

*French version*

**TRINIDAD 2006: NOVEMBER 9 NEWSLETTER**

Dear colleagues:

I would like to update you on our preparations for the Trinidad conference. There are so many events pressing on us as we approach the end of the year 2005--Thanksgiving (for those of us in the U.S.A.), a couple of conferences, the end of semester examinations, and of course (for Christians) Christmas--that I thought I should keep the conference within your view as you negotiate your way through the rest of the calendar. Let me bring the following to your attention:

Paper proposals for the Trinidad conference

Although I have received a good number of titles and abstracts for papers that will be presented at the Trinidad conference (July 20-23), I would like to ease the pressure a little bit for those who have not sent in theirs. The new deadline for submission of titles and abstracts is December 20, 2005. This three-week extension of the old deadline at least enables many of us to get a couple of our commitments (mainly Thanksgiving and the conferences) out of the way. I will start drafting the programme for the conferences as soon as the new year (2006) begins. As you know, this process is often a long one, so I hope you will help me by sending in your proposals as soon as possible between now and the expiration of the new deadline.

Payments: Membership dues and conference registration

Since membership in ISOLA is reckoned on a yearly basis, I would urge those of you who have not paid your 2005 membership dues to do so now. Our membership fees are clearly among the cheapest in the scholarly profession, so they should present fewer problems of payment than the fees for most of the organizations we belong to. Also, since 2006 will soon follow 2005, those who have not paid may in fact consider paying for both years at this time, as a few members have actually done. Allow me to remind everyone that only those who have paid their 2005 membership dues will have their paper titles included in the conference programme soon to be prepared. Remember also to pay up your conference pre-registration fees as soon as possible, to avoid paying the inevitably higher registration fees at the site of the conference in St Augustine, Trinidad & Tobago. To remind yourselves of the tariff of payments for both kinds of fees, please check the Call for Papers and the ISOLA website (<http://isola.binghamton.edu>). In answer to questions I have received from those who did not attend our conference last year in Banjul, Gambia, let me say that you do not have to pay registration fees for a partner or family member accompanying you to the conference, unless they wish to have their own copies of the programme. Those who plan to be accompanied by such non-participants should please let me know how many in their party to expect. Some participants have informed me they will be bringing their spouses along. A large number of these companions may have implications for the hospitality our hosts would be offering both in St Augustine and (possibly) during our day-trip to Tobago, and we hardly wish to abuse the hospitality.

ISOLA General Meeting

As usual, there will be a general meeting on the last day of business at the conference. I am inviting anyone who has any issue to raise for discussion to send me a notice about it, so that I can include it in the agenda for the meeting. For a start, there are a few issues that I will table myself. One is the question of electing a new president of the society, to take over from me after the Trinidad conference. As those of you who were present at the Banjul conference (2004) will recall, I was unanimously voted to serve one more term as president after my first term. I appreciated the society's kind endorsement of my work and accepted the re-election, but gave notice that I would step down upon completion of this second

term. I humbly request that members be ready to nominate a fresh set of candidates for election at the general meeting, not only to give the society the benefit of alternative visions but also to free me to return to my other professional commitments. It is particularly urgent that we find someone who would pursue, more aggressively than I have been able to do, an affiliation with UNESCO and any other national and international bodies, whether public or private, that might be willing to commit resources to help our agenda, including funds to help younger scholars (especially from the Third World) do some research and attend our conferences. We currently have a committee working to secure some support from UNESCO, which has long advertised a commitment to preservation of the world's 'intangible heritage.' But it may be too soon to expect substantial results from the committee's efforts.

I am also proposing for discussion a consideration of both the topic and the site for the next (2008) conference after St Augustine. For topic, perhaps it is time we addressed the subject of political turmoil and activism that have marked the condition of black peoples throughout their history: songs, tales, and slogans attacking opponents--whether these be rival ethnic groups, political rivals, the established leadership, or imperial/metropolitan authorities/systems--as well as the narratives of engagement (e.g., war) arising from these ideological and other clashes. A topic like "Oral Literature and Political Struggle in Africa and the Diaspora" should help us to examine a spectrum of texts from an equally wide span of history stretching from the careers of (say) Sunjata and Shaka, through the confrontations of maroon communities in the Americas and the Caribbean with the slavocracies of the time, to colonial and post-independence (civil) wars in various African nations right up to immigrant uprisings of today in France and elsewhere. Texts from such historical moments would be grist for a wide array of analyses and hopefully of projections and recommendations.

For conference site, I am happy to announce that I have received an offer from Italy for 2008. Our colleague Itala Vivian first initiated contact between me and Ms Maria Renata Dolce of Lecce, "a beautiful town in southern Italy, where there is a good university," in "a region which has great cultural and natural beauties." Itala was convinced that a conference in such a place "might contribute to the study of African culture in southern Italy." I subsequently received a letter from Renata herself, who informed me that she had organized other international conferences like "the EACLALS conference in 1990, the EASA in 2001, and the AISLI meeting last [2005] June." Renata has also promised to "come to Trinidad in 2006 in order to offer our university facilities for your conference." Unless anyone has a more attractive proposition, I suggest we take Renata's offer very seriously (not least for the prospect it offers of a diversification of interest in our field of study) and look forward eagerly to welcoming her to Trinidad 2006. I am also grateful to Itala for giving us an early start in our future plans.

#### Travel plans

In my September 2005 newsletter, I gave some information about excursions and other events that will be part of our programme for the Trinidad conference. I simply wish to remind those who plan to participate in the trip to Tobago to check with their airline agents how much exactly this additional leg of their flight will amount to in currencies they are working with. Otherwise, arrangements for the Tobago excursion are very much alive, with the cooperation of influential civic and cultural officials in this reputedly charming island, home region of the late Dr J.D. Elder. Let me also add that the conference spans a period of four days (July 20-23). Participants should arrive on July 19, on the evening of which there will be a welcoming reception. The real business of the conference--discussion sessions and other meetings--will take place on the 20th and 21st. The day-trip to Tobago takes up the whole of the 22nd, while the 23rd will be devoted to visits to an orisa shrine and St James, "the city that never sleeps." Participants depart the conference for their homes on the 24th. If there are any changes to this schedule, I will notify you soon enough for your travel arrangements.

#### Other matters

Letters have been sent out to authors of papers from the 2004 conference (Banjul), notifying them of

readers' reports on their papers and the decision arising from these--improvements recommended, as well as whether or (regretfully) not to accept. Authors of papers that need a little more work have been given until the end of December 2005 to submit their revised versions. Editing of the accepted papers for publication in the journal **Research in African Literatures** will begin in January 2006. I am also issuing a final call to members to send me details of articles and/or books they published in 2004-2005, to be included in the bulletin **ISOLA Publication News** that will be issued in February 2006.

I conclude by reminding members to please pay their membership dues and pre-registration fees as soon as possible, to enable us produce articles like the conference programme (with folders) and name tags as well as make other relevant arrangements for the conference. I should also urge participants to send me their titles and abstracts as soon as they could. Deadline extensions, I may add, sometimes lure us into a treacherous assurance that we have more time on our hands!

Best wishes,

Isidore Okpewho  
President of ISOLA