

Network of Theology and Religious Studies

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Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary, Ethiopia
Lutheran Graduate School of Theology, Madagascar
School of Mission and Theology, Norway
Lutheran Theological Institute, South Africa
Makumira University College, Tumaini University,
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The fourth year

We are now well into the fourth year of our network cooperation. When we met in Stavanger back in 2000 to launch the network, we hoped to be able to meet again after three years. It has been difficult to find funding for a new consultation, but I hope that we will be able to do something within the next year.

In the meantime, the various programs of our network go on, as Rev Peter L. Kimilike's report from Tanzania so vividly demonstrates.

Knut Holter

Network of Theology and Religious Studies Experiences and Perspectives from Tanzania

Makumira University College of Tumaini University (MUCO) in Tanzania has been part of the Network of Theology and Religious Studies from the launching of the network back in 2000, and our experiences are related to exchange of students and research cooperation.

Exchange of students

Under the network short-term exchange program MUCO has managed to have a one month visit by a group of three students from the School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger (MHS) in 2001. Another group of students from the MHS is expected this August 2004. They will also stay for one month and participate in classes for topics of their choice. The period of stay is a bit short, but the impression made on both the students and the community during their stay at MUCO is tremendous. For instance, almost four years have passed since the last visit, but the communication between the students is still very live. The recommendation for this short-term exchange program is to have its time extended at least to one full semester. We think from our perspective it can benefit the students even more if they can take with us full courses of their choice and the credits of which can be transferred to the MHS.

For the last four academic years the network's long-term exchange program has continued to be utilized by MUCO. Since 2000/01 six students were invited to pursue the two-year Masters of Philosophy in Theology at the MHS. This year also one student will go to Norway for the two-year Masters program. From our perspective this program has been very effective and promising in strengthening the link between the two institutions. However, the challenge for the future of this link also is to have it centralized at MUCO with respect to the procedures of processing of applications to be considered by the MHS. This link will help to make recommendation and follow-up of the progress of the students both for the home institution in Tanzania and after they graduate at the MHS. So far the preceding responsibilities had been left to the individual dioceses that have no recognition of the Higher Education Accreditation Council of Tanzania to render such services.

The MHS Alumni in Tanzania Seminar

MUCO in collaboration with the MHS on 9th March 2004 organised a one day seminar which brought together the latter's alumni of Masters of Philosophy in Tanzania at Makumira campus. All the eight Tanzanian graduates attended the seminar (for more details, cf. *Network Newsletter* 7 (2004) pp. 3-7). Prof Knut Holter and Ph.D.-student Ingeborg Kvammen represented Norway. The

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania that runs the MUCO was represented by its Deputy General Secretary for Mission and Evangelism Rev Ambele Mwaipopo, and MUCO was represented by Rev Lechion Peter Kimilike. The significant thing in this gathering to the network is the fact that all the graduates from the MHS in Norway were serving in Tanzania from the time of their return from Norway. This was the major point for the Norwegian staff development assistance to developing countries like Tanzania.

The evaluation of the seminar of the graduates' training experience in relation to their services in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania significantly pointed to the valuable accomplishment of the network training program both at the individual level and to the church at large in Tanzania. The range of their services and activities was wide and varied among them were an assistant to the bishop, a director of planning and development, a rector of a seminary, two district pastors one of whom the first female district pastor in the ELCT, a lecturer of a Bible college, a parish pastor and lecturer at the university. These services indicate that the network graduates are welcome and competent in their dioceses and the church but also are good ambassadors of the training institutions. The main challenge is on the lack of resources to meet the high demand for trained staff in relation to the internal and external mission area of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. The external mission area covers Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. Another challenge is to look for ways to organize local alumni meetings in order to keep in touch.

Research Cooperation

MUCO is among the participants in the sandwich 'Africanisation of Biblical Studies Project' which runs into its second year in August 2004 (cf. *Network Newsletter* 6 (2003) p. 2). Its D.Th.-student Rev Lechion Peter Kimilike visited MHS in Norway in the fall terms 2002 and 2003 (together with the two other D.Th.-students in the project, Fr. Phillip Lokel, Makerere University, Uganda, and Rev Georges Razafindrakoto, Lutheran Graduate School of Theology, Madagascar). From August to the end of November 2004 they are scheduled to do part of their research in South Africa (University of South Africa) under a closer contact with their main promoters of the individual projects. The rest of the time each student spends time doing research within the home institutions respectively under long-distance supervision by the promoters.

The communication between Rev Kimilike and his promoters, Assoc Prof Madipoane Masenya in Pretoria and Prof Knut Holter in Stavanger has been prompt. Valuable commends and encouragements received have given much impetus to the project in terms of commitment and interest on the part of the student. Also the library copying services at MHS have been prompt and efficient with regard to the research material requested from them. With respect to the home institution, MUCO has given ample cooperation, time and

opportunity to concentrate with the research. An office with internet facility has been ready for the project from mid-December 2003. Also travel arrangements, accommodation, the upkeep stipends and other logistical support have been up to date from all ends.

The following speaking and writing engagements related to the research should be mentioned:

- Stavanger Standup Research, 24.09.2003: Topic: *African and Old Testament Poverty Proverbs*. Rev Kimilike presented a short talk explaining why he thinks the proverbs on poverty in the Bible can influence the development in the poor countries in a good if the interpretation is based on African rather Western tradition.
- In April 2004 the MUCO second and third year bachelors program invited Kimilike to discuss about poverty with the title: *The Challenge of Poverty in Tanzania: Reflections on some transforming possibilities*. Due to demand by the public the paper was translated into Kiswahili language and published by a monthly *Taswira ya Maisha (Life Visions)* magazine in May 2004.
- On 10.03.03 the MUCO Colloquium Kimilike presented a paper: *'After God creates, humankind recreates': Reflections on the teaching on work as contained in Hebrew Bible and African Proverbs*. This paper is a contribution to the 'African Narrative Readings of the Bible: Essays in Honour of Prof John Mbiti' project edited by Prof Justin U. Ukpong and Prof Madipoane J Masenya.
- Participation in the main project's scheduled seminars and annual colloquiums have helped to work together with colleagues and co-promoters to improve the sub-project with regard to the overall perspective of the 'Africanisation of Biblical Studies'.

The major advantage of the sandwich modelled research is the student's enormous exposure possibilities to the research context in the home institution and scholarly context in use of full fledged research facilities in Norway and South Africa. Also there is a possibility to limit the foreign cultural crisis on the student because the stay abroad is brief. More important, the project has a greater chance of developing and strengthening cooperation efforts and unity among the three Eastern and Central African religious and theological institutions in the utilisation of their available scarce resources for sustainable development initiatives in the region. The Kaguru (Tanzania) proverb to this effect is *Mtoa mbasi na ulawilo* (One who gives a proverb should be able to correctly interpret it).

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