

CONFERENCE REPORT**THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF CULTURAL
ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND ASSOCIATION FOR
ANTHROPOLOGY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

By

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The SASCA conference was held at UNISA Park, Irene, in Pretoria. The conference started on the 10th of September 1998 in the morning and ended up on the 11th of September, in the afternoon. A total of eighteen papers were presented in this conference.

The co-ordinator of the conference, Professor Louis Vorster started by welcoming every participant, followed by a Bible reading and prayer led by a priest.

Four papers were presented in the first session under the sub-theme: AFRICAN RENAISSANCE: CHALLENGES AND REALITIES. The first paper was read in Afrikaans and it was very difficult to follow the presentation especially if one did not understand the language sufficiently. The other three papers were read in English. Out of four speakers, two were Anthropologists, one a Sociologist and the last one a Lawyer.

The second session was very crucial and that is where the conference reached its climax. The sub-theme was entitled: SASCA AND THE 21ST CENTURY. Two papers were read and the first presentation was a joint paper which strongly criticized two existing associations in South Africa. The paper questioned the ideology of SASCA and the South African Journal of Ethnology. It further outlined in terms of statistics, who are in the journal editorial board and also provided the numbers of papers published in this journal since its conception. The paper also raised the language policy of both the journal and SASCA.

It was very difficult to understand the second presenter because he used English and Afrikaans. The little that I have picked up from this presentation is that there is room for discussion between the two associations. The paper also encouraged SASCA to play a vital role in promoting Anthropology as a discipline in academic circles and beyond.

Discussions were heated, and hard questions were posed directly to the speaker. Emotions ran very high between members of the two associations. The host members by far outnumbered the AASA.

All other sessions went very well and there was a general meeting for ONLY registered members. Unregistered speakers were not allowed in the meeting. One of the issues discussed in the meeting was the increase of the membership fee as from next season.

The session with sub-theme: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES was the closing session. During it Professor Louis Vorster asked the chairpersons of each session to present their reports. The various chairpersons presented their reports individually. Finally all the participants who attended the conference were asked to give their impressions about the whole conference. Most of the comments were that there should be open discussions between the associations in future.

The AASA conference was held at the University of Zimbabwe. The conference started on the 19th of January and ended on 22 January 1999. The theme of the conference was "POVERTY AND LIVELIHOODS, RURAL AND URBAN". Professor Emeritus of the University of Zimbabwe, Gordon Chavunduka welcomed all the speakers and members of the association.

The majority of the speakers were from South Africa, few were from Zimbabwe, one from Botswana and others came from Namibia. Besides anthropologists and sociologists, there was a geographer and nutritionist.

Interesting papers were presented and many issues were raised. My focus is on a joint paper which was presented for a second time. This joint paper had first been presented at the SASCA conference in September 1998. The title of the paper was: "SERVING OR QUESTIONING

POWER: AN ANALYSIS OF ELEMENTS OF THE HISTORY AND FUTURE POSITIONS OF AFRICAN ANTHROPOLOGY".

The speakers were sort of giving a report about their first presentation at SASCA conference. They argued that their paper was not well received by the majority of SASCA members. They also mentioned some of the factors that I have just indicated, that emotions ran high, it was tense and so on. Emotions also ran high during the AASA conference when they hear that their members were not well received at the SASCA conference.

AASA AGM

The AASA AGM was open to all. The focus of this meeting was "collaboration between SASCA and AASA". Members of AASA mandated the executive members to continue negotiations with SASCA. Issues at stake included, the language policy, ownership of a journal which is presently owned by SASCA, a new constitution and the name to be adopt if two associations merged.