

Prenotandum; This proposal to restructure the IAHR Executive was published in *AASR Bulletin* 33 (November 2010): 15-29

Jan G. Platvoet
& Gerrie ter Haar

Restructuring the IAHR Executive

Summary

This proposal has been submitted to the IAHR International Committee for discussion and decision in its meeting at Toronto in August 2010 on behalf of the African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR). It proposes that the IAHR Executive be restructured into four functional triads, as set out below. This model allows all officers to be actively involved in the government of the IAHR and in further strengthening and expanding the IAHR in the decades ahead.

The four triads	Their functions
Presidency	overall leadership and long term policy development
Secretariat	the smooth running of IAHR daily affairs
Treasury	(strengthening and reforming) IAHR finances
Communications Unit	providing the IAHR with a dynamic electronic and print communication, <i>ad extra</i> and <i>ad intra</i>

This proposal is not meant as a critique of the achievements of the present and past IAHR Executives. They have actually done an excellent job in globalising the IAHR since it was founded in Amsterdam in 1950, and more especially since 1985,

as we show in a survey of developments since 1950. It is only after detailing these past achievements that we set out why, despite these achievements, we propose that the IAHR Executive should be restructured. Or better, why it should be further restructured, for our historical survey ends by showing that a major structural change was already introduced into the IAHR Executive in 2005 when the number of its functional offices was expanded from six to ten, and the number of its non-functional Members without portfolio reduced from six to two. We propose that the number of Members without portfolio be reduced to zero by structuring the twelve offices into four functional triads, each charged with a distinct task, the duty to develop a program of action for it for their period in office, and the duty to report on what has been achieved in respect of it before the next elections. This structural change is proposed for the purpose of worldwide power sharing: all IAHR officers should be actively involved in the government of the IAHR. It is proposed now because modern communications technology and means of transport provide the means of actively involving all of them, and so of truly globalising the IAHR Executive itself.

The Globalisation of the IAHR, 1950-2005

Past IAHR Executives have done an excellent job in globalizing the academic study of religions beyond its heartland, Northwest Europe.¹ A first intimation of this was the accession of the Japanese Society for the Study of Religions, founded in 1930, in 1955, and the Special IAHR Congress in Tokyo in 1958. The globalization by ‘regional diversification’ (Pye 1994: XIV) began to gather speed, however, from 1980 onwards, when IAHR admitted the Nigerian and South African societies for the study of religions as affiliates at its congress in Winnipeg, Canada,² and held

¹ It is the area in which the first seven international congresses were held: at Paris in 1900, at Basel in 1904, at Oxford in 1908, at Leiden in 1912, [an unnumbered one at Paris in 1923], at Lund in 1929, at Brussels in 1935, at Amsterdam in 1950, at which the International Association for the Study of the History of Religions (IASHR) was founded, and at Rome in 1955, at which its present name was adopted

² In 1975, seventeen scholars of religions from Africa – six from South Africa, four from Nigeria, three from Ghana, two from Uganda; one from Kenya; and one from Malawi – had taken part, for the first time ever, in an IAHR Congress. See Pye & McKenzie 1980: 13-23, 56-58, 83-85, 152, 172-179. [J.G.P., 7.10.2026: I have since discovered that the first African scholar to attend an IAHR conference was Rev. Father Dr. Patrick Kwame Akoi from the then Gold Coast, now Ghana. In 1955 he attended the 8th IAHR quinquennial International Conference at Rome and presented a paper in it. In his opening address Prof. Raffaele Pettazzoni, IAHR President and President of the Congress, extended a special welcome to ‘those [who had] travelled [...] from [as far as] Tokyo, or Chicago, or Ashanti-land’ (cf. Pettazzoni 1956: 30).]

its first congress ‘down under’, at Sydney, Australia, in 1985. An important impetus to IAHR worldwide expansion was the conference at Marburg, Germany, in 1988.³ It reflected on how the academic study of religions might be promoted in regions that had so far, for various reasons, been inhospitable to it: the countries behind the Iron Curtain and China; the Muslim, Roman Catholic and Orthodox worlds; or in which it was as yet poorly organised and isolated, as in the so called ‘Third World’: Africa, Latin America, India, Southeast Asia, Indonesia, etc.

The results of this articulate strategy through planning and counselling and by financial support to regional and special IAHR conferences⁴ is impressive, as is apparent from the list of academic associations from all over the world that have been admitted as IAHR affiliates since 1990. In 1990, at Rome, the Czech, Chinese, Indonesian, and Latin American and Russian associations for the study of religions were affiliated.⁵ They were followed, in 1995 at Mexico City, by the African, Cuban, Indian, New Zealand and Spanish associations. And in 2000, at Durban, by the Austrian,⁶ Brazilian, East African associations, as well as the European association. And in 2005, at Tokyo, by the Greek, Romanian, Slovakian, South & South-east Asian, and Turkish associations. IAHR in addition maintains relations with the South Korean,⁷ Ukrainian and Kenyan associations that are not formally affiliated (yet), as well as with fledgling associations, such as the Russian that need much cuddling and counselling, and with defunct ones that may perhaps be revived, such

³ See Pye 1989b. Marburg was also special in another respect: till 1985, the IAHR International Committee (IC) met only during the IAHR quinquennial congresses. The IAHR-IC met for the first time mid-term in 1988 at Marburg, as it did again in Paris in 1993 (Pye 1989a: 12n1; 1995: 9), and has done since in Hildesheim, Germany, in 1998; in Bergen, Norway, in 2003; and in Brno, Czech Republic, in 2008 (cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/past.html>).

⁴ Cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/pastconf.html>

⁵ As well as the Francophone Canadian *La Société québécoise pour l'étude de la religion*, and the North American Association for the Study of Religion (NAASR) (Pye 1994: xv-xvii), the latter soon ousting ASSR, the American Society for the Study of Religions for not being open to all scholars of religious studies within the USA (cf. Pye 1991: 2; Anonymous 1993: 6).

⁶ The Austrian association was actually re-affiliated after a long lapse. It had been admitted at the 11th IAHR Congress at Claremont, California, USA, in 1965 (Ort 1968a: 145) and represented on the IAHR-IC (International Committee) by Matthias Vereno (Salzburg University) between 1960 and 1965 (Schneider & van Proosdij 1968: 142; Ort 1968b: 149), and T. Michels between 1965 and 1970) (Ort 1968a: 145).

⁷ The South Korean association is also a ‘lapsed’ IAHR affiliate. It was represented on the IAHR Executive from 1960 to 1975 by Sung Bum Yun as Member (Schneider & van Proosdij 1968: 142; Ort 1968a: 144; Ort 1968b: 151; Sharpe 1980: 156), and from 1985 to 1990 by Prof. Sung-Hae Kim as Coopted Observer (Anonymous 1994: x; below footnote 20).

as the Belgian, Cuban, East African, Hungarian and Israeli associations.⁸ If the defunct and fledgling affiliates are counted also, the number of IAHR associated societies has risen now, after Toronto 2010, to forty-six ‘member societies’ – forty-one national and five regional associations – and four ‘affiliated associations and societies’.⁹ The latter four constitute a new category, which was established at Toronto.¹⁰ The globalisation of IAHR is also reflected in its recent quinquennial congresses: Mexico City in 1995; Durban, South Africa, in 2000; and Tokyo, Japan, in 2005. This progressive globalisation is also reflected in the IAHR Executive itself. In order to reflect and promote its growing spread around the globe,¹¹ IAHR executives consisted of five officeholders – the President, two Vice Presidents, the Secretary-General, and the Treasurer – from 1950 to 1990, and a varying number of ‘Associates’ or ‘Members’ without office.¹² In the period 1950-1955, four ‘Associates’ without office were added to the IAHR Executive (Bleeker 1951: 26). In the period 1955-1960 six ‘Members’ without office were elected;¹³ in the period 1960-1965 nine;¹⁴ ten between 1965 and 1970;¹⁵ and ten also between 1970 and 1975;¹⁶

⁸ On the Russian, Belgian, Cuban and Israeli affiliates, cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/newsletter/dues.html>

⁹ Cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/associations.html>. But note that the American Society for the Study of Religions (ASSR) was disaffiliated in 1995 for its restrictive admission policy (Geertz 1996: 30-31); and the Australian Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) discontinued its IAHR affiliation in 2000 because it saw ‘no benefit to our [AASR] members in being members of the IAHR’ (Geertz 1998: 7-8) and deemed the IAHR Eurocentric and lacking gender balance (cf. Geertz 2000: 5-11).

¹⁰ <http://www.iahr.dk/associations.html#society>

¹¹ <http://www.iahr.dk/holders.html>

¹² I am grateful to Tim Jensen, IAHR General Secretary, for sending me a detailed history of the IAHR Executive in an e-mail dd. 22.10.2009.

¹³ For the list cf. Ishizu 1960: 788

¹⁴ In Schneider & van Proosdij (1968: 142) the following nine Members are listed for 1960-1965: A. Brehlich (Italy), Fr. Heiler (Germany), E.O. James (UK), H.L. Jansen (Norway), H.W. Schneider (USA), G. Scholem, (Israel) Sung Bum Yun (South Korea), I. Trencsényi-Waldapfel (Hungary), M. Vereno (Austria)

¹⁵ Ort (1968a: 144-145; 1968b: 151) lists S.G. Brandon (UK), A. Brelich (Italy), W. Harrelson (USA; he resigned and was succeeded by R.M. Grant), F. Heiler (Germany), L. Honko (Finland), H. Ludin Jansen (Norway), T. Michels (Austria), G. Scholem (Israel), Sung Bum Yun (South Korea) and I. Trencsényi-Waldapfel (Hungary). Ort adds that ‘the seats of Belgium and India [were left] vacant until the national groups of these countries would have mentioned new members of the Executive Board’.

¹⁶ Sharpe (1980: 156) lists A. Bausani (Italy), K. Goldammer (Germany), K.A.H. Hidding (The Netherlands), W. Klassen (*sic!*, Canada), H. Ludin Jansen (Norway), T. Michels (Germany), J. Pentikäinen (Finland), H.H. Pressler (India), H. Ringgren (Finland/Sweden), Sung Bum Yun (South Korea), R.J. Zwi

and five Members from 1975 to 1990. In 1990, the office of Deputy General Secretary was instituted.¹⁷ As that raised the number of IAHR Officers to six, the number of Members ‘at large’ and ‘without portfolio’ was also increased to six.¹⁸

Globalisation was reflected among the Officers in particular in the Vice Presidents. Four were Japanese.¹⁹ Three were posted in the USA.²⁰ Another was Mexican.²¹ And again another Spanish.²² The office of Treasurer, till 1990 the stronghold of two Dutch bankers, W.A. Rijk (1950-1964) and H.J. van Lier (1964-1990), was manned, after Armin Geertz (1990-1995), by two North American scholars: Don Wiebe, 1995-1998, and Gary Lease, 1998-2008. Likewise, the office of IAHR President remained the stronghold of scholars posted in European Universities till 2005, when Prof. Rosalind Hackett (University of Tennessee, USA) was elected to serve in that office.

The other part of the IAHR Executive, the Members without office, was even more fervently used to reflect and promote globalisation. In 1955, a ‘Representative

Werblowsky (Israel). Sharpe (1980: 156) adds that from 1975 onwards the IAHR Executive Board will have ‘ten members only – five *ex officio* and five elected’.

¹⁷ *Ad personam* Deputy Secretary-Generals had served informally and formally already in earlier quinquennial periods. L.J.R. Ort assisted Bleeker as secretary from 1960 to 1970, at first informally as Bleeker’s ‘Assistant’ till 1964, when he formally appointed as ‘Deputy Secretary General of the IAHR in order to enable him to deal with certain questions on his own authority’, from 1964 to 1970 (Bleeker 1968b: 162; Ort 1964: 76; 1968a: 144). Eric J. Sharpe acted as Brandon’s secretary from 1970 to 1971 and took over from him as Acting Secretary General after his death. Michael Pye served as ‘Deputy Secretary General’ under Werblowski from 1980 to 1985 (Anonymous 1986: 289), as did Peter Antes under Michael Pye (Anonymous 1994: x; Pye 1994: XVIII) from 1985 to 1990, though no such post existed and they were not elected into it.

¹⁸ Cf. Pye 1993: 19. Two reasons were adduced for the amendment of art. 4c of the IAHR Constitution. One was ‘the informal practice [of the General Secretary being assisted by an *ad personam* Deputy] of the past fifteen years’ [actually since 1960, see note 19]. The other was that an Executive of twelve would allow ‘for wider representation of various regions of the world’. The criticism of the severe gender imbalance in the IAHR Executive (see below note 28) during the Sydney congress in 1985 had caused the IAHR Executive to co-opt Prof. Sung-Hae Kim (South Korea) as ‘observer’ already in 1985. It had thereby expanded the number of Members without portfolio informally already from five to six during the previous period, 1985-1990.

¹⁹ T. Ishizu, 1960-1965; I. Hori, 1965-1970; M. Abe, 1975-1980; Akio Tsukimoto, 2005-2010.

²⁰ Mircea Eliade, 1970-1975; Joseph M. Kitagawa (1975-1980, 1980-1985); Rosalind I.J. Hackett (2000-2005).

²¹ Y. Gonzales Torres, 1995-2000

²² M. Abumalham Mas, 2000-2005.

from the USA', Dr. H. Schneider,²³ and a 'Representative from Japan', Dr. S. Miyamoto, were elected in addition to the four 'Associates' from Europe, bringing the number of members without office to six. In 1960, Swami B.H. Bon Maharaj²⁴ from India was elected as a Member, as were Dr. Sung Bum Yun²⁵ from South Korea and Dr. Hideo Kishimoto²⁶ from Japan (in addition to the Vice President T. Ishizu). In Claremont in 1965, and in Stockholm, in 1970, Prof. Sung Bun Yum was re-elected as a Member (Ort 1968b: 151; Sharpe 1980: 156). The Canadian New Testament scholar Prof. William Klasen was also elected as Member – in addition to Mircea Eliade as Vice President (Sharpe 1980: 156).

²³ Herbert Wallace Schneider (1892-1984) was professor of Religion and Philosophy at Columbia University from 1929 to 1957. He was known for his work in comparative religion and for fostering dialogue among religions. He taught for a year at several French universities in 1950 and served with UNESCO as Head of its Division Philosophy and Humanistic Studies from 1952 to 1956. From 1959 to 1967 he was on the staff of the Graduate School of Claremont College as Professor of Philosophy and as Acting Dean, and more in particular connected with the Blaisdell Institute, the purpose of which was 'to promote deeper understanding and more enlightened relationships among the peoples of the East and the West through the study of the part played by religions in shaping the various culture of the world [...] beyond the traditionally restricted boundaries of the established churches and educational institutions' (Ross 1965: 93). Schneider was active in the American Society for History [sic] of Religions (ASHR) (<http://www.lib.siu.edu/departments/speccoll/scrcphilosophy/schneider>). ASSR, the American Society for the Study of Religions, had been founded in 1959, and been affiliated to the IAHR in 1960 at Marburg. Schneider served as Member of the IAHR Executive from 1955 to 1965, and organised the 11th IAHR Congress in 1965 at Claremont, California, together with Professor K. Morgan (Colgate University, Hamilton [NY], USA), and a local Organising Committee chaired by the President of the Claremont School of Theology, Dr. Ernst C. Colwell (cf. Bleeker 1968a: 4; 1968b: 160, 161; Ort 1968c: 164).

²⁴ Swami Bhakti Hidraya. Bon Maharaj (1901-1980) was the founder and Rector of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy at Vrindaban, India, later Vaisnava Theological University at Agra. He had worked as a Vaisnava missionary in England, Germany, the USA, Japan and Burma. He 'tried to imitate Western intellectual approaches to religion, expecting in the process to convince Westerners of the superiority of Gaudiya Vaisnavism' (Klostermaier 1994). Bleeker (1968b: 161) reported that sadly 'the Indian group seems to have lost much of its energy', meaning that it had collapsed and that he and the Afro-Asian Secretariat (see below note 28) had lost contact with it.

²⁵ Sung Bum Yun (1916-1980) was a graduate of Doshima University in Japan and President of the Methodist Theological Seminary in South Korea. He gained his PhD at Basel University in 1960 under Karl Barth (cf. <http://cskcstudy.org/cskc/board.php?board=introduction1&command=body&no=8>).

²⁶ Kishimoto (1903-1964) was praised by Bleeker and Prince Takahito Makasa for his part in the organisation of the IAHR Congress at Tokyo in 1958, and for chairing 'the special IAHR Afro-Asian Secretariat in Tokyo for the extension of the IAHR in the East'. Kishimoto took an active part in the establishment of associations in India and South Korea and their affiliation to the IAHR at Marburg in 1960. In 1962, he and Prof. Hirai undertook a survey trip to many parts of South East Asia 'for the further expansion of the IAHR in the East' (Bleeker 1968a: 3, 5; 1968b: 156; 157-159; Mikasa 1968: 13-14; Ort 1968a: 146).

When no Japanese scholar served as Vice President after 1980, care was taken to elect one as a Member without office: Prof. Noriyoshi Tamaru in 1980 and 1985; Prof. Michio Araki in 1990 and 1995; and Prof. Akio Tsukimoto in 2000.

When the Nigerian and South(ern) African affiliates were admitted in Winnipeg in 1980, Prof. Jacob Awolalu, of Ibadan University, Nigeria, was elected as a Member. He was elected again in Sydney in 1985.

In 1990 Prof. Razaq 'Deremi Abubakre, of Ilorin University, Nigeria, was the first Muslim scholar to serve on the IAHR Executive as a Member. In 1995, after the demise of apartheid, a second Muslim scholar, Dr. Abdulkader Tayob, of Cape Town University, South Africa, was elected as a Member of the IAHR Executive. So was Prof. Jacob Kehinde Olupona, a Nigerian scholar teaching at the University of California, Davis. He was re-elected in 2000, in Durban, South Africa, together with Dr. Mary Getui, of Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Dr. Paul Morris, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand, and another Muslim scholar, Prof. Alef Theria Wasim, of the State Islamic University at Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

But, however helpful this large Executive was for reflecting and promoting IAHR globalization, as well as for striving after gender balance,²⁷ by 2005 the large number of Members 'without portfolio', or 'at large', was perceived also as unhelpful. Being functionally empty, these positions provided little or no incitement for involvement in IAHR affairs by attending the annual meetings of the IAHR Executive or otherwise.

²⁷ Till 1995, the IAHR Executive scored dismally on gender balance: **1950-1955: 9 male officers: 0 female officer; 1955-1960: 11 : 0; 1960-1965: 12 : 0; 1965-1970: 15 : 0; 1970-1975: 10 : 0; 1975-1980: 10 : 0; 1980-1985: 9 : 1** (Annemarie Schimmel, President, 1980-1990!); **1985-1990: 9 : 2** (Prof. Sung Hae Kim, South Korea, was co-opted as 'observer' to meet the sharp criticism of gender imbalance voiced during the General Assembly at Sydney in 1985); **1990-1995: 10 : 2** (Louise Bäckman and Yotl Gonzales Torres were elected as Members). At the IC-meeting in Paris in 1993, Ursula King drew attention again to the gender imbalance on the IAHR Executive (Anonymous 1993: 2). Her passionate plea that it should be remedied was effective: from 1995 onwards the gender balance on the IAHR Executive improved markedly: **1995-2000: 7 : 5** (Yotl Gonzales Torres, Vice President; Rosalind Hackett, Deputy General Secretary; Giulia Gasparro, Gerrie ter Haar and Helena Helve, Members); **2000-2005: 7 : 5** (Rosalind Hackett, Vice President; Gerrie ter Haar, Deputy General Secretary; Mary Getui, Ingvild S. Gilhus and Alef Theria Wasim, Members); **2005-2010: 7 : 5** (Rosalind Hackett, President; Gerrie ter Haar, Vice-President; Ingvild S. Gilhus, Deputy General Secretary; Morny Joy and Alef Theria Wasim, Members). Only in 2010, at Toronto, was an IAHR Executive elected for **2010-2015** with an equal number of male and female officers: **6 : 6** (Rosalind Hackett, President; Ingvild S. Gilhus, Vice-President; Maria Mar Marcos, Deputy General Secretary; Mariana Shakhnovitch, Deputy Treasurer; Morny Joy, Publications Officer; Satoko Fujiwara, Member) (cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/committee.html>).

Moreover, Members without portfolio who resided at a great distance from where the IAHR Executive met for its annual meetings were usually unable to attend, being posted in universities in countries with weak currencies which could not afford to have them attend a conference in Europe or North America. But even when they did attend,²⁸ they could usually not make significant contributions or exercise real power by virtue of their not having an office. Therefore, in 2005, at Tokyo, the number of Members without portfolio was shrunk to two,²⁹ and the number of ‘functional’ offices was expanded from six to ten by the institution of four new offices: Deputy Treasurer, Membership Secretary, Publications Officer and Internet Officer.³⁰ Michael Pye wrote in 1995: ‘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’ (Pye 1995: 3). And, he adds, in being ‘the only religiously neutral, widely international body devoted to the study of religion’ (Pye 1995: 1, 10).³¹ But, if that is true – as we think it is –, why would we need to restructure the IAHR Executive even further?

Why restructure the IAHR Executive?

The one office which has so far not been globalised is that of General Secretary. It signifies that the original heartland of the IAHR, North-West [Protestant] Europe,

²⁸ In the past few years, the IAHR Executive did however assist Members from countries with weak currencies at times with a subvention for attending its annual meetings.

²⁹ Prof. Morny Joy (University of Calgary, Canada) and Prof. Alef Theria Wasim (State Islamic University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia) were elected as Members without portfolio

³⁰ Prof. Pratap Kumar (University of KwaZulu/Natal, South Africa) served as the first Deputy Treasurer from 2005 to 2008. Prof. Abraham Ivan Khan (University of Toronto, Canada) was (2005-2010) and is (2010-2015) the first Membership Secretary; but this post is now a nominal one and will be abrogated in 2015. Prof. Brian Bocking (University College Cork, Ireland) was elected as the first Publications Officer; in which post Prof. Morny Joy now serves. And Prof. Francisco Diez de Velasco (University of Laguna, Tenerife, Spain) served as the first IAHR Internet Officer from 2005 to 2010, and has been succeeded by Prof. Silas Guerriero for the period 2010-2015.

³¹ These statements were directed against the AAR, American Academy of Religion, which at that time was actively planning to found a World Academy of Religion on the model of the AAR. Like AAR, it would privilege a Christian interreligious perspective and ‘include theological and religiously committed studies’. Unlike the IAHR, it would not be without ‘undue dependence on any one political power or on specific religious bodies’ (cf. Pye 1991: 2, 5, 7). Michael Pye has insisted on several occasions that ‘the IAHR [...] is not a religious body’ (Pye 1992: 1); that ‘the study of religion is not itself a religious undertaking’, but a non-normative, non-theological, but also non-reductive, religiously neutral discipline (Pye 1989: 13-15); and that scholars of religions should therefore practise ‘methodological independence from specific religious standpoints’ (Pye 1996: 39).

still constitutes its centre, be it that it has been enlarged by including North America into it, and to a lesser degree also Japan, as is clear from who were elected to what IAHR offices in the past five decades. The remainder of the IAHR constitutes its ever expanding periphery. Together the two – centre and periphery – constitute a huge achievement that must be admired and applauded. However, the IAHR centre needs to expand further and integrate the present periphery, and new ‘periphery’ must be created. Modern communications technology and means of transport provide the means for these tasks.

The restructuring of the IAHR Executive proposed below is therefore not proposed as a criticism of past or present IAHR policy but in order to suggest how the IAHR Executive may be even better equipped to face its ever more complex task in the quinquennial periods ahead. It does so by a critical assessment of the functionalities of some of the current IAHR offices and by offering a model that eliminates these non-functionalities.

At present, several IAHR offices have no, or very little functional content, despite the 2005 reform. The members without portfolio have no functionality at all. They merely serve the purpose of achieving neat gender and regional balances, i.e. a nominal representation of, in particular, new peripheral associations. The two vice-presidents and the deputy treasurer are merely ‘in waiting’. The office of vice-president seems so far also to have been mostly, or even merely, honorary.

The present division between functional and non-functional posts in the IAHR Executive has grave consequences for centre-periphery relations. A dispassionate look at the composition of the 2005-2010 IAHR Executive reveals that the current heartland of the academic study of religions (Northwest Europe and North America) occupies all the central posts: the three of old – President, General Secretary, Treasurer – and the more recent one of Deputy General Secretary who is in charge of the upcoming IAHR congress. The remaining non-functional posts (the two Vice Presidents, the Deputy Treasurer, the two Members without portfolio) and the auxiliary posts are, moreover, more or less evenly divided between scholars from the heartland affiliations and those representing the new affiliates, located in the ‘fringe’ of the world of the academic study of religions for reasons of distance, language, religion, culture, or history.³²

³² The IAHR ‘fringe’ affiliates are currently those in Eastern Europe and China, in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim worlds, and in Africa, Latin America, India, Southeast Asia, South Korea, and Indonesia.

Perhaps this was more or less inevitably so in the past two decades. It should, however, not remain so. The process of the globalization of the academic study of religions needs to be furthered, deepened and completed by ‘de-centering’ the centre and by making sure that the ‘fringe’ obtains a real share in the offices that bestow the power to steer the IAHR. The modern world of electronic communication offers tools for instant worldwide communication. De-centering the planning of the conferences at which the IAHR Executive annually meets will also be necessary.³³ The present relative financial vitality of the IAHR also needs to be made more secure and possibly to be fundamentally reformed, e.g. also in order to ensure that officers can attend meetings of the IAHR Executive.

To assist in the further globalization, or decentering, of the IAHR we offer a new model that aims to eliminate all non-functionality from the IAHR Executive by grouping its offices into four functional triads. This model allows all twelve officers to be actively involved in the government of the IAHR and in further strengthening and expanding the IAHR in the decades ahead.

The four functional triads

IAHR Presidency

The IAHR President and the two Vice Presidents will form the first functional triad: that of the IAHR Presidency. Without abrogating the distinct offices of President and Vice Presidents, its three members should share the workload of the IAHR Presidency by discerning, as soon as they have been elected, what major tasks in policy development and structural change lie ahead. Four may be noted.

1. One is the ‘North-South’/‘centre-periphery’ relations;
2. Another is how to promote the academic study of religions, as a first priority, in the Muslim world and, secondly, expand the presence of the IAHR in academic institutions in the Muslim, Roman Catholic and Orthodox worlds;
3. A third, huge task is the problem of IAHR affiliation, voting rights and financial dues posed by the change in the kinds of the societies affiliated to the IAHR. Only national societies were affiliated till 1990,³⁴ when ‘regional’ (actually con-

³³ Not only did all annual meetings of the 2005-2010 IAHR Executive meetings take place in Europe during EASR conferences. So did also all half-term meetings of the IAHR International Committee since 1988, as was shown above in footnote 5.

³⁴ Bleeker (1968b: 161) reported in 1965 that IAHR statutes also allowed ‘non-national members’, and that the IAHR-IC had decided at Marburg in 1960 that institutes might fall under that category. So,

tinental) societies began also to be admitted: the Latin American ALER in Rome in 1990, the African AASR in Mexico City in 1995, the European EASR in Durban in 2000, and the South-east Asian SSEASR in Tokyo in 2005. At least one of these, the AASR, is also a global society by the fact that it serves as the worldwide forum for scholars of the religions of Africa. All national and regional affiliates are multidisciplinary in character.

he proposed to the IC at Claremont that three institutes be admitted as IAHR affiliates: the Union for the Study of Great Religions of the Spalding Trusts, Salisbury, UK; the SVD Anthropos Institute; and the Institutum Judaicum Delitzschianum of Münster University, Germany (Ort 1968a: 145; 1968b: 150). All three were clearly religiously inspired institutions and two explicitly promoted dialogue between religions. Their delegates had been invited to attend the IC meeting on 10 September 1965. In ‘a lively discussion’, Werblowsky and Bianchi opposed their affiliation. Werblowsky argued that these institutes could join the national affiliates; and Bianchi stressed the ‘necessity of a scholarly character of such a non-national group’. Cantwell Smith, however, pleaded that the structure of the IAHR be revised, i.e. be made explicitly religious, as he had proposed also in his plenary lecture (Smith 1968). The President, Wiedengren, ended the discussion by concluding that no agreement could be reached and that therefore the admission of these institutes had to be postponed. A special committee (Werblowski, Simon, Brandon, Morgan) was commissioned to study the IAHR Statutes in relation to their affiliation (Ort 1968b: 150). Towards the end of that IC meeting, Cantwell Smith, however, proposed again that another *ad hoc* committee be nominated ‘to consider the structure and working principles of the Association’. It provoked another debate in which Bianchi ‘strongly’ stressed that the IAHR should maintain its the scholarly character and warned that its congresses must not become ‘religious conferences’. This contentious issue was then entrusted also to the special committee already installed and not to the *ad hoc* committee Cantwell Smith had proposed. That defeat caused Cantwell Smith and Morgan to ‘resign from the International Committee’ after the Congress (Ort 1968b: 152-153).

Not only Cantwell Smith but also Bleeker provoked debate on religious inspiration versus scholarly neutrality among participants in the congress. He insisted in his opening address on the one hand that ‘the primary object of the IAHR is purely scientific research’ (Bleeker 1968a: 4), but stated on the other hand also that historians of religions researched ‘phenomena which are unique in a special sense, because they refer to the superhuman, the transcendental, the Holy’. In his view, ‘religion is born from man’s encounter with the Holy’. Religion should therefore not be ‘denatured’ by ‘reducing it to such purely human factors as social or psychological forces’ (Bleeker 1968a: 8). Following Kristensen, he defined ‘the task of the historian of religions’ as ‘to listen attentively and unbiasedly to what the religious man has to tell about his encounter with the Holy’ (Bleeker 1968a: 8-9). Though ‘anthropological’ research of religions is necessary, it cannot open ‘the secret inner room of man’s religious consciousness’, or gain access to the ‘spiritual nature’ all humans have in common, through which religious people all over the world take part in ‘what I would call a *religio perennis*’ (Bleeker 1968a: 9). Bleeker’s position and Cantwell Smith’s proposals caused Jan Zandee (Utrecht University) to express the fear during the General Assembly that the IAHR would desert its tradition of neutral scholarship, and to insist that ‘the so-called “Wahrheitsfrage” [the question whether religion is ‘true’, and which of the religions is ‘true’] should not be raised’ at IAHR congresses (Ort 1968d: 154).

A third type of association is applying now for IAHR affiliation: monodisciplinary and/or mono-thematic societies, promoting a particular approach to the study of religions or focusing on a specific type of religion(s). These are also 'global' associations, for even when they study a specific kind of religion in a specific part of the world, e.g. Western esotericism in Europe, they may be joined by scholars posted in any university who is engaged in its study.³⁵ One example is the International Association for the Cognitive Science of Religion (IACSR, or International Association for the Study of Cognition and Culture?) that will seek affiliation to the IAHR in 2010. Another is the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture (ISSRNC), which is also seeking IAHR affiliation in Toronto.³⁶ A special case is the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE). It may not apply for IAHR affiliation,³⁷ but it uses IAHR congresses for organising its own panels and meetings. The admission of IACSR and ISSRNC, and the intimate link of ESSWE with IAHR, seem to signal a new phase in IAHR history. Its increasingly pluralistic and diverse types of affiliation demand strategic reflection on how the IAHR should be restructured in terms of voting rights and annual dues. Once IACSR and ISSRNC have been admitted, other associations that are neither national nor 'regional', will also seek admission and rapidly change the structure of the IAHR.

Lastly, quite a different problem of affiliation is that posed by AAR seeking some affiliated status to the IAHR. Which is like Rome seeking affiliation to WCC, for AAR has many more members than the IAHR, has a very different financial structure, outstrips IAHR by far in financial vitality, and organises annual conventions whereas IAHR meets only at its quinquennial congresses. Moreover, AAR membership composition³⁸ is of a different kind from that of the IAHR.

³⁵ Cf. Hanegraaff 2006: 3

³⁶ ISSRNC organises a meeting at the IAHR 2010 Congress in Toronto 'in expectation of a new professional affiliation with the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR)'. Cf. <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=927>; e-mail message from Kocku von Stuckrad, dd. 19.01.2010

³⁷ It did actually apply and was admitted as 'affiliate'.

³⁸ 'The American Academy of Religion has over 10,000 members who teach in some 1,000 colleges, universities, seminaries, and schools in North America and abroad. The Academy is dedicated to furthering knowledge of religion and religious institutions. [...] Within a context of free inquiry and critical examination, the Academy welcomes all disciplined reflection on religion – both from within and outside of communities of belief and practice'

(http://www.aarweb.org/About_AAR/Mission_Statement/default.asp)

4. The fourth task of the Presidency triad is to assign distinct tasks, and/or distinct spheres of policy development, to one of its members and/or to one of the other three triads, and oversee the execution of these assignments.

The four tasks noted pose huge challenges to the IAHR Presidency triad, for it is likely that they will change the character of the IAHR in fundamental ways. But they will also provide big opportunities for strengthening and expanding the IAHR.

IAHR Secretariat

The second functional triad may be distinguished around the General Secretary. The Deputy General Secretary has already been assigned the specific task of serving as the ‘academic director’ of the next IAHR quinquennial congress, thereby relieving the General Secretary from a major task. The more recent office of Membership Secretary seems also to have been founded to relieve the General Secretary from another laborious duty, that of keeping in close touch with the IAHR member societies for the purpose of keeping track of changes in their executives and constantly updating data on them, and the means of communication with them. The post of the Membership Secretary seems primarily to serve to alleviate the work burden of the General Secretary.

An important additional task should be the development of policies to incorporate young scholars of religion into the life and work of the IAHR. The strategic aim would be to provide leadership for the IAHR in years to come. Together the three officers in this functional triad would be in charge, as a unit, of the smooth functioning of the daily affairs of the IAHR, as well as the organisation of the next quinquennial congress.

IAHR Treasury

IAHR finances would constitute a third triad of shared reflection and work to further improve and secure the financial position of the IAHR. The ever recurrent problem of member societies not paying their dues, or claiming that they cannot pay them, has been remedied to some degree by the new provisions that only societies who have paid them will have voting rights in the meetings of the International Committee, and that individual members who have not paid their annual membership fee cannot apply for a grant.³⁹ But there is also the repeated call for improving

³⁹ <http://www.iahr.dk/newsletter/dues.html>

IAHR finances by fund raising, e.g. for the African Fund and the Endowment Fund. The General Secretary reported that in 2005,

‘the In-Coming Executive Committee has set up a finance as well as a fundraising sub-committee and seen to it that an IAHR Endowment Fund has been established. The fundraising sub-committee is working on establishing a specific fund-raising ‘task force’ as well as drafting relevant rules and guidelines for the IAHR Endowment Fund’.⁴⁰

It has, however, so far not been reported that the fundraising taskforce was indeed established, neither who sat on it, nor what funds it did gather in for the IAHR or for its Endowment and Africa Funds. We suggest that a treasury triad be installed that reviews thoroughly the financial options of the IAHR, e.g. by a comparative analysis of the financial structure of other international academic societies, both those with fee-paying member societies like the IAHR, and those with fee-paying individual members, such as the AAR and SBL. On the basis of such data and analyses, this triad may develop proposals for a thorough review of the membership contributions to the IAHR in a manner that would secure the financial future of the IAHR.⁴¹ In addition it should try to initiate effective (and realistic) fundraising instead of paying mere lip service to it. It seems that this task is too big for the Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer and that it should be complemented therefore with a third member, e.g. from what are now the ‘members without portfolio’.

IAHR Communications Unit

The fourth triad would consist of the Publications Officer, the Internet Officer and again one of the Members without portfolio. The function(ality) of the Internet Officer is clear, and as yet limited to editing the IAHR website. The IAHR internet site will, however, rapidly become the central means of communication between the IAHR and its member societies, and with the public at large. It may also be developed as the internal means of communication between the officers of the IAHR Executive, and between the members of each of the four triads. In addition, other internet options, such as e-publications, an *IAHR e-Journal* (in addition to *Numen*), an (at least) annual electronic *IAHR e-Bulletin*, discussion forums, mail distributions lists, etc., will soon also have to be developed, some of them overlapping with what seems now the province of the IAHR Publications Officer. The function(ality)

⁴⁰ <http://www.iahr.dk/docs/ebulletinmarch08.pdf>

⁴¹ E.g. reconsider whether, and if so, state expressly why regional affiliates should be exempted from paying annual dues (cf. <http://www.iahr.dk/newsletter/dues.html>).

of the latter is much more opaque now that it is reported that Brill, though it will continue to publish *Numen*, has discontinued the *Numen Book Series* and the *Science of Religions Abstracts*. In addition, it is planned that the printed *IAHR Bulletin* will appear only once every five years, before the quinquennial congresses. It has actually been replaced, for financial reasons, by an occasional electronic *IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement*. Being electronic, that bulletin, however, has the major disadvantage that it may go unnoticed for a long time by most of those who need to read it unless its publication is announced through an e-mail distribution list to all who need to read it.

In view of this, we suggest that also a communication triad be formed consisting of the Internet Officer, the Publication Officer and a third officer from the ‘members without portfolio’.

In conclusion

In brief, if our suggestions are implemented, the IAHR Executive would consist of four functional triads:

- the presidency for overall leadership and long term policy development;
- the secretariat for the smooth running of the daily affairs;
- the treasury for (the reform of) IAHR finances; and
- the communications unit for providing the IAHR with the means for a dynamic electronic and print communication, *ad intra* and *ad extra*.

It is important to add that each triad should deliberate after it has been appointed which goals it needs to achieve in its term of office and develop an action program for achieving them. It should explicitly consider continuity with policies developed in the previous period(s), and the mandates received from the International Committee and/or General Assembly. These programs should be published electronically soon after they have taken office and be discussed in the International Committee when it meets at mid-term for consultation about the next IAHR Congress. In addition, each triad should report towards the end of its term of office what it has, and has not, achieved, preferably shortly before the next Nominations Committee is installed.

Adapting the IAHR Constitution to the changes proposed

In the past, changes in the composition of the IAHR Executive and in the functions of its officers have often been *ad hoc* decisions, approved by either the IAHR Executive itself only, or also by the International Committee, but without the relevant passages of the IAHR Constitution being first reformulated and submitted for approval to the IAHR General Assembly.

Two options are open to forestall that the changes proposed lack a constitutional basis. One is that the necessary constitutional changes are formulated and discussed in the IAHR Executive now in order that they are communicated to the (boards of the) affiliated societies for discussion at short notice. They may then be put before the International Committee for discussion and decision in its meeting in Toronto in August 2010 and be put before General Assembly for approval.

The other option is that the changes proposed are adopted for a trial period of five years, are reviewed in 2015, and if found to be helpful are given a constitutional basis in 2015. Both options seem acceptable.

The following reformulation, italicized and in bold, of the relevant article, 4 c, is offered for discussion, if the restructuring of the IAHR Executive proposed would meet with general approval and if a constitutional basis for it is deemed advisable immediately:

Article 4 (c): ***The Executive Committee is composed of a President and two Vice Presidents; a General Secretary and two Deputy General Secretaries; a Treasurer and two Deputy Treasurers; and a Communications Unit consisting of a Publications Officer, an Internet Officer and a Webmaster. It is organised in four functional triads: the Presidency, the Secretariat, the Treasury and the Communications Unit. These twelve officers*** shall be chosen in such a way as reasonably to reflect various parts of the world where the 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 mem-

bers 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. No one member shall serve in the same office more than two terms and no one member shall serve *as a rule* for a total of more than *three* terms⁴² with or without intervening periods. 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.

References

- Anonymous 1989, 'IAHR (and AASR) Information', in Hayes 1989: 289-293
- Anonymous 1993, 'International Committee of the IAHR: Minutes of the Meeting held in Paris 19.9.1993', in *IAHR Bulletin* 27 (October 1993): 2-7
- Anonymous 1994, 'The Congress: Generalities', in Bianchi 1994: VII-XIII,
- Bianchi, Ugo, 1994, *The Notion of 'Religion' in Comparative Research: Selected Proceedings of the XVIth Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Rome 3rd-8th September, 1990*. Roma: 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider.
- Bleeker, C.J., 1951, 'Congress Report', in Bleeker, Drewes & Hidding 1951: 19-26
- Bleeker, C.J., 1968, 'Opening Address', in Schneider & van Proosdij 1968: 3-12
- 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
- Geertz, Armin, 1996, 'Minutes of the Meeting [of the International Committee], August 9, 1995', in *IAHR Bulletin* 34 (August 1996): 30-37
- Geertz, Armin, 1998, 'Report by the General Secretary', in *IAHR Bulletin* 35 (May 1998): 5-15
- Geertz, Armin, 2000, 'Report by the General Secretary', in *IAHR Bulletin* 36 (July 2000): 5-23

⁴² We propose that the maximum of four terms be abrogated with the proviso that it may be allowed in special, well-argued cases and only for the central offices of President, General Secretary and Treasurer.

- Hanegraaff, Wouter J., 2006, 'The Story of ESSWE', in *ESSWE-Newsletter* 1 (July 2006): 2-4, at http://www.esswe.org/upload/newsletter/newsletter_3.pdf
- Hayes,, Victor C., (ed.) 1989, *Identity Issues and World Religions: Selected Proceedings of the Fifteenth Congress of the International Association for the Histoty of Religions*. Bedford Park [South Australia]: Australian Association for the Study of Religions
- Ishizu, Teruji, *e.a.* (eds.) 1960, *Proceedings of the IXth International Congress for the History of Religions, Tokyo and Kyoto 1958, August 27th – September 9th*. Tokyo: Maruzen
- Klostermaier, Klaus, 1994, 'The Education of Human Emotions: Srila Prabhupada as Spiritual Educator', in *ISKON Communications Journal* 4, 1 (June 1994), at http://www.iskcon.com/icj/4_1/klostermaier.html
- Mikasa, Prince Takahito, 1968, 'Greetings from Japan', in Schneider & van Proosdij 1968: 13-15
- Ort, L.J.R., 1965, 'Study Conference of the IAHR, Strasbourg [France], September 1964', in *Numen* 12, 1: 76-80; also at <http://www.jstor.org/pss/3269320>;
- Ort, L.J.R., 1968a, 'Meeting of the Executive Board of the International Association for the History of Religions [IAHR] on September 8th 1965', in Scheider & van Proosdij 1968: 143-147
- Ort, L.J.R., 1968b, 'Meeting of the International Committee of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) on September 10th 1965', in Schneider & van Proosdij 1968: 148-153
- Ort, L.J.R., 1968c, 'Additional Report on the Activities of the IAHR duting the Period September 1964 – September 1965', in Schneider & van Proosdij 1968: 163-164
- Ort, J.L.R., 1968d, 'General Assembly of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) on September 11th 1965', in Schneider & van Proosdij 1968: 154-155
- [Pettazzoni, Raffaele, *e.a.*] (eds.) 1956, *Atti dell'VIII Congresso Internazionale di Storia delle Religioni*. Firenze: G.C. Sanzoni-Editore
- Platvoet, J.G., J.L. Cox & J.K. Olupona (eds.) 1996, *The Study of Religions in Africa: Past, Present and Prospects*. Cambridge: Roots and Branches
- Pye, Michael, 1989a, 'Cultural and Organisational Perspectives in the Study of Religion', in Pye 1989b: 11-17

- Pye, Michael, (ed.) 1989b, *Marburg Revisited: Institutions and Strategies in the Study of Religion*. Marburg: diagonal-Verlag
- Pye, Michael, 1991, 'Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Committee, Burlington, Vermont, USA, August 9th 1991', in *IAHR Bulletin* 18 (September 1991): 2-6
- Pye, Michael, 1992, 'Letter from the Secretary General', in *IAHR Bulletin* 19 (January 1992): 1
- Pye, Michael, 1993, 'Minutes of a Meeting [of the International Committee of the IAHR] held in Rome on 5.9.1990 at 10 a.m.', in *IAHR Bulletin* 26 (September 1993): 18-22
- Pye, Michael 1994, 'Report by the Secretary General', in Ugo Bianchi (ed.) 2004, *The Notion of 'Religion' in Comparative Research: Selected Proceedings of the XVI IAHR Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Rome, 3rd-8th September, 1990*. Roma: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider
- Pye, Michael, 1995, 'Report for the Period 1990-1995', attached to *IAHR Bulletin* 32 (Special Congress Issue, July/August 1995), 10 pages
- Pye, Michael, 1996, 'Intercultural Strategies and the International Association for the History of Religions', in Plavoet, Cox & Olupona 1996: 37-45
- Pye, Michael, & Peter McKenzie (eds.) 1980, *History of Religions: Proceedings of the Thirteenth Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (Lancaster, 15-22 August)*. Leicester: Black Friars Press
- Ross, Floyd H., 1965, 'News and Notes', in *Philosophy East and West* 15, 1 (January 1965): 93-96; available at <http://www.jstor.org/pss/1397416>; consulted on 9.-10.2010
- Schneider, H.W., & B.A. van Proosdij (eds.) 1968, *Proceedings of the XIth International Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions [...] at Claremont, California, September 6-11, 1965; vol. I: The Impact of Modern Culture on Traditional Religions*. Leiden; Brill, 142)
- Sharpe, Eric J., 1980, 'Report of the Acting Secretary General, Dr. E.J. Sharpe, to the Executive and International Committee', in Pye & McKenzie 1980: 156-160
- Smith, W. Cantwell 1968, "'Traditional Religions and Modern Culture'", in Schneider & van Proosdij 1968: 55-72.