



CALL FOR PAPERS

Religious mobility in East Africa and Latin America

Nairobi, 24-26 April 2012,

French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA), Nairobi

Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva

Catholic University in Eastern Africa, Nairobi

Religious mobility is no longer, had it ever been, a phenomenon unique to “syncretistic” societies. All around the world, believers make adjustments in order to align their universe of meaning with their religious practices. Since the 1970s, religious mobility – transition, coping strategies, religious “collage”, etc – has been a central question in sociological debates. More often than not, these debates concentrate on religious hybridism and syncretism, which is explained in terms of the “privatization”, the “individualization” and the “subjectification” of religion. These arguments consider believers’ mobility to be a response – reaction and adjustment – to religion as it is socially instituted. However, this mobility, more than unbinding believers from their official church affiliations, seems to be constituted by – and in turn, affirm and constitute – a wide range of social bonds. The influence of such wider networks of association is due to the fact that religious practices are by nature embedded within a greater range of social practices, and this larger setting influences the believer’s mobile behaviour. Religious experience – as manifesting in everyday life – thus exceeds the normative framework of institutionalized religion. Therefore, religious experience is not simply an expression of autonomy by the individual believer, but is also the expression of his or her belonging to an embedded network of social ties.

The conference is open to contributors from various human sciences disciplines to present papers on East Africa and South America (especially Kenya and Brazil), possibly as part of a comparative perspective. A preference will be given to studies which emphasize anthropological/sociological research methods. Relevant themes may include, though not limited to:

- Religious mobility and multiple religious affiliations
- Factors influencing religious commitment and church attendance: political context, economic aspirations, witchcraft accusations, disease etc.
- Pentecostalism, born again, neo-traditionalism, and the growth of new churches
- Inter-religious and inter-denominational influences on individual and institutionalized religious practices

Paper abstracts – in English or/and French – should be submitted before the 15th of January 2012 to the convenors. A full version of the selected papers has to be sent before the 15th of April 2012. These will be circulated among the contributors.

For enquiries and for submission of paper abstracts (max 2’500 signs), please contact Yvan Droz or Yonatan Gez of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID), Geneva, at: yvan.droz@graduateinstitute.ch and yonatan.gez@graduateinstitute.ch.

The conference is organized within the framework of Project StAR, a comparative research project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation which compares structures of religious mobility in Kenya, Brazil and Switzerland. It is organized in collaboration with the *Institut français de recherches en Afrique* (IFRA).

