Editorial

A Tribute to Ingrid Lawrie

Instead of our usual editorial, we have decided to use this space to recognize one of the people responsible for making the Journal of Religion in Africa the quality publication that it is today. Ingrid Lawrie served as the Deputy Editor of Administration and Copy Editor for the Journal for more than two decades, and also served as our Reviews Editor for many years. As of the beginning of this year (2009) she has retired from her duties to the Journal. If there is any testimony to Ingrid’s dedication and work ethic, it can surely be found in the fact that since her retirement the Journal has had to employ three different people to do the job she used to handle alone. As one of those who has succeeded Ingrid, I can attest that I find my particular duties daunting; I honestly cannot imagine how she did my job in addition to being the Review Editor and Copy Editor.

As the Journal moves forward we can find comfort in the fact that Ingrid has established a system and structure that can easily be followed. Perhaps more importantly, although she claims to be retired, Ingrid is still one quick email away from providing possible reviewers, clarification on style, or a solution to the numerous tangles that the publication process uncovers. Below are several testimonies from people who worked closely with Ingrid for many years that attest to just how valuable Ingrid has been to the Journal. It is no exaggeration to say that the Journal of Religion in Africa is what it is because of Ingrid. I am sure I speak for everyone who has been a part of the Journal in sending Ingrid a profound thank you and best wishes in her retirement.

Derek Miller
Deputy Editor (Administration)

When I was asked to serve as the Executive Editor of the Journal of Religion in Africa in 2003, I had a few reservations about the responsibilities it entailed and the complexity of the organization. Fortunately I had worked with Ingrid Lawrie as a deputy editor for the past four years, so I knew that I would have an excellent guide to the job! It is no exaggeration to say that Ingrid was largely
responsible for the everyday operations of the JRA, and her influence on its now long history cannot be overstated.

In matters of production, Ingrid’s skills as an administrator are unsurpassed. She managed to keep dozens of balls in the air, always communicating with authors, reviewers, editors, and publishers in a clear and timely fashion. Ingrid also has a wonderful prose style; this allowed her to shape up the oftentimes tortured language of many a manuscript (and review) in ways that were always helpful. While her professional experience did not cover African scholarship prior to her affiliation with the JRA, she now has a magisterial command of the field. By following the literature closely she is always able to see the value in a piece of scholarship that may need reshaping and is not afraid of offering criticism of some of the more celebrated scholars’ submissions to the Journal. Ingrid’s exacting standards have served the JRA very well and helped us maintain the high quality for which the Journal is known. Moreover, she has been a tireless advocate for the JRA itself, always making sure that the Journal is promoted in the right circles at conferences and symposia around the world. Ingrid has also been a strong supporter of junior scholars, particularly African scholars whose work she has always encouraged both through her professional contacts and her editorial skills. Above all, as an editor at the JRA I depended on Ingrid to find the right readers for a great many of the submissions, articles, and books for review that we received. She has a sophisticated and nuanced grasp of the many disciplines encompassed in our articles, and Ingrid’s long experience and always considerate style allowed us to recruit a small army of reliable readers without which no publication can long function.

Ingrid’s contributions to the JRA have gone unsung for too many years. It is a real pleasure for me to wish her well on her future plans, and to sincerely thank her for the opportunity to work with her in producing the fine scholarship our readers have come to enjoy.

Brad Weiss
Dept. of Anthropology, College of William and Mary

Academia has unsung heroes and heroines without whom it would not be possible to function. Archivists, librarians, and cartographers all play an invaluable role in the production of research, yet so often their contribution is barely acknowledged in articles and monographs. As administrative and reviews editor Ingrid made an enormous contribution to the JRA, one that deserves greater recognition.

Trained in Jurisprudence at Oxford University, she brought many skills to the JRA. She had an eye for detail and clarity of argument, and could spot