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Glendora Books Supplement
(ISSUE Nos.5 2000) is published quarterly
by Glendora International (Nigeria) Limited.
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Three laureates share the Prince Claus principal award

SINCE its establishment in 1997, the Prince Claus Awards have been presented annually to individuals and organisations whose exceptional contributions in the field of culture and development within the non-Western world have been noted. The awards form a part of wider activities in which the Fund, named after Prince Claus of the Netherlands, established three years ago by an endowment from the government in the Prince's honour on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, is engaged in.

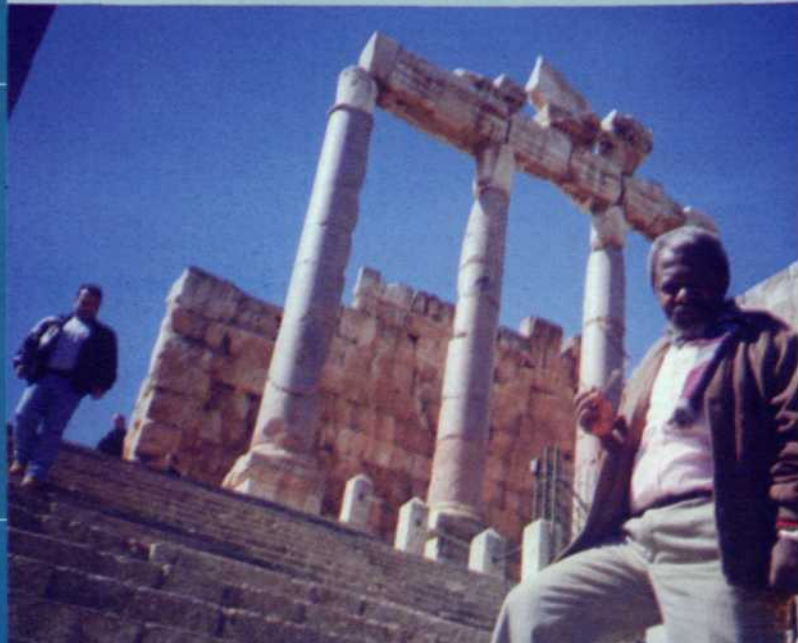
Ten recipients, among which are writers, architects, film makers, scholars and visual artists from countries of Africa, Asia, Latin-America and the Caribbean, were conferred with awards on the 8th of December, 1999 while three laureates shared the principal award worth USD100,000 presented during an afternoon ceremony at the Royal palace in Amsterdam.

The principal award recipients are the organisations - Vitral, a Cuban cultural magazine and Al-Jazeera a satellite television channel based in Doha in Qatar. The third is the Paris-based Algerian comedian Mohamed Fellag, formerly a director of the Theatre Regional in Bougie, Algeria, who since his relocation to France in 1995 has been staging live performances before Algerian/French audiences and to local Algerians who continue to access his work through tapes in Kabyle, Arabic and French.

The magazine Vitral, founded in 1994 and based in Pinar del Rio, Cuba is the private initiative of a group of independent intellectuals who make use of the relative protection of the Roman Catholic church to create space for free debate while Al-Jazeera broadcasting from 1996 is acknowledged as representing a revolution in the media of the Arab world.

The ten laureates presented with the main awards worth USD20,000 each include Patrick Chamoiseau of Fort de France, >>

Professor Hountondji on the stone steps of Baalbeck, near Beirut, Lebanon, February 2000



The Noma award at twenty

THE jury for the prominent annual award for African publishing, The Noma, sat in Florence, Italy, late in September, around the time that two other significant conferences of cultural experts were meeting in the same city - first the Ubuntu Books meeting, convened in the outstrip village of Pratolino, organised by the Bellagio Publishing Network whose sitting was set to 'find ways of giving strength to initiatives to Africanise publishing in arts and humanities in Africa', a meeting which, itself was prelude to the wider conference of professionals in the field of culture drawn from across continental lines, organised by the World Bank.



City of Florence on the river Arno

<< Three laureates

Martinique, a writer and populariser of an innovative creolised French; Paulin J. Hountondji, notable African scholar and a rallying point for French and English speaking philosophers of African descent; Kenneth Yeang, Malaysian architect who conceived 'the green skyscraper' and whose architecture adopts avant-garde technology producing an artificial environment that gives off benefits such as natural lighting, natural air circulation and collects rainwater as well as generating solar energy.

Others are Cildo Meireles the Brazilian artist, Cheick Oumar Sissoko, Malian filmmaker, Pepetela the Angolan writer, Dessalegn Rahmato an Ethiopian sociologist, Tsai Chih Chung Chinese car-

toonist, Claudia Roden an Egyptian culinary anthropologist and Juana Marta Rodas en Julia Isidrez a ceramicist based in Paraguay.

The ten awards were presented in December by the Dutch ambassador in each recipient's country with a special citation. Wole Soyinka read a citation on Paulin Hountondji of Benin Republic while a citation entitled 'The Ever-watchful Eyelash' was delivered on the writer Pepetela by South African novelist Mia Couto.

Winners in 1997 and 1998 have included the Zimbabwe International Book Fair, the Lebanese author Nazek Saba Yared and London's free-speech magazine, Index on Censorship.

But the significance of the last sitting of the Noma Jury exceeded the happy 'coincidence' of both venue and timing with the two other meetings with direct relevance to publishing and the African world. Florence marked the twentieth anniversary of the Noma award which this time attracted a total of one hundred and seven titles, from sixty-seven African publishers, in nineteen countries, and in ten languages.

And one more coincidence: the book voted as the winning entry for 1999 was from Les Nouvelles éditions Africaines du Sénégal in Dakar, publisher of the very first Noma award winner in 1980, Mariama Ba's *Une si longue lettre* translated as *So Long A Letter* in English.

Djibril Samb received the award for his scholarly study of interpretation of dreams in the Senegambian region *L'interprétation des rêves dans la région Senégambienne. Suivi de la clef de songes de la Senégambienne, de l'Égypte Pharaonique et de la tradition Islamique*, published in 1998.

The Jury cited the book as:

'An original, innovative scholarly study, entirely independent of the culture-bound and narrow Freudian dream analysis. It is extremely well organised, with vivid examples, displaying a consistently high level of formulation. In its historical, inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-disciplinary coverage, the work exceeds all past and current writing on the subject. The scrupulous scholarship, formidable erudition, and captivating prose represent an impressive achievement, doing great honour to African scholarship. The book has demonstrative value for younger scholars in Africa, working under demoralising conditions.'

The work is a study of the structure of ideas and symbolic significance associated with the dream, the intellectual constructions derived from dreams and the symbolic meaning attributed to them provide the double perspective for the study. Focusing on dreams in the author's own Senegambienne culture, the study is set in the context of the ideas held by the ancient Egyptians, by writers and thinkers of the classical world, Judeo-Christian and Islamic tradition. The author advances, as the rationale for his retrospective approach and in common with Cheik Anta Diop, the fact that ancient Egypt forms part of the African heritage of philosophical thought and religious expression. The heart of the book presents the dream as a presence in the lives of the populations of Senegambia, and discusses the different functions dreams fulfil in their lives.

The \$10,000 award was presented at a special ceremony held on Friday 26 November 1999 in Perth, Australia, during the twenty-second annual and international conference of the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific.

The Jury, chaired by Walter Bgoya of Tanzania, a former diplomat and distinguished African publisher, and includ-