

Slide 1

A slide with a yellow background and a decorative border on the left. It contains text about a workshop and a research project.

Archiving Orality and Connecting with Communities:  
World Oral Literature Project 2010 Workshop  
CRASSH, Cambridge, UK

**Multimedia Research and Documentation  
of African Oral Genres: Reflections on  
Partnership**

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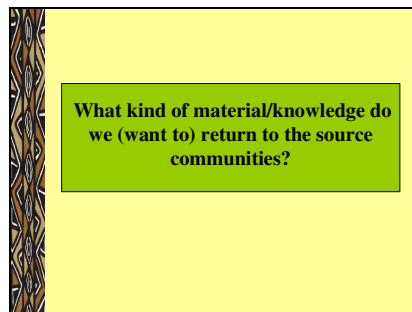
Slide 2

A slide with a yellow background and a decorative border on the left. It contains text about scientific and ethical problems and a specific video publication.

Scientific and ethical problems  
involving the making and diffusion of  
the video publication:

**Verba Africana No. 4**  
*“Hogbetsotso: celebration and songs of  
the Ewe migration story (Ghana).  
Interview with Dr. Datey-Kumodzie”*


Slide 3

A slide with a yellow background and a decorative border on the left. It contains a question about returning material/knowledge to source communities.

**What kind of material/knowledge do  
we (want to) return to the source  
communities?**

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**“Verba Africana” series on CD/DVD format**



**Verba Africana**  
Africa's oral traditions and their  
written records in CD/DVD format

**Zanzibar, Tsamb and Ngoma**  
Performances

**Author:** Gerda Merolla  
**Contributor:** Tanya Nkomo and Vera Ebenhart  
**Publication:** 2005  
**Media and code:** MP3, MP4, DVD


The video recordings of Tanya and Vera's fieldwork are available with  
audio and English subtitles in order to facilitate their dissemination.

**2005 - ...: Verba Africana: Video Publication series**  
started by D. Merolla thanks to Leiden/Naples  
cooperation

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**Project aim**

The integration of technology into a  
novel approach of the study of Oral  
Literature



→ African Oral Literatures in this  
specific case

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**Online “Verba Africana” series at**  
[www.hum.leiden.edu/research/africanliteratures](http://www.hum.leiden.edu/research/africanliteratures)  
**Portal:** [www.hum2.leidenuniv.nl/verba-africana/](http://www.hum2.leidenuniv.nl/verba-africana/)




• **video documentation**

• **research**

• **teaching and e-learning**

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**Problems and Theoretical questions**

- Video documentation is not the “ultimate solution” (see selection etc.)
- Technology is not only a mechanic tool, but it contributes to change what it is recorded

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**Network Projects started at Leiden University in cooperation with international institutes**  
Main Applicant: D.Merolla  
Coordination: J.Jansen and D.Merolla

**2006-2009**  
**African Oral Literatures, New Media, and Technologies: Challenges for Research and Documentation**

**2010-2013**  
**Multimedia Research and Documentation of African Oral Genres: Connecting Diasporas and Local Audiences**

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**Partner Institutions**

Leiden University  
Institut National des Langues et Civilizations Orientales  
INALCO (Paris)  
Language Centre, University of Ghana (Accra, Ghana)  
University of Hamburg  
University of Naples L'Orientale  
University of Bamako (Mali)  
School of African and Oriental Studies SOAS (London)  
School of Languages of Rhodes University (South Africa)  
*The World Oral Literature Project*  
Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research  
(NWO)



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Network Projects: activities

- Workshops and conferences on Technological Problems and Theoretical Questions
- Publications of video materials and research in “Verba Africana” series

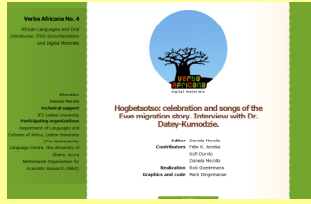
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Network Projects: main areas of discussion until now

- ‘free’ technical tools for documentation and research
- “new orality” and what happens when oral forms transigrate from the one genre/media to the other one (“oral” contexts and new media such as films and the Internet)
- concept of “authorship” and copyrights
- opportunity to reach the cultural owners of the collected oral genres through the Internet

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Scientific and ethical problems involving questions of selection, authorship, and audience in:



Verba Africana No. 4  
Hagebotsoos: celebration and songs of the Ewas migribon story. Inebonous with Dr. Daboy-Kamofide.

Author: Daboy-Kamofide  
Contributors: Felix O. Amadi, Kall Gyasi  
Editor: Daboy-Kamofide  
English and code: Nick Longman

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At the beginning...




Research Project by  
Felix Ameka, Kofi  
Dorvlo, and Daniela  
Merolla on

Ewe migration stories  
and the *Hogbetsotso*  
festival (Ghana) in  
which these stories are  
re-enacted



<http://www.ghanaeth.com/ClassicalEthnicPaper/geography/1map.php>

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2007-2009



Series of meetings and  
interviews  
in Accra and the Ewe  
(Anlo) area



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Reflections on the Interview

- Introduction: secret knowledge
- “tapping and stealing”
- the UNESCO is afraid of (t)his knowledge

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A slide titled "A powerful performance" with a yellow background and a decorative border on the left. The main content is a screenshot of a document with the heading "Regenda and transcription". The document text is small but includes a section titled "400 years of history" and a photograph of a building interior.

Slide 17

A slide titled "Attempt to interpretation" with a yellow background and a decorative border on the left. It contains a bulleted list of two points:


- His narrative: a convoluted mix of Ewe migration stories + creation stories, evolutionism, historical knowledge, and popularising fictional narratives on the Lost Continent of Mu
- “Ewe-centric” perspective: Ewe language fertilized the most known civilizations of the whole world

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A slide titled "Questions and Problems" with a yellow background and a decorative border on the left. It contains a bulleted list of two points:

- What is not a problem:  
Heterogeneity and ethnocentric view as narrative performance
- What is a problem for the Verba Africana series:  
The interviewee is and presents himself as a researcher looking for (academic?) legitimization of his narrative


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**Video Publication and Internet diffusion:  
Scientific and Ethical Problems**

- We do not want to be 'incorporated' in his personal agenda by endorsing his complex narrative as "scientific"
- nor do we intend to publicize his agenda or spread it as "history" among (Ewe, Ghanaian, international) students and among Ewe people


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**Ethical problems**

- Respect for our interviewee's discourse vs caution in publicizing his personal narrative "as such" (see effect of certain legitimacy)
- Unbalanced power relationship between interviewers and interviewee

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**Theoretical reflections**

- On 'giving voice'
  - narrative criticism of ethnographic works
  - misconception of the distance established between subject and object of research
- On authorship
  - intellectual property and rights of "indigenous people"
  - collaborative authorship (the interviewee is author together with the interviewers)

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Slide 22 features a yellow background with a decorative border on the left side. At the top, a green box contains the title "Participant structure". Below the title, a bullet point explains the concept.

**'Participant structure'**

- 'Participant structure' introduced by the sociologist Erving Goffman (Forms of Talk, 1981)

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Slide 23 features a yellow background with a decorative border on the left side. At the top, a green box contains the title "Triadic participant structure". Below the title, three bullet points describe the components of this structure.

**Triadic participant structure**

- a Principal (who is the source of information or text)
- an addressee or recipient
- an 'animator' (or intermediary) who "words" the information:  
e.g in the analysis of the role of the West African 'griot' (the bard who speaks for his chief)

Slide 24

Slide 24 features a yellow background with a decorative border on the left side. At the top, a green box contains the title "Researchers as griots". Below the title, three bullet points describe the roles in this context.

**Researchers as griots**

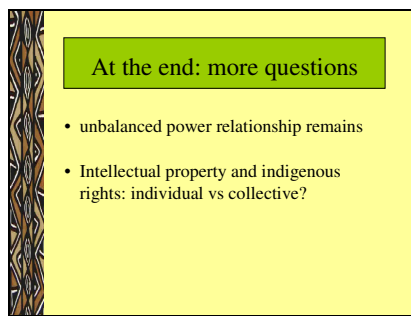
- a Principal (the interviewee)
- the outside world - the addressee
- Animators/editors:  
Daniela and Felix shape and retouch the interview in more palatable language and communicate it through the medium of Verba Africana



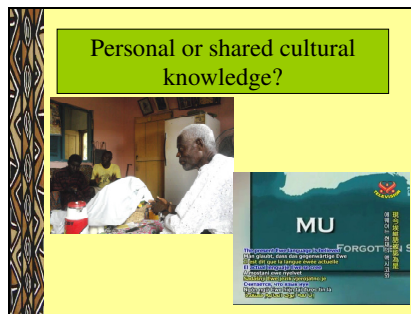
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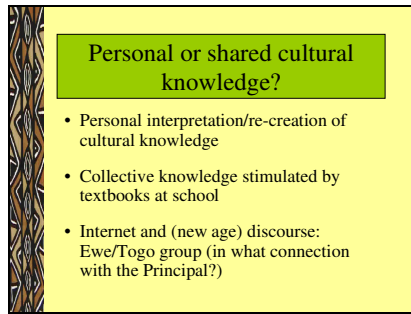
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Slide 27



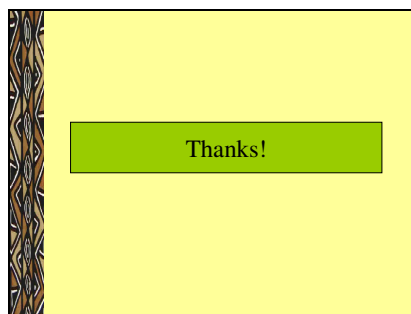
Slide 28

A yellow rectangular slide with a decorative border on the left side. At the top, there is a green box containing the title "Personal or shared cultural knowledge?". Below the title, there is a bulleted list of three items.

**Personal or shared cultural knowledge?**

- Personal interpretation/re-creation of cultural knowledge
- Collective knowledge stimulated by textbooks at school
- Internet and (new age) discourse: Ewe/Togo group (in what connection with the Principal?)

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A yellow rectangular slide with a decorative border on the left side. In the center, there is a green box containing the text "Thanks!".

**Thanks!**