GARPI: A decade of African research into interculturality

The African Research Group for Intercultural Philosophy (GARPI) was established during the eleventh International Congress on Intercultural Philosophy, which took place from 17 to 21 September 2015 in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) under the theme 'Educational Traditions, Spirituality and the University. Towards an Intercultural Transformation of Higher Education'. On this occasion, Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, the German-Cuban philosopher and initiator of these international meetings on interculturality, expressed the wish that interdisciplinary working groups on this topic should be formed on every continent.

An initiative spearheaded by four researchers

The two African participants at the Santo Domingo Congress, Dr Anne-Béatrice Faye (Senegal), a Sister of the CIC and philosopher, who was working in Burkina Faso at the time, and Dr Rodrigue Naortangar SJ (Chad), a theologian and anthropologist, who was working in the Ivory Coast at the time, approached Dr Paul Béré SJ, an exegete and then Director of the Research Department at the Institut de Théologie de la Compagnie de Jésus (ITCJ), and to Dr Thérèse Samaké FCIM, a philosopher and then Vice-President of the UCAO-UUB (Catholic University of West Africa – Bamako University Unit). Together, these four researchers formed the founding core of the African Working Group on Interculturality, which was named GARPI.

Objectives

GARPI has set itself the aim of promoting interculturality from a genuinely African perspective, along four main lines of work: taking stock of existing work on interculturality in Africa; re-establishing continuity with African ancestral traditions; reflecting on methodological issues relating to interculturality; and developing a dimension of interculturality rooted in the African context as an alternative to the dominant discourses.

First workshop and first publication

With financial support from Missio Aachen and the ITCJ's Research Department, GARPI's first workshop took place at the ITCJ in Abidjan on 22 and 23 May 2018 — the realisation of a project that had been in the making since 2015. The collected contributions led to the first volume of the GARPI series:

Anne-Béatrice Faye, CIC – Rodrigue M. Naortangar, SJ (eds.), *La transformation interculturelle de l'université africaine*, Abidjan, Presses de l'ITCJ, 2022.

The 'Africa and Europe' colloquium and the second publication

GARPI subsequently took part in the international colloquium 'L'Afrique et l'Europe. Penser le défi d'une rencontre', which took place at the ITCJ in Abidjan from 2 to 3 February 2023. Conceived as an intercultural and interdisciplinary forum, this colloquium brought together philosophers, theologians, exegetes, anthropologists, historians and linguists from Africa and Europe, and was funded by educational and research institutions from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo and Chad, as well as from Germany, Belgium, Austria, Italy and Switzerland. This exchange gave rise – with further financial support from Missio-Aachen – to the second publication in the series:

Franz Gmainer-Pranzl – Rodrigue M. Naortangar, SJ, **L'Afrique et l'Europe. Penser le défi d'une rencontre**, Abidjan, Presses de l'ITCJ, 2025.

Outlook

Two research projects are currently in preparation: a series of workshops on cultural dynamics in the Sahel region and a publication project on the resilience of African women.