

NETWORK OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

NETWORK NEWSLETTER 11

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**INSTITUT LUTHÉRIEN DE THÉOLOGIE
CAMEROUN**

**MEKANE YESUS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
ETHIOPIA**

**LUTHERAN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
MADAGASCAR**

**SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY
NORWAY**

**LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA**

**MAKUMIRA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
TUMAINI UNIVERSITY, TANZANIA**

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY, UGANDA**

FROM STAVANGER TO KAMPALA: LET US GET GOING!

Consultation in the Network of Theology and Religious Studies is central in terms of planning, implementation and evaluation of the desired scholarly interaction and generation of new knowledge relevant for the 21st century Africa. The present issue of our network newsletter brings to light a briefing of the Network Consultation 2005 in Kampala as follow up of the General Agreement 2000 in Stavanger. Generally our vision and realities show some progress but there have been some obstacles as well. Thanks to our sponsors: Norwegian Missionary Society, School of Mission and Theology and Makerere University.

Foremost I wanted to take a moment to say a hearty thanks to all the institutions for their determined efforts towards the Network as indicated in the report. However it has to be emphasised that the difficult part of the journey towards the goal of a stronger network has just started. There is a need for increasing varieties and numbers of exchange programs, study programs and research collaboration programs. As the new network coordinator I am looking forward to this new challenge as we start together a new phase of our network collaboration with a renewed enthusiasm and commitment. Both at individual and institutional levels we should expect initiatives towards enhancing the network activities.

Secondly on behalf of myself and the network I want to thank our colleague Knut Holter the out-going coordinator and editor of the network newsletter. I assure him that we all have enjoyed his tenure with the network. We appreciate for availing us the opportunity to launch the network. Thank you for the support, guidance and encouragement he has provided our network from the start and during the whole time thereafter. We ask him to keep in touch because his resourcefulness is vital to success and growth of the network.

Finally in March 2006 Makumira University College will host the first one week seminar on 'Africanisation of Pastoral Care' a small scale network collaboration project together with the School of Mission and Theology and Mekane Yesus Seminary.

Peter L. Kimilike

REPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND NETWORK CONSULTATION KAMPALA, 24.-28. NOVEMBER, 2005

More or less exactly five years after the launching of the Network of Theology and Religious Studies in Stavanger (Norway) in November 2000, delegates from all seven partner institutions met for an international conference and network consultation at Makerere University in Kampala (Uganda) from 24th to 28th November 2005: Institut Luthérien de Théologie, Meiganga, Cameroun; Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Lutheran Graduate School of Theology, Fianarantsoa, Madagascar; School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway; Lutheran Theological Institute, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa; Makumira University College of Tumaini University, Usa River, Tanzania; Department of Religious Studies at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda.

The underlying idea of the meeting was to strengthen the collaboration within the network, both from academic and organisational sides, and the meeting was made possible through a substantial grant from the Norwegian Missionary Society, but also by some economic support from Makerere University and the School of Mission and Theology (Norway). The meeting took place at the beautiful campus of Makerere University, and on one of the days there was an excursion to the Royal tombs, the Bahai temple outside Kampala, and to the source of the Nile.

The meeting was divided in two parts. First, a scholarly conference (24-26 November), aiming at developing and disseminating new knowledge related to our network's focus on theological and religious studies in Africa. And then, a network consultation (28 November), aiming at finding better ways of collaboration within the network.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AFRICAN HERMENEUTICS

The theme of the conference was "Interpreting Classical Religious Texts in Contemporary Africa", and the aim was to describe and analyse major trends in contemporary African hermeneutics. As such the conference proceeded from the major collaborative research project of the network so far, the "Africanisation of Biblical Studies Project", whose three doctoral students (Uganda, Madagascar,

Tanzania) also participated at the conference with papers related to their research. Most of the other papers, too, reflected the Judeo-Christian tradition, but there were also some papers on African Traditional Religion, Islam and Hinduism.

All seven network institutions were represented with papers; most, for obvious reasons, from the host institution, Makerere University. In addition there was a key note paper by Professor Jesse Mugambi from Nairobi University, and also papers from the South African promoters of the three doctoral students in the Africanisation project. In a sum, no less than 24 papers were presented, by scholars from eight countries:

1. Jesse Mugambi (Nairobi University, Kenya): What is a 'classical religious text' and what is 'contemporary Africa'?
2. Knut Holter (School of Mission and Theology, Norway): Religious texts in critical contexts: The interpretation of classical religious texts in contemporary African academia.
3. Baard Maeland (School of Mission and Theology, Norway): Interpreting strange texts: Hermeneutics as distance overcoming.
4. Deusdedit Nkurunziza (Makerere University, Uganda): African Hermeneutics in a global context.
5. Professor A.B.T Byaruhanga Akiiki (Makerere University, Uganda): Reading African Traditional Religion in contemporary Africa, (ATR as an event): an epistemological approach.
6. Serapio Kabazzi-Kisirinya (Makerere University, Uganda): Reading religious texts at Makerere University.
7. Medard Rugyendo (Makerere University, Uganda): Reading Anglican Provincial Synodal texts.
8. Musawenkosi Biyela (Lutheran Theological Institute, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa): Re-inventing the Kairos Document: Children, do you have any fish?
9. Gerard Banura (Makerere University, Uganda): Reading Catholic religious legal texts in contemporary Africa.
10. Manuel J.K. Muranga (Makerere University, Uganda): Christian prayer and hymn texts in English
11. Peter C. Matovu (Makerere University, Uganda): The history of the Orthodox church in Uganda.
12. Abdisa Etana (Mekane Yesus Theological seminary, Ethiopia): Reading the Bible in Ethiopia.
13. Tugume Lubowa Hassan (Makerere University, Uganda): Reading Islamic classical texts in contemporary Africa.
14. Chandrakant Bhatt (Makerere University, Uganda) Reading Hindu religious texts in contemporary Africa.

15. Mariette Razivelo (Lutheran Graduate School of Theology, Madagascar): The life giving spirit vis-à-vis the Malagasy belief in ancestors.
16. Willie van Heerden (University of South Africa, South Africa): 'It is on the old mat that one weaves the Next one': The dialogue between African proverbs and Bible texts.
17. Sylvester B. Kahakwa (Makumira University College, Tanzania): Reading African religion in contemporary Africa: A study of its impact and contribution towards an African Christianity
18. Peter Kimilike (Makumira University College, Tanzania): 'The Poor are not us': An exploration into the transforming possibilities of Old Testament and African proverbs on poverty.
19. Philip Lokel (Makerere University, Uganda): Moses and his Cushite wife: Reading Numbers 12:1 with undergraduate students of Makerere University.
20. Georges Razafindrakoto (Lutheran Graduate School of Theology, Madagascar): The Old Testament outside the realm of the church: A case study for Madagascar.
21. Magdel LeRoux (University of South Africa, South Africa): The people of the book in Southern Africa.
22. Madipoane Masenya (University of South Africa, South Africa): Killed by AIDS and buried by religion: African female bodies in crisis.
23. Baba Tonga (Lutheran Theological Institute, Cameroon): Paul's collection: From food relief to church unity.
24. Helen Nambalirwa (Makerere University, Uganda): An African interpretation of biblical 'shalom'.

After each paper followed a discussion, and the plan is to publish them in a conference volume, hopefully to be used in our network institutions. Professors Serapio Kabazzi-Kisirinya (Uganda) and Knut Holter (Norway) will serve as editors, and the book will be published by Acton Publishers (Nairobi), and possibly also by a western-based publishing house.

NETWORK CONSULTATION

The last day of the meeting was set aside for a discussion of the experiences so far – and visions for the future – for the network:

1. Introduction

The network co-ordinator gave a brief historical survey of the launching and first five years of the network, and then each institution gave reports about

recent developments with regard to student numbers, study programs, and research.

2. Research collaboration within the network

One should here distinguish between large scale and small scale projects of research collaboration.

- The network has till now had one large scale project, the “Africanisation of Biblical Studies Project”, where three doctoral students from Madagascar, Tanzania and Uganda interpret the Old Testament from various African perspectives. The project is funded by NUFU, the Norwegian Council of Higher Education, and in addition to the main partners of that particular project, Makerere University (Kampala) and the School of Mission and Theology (Stavanger), the project is linked up to the University of South Africa (Pretoria), with three promoters from there.
- As far as small scale projects are concerned, little has been done till now. However, there are signs of researchers in the network institutions who now establish collaborative research projects, and the network consultation very much encourages this to continue.

3. Exchange programs within the network

There are a few exchange programs, both for students and lecturers, in both cases both North>South and South>North. It was argued that these programs must continue, but it was also pointed out that – in spite of difficulties of finding funding for this kind of exchange – that there is an obvious need for South>South programs within the network.

4. Infrastructure development: collaboration within the network

Two issues were raised here:

- The library situation: the network must continue its efforts of finding means of more interaction with regard to library services.
- The Norwegian Missionary Society has funded a textbook program, enabling the School of Mission and Theology to invite senior academic staff from some of the network institutions to Stavanger to do research for – and write – a textbook. The consultation agreed that there is a strong need for such and similar programs.

5. Organisational structure of the network

There is a need for a strengthening of the organisational structure of the network. To meet this need, it was agreed that:

- Each network institution should appoint a local network co-ordinator.
- The Network Newsletter should continue.

Knut Holter (School of Mission and Theology, Norway) has served as co-ordinator for the network from 2001 to 2005. Peter Lechion Kimilike (Makumira University College, Tanzania) was elected new network co-ordinator, for the period 2006 to 2008. Kimilike's e-mail address is: kipeter@hotmail.com

6. Other questions related to the network

Throughout the last four years, the major research project of the network – the Africanisation of Biblical Studies Project – has collaborated closely with the Department of Old Testament, University of South Africa (Unisa). The collaboration will continue, as the three doctoral students of the project will be appointed research associates at Unisa after their graduation. Based on the good experiences with Unisa, it was agreed to invite the School of Religion and Theology at Unisa to join the network as its eighth partner institution.

Stavanger, February 20, 2006

Knut Holter, network co-ordinator 2001-2005

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