Panels Organized by MANSAs Members for the Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association Philadelphia 1999

REDEFINING MUSOYA AND MUSOTONW: WOMEN'S (RE)-APPROPRIATION OF NEW POLITICAL AND CULTURAL SPACES IN THE MANDE WORLD

This panel examines Mande women's social movements in a multiplicity of historical and geographical contexts. It challenges long-held assumptions that women's associations (tonw) are not significantly different from men's tonw and they have no impact on decision-making processes at the local level. Panelists argue that women's tonw present some important and unique characteristics. They are sites for women to negotiate between modernity(ies) and tradition(s), and between political and cultural identities. Moreover, women's associations have been fundamental in enabling women to participate in local and national political arenas. Building on detailed case-studies of women's groups, we question the presumed marginality of Mande women in the public sphere. While women may not directly challenge the general power structure, they often resist and/or partially transform state policies. In addition, they are often successful in carving out parallel, often secret, spaces for their political and ritual expression. By including papers from different geo-social milieux (rural and urban Mali, as well as Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso), this panel seeks to highlight the specificity of each socio-political context in which women's organizations operate.

Co-Chairs: Rosa De Jorio, University of North Florida and Marie-Nathalie Le Blanc, Concordia University

Papers:
Dorothea Schulz, Free University of Berlin
"Silamu musow ton: Muslim women's quest for moral and political renewal in urban Mali"

SAMORI TOURE ONE HUNDRED YEARS ON: EXPLORING THE AMBIGUITIES

The year 2000 will mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the passing of Samori Toure, who died June 2, 1900 on the island of Missanga in Gabon where he had been exiled by his French captors. This nineteenth-century West African empire-builder remains an intriguingly ambiguous historical figure because he is both charismatic hero and murderous villain to the West African people whose lives he touched. This panel kicks off a projected series of studies initiated in anticipation of an international conference on Samori, possibly to be held in Gabon in the year 2000, to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of his death. The present collection of papers focuses mainly on questions involving the impact of Samori's conquests on peoples of the Mande regions of northeastern Guinea, southern Mali, and northwestern Cote d'Ivoire. The papers draw on both archival and oral sources, and include issues of gender as well as historiographical problems involved in the study of such a controversial figure.

Chair: David Conrad, State University of New York-Oswego

Papers:
Emily Osborn, Stanford University
"Samori Toure in Upper Guinea: Hero or Tyrant?"
Jeanne Maddox Toungara, Howard University
“Kabasaran and the Samorian Conquest of Northwestern Côte d’Ivoire”

James Jones, West Chester University
“The Railroad Campaign Against Samori Touré”

Jan Jansen, Leiden University
“Samori’s Ally: ‘L’état de Kangaba,’ It’s Rise and Fall ca. 1870-1888”

Mohamed Saidou N’Daou, Chicago State University
“Almamy Samory Touré: Politics of Memories in Post-colonial Guinea (1958-84)”

David Conrad, SUNY-Oswego
“Victims, Warriors and Power Sources: Portrayals of Women in Guinean Narratives of Samori Touré”

Fata Bakari Kromah (1912-1998)
by Tim Geysbeek

On February 18, 1999, Fata Bakari Kromah died, aged 85, in Macenta, Guinea. Fata Bakari was the chief of the Kromah clan in the Macenta region. He was a farmer, born and raised in Macenta. In the early 1980s, the clan selected Bakari to be their kabila kundi because he was a trustworthy and respected elder. Bakari was important in Macenta because the Kromah are, according to some accounts, the founders of Macenta. According to oral traditions that I collected in Macenta, Bakari’s legendary grandfather Sonidene Bakari Kromah founded Macenta in the mid-nineteenth century.

I first met Fata Bakari when one of his nephews, Makula Mammadi Kromah, took me from Monrovia to Macenta in August 1984. Bakari opened his home and family to me, and took care of me as though I was one of his honored sons. He became my stranger-father, and I became his namesake because Makula Mammadi had named me after his great-grandfather. Equally accepting were Bakari’s wives Maceme Kamara, Mafatuma and Mararnia Kamara, and all of the Kromah whom I met. I took my wife Tami and son Jamie to Macenta in August 1984. Bakari opened his home to David Conrad and me, where we spent many tireless hours working with our assistants to translate oral traditions. Fata Bakari was always willing to help us translate difficult words and explain the meaning of phrases that we did not understand. His personal house was across the courtyard from where we did our work, where we saw him welcome countless visitors, settle disputes, and make other decisions.

I interviewed Bakari three times. Although he was not a jeli, he narrated priceless stories about the migration of the Kromah from Nolosoba to Macenta, Sonidene Bakari Kromah and the founding of Macenta, Samori’s dealings with Sonidene Bakari, Loma-Mandingo relations in the late nineteenth century, and early French encroachments into the area. I have not seen many of these stories in print, and I plan to publish them in the next millennium.

I have many fond memories spending time with Fata Bakari and his family. He was a man of great wit, and he got a particular joy (and laughter) out of trying to teach me the several ways that the word kono can be pronounced and translated. I can speak for myself, my family, David Conrad, the Kromah and many other people in Macenta and beyond - and say that we will...
like to donate to a planned Institute for Research on

"Greater Senegambia in the 21st Century":
Boubacar Barry and George Brooks

In a letter to George Brooks and other colleagues written from Universitat Hamburg in summer, 1998, Boubacar Barry issued an invitation to his friends "to come and spend two weeks in my home village of Mamou [Guinea-Conakry], with three days set aside for reflection on the future of Greater Senegambia in the 21st Century." Professor Barry defines "Greater Senegambia" somewhat broadly as "embracing Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea-Conakry, and... Sierra Leone and Liberia, understood as a single economic, political and social entity to be constructed by coming generations, a people’s Senegambia free of frontiers." The proposed deliberations would concentrate on education, economic integration, and political institutions:

"Education will be conceived of, as in Professor Ki-Zerbo’s Educate or Perish, as the key to the entire process of social construction. Against a background of past failures, our challenge will be to rethink an educational system capable of endowing our children with confidence, and of arming them with the moral and intellectual qualities needed to overcome handicaps in a world in which ignorance marks the boundary between successful globalization and abject marginalization.

"Economic Integration: It is plain that neither colonialism nor the successor system of nation states was able to meet even the basic needs of our populations. The relevant question, now, is how to organize our economic space so as to facilitate the joint exploitation of our common resources. Above all, we need to ensure that our economies function as complementary components of a coherent whole. To do this, we will have to wear ourselves from the dated Atlantic connection, and bring entire hinterland regions that have lain fallow for centuries into full development.

"Political Institutions: We need to work out ways of creating a secure political environment within which populations can freely organize, and autonomously determine the manner in which local regional, national or supranational power shall serve to guarantee individual and collective liberties as well as cultural identities.

"In a nutshell, our planned focus is not on what went wrong in the past century of colonization and nation-building. It is on developing a vision for constructing a viable future for our societies on the eve of this new century, with our history integrated into a coherent long-term perspective.”

Professor Barry goes on to describe what participants in the meeting can expect to see and do, and he asks that they bring along one copy each of their publications, as well as any other books they would like to donate to a planned Institute for Research on Sub-regional Integration (Institut de Recherche pour l’Intégration Sous-régionale -- IRIS), to be established at Saabu, near Mamou.

"So I invite you to this reunion of the century, 'to jointly examine the future - and to dream,' as, hands linked, we say goodbye to the twentieth century, from August 1 to 15, 1999 at Mamou.”

The mailing address: B.P. 5736, Dakar-Fann, Senegal. Tel. & Fax: 221 824 9301.

George Brooks replied by e-mail on 8/21/98 and sent a hard copy dated 10/7/98. Following some introductory remarks, Professor Brooks writes:

"With the recent warfare in Guinea-Bissau that destroyed INEP and years of dedicated work by many friends, with the ongoing disasters in Sierra Leone and Liberia and unresolved conflicts elsewhere, and with the prospects of worsening economic conditions during the oncoming global depression, you should not wait until next August to address the issues you have identified. Surely no time should be lost to rally leading western African scholars, journalists, business people, bankers, diplomats, and others to address the current and prospective crises and capture the initiative from the self-serving opportunists and their entourages, military and civilian, who thrive in the present circumstances.

"To be sure, I am an outsider, but based on four decades of study and experiences in western Africa, I offer the following ideas for consideration. I think my suggestions are feasible based on western Africans’ shared social and cultural histories, longstanding commercial networks, linking river basins, yet-to-be adequately exploited agricultural, pastoral, and mining resources, and other factors you and I and others have written about for many years.

"The colonial boundaries must be obliterated (in fact, already have been in many places from force of circumstances) to be replaced by a Western Africa Federation. The legacy of individual states, armies, police forces, embassies, customs services, marketing boards, and other enormously wasteful duplications must be replaced by a federal system based on appropriate models elsewhere on the globe, e.g., Switzerland. Recall that American states retained a large measure of independence after separating from Britain, but when the Articles of Confederation proved inadequate to the circumstances, Americans convened a constitutional convention to found a new federal system of government. Western Africans should do likewise.

"Suggestions: the legislature, executive branch, and supreme court should be located in different cities, as the case in South Africa, e.g., agriculture, fishing, mining, education, tourism, and transportation; and branches of the federal university should be separated, e.g., the school of agriculture in one place, the law school in another, the medical school somewhere else.

"Taxes should be collected and disbursed by revitalized local institutions. These are crucially important to re-establish the credibility of democratic processes. Indeed, meetings to organize new units of local governance would galvanize people’s commitment to local initiatives and problem-solving after decades of
top-down rule and stultifying neglect. A small proportion of taxes should be designated for the consolidated federal responsibilities, including highway construction; medical, agricultural and veterinary outreach programs; and coordination of educational programs.

“What will persuade those in power to give way to sweeping changes (?): their incapacity to cope with augmenting and intractable economic problems; growing unrest; demands for change from an informed and engaged citizenry; perceived opportunities for themselves in the new federal government; and judiciously exercised international pressure from the EU, World Bank, U.S., and other governments by means of curtailed spending on individual countries, with funds instead designated for prospective federal purposes only, e.g., the development of major river systems and highway networks, the single medical school, the single agricultural school, etc.

“Surely you and others have considered these and other ideas. My perspective is that of someone who has long studied western Africa, is greatly concerned by present circumstances, and who believes that the lives of most people will progressively worsen without fundamental and far-reaching changes.

“In hopes of better prospects for the peoples of western Africa.”

George Brooks

Up-Date on MANSA Members’ Activities

LILY AN KESTELOOT has communicated with us regarding the sad news of the death of Almamy Maliki Yettara (Newsletter 39, pp. 3-4): “Que j’ai très bien connu chez Hampaté Ba à Bamako, et qui a travaillé avec moi (aussi) notamment à la recolte des textes du mythe peul Tyamaba, sur lequel nous avons publié un no. double de Notes Africaines à l’IFAN (185-186) de 78 pages.”

ANDREAS MASSING is splitting his time between Germany, Ghana and Mali. He is presently based back in Weiler, Germany but is spending every two months in Ghana where he is concentrating on writing a History of the Potters Association and Firing Techniques on the axis Household Energy Projects in the Sahel, and with Dimitry Bulanin Publishing House. Hard cover, pp. 320. Covering letters A, B and the beginning of D of the Manding alphabet. The main text is supplemented with about 90 pages of Supplement including preliminary versions of entries for subsequent letters of the alphabet. The basic variants in the Dictionary are the Standard Bamana of Mali and the Maninka-Mori of Guinea; in addition, many other dialects are covered. Most entries have etymological information (component morphemes, the source of borrowing, reconstructed proto-form and forms in related and neighbouring languages). Special attention is paid to the polysemy, collocations, valency structure (syntactic combinatoriality), stylistic and usage characteristics of words. Many entries have cultural and encyclopaedic information. Synonyms and quasi-synonyms are indicated. Each headword is supplemented with a transcription in Nko writing. The Introduction

Book, Article, CD and Dissertation Releases

BOOKS:
1999 Valentin Vydrine. Manding-English Dictionary (Maninka, Bamana), vol. 1. St. Petersburgh, Russia: Dimitry Bulanin Publishing House. Hard cover, pp. 320. Covering letters A, B and the beginning of D of the Manding alphabet. The main text is supplemented with about 90 pages of Supplement including preliminary versions of entries for subsequent letters of the alphabet. The basic variants in the Dictionary are the Standard Bamana of Mali and the Maninka-Mori of Guinea; in addition, many other dialects are covered. Most entries have etymological information (component morphemes, the source of borrowing, reconstructed proto-form and forms in related and neighbouring languages). Special attention is paid to the polysemy, collocations, valency structure (syntactic combinatoriality), stylistic and usage characteristics of words. Many entries have cultural and encyclopaedic information. Synonyms and quasi-synonyms are indicated. Each headword is supplemented with a transcription in Nko writing. The Introduction
includes sociolinguistic and genetic information about the Manding group and the Mande language family, the presentation of the Nko alphabet, information about the structure of an entry in the Dictionary. The price is US$35. Thanks to a grant from Stephan Büchnen's Bremer Stiftung für Kultur und Sozialanthropologie (formerly the Bremer Stiftung für Geschichte), there is a discount for MANS members and citizens of African countries; they can buy the volume for US$25. The postal charge is US$3 (surface mail), US$4 (air mail). Send orders to: bulanina@nevsky.net Dmitry Bulanin, Institute of Russian Literature, Makarova Embankment, 4, St. Petersburg 199 034, Russia Fax (812)346 16 33 (or pozdn@club-internet.fr Konstantin Pozdnjakov, INALCO, 2 rue de Lille 75343, Paris CEDEX07, France.


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Joining MANSA and Renewing Membership
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, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, 901 South National Avenue, Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield, MO 65804-0095. 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.