

Call for Proposals

12th Conference of the International Society for the Oral Literatures of Africa (ISOLA)

Oral Literatures and Festivals in Africa and the African Diaspora:
Tradition and Globalization

July 10 – 12, 2018
University of Ibadan, Nigeria

DEADLINE TO RECEIVE PROPOSALS/ABSTRACTS: November 30, 2017

In Africa and the African diaspora, the festival is the premier cultural institution; it is most enduring element of cultural heritage through which societies undergo a periodic rebirth, and renewal of body, soul and spirit. It is a creative and regenerative process occasioned by the visiting ancestors or genies and their blessings for individual and communal cleansing of accumulated sins and diseases to usher in peace, fruitfulness and progress. In other words, festivals are seasons of celebrations, marking important events and phases in the life of a community. Festivals memorialise moments of triumphs and achievements, trials and travails, rites of passage, transitions, adventure and expeditions. Festivals are conventions and convocations; remembrances, reflections, thanksgiving, propitiations, appeasement, and questing for individual and communal harmony. Festivals designate seasons when groups congregate to express and display the best and the brightest in oratory, song, music, poetry, ribaldry, drumming, dance, theatre, masquerade, costume, laughter, feasting, sharing, revelry, and manifold life-affirming gestures. This is the sense in which it is said that life in a community

where there are no festivals is like a journey undertaken without travel guides or maps.

Without a sense of tradition societies lose their identities. Cultural ceremonies, festivals, and the arts they foster constitute the major means of sustaining and transmitting the traditions of a society from one generation to another. Festivals are important events as they bring together people to promote social integration and constructs, give historical sense and identities, structure cognitive points of references and forge distinctiveness and collective spirit. Africa and the Diaspora with about 1,900 living languages is a veritable treasure land of festivals and literatures associated with them. In each year or season, hundreds of festive events take place in Africa and the African Diaspora that renew the bonds of affinity and cultural unity. Africa has hosted continental cultural Olympiads known as the Festival of African Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Dakar, Senegal (1966 and 2010, FESMAN) and Lagos, Nigeria (1977). Similarly, the centrality of festivals and their impact on the sociology and the spi-Rituality of the African Diaspora communities in Trinidad and Tobago, Italy and in the Salento region, among others, have been quite immense.

In modern and contemporary times, festivals have become ubiquitous spaces where the norms and rhythms of daily life are partially suspended in favour of the 'carnival', the special occasion for public enjoyment, revelry, and freedom, and the merging of the individual with the collective. Recent decades have seen the extension of carnival-like musical fests, exhibitions, and sports festivals as established, substantial industry and part of cultural landscape of modern societies. Advances in communication have been the main stimulant for the globalisation of cultural festivals and spaces. Both ancient indigenous and modern festivals have enormous potential to produce economic wealth and opportunities for self-reliant growth and development. Many modern festivals focus on cultural, ethical, and spiritual ideals to inform, educate,

and entertain members of the community in which they are held. How articulate these community ideals with the phenomena of globalization faced by all societies? Festivals, carnivals and the arts they engender are important to people and societies and deserve serious attention from scholars.

It is in the light of the foregoing that the 12th ISOLA Conference in 2018 calls on scholars and researchers of Africa and the African Diaspora culture and oral literatures to examine the potentials of ancient, indigenous and modern Africa and the African Diaspora festivals and carnivals from a multi-disciplinary outlook, including literature, media studies, history, gender studies, cultural economy, anthropology, linguistics, political science, etc.

The sub-themes include but not limited to the following areas:

- Theories, Typologies, and Discourses on Africa and the African Diaspora Festivals
- Poetic and Oratorical Arts, Music and Dance Traditions in Africa and the African Diaspora Festivals
- Carnivals, Masks and Marionettes in Africa and the African Diaspora
- Festival Drama and Theatre Events
- Festivals, Rites of Passage and Identity Formation
- Festivals, Orality, Orature, Films, Video, Internet, etc.
- Popular Culture, Social Media, Festivals and Carnivals
- Tourism and Festivals in Africa and the Diaspora
- Festivals and the Cultural Economy of Nations
- Gender Issues and Spaces in African and the Diaspora Festivals
- Children and Juvenile Arts in Africa and the Diaspora Festivals
- Organisation and Management of Festival Events
- National and Community Politics, Festival Organisation and Identity

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 both languages**, bearing the author's name, institutional affiliation, and brief bio note should be sent to:

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Notifications of acceptance will be sent beginning mid-January, 2018. For further information – registration fee, membership, transportation, lodging, and all conference updates, please, visit our website: www.africaisola.org

According to ISOLA policy, all presenters are expected to pay membership fees for two years. Membership fees are separate from conference registration fees. See full membership information here: <https://cms02.initial-website.com/app/936263623/1373318074/>