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**MANDE STUDIES ASSOCIATION**  
Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association  
November 2018  
Atlanta, Georgia

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**MANSA Business Meeting 2018**  
**Friday, Nov. 30, 2018, 7:30 – 8:30 p.m.**  
**Room M107, Atlanta Marriott Marquis**  
Minutes

The directors of West African Research Center (WARC – Dakar), Ousmane Sene, and West African Research Association (WARA – Boston), Jenny Parker, visited at the beginning of the meeting. Sene encouraged thinking about joint activities, meetings, collaborative exchange of researchers. Researchers visiting Dakar are encouraged to visit and take advantage of the Center – a quiet environment for research, with restaurant next door. They have facilities appropriate for organization of workshops and seminars. Their door is open, and they welcome any proposals for further and stronger collaboration. (He asked about his friend Chérif Keita, who was actually in Senegal at that time.) The new Musée des Civilisations Noires in Dakar is about to open on December 6.

**Approval of minutes from 2017 ASA meeting**

Approved.

Hellweg gave a reminder of the dinner reservation at 9 PM at Desta Ethiopian Kitchen, did roll call for those planning to go, and solicitation of any other attendees.

**Secretary-Treasurer's Report** (Joseph Hellweg for Dianna Bell): We have 92 members right now; 52 are Africa-based, 40 are non-Africa-based. 56% live in Africa (Congo, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, South Africa). 30% live in North America (United States, Canada). 14% live in Europe (Norway, France, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Sweden). We have \$9,163.98 in our U.S. Bank account, \$339.68 in PayPal, and 1,077,715 francs CFA in the Ecobank account in Côte d'Ivoire. That's what our West African members pay into, Ecobank is present in all of our member countries. Membership levels: Africa-based members pay 20,000 francs CFA (about \$40); sponsor levels: Gold (was Platinum) \$300, Silver \$200, Bronze \$100. Regular membership (income > \$40,000) \$60; regular membership (income < \$40,000) \$40. Student membership: \$35 with journal, \$20 without journal. Reminder from Dianna: address fields are not mandatory when completing online profile / paying membership; however, if you don't complete your address, you will not receive a mailed hard copy of the journal.

## President's Report (Joseph Hellweg)

**Search for new secretary-treasurer:** Joseph has found a possible replacement; anyone else in attendance interested in replacing Dianna? [No.] He will pursue communications with the interested person.

**ASA Coordinate and Affiliate Organization meeting:** Joseph and Sten Hagberg attended this meeting the day before. Suzanne Baazet (ASA executive director) was there. MANSAs status has been changed from coordinate to affiliate, unbeknownst to us. [Barbara Hoffman, while president, had changed MANSAs status from affiliate to coordinate.] In principle we have an independent financial status, and our members are members of MANSAs and then secondarily members of the ASA. We have to look into how that status changed; but in principle we are (now) a coordinate organization. One of the reasons that we made the change and that Barbara thought that it would be a good idea for MANSAs to be a coordinate organization is because there may have been problems in getting funds quickly on the ground in planning our triennial conferences. But Suzanne said they have now organized three conferences in Africa, and they have had no such problems: Africa and the World Conference (Johannesburg), African Futures Conference (Dakar), Scholars Workshop (Ghana). So, per one of the members of MANSAs board, and now Suzanne, there shouldn't be this reason not to be a coordinate organization. Unsure how to decide about this – whether to have a vote, to discuss with the board.

Barbara: The reason that we decided to be a coordinate organization [status confirmed by her in email, May 5, 2015] is that affiliate organizations, at that time, did not get an automatic approval for a talk at every ASA meeting; one had to be a coordinate organization to do that. So she filed paperwork for MANSAs to become a coordinate organization. The first year that Hellweg was president-elect [2014], ASA proposed that coordinate organizations conduct their finances through the ASA; so the ASA would collect our dues, pay bills for the journal. And the principal issue for MANSAs then was that there was no way, other than PayPal, for members in Africa to pay MANSAs dues through the ASA. So she asked the ASA where they had African members who were able to use their PayPal system; and none of them were in the countries where the majority of African MANSAs members are located. Those were the main issues in the decision not to join ASA's financial infrastructure. She doesn't know whether they've changed that: can one be a coordinate organization and *not* use their financial infrastructure? ACASA (Art Council of the African Studies Association) decided not to go with that financial infrastructure. But though MANSAs decided not to do that, we were still listed last year as a coordinate organization; and when we did the conference in Grand Bassam, we applied for, and won, a coordinate organization grant from the ASA.

Sten: It was pretty clear that the financial constraints [i.e. benefits?] of being linked to ASA's whole economy was enough to become a coordinate organization; but Suzanne said that, in terms of grants, they do not make any distinction between coordinate and affiliate organizations. But she recognized that things are not very clear. Another issue: we have a bank account in Côte d'Ivoire; probably wouldn't be possible if

we were adhering to ASA guidelines for coordinate organizations. Joseph: No, she said that that would be possible. Barbara: get that in writing; her written exchange with Suzanne was that we would not be able to maintain any independent bank accounts, in this country or elsewhere. Hellweg had the impression that she said we could keep that. We have to discuss it. (MANSA does not have 501(c)(3) status.) ASA would pay administrative costs; they will develop microsites for each coordinate organization, we wouldn't have to maintain our own website. We will be in touch with Suzanne and pursue that further. Audience member: given how many members live in Africa, it's important that dues payment be easy to do. Suzanne said that more and more African countries are using PayPal, so maybe that issue has changed since the last conversation.

**Meeting with Indiana University Press:** Joseph, Rosa De Jorio, and Sten met with Dee Mortensen, editorial director of Indiana University Press. One of the things they discussed was the possibility of starting a MANSA book manuscript prize. IUP would solicit manuscripts on issues related to Mande studies. We would need to set up a committee of volunteers to read the manuscripts, once or twice a year. The manuscript that won the prize would then be published by IUP.

**Coleman Donaldson's orthography initiative (ad hoc position) & Corpora Mandeica:** Coleman has volunteered to lead an initiative to standardize Mande orthography. Sten pointed out that the linguists need to be a little merciful to those of us who are non-linguists, to make that system comprehensible, and so that it's practical as well as faithful to the language. So, make Coleman's role an ad hoc position within MANSA. Coleman and Valentin Vydrin sent out a message about [Corpora Mandeica](#). Barbara or Jan might know more about that; it seems to be a database of Mande documents, not searchable exactly, not full texts, one can look for "correspondences". Barbara: it's a work in progress.

**Listserv problems:** Anyone present not receiving listserv messages? Yes, a few; give Joseph names and email addresses. He will be following up with Richard Warms. Audience member: Cherif Keita's listserv messages keep winding up in his spam box; but he exchanges direct emails with him without any problem. Sten: may be a problem with Outlook interface.

**Quarterly officers' Skype call with journal editors:** Rosa, Sten, Joseph and Dianna have started a quarterly Skype call between MANSA officers and editors of *Mande Studies*, to discuss issues with the organization and the journal.

**Marcel Yao Kouakou's contributions and possible ASA participation next year:** Marcel is an active member in Côte d'Ivoire; he's managing the Ecobank account, has been actively recruiting members, which is why we have so many West African members now and such a high balance in that account. It would be good to see if we can find funding for him to be at ASA next year. Joseph proposes that we even pay part or all of his ticket out of MANSA funds if that seems feasible. We seem to be in a good position now

financially, but also have to think about the upcoming triennial conference. Thoughts? ASA fellowships – do they tend to go to more senior people? No, younger. Audience member: their university director had just said that they always have to nominate three people for ASA fellow, and they didn't know who to nominate; Joseph will be in touch and send Marcel's contact information.

**Use of Ecobank account funds for West African MANSAs events:** Marcel is also interested in the idea of using some of the Ecobank funds for events in West Africa for regional events, which West Africa MANSAs members could organize (and that other MANSAs members could attend). Questions: how to approach that, who approves, is this a competitive process; we need to deliberate about that, have some standard policy, if we pursue that. Sten and Joseph had discussed this. Joseph's ideas were: should we have a call, invite people to submit ideas, review them, transparent process. Sten was a bit more hesitant about it; concerned with the burden; activities should not be organized in the same place each time. But if Marcel wants to propose an initial event, in Abidjan, why not? And then in, say, Bamako or Ouaga the next time. But we don't have so much money; hesitant to think about setting up another structure.

Jeanne Toungara: how many Africa-based members are being considered for financial assistance to come to the next triennial conference? Many. Funds coming from where for that? Sten will talk about that during next point. If funds are used for local/regional events, that will pull away from what we have to work with for conference attendance. Also, if events are organized regionally, why attend the triennial [in Uppsala], our main activity? Willing to support something small, if a proposal is made; consider putting a cap on funding, considering we're trying to subsidize attendance at the triennial. Maybe do something in Daloa, or Bouake; the university [system] is spread out. But it makes sense that they have some kind of local/regional activity, and not be "dry" for three years. We meet here at ASA every year. Rosa: we don't need a big budget; when she organized a small conference at Point Sud [in Bamako], it was very feasible: offer transportation, provide a meal; it was one of the best conferences she ever attended; can be less than \$1000. Jeanne: maybe this is a change to collaborate with WARC; when she's been active with them, she's leaned on them to be a regional organization, rather than just Senegalese. This could be an opportunity for them to be more regional, in collaboration with MANSAs's local leadership.

Sten: that's a great idea. He would also urge MANSAs members who are traveling to West Africa for research or conference purposes to think about offering training workshops, or scientific article writing, or some sort of presentation, that puts the MANSAs name out there. It's a nice way to increase activity – low-budget, case by case; put it out on the listserv. Joseph was at the University of Daloa, where Marcel teaches, and gave a workshop on article writing. Rosa, Sten, Tom [Bassett], and a colleague of Rosa's in Atlanta, Ramata Sissoko Cisse, were all just at a colloquium at Florida State University, his university, Tallahassee [Broad Lecture Symposium on Democracy in West Africa, November 27, 2018; on [YouTube](#)]. So the idea is, if you are coordinating some activity in the United States, or if you are going to do something in West Africa, let

MANSA know, and you can include MANSA as some sort of sponsor or organizer of the event, to get word out about MANSA.

**Electronic journal access for West Africa colleagues; Sten Hagberg's journal transport:**

So far, electronic access is the easiest access we can provide to *Mande Studies* for West Africa members. We're considering sending, or taking, journals; Sten is going to Burkina Faso and Mali shortly, and taking 10-15 copies that we got from IUP. If anyone is going to West Africa and wants to take copies, please contact Joseph before leaving and he will order copies from the press and send them to you. But so far, it looks like it's going to be the electronic version that members in West Africa can easily receive.

**Possible MANSA panels for next year: book launch(es), Chérif Keita, MANSA and**

**public engagement, other ideas?:** Rosa's book recently published; Dianna's book to come out in 2019. Joseph thinking of organizing a panel in honor of Chérif Keita. Sten has suggested a panel on MANSA and engagement with issues in the public sphere. Maybe Coleman could organize something on Mandekan orthography. If other ideas come up, let them know and maybe MANSA could sponsor the panels.

**[Skipped agenda items]**

Maria Grosz-Ngaté's initiative re doctoral student mentorship – Maria wasn't there earlier; now there, but not ready to discuss it; maybe next year.

MANSA mentorship more generally

Côte d'Ivoire summer 2018 visit, University of Daloa workshop—other workshop ideas?

Kurukan Fuga conference, Bamako, July 5-8, Méké Méité/Sanagouya: six new members

Florida State University MANSA event, Nov. 27, 2018—other such events elsewhere?

Former officers list for website

**President-elect's report** (Sten Hagberg): The next Mande Studies Association conference will take place at Uppsala University, Sweden, in June 2020. It's a good time of year, hopefully sunny, and the university closes around June 6-7 so students will be gone. He's thinking of holding it June 10-14, or June 17-21. Barbara: check on date of ACASA (Arts Council of the ASA) conference for possible conflict; they've already set their date. Sten asked her to send him a link. [Their 18<sup>th</sup> Triennial Symposium will be held on June 16-21, 2000, in Chicago.] We haven't yet decided on a formal conference theme; but in rough terms, we're thinking of something like 'Beyond West African crisis and insecurities.' We're obsessed with crisis and problems; as a scholarly organization, it's important to think beyond, imagine something beyond that – e.g. peace, justice, and the dynamics of change. This could also raise the interest of potential funding agencies.

For that conference, the big challenge will be how to find enough funding for strong participation by members in West Africa. He plans to approach his usual supporters – Swedish Embassy, Swedish Development Corporation, and so on. He will begin that process next week. For that reason he doesn't want to yet have a fixed theme, to leave room for adjusting according to potential funders. If unsuccessful, he

will think of other ways of funding the conference. Whether successful for not, it won't be possible to fund everyone; so there will be a need to join forces, once we have the theme and the abstract out.

Sten organized the APAD [Association for the Anthropology of Social Change and Development] conference in 2010, with 350 participants. An important thing that Jeanne mentioned is that, when you organize a conference, you always need some small funding – VISA, taxi, hotel – so it's not a bad idea to have some savings in West Africa. Another aspect he would like to bring up in terms of funding is that he would like us to be creative, think strategically: if you have a project or a program and you would like to host a specific panel, why not choose the Mande Studies Association meeting. He had contact with Paul Richards, who is working in Sierra Leone, has written several books, the most recent on ebola. They are discussing bringing some Sierra Leonean colleagues to the conference. If we open up to such possibilities, it could also be a linked workshop just afterward. He will start organizing it in January (after approaching donors), with a local organization committee, but also some sort of “neighborhood” organizing committee – neighborhood being, for example, Maria Grosz-Ngate, in Germany.

Joseph attended Nordic Africa Days in Uppsala, September 19-21, 2018 – for his scholarly contribution, but also for MANSA meeting. They did something similar when Sten was in Florida. Good to invite colleagues but also do some MANSA business. Comments? Jeanne: it might be a good idea to have a working title. When colleagues approach your embassy in-country, it might be more convincing if they had a theme to work with. So as soon as he gets paperwork together, he can write to the embassies, and then local members can see about getting funding to help get to the conference. Rosa: also, prior organization good, there are established practices – solicit papers, review papers, allocate scholarships for African scholars; not to reinvent the wheel, but there are practices established that it would be good to share, write down, and have in mind.

Jody Benjamin: likes the idea of transparency, sponsorship around particular events. It's a bit early, but he's been having conversations with the director of the national archives in Conakry, trying to get funding for archives that are scattered in regional towns, to get them processed and actually usable. He sees him being at this conference and talking about his work, about his efforts to get more of the archives around the country used, raise their profile. It's not big-money, but there are sources around for preserving endangered archives; could be part of what we're talking about.

***Mande Studies* editors' report** (Rosa de Jorio): Rosa is working with Peter Mark, who remains editor-in-chief until the end of 2020. They're thinking, going forward, involve more members in the running of the journal, to broaden the editorial board. The ideal would be to have two issues per year, and thereby really be a reference point for our membership in terms of publication, draw scholars' attention. She also wanted to emphasize that they really welcome contributions. We will have thematic issues, but also open, “*varia*.” Please look to *Mande Studies* as a venue to publish; contact Rosa and/or Peter if interested in publishing something. In their conversation with Dee

Mortensen (IUP), they said that if we move to two issues per year, we might have one thematic and one open, to emphasize that we are really welcoming contributions. They will be contacting those already on the editorial board. Something that emerged in conversation with Maria [Grosz-Ngate], who has a lot of experience with *Africa Today*, was to ask board members to participate in peer review of manuscripts.

Joseph: there has been a shift in how the journal is being managed. He was concerned about who would succeed Peter; he will have been editor for ten years in 2020. He spoke with Michael Regoli, who is in charge of journals at Indiana University. So now instead of just an editor, there's an editor in chief. We're not sure what the terms will be, but there will be an associate editor who will serve for the same amount of time as the editor in chief, learning the ropes, and will then take over – much the way that terms work for president and president-elect. Barbara: what she recalls from Peter Mark's foreword in the last issue, was that this year Rosa is associate editor, and next year she will be co-editor; and that when he steps down in December, Rosa will become managing editor or editor in chief. She would love for us to be able to produce two issues per year. Historically, we've had sometimes significant difficulties in producing even one. Has something changed, is there a list of people ready to send articles? Rosa: yes; we want to use the triennial conference, and the proceedings that Barbara put together, as a foundation. We are inviting Sten to contribute his panel to the next issue; but she also wants everyone to understand that we are welcoming a constant influx of individual contributions. Which she thinks was not always clear; some members expressed a concern that all the issues seemed to have a theme, so people didn't feel so welcome to contribute. She wants to make sure there's a section, so that if you submit, it's going to happen – so long as the peer review process goes smoothly – even if it's not part of a theme. We will make room for this more open, free-standing article submission model. We especially welcome contributions from young scholars, African scholars, anyone who is willing to contribute to the life of the journal.

Sten: during their meeting with Dee Mortensen the day before, they raised the idea of two issues per year; she thought it was a good idea. They said they could not do it in 2019, so that would begin in 2020 at the earliest. It will require substantial reflection on how to accomplish this. But we do think that it is important that any person involved in Mande studies considers submitting a paper they've completed to the journal, independent of any call. It will be a learning process, but that's the idea. Rosa approached him about expanding on the panel they presented on "Security from Below" in Grand Bassam, and he continues to work on that topic with people on his team in Mali and Burkina Faso. So they will try to do something on that for a thematic issue, in order to not lose track. And then we can set the new publication pattern.

Joseph: Dee was quite willing to accept a year in which we have two issues, and a year in which perhaps we don't – that it may take some time to regularize it; she didn't see that as a problem at all. Sten: but we saw it as a problem. Barbara: that's something else that you might want to get in writing. And if you go to two issues a year, you need to keep to it. Sten: yes, and we would not embark on this if we didn't believe in it.

Rosa: Again, re: soliciting contributions: if you want to be considered for the next issue, please submit by the beginning of next summer – May or June 2019, at the



latest – so we can begin with the peer review process. We need to submit the issue by August (some leeway there); but if anyone in the room is interested, working on something, let her know. She will be putting out a call; needs to coordinate with Peter, make sure he's on board; he couldn't be here, is in Germany.

Sten: would like us also to think about how to marketize the journal better; to use Facebook and Twitter, to say, not only that it's published, but also slip out bits of articles, contents. So please be more active on social media, please like us, and join us. Barbara: re: that, we have a Facebook page, and Joseph is the administrator. Yes. It's been an ordeal to figure out the journal, but he plans to get on that.

Laura Ann Twagira: in terms of integrating younger scholars, and scholars on the continent who are younger, getting them more involved in social media is also going to get them more involved in MANSAs, and do a better job than those of us who are less equipped in that way. It would be good if that were a longer-term goal of using social media. Joseph: Alfredo will be addressing that, and the sort of network that we're trying to set up.

**ASA Academic Freedom Commission report** (Jody Benjamin): He attended a meeting of a new ASA task force, the Task Force for the Protection of Academic Freedom, on behalf of MANSAs. A [news article](#) was sent out on the ASA site; if people aren't familiar with it, he'll give a short description. The conversation started over the summer, and a group has just come together, made up of representatives various coordinate/affiliate organizations. He read the task force statement of mission. Since this is a new initiative, the group was trying to define what is meant by academic freedom, and then what ASA could or should do specifically in response. Background: there had been a smaller subgroup of the ASA Board that found itself confronted with issues that would come up quickly and unexpectedly, which really required some sort of learned response; and they found themselves unable to do that. So they have reached out to all the various organizations within ASA in order to establish a network or cohort of people who could respond in particular cases. There was a lot of discussion about what ASA could or should do. Essentially, ASA would issue a statement that would publicize a particular case, but that wouldn't involve going further than that, such as hiring legal teams or getting involved more substantively, as some organizations do; but that the statement itself could be something useful. There was discussion of what other organizations do, and whether those models would work for ASA. MESA (Middle Eastern Studies Association) was mentioned as a group that has a model that could work. So we're in discussion about how to set this up. An issue was raised during the meeting by a WARA member about ASA, as a U.S.-based organization, being in a position to being in a position to "lecture" African institutions about problems. Jody responded in that context that MANSAs was essentially transnational, with members based in West Africa. Jody is serving in a liaison role here, so he's letting MANSAs know about it, to get feedback/response, and sense of whether there are any issues that MANSAs thinks the task force should take on. Joseph: really wants to thank Jody; all the organizations were invited to propose a representative to this task force, over the

summer; Joseph was in Côte d'Ivoire, and Jody was ... where? But Jody responded quickly that he would be willing to do it. Question: is it the ASA Board that ultimately drafts the statement that comes from the ASA? Jody's understanding is that it's the task force that would draft the statement; he's not sure whether there would be other approval required beyond the task force, but the point of the task force is to pull together people who can respond. ASA would issue the statement. Question: is there an idea for the task force to survey people at universities on the continent to see what ideas they have about how we could support them? Or is it just about making a statement ...? Jody: it's about learning about instances of infringement of academic freedom, for one thing, and providing a conduit for this information to get to a centralized place where it can be responded to; and the second piece is to identify people in particular countries / regions who can speak to particular cases. Question: is it going to extend to other freedoms, or be restricted to academic freedom? Jody: initially this was called 'Academic Freedom and Human Rights,' but got narrowed down to academic freedom. There was concern about making the focus narrow enough so that it would be actionable.

Maria: attended the meeting also because she wanted to hear the discussion. The ASA has had an Advocacy Committee, so that if issues came up, if a scholar had problems – for example, the Central African Studies Association was advocating on behalf of two Congolese scholars in the past year who had had problems, and they asked the ASA if they would endorse their statement. Patrice Nganang was mentioned yesterday, a scholar of Cameroonian origin who is in New York, Long Island University, who was arrested and imprisoned in Cameroon. In cases like this, members will come to the ASA and say, can you issue a statement in support of this person, to put pressure on authorities and so on. Just yesterday, the Board voted to make the Advocacy Committee a standing committee; before, it was not. But it's a small committee, everyone is busy, and its members are not expert on everything. So if a request comes, the Association cannot just issue a statement without having more knowledge about the circumstances. That is what generated the idea to create this task force. But the task force is not a committee; it's a consultative body, to provide more expertise, so that the members of the Committee can quickly reach out to someone; because sometimes the statements have to be issued quickly.

**Webmaster's Report** (Jesse Miller): needs to be rushed, due to going over time and dinner reservations. There won't be time to go through the whole PowerPoint presentation. Would it be possible to do a PDF of where the new membership button is, etc., to send out on the listserv? Yes. Joseph: We've had some problems with getting memberships and also with purchasing memberships for colleagues in West Africa. There were different codes written into the website over time, which were interfering with each other, and Jesse is trying to straight that all out; he's still in the process of working on that. Jesse: the website is like an archaeological dig, and if you disturb some layers, it causes problems in other layers. He knows the website looks really simple and kind of "1998", but it's actually really complicated. We use S2Member Plus

to track membership – who has paid, who has not, when does membership run out, etc. Right now there are something like 20 different membership categories, needlessly complex. We're trying to make things simpler.

**Ad hoc student network member's report** (Alfredo Rojas): Alfredo, Bintou Kone, Molly [...] are members of an initial attempt to create a Mande student network. In trying to think about what such a network would actually do, Sten suggested that they could create a flyer about the network, about Mande studies. [Laura Ann] has just given us a great idea of what the network can do in terms of social marketing of MANSA. Alfredo handed around a brochure draft: the organization's history, how members can join, what are the benefits of joining, contact information. Sten: the idea is also to rejuvenate our association; important to have more of a younger generation interested in these studies.

#### **Last-minute items:**

Henrike Florusbosch, University of Michigan African Studies Center: every year on August 15, the University of Michigan opens an application cycle for early career scholars who are based at an African university to apply for a six-month sabbatical residency – to write a PhD proposal, finish their PhD, do a post-doc, in any discipline that University of Michigan scholars also pursue. You can only directly apply if you are early career faculty in Liberia, Ghana, Ethiopia, Uganda, and South Africa, due to their funding source. Scholars from other countries can apply if they have a relationship with a University of Michigan faculty member who is willing to nominate them. She has more information if anyone is interested.

Joseph: Dee Mortensen gave him cards for *Mande Studies*, if anyone wants them to put up on bulletin boards in their institutions, e.g. African studies centers.

Congratulations to Maria Grosz-Ngate on assuming the ASA presidency!

Submitted by Marcia Tiede  
November 14, 2019