

MANSA

Newsletter Number 36 -- Winter 1997-98

Twelfth Annual Meeting of The Mande Studies Association

Editor's Note:

Some members appear to remain unclear about who does what in the Mande Studies Association. On occasion this has been a source of amusement, as in the item in the last issue addressed to "whomever gets this published" (#35, p. 7). However, the lack of clarity has occasionally caused problems in MANSA transactions, including lengthy delays in publication of members' submissions to the newsletter.

Therefore, at this time one feels compelled to point out that perhaps peculiar to MANSA is the fact that in our organization the term "President" actually signifies "Newsletter Editor." Indeed, at the founding meeting in 1986, the idea of organizing to encourage and facilitate communication between Mande specialists began with the decision to publish a newsletter. At that time, the title "President" was assigned as a sort of honorific to the person (D. Conrad) who agreed to attempt the editing of the newsletter of a then nascent organization which few dreamed would soon become a model for other African area specialists wishing to form their own organizations (most recently the Tanzania scholars).

Originally, the Secretary basically recorded the minutes of the annual meetings, but since the introduction of official by-laws two years ago, collection of dues and recording of memberships have been transferred from the President to the office now known as "Secretary-Treasurer." However, newsletter editing duties remain entirely with the "President."

In the interest of time and efficiency, please note that any business having to do with MANSA Newsletter should be addressed directly to David Conrad, History Department, SUNY-Oswego, Oswego, NY 13126, U.S.A. Tel: (315) 341-3443; Fax: (315) 341-5444; E-mail: dconrad@oswego.edu

The following report is based on a tape of the annual meeting made by Secretary Laura Arntson. Her notes from the transcript have been edited and condensed

by the editor. A more detailed version of the minutes is available to anyone who wishes to see it.

Opening of the 12th annual MANSA meeting

The 1997 MANSA meeting was held on November 15 in Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A., 5:30 -- 7:30 p.m. Members attending: Laura Arntson, Ralph Austen, Alpha Bah, Lamissa Bangali, Stephen Belcher, George Brooks, David Conrad, Julianne Freeman, Tim Geysbeek, Sean Hanretta, Christopher Hayden, Musa Abdul Hakim, Jan Jansen, John Johnson, Lansine Kaba, Michelle Kuenzi, Dolores Koenig, Joseph Lauer, Elise Levin, Ann McDougall, Gregory Mann, Peter Mark, Andreas Massing, Ibrahima Iba N'Diaye, Bob Newton, Dianne Oyler, David Rawson, Daniel Reed, Helen Regis, Dorothea Schulz, Richard Warms, Stephen Wooten, Donald Wright. (Many more members attended the ASA, but owing to scheduling conflicts they were unable to be at the MANSA meeting.)

Treasurer's Report: Secretary-Treasurer Laura Arntson reported that we began the fiscal year with a balance of \$520.87 and ended (Nov. 12, 1997) with a balance of \$722.13. During the fiscal year, \$1,636.14 was paid out (in supplies and expenses for the production and mailing of three newsletters). We received \$1,837.40 (in dues, t-shirt sales, and a \$400 anonymous donation from a MANSA member). The average cost for newsletter production (photocopying, postage and supplies) and mailing was c. \$460.00. 23 new members joined during 1996-97, including two sponsoring memberships, and our current total membership is 246 members. Of that number, 52 are sponsored.

The President opened the proceedings with remembrance of MANSA members lost during the past year or so, beginning with François Manchuelle, continuing with Vice-President B. Marie Perinbam, and including former member Philip Ravenhill. He noted the passing of several esteemed bards of Mande (see notices later in this issue), and called for a period of silent contemplation and prayer for all these departed colleagues.

DAVID C. CONRAD, *President*, State University of New York-Oswego
BARBARA E. FRANK, *Vice President*, State University of New York-Stony Brook
STEPHEN WOOTEN, *Secretary-Treasurer*, University of California-Los Angeles
Advisory Board

Alpha Bah, College of Charleston
ARIANE DELUZ, Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociologique
MAMADOU DIAWARA, Universität Bayreuth

LANSINE KABA, University of Illinois-Chicago
PETER MARK, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
TEREBA TOGOLA, Institut des Sciences Humaines

Mansa Meeting (continued)

Amendment to by-laws

Following on discussion at last year's meeting, Laura Arntson submitted an amendment to the by-laws. Proposed: That a phrase in Article IV (Advisory Board) read: "Members of the Advisory Board are expected to make every possible effort to attend the business meetings of the Association at least biennially." (It had previously read that Advisory Board members "must" attend at least biennially.) After some discussion a vote was taken and the amendment carried with 22 in favor, 3 opposed, 6 abstentions.

Addressing the issue of Advisory Board replacement, the President clarified his position on retaining certain African colleagues on the Board beyond the terms indicated in the by-laws, saying he had not intended for this to become a stumbling block as it had in the previous year's meeting: The basis of his reasoning for clinging to certain overseas members, e.g., Tereba Togola and Mamadou Diawara, was expressed roughly as follows: "Although these individuals cannot regularly attend annual meetings they have done so whenever possible, and they have taken leading roles in our international conferences in Bamako and Leiden. They are conspicuous charismatic examples of the Mande ideals of leadership and knowledge acquisition, and are important role models for young scholars everywhere."

Further discussion of Advisory Board replacement was greatly facilitated by contributions from Jeanne Toungara and Laura Arntson. Among other points at issue, Toungara's view was that nominations are basically the President's call, and that the members can vote based on the President's acceptance of a nomination to the Advisory Board.

New Advisory Board members

The President asked for nominations to replace outgoing members of the Advisory Board. Alpha Bah and Peter Mark were added, replacing Robert Launay and Lamin Sanneh, both of whom have served for many years as distinguished members of the Board.

MANSA Vice-President

On the question of an Interim Vice President to replace Marie Perinbam, it was generally agreed that the position be filled until the elections scheduled for next year according to the by-laws. Conrad put forward the name of a founding member of the organization who wrote in a tribute to Marie Perinbam in the last newsletter, expressing her view of the real spirit behind the founding of MANSA. Though her name was left out of the last issue, it was Barbara Frank who wrote:

"Another very fond memory I have occurred at the African Studies Association meeting in New Orleans when Marie orchestrated a dinner of Mande specialists at a local restaurant... After many stories and much laughter, Marie announced that she intended to create a directory of Mande scholars. She passed around a scrap of paper for us to provide our research interests, addresses and phone numbers. To my mind, this was the first step toward the founding of MANSA the next year. In her memory, I propose a toast: 'To a scholar who was always such good company, whose laugh was so

rich and genuine, you will be greatly missed."

The President suggested that Barbara Frank was the logical and perfect "replacement" for Marie as Vice President. John Johnson seconded and there were no other nominees. The vote was unanimous in favor of Barbara Frank as MANSA Vice President.

Secretary-Treasurer replacement

Election of a Secretary-Treasurer was also scheduled according to the by-laws. The President noted that Laura Arntson had begun contributing to MANSA as unofficial Secretary early in 1994 when her Fulbright year in Guinea coincided with Conrad's. He recalled that she helped with the issue of the newsletter that was edited in Conakry. In 1995 Arntson was elected Secretary-Treasurer, and has served with distinction. Now, the completion of her first official term coincides with her plans to enter the Peace Corps. At the Columbus meeting, Laura presented a brief description of the duties and responsibilities of the office. She then nominated Stephen Wooten, seconded by Julianne Freeman. After a unanimous vote in favor, the President welcomed Stephen Wooten as the new Secretary-Treasurer of MANSA, and expressed his deep appreciation to Laura Arntson for her outstanding support and work during the past three years.

Crediting MANSA as ASA panel sponsor

The President reminded members that one of the foundation stones of MANSA's organizational success has been the annual sponsoring of high-quality Mande studies panels at ASA meetings. He noted that consistent with many other problems in this year's ASA program, was the omission of the customary mention of which panels were MANSA sponsored. Since several of the MANSA panels were scheduled for later sessions, Conrad asked that chairpersons announce their panels as MANSA-sponsored, along with dedication of their panels to the memory of our departed Vice-President.

Memorials to departed colleagues

The President acknowledged Lansine Kaba's previously submitted request that he organize a memorial for Marie Perinbam. He found, however, that on short notice and with an agenda filled with preparations for the ASA/MANSA meeting and Banjul Conference plans, this had proven impossible, in addition to which there was the question of so many other deaths in the same year, including those of West African colleagues and Philip Ravenhill.

Responding to a request for appropriate ways to memorialize Marie, Stephen Wooten suggested scheduling of a roundtable discussion devoted to Perinbam's recently published book, and offered to chair the session. Richard Warms mentioned that François Manchuelle had also recently published a book and suggested the roundtable be broadened to include that as well.

Andreas Massing pointed out that the Gambia conference is the next opportunity for a memorial, and Conrad responded that memorialization of Marie was already on the agenda. Tim Geysbeek suggested a festschrift dedicated to Marie.

MANSA-sponsored panels for the next ASA meeting

The President requested additional topics for next year's MANSA-sponsored ASA panels, stressing that in the early stages it is simply a question of ideas, and that suggestions do not imply a commitment to chair a panel or deliver a paper.

Jan Jansen proposed "Secrets and Lies," and his official, detailed call for papers may be found in a separate item below.

Ralph Austen suggested "Mande Culture in the New World," prompted by listserv discussion of a question about Bambara in Louisiana in a book reviewed in *Slavery and Abolition*. John Johnson suggested this be expanded to Mande influence outside of Manden, rather than limiting it to the "new world."

Stephen Belcher proposed a panel on "Trade and Trading Partners." Ralph Austen suggested a panel on the earliest evidence of writing in early Mande vernacular and the beginnings of literacy.

David asked that members let him know as they come up with more topics or ideas for submissions to join panels for next year's ASA meeting.

The Journal of Mande Studies

Next on the agenda was the question of the journal which, as Conrad observed, has not made much progress since members voted to establish it (at the San Francisco meeting, 1996). Noting that Jan Jansen is so far the only one who has submitted anything, the President voiced a desire to avoid starting up a journal that might fail after one or two issues. He suggested that unless more contributions are forthcoming, we should table the idea until such time as members appear more motivated to support such a project.

Stephen Belcher, one of the journal's editors, reported that the editorial board had not yet been formed, and apologized for not being more aggressive in soliciting submissions. (A bit later, Bob Newton again raised a question about solicitations, and Belcher replied that in fact notices had gone out in the newsletter and on e-mail.)

Stephen Wooten spoke in support of the journal, but suggested we also investigate the possibility of an edited series of Mande volumes from an established publisher. Bob Newton also indicated a reluctance to witness the demise of the journal idea at this time.

Dianne Oyler asked about guidelines for submission and acceptance, and if there is a thematic focus for the first issue.

Dolores Koenig pointed out that there have been interesting MANSA sessions at ASA that could lead to a collection of papers for a special issue. She also asked for clarification of Wooten's idea of a series, noting that some tenure committees pay more attention to refereed journals than to book chapters, etc.

Ralph Austen inquired about the extent to which a Mande studies journal would in fact be refereed.

Andreas Massing asked if the journal would replace MANSA Newsletter. Conrad replied that it would not, and explained that the issue of a scholarly journal arose because so many Mande studies articles were submitted

to *History in Africa*, that David Henige not only suggested we do this, but offered to oversee the journal.

Andreas pointed out that a journal is more flexible than a series, because it can incorporate research notes, communications, etc. (Secretary Laura Arntson supports Massing's position, noting that "shorter research notes or communications on a specific topic are wonderful things to [include in] a journal....whether it's on the derivation of a particular word or concept, or an update on a particular archaeological site, on-going project, or archives.")

The President concluded the discussion by observing that the best way to demonstrate interest in a *Journal of Mande Studies* would be to submit articles to it.

The Mande Studies Conference in The Gambia

The President reported on preparations for the Fourth International Conference on Mande Studies to be held in the Gambia in June, 1998. That information is now partially superseded by the most recent up-date published below, so that part of the proceedings is not included in this report.

The meeting was adjourned. c. 7:30 p.m.

International Conference on Mande Studies Serrekunda, Gambia (Up-date)

To: MANSA Members

From: David Conrad

Dates of conference: 12-19 June, 1998

Location: Senegambia Beach Hotel, Serrekunda, The Gambia

SPECIAL NOTE TO PARTICIPANTS: To avoid problems and to take advantage of the special rate package for your flight and accommodations, PLEASE pay close attention to the section below entitled "Deposits, terms and deadlines."

To participate, your MANSA membership dues must be up-to-date (check your newsletter mailing label). As was the case with the conference in Leiden, we will be charging a registration fee of U.S.\$25.00 per person, to help defray the expenses of the conference. In addition to that we are asking a donation of \$5.00 apiece to help pay musicians at the concert being organized and mostly payed for by Lucy Duran (see below). You may submit this payment totalling \$30.00 before leaving for The Gambia, or pay by check in Serrekunda at the beginning of the conference (make your check out to MANSA).

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF PANEL PROPOSALS AND PAPER ABSTRACTS: MARCH 1, 1998. Abstracts and presentations may be in either English or French.

RE. THE TRAVEL PACKAGE: LONDON BANJUL RETURN

NOTE: The travel agent in London is now: SoHo Travel, Suite 409/410, Golden House, 29 Great Pulteney Street, London W1R 3DD, England. Tel:

0171 494-3360. Fax: 0171 494-3360, E-mail:
schotravel@msa.com

You may address your inquiries to Mr. Julian Wood.

Departures:

Departing: Gatwick Friday 12th June 1998

Returning: Banjul Friday 19th June 1998.

NOTE:

If you are making flight arrangements to Banjul from a destination other than London (e.g. elsewhere in Europe, or from West Africa) and will not be taking advantage of the full travel-accommodation package, your Senegambia Hotel rooms must nevertheless be booked through SoHo Travel. Availability of rooms is limited, and a certain number have been reserved for us, the initial deposit having been made by our agent.

If you plan to spend more time in West Africa following the conference, see below for information on alternative arrangements including later Banjul-London flights.

Accommodations:

Senegambia Beach Hotel, based on twin occupancy rooms on the bed and breakfast plan.

The number of available single rooms is limited.

Prices:

Price for the above accommodation will be £339 per person based on a minimum of 40 passengers travelling on an inclusive package. Air conditioning is available at £9 per room per night. An extra week at the hotel: £90 per person.

These prices are fully inclusive of flights, transfers, hotel accommodation, airport taxes and security charges, air passenger duty and Gambia departure tax.

Optional arrangements for extended itineraries:

Passengers wishing to stay on for extra weeks on a flight only basis (i.e., travelling elsewhere after the conference but taking advantage of the London-Banjul special travel price), will be quoted for on an individual basis. We are told that "in principle this should be no problem." Our travel agent adds: "Participants can stay longer & we can also arrange travel within Africa but the prices will depend on what people are doing."

Deposits, terms and deadline:

Deposit required to confirm is £95 per seat (approximately \$150). DEADLINE JANUARY 31.

Final numbers should be confirmed 12 weeks before departure [that means c. March 15]. At this time cancellation charges will apply at loss of deposit.

FULL BALANCE IS TO BE PAID 8 WEEKS BEFORE DEPARTURE [that would be c. April 10].

Cancellations within 6 weeks of departure will be calculated as per the agent's terms of trade as follows:

42-29 days prior to departure	50%
28-22 days prior to departure	75%
21-6 days prior to departure	90%
6-0 days prior to departure	100%

Name changes up to 7 days before departure

[presumably getting somebody to take your place] will be permitted at a rate of £15 per change. Name changes within 7 days will be considered cancellations and re-bookings and charged accordingly.

Please take special note of the fact that we must confirm our final numbers on the travel booking by the middle of March. Participants are responsible for coordinating their own room arrangements (sharing, etc.), and for making their own bookings with the agent and submitting of their deposits on time.

Conference Theme:

HISTORICAL MOMENTS AND SOCIAL IDIOSYNCRACIES: CULTURE, AGENCY AND CAUSALITY IN THE MANDE WORLD

Deadline and submissions:

Remember, aside from the official deadline, the more time you give me to coordinate the program, the better job I can do. Please submit your paper and panel proposals (tentative if necessary) as soon as possible, and contact potential participants on your panels NOW.

I will be sending out up-dates via e-mail, but please remember that we have many members, especially those in West Africa, who are not on e-mail. I do not want to leave them out of the picture, so I need information from you to be as complete as possible.

**PANEL TOPICS AND PAPERS
SUBMITTED TO DATE**

(Some of the panel headings listed below are tentative, pending submission of the complete corpus of papers, i.e., some of these groupings and general headings will change as more papers come in. Also, some paper titles are suggested or working versions only, to be changed by the authors before printing of the final program.)

THE ANCIENT MANDE LANDSCAPE: CLIMATE CHANGE AND HUMAN RESPONSE

Chair: Roderick McIntosh, Rice University

Papers:

Tereba Togola, Institut des Sciences Humaines, Bamako

Hamady Bokoum, IFAN, Dakar

Robert Vernet, Mauritania

Discussant: Joe Tainter, Forest Sciences Laboratory, U.S. Forest Service, Albuquerque, NM

CHANGING FRONTIERS: MIGRATORY MOVEMENTS OF MANDE PEOPLES AND THEIR NEIGHBORS

Chair: Mirjam de Bruijn

Papers:

Edda Fields, University of Pennsylvania

"Migration, Islam, and Rice Cultivation: Elements in the History of Baga-Mande Relations"

MATERIAL ARTS AMONG THE MANDE AND THEIR NEIGHBORS

Chair: Barbara Frank, SUNY-Stony Brook

Papers:

Mary Jo Arnoldi, Smithsonian Institution

"Beautifying Bamako's Streets: New Public Sculpture in Mali"

**PRE-1700 MANDE AND LUSO-AFRICAN
CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS ON
THE ATLANTIC COAST**

Chair: Peter Mark, Wesleyan University

Papers:

Peter Mark, Wesleyan University

"Mande-Portuguese Relations and Cultural Interaction
Before 1700"

Martin Klein, University of Toronto

"Ethnic Pluralism and Homogeneity in the Western
Sudan: Saalum, Segu, Wasulu"

Donald Wright, SUNY-Cortland

"A World-Systems Approach to Manding History"

**TOPICS IN MANDE ORAL TRADITION
AND JELIYA**

Chair: Lilyan Kesteloot, IFAN, Université de Dakar

Papers:

Seydou Camara, ISH Bamako

"La Geste de Nankomanjan d'Après Fode Berete de
Kangaba"

Lilyan Kesteloot, IFAN, Université de Dakar

"Le mythe du Chef dans les épopées sahéliennes"

Gérard Dumestre, INALCO, Paris

"Chroniques amoureuses au Mali"

Marloes Janson, CNWS Leiden

"The 'Heroines' of Manding Culture: Positions, Roles,
and Gender Identity of Mandinka Griottes in Eastern
Gambia"

**GENDER IN MANDE STUDIES INTO THE 21ST
CENTURY (Roundtable)**

Chair: Barbara Hoffman

Papers:

Saskia Brand, University of Leiden

"Musoya: Gender Discourse Interpreted"

Lucy Duran, SOAS, University of London

"Musoya and the Impact of the Music of Oumou
Sangaré"

Barbara Frank, SUNY-Stony Brook

"Gender, Craft Specialization and Mande Art History"

Maria Grosz-Ngate, Cornell University

"Community and Gender in Sana (Mali)"

Eugenia Herbert, Mount Holyoke College

"Gender and Technology in Mande Societies"

Barbara Hoffman, Cleveland State University

"Genderizing Mande Studies: A View From Jeliya"

Rosa de Jorio, University of North Florida

"Le Bara Dance and Women's Political Participation: A
View From Segu"

Kassim Kone, SUNY-Cortland

"Male and Female in the Manden: Covert and Overt
Rules in Excision"

**CULTURAL AND POLITICAL
DECENTRALIZATION IN THE MANDE WORLD**

Co-chairs: Clemens Zobel and Jean-Loup Amselle

Papers:

Jan Jansen, Leiden University

"Inviting the Trojan Horse?: Local Traditions in Mali's
Politics of Decentralization"

**CONSTRUCTIONS OF POLITICAL AND
CULTURAL IDENTITY AMONG THE MANDE
AND THEIR NEIGHBORS**

Co-chairs: David Conrad, SUNY-Oswego and

Dorothea Schulz, Freie Universität Berlin

Papers:

Marie Nathalie LeBlanc, Concordia University

"From Ethnicity to Islam: Processes of Identification
Amongst Muslim Youth in Bouaké Côte d'Ivoire"

Mohamed Saidou N'Daou, Chicago State

University

"Politique de Peuplement et Construction de l'Identité
des Mikhifore (Boke, Guinea)"

Berend Timmer, CNWS Leiden

ISLAM IN THE MANDE WORLD

Chair: David Skinner, University of Santa Clara

Papers:

David Skinner, University of Santa Clara

"The Late 19th-Century Spiritual and Military
Movement of Fode Kaba"

Eduardo Costa Dias, Centro de Estudos Africanos,
Lisbon

"Les mandingues de l'ancien Kaabu et le savoir
islamique"

Discussant: Nehemia Levtzion

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE IN MANDEN

Chair: Valentin Vydrine, European University at St.
Petersburg

Papers:

Ralph Austen, University of Chicago

"African Autobiography in Comparative
Perspective: The Case of Laye Camara"

Valentin Vydrine, European University at St.

Petersburg

"Manding Lexicography Today"

Ingse Skattum, University of Oslo

"Bilingual Education: On French and Bambara in
Primary School in Mali"

**TRADITIONAL RELIGION
AND HEALING IN THE MANDEN**

Chair: David Conrad, SUNY-Oswego

Papers:

Kalala Ngalamulume, Central Washington

University

"West African Itinerant Healers and the

Commoditization of Healing Power in Saint-Louis,
Senegal: 1850-1914"

**Mande Studies 1972-1998:
Proposal for a Round-Table and Concert
in The Gambia, June 1998
(Lucy Duran)**

As many MANSA members are probably aware, 26
years have now passed since the pioneering International
Conference on Manding Studies took place at the
School of Oriental and African Studies, University of

London, 1972. All of us, without doubt, owe something to the remarkable breadth and quality of scholarship first presented at this conference.

It was probably one of the best attended and most prestigious regional conferences on Africa ever held outside the continent, with 240 registered participants, the list of which is truly impressive. It included the President of the conference, Leopold Sedar Senghor (who gave the opening address), the late authors Laye Camara and Massa Makan Diabate, and most of the leading scholars in the field, too numerous to mention but known to us all. (Many are now MANSA members and hopefully some of them will be present in Banjul, 1998.)

Gambia, Senegal and Mali all sent their leading musicians to perform at the conference. The names include Malian kora player Batrou Sekou Kouyate and jelumuso Nanténé Je Kamissoko. The musical events received such a high profile that a delegation was invited to perform at 10 Downing Street, in front of the Prime Minister, Ted Heath.

Even Alex Haley was there in 1972, presenting to the delegates a synopsis of his still unpublished story, while the "Kinté tune" (*Kinté la julo*) was played on the kora. (Ironically, the BBC turned down his offer at the time to televise the story, believing it to be of little "public interest." They have been kicking themselves ever since.)

The diversity of subject areas represented at the 1972 conference (linguistics, history, archaeology, music, oral literature, visual arts, religion, politics, etc) certainly has had an impact on the interdisciplinary nature of MANSA, something which I'm sure all of us have benefited from, and continue to enjoy at our own MANSA conferences and ASA panels.

To mark the passing of 26 years since the 1972 conference, I would like to propose two events to be held at our 1998 gathering in Banjul.

1) A round-table: "The Manding Studies 1972 Conference and Mande Studies Today: 26 Years On" This could include, for example, comments from scholars who participated in 1972: What are their memories of the conference? Where have we gone with Mande studies in the last 26 years? How have approaches and methodologies changed? What events have affected subsequent scholarship in the field? This would be an open forum in which anyone who would like to present their own views on developments and achievements (or gaps) in their own discipline, would be welcome to do so.

In the context of the usual panels devoted to individual subject areas, this round-table could be a useful forum for us all to step back from the immediacy of our own work and "take stock" of where we are now as a broad area of study, and of what new goals we need to set.

If you wish to take part in such a round-table, please contact David Conrad with a brief outline of your presentation. It does not have to be in the form of a written paper. [Editor's note: In MANSA conferences there are no ASA-style restrictions on multiple

contributions. If you are on a panel but wish to participate in this round-table, you are encouraged to do so. I suggest that we schedule this for the final session, allowing plenty of time. I'm asking Nehemia Levzion to moderate -- DC.]

2) A commemorative concert, "Mande Music 1998" I am planning to organize a concert to be held at the Senegambia Hotel towards the middle of our conference. I will finance this myself out of a small fee I have received from Penguin Classics for writing an Introduction to a new edition of Gordon Innes' *Sunjata: Three Mandinka Versions* (SOAS, 1974). (The new edition is Graham Furniss, ed. *Sunjata, Gambian versions of the Mande epic*, Penguin Classics, forthcoming). I would also like to ask participants to make a contribution of U.S.\$5.00 toward the musicians' fees (consider this, if you like, the price of a ticket to the concert).

I feel a concert is an entirely appropriate way of marking the 26 years' anniversary, not just because music was such an important part of the 1972 conference, but also as a means of providing a platform for Gambia's great musical heritage. So far, my plan is to invite the well-known, superb kora duet Dembo Konte and Kausu Kouyate, and the balafon player Mawdo Suso, among the guest performers.

The Recent Untimely Passing of Great Jeliw Ngaraw of Manden

(David Conrad)

The past few years have proven disastrous in terms of the extraordinary number of losses we and our *jatigiw* have sustained among the great bards of the Manden. Some had greater name-recognition than others beyond the borders of their home towns or countries, but within the Mande world they were all distinguished *jelingaraw* who, along with other members of their extended families, have been our hosts, mentors, "stranger fathers," and providers of information vital to our research interests. One cannot recall when so many bardic notables have departed for *lakira* in such a short span of time. Each of them harbored bodies of knowledge and artistic gifts unique unto themselves, and they can never be replaced.

In my own experience, this relatively recent string of losses began shortly after my arrival in Guinea in January, 1994, when Djibril Tamsir Niane informed me that the great *belentigi* of Fadama, Mamadi Conde, had died on the 16th of that month, shortly before I was to have my first meeting with him.

In MANSA Newsletter 33 (Winter 1996, pp. 5-6), tribute was paid to Sanassey Kouyate of Jelibakoro (d. March, 1995), and to the great kora player Sidiki Diabate (d. September 29, 1996). MANSA Newsletter 35 (Fall 1997, p. 7) contained Barbara Hoffman's lament for Al-Haji Bala Ba Diabate of Kela (d. April 19, 1997), and an additional tribute to him by Jan Jansen (previously submitted but inadvertently delayed in publication) will be found below.

Sad to say, that will be followed by tributes to two other beloved bards, Yamudu (Yamuru) Diabate of Kela and Djanka Tassey Conde of Hamana, Kouroussa.

Al-Haji Bala Diabate (Jan Jansen)

Al-Haji Bala Diabate, better known as Kelabala, died on 19 April, 1997 at 3 a.m. According to the official communiqué he was 90 years old. The funeral, which took place the following day, was attended by about 1,000 visitors from all over Manden. According to his own wishes, Kelabala was buried in his own compound. *Ala ka hin'a la.*

When I met Kelabala for the first time, in 1989, he walked with a stick because of a bad hip. In the years thereafter, walking became more difficult for him. In Fall, 1994, I visited him in the hospital of Point G (Bamako), where he got urological treatment. Although he had lost a lot of weight at that time, he recovered but was no longer capable of walking. In Spring 1996 I witnessed him directing his affairs while seated in a big chair. By Fall 1996, Kelabala had become stiffened by arthritis and was forced to stay in bed. Until 7 April his mind was perfectly clear. That day, as someone put it, he stopped communicating with the outside world.

During the extended period when his health was gradually deteriorating, Kelabala's prestige continued to rise, attaining almost saintly proportions. He was appointed president of many organizations. Ministers and politicians visited him regularly, griots and hunters came to seek his advice. Moreover, certainly in the last decade of his life, he was often consulted as a marabout. As someone on Radio Mali put it, "With Kelabala's death two libraries (*bibiyoteki fila*) have burned down," thus referring to Kelabala's knowledge on both Mande and Islam.

However, these libraries were difficult to consult. Many of us, starting with Djibril Tamsir Niane in the 1950s (*Etudes Guineennes* 1959), have spoken with him, but few succeeded in recording anything special. Yet, we have some audiovisual data on Kelabala. He is featured in the ORTM production *Hommage à Djemoussa Soumano* (1992), and on the three tapes recorded during the opening of the Kitabolon in 1986 (stored in the Musée National and analyzed by Barbara Hoffman in her Ph.D. dissertation). Kelabala's voice has been recorded in a few songs by his "sister" Siramori Diabate, and in one song of the Kela song collection *An Be Kelen* (PAN records CD 2015). His mastership as an ngoni player can be enjoyed on the recording made by Charles Bird in 1968 (Archives of Traditional Music, Indiana University OT 4516-4517). Similar to his younger brother Yamudu, as a young man Kelabala was leader of a successful group of artists.

Personally, I learned to appreciate Kelabala as someone who is unpredictable, but always in a brilliant way. Although I met him daily during a long period, I never succeeded in achieving a stable base for communication with him: each time, I was

overwhelmed by his charisma. The ultimate evidence for Kelabala's brilliant unpredictability is, of course, his choice to be buried in his own compound; his garage was thereby transformed into a mausoleum. Who could have thought that Al-Haji prefers to be buried in a way which recalls a "pagan" tradition abandoned long ago in Manden. Although beyond the predictable, his last wish is a cunning strategic move, in relation to both his own small group of descendants (he has one son), and to the position of Kela in contemporary Mali.

Kelabala was famous because of his knowledge of proverbs, and it is a pity that no one has ever managed to make a study of his verbal mastership. In March this year, I asked my host Lansine Diabate: "What is so special about Kelabala's words? Everyone enjoys them whenever he talks." Lansine smiled, then paused a little and replied: "Kelabala's words go to all directions, from the right to the left, and from back to front."

It has become silent in Manden.

Jan Jansen, May 12, 1997

Yamudu Diabate of Kela (1923-1997) (Jan Jansen)

On Saturday, October 18, 1997, Al-Haji Yamudu Diabate died. About two weeks before his death he was involved in a motor accident. Yamudu was riding in the back seat of a car coming from Kela, which turned onto the Siguiri-Kangaba road and collided with another vehicle. Yamudu suffered a fractured skull and a broken leg. He was hospitalized first in Kangaba and then in Bamako, but succumbed to brain injuries sustained in the skull fracture. He was buried in the Diabate family cemetery east of the Diabate compounds in Kela. May he rest in peace.

Yamudu acquired his fame in the 1940s and 1950s when he was the leader of a musical group known as "Yamudu and Brémajan." The group featured Yamudu himself as speaker, singer, and skilled dancer, along with Brémajan Kamissoko. The female vocalists were Siramori Diabate (whose husband Nankoman Kouyate played the balafon), Yamudu's wife Fanta Kouyate, and Kayra Seku Koita of Djoliba. The group was famous for its interpretation of "Kayra," the song dedicated to the "Peace" after World War II. A forgotten recording from 1949, recently discovered by Eric Charry, demonstrates the group's style which is characterized by "male rap" and chorus of combined male and female voices.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, Yamudu performed together with present-day *kumatigi* Lansiné Diabate who sang and played ngoni at the time. In the 1980s Yamudu became one of those responsible for checking the *kumatigi*'s recitation of *Mansa Jigin*, the history of the Mande mansaw as it is told during the septennial Kamabolon ceremony in Kangaba.

Yamudu was the host of the "Godfather of Mande studies," Charles Bird during his pioneering research in Kela in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Later he hosted

many Mande researchers such as David Conrad and Eric Churry, and most of the occasional visitors to Kela.

Together with his brother Bala and his cousin Siramori (d. 1989), Yamudu lent prestige to the Kela jeliw. Now that the two brothers have died within such a short period, their numerous descendants -- who live in two compounds -- have started talking about splitting up the heritage. Such fragmentation has occurred more than once among the "Damorila," the five Diabate lineages that descend from Damori. One hopes that the division of inherited property will not harm the cultural heritage which they formerly transmitted and performed in such harmony.

Jan Jansen, Columbus, Ohio, November 12, 1997

Yamuru (Yamudu) Diabate of Kela (David Conrad)

Early in 1976 shortly before I moved to Segu, I arrived in Kela with a note of introduction from Charles Bird, and Yamuru (as I have always spelled it) Diabate immediately became my jatigi. I had never before seen, much less entered, a two-story circular thatched house, and it was an unforgettable experience each night to climb the stairs with my research assistant, to spread our blankets on the large open floor directly beneath the great cone of thatch, and to fall asleep listening to the night sounds of Kela. Yamuru's home also boasted the best-appointed bathing/toilet area I've ever seen in a village compound, graced by a flintlock pistol that hung under the eaves of the thatched privy.

My fondest memories of Yamuru are distinct but scattered, and much colored by the many photographs I have of him and his family, still regularly viewed during slide presentations for students: Yamuru standing proudly before the veranda of his magnificent home, his warm countenance and upraised hand saluting the photographer; Yamuru packing the back of his mobylette before setting out to perform his jeliya in a neighboring community.

When it came to my research, Yamuru's refusal to share esoteric knowledge was rendered in the kindest ways imaginable. One way he did it was to wait until it was late at night before allowing me to start the tape recorder and ask a question, upon which he would launch into a promising monologue, continuing unabated, quite a long time after his eyes closed and I would realize that he was far away in dreamland. Yes, Yamuru was living testimony that the great guardians of Mande tradition can and do narrate in their sleep.

Yamuru's three wives, many children, boarders, and other family members were sources of constant joy and entertainment during my time in Kela, doing much to fill the long days when Yamuru and the other savants were unavailable for consultation (as was usually the case). My favorite slide from those days is the one in which I'm chatting with the wives while occupying Yamuru's hammock under the big veranda, because it reminds me of the time one of the ropes broke and I

dropped to the ground like a stone, to the great amusement of all of us.

I'll always regret never getting back to greet Yamuru and his family, only sending messages and photographs via colleagues researching there at various times. But Yamuru was a man that one somehow assumed would always be there -- and in a way, he always will be.

Djanka Tassey Conde of Hamana (David Conrad)

Djanka Tassey, son of Babu, brother of Mamadi, died on October 10, 1997, after serving as *belentigi* of his rural community near the Niandan River only since the death of Mamadi on January 16, 1994.

Tassey's brother Mamadi was deservedly famous in Mande culture as an extraordinarily knowledgeable narrator of epic tradition, and he contributed important texts on Sunjata, Fakoli, Samori, and their cohorts that will appear in two forthcoming collections. However, thorough familiarity with the work of both Mamadi and Tassey leads inevitably to the conclusion that Tassey was the true heir and conservator of the enormous body of knowledge bequeathed by their father Babu, to whom Laye Camara paid such tribute (*Le Maître de la parole (Kouma Lafôlô Kouma)* Paris: Librairie Plon SA, 1978; Eng. tr. *The Guardian of the Word* (New York: Vintage Books 1984).

My first meetings with Tassey were April 11-12, 1994. Arriving with an introductory note from Djibril Tamsir Niane, I expected to merely extend my greetings to the elders and go on my way. Instead, after hearing what I was interested in, accepting my own identity as Dauda Conde, and seeing that I had reached an agreement with his other male family members, Tassey began to narrate, accompanied by his master naamutigi, Mamadi Kouyate. To my astonishment Tassey continued for over five hours, pausing only to drink water. To my further astonishment, when I returned the next day he went on for a similar length of time, and he did so again when I returned the following month. The transcript of the narrative recorded in multiple sessions now runs to nearly 17,000 lines and contains details of Mande epic ancestors and events that I never heard anywhere else (the translation with extensive annotations is being prepared for publication).

In addition to being quite possibly the most knowledgeable savant of the last generation of Mande bards (or at least the most willing to share such details), Tassey had one of the sweetest dispositions I've ever encountered. This made it all the more painful to witness his health problems in recent years. In 1995-96 he endured repeated problems resulting from stomach surgery. And when I returned to see him in June, 1997, I found him extremely ill with malaria on top of which he was in terrible pain from a hugely swollen hernia. As I sat on the side of his bed for many hours that day holding his hand and visiting with him and his family, I suggested taking him out with me to the hospital in

Kankan, but they were waiting for his brother-in-law who is a doctor. Instead, I took one of his sons with me to be sent back with medicine, but I did not seriously think this was the last time I would see Tasse.

Exacerbating the tragedy of Djanka Tasse Conde's loss, is that similar to the circumstance of Sanasse Kouyate's 1995 death in Jelibakoro, this appears to spell the end of a very substantial body of traditional knowledge in one of the core locations of Mande culture. In 1996 when I arrived at Tasse's home to find he had been hospitalized in Gueckedou, the family sent out to the fields for a brother who they claimed could answer my questions. When we finally settled down to work, he and the other assembled elders did their best, but it soon became clear that no one present could provide answers to my latest list of follow-up questions on Tasse's narrative.

As some nyamakalaw once said upon the departure of a man of great charisma:

The day is drawing to a close,
The ground is hot.

We have no basket to sit on in the sky,
While we tell our troubles to the angels of God.

The Passing of Philip Ravenhill Art Historian

Philip Ravenhill, a member of MANSA for several years, was Chief Curator of the National Museum of African Art, which is part of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. He died of a heart attack on October 13, 1997 at the age of 52.

Dr. Ravenhill was born in Bath, England, but was educated in the United States, receiving his Ph.D. from the New School for Social Research in 1976. Before joining the Smithsonian Institution he was a senior research fellow at the International African Institute in London, and project director of the West African Museums Project in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. His recent publications include *Dreams and Reveries: Images of Otherworld Mates among the Baule of West Africa* (1996), *The Self and the Other: Personhood and Images Among the Baule, Côte d'Ivoire* (1994), and the catalogue for the museum's permanent installation *The Art of the Personal Object* (1991).

CALL FOR PAPERS

Secrets and Lies:

The Social Life of Knowledge in Mande

Aim:

The panel will undertake investigation of the roles of the 'secret' and the 'lie' in processes of knowledge construction in and about the West African Mande area. Publication of papers is foreseen. Contributions may be in English or French. A two- to three-paragraph abstract should be submitted by April 1, 1998. A first draft of the paper should be sent to one of the organizers before August 31, 1998. Papers not presented at the ASA

meeting may be included in the published volume. These contributors must also send an abstract before March 1, 1998, and a first draft before August 31, 1998.

Short Outline:

As both Mande bards and researchers realize, knowledge is a source of power and authority. Yet, at the same time, knowledge is constituted by authority. No one can know all things, nor should s/he. Neither is control over meaning distributed evenly across social space. Furthermore, knowledge changes its shape or character in different hands. Children may casually sing verses that have profound meanings in other mouths. In this sense, knowledge has a "social life," it may even have characteristics of a distinct social status: age, gender, caste, etc.

This panel proposes to explore the social life of knowledge by examining some of its most "marked" forms: the secret and the lie. The concepts secret (*gundo*, sometimes *dalilu*) and lie (*kalabanciya*) appear in the Mande world as labels for contested knowledge. This panel aims at a systematic investigation of the semantic fields of these terms and of the social circumstances in which they are deployed or invoked.

Because researchers in the Manden often encounter attributions of secrecy and/or falsehood, the data-collection process is placed squarely within this panel's field of inquiry. Coping with notions of secrecy is a necessity for understanding and representing the Mande world.

The papers ideally contain a general statement about secrecy and/or truth illustrated by one or several extended case studies. Papers must be related to the following themes:

1) Concepts and meanings. How are concepts of secrecy and truth or falsehood related to each other, and what are their larger semantic fields? Exploration of the conceptual variety and discursive traits of terms for secrecy and truth draws attention to the notions and meanings behind data which are often communicated to researchers as *secret* or *mensonge*.

2) Social analysis of contested knowledge. In the Mande world notions about secrecy play crucial roles in political and social strategies. Investigation of the social contexts in which attributions of secrecy and/or duplicity are made provides insight into the constitution of valid-- "true"-- knowledge and the itineraries it takes in social space.

3) The selection by the researcher. Informants confront researchers in Manden with claims about secrecy and falsehood during the latter's search for information. Reflection on secrecy is necessary, either as a criterion for stopping further research, or as a signifying moment in the process of gathering and selecting information. Secrecy has thus to be taken into account as a methodological issue in the construction of the researcher's narrative on Mande culture.

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Book, Article, and Dissertation Releases

BOOKS:

1996. Frederick Lamp. *Art of the Baga: A Drama of Cultural Reinvention*. New York: The Museum for African Art and Munich: Prestel-Verlag.

Another of the beautifully produced, extravagantly illustrated volumes from the extraordinary series put out by the Museum for African Art in New York City. This book accompanied the dramatic art exhibition of the same name, but it results from the author's years of determined, pioneering fieldwork in Guinea and is a full-scale monograph on the history and culture of one of the most artistically creative peoples of West Africa, carrying the story from earliest recorded times to the present. It includes forewords by Djibril Tamsir Niane and Simon Ottenberg, as well as an additional contribution by Niane, and one by Paul Hair.

1997. Maria Grosz-Ngaté and Omari H. Kokole, eds. *Gendered Encounters: Challenging Cultural Boundaries and Social Hierarchies in Africa*. New York: Routledge.

Early in her erudite, illuminating introduction, Maria Grosz-Ngaté states: "One of the objectives of this volume is to continue to undermine the notion of homogeneous and bounded cultural wholes by shifting the spotlight to the historical dynamics and cultural creativity which have characterized the continent over time. More specifically, the essays here explore the interplay between global historical forces and local social relations and cultural configurations through the prism of gender."

This book is divided into three sections. Part I, "Women Negotiating Boundaries," includes articles by Sandra Greene (Ghana), Obiagele Lake (Ghana), and Ch. Didier Gondola (Zaire).

Part II, "Gender and the Mediation of Modernity," contains chapters by Barbara Moss (Zimbabwe), Dorothy Hodgson (Tanzania), and Victoria Bernal (Sudan).

Part III, "Engendering Cultural Flows," presents studies by Gillian Feeley-Harnik (Madagascar), Judy Rosenthal (Togo), and Helen Mugambi (Gambia).

ARTICLES:

1997. Jean-Loup Amselle, EHESS, Paris. "Salvation through Writing: The N'ko, a West African Prophetism." *Diogenes*, No. 177, Vol. 45/1, Spring, 37-52.

1997. Stephen P.D. Bulman, Newman College Birmingham. "A Checklist of Published Versions of the Sunjata Epic." *History in Africa* 24, 71-94.

1997. Dianne White Oyler, Minot State University. "The N'ko Alphabet as a Vehicle of Indigenist Historiography." *History in Africa* 24, 239-256.

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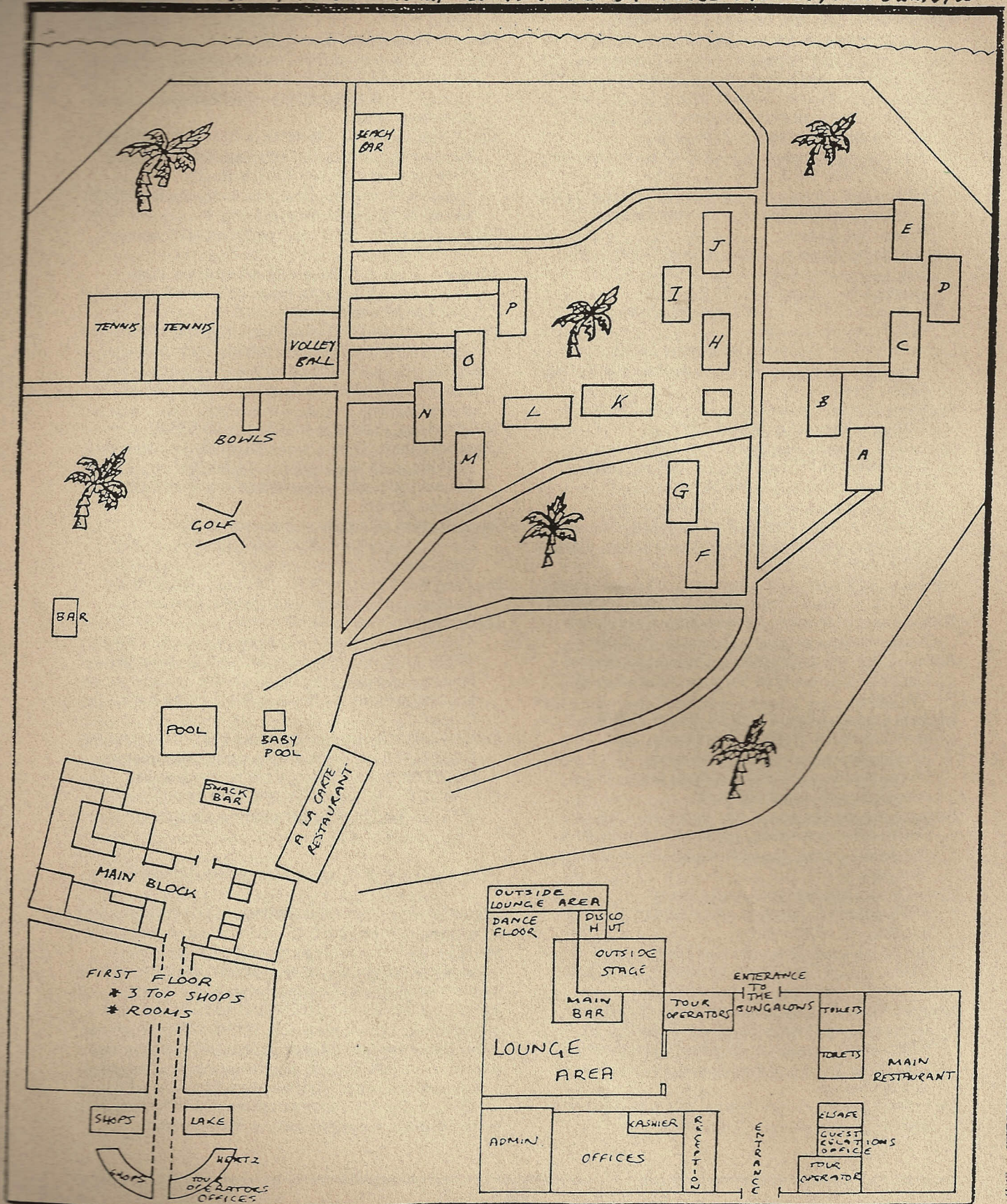
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Regular and institutional membership \$10, students \$5, sponsoring membership \$25. Make check out to MANSA and (if you are joining) send your institutional affiliation and a brief description of your research interests to: Stephen Wooten, James S. Coleman African Studies Center, 10244 Bunche Hall, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1310. Members (other than sponsored African colleagues) will find the date on which their present membership expires recorded on their address labels. The Secretary-Treasurer will forward your up-dated address and research information to the President for publication in the newsletter.

SENEGAMBIA


HOTEL

Site of the Fourth International Conference on Mande Studies, The Gambia




COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL "BORGOU '98"
"BORGOU '98" INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM

1st Announcement



Theme: *"THE HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY
BORGOU IN THE WEST AFRICAN CONTEXT :
CONTRIBUTION TO A POLICY OF PEACEFUL
PLURITHNIC COEXISTENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY .*




 **Organizer :** *Université Nationale du Bénin*


with the collaboration of

*the Centre Béninois de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique
and the Direction du Patrimoine Culturel .*

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
*the Government of the Republic of Bénin
and the local Communities in the Departments
of Borgou and Atacora .*


 **Place and dates :** *Parakou (Bénin republic)*
3rd week of december 1998
(precise dates in the 2nd announcement)

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(assisted by Mr. Obarè B. BAGODO)

 **2nd Annoucement :** March 1998
with sub-themes and call for papers