

Paris conference 2002

EASR General Assembly , Paris 2002, September 14th, 10 a.m.

Report 2001-2002 by the General Secretary

1. Membership Status

The total number of national associations now corporate members of EASR amounts to 15:

- BASR, British Association for the Study of Religions (James Cox)
- Ceska Spolecnost Pro Studium Nabozenstvi (The Czech Society for the Study of Religion) (Bretislav Horyna)
- DAHR, Dansk Selskab for Religionshistorie (Danish Association for the History of Religions) (Marianne Q. Fibiger)
- DVRG, Deutsche Vereinigung für Religionsgeschichte (German Association for the History of Religions) (Hubert Seiwert)
- NGG, Nederlands Genootschap van Godsdiensthistorici (Dutch Association for the History of Religions) (Herman Beck)
- NRF, Norsk Religionshistorisk Forening (Norwegian Association for the History of Religions) (Knut A. Jacobsen)
- Polskie Towarzystwo Religioznawcze (Polish Association for the Science of Religions) (Halina Grzymala-Moscinska)
- RAHR, Asociaia romani de istorie a religiilor (Romanian Association for the History of Religions) (Eugen Ciurtin)
- SECR, Sociedad Española de Ciencias de las Religiones (Spanish Association for the Science of Religions) (Santiago Montero)
- SGR/SSSR, Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Religionswissenschaft/Société Suisse pour la Science des Religions (Swiss Association for the Science of Religions) (Maya Burger)
- Società italiana di storia delle religioni (Italian Association for the History of Religions) (Fabio Scialpi)
- Société Ernest-Renan. Société Française d'Histoire des Religions (French Association for the History of Religions) (Charles Guittard)
- Société Belgo-Luxembourgeoise d'histoire des religions (Association for the History of Religions of Belgium-Luxembourg) (André Motte)
- SSRF, Svenska Samfundet för Religionshistorisk Forskning (Swedish Association for Research in Comparative Religion) (Britt-Mari Näsström)
- Suomen Uskontotieteellinen Seura (Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion) (Nils Holm)

Compared to the list as of September 2001, this list shows that we have been honoured to welcome 2 more associations during the last year, namely the Société Belgo-Luxembourgeoise d'histoire des religions (Association for the History of Religions of Belgium-Luxembourg) (André Motte), and the - RAHR, Asociaia romani de istorie a religiilor (Romanian Association for the History of Religions) (Eugen Ciurtin). We are indeed very happy that they have joined.

During the past year, the general secretary has been in electronic contact with Ukrainian and Russian scholars, and he has – following up on rumours – tried to contact the Austrian Association in order to encourage the Austrian colleagues to join. While he has so far had no response from Austria, the president has received the good news that the Austrians have decided to join EASR, and hopefully it is just a matter of time before they can be formally accepted as members.

Also a Russian colleague has communicated that several Russian scholars are gathering this month (September) to establish an association which may then join EASR, and in case they did not succeed, he and probably some other scholars would probably join as individual members.

The communication with the Ukrainian scholars has been on and off, but so far no definite response from their side has been received. Unfortunately, the financial situation is so tight for many a colleague also in Ukraine that even a reduced fee may cause a problem. We have tried to encourage them to apply for a special arrangement as concerns membership fee. The general secretary will keep on trying to communicate this message.

Finally, the Greek colleagues who were in the process of establishing a Greek national association last year, so far have not succeeded but the general secretary and prof. P. Pachis has agreed to stay in close contact in the coming year.

We do not have precise informations about the total number of members of all the affiliated national associations but the membership secretary in cooperation with the treasurer is working on providing this information.

An increase in membership fortunately shows also when it comes to individual members. At the moment the membership has registered the following individual members: P. Pachis, G. Lease, Gustavo Benavides, Gilani Fawsia and Svetlana Gorbunova. Unfortunately the treasurer has not received a fee from each and everybody, but this is probably due to the fact that we have considered 2001 – 2002 a period of transition.

Besides this, we have

Peter Antes & Armin W. Geertz as members of the committee as representatives of IAHR.

2. Conferences planned

Following the GA and the proposals put forward at the GA in Cambridge, the committee agreed upon a plan for the coming two conferences. The EASR conference 2003 will take place in Bergen May 8-11 in connection with a meeting in the International Committee of IAHR. It will be arranged in cooperation with IAHR, the Dpt. for The History of Religions at the University of Bergen and the Norwegian Association for the History of Religions. The theme – as already announced at our website – is The Globalization and the Localization of Religion. Another

announcement and a final deadline for the proposal of papers will be paged in a short while. The conference in 2004 will, according to our wish to move around in Europe, and thanks to our Spanish colleagues, take place in September 2004 in Santander in connection with the annual meeting of the Spanish association. The preliminary theme is Tolerance and Intolerance of Religion(s).

3. Website, discussion lists, newsletters and publications

Thanks to our internet officer Michael Pye, and his webmaster Richard Boehme, our website is up and working, in my opinion, excellently. Thanks to Michael Pye, and the colleagues joining the discussions, the 6 discussion lists are also up running. Some with more vigour than others of course, but still. Dolem has 48 participants, Candide 34, Yggdrasil 156, most 56, Tonantzin 81 and Synkron 76, all in all 451. We are very grateful for the help received from members to make these lists running.

Plans for further development of the electronic sites and communication of EASR have been discussed at the committee meeting September 11 in Paris. The proposals concerned (a) a bibliographical data-bank standard (b) the turning of the Internet Journal of Religion, incl. Diskus and Marburg Journal of Religion, into a single EASR internet journal. (c) the use of the Roumanian Archeus as a means of publication and EASR-Newsletter

As for (a) it was decided to slowly see how the idea might be developed. The internet-officer can take any step he finds appropriate. As for (b) the proposal was accepted, and the internet-officer was asked to move forward in the proposed direction. As for (c) the committee warmly thanked the Roumanian association for its generous offer. However, the committee did not approve of the creation of a single 'official' journal for possible publications, and as regards a newsletter it was decided that so far the website of EASR plus the information given by the national associations sufficed.

4. Other business

The general secretary has during the year received several other proposals. 1) to use EASR as a platform for exchange of scholars within the frames of e.g. the Socrates scheme. 2) to provide funding for postgraduate students to attend EASR-conferences, especially from the poorer European countries, 3) to develop an EASR Bulletin, 4) to consider the possibility of having special sections at future conferences where subjects which the committee consider of special interest to EASR might be discussed parallel to the main theme of the conference.

The committee has discussed the above mentioned proposals and agreed upon the following: The general secretary will make an announcement as regards item (1) in order to invite scholars with an interest in exchange with other European universities to join a list of such. The list then will be distributed to all the member associations. As to (2) the committee decided to ask each and every association in charge of the annual conferences to do their best to see if they may provide special funding for not only post-graduate students but for scholars as well from less affluent European countries and memberassociations. Also, associations which have some extra money are kindly asked to consider whether they may make a special contribution. As for (3)

it was decided to go on in the direction mentioned above concerning the establishment of a special EASR-electronic journal, and besides that to depend on the website, the lists and the national associations for distributing news from EASR. As to 4, the committee agreed that it would be most useful to try to use EASR to enhance certain areas of research as well as to open up new areas. However, the association in charge of the annual conference must have relatively free hands in deciding upon the theme and arranging the conference. The committee, however, recommended that the host of the conference decide upon the theme of the conference in collaboration with EASR, and that it tries to provide space for parallel sessions, sessions for work in progress and the like.

One more issue has been discussed in the committee, namely the question of conference language(s). It is the aim of EASR to help strengthen the academic study of religions in Europe at large and in the various European countries. The need for cooperation is evident and so is the need for mutual understanding. This, however, implies recognition of and respect for difference, in academic tradition and language. Consequently, the committee decided that the associations hosting the annual conferences are kindly asked to see to it that more than one language may be used at the conferences.

Finally: Mention should be made of the fact that the Gen. Secr. on behalf of the committee of EASR has asked Donnerska Institutet in Aabo, Finland, to support its activities by way of a donation. We have reason to hope that our application will be well received.

Concluding remarks:

The second year of EASR certainly has proved that EASR is here to stay. We are now on our feet and having used the first two years to establish the association, it is now time to take more than the one step we take each and every year by way of the annual conference and the annual general assembly.

The annual coming together of scholars from many of the member associations, the gathering around the various themes and the publication of the papers or some of them is extremely important and useful in our effort to further the aims of EASR, i.e. promoting the academic study of religions amongst scholars in Europe. Consequently, we are extremely happy and grateful that the member associations are ready to host the annual conferences, and we want to use this opportunity to thank the British Association for the great work done to make the conference last year possible. Likewise we want to thank the Societe Ernest Renan for hosting us this year.

We do, however, think that it is now our task to try to do more than that, and more than is done already by way of our website and the discussion lists. Consequently, it is our intention to see to it that some of the above mentioned proposals are realized in the years to come in case the General Assembly approves of them.

Tim Jensen, General Secretary, Paris, September 2002.