

THE XXI WORLD CONGRESS  
OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE  
HISTORY OF RELIGIONS  
ERFURT, GERMANY  
AUGUST 23-29, 2015



## Call for Panels

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We invite contributions from all disciplines of religious studies and related fields of research to allow for broad, interdisciplinary discussion of the Congress topic to register their panels for the XXI World Congress of the IAHR. Panels should address one of the four thematic Congress areas outlined below.

Each panel lasts two hours. Panel papers should be limited to 20 to 30 minutes, depending on the number of panel participants. Panel conveners are asked to approach possible participants from different nations to reflect the scope and internationality of the IAHR Congress.

To propose a panel, please submit a general proposal of the panel as well as individual proposals of all papers included in the panel. Both panel and papers of a proposed panel will be evaluated by the Academic Program Committee to ensure a high academic standard of the Congress program. We therefore ask panel conveners to submit the proposals of all prospective panel participants of a proposed panel as indicated by the submission form. Proposals of panels and of papers should not exceed 150 words.

The deadline for submission of proposals is **Sunday, September 14, 2014**. All proposals must be submitted electronically via the IAHR 2015 website ([www.iahr2015.org/iahr-registration/panel-registration.php](http://www.iahr2015.org/iahr-registration/panel-registration.php)). As part of the submission process, you will be asked to indicate the area in which you would like your proposal considered. Your proposal will then be forwarded to the appropriate member of the Academic Program Committee.

You will receive notice concerning the status of your proposal as soon as possible and certainly before March 1, 2015. If your panel or paper has been accepted by the Academic Program Committee, please note that you will have to **register as Congress participant before May 15, 2015** to be included in the Congress program.

## Dynamics of Religion: Past and Present

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Religion is a human, historical, social and cultural phenomenon. As such, religious ideas, practices, discourses, institutions, and social expressions are constantly in processes of change. The Congress will address the processes of change, the dynamics of religions past, present, and future, on several interconnected levels of analysis and theory, namely that of the individual, community and society, practices and discourses, beliefs, and narrations.

These will be addressed within four areas:

## **Religious communities in society: Adaptation and transformation**

Embedded within complex cultures, characterized by social change and intercultural exchange, religious communities constantly adapt to their changing environments, developing practices, discourses, and institutions conceptualized as “religion”. These concepts are subject to social and cultural influences. They also shape political and economic environments. Religious traditions are invented and re-invented, imperceptibly transformed, violently reformed or emphatically defended. How, then, do religious communities and institutions adapt to cultural change? How do they affect social change? Does interreligious contact and dialogue lead to religious change? How do religious communities react to the possibilities and threats of new media? Does globalization transform public religions? To what extent do states and public law affect religions?

## **Practices and discourses: Innovation and tradition**

Founding figures, schisms and revivals characterize the dynamics of religion in past and present. Institutions develop or are dissolved. This, again, poses questions: How are religious traditions established, standardized and canonized? What are the mechanisms and agents of religious innovation? How do religious traditions repel religious change? How is sacred time and space established? Does religious individualization lead to innovation? What are the mechanisms of transformation and innovation of rituals and other practices? Do rituals create and perpetuate religious traditions? Are new religious movements or esoteric currents innovative? Does fundamentalism protect religious traditions? Does the internet lead to religious innovation? What are the dynamics of gender traditions?

## **The individual: Religiosity, spiritualities and individualization**

Individuals, too, are agents of change. Privatization, patchwork religiosity and religious deviance are not restricted to the present. Can “religiosity” or “spirituality”, popular in many contemporary self-descriptions, be used as descriptive terms of our meta-language? Under what circumstances do individuals obey or deny religious traditions? How and why do individuals converse, or gradually change their religious convictions and affiliations? How can plural religious identities or patchwork religiosities be explained, what effects do they have on religious traditions? How important are religious experiences in religions? What are individual reasons for religious deviance? How do religions control the individual? Is the privatization of religion a modern phenomenon? Do biographic developments explain individual religiosity?

## **Methodology: Representations and interpretations**

Religious change is registered and narrated by outsiders and insiders. Emic representations influence academic interpretations. Scholarly paradigms and theories are therefore as dynamic as their object. Which master narratives about religious change need to be revised? Are all religious traditions invented? What is the current status of the secularization debate? Is there some scientific value in old paradigms of religious change (e.g. decline, fall, rise, axial age)? How can theories of cultural and religious evolution be applied in historical sciences? How do new approaches in historiography conceptualize religious change (e.g. entangled or transcultural history, postcolonial history, discourse analysis)?

**Congress Websites:** [www.iahr2015.org](http://www.iahr2015.org)

[www.uni-erfurt.de/iahr](http://www.uni-erfurt.de/iahr)

**Contact:** [iahr-congress@uni-erfurt.de](mailto:iahr-congress@uni-erfurt.de)



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