NEW WORLD - NEW CREATION: MISSION IN POWER AND FAITH.
VIIIth IAMS conference in a (lost) paradise

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From August 4-11(12), 1992, the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS) held its three-yearly congress in a very inviting region, namely Hawaii. So far IAMS had not met in Oceania, and it was therefore the first time that several representatives from this region were among the (about) 175 participants. The venue was Loa College, merged with the Hawaii Pacific University that very week, and situated near Kaneohe on the east coast of the isle of Oahu. The campus, beautifully laid out on hilly terrain, was not only rich in trees, flowers, plants and birds, but had also a view of the impressive Koolau Range. Especially during the daily morning service and plenary sessions, held in a sheltered place in front of the main building, we were more or less sitting amidst nature.

The context

This idyll would not remain undisturbed. As usual the organizing local committee -- chaired by Dr. Joan Chatfield, M.M., former president of the IAMS and Director of the Institute for Religion & Social Change in Hawaii, and Patricia Mumford, Executive Director of the Hawaii Council of Churches -- had arranged various possibilities to get to know the context. This time not through an 'exposure' of some days but by joining one of the four day trips on respectively social issues, human needs, militarization/peace education, and historic Honolulu, or the home-session on neighbour islands. Visiting church-related organizations and projects we were introduced to the problems of prostitution, runaway youth in Hawaii's famous tourist area, AIDS, violence in the family, the consequences of immigration, the (causes of) the serious housing shortage, and the military complex, which means the presence of 150,000 American militaries and their families and the occupation of vast terrains, apart from Pearl Harbour. The environment and water supply were other issues of concern; at the moment there are six million tourists a year, the planning is to double this number.

The historic Honolulu excursion visited the houses (including the printing establishment) of the first missionaries, as well as the about 1880 built and recently restored 'Iolani palace, where in 1893 queen Lili'uokalani was imprisoned for nine months after being dethroned by white inhabitants. This beautiful historic
area forms quite a contrast with the adjoining modern city centre with its towering business buildings. Remarkable for a rather small island, but in view of the many tourists, militaries and business people perhaps not surprising, is the intensive traffic with corresponding roads which also affected Loa College.

We were also introduced to the movement for independence by the descendants of the original inhabitants of Hawaii, and their claim for the same status as that of other indigenous groups in the United States like the Indians, including retrocession of land, most of which is now in the hands of a trust consisting of a limited number of mainly Japanese, Chinese and Americans. The IAMS-meeting passed a resolution on these matters and called especially on the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States to take this matter up with the US government. In the preceding discussion it was pointed out that there are hardly any aboriginals left: Portuguese, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Philippino's, Americans, and many other immigrants contributed to the mixture.

Plenary sessions and workshops

The theme of the conference was 'New World - New Creation: Mission in Power and Faith'. It was elaborated in the opening speech by prof. Kosuke Koyama from Japan and served as guide-line in the daily morning service and the workshops. There were eleven workshops, dealing with topics like Biblical Insights on New Creation and Mission in Power and Faith, Evangelism, Mission and Ideologies, Popular Religiosity and the Faith of the People, Rape of the Land - Rape of the Peoples, the Church and the Power of the People, Healing as a Sign of the New Creation, Mission Beyond Colonialism, and Christ and Pluralism. Especially the latter was well attended. I myself took part in the workshop 'Empowerment of Women' which wrote a letter to support the action for rehabilitation of Korean comfort women and the rewriting of Japanese history books with regard to this issue. The participants also decided to start a bibliographical project on 'Women in Mission' and to report this to the IAMS-Board.

Many more things happened. A new Board was elected, with Dr. Michael Amaladoss as president and the Lutheran minister Ana Langerak from Costa Rica as vice-president. An impressive celebration concluded the conference.

Finally the following day three groups convened, one of which was Documentation, Archives and Bibliography (DAB). Participants were informed a.o. on the progress made in the development of DAB software and the DAB macrothesaurus. Both are expected to be ready in March 1993.

All in all an inspiring and for the most of us very successful IAMS-conference. For an official report see the forthcoming issues of Mission Studies - Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies (Arnold-Janssen-Str.24, D-5205 Sankt Augustin 1, Germany.)