

9th Conference of the International Society for the Oral Literature of Africa (ISOLA)

University of Venda, Thohoyandou, Limpopo Province, South Africa,

June 28—July 1, 2012

Theme: Orality, New Media, and the Postcolonial Experience

In the four decades since the publication of Ruth Finnegan's seminal *Oral Literature in Africa*, the study of the expressive arts of Africa and its diasporic communities worldwide has firmly taken root in academia as a legitimate and necessary field of scholarship. There have been extensive studies of African folklore, oral history and performance, in addition to the sharing of new findings on the sophisticated processes by which these expressive arts have retained their unique aspects through time. Understandably, therefore, since its inception, ISOLA has actively promoted various dimensions of African and African diasporic oral arts through conferences that explore the ramifications of indigenous knowledge production in the age of globalization; the variabilities of creativity; oral arts and the archives of memory; and the impact of oral literature on identity formation, especially in the black diaspora.

However, given the advances in media technology and the increasing tensions between the notions of "primary," "secondary" and "tertiary" oralities, there is a growing need to reexamine the new frameworks of cultural engagement and political culture which define the production, dissemination, and understanding of oral literatures of Africa. It has become more imperative to consider the ways in which current oral production and performance practices may be straddling categories of orality far beyond traditional boundaries or paradigms. The rise of interactive, real-time exchanges between purveyors of culture and their audiences via blogs, vlogs, and twitter sphere, for instance, and the exponential digitization of cultural and intellectual production in today's evolving cyber culture, open up new possibilities for the (re)conceptualization of orality, authorship, audience, community/folk, creativity in-situ, and such other "settled" notions that constitute apparatuses of discourse in folklore and oral literature.

Perhaps, even more significant, despite what may well be an historical coincidence between the ascent of African oral literature studies and the emergence of modern African nationalism—the latter triggered by the colonial encounter—sufficient critical attention has not been paid to the ways in which orality, performance, and folklore intersect with the myriad experiences that have come to define life in postcolonial Africa. Thus beyond *text*, it is important to investigate how evolving popular cultural forms identified above impact the postcolonial political order via, notably, the role they have played in the recent revolutions and political transformations in North Africa and the Arab world.

The Vhembe District Municipality, a principal region of South Africa's Limpopo Province, rich in history, and pulsating with the arts and traditions of its people, offers an ideal setting for theorizing these issues under the auspices of ISOLA's bi-annual conference. Noted for its venerated artists and healers, who maintain traditions going back to the 9th century, the district is home to University of Venda, established in 1982 with a diverse campus body, and making strides in the field of science and technology. As a tribute to this long tradition of oral performance, we hope that presentations at the 2012 ISOLA conference will emphasize fieldwork and oral performativity in panel deliveries.

On that note, we invite proposals for papers or multi-media presentations at the 9th ISOLA Conference on the theme "Orality, New Media, and the Postcolonial Experience." Scholars may wish to present on any of the following sub themes:

- Tradition, modernity/globalization and the transformation of the oral performance in Africa
- Orality and political resistance in postcolonial Africa
- Oral performance aesthetics and postcolonial theory
- The oral, the written and the digitized: The evolution of fieldwork methodologies in the study of oral performance in Africa
- The milieu, the message, the medium: text and context in contemporary oral performance
- The impact of Popular Culture, Youth Culture and Globalization on oral performance in Africa
- Spoken word, popular music, technology and protest culture
- Television, cinema, radio, and public performances
- Orality, film, and new media in postcolonial politics
- The changing audience of the oral performance in Africa

ISOLA is committed to the promotion of excellence in scholarship. Proposed papers should have a clearly defined thesis, show familiarity with research trends, and address the conference theme, highlighting Africa and the African diaspora.

The working languages of ISOLA are English and French.

Abstracts of no more than **500 words**, in either language, bearing the author's name and institutional affiliation and a brief bio note should be sent to:

Prof. Mokgale Makgopa: dean.humansocial@univen.ac.za

DEADLINE for the receipt of proposals is October 1st 2011.
For further information and updates you may visit our website: www.AfricaIsola.org.

ISOLA Organizing Committee:

Chiji Akoma, Chair, ISOLA Conference Committee

Antoinette Tidjani Alou, ISOLA President

Mokgale Makgopa, Chair, Local Organizing Committee (LOC)

Tsoaledi Thobejane, LOC

Madimabe Mapaya, LOC

Ursula Baumgardt, ISOLA Secretary

Bob Cancel, ISOLA Communications Officer and Webmaster