

Editorial Note

From the 4th to the 7th of August 1997 the Donner Institute and the Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion arranged an IAHR Regional Symposium in Turku/Åbo, Finland. The topic of the symposium was "Methodology of the Study of Religions". I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the Nordic Organizing Committee, Jan Bergman (Uppsala), Jeppe Sinding Jensen (Aarhus), and Einar Thomassen (Bergen), and to the members of the Board of the Finnish Association for the Study of Comparative Religion, Veikko Anttonen (Turku), Eila Helander (Helsinki), Helena Helve (Helsinki), Nils G. Holm (Turku), Ilkka Pyysiäinen (Helsinki), and Martti Junnonaho (Turku). The practical arrangements were taken care of by Tuija Hovi and Anne Puuronen from the Department of Comparative Religion at Turku University and by Monica Sirén and Björn Dahla from the Donner Institute in Turku. I would like to express my thanks to them.

In 1973, little less than a quarter of a century earlier, the Department of Folklore and Comparative Religion at Turku University had organized an IAHR Study Conference titled "Methodology of the Science of Religion". Certainly you should not arrange conferences on methodology at too short intervals. However, we were of the firm opinion that four conferences in a century is the correct amount.

The main difference between these two conferences is that the latter focused on the Nordic countries whereas the former was genuinely international. As a consequence, comparisons between the two conferences are difficult to make.

The conference publication from the 1973 conference *Science of Religion: Studies in Methodology*. Ed. by Lauri Honko. The Hague: Mouton, 1979. (Religion and Reason, 13) includes the commentaries of the co-referents and the discussion among the audience. The present publication is more "traditional" which means that no commentaries or discussions have been included.

We invited seven key-note speakers to the conference: Pascal Boyer (Lyon), Rosalind I. J. Hackett (Kentucky), Lauri Honko (Turku), Thomas Lawson (Kalamazoo), Thomas Luckmann (Konstanz), William E. Paden (Burlington), and Donald Wiebe (Toronto). They repre-

sent various subjects and approaches, such as cognitive analysis, the history of religions, epic studies, the sociology of religion, and the philosophy of religion. Since it was a regional IAHR-conference we circulated a call for papers in all of the Nordic countries.

“Methodology of the study of religions” as a conference topic is vague. In the call for papers covering letter we tried to limit the theme to the science of religion, including the history, phenomenology, anthropology, sociology and psychology of religions. Nevertheless, the theme remains extensive if you want to produce a coherent and well integrated conference publication. To elucidate the problem I cite from my Editorial Note in an earlier volume of this series, *Dance, Music, Art, and Religion* (Åbo 1996): “The organizers of a symposium such as this seem to face a problem that is impossible to solve: either they choose a very specific and regional theme, in which case they end up with a comprehensive and homogeneous volume but the specific theme excludes far too many from delivering a paper and attending the symposium, or they choose a very broad and woolly theme that results in a disparate, heterogeneous volume but gives almost every historian of religion in the Nordic countries a chance to deliver a relevant paper”.

We can at least say that the theme of this conference was “broad enough by all standards”.

What can be done to minimize the disadvantages of a broad topic when it comes to a publication? We have proceeded in the following way: The 37 papers – all of them relevant to the topic but very heterogeneous – have been formed into two main groups. The first group consists of papers dealing with method in an abstract or purely theoretical way. In the second group papers discussing method in a practical or applied way are included. These two groups complement each other: the papers in the first group are reflections on methods as tools for doing research whereas the papers in the second group can be considered demonstrations of how to use methods as tools in “real life”. We have decided to publish the papers in two parts – the papers concerned with theory in part 1 and the case studies in part 2. Both volumes will be published during 1999.

I am grateful to Ann-Mari Dahlström for having prepared this manuscript. Without her effort there would be no conference publication whatsoever from the 1997 IAHR Regional Conference in Turku.

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