

# Beyond Expectations in the Academic World: 17 Years of Publishing with *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (2006–2023)

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## Abstract

This research article aims to bring out the author's 17 years of research and publications with the *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae: Journal of Church History*, abbreviated as *SHE*, from 2006 to 2023, and to establish its impact on his socio-scholarly formation. Methodologically, this drives the researcher to acknowledge the journal's sharpening and preparatory role that has made it possible for him to be invited as an editor of an East African journal, an external examiner in various universities, and a conference speaker in diverse forums. The methodology also includes surveying the Church History Society of Southern Africa (CHSSA)'s annual conferences whose presentations since 2007—when the author attended for the first time—have enriched his engagements with *SHE*. Such presentations were later published in the journal. Key events that helped the author to come into contact with the first *SHE* copy have also been surveyed. The Mombasa Biographical Conference of April 2024, where the author was invited as the closing speaker, is viewed as one of the journal's impactful events. The author was invited to address the gathering after his interest in biographical research was noted through his publications in *SHE* since 2006. Given this, the author seeks to usher in an East African perspective by drawing from the 17 years of his active participation in *SHE* publications and the CHSSA conferences. The latter provides the raw material for *SHE*'s publications.

**Keywords:** East Africa; Kenya; 17 years; *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*; publishing



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## Introduction

*Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae: Journal of Church History*, abbreviated as *SHE*, has been in circulation since 1973 when its first edition was released to the public domain. In the dark days of separate development (apartheid), *SHE* did not come out, initially, as an all-inclusive enterprise that sought to bring a pan-African voice to the fore. Rather, it came out as an exclusively South African voice, with a bias toward the privileged members of the South African society of the 1970s. In post-apartheid South Africa, however, *SHE* has emerged as one of the most effective academic journals that address a hotchpotch of issues that face Southern Africa, Africa, and the global society. Diverse themes have been addressed since then through the annual Church History Society of Southern Africa (CHSSA) conferences. Such thematic areas include but are not limited to, Festschrift, money and wealth, religion and technology, methodology in church history, Ecumenism, war and peace, theological education, environmental concern, church and migration, and religious freedom, among others.

As implied above, the lowest point in *SHE*'s historiography is that it was established during the dark days of South Africa, when there were social imbalances in the country. During the apartheid era in South Africa (1948–1990), East Africans were not encouraged to interact with South Africa. In Kenya for instance, there was an instruction on citizens' passports not to travel to "apartheid South Africa" (Kamau 2023, 1). However, the opening up of the democratic space made it possible for the author to enter South Africa on 5 March 2003 as a post-graduate student in the then-University of Natal, renamed the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2004, after the merger with the then-University of Durban Westville. As will be explained, the researcher only got a copy of the *SHE* journal after he entered South Africa. Eventually, the demise of apartheid enabled *SHE* to reach out to the East African market easily, as cross-cultural interactions became the modus operandi.

Although the researcher managed to read several *SHE* editions upon entering South Africa in 2003, he noted that some of the early editions, since the 1970s, were written in Afrikaans, a matter that shows another weak point for *SHE*. Publishing in Afrikaans presented a language barrier for non-Afrikaans-speaking readers. Although this is not a common occurrence in *SHE*, as it was in the 1970s and 1980s, some articles are still published in Afrikaans rather than English as a more common language. Certainly, Lusophone Africa, Arabophone Africa, and Francophone Africa may also want to engage *SHE* in their respective languages. The use of the English language would enhance the ideal of an inclusive agenda and pan-Africanism. While we need to celebrate all human languages as tongues of God, and as vehicles of culture, inclusive language is critical to *SHE*'s future. This observation is made after underlining the fact that the journal has shifted from being a mere South African periodical of Church history to a pan-African scholarly voice that is transforming individuals and societies beyond South Africa. Nevertheless, a look at several editions in recent times has demonstrated that *SHE* has employed an inclusive approach across gender, race, nationality, and colour

considerations. Its transformative agenda cuts across the South African communities and the larger African context.

At this juncture, it is worthwhile to acknowledge that CHSSA founded *SHE* in Pretoria in October 1970 and its annual conferences enrich it greatly. Despite *SHE* being founded in 1970, its first edition was published in 1973. Thus, as noted in the *SHE*'s website,

The Church History Society of Southern Africa [CHSSA] was founded at UNISA, Pretoria, on 1 October 1970, by a group of academics and church ministers. Some of the leading founding members included Professor JAAA Stoop, CF Borchardt, SJ Botha, P Bothma, E Brown, BJ Marais, AD Pont, BJ Odendaal, and AM Hofmeyr. Whilst at the time of its founding, it catered for white male South Africans, the society has grown to embrace an open character where everyone [who is] interested in church history as an academic discipline is accepted without regard to their gender, colour, class, denomination, or political ideology. Furthermore, since 1992, it has since broadened its membership to cover the whole of Southern Africa (*SHE* 2024, 1).

Before the researcher's maiden publication with *SHE* in 2006, reading earlier editions (from the 1970s to 2005) broadened his socio-scholarly horizon. In particular, the rich content of the 2005 edition of *SHE* mesmerised the researcher because its research base was not only a South African concern but also a Southern African one. It articulated the Southern African regional concerns well and created room for other regional voices. Specifically, the two volumes that were released in 2005 had some of the following articles: "The Process Surrounding the Birth of the Justice and Peace Commission in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)" by Paul Gundani, "A Discussion of Adrio Konig's Views on the Evil One, Evil and Evil Powers" by J. P. Theron, "Doing Christian Education at the Edges in South Africa: A Review of the Work of Bongani Mazibuko as a Christian Educator and Missiologist" by Simangaliso Kumalo, "Waging peace in the Spanish Civil Wars: The Relief Efforts of the British Quaker Mission" by Frederick Hale, "Decolonising History: On Being a Church on the Borders of South Africa" by Lesiba Matsaung, "State of the Union: the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, 1999–2004" by Graham Duncan, "From Edinburgh to Achimota: The World Mission Conferences as a Source of Missiological Knowledge in the Thinking of D. J. Bosch" by Nico Adam Botha, "The Experiences of the First Indigenous Catholic Priest in South Africa: Fr. Edward Muller Kece Mnganga, 1872–1945" by George Mukuka, "Wholesome and Dynamic Sense Making Approaches in the Transfer of Doctrines and Theories of Faith" by Erasmus Van Niekerk, "Archiving Otherwise: Some Remarks on Memory and Historical Responsibility" by Robert Vosloo, "The Politics of Heresy" by Victor Kuligin, "Elizabeth Musodzi: The Catholic Woman Agent of the Gospel in Harare" by Munetsi Ruzivo, "Martin Luther on Miracles, Healing, Prophecy and Tongues" by O. Foller, "An African Theology of Healing and its Impact on HIV and AIDS" by Victor Molobi, "Black Theology in South Africa: An Autobiographical Reflection" by M. G. B. Motlhabi, "South African Baptists and the Land Discourse, 1806–1913" by Humphrey Mogashoa, "Feminist Response to the Historical and Current Influence of Belief on Sexual Relationships" by M. M. Pieterse, "Reviewing Control

and Administration of Bethesda and Emmarentia Geldenhuys Schools, 1935–1974” by L. E. Matsaung and S. M. Seloana, and “Faces and Phases of Protestantism in African Contexts: The Jacobus Capitein Heritage” by Tinyiko Maluleke.

While we cannot do justice by sampling one or two editions or volumes, the cited cases speak largely for the diverse themes that *SHE* came to address. Given this, the second volume of 2005 covered broad areas that pointed out the “new” shape of the *SHE* journal in post-colonial Africa. Another notable point is that the articles were historical. Vosloo came out uniquely when he addressed methodology in oral studies, a pointer to the original nature of *SHE* articles that largely utilise primary data rather than secondary data. Encouraging oral histories is certainly the greatest strength in *SHE*, as archival and unpublished write-ups and synod minutes among other elements of oral works are brought forth to mid-wife a new knowledge base in academia. Besides this, some articles in the second volume of 2005 addressed doctrinal concerns as in the case of Munetsi Ruzivo’s piece titled “Martin Luther and Miracles” and Kuligin’s write-up on “The Politics of Heresy.” Church polity was addressed in Duncan’s article titled “State of the Union.” Feminist themes were brought forth, for example, in Pieterse’s article entitled “Feminist Response to Sexual Relationships.” Further, missiological themes were well captured in Maluleke’s article titled “Jacobus Capitein Heritage.” Equally, Molobi captured the theme of healing, which is a major treatise among the African-instituted churches. Most authors in the 2005 edition were South Africans, although there were non-South Africans as well. For example, Gundani and Mukuka were Zimbabwean and Zambian, respectively. Besides this, renowned systematic theologians such as Vosloo contributed to this historical journal and further enriched it with backgrounds in academia. Further, themes largely associated with liberation theologies were historicised in this volume, as in the case of Motlhabi’s autobiographical reflection. The second edition included Black and white South Africans and non-South African contributors. The gender question was equally considered. Was *SHE* inviting scholars across various gender, nationalities, and disciplines to come and participate in this all-important task of remaking post-colonial Africa through research and publication? Nevertheless, the second edition gave impetus to the author of this research article who found *SHE* a critical partner in disseminating the East African oral histories (social or ecclesial dimensions), which remained largely undocumented. It played a critical role in his maiden publication, “Jesse Mugambi’s Pedigree: Formative Factors” (2006) in *SHE*’s Volume 32 Issue 2, pp.173–205, which brought Prof. Mugambi’s pan-African role in his theology of reconstruction and his quest for the church of the future. Mugambi’s pontification for an “electric church” did not, however, come out clearly. Or was he foreseeing a COVID-19-era church where worship services, meetings, and strategies went online?

### **Recollections on *SHE*, 2006, Volume 32, Issue 2**

The author considers Volume 32, Issue 2 of September 2006 as a critical point of reference as it marks his dalliance with *SHE*. This is because he published his first article which launched him as an article writer with over 200 publications (journal articles,

books, co-authorship in books and journals, individually authored books, book chapters, book co-editorship and so on) by December 2023. These research and publication experiences catapulted him to the post of Editor-in-chief of an emerging East African journal, the *Jumuga Journal of Education, Oral Studies and Human Sciences (JEOSHS)* in 2018. As noted earlier, the researcher's maiden article on *SHE* is chronicled. That is, Prof. Jesse Mugambi's pedigree is traced from his paternal and maternal lineages to understand the formative factors that could have nurtured his scholarly prowess. Such include the cultural factor debates and contestations that he encountered as some members of his family became ardent Anglican Christians, and as others vouched for African religion and culture. The Mau Mau (deadly quest for Kenya's independence) is also viewed as another major factor that is seen to have contributed to his persona, as an early curiosity on the concepts of liberation and reconstruction came in as Kenya geared towards independence in 1963. Another biographical article came from a Zambian scholar, George Mukuka (2006, 207–225). The scholar brought out the contribution of Father Aloys Majonga Mncadi, a black Roman Catholic priest from South Africa who had a successful mission among the Zulus from 1887 to 1957. The period under consideration, 1887–1957, gives a background to the training of African indigenous clerics in South Africa.

In the same volume, Puleng Lenkabula (2006, 269–292) argues, in her article entitled “African Feminist Reflections on the Accra Confession,” that the Accra Confession—implemented by the representatives of the 24th General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) in Accra, Ghana, 2004—had huge implications for the church and society, as its relevance for gender and ecological justice are well articulated. In the third article titled “Christian Attitude and the Human Dignity of Women,” Koos Vorster (2006, 229–268), argues that women's contribution to ecclesiastical and social matters across historical times—even within reformed traditions—cannot be downplayed. Despite being authored in Afrikaans, hence risking the communication barrier among *SHE*'s pan-African and global readerships, J. G. Gillmer's article (2006, 99–119) appraises the contribution of Afrikaans-speaking reformed churches when mining started in the goldfields during the 1950s. As the mining industry helped in industrial and infrastructural growth, and as towns emerged and populations in the towns increased, the Reformed churches played a role in contributing to the developmental trajectories that were critical in ushering in quality living. This role should not be overlooked. Further, in Volume 32, Issue 1, of *SHE*, Landman, Willem, and Du Preez (2006, 321–343) address the case of Independent Prison Visitors (IPV) who they argue had become the “voice of the voiceless” in prison circles, and recommend that religious needs of the incarcerated should be factored in.

Another concern that came up in Volume 32, Issue 1, is the youth factor (Matsaung 2006, 123–141). From a historical perspective, Lesiba Matsaung (2006) has effectively brought up the plight of the youth who were excluded in church polity, especially in the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA) and explained the value of their inclusion in the future ecclesiastical

engagements. Frederick Hale (2006, 47–68) went beyond this by recalling the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, at the “Battle of Rorke’s Drift” where the Swedish Mission Board (SMB) established the Swedish Lutheran Oscarsberg mission station in 1874. However, the Church of Sweden Mission (CSM) only acquired a plot of land in 1878 and renamed it “Oscarsberg” in recognition of King Oscar II of Norway, who reigned from 1872 to 1905 (Matsaung 2006). Others who contributed to this maiden volume, where the researcher was launched into an article writer, are Edmund De Beer (293–319) who argues that apartheid and other inequitable practices were not the only cause for discrepancies in the labour market in 1994 and Victor Molobi (2006, 153–170) who explores the inter-connectedness of burial societies that paradoxically utilise Indigenous and Christian rituals, a phenomenon that drives one to wonder whether this smacks off syncretism (un-coordinated dalliance of various religions) or inculturation (coordinated/scientific dialogue of culture and religion/gospel). Ordinarily, syncretism is seen as a Western concept used to scatter dialogue between the gospel and culture in Africa across historical times. Coming from Molobi (2006), a polished scholar in African Instituted Churches, it triggered more questions in the researcher, provoking further research. Such contestations are commonplace in the researchers’ 17 years of publishing with *SHE*, as Conversion (genuine appreciation of the gospel after interacting with socio-cultural realities of the evangelised) and Proselytisation (assumed conversion after the socio-cultural realities of the “converted” are dismissed as non-existent) have also sparked further debates and research. Certainly, 17 years of researching and publishing with *SHE* has had huge lessons and research-trigger cases as noted above. Lazarus Lebeloane and Mokhele Madise (2006, 143–152) wrote a thought-provoking and/or research-debate-trigger article that appeared in 2006 Volume 32 Issue 2. In the article, they explored the use of different types of water (water from a spring, water in a flowing river, wells, fountains, seas or oceans, and waterfalls, among others) in the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) since the church members engage in the rituals of cleansing, blessings, healing, and casting out evil of spirits.

Graham Duncan (2006, 69–97) explored the pre-history of the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa, an ecumenical institution before 1963. In particular, the role of the founding ecclesiastical societies such as the Presbyterians, the Methodists, and the Anglicans are surveyed. The author did not, however, deal with the circumstances behind its closure in 1993. Such gaping holes were critical in triggering further curiosity, hence more research was needed. Aleta Dube’s (2006, 21–46) article was entitled “A History of Training Lay People for Evangelisation in the Catholic Church in Zimbabwe.” It sought to justify the urgent need for training lay people, as it drew from Vatican II’s “revolutionary” deliberations whose implications pointed out the need to empower all Christians. It specifically cited the Zimbabwean case where lay participation in ecclesiastical affairs was at its lowest web. Raymond Kumalo Simangaliso’s (2006, 1–19) article was entitled “Methodism in South Africa: The Teaching Ministry of Five Native Mission Agents.” Although the words “native” and “tribe” are viewed in some African countries as imperialistic and pejorative because they were used during the colonial era to mean primitive, backward, ancient, or foolish

people, Simangaliso (2006) uses them unapologetically. He went on to discuss some indigenous contributors to Methodism in its earlier stages. Such included Samuel Mathabathe from Transvaal, who established a church in 1869. Robert Ndevu Mashaba (1865–1935), a member of the Ronga clan of Mozambique was also cited as one of the five pioneer indigenous contributors to the birth of Methodism in Southern Africa. Mashaba pioneered the work of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Mozambique and translated 100 hymns into Tsonga (Simangaliso 2006).

### **CHSSA Conferences since 2007**

Another pointer to the way in which the author journeyed with *SHE* in his 17 years of research and publishing is through the annual CHSSA conferences. Although the researcher had already published an article by September 2006, he was only able to attend his first CHSSA Conference in 2007. The CHSSA conference papers, which ordinarily end up as one of the three annual issues of *SHE*, are critically important in the growth of the journal and the participants. Such presentations are published after a blind peer review. This means that presentations were (and are) not guaranteed publication in *SHE*, as peer-review reports form the basis of publication. Nevertheless, the annual CHSSA conferences provided a forum that helped presenters improve the quality of their content and the general presentations, as audience response was meant to meet that significant schema in academia.

Given this, the researcher attended the 14 to 16 January 2007 CHSSA Conference held at St. Augustine College, Johannesburg, South Africa. St. Augustine College of South Africa is a Roman Catholic academic institution which offers post-graduate courses in humanities and theology. It was accepted as a research institution by South Africa's National Research Foundation in 2010 (St Augustine 2024). The theme of the January 2007 CHSSA Conference was: "The Methodology of Church History," where the researcher presented a paper titled "Story-telling as a Methodology in Developing a Theology of Reconstruction." The paper was later published in *SHE*, Volume 33 Issue 1, 2007. The second CHSSA Conference, where the researcher presented a paper, was in January 2008. It took place at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. By then, Kenya Airways had a direct flight, from Mombasa to Johannesburg, which took about four hours. The researcher was living in Mombasa, so he benefited from this arrangement. As he travelled to this critical forum of learning, his home country was on fire resulting from a disputed presidential election, held on 27 December 2007. As a result of the violence, over 1, 500 people died and over 300, 000 people became internally displaced persons (IDPs). These events affected the researcher psychologically and had a bearing on his participation in this conference. The 14–16 January 2008 Conference's main theme was: "Religious Freedom and Church History." The researcher presented a paper titled "The Quest for Religious Freedom in Colonial Kenya, 1987–1963." It was later published in Volume 34, Issue 1, 2008.

The 2009 CHSSA Conference was held at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, from 22 to 26 June. Although it was a joint conference, where various academic

societies presented from various rooms, there were common areas where all were assembled. The CHSSA Conference theme was: “The History of Theological Education in Africa.” The researcher presented a paper titled “The Birth of Protestant Education in Eastern Africa: Sampling Johannes Ludwig Krapf, 1837–1872.” It was published in Volume 35, supplement issue, 2009. The 2010 CHSSA Conference was set on the theme: “Ecumenism: An Historical Perspective.” It was held at the University of North West, Potchefstroom, South Africa. The researcher presented a paper entitled “The Early Attempts at Ecumenical Cooperation in East Africa: The Case of Kikuyu Conference 1913.” After the due process of peer review and editorial work, it was published in Volume 37, Issue 1, 2011. The 2011 CHSSA Conference was held from 29 June to 1 July, in Durban, South Africa. Its main theme was: “Histories of Church and Money.” At this conference, the researcher presented a paper titled “The Challenge of Money and Wealth in Some East African Pentecostal Churches.” The main theme of the 2012 CHSSA Conference was: “Knowing, Believing, Living in Africa: An Historical Perspective.” It was held at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, from 18 to 22 June 2012. Ordinarily, presenters are requested to send their titles and abstracts of less than 200 words to the steering team. Given this, the steering team rejected the researcher’s first abstract in March 2012 because the topic on the birth of African theology was not original enough. There is a lot of information on the same on the web. The abstract reviewers felt that diverse materials on the same topic could be accessed through a simple web search. Two weeks later, the researcher sent another abstract titled “Some Challenges in Founding the African Faith: Sampling Mutira Mission, Kenya, 1907–2012,” which was accepted. It was presented during the CHSSA conference and was later published in Volume 38, Issue 2, 2012.

The CHSSA Conference of 2013 was held at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa. Its main theme was: “The African Christian Churches and the Environment in a Historical Perspective.” It was held from 15 to 17 August 2013. The researcher presented titled “African Indigenous Ways of Environmental Preservation.” It was later published in *SHE*, Volume 39, Issue 2, 2013. Since then, it has triggered environmental debates across trans-disciplinary lines. The 2014 CHSSA Conference was held from 14 to 16 August 2014, at the University of South Africa, Pretoria. Its conference theme was: “Church, War and Peace.” The researcher presented his article entitled “Mau-Mau War and the Church in Kirinyaga, Kenya: Accounting for the Tension and Conflict, 1952–1960.” It was published in Volume 40, Issue 2, 2014. The 2015 CHSSA Conference was held from 13 to 15 August 2015, and its main theme was: “The History of Commemorations, Celebrations and Anniversaries.” It was held at North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa. The researcher presented a paper under the theme: “Ecclesiastical and Political Leaderships in One Armpit: Celebrating the Life of Thomas Kalume.” After peer reviews, it was published in *SHE*, Volume 41, Issue 3, 2015. The 2016 CHSSA Conference took place at the University of Pretoria, South Africa from 11 to 15 July. Although it was a joint conference where various academic societies met under one roof, the CHSSA team was able to address



their relevant themes under the theme: “Popular Faith and Canonical Faith of the Church in Southern African Christianity.” The researcher presented his paper under the theme: “Continuity of Indigenous Rituals in the African Ecclesiology: A Kenyan Experience from a Historical Perspective.” Although the paper was not included in any of *SHE*’s 42 Volumes of 2016, it was published by *Stellenbosch Theological Journal*, Volume 3, Issue 1, 2017. The main theme for the 2017 CHSSA Conference was: “Turning Points in the History of Christianity.” Its annual conference was held at Stellenbosch University from 17 to 19 August 2017. The researcher presented a paper on “Nahashon Ngare Rukenya (1930–96) and the Moral Re-Armament in Kenya: The Turning Point and the Resettlement of Post-War Victims.” It was later published in *SHE*, Volume 44, Issue 2, 2018.

The CHSSA Conference returned to the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg city and was held from 16 to 18 August 2018. The main theme was: “Church and Empire,” and the researcher presented a paper on “Alfred Tucker and the Birth of a Christian Empire in Eastern Africa.” It provoked interesting debates on the various dimensions of the empire. Just as in 2010, the CHSSA Conference of 2019 returned to the University of South Africa, Pretoria City, and was held from 14 to 17 August. Its main theme was: “Church and Land in Historical Perspective.” The researcher presented a paper on “Settler-missionary Alliance in Colonial Kenya and the Land Question.” It was published later in *SHE*, Volume 46, Issue 2, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the 2020 CHSSA Conference didn’t take place as scheduled. It was initially set to take place at the University of Western Cape, Cape Town, from 29 June to 3 July 2020. Its envisaged theme was: “The History of Contextual Theology in South Africa and Beyond: An Investigation in Historical Theology.” Nevertheless, during the 17 to 18 September 2021 webinar presentations, the different presentations of June 2020 were delivered, and the researcher presented a paper entitled “John Mbiti’s Ubuntu Theology: Was it Rooted in his African Heritage?” It was eventually published in *SHE*, Volume 48, Issue 2, 2022. As in 2009 and 2017, the 2022 CHSSA Conference was held at the University of Stellenbosch and took place from 11 to 13 August 2022. The physical attendance indicated that COVID-19 fears had been eliminated after the two-year break. Its main theme was: “The Church and New Technologies from Colonial Times to the Present Day.” The researcher presented a paper entitled “Ecclesiastical Dalliance with Science and Technology in Colonial Kenya.” It was later published in *SHE*, in 2023, as “The Use of Science and Technology Among Afro-Pentecostals: A Theo-Historical Perspective from the Kenyan Context”, Volume 49, Issue 2, pp.1–20 (Gathogo 2023a). A related paper, whose publication was inspired by the CHSSA Conference theme of 2022, was “Missionaries’ Engagement with Science and Technology in Colonial Kenya (1887–1963).” It was eventually published by a leading American journal, the *Journal of Religion in Africa* 53(2023), pp.1–25 (Gathogo 2023b). The CHSSA 2022 also inspired the author to research on a third article on the theme of religion and science, whose title was “African Indigenous Knowledge Versus Western Science in the Mbeere Mission of Kenya.” It was eventually published in *HTS Teologiese Studies Journal* (Gathogo 2023c). During the 2023 CHSSA Conference, whose theme was: “Church and

Migration from Colonial Times to the Present Day,” held at the University of Free State, Bloemfontein from 17 to 19 August, the researcher presented a paper titled “Migrants and Martyrs in Eastern Africa: A Historical Engagement.” It was published by *SHE* in the first issue of 2024.

### **Analysis of CHSSA Conferences, 2007–2023**

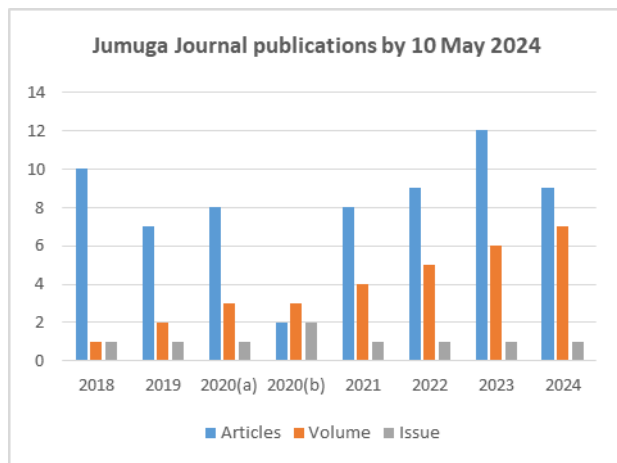
A review of the CHSSA Conferences that the researcher has attended since January 2007 demonstrates five major things. First, all these conferences and publications show a symbiotic relationship between *SHE* and CHSSA for mutual scholarly benefits amongst their twin memberships and/or subscribers. *SHE* published over 90 per cent of the researcher’s annual presentations at CHSSA conferences. Second, the scholar’s 17 years of research and publishing with *SHE* have been retraced and documented. The researcher has not missed the annual CHSSA Conferences except in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the entire CHSSA to postpone the annual meeting. Instead, it pushed the meeting to September 2021. Third, the rich engagement encouraged and/or inspired the author to also research with other academic societies and refereed journals, as a measure of consolidating the gains made. Fourth, thematic arrangements in *SHE* have remained a milestone in academia as researchers are allowed to work under a guided format. Further, CHSSA conferences remain elaborate and organised forums of academic engagement which have the potential to transform African society and beyond. Fifth, with all these conferences being concentrated in South African cities, how will the other African cities be socio-ecclesial-academically transformed? Suggestions have been made to transform CHSSA into a broad-based pan-Africanist forum for engaging the West, East, Central, and other parts of Africa. Being the most active theo-ecclesiastical society in Africa, the CHSSA needs to revive or launch regional memberships, as in the example set by the Circle of Concerned African Women theologians (The Circle), which has branches across the various cities and universities in the tropical Africa (see Gathogo and Kaunda 2021).

### ***SHE* Influences on Journal Editorship**

In analysing how the 17 years of engagement with *SHE* has impacted the researcher—at individual and corporate levels—as an East African scholar from Kenya, one may be forced to look at several areas. First, many other journal articles authored by the researcher came after the *SHE*’s publication in September 2006. Indeed, the first article in *SHE* gave him the impetus to learn and publish more. This drives him to recall his appointments as an external examiner in various universities across the globe, the number of other journal articles that he has published with other journals, the many keynote addresses that he has been invited to deliver since then, the research output received as a UNISA research fellow, and his appointment as the Editor-in-chief for an emerging East African scientific journal, *JJEOSHS*, in 2018.

In analysing *JJEOSHS*, one realises that lessons learnt from contributing to *SHE* have gone beyond expectations. The former goes beyond ecclesiastical concerns and

addresses oral studies, educational concerns, religious agenda, human conflicts, science matters, socio-political issues and so on. As noted thus, the first edition of *JJEOSHS* attracted 10 articles in its maiden volume. The second volume of 2019 attracted seven articles, as the 2020 Volume 3 had two issues that published 10 articles. While the 2018 and 2019 publications attracted East Africans from various universities, the third volume of 2020 attracted researchers from Southern Africa, as in the case of Bridget Mukuka’s article titled “Rethinking Land and Religion: Examining the ‘Power of Naming’ through the Concept of Culture in the African Initiated Church in Zambia” (Mukuka, 2020) and Dominic Mukuka’s article titled “The Impact of Land Act of 1995 on Customary, State and Church Lands: The Case of Land Within the United Church of Zambia” (Mukuka, 2020). The fourth edition went beyond Southern Africa and Eastern Africa when it received an article from a Norwegian-based scholar, Andrew Ratanya Mukaria titled “Child-Friendly Environments in Norway and the Kenyan Contexts: A Comparative Analysis” (Mukaria 2021). A scholar from South Sudan, Garang Kuol Gabriel, also contributed an article titled “Christ’s Seer Office in the South Sudanese Context: Exploring the Place of Prophet Ngundeng as a Receptor Lens of Understanding Christology Among the Nuer” in the fourth volume of 2021 (Gabriel 2021).

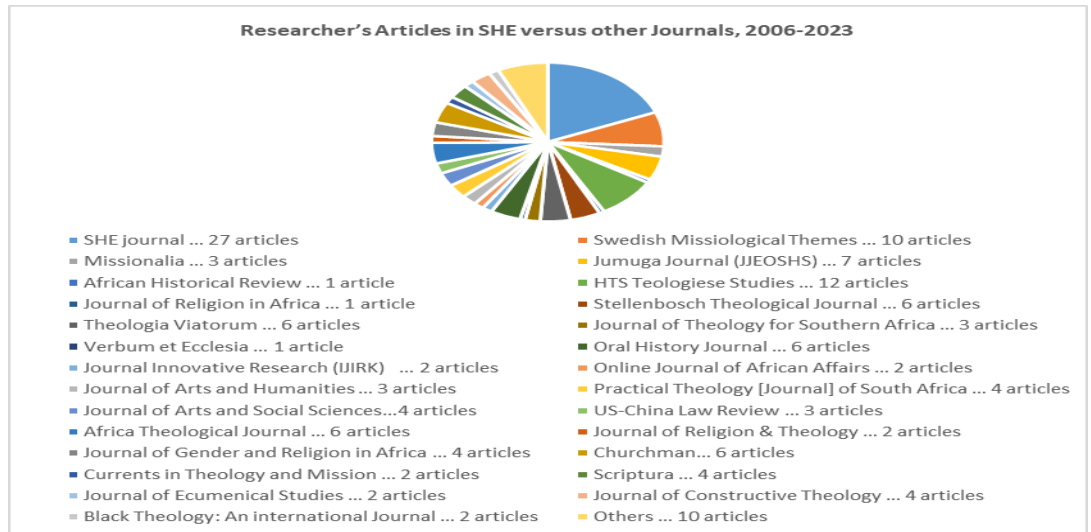


**Figure 1**, Articles published in the researcher’s edited journal, *JJEOSHS*

Like *SHE*, *JJEOSHS* has handled themes such as alcoholism, education and identity politics, methodology in oral history, ecclesial-indigenous paradigms of Ubuntu (care and concern for the other), maritime insecurity, equity and equality in public domains, conservation and management of woodlands, possibilities and limitations of interculturalism, theories of atonement from a historical perspective, and gender concerns, among others. While *SHE* specialises in ecclesiastical history, *JJEOSHS*’s scope is broader as it strives to address historical, oral, educational and social matters, medical, health, and human sciences. This is largely informed by East Africa’s holistic-contextual needs, a phenomenon where an interdisciplinary approach appears to be the better option, especially as various university faculties and schools are merged to meet

human-economic needs collectively. Or are the schools and departmental mergers informed by the desire to cut operation costs? The failure to focus on refereed journals as critical avenues of research and publications is another factor that drives some East African journals to adopt an interdisciplinary approach rather than employing specialist approaches, as maintaining a journal across specialist lines may prove a tall order (Gathogo 2019). As a “student” of *SHE*, *JJEOSHS*, as the diagram shows, is on an upward trajectory.

Researcher’s published articles in *SHE* versus in other journals, 2006–2023



**Figure 2,** *SHE* and other journals where the researcher has published articles

In analysing the researcher’s over 100 journal article publications, one realises that his overall works in *SHE* constitute 20 per cent by 2023. *Swedish Missiological Themes* gives partly seven per cent while *HTS Teologiese Studies*, which comes second after *SHE* only gives eight per cent. Other academic journals, about 30 or so, go below five per cent each. In being elevated to the post of Editor-in-chief of *JJEOSHS*, the researcher’s writing skills were well-sharpened. In view of this, the researcher’s experiences were largely gathered from the many volumes that went up to three annually during Prof. Christina Landman’s editorship (2005 to 2022). Out of the three annual volumes, the researcher could publish at least two articles in each of the two volumes, as the third article would be rejected because *SHE* preferred to publish one article for each author per year. The researcher was privileged to publish two out of three articles annually. Hence, he was encouraged to continue with his oral and mission research that now informs the East African market immeasurably. This was evident when he was invited to deliver the closing speech for the Mombasa Diocesan Research Conference under Dr Alphonse Mwaro Baya, the local Anglican Bishop. The conference was held from 23 to 25 April 2024, organised by the Mombasa Anglican Diocese and the

*Dictionary of the African Christian Biographies* (DACB) project. The latter is based in the Boston School of Theology, USA. The venue of the conference was the ACK Mombasa Memorial Cathedral. The conference, addressed by Dr Michelle Sigg, the Director of the DACB project, was set on the theme: “Reclaiming the Voices of First-Generation Kenyan Church Leaders” (Gathogo 2024a).

### **The Biographical Conference, 23–25 April 2024**

During the Mombasa biographical conference of April 2024, Dr Sigg, who provided the first keynote speech, presented her paper titled “The Power of Biography for Reconstructing History: Modern Pioneers, Preachers and Prophets of Kenya” (Gathogo 2024a, 1). As the starting paper, it agreed with the last presentation given by the researcher in that both papers highlighted the value of biographical research and publications. As reconstructions of memories, biographical researches help us to understand our ancestors, the living, and the future of a given community that produces the chronicled characters (Gathogo 2024a). Indeed, we can

Think of St. Luke’s story about Jesus: Was he quoting it from some authorities from Berlin, New York, Washington, or Cambridge? Certainly not. He simply brought stories about Jesus, as a participant observer and from what he had learnt from verifiable and credible sources. If he didn’t tell the true story that was not adulterated at all, we still do not know what the ministry of Jesus would have shaped up to us. Further, St. Paul’s contribution is largely gathered from the letters that he wrote... It is the pioneer pan Africanist, Marcus Garvey, who used to say: “A people without knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.” Through these biographies that you have presented today, scores of people will be able to retrace their roots and be inspired to become more productive to God and humanity. It will also help them understand and appreciate their heritage (Gathogo 2024a, 1–3).

In a nutshell, conference presentations largely revolved around the contributions of key ecclesiastical leaders in the East African context such as Rev. Canon Jonathan Kituri (1888–1964), David Koi (1819–1895), Maryam Mwang’ombe (1914–2016), Nimrod Mwakiwa Mboje (1900–1986), Rose Mlale Mwadime (1938–2013), Evangelist Margaret Sidi Kadzomba (1942–2004), and Dr Agnes Regina Murei Abuom (1949–2023) (Gathogo 2024a). The organisers of the biographical conference invited the researcher to wind it up because of his biographical contributions, largely published in *SHE*, where he has chronicled several East African actors, especially in the ecclesiastical scenes (personal communication with some of the key actors, 20 April 2024). In this conference, the researcher encouraged the “young” writers to continue chronicling African players whose contributions remain suppressed by our failure to document them through the medium of publication (Gathogo 2024a). The researcher further noted, thus:

When some well-decorated Africans insist that we write about the pioneer Archbishops of Canterbury, from Augustine of 597, Justus of the year 624, Anselm of 1093, Richard Grant of 1229, Thomas Cranmer of 1533, Randal Davidson of 1903 to 1928 and his involvement in the Kikuyu conference of 1913, and George Carey of 1991 to 2002, or

even the current Archbishop, Justin Welby, who taught as a volunteer teacher in my village secondary school [Kiburu] in 1980s, who will capture the non-recorded, the non-documented histories of men and women of Africa who lie on unmarked graves in East Africa and other African spots? Who will liberate Africa through writing? Is it the British Anthropologist Edward B Tylor who wrote a lot about Africans as Animistic though he never stepped on the soil of Africa, where our ancestors were buried? (Gathogo 2024a, 1).

In turn, some of the biographical contributions by the author in *SHE* include “Jesse Mugambi’s Pedigree: Formative Factors” (2006), “David Gitari’s Prophetic Ministry in Kenya (1986–1991)” (2007), “Reading John Calvin in African Context” (2009), “Johannes Ludwig Krapf (1810–1881)” (2009), “Heroes and Heroines at Mutira Mission” (2013), “Milkah Muthoni’s (1948–2009) Afro-Pentecostalism” (2014), “Francis Akanu Ibiam (1906–1995)” (2015), “Thomas Kalume, 1925–1975” (2015), and Nahashon Ngare Rukenya, 1930–1996” (2018), among others. *SHE*’s editorial and publishing “lessons” helped the author of this article to be selected as the epilogue speaker in the Mombasa Diocesan and to be appointed as the *JJEOSHS* Editor-in-chief. To a large extent, this “sharpening” in the scholarly world also prepared him to publish with other global and more established international journals such as the *HTS Teologiese Studies* (South Africa) (2015), *Currents in Theology and Mission*, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, USA (2009), *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, in Temple University, Philadelphia (2008), *US-China Law Review* based in New York, USA (2014), *Verbum et Ecclesia*, a journal of the Dutch Reformed Church at the Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, South Africa (2021), *Journal of Religion and Theology*, Pa Leiden, The Netherlands (2012), *Journal of Religion in Africa*, based in USA and the United Kingdom (Gathogo 2023b), *African Historical Review*, based in the UK and South Africa, among others. Besides this, his over 100 publications in scientific journals—*SHE* leading as his main journal, his huge volume of research, his examination of over 30 PhDs and over 20 successful post-graduate supervisions, were honoured by the Texas-based All Nations Christian Church International (ANCCI) University which conferred him as a Distinguished Professor of Oral and Mission Histories on 3 June 2022. The “distinguished professorship” is the highest academic conferment in the American system; it confirms the Christological aphorism of a prophet whose influence is largely acknowledged abroad rather than locally (Matthew 6:4). Further, his appointment as a Research Fellow, in the Research Institute of Theology and Religion (RITR) in the largest University in Africa, with over 400, 000 students in various colleges and affiliates, the University of South Africa (abbreviated UNISA) (Wikipedia 2024), in 2014 to date, was another major recognition that was fundamentally triggered by *SHE*’s publication. Besides this, *SHE*’s contributions have led to research outputs that have continued to oil his research activities. It is no wonder that the researcher appears as one of the most influential Anglican writers in the book, *Anglican Theology: Postcolonial Perspectives*, edited by Stephen Burns and James Tengtenga (2024). A chapter chronicles his work. Such gestures confirm *SHE*’s influence on the researcher, among other non-documented dimensions which go beyond academia.

## Exposure and Linkages with Diverse Universities

While the author started his oral history and mission research in 1998, he only published his first book, *The Truth About African Hospitality: Is There Hope for Africa*, in 2001. Since 2001, the researcher experienced a publication disconnect until he joined the University of Natal where he came into contact with *SHE*'s write-ups from 2003 to 2004. This allowed him to read *SHE* oral historical articles, which inspired him on research and publication matters (See also Van Rooi 2008). As noted earlier, this climaxed in September 2006 when the researcher published his first article in Volume 32, Issue 2, 2006. Being invited by the Anglican Bishop of Kirinyaga Diocese of Kenya, Dr. Joseph Kibucwa, to the capacity-building course, dubbed "Mt. Kenya Regional Clergy Cohort" from 10 to 21 June 2024 and lecture on academic writing and publishing further affirmed *SHE*'s role in sharpening the researchers' skills as a researcher, writer and a publisher from 2005 to 2023. The larger society had already noticed these skills, hence the countless invitations on related assignments. It reminisces the Mombasa's Biographical Conference of April 2024. *SHE*'s role is explicitly and implicitly felt in all these discourses. Second, with the Second Floor of Pietermaritzburg Campus' mega library (in the University of KwaZulu-Natal) being reserved for journals only, *SHE* inclusive, the impetus to research and publish journal articles was now set to become his special *modus operandi*. Third, being introduced to Cecil Renaud (Main) Library and Alan Paton Centre and Struggle Archives for Special Collections changed his research and publishing worldview immeasurably; for indeed, Cecil Renaud Library (CRL) preserved all *SHE* copies from 1973 onwards. Equally, the Alan Paton Centre (APC) preserved journals, manuscripts, videos, posters, documents, artefacts, and crucial information on the resistance to apartheid in KwaZulu-Natal Midlands. The researcher could not find these books, papers, minutes of critical social-ecclesial matters, tapes, and books anywhere else. Being in the APC felt great. APC was named after Alan Stewart Paton (1903–1988), a committed Christian whose faith made him oppose separate development (apartheid). Indeed, Paton was a renowned anti-apartheid crusader whose books, *Cry the Beloved Country* (1948), *The Land and People of South Africa* (1955), *Tales from a Troubled Land* (1961) and *Save the Beloved Country* (1989), the author had read in the late 1980s as a high school student while in his home country Kenya (see also Alexander 2010).

In particular, the researcher had read Paton's book, *Cry the Beloved Country* in 1984, as it was a compulsory class textbook for Form Two students (in Secondary School). The setting of *Cry the Beloved Country* is in 1948 when the right-wing apartheid proponent, the National Party, came to power in South Africa under Daniël François Malan (1874–1959), a Dutch Reformed Church Cleric (Korf 2008). This was followed by bizarre legal enactments such as the Bantu Education Act of 1953 which sought to give inferior education to Black people and the Registration Act of 1950 which sought to balkanise the country into three groupings (Bantu, Coloureds, and White), among others (Korf 2008). Reading some articles from *SHE*, in both APC and CRL, erased some of his established stereotypes that all South African churches and their leaderships were pro-apartheid. He realised that some ecclesiastical leadership, across racial-

denominational divides, had suffered immensely. Perusing *SHE* publications, in both APC and CRL, made the researcher appreciate that several ecclesiastical leaderships in South Africa had signed the Kairos Document (KD) of 1985, irrespective of their denominational and racial lines. In turn, the KD had five chapters: “The Moment of Truth,” “Critique of State Theology,” “Critique of Church Theology,” “Towards a Prophetic Theology”, and the “Challenge of Action” (Nolan 1994). In a nutshell, KD was a bold attempt by concerned South African Christians to change the status quo for the better.

Fourth, the researcher had not encountered such mega academic resources, such as Cecil Renaud (Main) Library (CRL), Alan Paton Centre (APC), and Struggle Archives for Special Collections, which provided virtually every academic need for research. This was further strengthened by their inter-library loan services—a phenomenon where CRL had a web network arrangement that allowed people to borrow books from all the major world libraries, hence *SHE*’s contributions were well complemented. This is because one could employ the inter-library loan services to consolidate relevant areas of research that were not exhaustively covered in *SHE* articles.

### **The Masvingo and Mombasa Conferences**

During the 2017 conference at Stellenbosch University in Western Cape Province, East African attendees, Kenyans in particular who were members of CHSSA, made some proposals. In this 2017 conference, the researcher led the pack in urging the society to consider an inter-country rotation of annual CHSSA meetings. In particular, the East African proponents of this idea were advised to draw a proposal that was set to specifically and realistically justify the rationale for such engagements. The proposal was proficiently drawn and distributed to the CHSSA leadership and a few other concerned members. During the 2018 and 2019 annual CHSSA conferences, it appeared that some attendees were softening their stand on this proposal to move the CHSSA conference to Kenyatta University-owned North Coast Beach Hotel, Kikambala, Kilifi County. The hotel has all the facilities that the team needed—a major conference hall, smaller conference halls for small groups, catering services, good diet across cultural preferences, fair and cheaper accommodation compared to that in South African cities, leisure activities, security, teaching projectors, transport services, reasonable rates, standard rooms across various standards and costs, swimming facilities, a gym, evening entertainments, and an opportunity to visit tourist and historical sites such as Fort Jesus which was built by the “migrant” Portuguese Christians in 1593 (Gathogo 2024b). With some members of CHSSA coming from Kenyatta University, which owns the facilities, it was explained that the charging rates were set to be lowered. With the sudden upsurge of COVID-19 disruptions, the matter died out for some time, only to reappear during the August 2022 annual conference. Nevertheless, the members agreed to hold the first CHSSA conference, outside South Africa, at the Open University in Masvingo, Zimbabwe from 15 to 17 August 2024. The theme of the 2024 CHSSA conference is set to be: “Storytelling in the History of the Christian churches in Southern Africa.” In engaging *SHE*, since 2006, the researcher’s initial expectations of just publishing one



or two articles, went beyond expectations as it had a huge and positive impact on his influence on CHSSA conferences and made him propose the motion to take CHSSA conferences out of South Africa in 2017. The August 2024 CHSSA Conference in Masvingo and the proposed CHSSA Conference of June to July 2025 at North Coast Beach Hotel, Kilifi County, near Mombasa City of Kenya are a breakthrough that encourages more dalliances with *SHE/CHSSA* activities in academia. With most of the CHSSA presentations being published in the *SHE* journal, the conferences will further broaden the researcher's horizons as well as improve CHSSA's memberships across Africa. Indeed, the CHSSA/*SHE* activities are a "beyond expectations" growth in academia.

## Conclusion

From the outset, the article sought to demonstrate *SHE*'s huge influence on the researcher's socio-scholarly formation since September 2006 when he published an article in the journal's second issue and is surveyed until 2023. In retracing the impact of the 17 years of publishing with *SHE*, the article has brought socio-scholarly breakthroughs that saw the author being invited as keynote speaker, appointed as an East African journal editor, invited from all over the world to author book chapters, appointed to journal boards of editorship and as an external examiner in different universities, recognised as a Distinguished Professor by ANCCI University, awarded an Academic Preceptorship by St Alcuin's College of USA, appointed as a research fellow by UNISA, and invited to many forums that cannot all be listed in this article. Besides this, the article has successfully retraced the CHSSA conferences, which birthed the *SHE* in the early 1970s. It also revisited *SHE*'s Volume 32, Issue 2 of 2006 where the author's article appeared, the CHSSA conferences from 2007 to 2023, the *SHE* impacts on his persona, his invitations as a key speaker in Mombasa and Kirinyaga-Kenya in April-June 2024, his connection with many universities, and the Masvingo CHSSA Conference of August 2024. The proposed CHSSA Conference in Mombasa in 2025 has also been surveyed, albeit in passing.

As implied above, the lack of journals specialising in Church history in the East African context makes *SHE*'s entry into the academic market to remain a strong force. Since 2012, when *SHE* became an online journal, it has continued to have an impact on African scholarship despite a few of its contributors still writing in Afrikaans rather than in English which is more inclusive across Anglophone Africa. Further, with an emerging culture of researching and publishing through academic journals, *SHE*'s online presence helps it stand in the gap. Its thematic contributions will continue to inform the world of academia in the unforeseeable future. The coming of *SHE*'s online publications, since 2012, has seen some scholars of religion and history seizing the moment and propounding the East African agenda with urgency. Further, the writer's profile as a researcher also got a major boost as *SHE* constantly released its volumes on time and addressed some cutting-edge themes facing the East African context, and indeed tropical Africa. This gave the author's students, particularly the post-graduate

ones, a forum of reference on designated areas such as the Kikuyu Conference of 1913, Mercy Oduyoye's contribution to African women's theology, the theology of reconstruction, theological education in tropical Africa, war and religion, and environmental management from a historical-indigenous perspective, among others. With COVID-19 disrupting regular lessons, online classes replaced the on-site ones. This converted *SHE* into a major online library, among the researcher's students, as he constantly sent his students to its website for references. Sometimes, the researcher would send his students to his research blogs that have diverse *SHE* thematic write-ups, a matter that makes his dalliances with *SHE* a "beyond expectations" matter in academia.

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