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MANDE STUDIES ASSOCIATION  
Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association  
November 2017  
Chicago, Illinois

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## AGENDA

Barbara called the meeting to order and started with her final report as the MANSAs president:

Tonight, I conclude 12 long years of service to MANSAs. I became an active member of the Advisory Board in the fall of 2005; helped organize the travel awards for the Lisbon conference in 2008 and was then elected Vice President that fall, and during my tenure as VP coordinated the rewriting of the bylaws to institute terms and transition procedures to assure continuity in the leadership of the association. I co-organized the 2011 conference in Bamako; was elected President-Elect in Fall 2011 and during that tenure headed up a team to redesign the MANSAs website and newsletter and co-organized the 2014 conference in Bobo-Dioulasso. In fall 2014, I became president with Joseph Hellweg as my VP/President-Elect, and my right hand man.

During the past three years, MANSAs has more than consumed my professional service time. The *Mande Studies* journal faced a publication crisis when the University of Wisconsin African Studies Program ceased publishing and handed the journal over to the UW Press. I investigated the conditions of that transfer and found them lacking proper procedures, including permissions to publish and copyright issues. On behalf of MANSAs, I applied for and was granted a trademark for our logo. I worked steadily with a team of attorneys and our editor to obtain copyright over the journal and get it contracted for publication with Indiana University Press under the conditions that 1) the copyright remains the property of MANSAs, 2) every author must grant legal permission to publish to the Press, 3) MANSAs retains the profits from the sale of the journal, and 4) the editor is appointed for a period of four years. The journal's managing editor, Peter Mark, is in the second year of his contract, which will end December 31, 2020. Most gratifyingly, our journal is now available on JSTOR. I was pleased to be asked to help with the preparation of the first two volumes to be published by IU Press, both of which have come out this year.

Also during the past three years, I headed up an excellent team of colleagues to organize our 10<sup>th</sup> international conference. Joseph Hellweg and Jeanne Toungara worked under my direction with our Ivorian colleagues Marcel KOUAKOU and Yacouba Konaté during the summer of 2015 to make initial contacts and explore possible venues. Joseph and I returned to Côte d'Ivoire during the summer of 2016 to finalize that selection and solicit support of the conference from a variety of sources. We both returned there in July last summer to oversee all the little last-minute organizational details necessary in running a conference, from the production of the program to assuring the availability of bottled water for the presenters, from selection of honored guest speakers to the choice of daily lunch menus in the cafeteria. We had an outstanding local organizing committee, presided over by long-term MANSAs associate and 2-time Advisory Board member Yacouba Konaté, with Marcel Kouakou as committee Vice-President and Jacques Ngoran Kouacou as committee Secretary. I want to formally recognize and thank each and every person I've named here and all the others named in the conference program for

their invaluable contributions to the successful organization and running of our 10<sup>th</sup> triennial.

With all this help, MANSA held its tenth triennial conference August 2-6, 2017 at the International University of Grand Bassam (IUGB) in Côte d'Ivoire, with the welcome assistance of grants from the ASA and the Dept. of State, and contributions from numerous individual donors. IUGB hosted the conference largely thanks to its ties to Jeanne Toungara and we are most grateful for their hospitality. The theme of the conference, particularly apt for the time and place, was *Intersecting Identities: Coexistence, Conflict and Reconciliation in West Africa and Its Diasporas*.

This was the largest conference MANSA has ever held, with some 150 presentations by scholars from ten African countries and thirteen countries of the Global North. The largest contingent was the Ivorian scholars, fifty of them holders of doctorates, twenty-seven of them doctoral students. Most of the participants roomed and boarded on the campus of IUGB for the all five days of the conference, offering constant opportunities for discussion and networking outside of formal panel sessions. Many had never attended an interdisciplinary conference before and were enthusiastic about the opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration presented by the African Studies model. We look forward to seeing many of these scholars at future MANSA triennials and ASA conferences.

After the conference, I continued to work on organizing the publication of the Proceedings and settling the bills. The final bill was paid on November 13 by our Treasurer for West Africa, Marcel KOUAKOU, which I believe that Joseph will say more about too. I'm happy to say the Proceedings are now complete too, as of Wednesday, November 15, 2017. The proceedings are available as a PDF through the MANSA website's Proceedings of Past Conferences page. We had an outstanding response to my call for submissions and have published 103 of the talks given at the conference.

Tonight I'm leaving the position of MANSA president, but am not abandoning all service to Mande Studies, as I have accepted a position on the editorial board of the journal which will begin after this meeting concludes. And, as past president, I will remain an active honorary member of the MANSA Advisory Board.

It's been a long, beautiful ride. *Allah ye sira diya, n'b'a tanu!* And, as with all long-term departures in the Mande world, I ask for your forgiveness for any unintended mistakes I may have made, slights, or hard feelings I may have caused: *Aw ka yafa n'ma*.

Barbara then turned the time over to Peter Mark to give his annual report:

I want to thank Barbara for the nice words and for all of her work. We've just published issue 19, which is the first issue to be published by Indiana. I really believe that Indiana is the best press for journals in African Studies and we're fortunate to be with them. They put the editor through more work than our predecessors, but it's worth

it. For this to be a reality, I am deeply indebted to the press, journal editor, Daniel Pyle and Sheronda Thedford, who I've worked with closely in the production process and who has been terrific at holding my hand and then using screenshots long distance to walk me through the intricacies of editing digitally. But I'm even more thankful to Barbara for her years of editing, co-editing, and guest editing, and for shepherding our move from University of Wisconsin Press to Indiana, which is the top African publisher. We devoted more time and patience to this task than I can tell you. And thank you too for holding my hand when the obstacles for learning the new editorial had me convinced I could never learn it. The journal is back on its feet with Indiana and I feel less overwhelmed with the second issue when it comes to production time, because I feel we were well established. The maturing of the journal, if I may, coincided with and bleeds into the observation that *Mande Studies* is not a one-person journal. As a principle, it should be identified with any single individual and it should not be the intellectual product of any one individual. I have enjoyed my opportunity to take the journal in new directions, especially encouraging submissions from young scholars and it fulfilled me to do so because I don't have graduate students and so I was able to help young historians construct an argument and write an article. Whether I helped them or not, they have helped us to fill the journal with innovative submissions. But the journal should not be identified with any single person, including me. I think that, for that reason, and because the workload has increased, it would be ideal if we can appoint a managing editor. I think that MANSA also needs to address the issue of how to choose a successful managing editor. My term ends in 2020, but we need to get ahead of this and find someone soon. The managing editor should not have the authority alone to choose his or her successor. MANSA rightly should play a role of who should be the next managing editor. We can address this once the board members are in place, and this should be taken care of in the next year. I will go through the list of the editorial advisory board, many of them have played no role for years and it's time to renew the board a little bit. The only thing left is in capital letters and it says: PAY MY DUES.

Barbara asked if anyone failed to vote on Survey Monkey for the new president-elect. It was reviewed that only paid members are eligible to vote and Sten Hagberg is the sole candidate. Four people voted in the room, Joseph announced that Dianna counted 48 votes online, so it's a unanimous vote in favor of Sten being our next President-Elect. Barbara announced Joseph Hellweg formally as the new President of MANSA.

Joseph thanked the group and Barbara for pulling off what seemed like an impossible conference, and that Barbara stood three steps ahead of everything. He said that he would like to mention Sam Koffi, who is the president of the IUGB and thanks to him and his friendship with Jeanne Toungara, we were able to pull the conference off. For the next conference, Sten has offered to host it at the University of Uppsala, so that's likely where it will be. It's time for the conference to return to Europe after three conferences in Africa. Although, perhaps this should be the model to follow, to have two or three conferences in West Africa and then one in Europe.

Joseph explained the position of Marcel KOUAKOU, who served on the organizing committee for the conference and is now the assistant treasurer in West Africa since we now have an account at Ecobank.

The next item of business is to appoint the members of the advisory board. Joseph proposed that Alain Sissao be retained, that Marcel KOUAKOU be on the board, and that Maria Grosz-Ngate represent Europe, and that Ibrahim Konde represent Guinea, and we will retain Fatoumata Keita in Mali, and Rosa De Jorio be the representative for the US. There are two reasons for these choices: both geographical and gender balance. Joseph called for a motion to vote, which Barbara seconded and the vote was unanimous in favor.

Joseph then gave his report:

My biggest concern is the mentorship of female colleagues in West Africa. We need to do what we can to make sure that junior women colleagues obtain the same senior status as male colleagues. Those at the conference noticed a preponderance of senior, male scholars in West Africa. I don't know what to do about it, but I'm open to ideas of how we can encourage them to publish and submit manuscripts.

I'd also like to put in place a student network. According to Dianna, we have three student members. I think we can increase the number of students who are visible at our events. If anyone has graduate students, please put them in touch with me and perhaps we can encourage them to propose panels at conferences and to publish in the journal.

One issue for the Uppsala conference will be finding funding to get our West African members to Uppsala. Sten and I have talked about sources of funding, including the University of Uppsala and embassies in West Africa in countries where we have money. Please let me know if anyone has any thoughts offhand. Joseph mentioned that there could be money available through Russian, German, and funding agencies in the Netherlands. Someone said that N'Ko activists internationally could be in a position to sponsor scholars working on N'Ko. WARA also came up as an option to look into. There could be funding outside of the ASA. I recently attended an ethnomusicology conference, and we could put together a panel on Mande music and have someone like Lucy Duran serve as the respondent. If anyone has any ideas for panel proposals, then propose them through the ASA and then write to Joseph to indicate that they would like it to be MANSA supported.

Joseph offered the treasurer report on behalf of Dianna Bell, who is now living in South Africa and will not be able to attend the ASA regularly:

We have restructured membership and no longer offer sponsored memberships. Instead we have "Africa Based" and "non-Africa Based" membership categories. For members living outside of Africa, we offer varying membership levels (student, regular, bronze, silver, platinum). We have 96 members, which is up from 84 last year.

Our membership divided as follows:

Africa Based	44
Regular	46
Student	3
Bronze	1
Silver	1
Platinum	1

Where is our membership?

- 45% lives in Africa (Congo, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, and South Africa)
- 39% lives in North America (United States and Canada)
- 18% lives in Europe (Norway, France, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Sweden)
- One member lives in Israel

We have \$7,895.93 in our US Bank account and 787 897 in our Ecobank account. Joseph suggested that we could use the money for West African members to organize meetings and activities on their own.

Please note that the address fields are not mandatory fields when you complete your online profile owing to the diversity of our membership and the variation internationally in how addresses are formatted. You will not receive a mailed copy of the journal if you do not completely fill in your address on your own.

Dianna recommended adjusting the 20 000 XOF annual rate for Africa-based members to an amount that is generally more commensurate with the income of households in Sub-Saharan Africa, and that the sum cover three years instead of one. The most natural time to renew would be on years when a conference is held.

Most companies that trade in intellectual property and organizations that offer affiliations charge a rate that is tied to currency, so a product in the US will be \$50, in Europe 50€, in the UK 50£, in South Africa 500 Rand (~\$37), and in West Africa 5000 XOF (~\$9). Just as MANSAs offers discounted membership for students, it is equally important for the organization to charge based on an income-dependent scale that is tied to the relative strength of a member's currency and their buying power. Charging a Malian 20 000 XOF a year, for example, is equivalent to charging an American \$258, if you take into account both the wage and consumer price index for both countries.

The fee as it stands could be a financial barrier for prospective members in Africa. So far well over half of the Africa-based members who have become paid

members have had their fees paid on their behalf by a MANSAs member based in Europe or North America. While paying fees for someone else is a wonderful gesture of collaboration and friendship, Dianna fears that the practice generally sets up a pattern of client-patron relationships that the organization should be wary of. Dianna is in favor of all members of MANSAs paying a fee, but proposed that members discuss adjusting the amount we charge in XOF.

Joseph then reviewed the dues levels (which are posted on the MANSAs website), and reminded people how many participants at the conference at IUGB do not have permanent positions, and in fact have to pay even to submit money for an application. Joseph then reviewed the costs we covered for African-based colleagues, including airfare, ground transportation, room and board, and Barbara said that the total cost of the conference was approximately \$21,000.

Barbara said that in 2014 [at the conference in Bobo-Dioulasso] African colleagues felt that they were treated as second-class citizens because they were not dues-paying members and consequently could not serve in offices and vote. The figure that was bounced around at the meeting was 20 000 XOF. MANSAs did not want to set up a dues paying category for members in Africa, Barbara saying that is a type of apartheid. Joseph said that the 20 000 XOF seems to be a barrier because MANSAs has not had as many members join. Bill Moseley said we could open an income fee for people below \$20,000 in general.

Members in Europe and North America are automatically mailed a physical copy of *Mande Studies*. Please write to Dianna at bell.dianna@gmail.com if you would like to opt to receive only a digital copy instead.

Dianna is now finishing her seventh year as treasurer and so appointing a new officer is in order. Please send in nominations. Ideally the new treasurer would take over the office by the end of 2018.

Joseph then returned to his own items of business, saying that David Conrad had written to Barbara and himself about a colleague who wants to open a Manding Studies Center and David was asking what we thought about the usefulness of a center there and how we might collaborate with them. They're switching to an American system, and the students that Joseph knows there either go to Conakry or Bamako for graduate studies. The center wouldn't serve a purpose for degree training, but if we're going to be affiliated the center could help to serve the needs of faculty there. Moreover, we could collaborate with young students there on their research projects. Joseph noted that Til Forester and Sten Hagberg are examples of European colleagues who do quite a lot of mentoring and collaborating with Africa-based colleagues. Marsha proposed that we could return to Guinea for a meeting there. Joseph added that there's been talk of Sierra Leone also serving as the next site for a MANSAs meeting.

Inaudible conversation, and then Joseph reminded the group of a celebratory dinner for Barbara and Joseph motioned to adjourn the meeting.