

FOREWORD

Since 1970, when the first fascicle in the series *Iconography of Religions* was published, there has been an increasing interest in this field of research.

Historians of religion have come to realize the importance of iconic sources for a more complete account of religious culture. The expressions of religious thought and action in architecture, carving, sculptural and pictorial art, as well as in ritual and drama, are of no less value to our understanding than oral information and documents. Iconic materials of religious nature are not to be considered as only a *biblia pauperum*; very often, they reveal the central issues of a religion on a level of great subtlety and complexity.

Therefore, *Iconography of Religions*, planned to offer an encyclopaedic survey in the tradition of Hans Haas' *Bilderatlas der Religionsgeschichte*, cannot cover the whole field of study. Its scope does not encompass theoretical and comparative aspects, nor detailed regional and thematic problems.

In the near future, *Visible Religion, Yearbook for the Iconography of Religions* (H. G. Kippenberg, L. P. Van den Bosch and L. Leertouwer, Editors, E. J. Brill, Leiden, Publisher) will provide an opportunity for publication of short studies and articles on these themes.

The *Supplements to Iconography of Religions*, however, will not appear as a regular series; occasionally, monographs which either for their size or for their special subject go beyond the limits set for the series as well as for the Yearbook, will be published as supplements.

This first volume is the last work of the late Professor C. Hooykaas, whose death in 1979 bereaved the history of religions of one of its most dedicated specialists. The Editors wish to express their sincere thanks to H. I. R. Hinzler, who, having co-operated with the author in the preparation of the manuscript, at his request accepted the difficult and laborious task of making the text ready for the press.

The Editors