

# Boahen Awarded the Noma in Kampala

**A. ADU BOAHEN'S** *Mfantsipim and the Making of Ghana: A Centenary History, 1876-1976*, published in 1996 by Sankofa Educational Publishers Ltd. Accra, Ghana, has been named as the winner of the 1997 Noma Award for Publishing in Africa. The book was cited by the jury as 'no ordinary history book. It is a fascinating story, elegantly told by a meticulous historian in a beautifully produced volume. The author, a major historian and great political figure, skilfully presents the story of the making of modern Ghana through the life history of one school. Through detailed and rigorous original research, he situates the story in its historical context with an easy and magisterial professionalism. Whilst combining thematic and chronological styles in such an ingenious way as to excite the reader's imagination, the language and style remain simple, straightforward, and fluent.'

The book tells the story of the doyen of the Ghanaian secondary school system, and how it emerged to epitomise the rise of a nation - the history of the school is linked to the evolution of modern Ghana, from its colonial inception to independent nationhood. The founding fathers were fired in their determination by the rising tide of nationalism which inspired the search for knowledge as a weapon of liberation. The story is woven around this nationalist spirit, linking it creatively with the larger struggle for national independence and sovereignty which culminated in the birth of modern Ghana. The story illustrates how Mfantsipim was the trailblazer for institution building in Ghana's educational institutions, and how it helped to instill in the national psyche the pursuit of excellence in scholarship and in service, patriotism, competitiveness, and pride in Ghanaian culture.

The book is published by the author's own recently founded publishing company, Sonkofa Educational Publishers Ltd. The Jury additionally commended this double achievement and the high standard of the book's production.

The \$10,000 Award was presented on Friday 7 November 1997, during the Uganda Book Week, in Kampala. *Guia Bibliográfica para o Estudante de História de Moçambique* by Amélia Neves de Souto, published in 1996 by the Centro de Estudos Africanos, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane in Mozambique, was

awarded 'Special Commendation.' The guide, in Portuguese, is the first significant and substantial bibliography of Mozambican history to appear outside Mozambique, filling a lacuna in the bibliographical infrastructure for African history. A bibliographic guide to the country's history from the third century up to 1930, some 1,000 entries, many annotated, are supplemented by judicious interpretative essays. The jury praised the guide as 'a work of exceptional academic importance and genuine scholarship. Authoritative, highly utilitarian, comprehensive; original, innovative and ground breaking in a number of ways; the work is a genuine guide for scholars which can be used with confidence throughout the world scholarly community.'

133 titles, from 80 African publishers, in 19 countries, were submitted for the 1997 competition. Publishers were limited, for the first time, to a maximum of three entries, to encourage publishers to be responsibly selective in submitting titles; and the jury noted with satisfaction that this resulted in a continuing high level of entries, and an increase in the number of publishers submitting titles from 49 in 1995 and 72 in 1996, to 80 in 1997.

The jury considered the changing publishing conditions in Africa, particularly questions of ownership and autonomy. They decided to draw the attention of African publishers to the spirit of the Noma Award - to encourage and reward genuinely autonomous African publishers, and African writers; and to ask publishers considering submissions to take this condition and spirit into account in deciding whether to submit titles. The jury also singled out three further books for 'Honourable Mention.' They are (in alphabetical order by author):

*The Jailer's Book* by Ken Barris (Groote Schuur, South Africa: Kagiso Publishers, 1996); *Propaganda by Monuments and Other Stories* by Ivan Vladislavic (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1995); *The Road Out* by Dan Wylie (Plumstead, South Africa: Snailpress, 1996).