

Prenotandum: This draft of revision of the AASR Constitution was published in *AASR Bulletin* 32 (May 2010): 6-9

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Dead Wood:

Draft of a Proposed Revision of the *AASR Constitution*

Why revise the AASR Constitution?

The present AASR Constitution was drafted in 1994 as part of the process of applying for affiliation to the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR). Though there is no record in *AASR Newsletter* 4 (November 1995) that the AASR Constitution was actually formally adopted by the first AASR General Meeting in Mexico City on August 6, 1995, we may surmise that it was formally adopted then and so began to serve as AASR Constitution in 1995. Moreover, it was published in *AASR Newsletter* 5 (April 1996), pp. 10-12. It has since also been posted on the AASR website at <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=17>.

The 1995 constitution seems to have sat quietly in these two places for the past fifteen years without being consulted in order to check how it should govern AASR affairs, as is clear from the many discrepancies between the stipulations of the AASR Constitution and current AASR praxis. Moreover, nobody seems to have noticed the gap between rule and praxis, or to have been bothered by it. AASR Constitution 1995 actually seems a dead document with much ‘dead wood’.

A month ago I proposed therefore to the members of the AASR Executive and a few senior AASR members that the AASR Constitution be revised and be brought in line with AASR practices as they developed in the past fifteen year. Several AASR Officers and a few senior AASR members sent comments. They have been incorporated in the draft published below. It is now submitted for critical reading

and amendment to the AASR membership at large. The text below can therefore be further rewritten and refined before it is submitted the AASR General Meeting at Toronto in August for discussion and decision. AASR Members are invited to propose amendments when they feel that more or other revisions are due; or when they feel that some of the revisions proposed are unhelpful. They are invited to argue them. They may send them in to the AASR General Secretary who will put them before the other members of the current AASR Executive and either incorporate them in the revision proposed below, or put them as proposed amendments before the AASR General Meeting at Toronto when it discusses the revision of the AASR Constitution.

The revision proposed is meant to serve two goals: to bring the AASR Constitution in line with AASR praxis as it evolved in the past fifteen years; and to blow life into it again. By this revision all AASR members, and especially the AASR Executive 2010-2015, should be made aware that AASR has a constitution, and that we must either act in accordance with it, or discard it.

DRAFT

AASR Constitution 2010 (REVISED)

1. NAME

The name of the association is the *African Association for the Study of Religions* (AASR). The AASR is affiliated to the *International Association for the History of Religions* (IAHR). The AASR Constitution is modelled after the Constitution of IAHR (which may be subject to modification under article 8 of the IAHR Constitution).

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the African Association for the Study of Religions is

- to promote the academic study of religions in Africa, and
- the study of the religions of Africa worldwide

through the international collaboration of all scholars in Africa and elsewhere whose research has a bearing on the subject.

The AASR aims to stimulate the academic study of religions in Africa

1. by providing a forum for multilateral communications between scholars of the religions of Africa;
2. by facilitating the exchange of resources and information between them;
3. by encouraging the development of linkages and research contacts between scholars and institutions in Africa, as well as between scholars in Africa and those overseas;
4. by developing publishing opportunities particularly for scholars based in Africa;
5. by assisting African scholars to attend academic conferences both in Africa and overseas;
6. by organizing conferences in Africa on the religions of Africa, and panels on the religions of Africa in conferences outside Africa;
7. by maintaining a bulletin, a website [and an e-journal] as major media of communication between AASR members and other scholars of the religions of Africa around the world;
8. by creating and maintaining an online AASR Register of Members;
9. by co-operating with, and enhancing the work of, other African IAHR affiliates, such as the *Association for the Study of Religions in Southern Africa* (ASRSA), the *Nigerian Association for the Study of Religion* (NASR), etc. AASR members are encouraged to join also the IAHR-affiliated associations in their respective countries or regions where such associations exist.

3. MEMBERSHIP

- a. Any scholar with suitable qualifications in the study of the religions of Africa, or in the study of other religions when appointed to an academic institution in Africa, may apply for membership with the AASR. Membership is open to scholars of religions working in the fields of African indigenous religions, Islam, Christianity, new religious movements, as well as other religions occurring on the continent, such as Hinduism and Judaism.
- b. Applications should show evidence of the required qualifications. They may be directed to the AASR General Secretary, the AASR Regional Representative and/or the AASR Officer in charge of maintaining the AASR Register of Members. They may consult about an applicant's qualifications before entering him or her into the online AASR Register of Members.
- c. Membership is terminated by
 1. death
 2. notice of termination of membership by an AASR member to the AASR General Secretary, AASR Regional Representative and/or AASR Officer maintaining the online AASR Register of Members
 3. a decision of the AASR Executive on grounds, made explicit in an electronic or written message, that the member has acted in gross ways against the aims or interests of the AASR or has failed to comply with statutory obligations. The failure to pay membership fees for more than two consecutive years constitutes such a ground.

4. DUES

Members are required to pay an annual membership fee. Its amount will be fixed at the general meetings of the AASR. There are reduced rates for students and the non-salaried. The proceeds will be used to cover the costs of the AASR Bulletin, the website and the e-journal, to support the travel and publications of African scholars, and to assist AASR Officers to attend AASR conferences and AASR General Meetings.

5. MEETINGS

- a. General meetings will be held during the IAHR International Congresses and at AASR conferences whenever these bring together a sufficient number of AASR members.
- b. The AASR will organize a major regional conference in Africa at least once every five years, and preferably two. These conferences may be organized in conjunction with a national or sub-regional IAHR affiliate in Africa
- c. The Executive Committee shall endeavour to meet at least once every two years. A quorum shall be formed when no less than a third of the members of the Executive Committee are present.
- d. The General Secretary shall draw up minutes of the General Meetings and of the meetings of the Executive.
- e. The AASR Treasurer shall publish an annual survey of AASR finances in each May issue of the AASR Bulletin.
- f. The Executive Committee shall publish an account of its policies and its administration of the AASR funds in the AASR Bulletin well in advance of the AASR General Meeting at the occasion of the IAHR Congress.

6. OFFICERS

- a. The officers of the Association who form the Executive Committee shall be:
 - President
 - Vice-President
 - General Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Regional Representatives for West Africa, East and Central Africa, Southern Africa, North and South America, and Europe. Regional Representatives may also hold an additional office on the Executive Committee.
 - Publications Officer
 - Two Editors of the *AASR Bulletin*
 - Webmaster
 - Assistant Webmaster

- Other officers may be added as deemed necessary.
- b. The officers shall be elected for a five-year term. They shall be eligible for one more term in the same office. They shall serve as a rule no more than three consecutive terms in different offices.

7. PROTOCOL GOVERNING ELECTIONS

- a. Both the AASR Executive and AASR members may propose candidates for office.
- b. The AASR Executive appoints a Nominations Committee of AASR members who do not seek office themselves. It may solicit nominations from AASR members. It shall submit its nominations for the next Executive no later than six months before the next elections.
- c. AASR members may nominate counter-candidates for particular offices until one month before the elections. Each counter-nomination must be supported in writing by at least three AASR members. They must also have ascertained that the nominee is willing to serve in the office for which a member is nominated.
- d. The list of candidates proposed by the Nominations Committee must be made public in AASR Bulletin and on the AASR website at least three months before the elections are due. Counter-candidates must be listed on the AASR website for at least one month before the elections.
- e. The elections shall be held during the AASR General Meetings at the quinquennial IAHR Congresses. The AASR members then present shall be held to represent the total body of the AASR members. However, members who cannot travel to the congress may exercise their voting right either in writing by sending in their votes in sealed envelopes to the AASR election committee (These envelopes would be opened and counted only after the members present have cast their votes). Or they may delegate, in writing, their votes to AASR members that attend. These members would then cast, in addition to their own vote, as many extra votes as they have been authorized.

8. CONSTITUTION CHANGES

Changes can be made only by the AASR General Meeting at the recommendation of the AASR Executive.