



# MANSA

Newsletter Number 31 -- Summer 1996

## MANSA Conference Memo: Members Choose Banjul, 1998

The WARA invitation to hold a Mande studies conferences under their rubric in June, 1997 (MANSA Newsletter Number 30, Spring 1996, pp. 2-4) injected an extra measure of urgency into the question of conference site preferences of members who plan to participate or who say they at least hope to do so. The response to my question in newsletter #30 was inadequate, but the subsequent e-mail query proved effective. Fall 1996, when the next newsletter would normally appear, seems too late to notify members of the results of that query. Therefore, in the last few days before departing for the Manden, I am issuing a special "Summer Edition" of MANSA Newsletter.

Another reason for the special issue, is that after the Spring 1996 issue (#30) of MANSA Newsletter was issued with all conference information available at the time and requesting members' preferences, a letter arrived from Yacouba Konaté, providing information about conference facilities in Abidjan. Professor Konaté was a conspicuous participant at the MANSA conferences in both Bamako and Leiden, and has become not only our most active member in Côte d'Ivoire, but one of our most distinguished scholars residing in West Africa. As will be apparent from his letter, he has taken a good deal of trouble to acquire just the sort of information we desired regarding Abidjan, and the editor greatly regrets that it did not arrive in time for the previous issue. Abidjan is clearly an attractive conference venue and seems an obvious front-runner for future consideration as a MANSA Conference site. Had the letter been available in time it would doubtless have influenced the vote, however there comes a point at which the newsletter must be printed and decisions must be made, if things are to move forward in a reasonably timely fashion.

As of 5/7/96, thirty-one potential participants indicated a preference for an International Conference on Mande Studies to be held in 1998. Twenty-five of them specified Banjul: Tavy Ahern, Laura Arntson, Ralph Austen, Abdoulaye Bayo, Larry Becker, Stephen Belcher,

Eric Charry, Ferdinand DeJong, Lucy Duran, Eugenia Herbert, Eric Huysecom, Michele Johnson, James Jones, Martin Klein, Kevin MacDonald, Peter Mark, Pekka Masonen, Roderick McIntosh, Susan McIntosh, Marie Perinbam, Raymond Silverman, Patience Sonko-Godwin, Berend Timmer, Donald Wright, Clemens Zobel.

Four specified either Banjul or Abidjan: Mary Jo Arnoldi, Paulo Farias, Eliza Nichols, Ingse Skattum.

Two specified Abidjan: Tim Geysbeek and François Manchuelle.

Favoring 1997, eleven participants indicated a preference for the WARA Symposium in Dakar: Barbara Hoffman, John Hutchison, Lilyan Kesteloot, Barbara Lewis, Carlos Lopes, Andreas Massing, Julianne Short, Kathleen Slobin, Niels Teunis, Jeanne Toungara, Stephen Wooten.

Three members expressed hope of attending whatever conference was held, if it fit into the right time-frame or if they could get funding: Carmen Coustaot, Alma Gottlieb, Dorothea Schultz.

D. Conrad will therefore proceed in the organization of a MANSA Conference to be held in Banjul, 1998. Those of us interested in participating in the WARA conference at Dakar can submit proposals for MANSA-sponsored panels as we do every year at ASA. See the WARA "Call for Papers" at the end of this newsletter.

We can discuss specific dates for a 1998 Banjul conference at the MANSA meeting in San Francisco. Conrad will be in Guinea from 17 May to 29 June and letters *might* reach him c/o SIM/Kankan, Mission Protestante, B.P. 438, Conakry, Guinea. From 29 June to 3 July he can be reached c/o Abdoulaye Bayo, National Museum, P.M.B. 151, Banjul, The Gambia. From 4 July to 15 August: P.O. Box 72, Stinson Beach, CA 94970

## YACOUBA KONATE'S LETTER

J'aurais dû t'écrire depuis déjà un bon moment, depuis un an disons. En effet depuis le congrès de Leiden, j'ai à cœur de proposer Abidjan comme une opportunité pour le prochain congrès de notre

DAVID C. CONRAD, *President*, State University of New York-Oswego

B. MARIE PERINBAM, *Vice President*, University of Maryland

LAURA ARNTSON, *Secretary-Treasurer*, Michigan State University

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association. A cet effet, il me fallait le temps d'entreprendre quelques démarches pour obtenir des appuis institutionnels. Maintenant c'est fait et je peux vous donner l'assurance de la disponibilité de la faculté des Lettres, Arts et Sciences Humaines de l'Université d'Abidjan d'une part et celle du GIDIS-ORSTOM d'autre part. GIDIS signifie Groupe Interdisciplinaire de Recherche en Sciences Sociales, et cette association travaille en étroite collaboration avec l'ORSTOM, Office de la Recherche scientifique pour les Territoires d'Outre Mer dit désormais Office français de la Recherche en Coopération.

J'ai exposé le projet du congrès aux premiers responsables de chacune de ces structures et obtenu leur accord de principe. Bien entendu chacune de ces

structures souffrait à accueillir la conférence mais leur association renforce la faisabilité du projet tout en multipliant par 2 les petits financements locaux qu'on peut espérer soit environ 2 x 5000 dollars.

Le centre culture Américain que j'ai également contacté pourrait offrir une salle climatisée pour les travaux avec toutes les commodités mais tout dépendra de la disponibilité de la salle à la période du congrès. Je dois vous signaler également que sur place, un public de chercheurs et d'étudiants d'environ 100 personnes participerait volontiers aux travaux du congrès. Abidjan n'étant qu'à une heure d'avion de Conakry, Bamako, Ouagadougou, la ville offre également quelque atouts quant à la participation des chercheurs résidents en Afrique.

J'ai réuni également quelques informations sur les infrastructures hôtelières. Les hôtels à Abidjan offrent l'un des meilleurs rapports qualité-prix de la région. Comparé par exemple à Bamako, les chambres à Abidjan sont moins chères. 70 dollars pour une chambre d'hôtel 3 étoiles. Il est également possible de loger des participants à la conférence et la conférence elle-même au Centre des Métiers de l'électricité à Bingerville, soit à 20 km et à 10 minutes du centre-ville d'Abidjan. Ce cadre en bordure de lagune et très vert et très rafaïchissant. Les chambres sont climatisées et impeccables et relativement moins chères: 30 dollars la nuit.

Il faut peut-être signaler également qu'Abidjan est une ville internationale très ouverte sur l'ensemble des peuples de l'Afrique de l'ouest. Sa population est estimée à 3 millions d'Abidjan avec un aéroport international qui permet des vols directs sur l'Europe et les Etats-Unis. La dimension culturelle internationale de la ville permettra la programmation de spectacles vivants en rapport avec la culture mandingue.

Ceci et cela, cher Président, pour dire à notre Association que je propose d'accueillir à Abidjan le 4<sup>e</sup> congrès MANSA et que sur place tout sera mis en oeuvre pour que ce congrès soit une réussite. Et il le sera-- Avec mes sentiments cordiaux.

Yacouba Konate

Stephan Bühnen also wrote recently, discussing the relative merits of Banjul and Dakar. He agrees "with

most of [Donald] Wright's advice" (see Newsletter #30), but feels that "what is more important in estimating Bakau/Banjul's value as a conference site are logistics and cultural background." He says "The Gambia is better placed than Dakar in being located on the fringes of Mandinka country and it is worse placed in not featuring the research and university community of Dakar (and, to a lesser degree, of Kankan) [?!]. On the other hand, a MANSA conference might well generate new vigour in local Mande research."

### Journal of Mande Studies

On the question of a Mande studies journal, the response was generally favorable, with several people voicing some reservations owing to concerns about problems of subscription, distribution, and other technical matters. Marie Perinbam came out altogether against the idea and agreed to allow her reasons to be published here:

"I agree that many of our people do very good work. The current advantage is that they publish in the more mainstream journals and get read by a wide range of people. MANSA has a bigger and higher profile when our people remain in mainstream [publications]. A separate journal means a bigger chance of isolating the field (which I would hate), and expecting Africanists to pick up the subscription on yet another journal (Lord knows they are expensive)! Furthermore, would libraries, now pressed for resources, subscribe to a MANSA journal? I for one would have a hard time convincing our librarian that the University of Maryland needs a MANSA journal!!

"I really feel strongly about this. I would hate us to get to the point where we are only talking to ourselves (it is already happening on the MANSA-net). Mande studies are so important for ALL of Western Africa, and not just for the Fulbe either.

"There are all those eastern Mande that so little work has been done on. Isolating ourselves would not necessarily encourage our folk to extend eastwards.

"I would like to think that the next generation of Mande scholars would do their dissertations on the eastern Mande. They will be reading the mainstream journals. When fishing around for a dissertation topic, would they be reading a MANSA journal? Would their dissertation advisor, say a West African Anglophone scholar or East or Southern African specialist, be reading a MANSA journal? Would the French contribute to the journal? Amselle, Bazin? I doubt it. The British and Anglophone Canadians probably would. This would end up as an Anglo-American Anglophone journal, which I would not particularly like.

"Then there is the question of African contributions. Many African Mande scholars treat the subject very differently from the way Western-trained scholars do. We saw this at Bamako and Leiden. We are happy to have their contributions at conferences. In fact their contributions are essential. We would not want to be without them. But what do we do about their



contributions all in the same journal?.... I would hate us to have a journal which had problems with contributions from Africans.

"I am sure David Henige meant well. In fact his suggestion is quite flattering. But I frankly don't think it is a very good idea for us."

B. Marie Perinbam

Also writing more than a line or two on the journal question was Stephan Bühnen. He argues in favor of two "leaner issues per year" as opposed to one fat issue like *History in Africa*.

He also feels the "journal could be made more attractive (visually) than *History in Africa*, in the layout and colour of the title page, in the layout of paper titles, etc." Bühnen also favors the annotation style of the *JAH*, with footnotes instead of endnotes.

Finally, Bühnen says he does "not exactly like the 'Melli' emperor in the Newsletter title," and therefore does not want to see it on the journal. He says it is "a purely fictional representation," that it is from a Mediterranean perspective," and that it looks to him "more like a comical-faced court-jester than a king." He suggests instead, "a Komo or other mask located in the Mande area on a map of Africa" because it would "increase attractiveness and indicate the journal's regional focus for the non-initiated."

As for the title of a journal, fifteen people prefer *Journal of Mande Studies*. We also have *MANSA: Journal of the Mande Studies Association* (3), *MANSA: Journal of Mande Studies* (1), *MANSA: Mande Studies* (1), *MANSAYA* (1), *Mande Studies Journal* (1).

### Call For Papers

African Literature Association, East Lansing, MI, April 1997: CAMEL TRACKS: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE LITERATURES FROM THE AFRICAN SAHEL (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal)

Critical essays on a broad range of topics including: the oral tradition and genres, poetry, novel, theater, African language texts and other forms of prose fiction will be considered.

Send papers by June 30, 1996 to:  
Debra Boyd-Buggs, Department of Romance Languages,  
Wake Forest University, P.O. Box 7566, Winston-Salem NC 27109. Fax (910) 759-4432

or

Joyce Hope Scott, Department of English,  
Massachusetts Maritime College, 101 Academy Drive,  
Buzzards Bay, MA 02532. Fax (617) 349-3545.

See also the West African Research Association (WARA) "Call for Papers" on the last page of this newsletter.

### Book and Film/Video Releases

#### BOOK:

1994. Carlos Lopes (ed.), *Mansas, escravos, grumetese gentio: Cacheu na encruzilhada das civilizações*. Bissau: INEP (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa). Pp. 320.

Scholars interested in the Upper Guinea Coast and western Mandingo culture will find this very interesting and informative. The material is compiled from a seminar that Lopes organized for INEP in 1988 in Cacheu, Northern Guinea-Bissau, as part of a commemoration for the 400th anniversary of that trading post.

To order: Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa, P.O. Box 112, Bissau, Guinea-Bissau. Fax 245-251125.

#### FILMS:

MANSA was recently contacted by Taale Laafi Rosellini, Founder and Executive Director of the African Family Film Foundation. In his introductory letter he describes it as follows:

African Family Film Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing uplifting images of African people to adults and children worldwide. Our aim is to progress in positive ways which will benefit the people of Africa and the African Diaspora, and raise people's consciousness and appreciation of Africa and African culture worldwide.

So far released are three award winning films:

*Diro and His Talking Magical Bow*

*Adama, the Fulani Musician*

*Dance of the Bella*

Until September 1, 1996, these three are being offered on one VHS cassette at a special price of \$199.

The list of "Upcoming Releases" includes:

*Great Great Great Grandparents' Music* (90 minutes/ release date 1996)

Portrait of a family of *jeliw* with focus on how children learn music, song, the origin of music and cultural values from parents and grandparents. The girls in the family braid hair, drum, dance, sing, cook, attend school and speak as many as five languages. The boys construct and repair xylophones and drums and perform in the community with their sisters and cousins. Through filmed interviews, the grandfather, parents and children speak directly to the viewer about family members, activities, life principles and hopes for the future.

Filmed in Burkina Faso over a period of two decades. 16 mm, color, optical sound. Also available in video: VHS or U-Matic. In Jula, Bwamu (language of the Bwaba), and Moore (language of the Moose [Mossi]), with subtitled versions in English or French. International version (with transcript of subtitles).



*Zam Zam* (60 minutes/ release date 1996)

Portrait of Zam Zam -- a renowned dancer of the ancient Moose (Mossi) Empire. Zam Zam is a dancer, healer, farmer and family man. He dances at funeral celebrations. He gathers bark, grasses and herbs, treats a patient and teaches herbal medicine to his 5-year-old son. Zam Zam, his family and friends cultivate the land. Through filmed interviews, members of the family and community speak to the viewer about Zam Zam, while Zam Zam speaks about family, the struggle for survival and the power of medicine and dance.

Filmed in Burkina Faso over a period of two decades. 16 mm, color, optical sound. Also available in video: VHS or U-Matic. In Moore with subtitled versions in English or French.

*Music and Dance in African Life* (60 minutes/ release date 1997)

A music and dance film following the life cycle and seasonal agricultural cycle: childhood dance-games; initiation dance; marriage celebrations; work parties with hoeing, harvesting, threshing and winnowing to the rhythm of drums; coronation rites and celebrations; funeral celebrations. The film concludes with griot activities.

16 mm, color, optical sound. Lyrics in African languages are subtitled; versions in English or French.

*Alpha Blondy--Prophet in the New World* (90 minutes/ release date 1997)

Portrait of singer superstar Alpha Blondy, who sings in six languages for world peace and unity. An inside look at the man and his message for the world. Alpha, band members and fans speak directly to the viewer. The film includes enlightening interviews with major artists from Africa and the Diaspora, including; Pato Banton, Manu Dibango, Lucky Dube, Majek Fashek, Ismaël Lo, Baaba Maal, Thomas Mapfumo, Mutabaruka, Youssou N'Dour, Babatunde Olatunje and Oumou Sangare.

Filmed in the U.S. and Africa, music by Alpha Blondy and his band, the Solar System. 35mm & 16 mm, color, optical sound. Will also be available in video. Lyrics and dialogue are subtitled; versions in English or French.

*Zakaramba--A Family For All Seasons* (90 minutes/release date 1997)

Portrait of a Moose (Mossi) farming family and community in their struggle for survival, throughout the entire agricultural cycle, during both drought and good harvests. The film focuses on children--how they participate in agriculture and daily and seasonal activities, and how children, parents and elders perceive their community, the environment and life. *Zakaramba* demonstrates the integral relation of music, dance and oral tradition to year-round communal work, celebration and rites of passage. Through filmed interviews, elders, parents and children speak directly to the viewer about family, community, agricultural activities,

responsibility, reciprocity and beliefs and hopes for the future.

Filmed in Burkina Faso over a period of two decades. 16mm, color, optical sound. In Moore with subtitles in English or French.

*Mother Mask* (60 minutes/release date 1998)

Portrait of a mask sculptor's family and their village's annual harvest celebration. The renowned Mother Mask--in concert with the Hyena, Antelope, Buffalo and Youth masks--all dance on the village plain where the spirits of the bush openly interact with the human world. The film includes scenes of preparation for the festival, the annual "appearance" of each mask, and the mask sculptor at work with his children apprentices. The viewer learns of the significance of the mask and the festival through interviews with village elders, the village chief and parents and children who come to participate in the celebration.

16mm, color, optical sound. In San (Samo) with subtitled versions in English or French.

Available from African Family Film Foundation, P.O. Box 630, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-0630

### **The Forthcoming MANSA DIRECTORY**

If you have not yet submitted your up-dated information, including current address and telephone numbers, e-mail address and research interests, now is the time to do so. Please help us make the directory as current as possible. E-mail your information to the MANSA secretary: [arntson@pilot.msu.edu](mailto:arntson@pilot.msu.edu)

### **MANSA T-Shirts**

To order your MANSA T-shirt send \$17.40 per shirt (15.00 plus 2.40 each for mailer & postage; overseas orders please include an additional 2.50 per order) to: David Conrad, History Department, SUNY-Oswego, Oswego, NY 13126

### **New & Renewed MANSA Members & Address Changes**

Tavy Ahern, c/o PAO (USIS), American Embassy - Conakry, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20521 - 2110

George Brooks, History Department, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405

Paul Folmer, Tweede Shuysstraat 76, 2517XH, Den Haag, The Netherlands

Lilyan Kesteloot, IFAN, Université de Dakar, B.P. 206, Dakar, Senegal

Robert Leopold, 6034 Richmond Highway, Apt. 822, Alexandria, VA 22303-2118

Eric Silla, 1744 N. Rhodes St., Apt. 309, Arlington, VA 22201 (Address change)



Berend Timmer, Boerhavelaan 134, 2334 ET Leiden,  
The Netherlands  
Karim Traoré, Universität Bayreuth, Afrikanistik 1,  
Postfach 101251, 95440 Bayreuth, Germany  
Beate Vagt-Traoré, c/o Karim Traoré, Universität  
Bayreuth, Afrikanistik 1, Postfach 101251, 95440  
Bayreuth, Germany

### **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: Laura Arntson, African Studies Center, 100 Center for International Programs, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824. Members (other than sponsored African colleagues) will find the date on which their present membership expires recorded on their address labels.



# International Symposium on West Africa and the Global Challenge

June 22 through 28, 1997

Dakar, Senegal

**Cosponsors:** West African Research Association, Ralph J. Bunche International Affairs Center of Howard University, and the Smithsonian Institution-Center for Folklife Programs and Cultural Studies

*Coconvenors: Edris Makward, Jeanne Maddox Toungara, Leigh Swigart, John Franklin*

The West African Research Association invites faculty, researchers and graduate students involved in the study of West Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean to submit proposals for organized panels and individual presentations. To allow participants to better plan their visit to Senegal and West Africa, the symposium panels will be organized in three categories, and grouped into three-day sessions throughout the week.

**Part I: June 23 through 25**

## The African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean

Panels Organizer: Dr. Sheila Walker, University of Texas at Austin

**Part II: June 24 through 26**

## West African Research

Panels Organizer: Dr. David Conrad, SUNY-Oswego

**Part III: June 26 through 28**

## Contemporary Issues

### A Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of Fulbright Programs

Democratization and Society, Urban Environment, Electronic Technology, and Education and Culture

Panels Organizer: Dr. Robert Fatton, University of Virginia

Topics will be interdisciplinary. Contributions in the social sciences, public history, humanities and the arts are solicited. Some financial assistance for travel and/or per diem may be available on a first-come first-served basis. You are encouraged to apply early. Submit an abstract (500 words max.) and pre-registration fees by December 15, 1996. You will be notified of your acceptance by January 30, 1997. Send to WARA, P.O. Box 742, Howard University, Washington, D.C. 20059.

#### Registration fees:

	<i>Residents of the US, Canada, Western Europe</i>		<i>Others</i>
	<i>Members / students</i>	<i>Nonmembers / students</i>	
By Dec. 15	\$50 / \$30	\$75 / \$45	\$15
After Dec.15	\$65 / \$45	\$85 / \$55	\$20

**Airfares:** Air Afrique will provide symposium participants and their families with reductions of about 15% from John F Kennedy Airport/New York, up to 60% from Charles De Gaulle Airport/Paris, and 50% from West African airports. Air Afrique group flight departs from J.F.K. on Saturday, June 21, and will arrive in Dakar around midnight on the same day.

**Hotel accommodations:** Reduced rates near the conference site and in town.

**Excursions and cultural programs** are being planned with the assistance of local tourist agencies and will be made available for advance reservation. Participants can look forward to a special memorable visit to the slave house on the Island of Gorée on Sunday May 22, and an unforgettable banquet and cultural program in Dakar at mid-week.

Registered participants and WARA members will receive additional information by mail, as plans are confirmed, and may expect full details of the conference in the Fall 1996 WARA Newsletter.