

⁵⁶ <http://www.naasr.com/about.html>

acy in IAHR-affiliated academic scholarship in religions in North America, and Toronto 2010 as its end, for naturalist approaches featured very prominently in Toronto 2010.⁵⁷ But neither is correct. As for Winnipeg 1980, organised by Peter Slater and Donald Wiebe, its proceedings contain no papers critical of the AASR/AAR religiously inspired approach to the study of religions (cf. Slater & Wiebe 1983). That approach still reigned supreme. And NAASR was founded in 1985 only, in Sydney.

Even so, the bell for the battle had been rung already one year before Winnipeg 1980, outside North America, at the IAHR conference at Warsaw, Poland, in 1979. At this conference, Douglas Allen championed an improved version of the phenomenological *Wesenschau*, or ‘eidetic’ intuition, by which scholars of phenomenology of religion claimed they could uncover the ‘invariant core which constitutes the essential meaning of religious phenomena’ (Allen 1983: 23). And Kitagawa (1983: 126) asserted at Warsaw that ‘most historians of religions [...] by now recognize that [...] religious phenomena must be studied as something religious’. But Witold Tyloch, organizer of the conference, described the Polish Society for the Science of Religions as pursuing ‘objective, non-confessional studies of religion in all their historical and contemporary aspects’. ‘Working on the principles of Marxist methodology’, it regarded religion, he said, ‘not as an independent, isolated phenomenon in itself, but rather as a phenomenon in manifold relations with various other areas of social life and culture’. And it considered ‘science of religions as a multi-disciplinary branch of the social and humanistic sciences’ (Tyloch 1983: 10). And the crucial question whether ‘understanding religion requires religious understanding’ was answered by Donald Wiebe with an ‘unequivocal “No!”’ (Wiebe 1983: 297, 308).

IAHR now has three ‘national’ affiliates in North America. Curiously, it has two in Canada: the mainly Anglophone Canadian Society for the Study of Religions (CSSR), founded in 1965, and admitted in 1970; and the Francophone *Société québécoise pour l'étude de la religion* (SQÉR), founded in 1989,⁵⁸ and affiliated to the IAHR in 1990. CSSR has agreed to share its two delegates and voting rights with SQÉR.

Mirabile dictu, in view of past contests on methodology between NAASR and ASSR and AAR; and between IAHR and AAR because of AAR ambitions in the 1990s to found an interreligious World Academy of Religion that threatened IAHR’s position as the global association for scholarship in religions (Pye 1991: 5), the American Academy of Religion (AAR) was affiliated to the IAHR in Toronto in 2010. Most surprisingly, NAASR recommended that it be admitted. As AAR was admitted as the IAHR national member society for the USA, NAASR has needs now reverted to its pre-1995 position of IAHR *regional* member society for North America.

It is clear from the foregoing that NAASR’s relationship with the three North American IAHR *national* member societies, AAR, CSSR and SQÉR, is fundamentally different from that of EASR to its twenty-four IAHR national affiliates in Europe. This is so, not only because of the battle over methodology in the past thirty years between NAASR and ASSR/AAR, but also

⁵⁷ Four (of ten) public lectures discussed and promoted evolutionary, humanistic and cognitive theories of religion. Cf. especially <http://individual.utoronto.ca/yeungsydney/IAHR-2010-Congress-Proceedings-WEB.pdf>, pp. 151-155 for the lectures by David Sloan Wilson, William Arnal, R. Dale Guthrie, and Robert McCauley; and the many facilities and great publicity accorded to the three Related Academic Sessions (*o.c.*, pp. 157-158): the International Association for the Cognitive Science of Religions; MindLab of Aarhus University, Denmark; and in particular the EU-funded Exrel – Explaining Religion, to the dismay and discontent of quite a few prominent participants in this congress. During teas and coffees after the lectures they grumbled about this disproportionate display and celebration of naturalism in the academic study of religions.

⁵⁸ <http://sqer.org/content/view/22/28/>

because there is actually no structural relationship at all between NAASR and AAR, CSSR and SQÉR, except that NAASR has now at last also been granted the position of Related Scholarly Organization by AAR. That entitles NAASR to organise its own sessions during the annual AAR/SBL conventions.⁵⁹

In my view, NAASR is actually at present only a small 'beachhead' of naturalist scholarship in religions in a continent in which institutional constraints allow most scholars of religions to move only slowly and cautiously towards approaches that are less patently religiously inspired. NAASR could establish that beachhead only through its affiliation to, and with the help from like-minded European scholars of religions steering the IAHR. And it can maintain the beachhead because IAHR, by an accident of history, also saw reason, in the past two decades, to establish regional affiliates for Africa, Latin America and South and Southeast Asia, in addition to its national affiliates in these 'regions'. NAASR has found a safe haven in that recent category and can now maintain, and perhaps expand, the beachhead of naturalist scholarship of religions it has established on the continent of North America.⁶⁰

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⁵⁹ It applied for this affiliation to AAR already in 1985, but was accepted as such only in 1998; cf. <http://www.naasr.com/Establishingabeachhead.pdf>

⁶⁰ Pew researches into the changes in the American religious landscape document dramatic changes, e.g. in the rise of the unaffiliated (or 'nones') from 16.1% in 2007 to 22.8% in 2014. That may engender hope for the naturalist paradigm. However, it may take quite a long time for these demographic changes to produce changes at the institutional level; and at the short they may produce a backlash and acrimonious warfare.

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