

## MERGING OF THE TWO ASSOCIATIONS OF ANTHROPOLOGISTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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### Introduction

istory was made in anthropological circles in South Africa on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 2001. Anthropologists in South Africa including those from the neighbouring countries and abroad gathered at the University of South Africa. The main purpose of the meeting was the conference and of course to merge the two existing associations into one association. In my view, this was a step in the right direction.

I think it will be proper or rather fair to give a brief historical background of what transpired prior to the establishment of the new association. Previously, there were two associations of anthropologists in South Africa, namely the South African Society of Cultural Anthropologists (SASCA) and the Association for Anthropology in Southern Africa (AASA). SASCA had had a large following from historically Afrikaans Universities and to a little extent some members from other universities. AASA had members from universities across South Africa including the neighbouring countries. There were anthropologists who affiliated in both associations.

I knew about SASCA in 1997 and in 1998 I prepared a work paper and presented it at the SASCA conference in Pretoria. I attended the SASCA conference, innocently without any knowledge of the huge differences prevailing between the two associations.

During the second session, the conference reached its climax. The sub-theme was entitled "SASCA and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". The first presentation was a joint paper that strongly criticized the two existing associations of anthropologists in South Africa. Further, the paper questioned the ideology of SASCA and its journal (Bogopa, 1999: 109).

In the light of the above, I became aware of the divisions between the associations at the conference organized by SASCA in 1998. I decided to join SASCA and I was welcomed without any problem. To me being a member of both associations was not a problem, I just wanted to further my career and share ideas by attending both conferences and presenting papers.

Negotiations to merging the two associations were encouraged during the last session of the SASCA conference in 1998 (Pretoria, South Africa) and during the Annual General Meeting of AASA in 1999 (Harare, Zimbabwe). The points on which negotiations centered included, among others, the ownership of a journal that was then owned by SASCA, the language policy, a new constitution and the new name if the two associations merged (Bogopa, 1999: 110 & 111).

A series of meetings were held by the executive members of the two associations mandated by their constituencies respectively. Finally, it paid dividends largely because some agreements were reached. SASCA decided to cancel its conference that had been scheduled for October 2000 in the North West Province and AASA also cancelled its conference billed for April 2001 at the University of the Cape. The joint conference was then to be held in Pretoria at the University of South Africa on the 9–11 April 2001.

### **Conference Report**

In the morning of the 9 April 2001, members of both associations arrived at the University of South Africa. Registration started at 08h30 and lasted till 09h30. The conference officially started at 09h30 and the head of the hosting department of anthropology welcomed everyone and after that a keynote speaker was called upon to present. The first keynote speaker was a psychologist in charge of the social science department in the National Research Foundation. In her talk, she outlined how psychology had been divided in South Africa and how they had finally managed to come together and form one association. Having been told before about the same situation in anthropology, she encouraged the merging of the two associations of anthropology and strongly urged that anthropology should take a leading position in shaping education in South Africa particularly at tertiary level.

The second session of this conference was set aside for associations to have their last business meetings separately. The whole idea was to create an atmosphere where members of each association could meet in separate venues and take a final decision about collaboration. It was a confusing moment for those who belonged to both associations because they had to decide which of the two meetings to attend.

I managed to attend the AASA business meeting where various issues were raised. These concerned, for example, the name of the new association and many others. In my view, it was more than obvious that collaboration was the only route to take. Members of AASA did not even pose questions like, "*What if members of SASCA reject the idea of collaboration*". In the final analysis members of AASA decided to dissolve their own association in a resolution which read thus:

### **Resolution of Dissolution**

This annual general meeting of the Association for Anthropology in Southern Africa (AASA) resolves, in terms of the section XI of its constitution and By-Laws:

1. to dissolve the Association for Anthropology in Southern Africa as from the moment of the formal constitution of the new association, the "Anthropology Southern Africa", as association with the same broad aims and objectives of the AASA. And on the condition that:
  - all present elected honorary fellows of the AASA are elected to equivalent status in the new association at its founding meeting.*
2. to extend the term of the present council of the AASA for the purpose of winding up affairs of the AASA; and to mandate the present council of the AASA, once the moment of dissolution has occurred:
  - to finalise the business of the AASA by approving the accounts for the period 1 January 2001 until that moment of dissolution or the final winding up of the affairs of the AASA, whichever comes first.
  - to dispose of the remaining assets of the AASA by transferring them to the account of and/or by putting them at the disposal of the new association 'Anthropology Southern Africa'.
  - to lodge the papers of the AASA in an appropriate university archive in South Africa, the particular university archive to be selected by the present council

to report finally on the process of dissolution and disposition of assets and papers of the AASA at the first annual general meeting of the new association, 'Anthropology Southern Africa'.

After the meetings of the two associations a crucial moment came when both members of AASA and SASCA gathered in one venue. The lights in that venue were dim or rather "romantic", which, in my view, was a perfect atmosphere for the two associations to say "*until death do us part*". Two representatives from both associations addressed the meeting. They started by reporting to all about what transpired in separate meetings. Finally both associations were dissolved and a brand new association established.

A new executive council was elected as follows:

President:	Prof. M. de Jongh
Vice President:	Prof. J Sharp
Secretary:	Prof. LP. Vorster
Treasurer:	Prof. HC Pauw
Two additional members:	Dr. P Sithole Dr. E van Heerden

## Objectives

A proposed constitution for the new association was already in place. It was prepared prior to this conference by the two associations councils. The objectives of the new association are as follows:

1. promote study, teaching, discussion and research in Anthropology;
2. promote co-operation among, and the common interest of, persons engaged in anthropological study;
1. promote interdisciplinary discussion with regard to the study of humankind;
2. support members in their anthropological endeavours;
3. promote scientific and other subject, related publications and oversee the publication of a journal;
4. organise regular conferences and other scientific discussions;
5. assign activities or projects to members or study groups;

6. promote links with other associations, internationally, which are dedicated to anthropology as a field of study.

### **Membership and Membership Fees**

According to the proposed constitution for the new associations, all persons who subscribe to the objectives of the Association and who comply with requirements for membership, may apply for membership.

There are four categories of members:

1. Full members are persons who have paid their membership dues and
  - *hold an honours or higher degree in Anthropology, or equivalent qualification or achievements as determined by the Council; or*
  - *hold a lecturing or research position at an institution of higher learning, or are engaged in advanced research under the auspices of such institution, or similar institution, or a similar as determined by council; or*
  - *completed a final year degree course, or equivalent qualification, in Anthropology and who, in terms of their career, are involved in a field of anthropology on a continuous basis*
2. Honorary members are persons who are appointed by the Council on the grounds of having distinguished themselves in the field of Anthropology, or related fields, and/or promoted the objectives of the Association in a special way;
3. Associated members are persons interested in Anthropology and who have paid the appropriate membership dues;
4. Student members are persons registered for an undergraduate or postgraduate course in Anthropology at an institution of higher learning who do not meet the requirements for full membership and have paid the appropriate membership dues.

### **Journal**

According to the proposed constitution of the journal, the following are applicable:

1. The Council is responsible for managing and maintaining the Journal.

2. Anyone may publish in the Journal of the Association on conditions that the contribution complies with the relevant linguistic and quality requirements.
3. The name of the Journal is determined by the Council.
4. The Council appoints one or more editors and as may advisory editors as deemed necessary for a term of two years.
5. The Editor works within the editorial policy established by Council and reports annually to the Council and the Business Meeting about the course and state of the Journal.
6. All members receive the Journal at a rate determined from time to time by the Council.

## Conclusion

The existence of two associations was not healthy, it was rather confusing to young anthropologists. Having attended the conferences of both associations, I found it very much taxing in terms of understanding the political dynamics that separated the two associations. It was a great relief to all, both to those who struggled over the years with the differences and to those who found themselves in between.

The idea of merging both associations into one was a good one because it will help strengthen anthropology in the Southern Africa region. Anthropologists will now iron out their differences within one association and in most cases speak in one voice. Anthropologists in Southern Africa need to educate the public on the importance of anthropology, the general public need to be made aware that anthropology, for many years, played an important role in development projects and in many research projects.

The other major challenge facing the new association is transformation within anthropology circles. There are few black and female anthropologists in existing department at tertiary institutions in Southern Africa. Transformation within Anthropology needs to be speeded up and that could be done by encouraging students at undergraduate level about the importance of the field/discipline.

Finally, it was a good idea to elect the new executive council which comprised mainly of professors at this early stage. This will encourage stability since these professors are experienced. However, in future, the

outlook of the Council should, as much as possible reflect the configuration of the association in terms of age, gender and professional experience.

### **Bibliography**

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