

UFAHAMU
JOURNAL OF THE AFRICAN ACTIVIST ASSOCIATION
JAMES S. COLEMAN AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES, CA 90095-1310

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editors-in-Chief: Shobana Shankar (sshankar@ucla.edu) and Alhaji Maina Gimba (gimba@humnet.ucla.edu)

Production Editor: Susanna D. Wing (swing@ucla.edu)

Editorial Staff: Leslie Devlin, Mary Dillard, L. Lloys Frates, Chitra Golestani, Kristin Haynes, Matt Hopper, Rebecca VanDyck Laumann, Fatou Ndiaye, Masangu D. M. Matondo, Kristin Randall, Lahra Smith, Judy Stevenson

Advisor: Teshome H. Gabriel

Former Editors: Ali Jimale Ahmed, J. Ndukaku Amankulor, I. N. C. Aniebo, Louis D. Armand, Joyce E. Boss, Matthew J. Christensen, Lezlee Cox, Fassil Demissie, Kandioura Drame, Teshome H. Gabriel, Kyalo Mativo, Angaluki Muaka, Ahmed Nassef, Niko M. Ngwenyama, P. Godfrey Okoth, Edward C. Okwu, Renee Poussaint, Kipkorir Aly Rana, Kier Riemersma, Nancy Rutledge

CONTRIBUTIONS

UFAHAMU accepts contributions from anyone interested in Africa and related subject areas. Contributions may include scholarly articles, political-economic analyses, commentaries, review articles, film and book reviews, poetry, prose fiction, and artwork. Manuscripts must be no more than 30 pages, clearly typed, double spaced, with a brief abstract and a brief biographical note, including position, academic or organizational affiliation and recent significant publications, etc. We request that, when possible, articles be submitted on one 3.5 inch diskette or as an e-mail attachment to the Editors-in-Chief.

The Editorial Board reserves the right to edit any manuscript to meet the objectives of the journal. All correspondence—manuscripts, subscriptions, books for review, inquiries, etc.—should be addressed to the Editors-in-Chief at the above address. We regret that once submitted, materials cannot be returned.

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences.

Partial funding for the publication of *UFAHAMU* is provided by the Graduate Students Association of UCLA and the James S. Coleman African Studies Center.

Cover: Black and white photograph of an algaita player for the District Head of Gashua, Nigeria taken in Gashua, 1974 by Russell G. Schuh.

**UFAHAMU
JOURNAL OF THE AFRICAN ACTIVIST
ASSOCIATION**

VOLUME XXV NUMBER III
Copyright © 1997 by the Regents of
the University of California

CONTENTS

Contributors

Editorial.....1

ARTICLES

Translating Orality to Literacy: Writing Both an Audible Text and an Oral Narrative Situation

Leif Lorentzon.....3

Alekwu Poetry as a Source of Historical Reconstruction: The Pursuit of Idoma-Otukpo Origin, Genealogy and Migration

Idris O.O. Amali.....17

Trend Parameters of the History of Kiswahili Short Stories

F.E.M.K. Senkoro and Masangu D.M. Matondo.....50

Nationalism and the East African Writer: The Position of Nuruddin Farah

Raymond Ntalindwa.....67

Black Americans and Africa: The Racial Hermeneutics of Popular Response to Keith Richburg

Tunde Adeleke.....86

POETRY AND FICTION

- The Veiled Vase
Mehdia Ait Daoud.....110
- The Literary Circus
Alfred J. Matiki.....114
- Hope '93
Contrast
Trial
Adebayo Oyebadé.....116
- The Urban Vultures
Kwabena Opare Akurang-Parry.....118
- My Name is Juba
J.S. Hunter.....121

REVIEWS

- Paul Tiyambe Zeleza. *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises* (Dakar: CODESRIA Book Series, 1997).
Guy Martin.....123
- Opal Palmer Adisa. *It Begins With Tears* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1997).
Leslie Devlin.....131
- Jean Boyd and Beverly B. Mack, eds. *Collected Works of Nana Asma'u, Daughter of Usman 'dan Fodiyo* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997).
Shobana Shankar.....134

CONTRIBUTORS

Tunde Adeleke is an Associate Professor in the Department of History at Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana. He recently published *UnAfrican Americans: Nineteenth Century Black Nationalists and the Civilizing Mission*.

Mehdia Ait Daoud was born in Morocco and is a post-graduate student in English literature in Fez, Morocco. Her poetry publications include "The Ancient Needle," "The Song of a Dumb," and "Purple Eyes." She has also published various short stories, including, "The Invisible Candidate," "Cold Tears," and "The New Cradle."

Kwabena Opare Akurang-Parry is from Ghana and holds a Ph.D. in African History. He is currently a post-doctoral research fellow with the York/UNESCO Nigerian Hinterland Project at York University in Ontario, Canada. His poems have appeared in the *Atkinsonian* and *Okike*.

Leslie Devlin is a graduate student in the M.A. program in African Area Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her specialization is comparative literature.

J. S. Hunter lives in London where she attends the City Literary Institute. She recently completed an M.A. at the School of Oriental and African Studies and has taught at the British Refugee Council. Her poetry and writing has appeared in *Présence Africaine*, *Africa World Review* and *New Sudan*, a pilot issue of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement Journal.

Leif Lorentzon completed his Ph.D. in the Department of Literature, Stockholm University, Sweden, where he is currently teaching and doing research on early African prose. His recent publications include *An African Focus: A Study of Ayi Kwei Armah's Narrative Africanization*.

Guy Martin is a professor in the School of Government at the University of Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa. He is also Project Co-ordinator for the HDI project of capacity-building for South Africa's historically disadvantaged institutions.

Alfred J. Matiki is a lecturer in English Language at Chancellor College, University of Malawi.

Masangu D.M. Matondo is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Linguistics at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Raymond Ntalindwa is a researcher at the School for Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. His interests include East African Literature and Comparative Literature, with an emphasis on African and Caribbean.

Adebayo Oyebade is an Assistant Professor of History at Tennessee State University.

F.E.M.K. Senkoro is a professor in the Department of Kiswahili at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Shobana Shankar is a Ph.D. student in the Department of History at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Editorial

In this issue entitled "Expressive Culture in Africa", we bring you a collection of scholarly articles together with short fiction and poetry. We have chosen this title because of the expansive potential it holds beyond literary and oral cultural productions.¹ Take, for instance, the image of the *algaita* player on the cover. The photograph as a work of visual art is clear. Moreover, as the photo's subject is also an artist, the image concerns itself with cultural production. But what about the positionality of the photographer and any other audience that may have been present? What is the part played by these agents? Is their presence felt even though they are not seen? And what of the player's clothes, expression, and the circumstances of his creativity? Finally, do the circumstances of this snapshot represent a wider occasion than the photographer's visit, occur regularly, or unite people through a mutually intelligible significance? These are just a few of the questions that arise when examining humanistic expressions.

Expressions do not end with photos and writings. For example, consider collective actions. The successful conclusion of elections in Nigeria and South Africa recently are important landmarks for democratization processes in Africa and throughout the world. The people of these two great African nations have expressed their wishes through the ballot. In such group expression, the culture of performance, comprised of elements such as performance, audience, ambience etc., is important to develop a more complete analysis of the form and meaning of the people's collective actions. Leif Lorentzon shows this to be the case for the oral narrative situation. By comparing various techniques for interpreting oral narrative, and contextualizing African oral narrative among European traditions, Lorentzon tackles the task of breathing life and 3-dimensionality into a literary snapshot. Similarly, Idris O.O. Amali uses Alekwu poetry to recreate the life of the Idoma people, to engender an historical narrative. The author shows that such cultural expression may shed light on the distant past as well as on recent circumstances.

¹ For an informative discussion of expressive culture, see Carol M. Eastman, "Expressive Culture and Oral Tradition: Clues to African Influences on Swahili History," in *Paths Toward the Past* (Atlanta: African Studies Association Press, 1994): 27-38.

Although very much a modern phenomenon, the Kiswahili short story finds its beginning in older forms as well as in time-honored rites of life-stage transition. F.E.M.K. Senkoro and M.D.M. Matondo trace the development of the Kiswahili short story with regard to many dimensions—social function, historicity, relation to class dynamics, and as a mechanism for consciousness-raising. This last point raises the ever present problematic of the relationship of art and social responsibility.

Emblematic of modernity is literary effort as social and political commentary. Raymond Ntalindwa locates Nuruddin Farah among other African writers and within the many currents of African political thought. This piece raises the question as to whether or not we have a canon of African political literature, and, for better or worse, this canon implies the acceptance and mainstreaming of some of today's most subversive and original thinkers from Africa. With celebrated authors, do standards and expectations emerge? Ntalindwa examines whether Farah is a renegade or representative artist. Tunde Adeleke considers the very question of standards with "acceptable" speech and who determines suitability. Adeleke's examination of a controversial writer shows that when a work is contested, so too becomes the author. We also have here an addition to the important dialogue about diasporic identity and the image of Africa.

With an economy of language and varying literary stylistic elements, the short stories and poems included here evoke some of the questions and issues discussed above. Finally, our book review section begins with Guy Martin's consideration of a seminal work by Paul Zeleza, whose article appeared in our last issue (25.2). Leslie Devlin reviews a work of fiction by Opal Palmer Adisa, and Shobana Shankar discusses a collection of works by a nineteenth-century Hausa woman.

Shobana Shankar and Alhaji Maina Gimba