

IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement

September 2024



1 - From the IXth International Congress for the History of Religions, Tokyo and Kyoto, 1958. Our quinquennial congresses were referred to as "International Congress" until the Lancaster Congress in 1975, hence the abbreviation "ICHR." At that time, Congress hosts provided "Congress badges" instead of mugs or T-shirts. This badge is cloisonné ware, known as "shippo-yaki" in Japanese.

Preface

To Officers and Individual Members of IAHR Member Associations/Societies and Affiliates

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this message finds you well.

As our 23rd World Congress is now less than a year away, this e-Bulletin Supplement brings you important updates about the Congress, including a reminder of the Call for Papers and Films (#1) and an announcement regarding expanded travel bursaries (#2).

In addition, this bulletin includes information regarding:

- The nominations for the IAHR Executive Committee 2025-2030 (#3)
- Call for IAHR Summer/Winter School 2025-2026 (#4)
- Introducing the IAHR Guidelines for Public Outreach (#5)
- Special journal subscription offer for graduate students (#6)
- IAHR Best Graduate Student Paper Award Program (#7)
- Report on the IAHR Regional Conference in Nairobi, 2023 (#8)
- Report on the IAHR Regional Conference in Vilnius, 2023 (#9)
- Report on the IAHR Special Conference in Tokyo, 2023 (#10)
- Report on the IAHR Special Conference in Tirana, 2024 (#11)

Thanks go to Dr. Nathanael J. Homewood, Prof. Rasa Pranskevičiūtė-Amoson and Prof. Agata Rejowska for their excellent conference reports.

Please share this IAHR e - Bulletin Supplement, September 2024, with the members of your respective national or regional IAHR member associations and societies. It is crucial for the effective functioning of the IAHR that not only officers but also all individual members of your organization are continuously informed and updated on IAHR-related matters.

If you have any questions regarding the IAHR, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully yours,

Satoko Fujiwara, IAHR Secretary General

Tokyo, September 25, 2024

1. The 23rd World Congress of the IAHR: Reminder of the Call for Papers and Films

Our next Quinquennial Congress in Kraków, Poland, August 24–30, 2025, will be the first World Congress since Erfurt in 2015, as the Congress planned for 2020 was canceled due to COVID-19. The hosts of the Jagiellonian University and the Polish Society for the Study of Religions will warmly welcome you to participate in this exciting Congress in person.

The Academic Program Committee has been working hard to arrange [keynote sessions](#) and review submissions. Thanks to their efforts, we believe that the Congress will be a truly exciting event, offering established scholars the opportunity to renew and expand networks, and young scholars the invaluable chance to experience the broadness, intellectual depth, and welcoming atmosphere of the IAHR community.

The deadline for closed panels, roundtables, individual papers and films is December 1, 2024. However, please do not wait until the last moment to submit. The host and the Academic Program Committee appreciate earlier submissions, which will be reviewed within three months from submission.

Please carefully read the [guidelines](#) and [review criteria](#) if you have not done so already. The description of the main theme and subthemes of the Congress is also available in [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

We strongly encourage everyone to contribute to making this Congress a vibrant, diverse, and intellectually stimulating event. Your early submission will help us ensure an engaging and well-rounded program for all attendees!

Useful links:

Call for Panels & Papers: <https://iahr2025.org/call-for-panels-papers/>

Registration & submission: <https://www.konferencje-uj.pl/?lang=en&go2rej=1&kid=368>

Descriptions of open panels: <https://iahr2025.org/call-for-panels-papers/open-panels/>

Descriptions of streams: <https://iahr2025.org/call-for-panels-papers/#streams>

Important dates: <https://iahr2025.org/registration/important-dates/>



2. Travel Bursaries for Participants of the 2025 World Congress and International Committee Meeting Delegates

To ensure the diversity of the 2025 World Congress, the IAHR and the Kraków host have expanded their travel bursaries to a total of 62 recipients.

Each individual may apply for travel bursaries under only one of the following four funding schemes:

- A) Delegates to the 2025 IAHR International Committee (IC) Meeting, which will be held during the Congress
- B) Regular participants in the Congress (offered by IAHR)
- C) Ph.D. candidates participating in the Congress
- D) Regular participants in the Congress (offered by Kraków host)

Individual bursaries are not intended to cover the total costs for attendance at the Congress. They can only be redeemed against travel to the conference site or accommodation costs. No other expenses or costs will be reimbursed.

Reimbursement will take place only after the conference upon presentation of the original documents (flight, train, or bus tickets, and accommodation or hotel receipts). In the event that the applicant spends less than the maximum awarded amount, the bursary will cover only the actual costs incurred.

The deadline for applications is 10th February 2025. The documents should be sent to iahr2025@uj.edu.pl. Applications with missing information/documents will be considered incomplete and will not be processed.

A) IAHR partial travel grants for delegates to the 2025 IAHR International Committee (IC) Meeting

The IAHR is offering a total of 30 partial travel grants to delegates of its constituent national and regional societies who participate in the International Committee (IC) meeting in Krakow.

The partial travel grants will be distributed as follows:

- 20 partial travel grants of up to EUR 1000 for delegates coming from countries outside of Europe.
- 10 partial travel grants of up to EUR 500 for delegates from European countries.

The conditions for applying for an IAHR partial travel grant for IC delegates are the following:

- The person applying has been officially selected as a delegate to the IC by an IAHR constituent national or regional society in good standing. Two delegates from the same society cannot each apply for a grant. However, they can, if they choose, share a single grant in the way they consider most appropriate.
- The person applying can reasonably demonstrate that they have looked for other sources of financing in addition to the IAHR partial travel grant.

- The payment of the grant is conditional on their in-person participation in the IC meeting.

Should the number of applications exceed the available travel grants, priority will be given to scholars from low-income countries.*

Applicants are required to submit confirmation of their role as official delegates of an IAHR constituent national or regional society.

B) Partial travel grants for participants in the 2025 World Congress in Kraków

The IAHR is offering a total of 17 partial travel grants of up to EUR 1000 each for scholars from low-income countries* who are presenting a paper or participating in a roundtable at the 2025 IAHR World Congress in Krakow.

The conditions for applying for an IAHR partial travel grant for scholars from low-income countries are the following:

- The applicant must be affiliated with an academic institution in a low-income country.*
- The applicant must be a member of a national or regional association or society of the IAHR or a member of an IAHR affiliated association or society in good standing.
- The applicant must have a paper accepted for the conference or participate in a roundtable discussion.

Should the number of applications exceed the number of available grants, priority will be accorded to junior scholars.

Applicants are required to submit

- An academic CV (500 words)
- A letter of recommendation from an officer within a national or regional association of the IAHR or within an IAHR affiliated association or society.
- Ph.D. candidates applying for this grant are required

C) Partial travel grants for Ph.D. candidates participating in the 2025 World Congress in Kraków

The IAHR is offering a total of 10 partial travel grants of up to EUR 500 each to Ph.D. candidates who are presenting a paper or participating in a roundtable at the 2025 IAHR World Congress in Kraków. Ph.D. candidates can apply to this scheme independent of the country of the institutions to which they are affiliated.

The conditions for applying for an IAHR partial travel grant for Ph.D. candidates are the following:

- The applicant must be affiliated with an academic institution as a Ph.D. candidate.
- The applicant must be a member of a national or regional association or society of the IAHR, or a member of an IAHR-affiliated association or society in good standing.

- The applicant must have a paper accepted for the conference or be participating in a roundtable discussion.

Applicants are required to submit

- An academic CV (500 words)
- A letter of recommendation from an officer within a national or regional association of the IAHR or within an IAHR affiliated association or society.
- A letter of support from their academic supervisor or a senior scholar in their research field endorsing the quality of their application.

D) Local Host bursaries for scholars presenting at the Congress

1. Individual bursaries are not intended to cover the total costs for attendance at the IAHR Congress. They can be redeemed against the registration fee, the travel expenses to the conference site (Kraków), or the accommodation. Bursaries are paid only to scholars attending in presence.

2. Reimbursement will take place only after the conference upon presentation of the original documents (e.g., receipt of registration fee, flight/train/bus tickets, hotel receipt). In the case that less than granted amount is spent by the applicant, the bursary amount paid will correspond to the actual costs incurred.

3. The applicant must be a member of a national or regional association or society of the IAHR or a member of an IAHR affiliated association or society

4. The applicant must have a paper or panel accepted for the conference.

5. Priority will be given to delegates from low-income countries and Ukraine. In order to apply, the applicant must send an email stating the details of their accepted paper/panel as well as:

1. An academic CV (500 words)
2. A letter of recommendation from an officer within a national or regional association of the IAHR or within an IAHR affiliated association or society.
3. Students/PhD students must provide a letter of support from his/her academic supervisor or a senior scholar in their research field endorsing the quality of his/her application.

*Low income countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

3. Nominations for the IAHR Executive Committee 2025-2030

On December 15, 2023, in Tokyo, the IAHR Executive Committee appointed an IAHR Nominating Committee composed of Prof. Mar Marcos (Chair), Prof. Gregory Alles, Prof. Carole Cusack, Prof. Yoshitsugu Sawai, and Prof. Johan Strijdom. The committee's task was to submit nominations for the next Executive Committee (2025 - 2030) to the members of the International Committee, in accordance with the IAHR Constitution § 4c and the rules for the nomination procedure (cf. <http://www.iahrweb.org/nominations.php>).

The Nominating Committee submitted its nominations on September 4, 2024. The candidates nominated by the committee are as follows:

President: Satoko Fujiwara (Japan)

Vice-Presidents: Milda Ališauskienė (Lithuania)

Amarjiva Lochan (India)

Secretary General: Andrea Rota (Norway)

Deputy Secretary General: Aleš Črnič (Slovenia)

Treasurer: Amy Allocco (USA)

Deputy Treasurer: David Thurfjell (Sweden)

Publications Officer: Gritt Klinkhammer (Germany)

Further members: Blanca Solares Altamirano (Mexico)

Denzil Chetty (South Africa)

Aaron W. Hughes (Canada)

Will Sweetman (New Zealand)

According to the aforementioned § 4c (and the rules for the nomination procedure), "Members of the International Committee may propose alternative nominations not less than three months prior to each quinquennial 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."

I therefore urge members of the International Committee who wish to propose alternative nominations to do so by e - mailing the IAHR Secretary General no later than **May 23, 2025**.

On behalf of the IAHR Executive Committee, I extend my warmest greetings and sincere thanks to the members of the Nominating Committee for their excellent service to the IAHR.

4. Call for IAHR Summer/Winter School Status & Grant 2025-2026

The IAHR aims to promote the academic study of religions by fostering international collaboration among scholars within and across its Member and Affiliate associations engaged in the historical, social, and comparative study of religions. The IAHR recognizes the importance of contributing to the future of the study of religions by supporting young researchers and strengthening their academic communities. To this end, it provides spaces for their meetings in an atmosphere of interdisciplinary knowledge exchange, discussion, and cooperation. Therefore, the IAHR will introduce the IAHR Summer/Winter School Status & Grant starting in 2025/26.

An IAHR Summer/Winter School consists of a series of lectures, seminars, and other academic activities organized by an IAHR Member or Affiliated association, in collaboration with a study and/or research institution. It takes place over several days to a few weeks during the summer or winter break. Students can attend the school as part of an academic program or for personal or professional development. The IAHR supports one Summer/Winter School per year with a grant of up to 5000 EUR.

A member or group of members from one or more IAHR Member or Affiliate associations in good standing is eligible to apply. The application must be submitted in the name of the Member or Affiliate association(s) and with its support.

For detailed information, please visit the [“Grants/Support” page](#) of our website.

The application for a Summer/Winter School that will take place between December 2025 and November 2026 will **open on November 1, 2024 and close on October 31, 2025**.

5. Introducing the IAHR Guidelines for Public Outreach

Through the new IAHR Summer/Winter School program, as well as the yearly Regional/Special Conferences, the IAHR is increasing opportunities to reach out to our individual members and the public to foster the academic study of religion.

The current Executive Committee, drawing from their collective experiences in supporting the hosts of our Regional/Special conferences, recognized the need to clarify the type of academic study of religion we seek to promote. This clarification involves breaking down the phrase “The IAHR is not a forum for confessional, apologetical, or other similar concerns” in Article 1 of our constitution.

During their annual business meeting in August 2024, the Executive Committee agreed to present the following guidelines to the hosts of IAHR events or to any of our member associations and their individual members, when they ask what is meant by that phrase and why it is required in IAHR contexts.

Please note that these guidelines are not new rules, but an explanatory document regarding the phrase. Since it adds nothing new to Article 1, the Executive Committee believes it does not require approval from the International Committee.

Below are the guidelines, which are also available [on our website](#).

IAHR Guidelines for Public Outreach

In its public outreach, the IAHR – through its elected officials, member and affiliated associations, activities, events, projects, and publications – acts according to the following principles. These principles are expected to guide individual and collective IAHR members when acting *in their capacity as IAHR members*, that is,

- a) when hosting or participating in IAHR activities, events, projects or publications;
- b) when accomplishing a single specific task that the IAHR has explicitly delegated to one or more of its members;
- c) when using the IAHR name or logo or when appealing to the IAHR and its institutional role in any other way or form (e.g. by referring to the IAHR website).

1. The IAHR recognizes and defends the importance of the scholarly non-religious study of religion/s in the academy as well as in the public sphere as a means to inform and educate the public on religion/s-related matters, thus allowing citizens, policy-makers, and other individual and collective actors to make informed decisions pertaining to religion/s-related issues.

2. The IAHR is engaged in and supports activities, events, projects, and publications that are rooted in a non-religious (to be distinguished from both “religious” and “anti-religious”), academic, and analytical* perspective. Such perspectives include, but are not limited to, historical, philological, social-scientific, psychological (e.g. cognitive, evolutionary), and philosophical (e.g. epistemological, methodological, theoretical) approaches. Point 3 clarifies a number of basic epistemic and methodological presuppositions.

3. The IAHR is engaged in and supports activities, events, projects, and editorial work that are based

on the following epistemic and methodological principles:

a. **Methodological naturalism**, that is, the exclusion, on methodological and epistemic grounds, of arguments, theories, and data (e.g. first-person experiential data) resting on the presupposed existence or authority of super-natural entities or principles (e.g. gods, *dharma*, spirits).

b. **Axiological neutrality**, that is, the exclusion, on methodological and epistemic grounds, of evaluative judgments regarding the intrinsic value, virtues or inadequacies of religious or anti-religious (pro-)positions. Evaluative judgments are admissible, on methodological and epistemic grounds, in relation to the social and environmental consequences (e.g. systemic discrimination, ecological deterioration) of religious, non-religious (that is, including the IAHR's position), and anti-religious positions, when these evaluations are supported by data-driven research.

c. **Suspension of truth claims**, that is, the exclusion, on methodological and epistemic grounds, of evaluative judgments regarding the ultimate truth or referentiality of claims or statements pertaining to religious doctrines, experiences, beliefs, etc.

4. The IAHR recognizes and defends the importance of a continuing reflection on the form and scope of the academic study of religion\\$. The IAHR is engaged in, and supports activities, events, projects, and editorial work that offer a ground for critical self-reflection on the IAHR and its stance.

5. The IAHR is not engaged in nor supports any activity, event, project or publication aimed at defending or fostering the partisan interests of any particular religious or anti-religious individual or group, nor any activity, event, project or publication aimed at defending or fostering general (inter-)religious or anti-religious views or interests.

6. The IAHR is not engaged in nor lends its institutional support to “sociotechnical” activities, events, projects or publications (e.g. *social engineering*, interreligious dialogue, anti-cult advocacy, secularist political activism, or faith-based peace-building initiatives).

**As opposed, here, to expressive, aesthetic, artistic, or experiential approaches.*

6. Special Journal Subscription Offer for Graduate Students

As communicated via an email to the officers of our member associations in February this year, Equinox is now offering graduate students who are members of IAHR member associations a reduced subscription rate for *The Bulletin for the Study of Religion*. If you are a student and would like to subscribe to the journal, please ask the officers of your association to forward your name and email addresses to Janet Joyce, Managing Director at Equinox (email: jjoyce@equinoxpub.com). It is important that students do not contact Equinox directly, as Equinox cannot verify their membership status with IAHR member associations.

We, the IAHR Executive Committee, are hopeful that other journals and publishers will follow suit in offering similar support to our student members.

Below is a message from Equinox:

Equinox would like to offer member societies the option to purchase subscriptions to *The Bulletin for the Study of Religion* for each of their student members at the reduced rates of £8.00 (for those in weak currency nations) or £12.00 (elsewhere). These prices would cover 4 issues per year for the online edition.

The Bulletin was founded in 1971 (originally titled the CSSR Bulletin) and has been publishing continuously since then. Equinox acquired it when the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion disbanded in 2009. Since then, it has published 4 issues per volume year in print and online.

The current editor is Merinda Simmons, University of Alabama and previous editors have included Russell T. McCutcheon, Craig Martin and Philip L. Tite.

The Bulletin publishes articles that address religion in general, the history of the field of religious studies, method and theory in the study of religion, and pedagogical practices. Articles featured in the journal cover diverse religious traditions from any time period (from ancient religions to new religious movements), but are typically distinguished by their social scientific methods (e.g., historical, sociological, anthropological, cognitive scientific) or critical theory apparatus (i.e., post-colonialist, post-structuralist, neo-Marxist). It is unique in offering a lively forum for debate and reflection on the ever-changing state of the field, and insofar as it encourages scholars continually to engage meta-level questions at the leading edge of inquiry. It is also unique in publishing a combination of invited and peer-reviewed content, often involving graduate students in conversation with established scholars.

7. IAHR Best Graduate Student Paper Award Program

In collaboration with Equinox and *The Bulletin for the Study of Religion*, the IAHR is launching the “IAHR Best Graduate Student Paper Award Program.”

This program aims to encourage graduate students to present at international conferences and provides them with valuable experience in the formal article revision process.

IAHR member associations are eligible to nominate papers or poster sessions presented by their student members at IAHR Regional/Special Conferences and IAHR World Congress during any calendar year.

Prizes for awardees

Winners (four students annually) will gain free access to all online Equinox publications (Equinox Religion Library) for 3 years from the date of their award.

Their awarded papers will be published in Equinox’s *The Bulletin for the Study of Religion*, with one paper featured in each of the four annual issues.

The winning papers would undergo a regular review process of the Bulletin and be revised before publication.

The program will begin in 2025, during which only one World Congress will be held (no Regional/Special Conferences). I will send the officers of our member associations a Call for Nominations as the Congress approaches next year. For detailed information, please visit the [“Grants/Support” page](#) on our website.

8. Report on the IAHR Regional Conference in Nairobi, 2023

The African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) held their 89th AASR Conference in Africa from 2-4 August 2023. It was recognized as an IAHR regional conference and hosted by the University of Nairobi in Nairobi, Kenya. The conference's theme was 'Creativity, Innovation, and Imagination in African Religions.' Supported by the AASR Executive, the Local Organising Committee (LOC) was expertly led by Telesia Kathini Musili, Lecturer at the University of Nairobi.

The conference commenced with an exciting opening ceremony and a keynote from Halkano Abdikadir Abdi Wario entitled "Aesthetics, Politics, and Imageries of Fighting Terrorism: Faith-Based Entanglement in Counter Narrativity Production in the Horn of Africa." This opening session set the tone for an invigorating and stimulating academic conference for more than 100 registered participants from four continents and many nations. The paper sessions that followed featured an extensive array of topics and methodological approaches, with scholars from across the humanities and social sciences engaging in what became very much a multidisciplinary conversation highlighting multiple religions.

The breadth of the theme proved helpful, with participants presenting original research on topics including, but not limited to, healings, digital media, sexualities, genders, ritual creativity, and ecology in Kenya and the continent broadly. Highlights of the programme included plenary sessions from Mary Getui on "The Interlink Between Virtue, Creativity, Innovation, and Imagination," and Mwenda Ntarangwi answering "Does Competition Result in Religious Innovation? Some Reflections on Christianity in Kenya and Beyond." As it has become a staple of AASR conferences, many graduate students and early career scholars appreciated the lively special sessions led by Afe Adogame on "Tools of the Trade: Research Publishing and Grant Writing" and "Tips for Academic Writing and Publishing."

As always, ample time was dedicated to socializing and enjoying Kenyan cuisine. The space such a conference provides for informal conversations, encouragement, mentorship, and collaboration is perhaps its greatest gift. On the concluding day, the closing ceremony provided an opportunity for many to express their gratitude for all that had occurred.

The AASR is especially grateful to the:

- local organizing committee and Telesia Kathini Musili for their tremendous efforts in providing such a well-organized and stimulating conference.
- the University of Nairobi administration for their support
- and the many attendees whose contributions, formally and informally, made this conference a rousing success.

Finally, for this conference, the AASR introduced awards to make the conference more accessible to graduate students and early career scholars. These awards were made possible by the generous contributions of funds from Gerrie ter Haar, Afe Adogame, and the IAHR. IAHR funds provided awards for International scholars (Stephen Nawa, Tshenolo Madigele, and Abel Tabalaka) and local Kenyan scholars (Samuel Munyiri, Catherine Njogu, Jophat Wangoto, Michael Kuria, Magdalene

Chepkirui).

Nathanael J. Homewood, Ph.D.

Associate Director, Religious Studies Program

The University of Minnesota



9. Report on the IAHR Regional Conference in Vilnius, 2023

Conference “RELIGIONS AND TECHNOLOGIES” Report

The 20th Annual Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions & Regional Conference of the International Association for the History of Religions

Vilnius, Lithuania

September 4-8, 2023

The 20th Annual Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions & Regional Conference of the International Association for the History of Religions attracted 454 participants coming from 37 countries. Plenary keynote speeches were delivered by Jana Valtrová, François Gauthier, Xenia Zeiler, Neil Price and Bronislaw Szerszynski. Five plenary and 83 parallel panels attracted attention of both attending scholars and students (123 participants were students). Twelve publishing houses participated in the exhibition, taking place during the EASR 2023, having a great opportunity to find new contacts, make new partnerships as well as reconnect with existing clients. The EASR conference theme encouraged its participants to present and discuss any aspect relating to religion and technology in the broadest sense.

The cooperation with the IAHR proved to be extremely beneficial. The status of an IAHR regional conference helped the general relevance of the conference theme visible beyond European context and encouraged interested scholars from other parts of the world to participate. The IAHR also offered bursaries towards travel expenses, accommodation, and conference registration for the EASR conference in Vilnius. Four scholars from Ukraine were granted the IAHR bursary: one scholar received a bursary of 400 EUR and participated in the EASR 2023 conference on site, three scholars received bursaries of 230 EUR, they participated in the conference online. In addition, the organizational work by the Lithuanian Society for the Study of Religions (LSSR) and Vilnius University, Faculty of Philosophy was very helpful for a successful implementation of the EASR 2023 conference.

With kind regards,

LSSR board member

Chair of the Organising Committee on behalf of the LSSR and Vilnius University

Rasa Pranskevičiūtė-Amoson



10. Report on the IAHR Special Conference in Tokyo, 2023

The IAHR 2023 Special Conference was held on December 16-17, 2023, at the University of Tokyo, Japan. Hosted by the Japanese Association for Religious Studies (JARS), the conference focused on the theme, “Can the IAHR be engaged and relevant without being political or confessional? The position of ‘science (*Wissenschaft*)’ in 2023.” The event attracted a diverse group of scholars, both in-person and online, fostering vibrant discussions on the study of religions in global contexts.

This conference marked a unique gathering distinct from the regular IAHR Special Conferences that typically coincide with annual meetings of IAHR member associations or affiliates. Instead, it was organized to address pressing issues that have been on the agenda since the Extended Executive Committee Meeting in 2019 and the IAHR Executive Committee’s 2022 public statement on Russia’s war on Ukraine. The discussions served as preparatory groundwork for the upcoming IAHR World Congress in Kraków.

The conference spanned two days, comprising keynote sessions, roundtables and individual paper presentations. It was followed by the International Committee Meeting. Below is an overview of the key events and discussions:

Opening Session

The conference commenced with welcoming remarks by IAHR President Tim Jensen and local host Satoko Fujiwara, who is also the President of JARS and Secretary General of the IAHR. Both emphasized the historical significance of Tokyo as a host city for the IAHR’s events, highlighting its role in shaping global academic discussions in the study of religions.

Keynote Lecture: “Objectivity, Values, and Commitment in Science”

Nancy Cartwright of Durham University, President of the IUHPS (International Union of History and Philosophy of Science and Technology), delivered the keynote address, exploring the evolving definitions of objectivity in science and the complex interplay between values and scientific inquiry. She was joined by discussants Jeppe Sinding Jensen (Aarhus University) and Kevin Schilbrack (Appalachian State University), who provided philosophical reflections on the challenges of maintaining neutrality in the study of religion.

The keynote session delved into philosophical debates on whether the scientific study of religion can remain objective, considering the influence of values and sociopolitical contexts. Cartwright emphasized that objectivity is not a monolithic concept but varies across disciplines and cultural contexts, raising questions about the global applicability of “science” in the study of religions.

Roundtable Discussions

A diverse panel of scholars, including Amy Allocco (Elon University), Blanca Solares Altamirano (National Autonomous University of Mexico), Denzil Chetty (University of South Africa), Shahnaj Husne Jahan (University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh), David G. Robertson (the Open University) and Shusuke Yamane (National Institute of Technology, Maizuru College), engaged in a roundtable discussion on the political and cultural dimensions of religious studies. The session highlighted the tension between maintaining academic neutrality and responding to global crises, such as the war in Ukraine. The discussion also touched on the relevance of the study of religions in addressing social

justice issues, exploring whether a purely “scientific” approach can fully account for these complex dynamics.

Individual Paper Sessions

The second day featured individual paper presentations by scholars from various regions, addressing topics such as methodological changes in religious studies, the challenges of applying Western scientific paradigms in non-Western contexts, and the role of the study of religions in addressing global challenges like religious pluralism and extremism. Papers presented included:

- “The Study of Religion: Objective Inquiry and Politics” by Gritt Klinkhammer (University of Bremen)
- “Change of Paradigms of Methodological Thinking in Modern Religious Studies: The Experience of Ukrainian Scientists” by Trylis Serhii Ivanovych (Whole-Ukraine Buddhist Center)
- “Charting the Course: Advancements and Challenges in the Scientific Study of Religion” by Slawomir Sztajer (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)
- “Neutral. All Too Neutral? Contemporary Challenges in the Study of Religion” by Andrea Rota (University of Oslo)

These presentations underscored the varying approaches to religious studies across different cultural and academic contexts and the challenges of reconciling these approaches within a global academic framework.

Young Members’ Roundtable

The conference also featured a session led by young scholars from JARS, who offered fresh perspectives on the future of religious studies. The discussion with Milda Ališauskienė (Vytautas Magnus University) and David Thurfjell (Södertörn University), chaired by Katja Triplett (Leipzig University), focused on why young academics choose to study religion and the role of interdisciplinarity in their research.

The IAHR 2023 Special Conference in Tokyo thus succeeded in fostering critical discussions on the relevance and challenges of the academic study of religion in a rapidly changing world. The event provided a platform for diverse voices from across the globe, reflecting the IAHR’s commitment to inclusivity and intellectual rigor.

The proceedings of the conference have been published as [“Proceedings of the IAHR 2023 Special Conference, Tokyo,” *Religious Studies in Japan*, Vol.7, Supplementary Issue, 2024](#). This journal is the official online, open-access English publication of JARS.

In addition, selected papers from the conference will be published in a volume for the IAHR Book Series next year.

As the chair of the local Organizing Committee, I extend my sincere thanks to all the speakers, participants, and sponsors of the conference.

Satoko Fujiwara

Chair of the Organizing Committee



2 - Roundtable session

11. Report on the IAHR Special Conference in Tirana, 2024

Conference Report “Religious Diversity and Social Cohesion in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond”

The 16th Conference of International Study of Religion in Eastern and Central Europe Association & Special Conference of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR); in cooperation with University College Bedër and the COST Action - “Connecting Theory and Practical Issues of Migration and Religious Diversity” (COREnet)

Tirana, Albania; April 25-27, 2024

The biannual conference of the International Study of Religion in Eastern and Central Europe conference attracted 114 participants coming from 28 European countries, from the United States of America, and Israel. Plenary keynote speeches were delivered by Marian Burchardt, Halina Grzymała-Moszczyńska and Johan Hafner. The conference proceeded smoothly, with 110 papers organized into 18 parallel sessions.

The conference theme encouraged its participants to discuss among others religious diversity, religious coexistence and religious conflicts in the CEE region and beyond, as well as new theoretical and methodological approaches in the study of religion in the CEE region.

During the conference Miklos Tomka Award winner was granted to Sára Eszter Heidl (Max Weber Kolleg) for her paper *Religion as a Spectrum: Introducing Religionesque Experiences*. Thanks to the financial support from the IAHR we granted the Solidarity Fund to 3 participants (Ruzica Cubela; Kirill Lapitskii; Anna Vancsó).

ISORECEA General Secretary

Agata Rejowska