



# The Palgrave Handbook of African Oral Traditions and Folklore

*Edited by*  
Akintunde Akinyemi · Toyin Falola

palgrave  
macmillan

# The Palgrave Handbook of African Oral Traditions and Folklore

“This volume is not a displacement of the late 1990s/early 2000s publications on folklore in Africa in which African functional aesthetics gave way to Western formal aesthetics, but is a definitive source book of 50 original essays which provide a multidisciplinary study of the undercurrents of African and African diaspora folklore and oral traditions – indeed a *tour de force* work in the currency and originality of its ‘African voice and perspective’.”

—Pamela J. Olubunmi Smith, *Professor Emerita, University of Nebraska at Omaha, USA*

“This is a comprehensive, well-researched, and impressive volume that offers significant insights and perspectives into the dynamics of oral traditions and folklore in Africa and the African Diaspora. Systematically and thematically arranged with interdisciplinary approach, the volume is enlightening and riveting. The volume is a must-read for professionals, students, and lovers of culture.”

—Julius O. Adegunle, *Professor of History, Monmouth University, USA*

Akintunde Akinyemi · Toyin Falola  
Editors

# The Palgrave Handbook of African Oral Traditions and Folklore

palgrave  
macmillan

*Editors*

Akintunde Akinyemi  
Department of Languages, Literatures,  
and Cultures  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, FL, USA

Toyin Falola  
Department of History  
University of Texas at Austin  
Austin, TX, USA

ISBN 978-3-030-55516-0

ISBN 978-3-030-55517-7 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55517-7>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2021

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover credit: Alex Linch/shutterstock.com

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG  
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

# Introduction: New Perspectives on African Oral Traditions and Folklore

## Overview

Our aim as editors of this two-volume *Palgrave Handbook of African Oral Traditions and Folklore* is to provide a lucid, scholarly, authoritative, and well-researched essays that can serve as a basic university textbook, as a work reference for teachers, and a general background for all those interested in African verbal arts. The handbook is intended to be the most comprehensive, analytic, and multidisciplinary study of oral traditions and folklore in Africa and the African Diaspora. This definitive sourcebook provides a detailed, systematic discussion and up-to-date analysis of African oral traditions and folklore. It is an absorbing reference book about the intellectual retrieval and renewal of the oral, artistic traditions of Africans both in the homeland and in the diaspora, traditions representative of the world's fading heritage. Oral traditions in pre-literate Africa served not only as sociological tools for enculturation but also as a people's artistic expressions and memoirs. For example, folktales were a people's record of the collective ideology, while riddles, proverbs, and other short forms of oral literary production reflected both linguistic and cultural aesthetics. The oral rendition of folklore was not simply the only choice in pre-literate Africa, but was a powerful community-building tool in the traditional set-up.

In many studies, the term oral traditions is used interchangeably with folklore or cultural elements—language and belief systems shared by a common group. It is a verbal legacy contributing significantly to cultural and national identity. In contemporary usage, oral traditions or folklore is reflected in popular and group-oriented cultural expressions. A primary feature of oral traditions, which relates to the nature of performance, is community involvement (both in the creative and critiquing processes). In the words of Ruth Finnegan, a “full appreciation (of a performance) must depend on an analysis not only of the verbal interplay and overtones in the piece, its stylistic structure and content, but also of the various detailed devices which the performer has at his (or her) disposal to convey his (or her) product to the audience.”<sup>1</sup>

Africa is home to over one thousand languages, and many of these languages are used mostly in the oral, unwritten forms of expression. Given the plurality of languages in Africa and the primacy of oral communication, it is no surprise that

the bulk of literary activity on the continent today occurs in oral media. Several measures have already been set in place to ensure aggressive documentation of oral tradition materials not only in Africa but also throughout the world. According to Okpewho, “the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), at its meeting in October 17, 2003, recalled an earlier ‘Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity,’ and subsequently put into place a Convention (in April 2006) with the specific purpose of safeguarding that heritage.”<sup>2</sup> The Convention had in mind those “practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage—a heritage that is manifested in various domains, especially the oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage and the performing arts.”<sup>3</sup>

We therefore conceive this two-volume handbook as part of an urgent need to document and make accessible African endangered verbal arts before they disappear without record. African oral traditions and folklore survived from generation to generation, effectively transmitting folk wisdom in capsule form. Furthermore, oral traditions and folklore serve as tools with which their users explore language and African worldviews. The pertinent questions one may ask are: What specific social functions do oral traditions play in Africa? Are oral traditions and folklore just amusing pastimes or do they contain vital markers and messages, essential for the continuance of African culture and customs? In what ways do oral traditions and folklore reflect African perspectives on the human condition, human nature, the environment, celestial bodies, animals, et cetera? The fifty chapters in the two-volume handbook address these and many other questions, questions that require untying the knots in the oral traditions and folklore themselves.

The handbook is unique in several ways. It provides: a complete, deep, and innovative analysis of oral traditions and folklore in Africa and among Africans in the diaspora; easy access to comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and well-researched essays covering different aspects of African oral traditions; fresh insights into new discourses and intellectual developments in African oral traditions and folklore, occasioned by new directions in development studies, globalization, and some other critical issues raised by the diaspora; opportunity for established and upcoming scholars to engage in the universe of the debate around African oral traditions and folklore; a ready reference material for pedagogic purpose that will provide researchers, students, and teachers of African oral traditions and folklore with materials about the past, current state, and future possibilities of the discipline; theoretical debates on such topics as the collective or communal character of oral cultures, the relationship between tradition and individual talent, and the unique circumstances required for traditions to emerge; a reference for comparative analysis and ongoing debates in Africanist discourse on gender, class, ethnicity, language, and cultural nationalism; and an avenue to discuss issues and topics relevant to scholars across multiple disciplines, including literary studies, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, sociology, linguistics, curriculum development, early childhood education and, perhaps surprisingly, science.

To exhaust the full scope of all the above, we put together a team of scholars drawn from different geographical spaces and coming from diverse academic backgrounds. In doing this, we have not been unaware of the difficulties involved in asking over fifty scholars trained in different disciplines and writing in different places to tell different parts of a connected but often controversial story. However, our team of contributors have been able to discuss the richness and complexity of African verbal arts by focusing on issues relating to the continent's cultural and literary diversity, making effective use of authentic primary materials. Thus, the two-volume handbook offers readers access to a wide array of expert analysis on various aspects of African oral literature, folklore, cultural studies, and the intersection of contemporary literature, popular culture, and technology with orality. Although the focus here is on African oral traditions and folklore, the handbook has a multidisciplinary focus as contributors are from various disciplines such as literature, linguistics, cultural studies, history, anthropology, film studies, diaspora studies, and art history.

## **Volume One: Types, Features, and Motifs**

The twenty-seven chapters in the first volume of the handbook have been organized to provide basic information on the types, features, and motifs of African verbal arts. The volume is divided into three parts: "Contexts and Practicalities," "Themes, Tropes and Types," "Transformation and Transposition."

### **Contexts and Practicalities**

The first three chapters of this part argue that there is a connection between the creation of oral tradition material and its transmission/performance. In other words, without its oral realization, and performance by a poet/singer/storyteller, an oral literary piece cannot be easily said to have a continued existence. Some of the issues addressed in the chapters are concepts and components of performance in oral traditions transmission and their significance, and the role of the audience, performer, and participants in oral tradition production. In his lengthy opening chapter, titled "Creativity and Performance in Oral Poetry," Godini G. Darah examines the interplay of composition and performance in some oral poetry traditions of Africa. He argues that the oral methods of composition and performance are the kernel of oral literature discourse; the methods distinguish oral texts from written ones. About a dozen African traditions are described. The data are sourced from published studies by experts on the traditions. The competitive song contests of the *udje* of the Urhobo, the *ijálá* of the Yoruba, and song exchanges among the Tiv, all of Nigeria and the Dinka of South Sudan, illustrate the features of premeditated texts, memorization, festival performance, and creative improvisation during delivery. The composition-performance dialectic is richly illustrated by techniques employed by the bards of

Sundiaata epic of the Mandinka, the Ozidi Saga of the Ijaw, and Ohafia-Igbo singers of tales. According to the author, audience participation stimulates creativity and dexterous delivery, and each performance recreates texts and contexts. The *izibongo* heroic poetry of the Xhosa and the Zulu of South Africa furnishes good material to test the changes that composed texts undergo under the pressure of delivery. Oral poetry and music merge into aesthetic experience during performance. The musical practices of the Bala of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Hausa of northern Nigeria, and the Akan of Ghana demonstrate this generic fusion. New media of communication now enable artists to be more resourceful. The career of popular musicians in South Africa points to limitless opportunities for creativity and performance. Multimedia resources of poetry, music, dance, radio, television, and various social media platforms empower the African oral poet to create and perform for global audiences. The chapter concludes that studies on composition and performance should be given priority attention in oral literature curricula.

Chapter 2 by Anya Ude Egwu conceptualizes performance. It synthesizes the performance theory of performance studies (PS). While the writer finds arguments in PS very insightful and groundbreaking, his major point of departure is the argument that, contrary to opinion and praxis in PS, performance can and needs to be pinned down to something definable. The chapter synthesizes and relates Schechner's behavioral layers of "doing" and "showing doing" to Babar's "daily technique" and "extra daily technique" to formulate what the author labels as the "affectation or affect dimension." Combining this with Schechner's functionality dimension, the chapter establishes a ground on which performance can be isolated. It differentiates performance from drama, theater, and literature, and also maps the three. The chapter concludes with how the mappings affect the study of African oral literature.

Writing on the role of the audience in oral performance in Chapter 3, Clement Adeniyi Akangbe describes the audience as "a Siamese twin" that cannot be divorced from the performance. This is because the African audience is not a mere passive spectator but an active and informed one who is keen, critical, and commentarial. To the author, the crucial role of the audience provokes and galvanizes performer to better dramatization and rendition. Members of the audience in Africa are therefore very dynamic. It is on this premise that the chapter explores the dynamic nature and critical role of an audience of oral performance.

Writing under the title "Orality, History, and Historical Reconstruction" in Chapter 4, Bukola Adeyemi Oyeniyi notes that, as the main vehicle for transmitting African oral tradition, orality is undoubtedly important in studying African history. He notes further that, over the years, efforts at making African history, culture, and customs intelligible to others have led to situations whereby orality, as a vehicle through which oral tradition is transmitted, is pushed to the background. In its place, oral history—the collection of historical information using audiotapes, videotapes, or transcriptions of planned interviews—predominates. Using personal cognomen and family panegyric, funerary dirge, and bridal poetry among the Yoruba and Xhosa peoples of Nigeria and South Africa, Oyeniyi shows orality still persists, most especially in traditional courts and palaces, religious, and secular spaces—the very crucibles of change and continuities in African societies.



The next chapter examines festivals and carnival, which are classified into the historical, agricultural, royal, passage rite, and purification. Each type is described and illustrated from the West African and other African subregion cultures. The chapter draws attention to the proliferation and multi-functionality of festivals in Africa as major factors responsible for making a neat classification elusive, and to the fact that the aesthetic and other socio-religious functions are intricately intertwined. Not only that, the contemporaneous changing phases of the festivals are also discussed. It is revealed that the festivals are not rigid in form and content. Many aspects of some festivals have changed, while some whole festivals are reported to have gone into extinction and new forms are known to have emerged. The African functional aesthetics are shown to be giving way to Western formalistic aesthetics. The chapter, therefore, concludes by making a call for rigorous documentation of the festivals as an important cultural identity for posterity.

Chapters 6 and 7 are closely related. While Chapter 6 discusses best practices for fieldwork and data collection, Chapter 7 is concerned with the documentation of data collected in the field. Both chapters are concerned with strategies for preserving oral traditions and folkloric material: background preparations before fieldwork, appropriate recording equipment, relevance of archive research, the setting for recording and collection of data, asking appropriate questions (open-ended vs. close-ended), the making and keeping of records/storage of fieldwork data, transcription, translation, presentation, and dissemination of folkloric materials (texts and performances), etc. Chapter 6, in particular, provides adequate information to guide intending scholars of African folklore and oral tradition on how to conduct successful fieldwork in Africa. This includes preparation for pre-field, field, and post-field activities. The concluding section of the chapter enumerates the challenges that researchers may face during fieldwork, and how best to either avoid the challenges or resolve them. Chapter 7 is concerned with African languages and cultural practices that are disappearing at a rapid rate and, with them, important indigenous knowledge. Although Africa is characterized as an oral continent, one practice that is endangered is the narration of folktales. The chapter discusses the documentation of a popular fairy tale in Nyangbo, a Ghana-Togo Mountain (GTM) language spoken in Ghana. The story is about Spider and Orphan's search for food during a period of famine, and how, because of greed, Orphan turns into a stone. It is one of the few stories in which the Spider is not the villain. The author shows how the documentation method discussed in the chapter allows for capturing not only the story but the fact that telling stories among the Nyangbo community in Ghana, as in many communities across Africa, is a co-production process. Also discussed is how this method of documentation allows one to avoid the pitfall of reducing oral practices into writing. Thus, there is a transcription that provides truncated forms of words, which is the norm in spoken Nyangbo, on one tier, and the full form of the words that include the elided morphemes, on another tier.

In the last chapter of the first part, Oluwole Coker discusses the retrospect and prospects of African oral traditions and folklore. Starting on a positive note, the author notes that, across most indigenous societies in Africa, several forms of cultural productions thrive and have remained relevant in the contemporary age. With

modernity and Western civilization, however, African oral traditions have witnessed changes, which have altered their artistic constitutions and audience perceptions. Against this backdrop, this chapter explores the trajectory of African oral traditions from earliest times to the present age. The writer suggests that, rather than diminish in influence and stature, African oral traditions and folklore have remained vibrant and relevant in the globalized age. The chapter identifies patterns and trends of the dynamic responsiveness across major genres and in multimedia sensibilities. Ultimately, the future of African oral traditions and folklore is projected in the chapter as vibrant, promising, and fertile for continuous engagement of the enabling milieus of production.

## Themes, Tropes, and Types

This part of Volume One is the longest. Many of the nineteen chapters examine the major types of oral traditions and folklore found in Africa, and the subject they treat. The major themes discussed can be classified into two: the literary and the historical. Tal Tamari in Chapter 9 presents an overview of debates about the epic in Africa, including such questions as the definition of the epic, relationships to other literary genres, processes of transmission, social status of the performers, performer-audience interactions, stylistics, and value as historical sources. The chapter presents a survey of works and traditions from each of the areas of the African continent that have been deemed to have epics, including: Northern Africa (Egypt and the Maghreb), West Africa (mainly the Sahelian and Sudanic regions), Central Africa, and East Africa (mainly the Swahili written epics). Two major conclusions of the chapter are that: (1) Transmission of most epics is based on progressive assimilation of contents and style, followed by recreation in the performance situation; although several cultural traditions require formal memorization. (2) Most West African epics are closely related to praise songs and historical narration, whereas many Central African ones may have developed from myths. These are epics from Sudanic and Sahelian West Africa developed in a context of restricted literacy, rather than of a fully oral civilization.

Omotade Adegbindin's chapter on divination and divinatory systems in Africa is crafted to challenge Cicero's alleged denunciation of divination as superstition, which has led to divergent reactions from scholars and, most importantly, informed the need to provide justification for the possibility of divination. Although it is often said that Cicero's *de Divinatione* has suffered different interpretations since his time to date, the suspicion still remains that, perhaps, the text itself assumes that science—and, by extension, the imposition of certain cognitive modes on others—is the *hēgēmon* in matters concerning the state and human existence; the oracular cannot disclose the true nature of the universe. Cicero's position is no doubt a compelling reflection of the sharp differentiation between European and African thought that has endured as an issue that is mostly discussed in African philosophy and cultural studies. For the African, the issue of debate on the possibility of divination does not arise: As

a matter of fact, divination, for him, serves as a veritable means through which he can understand the configurations of the entire universe and his place in it. Thus, the chapter invariably attempts a deconstruction of the myth of writing that is mostly associated with the constitution of science and/or philosophy, and shows that African divinatory systems and their related mythical or religious conceptions represent a legitimization of the body of wisdom found in orality.

Oluwatoyin Bimpe Jegede in her chapter examines the collection of imaginative, explanatory, and intuitive stories that express the collective belief of Africans with regard to basic issues that pertain to life, living, and death. The chapter, therefore, interprets myth as both a product of the environment as well as the mind. Essentially, the chapter draws examples from creation, founding or origin, afterlife and hero myths, and through them, highlights similar African beliefs. This provides the opportunity for the discussion of myth that authorizes and validates current social customs, and others that explain certain religious ceremonies or origin of things and yet others that serve to mediate between the contradictions in life. The perception and reconciliation of these opposites are taken as reflections of the mind's binary organization.

The focus of Chapter 12, "The Dirge," by Felicia Ohwovoriolè, is on the nature and characteristics of funeral poetry in Africa. The author notes that oral funeral poetry provides a sieve for some understanding of the traditional beliefs concerning death, mourning practices, and funeral dirges rendered during burial processes. Writing on the subject of dreams in the following chapter, Anastacia Sara Motsei makes the case that the phenomenon of dreams among Africans, in general, tends to be downplayed and reduced merely as a mythical story. It then becomes difficult for many folklorists, literary critics, and the general reading public to fully realize the sociocultural significance of dreams in the conscious human life. The purpose of the chapter, therefore, is to demystify dreams with a view to put them in their proper sociocultural and sociolinguistic perspective. The Freudian approach is applied to explicate the finer details of a significant number of dreams drawn from the South African Basotho culture. The chapter reveals that dreams surface on two levels that are crucial in the life of man, namely reflections of the past, understanding the present, on the one hand, and making projections for the future, on the other hand. They are, however, interpreted differently from one society to another depending on the ontology, the epistemology, and the philosophy of life of the society concerned.

Mobolanle Egunoluwa Sotunsa's chapter on "Drum Language and Literature" explores the stylistic and aesthetic uniqueness which characterize drum language and literature in Africa. The talking drum is globally known as a uniquely African cultural asset. However, it is an icon of African culture not for its music-making capabilities but specifically for its producing speeches, which are conveyed in diverse literary forms. Using examples from various cultures across Africa, Sotunsa discusses the principles of drum language and the stylistic attributes which characterize drum poetry. The chapter notes further that the potential resources of drum poetry as a uniquely African cultural asset have not been fully harnessed and exploited for the advancement of African cultures and civilization in contemporary times. It therefore explores ways in which drum literature can be further enhanced.

David Adu-Amankwah argues in Chapter 15 that oratory in Africa is often accomplished through basic traditions and creative cultural processes that regulate and control the day-to-day behavior of the people within the communication systems of the various ethnic groups. His chapter, therefore, explores the verbal artistry and expressive cultural heritage of the peoples located in Africa south of the Sahara. In particular, royal praise performance among the Akan people is used as a case study, focusing on the role of indirection.

Cecile Leguy's concern in her chapter titled "Proverbs, Naming, and Other Forms of Veiled Speech" is how to study formulations that belong to oral tradition, but that emerge directly from ordinary discourse, such as proverbs, idiomatic expressions, or message-names attributed to people. Leguy is concerned about how they can be studied as folklore data, and as practices that make sense socially too. The first generation of French ethnographers were aware of language issues, under the influence of Marcel Mauss. The ethnolinguistic perspective proposed by Geneviève Calame-Griaule in the 1960s encouraged scholars to pay even closer attention to speech, particularly in the oral tradition, as well as its uses and effects on social life. This chapter, therefore, contributes to a cross-disciplinary approach, with a study of veiled speech and the unspoken in Africa. Beginning with an investigation of proverbial speech, the chapter proceeds to look at the naming process, and in particular, the use of names as indirect messages. In the African context, when the power and dangers of speech are taken into consideration by people, identifiable discursive strategies reveal not only meaning but also social relationships. By paying attention to indirectness and other uses of implicit information in ordinary communication, this chapter aims to refine the principles and tools of a pragmatic approach to oral traditions and language practices for both anthropologists and folklorists.

Augustine Agwuele and Alfred Nyagaka Nyamwange's chapter introduces and explores the texts and performances of an oral poet, Christopher Monyoncho, in the context of his audience and social circumstances. The authors examine the "cultural truths and aspirations cherished by the community" and show how the worldview, cultural values, and elements of material culture that bind the Gusii people are reflected in Monyoncho's performance. The chapter notes that, following the tradition of the griots, Monyoncho throughout his lifeworks never ceased to amuse, amaze, educate, and uphold the Gusii ways of life. The chapter also explores, through Monyoncho's orature, the creative dynamism of culture as a discursive, non-static response to existential. Ultimately, the chapter introduces Monyoncho and explores the historical background and orientation that informed the content of his orality in order to interpret the cultural identity that is projected in his works and performances. In so doing, the chapter illustrates the social, cultural, and political importance of oral literature in a group's identity formation and furtherance.

Olusegun Adekoya, in Chapter 18, presents a womanist deconstruction of gender politics in Ifá. Essentially a male oral genre, Ifá has been rightly lauded as a repository of Yoruba lore and duly recognized by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a World Intellectual Heritage that is worthy of preservation because of its unquantifiable cultural value in diverse domains, among which are algorithm, fine art, cosmogony, cosmology, education, ethic, geomancy,

guidance and counseling, history, literature, medicine, pharmacognosy, philosophy, and religion. Research on the gnomic corpus has concentrated on collecting, transcribing, translating, and describing it. Little attention has focused on the critical examination of its truth claims and representations of the female sex, perhaps, because fate, free will, and ritual sacrifices constitute arcane metaphysical subject that is improvable, on the one hand, and the art of divination is strictly a male preserve and considered sacred, on the other. Deconstruction of gender politics in Ifá is long overdue, and the chapter is right in its examination of the representations of gender relations in the corpus. Twenty-five gender-related lyrics are carefully selected from Ayo Salami's *Ifá: A Complete Divination* and analyzed using womanist theory, paying critical attention to marital conflict, remediation of impaired gender relations through the agency of ritual sacrifice, deployment of images and tropes to express the paradox of human and material nature, and problems engendered by patriarchy. Womanism, an African version of feminism, was adopted for the analysis because it emphasizes the primacy of complementarity and dialogue in resolving gender conflict and reproducing culture and life. The chapter reveals that, although the binary system employed in Ifá enhances a vision of cosmic and gender balance, it nevertheless privileges male over female and denigrates women. The chapter concludes that the principle of duality permeates the cosmos, gender discourse, and power politics, and wisdom is necessary in negotiating all chiral relations that sustain the world ontological order.

The next chapter, by Margaret Barasa and Augustine Agwuele, is an initial documentation of the communicative gestures in use among the Babukusu people of Kenya. While the taxonomy is not comprehensive, the chapter surveys a wide range of gestures obtained in their context of usage. Further, it shows how the communicative gestures are gendered within the community, paralleling the gendered form of verbal communication. The chapter is developed against the assumption that the documentation of the language of a people must be comprehensive, subsuming both the verbal and nonverbal components. Finally, the investigation reveals the connection of language, culture, and society, especially linking some linguistic features with some social categories.

Oral tradition has long provided historians with an enticing source in reconstructing Africa's past and has also been the subject of continuing debate over the last several decades. The historicity of African oral tradition is exhaustively debated by generations of scholars, but its folkloric significance has been either dismissed or understudied. The social features of African oral traditions are not merely a background for Africa's history, but they are an integral component of its communities' folkloric communication with vital symbolic inflections. The emphasis of Chapter 20, "Oral Tradition and Identity," therefore, is the actions of storytelling; the concepts of history and historicity; and the modalities of performances of oral tradition, in the construction of the past and identities across Africa. The first part of the chapter reviews the literature on the uses of oral tradition in historical reconstruction, while the second part illustrates how oral tradition is enmeshed with multiple folkloric practices such as rites of passages, autobiographies, and historical experiences of people. As the comparative cases across Africa provided in this section indicate, the ubiquity of

oral tradition stems from multiple forms of folkloric expressions about how people remember their pasts. This remembering constitutes the production of folkloric knowledge about the past, which poetically reveals highly entangled emotionally evocative collective experiences, strategies, and ideologies of the actors in the performance contexts. This lends critical insight into the art of oral tradition as a poetic discourse of identity and self in the African societies' folklore.

Lere Adeyemi's chapter discusses the figure of the child in African oral literature within the framework of postcolonial theory, especially nativism. The research methodology is essentially descriptive. Data are drawn from oral literature (lullabies, praise poetry, proverbs, riddles, folktales, and songs) from Akan (Ghana), Xhosa (South Africa), Bantu (Kenya), and Yorùbá (Nigeria). Among the findings of the chapter is that: Much attention is paid to the representation of the child's voice and performance in African literature. The consciousness of the child is not glossed over because the child is regarded as God-given, precious, and beautiful to be loved, cared for, protected, and guided. This is unlike what we see in contemporary African society, where the challenges facing the African child are overwhelming and the child is exposed to solitary, isolated, dehumanized, and voiceless ways of life, perhaps due to the fatal effects of slavery, colonialism, and lately, globalization. The face-to-face performance of the African child in oral literature has been reduced greatly due to the emergence of information technology. The chapter concludes that there is the need for Africans to go back to their roots and revive the dignity, care, love, respect, and guided-life of the child as reflected in the traditional African literature, where they are active and inclusive in performance.

In Chapter 22, Emmanuel Saboro discusses war songs within the context of slavery, oral tradition, and identity. There exists a rich body of documentation on the notion of an African-American collective identity constructed largely through written sources, including songs emphasizing resilience, triumph of the human spirit, and survival in the midst of the tragedy of slavery and enslavement. However, within the broader literature, the oral tradition and how it helps us reflect on indigenous African identity construction within the context of slavery and enslavement in Africa is yet to receive adequate representation. Drawing largely from examples across Africa and particularly from Ghana, the chapter argues that the images of violence, bloodshed, and open confrontation often contained in African war songs challenge dominant European narratives of African passivity in the wake of the slave enterprise in Africa.

The thrust of Russell H. Kaschula's chapter is to discuss the notion of "protest" as a contested arena in the production of oral literature, against the backdrop of continued and contested sociopolitical change in Africa. This contestation can be politically based, gender-based, and sometimes even based in religion. The chapter looks specifically at poetry, songs, and the folktale to establish how the "voice of protest" has been presented over time in relation to specific African countries such as Senegal, South Africa, Somalia, Guinea, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho. Poetic protest as part of political protest is also discussed. The chapter also explores how this "voice of protest" has been received, both from an audience point of view and from the point of view of those who control power.

Written against the background of the social contract theory, Enongene Mirabeau Sone's chapter, "Oral Literature, Liberty, and Political Change," examines protest songs and folktales which reflect the traditional African concepts of leadership, freedom, and democracy. The author notes that the concepts of good leadership, freedom, and democracy are fundamental to the concerns of African oral literature. The chapter therefore demonstrates how African oral literature can illuminate the current political process in Africa, with the view of drawing implications for positive change. Finally, the author recommends that if the issues of violence, liberty, democracy, freedom, good governance, and political change in Africa are to be addressed more successfully, and if the politically fraught conditions of Africans are to be ameliorated, Africans must be prepared to undergo a radical change of mentality. They must be able to rehabilitate their oral literature to raise the level of consciousness to provoke positive change.

Chapter 25, "Multiculturalism, Orality, and Folklore in South Africa" by Anastacia Sara Motsei and Pule Alexis Phindane, addresses three core questions: To what extent can orality and folklore enhance our understanding of cultural differences in a multicultural society such as South Africa? What exactly are the relationships between culture and social reality in a multiculturalism society? In which ways can sharing folklore stories help in creating a multicultural awareness in a diverse society? The chapter notes that oral traditions and folklore can play an important and effective role in guiding the South African society for better social adjustment environment, in spite of its diverse cultural practices.

In Chapter 26, Augustine Agwuele and Tafesse Matewos Karo examine the Fichee-chambalaalla New Year festival celebrated by the Sidama people of Ethiopia. The celebration is considered as one of the major cultural identities of the Sidama nation. It is an intangible heritage with immense social, economic, cultural, and political repercussions on the community. It is invaluable to the people toward the enhancement of equity, good governance, social cohesion, and peaceful coexistence. These values are transmitted intergenerationally through this orature and performance of chambalaalla. Images, including verbal, nonverbal, musical, and performative, uncover how things are perceived. The chapter explores the Sidama people and their orientation to life, as expressed in the annual national celebration called Chambalaalla, the material and expressive culture index certain values that define the people and guide their worldly outlook, and the signification of the Chambalaalla and its historical relevance. Furthermore, the chapter examines how the Sidama people perceive and present themselves as a function of their cultural heritage, including their verbal and expressive performances. In essence, through a discussion of the oral narratives, performance, and material representations of Chambalaalla, the authors are not only able to document this invaluable cultural observance, but they also engage the dialogue between oral texts, defining events, knowledge, and experiences that guide, form, and are informed by the Sidama societal organization.

The last chapter of the part, "Orality Indexing: Cultural Benefits of Male Circumcision," explores the orature of circumcision schools through a case study of one Ndebele initiation center, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. Cultural lore

indexed in initiation teachings of the Ndebele is a mere variable of a constant of circumcision oral lessons practiced similarly, yet not identically, among other African cultural groups on the continent. The author asserts that the addition of this other tribe among those whose initiation practices have been studied clarifies the nature of this cross-tribal practice in ways that enrich knowledge about this aspect of African cultures.

## **Transformation and Transposition**

In the pre-colonial African societies, oral literature occupied a pristine position as the only form of literature. It was valued as one of the major means by which the pre-literate societies educated, instructed, and socialized the younger generation. African oral literature as indigenous literature projects the societies' image and gives a clear picture of African values as it reflects and refracts the African worldview. It also incorporates past events embedded in proverbs, riddles, tales, taboos and superstitions, legends, and myths. Unfortunately, the values and traditions that oral literature embodied are fast fading away in modern-day Africa. However, we have some notable Africans who are committed to the exploration, documentation, and perpetuation of these very rich African values and tradition in their writings. The twelve chapters in this part highlight the reaction of contemporary African artists, musicians, playwrights, poets, novelists, etc., to the destruction of the oral tradition ecosystem, and how they are preventing the tradition of orality from total extinction. Some chapters discuss how contemporary writers incorporate oral traditions into their literary texts, arguing that by so doing, the writers display a secured knowledge of different aspects of African tradition and culture. Conversely, other chapters examine how contemporary artists, musicians, playwrights, poets, novelists, etc., convert various aspects of African oral traditions to a complex set of symbols that are only partly indigenous. Such traditional symbols are encoded in modern text to articulate new meaning. This frees such folkloric materials from the encumbrances of a fixed (print) medium. In the first chapter of the part, "To Tongue the Body/To Body the Tongue: Problematizing the Translation of Oral Traditions," Luan Staphorst suggests that the translation of the oral traditions should not be taken lightly. As manifestations and re-presentations of rich textscapes, the translator cannot be at ease when working within such traditions. Against the backdrop of the colonial practice of translation and its telos of archiving, artefacting, and creating the African-as-Other, the chapter investigates strategies to limit the inevitable violence that translation always enacts. Challenging the dominant approach to translation on the continent, namely that of "thick translation" termed by Kwame Appiah, Luan Staphorst presents a form of translation which tries to embody, rather than simply tongue, the spoken. This approach, which the author refers to as "omdigting," he illustrates by applying it to various oral texts from across Africa—texts which exemplify the diverse, but also similar, nature of the word-body which is found on this continent.



The next two chapters discuss the incorporation of oral materials into music performance, a significant aspect of African cultures. Scholars have extensively discussed the components of African music and their significance, including dance movements, rhythms, instruments, gestures, communication, and aesthetic values embedded in the form. It is also no doubt that the spread of Christianity and the long-lasting influence of colonial rules continue to suppress these art forms. Over the last three to four decades, there has been a “cultural re-awakening” rooted in “Sankofa” (go back and retrieve), a Ghanaian philosophical model that influenced the incorporation of traditional music performance in most churches in Africa. Despite its success, there arose criticisms with how churches perform this traditional dance-music. According to its critics, this style is contrary to the original objectives and values of the churches’ establishment. While writing on “Musical Transformation” in Chapter 29, Samuel Elikem Kwame Nyamuame sheds light on how traditional dance-music got into some African churches and examines some of the criticisms encountered in performing them. The chapter focuses on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in churches in Ghana and Uganda. The chapter is divided into four sections in which the author argues for the significance of traditional music and the missionary attitude toward it; the cultural re-awakening and the concept of transformation; the criticisms of performance; and suggested recommendations to ease the criticisms.

In a related chapter on the intersection of folklore, oral traditions, and music, Alfred Nyagaka Nyamwange examines how an upcoming Kenya popular musician, Dismas Nyangau, incorporates folkloric materials into his popular music. The musician played the *obokano*, an eight-stringed traditional lyre, fusing it with the keyboard and other contemporary instruments to the tune of reggae and other modern beats. The effect was astronomic, regaling the renowned *benga* and other established East African artistes like Christopher Monyoncho, Charles Omweri, and Isaac Otwori to some indistinct corner for a long time. The writer notes that the music had the old and young people on their feet swinging to the beats and humming along, their age sets and different world outlooks blended neatly. Using examples of renowned musicians from other parts of the wider African continent, the chapter attempts to trace the influence of folklore on the genres that have put Africa on the music world map. Employing the oral formulaic, ethnopoetics, and critical discourse analysis theories, the chapter traces the factors that made this music popular and its influence on the later generations, creative-wise.

The Western focus on autobiography as individualistic and written literature precludes several oral African versions of the genre. The various African societies that have oral individual and communal narratives where individuals and community members occupy subject positions, like the bridal chant, the hunter’s chant, the epic, and the panegyric, are not accounted for in the Eurocentric basis of the definition of the autobiographical genre. An oral autobiographical tradition that is least studied and not given adequate attention in the traditional Western definition of the genre is the “witches” and “wizards” tale or confession, and that is the focus of Chapter 31 by Adetayo Alabi. The chapter examines autobiography and memory in relation to how “witches” and “wizards” remember and narrate their stories of adventures, conquests, failures, and conversion. The chapter analyzes some of the narratives of the

“witches” and “wizards” to show their stories as auto/biographical tales of individuals and part of a community. Also, the chapter discusses magical realism and the narratives, especially how ordinary human beings, the “witches” and the “wizards” in this case, acquire supernatural powers and are transformed from ordinary people to dangerous and enigmatic artists and narrators empowered for sinister and propitious activities. The implications of the “witches” and “wizards” narratives for creativity and human development are also discussed. The oral texts for the analysis are from oral interviews, testimonies, and confessions of the “witches” and “wizards” collected/conducted by the author.

The next four chapters examined the hybridization of orality in modern literature. Claude Lévi-Strauss debunked the traditional claim that the advent of writing is the *sine qua non* sign of high civilization that dooms orality as an activity of the primitive. However, African literary critics convincingly argued for the complementary entanglement of orality and graphism as elements of the same narrative pulse. Written or oral renditions of narratives are mere forms of expression. The core of narration as a human activity lies not in the forms of the performance, according to Propp and Jakobson, but in the conjugation of various communicative components. This is the inevitability of narrative as an endowment, inscribed in the use of language as a representational instrument of human cultural heritage. Kasongo Mulenda Kapanga’s chapter, “Absorption of oral Tradition and Folklore Narrative in Written Fictional Works: Paul Lomami-Tchibamba, Ngandu Nkashama and Alain Mabanckou,” deals with this inevitability of the narration by way of its fundamental channels, orality and writing. They have fostered works that stand not in an antithetical relationship as it was earlier inferred, but rather in a complementary and sometimes conflictual way. The chapter examines critically the narrative modalities adopted by the three Francophone writers who seamlessly incorporated orality in their fictional written works.

Similarly, oral traditions are found in African dramaturgy. This is the focus of Rasheedah Liman in Chapter 33, “Oral Traditions in Selected Stage Performances.” Playwrights and directors of literary works for stage performance have variously represented different components of peoples’ oral culture in plays and performances. Dramatists have consciously drawn their source materials from history and oral traditions within the specific cultural contexts in which they exist, blazing the trail through their exploration of the nuances of culture in all its ramifications. Oral traditions are uniquely connected to the cultural essence of Africans. They have also served as vehicles of projecting and communicating history, values, and belief systems. This is the context in which oral traditions are appropriated in dramatic performances that have been staged within and outside the geographical boundaries of African plays. The discussed plays have moved from text to stage, and yet it is in this movement that words, songs, proverbs, chants, eulogies, music, and dance embedded in the text are brought alive in the encounter between performers and the audience. The chapter, therefore, explores how oral traditions play themselves out in stage performance of the discussed plays.

Chapters 34, “From the Hybrid to the Transcultural: A Comparative study on Orality in Contemporary Poetry,” and 35, “Oral Literary Technique as Commitment in Modern African Poetry,” examine how contemporary African poets reconfigured folkloric and oral traditions materials into their works. In Angola, non-Portuguese-based orality present in poetry, written within the borders of, essentially, a Portuguese-speaking Angolan “nation,” has become a staple of the literary landscape of the past several decades. Mozambican pre-independence writing similarly took as its basis the kind of hybridized identities which Angolan writers of the same period saw; later postcolonial identities forced a reworking of this socio-philosophical framework. In comparative terms, the so-called Anglophone and Francophone African countries have seen a similar restaging of the oral into the written, more easily transmissible forms in recent decades, albeit by way of techniques which differ substantially from those in Lusophone Africa. Senegal has seen the incorporation of notions of fluidity even at the most local levels of high and low cultural practice, with differing language politics and corresponding realities from those of the Lusophone African countries. Namibia has seen transnational identity shifts in even the academic cultural venue. Finally, Tanzanian, Ghanaian, and Nigerian poets have taken on oral tradition as part of a combined strategy of local transculturalism concomitant to an evident nation-oriented governmental policy. No matter which process we observe, the passage from establishing a constructed, monolithic national culture toward a more fluid concept of post-coloniality, and the ideals of hybridization, according to one of the writers, give way to what we may refer to as a “transnational” identity, one porous with regard to the “national” as well as “local” and “international” lens.

Aderonke Adesola Adesanya’s chapter, “The Masked Snap, The Snapped Mask: Mask, Power, and Betrayal in African Cultures,” discusses the relevance of orality to the field of art history. The mask, an interesting artifact and a profound cultural relic, has very weighty implications for historical and contemporary experiences. Humanity deploys it in many ways to convey simple to very complex ideas. Apart from its use for play and display, masks and masking express nuances and idiosyncrasies of persons and communities, connections and dissonance. In this chapter, Adesanya examines the literal and metaphorical ideas about mask and masking traditions in African locations, uniting knowledge about them with historical and contemporary personalities to explain phenomena and circumstances that are both stunning and instructive. The writer argues that the mask as an artifact and as a metaphor offers a veneer for sinister behavior, a concealment for dysfunction, mental health issues, and ominous intentions, and that understanding the many layers and configurations helps humans to calibrate and negotiate social contracts. As rightly observed by the author, the human face, in and of itself, is a mask—a repository for the multitude of intentions both good and bad that lurk behind it. Intentions are hard to decode, just as the masked person in a masquerade spectacle becomes inscrutable to the observer. Underneath the beautiful façade that appears in public lurks layers of mysteries. Just as one is encouraged not to take masquerading and masqueraders in traditional spaces on mere face value, but to approach them with restraints because they essentialize capriciousness and embody the inscrutable metaphysical other, Adesanya suggests

that one must also approach humanity with caution, and calibrate human relationships with attentiveness. This does not call for excessive paranoia, but rather a measured vigilance is necessary to avert grave circumstances like those that befell historical and contemporary figures in proximate societies. Case studies on the transcendental notion of the mask and its interface with politics, power, treachery, and other layers of human interactions are drawn from two African locations—Nigeria and Burkina Faso. For illustrative purposes, the chapter references the masks, masking, and oral traditions of the Yoruba people of Nigeria and Benin Republic, the Mossi of Burkina Faso, and some of the postmodern Gèlèdè portrait paintings of Wole Lagunju, a New African Diaspora Artist (NADA).

The last three chapters in this part examined the effects of migration on oral traditions and folklore among Africans in the diaspora, especially the Americas. In Chapter 37, Hanetha Vete-Congolo examines the relationship between African and Caribbean oral literatures through the concept of Caribbean interorality, a process by which African tales were systematically transposed into the Caribbean during the enslavement period. Her discussion in the chapter is comparative, and thus, several Caribbean and African tales are studied as to not only underline their “kinship” but also unveil the ways according to which the Caribbean oral canon testifies to a critical epistemic and philosophical presence in the Americas.

Writing along the same line in Chapter 38, titled “The Re-invention of Myths, Legends, Panegyrics and folktales in the Afro-Latin-American Diaspora,” Felix Ayoh’Omidire claims that the survival of African cultural ethos and praxis in the Americas within and beyond slavery, as alluded to by Melville Herskovits in his quest for the African cultural continuum, was imputable to the tremendous efforts of enslaved Africans and their descendants to preserve the memory and experiences of the African homeland through constant re-enactment of the various African oral consciousness and aide-mémoires such as myths, legends, folktales, and folklore. In Brazil, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, as well as Haiti, the negotiated re-organization of the social and religious life of enslaved populations and their descendants which led to the re-composition of the African family structure around Afro-Latin religious leaders and the eventual emergence of Candomblé, Voodoo, Sango and Santería temples, was highly instrumental to the survival of African oral genres in the Americas. In most cases, prevailing circumstances and the encounter with other cultures did not allow such oral literary expressions to survive intact, leading to some notable modifications or outright re-inventions that are no less remarkable. The chapter succeeds in analyzing the process and impact of the re-invention of African, specifically, Yorùbá oral genres such as myths, legends, *oríkì* and folktales among the Nagô of Brazil and Haiti, the Lucumí of Cuba, and the Yarriba of Trinidad and Tobago.

The last chapter in the part, written by Joseph McLaren, examines the commitment of an African-American writer to the retrieval of folkloric and oral traditions materials in her groundbreaking work, *Mules and Men*. Zora Neale Hurston, the author of the book, is an Harlem Renaissance writer and anthropologist known for her project of cultural retrieval through the study of African-American folklore in the Southern states of Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, and especially, the Caribbean Eatonville, Florida, where she spent her childhood years. *Mules and Men*, the first

study of African-American folk traditions by an African-American, retrieves a wide range of folklore materials, especially folktales, which constitute the collective memory of certain residents of Florida and Louisiana in the early decades of the twentieth century. Of the many topics covered in *Mules and Men*, the work can be understood in its treatment of religion, women and relationships, slavery, and language. Also, this chapter asserts that Hurston's fictional works show a reliance on folklore and the foundational experience in Eatonville. She employs vernacular with a few strategic interests, one, to construct narratives that are centered on social, familial, and interpersonal relationships, such as marital situations; the other, to codify, performing the role of the anthropologist who collects folklore materials, but also realizes that vernacular voices had a level of authenticity. Hurston joined the academic circle of ethnographers and formed her own ethnological self, observing the relationships between men and women as they show gender and power considerations.

## **Volume Two: Orature and Modernity**

The second volume of the handbook consists of twenty-three chapters, all designed to address the intersection of popular culture and technology with African oral traditions and folklore. The two organizing parts of the chapters in the volume, "Orality, Technology, and Popular Culture," and "Oral Tradition, Folklore, and Education," are succinct even in their divergent clusters.

### **Orality, Technology, and Popular Culture**

This part of the second volume of the handbook complements the last part of the first volume, but with specific emphasis on the intersection of orality, technology, and popular culture. The part examines the opportunities to preserve oral traditions and folkloric material through different technological avenues; from audio-cassettes and CDs to compact discs, to the Internet and World Wide Web, computer and iPad, and telephone, particularly the GSM and Smartphone revolution of the past decade on the continent of Africa. Therefore, some chapters in the section specifically address how technology has been very instrumental in preserving different forms of oral traditions and folklore, and how traditions are spread beyond what was previously limited by oral dissemination. Because oral traditions are now technologically preserved, they can be listened to repeatedly, and spread among the population. Some technologies also erode traditions, and this, too, is discussed. In a similar vein, other chapters in the part discuss the new reconfiguration of orality in the media (both print and electronic), cinema, film and Video Home System (VHS), popular music, rap and hip-hop music, signposts and advertorials, topical (electioneering and campaign) songs, slangs, etc. In short, while new forms of oral traditions are being created on a daily basis, obsolete images in old forms are being updated—either to demonstrate

their contemporary application or to modernize and better align these images with contemporary usage.

In Kole Odutola's discussion, "Orality, Media, and Information Technology," he uses empirical data from a selected number of social media platforms to uncover how viewers relate to the video clips of African folktales and performances. His findings show that electronic footprints stand in place of instant feedbacks performers feed off during face-to-face performances. Writing on a similar topic to that of Odutola, Tunde Adegbola in Chapter 41, "Orality and Information Communication Technology," writes that, with recent developments in multimedia and speech technologies, some of the perceived advantages of literature now also accrue to orature, yet modern Information Communication Technology (ICT) which makes these advantages of literature available to orature still manifests essentially as a tool of literacy. This challenged him to examine the possible effects of orality on the development of ICT, and the possible effect of ICT on primary oral cultures and cultures with high oral residue. Furthermore, the needless levels of the influence of the culture of writing on the trajectory of the development of ICT are yet to take the attention of scholars. Hence, the chapter reflects on the interfacing of orature and ICT in an effort to direct attention to the need to give adequate consideration to primary oral cultures and cultures with a high oral residue in the future development of ICT so that it can also grow as a tool of orature.

Charles Bwenge's chapter is on the reconfiguration of orality, especially proverbs, for advertorials. Proverbs have always been a source of fascination in the exploration and attempt to understand African cultures. Scholarly collections and bibliographical publications pertaining to African proverbs abound. However, it has taken a while for scholars in various fields to appreciate the value of African proverbs as they intersect with other fields of study. In the wake of globalizing businesses, commercial advertisers are exploring the possibility of adopting African proverbs in the promotion of their products or services. Nevertheless, exploration pertaining to the relationship between oral literature and the discourse of advertising in the African context has not been given significant scholarly attention. Bwenge attempts to fill that gap, but in a very modest way—he examines the interface of proverbs and commercial ads in relation to mobile phone services in the Swahili- and Haya-speaking people of East Africa. First, an overview of African proverbs is presented, followed by a brief discussion on the richness of Swahili and Haya proverbs. Then, a short account pertaining to the discourse of advertisement is provided, with special reference to the advent of mobile phone services in Africa—which eventually leads to the author's personal story that constitutes the data to the analysis and discussion.

Writing on "Reinventing Oral Traditions Through Arts and Technology" in Chapter 43, Stephen Folaranmi and Oyewole Oyeniyi discuss the role and effects of art and technology in reinventing folkloric and oral traditions materials. The chapter examines selected visual materials such as animations and other technology-aided media-designed artwork created by artists in the twenty-first century. The chapter shows that the media has in fact given a new life to orality through wide dissemination to the younger generation of Africans all over the world.

Abubakar Aliyu Liman in Chapter 44 explores the transformation of different modes of African lyrical performances under the influence of digital culture. African oral cultures are richly endowed with varieties of lyrical performances. However, over time, contact with other civilizational currents has made it possible for African oral traditions to absorb influences from foreign cultures. In the context of post-colonial modernity, for instance, African oral performances seem to be undergoing remarkable transformation due to the impact of global cultural flows via digital communication technology. Ubiquitous electronic media devices are everywhere, rejuvenating or even entirely changing the form, content, and quality of traditional oral performances that have been until now presumed to have withered away. Technological mediation has created a new cultural situation in which younger generations of African artists and performers have now been dipping their hands into the traditional repertoire to draw from its wealth of age-old lyrical performances for the purpose of creative experimentation. As it is, traditional elements are effectively blended with other modern trends in popular performances. Consequently, the chapter shows that a reinvigorated hybrid culture that is neither completely traditional nor entirely modern has now been created specifically for the consumption of youths that have all along been alienated from pristine African oral traditions. In the process, African oral performances are now susceptible to cultural appropriation through the de-territorializing impulses of global media flows.

Similarly, Rosaleen Oabona Brankie Nhlekisana in her chapter, “Orality and Technology: Transforming Traditional Songs to Popular Music,” examines the effects of technology on the traditional songs and enumerates the advantages and/or disadvantages of using these technological devices on the songs. The writer argues that transforming traditional songs through technological devices preserves and expands their accessibility. The chapter concludes that technological devices have greatly influenced the way in which orality functions in contemporary Africa; therefore, there is a need to accommodate and embrace these changes to fulfill the ever-changing societal needs of the continent.

Rose A. Opondo in Chapter 46, “Performance of Folklore on Television: New Vistas in African Folklore Renditions,” claims that today, orality is increasingly mediated by secondary media in the transmission of traditional forms of oral art which carry cultural communication. Apart from orthography, audio and audiovisual platforms have become spaces for transmission of oral performances, which try to maintain “authentic” forms of these on the screen. The chapter examines the performativity of African oral folklore on television. Emerging oral performance theories, mainly Technauriture, are employed to interrogate the influences of film as a static space, one that is removed from its immediate audience, on the performance of oral folklore, as well as the interplay between demands of oral performance and film performance. The writer paid particular attention to the narrative, production, and archival aspects of film on a dynamic oral art and the resultant mutations of traditional African folklore on the screen. Henry O. Unuajohwofia in Chapter 47, “Orality, Cinema, Film, and Video,” reinforces the conclusion of Opondo’s chapter. He shows that the shift in the media of storytelling tradition from primary orality to literacy, and to other media of transmitting stories, has transformed the content and

aesthetics of stories. The writer employs the narratological method to argue that as the media used to propagate a story shift from primary orality to the movie media, the content and aesthetics of the story changes. The dramatization of themes; the use of simulative techniques of cinematography and the vocalization of songs; the detailing of the death of distance and that of narrator; and the privatization and the commercialization of stories point to the cinema as a media that combine primary and secondary orality with technology to transform the storytelling experience in Africa for the better.

## **Oral Traditions, Folklore, and Education**

The final part of the handbook provides opportunity for three professionals to discuss appropriate pedagogical methods and tools for the teaching of African oral traditions or folklore, not only in colleges and universities but also in elementary school, middle school, and high school levels. The chapters offer practical suggestions to teachers and students of African oral traditions. The purpose of the part is to enrich teachers' concept of how oral tradition plays out in both familiar and unfamiliar instructional contexts. Oral literature as an agent of culture and reflection of the same is inherently dynamic. It has, over time, served different generations existing under various socioeconomic conditions. Drawing from different historical contexts and adapting to varied demands, it continually renews itself. By its very nature of verbal variability, it allows itself to incorporate new experiences and contexts. This flexibility also alludes to its ability to fit into various performance spaces owing to the fact that traditional performance spaces do not require elaborate design elements. The oral narrative as one of the major genres of literature has sought to find space in the ever-changing performance and socioeconomic environment. In all the performances, historically, the oral narrative has generated meaning that is contextually relevant, but also like good literature remains meaningful over generations. Participatory theater, which emphasizes on performance modes that are community-grounded and therefore accessible and acceptable to the audience, has borrowed from oral literature. It has employed oral narratives that are well known in communities to teach unfamiliar concepts existing in modern societies.

The first chapter in the part by Kimingichi Wabende examines how oral narratives are used in civic education as an awareness tool to teach the community about democracy and citizen participation in constitution-making. It explores the inherent meaning of the narrative's contextual and emerging meanings during the performance of the said narratives. The chapter draws from research and experience that the writer participated in through the Kenya Oral Literature Association (KOLA), Collaborations Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD), and People Popular Theatre (PPT) over a period of ten years of civic education in Kenya.



The ascendancy of literacy in the education of, and the general interactions between, adults is also reflected in early childhood education. The objective of Damola Adesina's chapter is to refocus attention on the traditional role of orature in early childhood education, and thereby use carefully selected illustrations to argue for the sustenance of the value of orature in early childhood education, more so in the current age of information technology. Using Yoruba folktales as its point of argument, the last chapter by Michael Oladejo Afolayan makes a case for folklore and oral tradition as powerful pedagogical tools, therefore accentuating the need for teaching them in schools. The inexhaustibility of the genre is quipped to be an empirical argument for utilizing it in formal and informal cultural settings. The chapter looks at the concept of *àlò* and *ìtàn* (among the Yoruba), matching both in functionality while still separating them in context. Existing literature on the subject of folklore and oral traditions are examined with the goal of strengthening the significance and power of orature among the people. Borrowing familiar Yoruba folktales, the chapter provides a componential analysis of *àlò* vis-a-vis its Ifá counterpart so as to demonstrate on the one hand, the interconnectedness within the genre of orature of the Yoruba people, and on the other hand, further prove the pedagogical power inherent in the folktale tradition.

## Conclusion

It is our hope that the fifty chapters in this two-volume handbook will serve academics whose research are focused on oral traditions and folklore; students at both undergraduate and graduate levels whose studies fall within oral literature, folklore, cultural studies, popular culture, and the intersection of modern literature with orality; general readers interested in exploring African cultural practices; research institutes and university libraries; and members of professional academic associations. This handbook has a distinctive edge over existing/competing texts.<sup>4</sup> It connects the past with the future of African oral traditions and folklore, and extends the debate on these issues in a more nuanced and comparative manner. Furthermore, conclusions from each chapter are intended to inform other studies, and certain general principles from therein are expected to influence studies of other societies.

## Notes

1. Finnegan. *African Oral Literature*. Nairobi/Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 13.
2. Okpewho, Isidore. "Introduction." *Research in African Literature*. 38.3, (2007): viii.
3. *Ibid.*, viii.

4. Some of these are Ruth Finnegan's *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices*, John Miles Foley's edited volume, *Teaching Oral Traditions*, and Philip M. Peek and Kwesi Yankah's edited volume, *African Folklore: An Encyclopedia*.

Akintunde Akinyemi  
Toyin Falola

## References

- Finnegan, Ruth. 1970. *African Oral Literature*. Nairobi and Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press.
- Finnegan, Ruth. 1992. *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Foley, John Miles (Ed.). 1998. *Teaching Oral Traditions*. New York: The Modern Language Association.
- Okpewho, Isidore. 2007. Introduction. *Research in African Literature*. 38 (3): vii–xxi.
- Oring, Elliott. 2012. *Just Folklore: Analysis, Interpretation, Critique*. Los Angeles: Cantilever Press.
- Peek, Philip M., and Kwesi Yankah. 2004. *African Folklore: An Encyclopedia*. New York: Routledge.

# Contents

## Part I Contexts and Practicalities

<b>1 Creativity and Performance in Oral Poetry</b> .....	3
Godini G. Darah	
<b>2 Concept and Components of Performance</b> .....	51
Anya Ude Egwu	
<b>3 The Role of the Audience in Oral Performance</b> .....	69
Clement Adeniyi Akangbe	
<b>4 Orality, History and Historical Reconstruction</b> .....	83
Bukola Adeyemi Oyeniyi	
<b>5 Insights from Festivals and Carnivals</b> .....	105
Philip Adedotun Ogundeji and Mercy Ayo Fasehun	
<b>6 Fieldwork and Data Collection</b> .....	119
Arinpe G. Adejumo and Akeem Oyebamiji	
<b>7 Documenting Oral Genres</b> .....	131
James Essegbey	
<b>8 Retrospect and Prospects of Oral Traditions and Folklore</b> .....	169
Oluwole Coker	

## Part II Themes, Tropes and Types

<b>9 Epic Tradition</b> .....	183
Tal Tamari	
<b>10 Divination and Divinatory Systems</b> .....	213
Omotade Adegbindin	
<b>11 Myth and Mythology</b> .....	233
Oluwatoyin Bimpe Jegede	

**12 The Dirge** ..... 247  
 Felicia Ohwovoriole

**13 Dreams Within the Context of the Basotho Culture** ..... 263  
 Anastacia Sara Motsei

**14 Drum Language and Literature** ..... 281  
 Mobolanle Ebunoluwa Sotunsa

**15 Oratory and Rhetoric: Praise Poetry** ..... 297  
 David Adu-Amankwah

**16 Proverbs, Naming, and Other Forms of Veiled Speech** ..... 317  
 Cécile Leguy

**17 Oral Poetry: Monyoncho’s Orature and Abagusii Culture of Non-violence** ..... 335  
 Augustine Agwuele and Alfred Nyagaka Nyamwange

**18 Ifá: A Womanist Deconstruction of Gender Politics** ..... 357  
 Olusegun Adekoya

**19 A Repertoire of Bukusu Nonverbal Communicative System: Some Gender Differences** ..... 377  
 Margaret Barasa and Augustine Agwuele

**20 Oral Tradition and Identity** ..... 403  
 Mustafa Kemal Mirzeler

**21 The Figure of the Child in Oral Literature** ..... 421  
 Lere Adeyemi

**22 War Songs: Slavery, Oral Tradition, and Identity Construction** ..... 437  
 Emmanuel Saboro

**23 Tracing the Voice of Protest in Selected Oral Literature** ..... 453  
 Russell H. Kaschula

**24 Oral Literature, Liberty and Political Change** ..... 473  
 Enongene Mirabeau Sone

**25 Multiculturalism, Orality, and Folklore in South Africa** ..... 489  
 Anastacia Sara Motsei and Pule Alexis Phindane

**26 Fichee-Cambalaalla (ፍቺ ጫንባላላ) of the Sidaama People** ..... 509  
 Augustine Agwuele and Tafesse Matewos Karo

**27 Orality Indexing: Cultural Benefits of Male Circumcision** ..... 529  
 Lesibana J. Rafapa

**Part III Transformation and Transposition**

**28 To Tongue the Body | To Body the Tongue: Problematizing the Translation of Oral Traditions** ..... 551  
Luan Staphorst

**29 Musical Transformation** ..... 575  
Samuel Elikem Kwame Nyamuame

**30 African Folklore: The Case of Others and Dismas Nyangau’s Popular Music** ..... 601  
Alfred Nyagaka Nyamwange

**31 When Witches and Wizards Are Narrators: Oral Autobiography, Magical Realism, and Memory** ..... 617  
Adetayo Alabi

**32 Absorption of Oral Tradition and Folklore Narrative in Written Fictional Works: Paul Lomami-Tchibamba, Ngandu Nkashama and Alain Mabanckou** ..... 661  
Kasongo Mulenda Kapanga

**33 Oral Traditions in Selected Stage Performances** ..... 685  
Rasheedah Liman

**34 From the Hybrid to the Transcultural: A Comparative Study on Orality in the Poetry of Contemporary** ..... 701  
Robert Simon

**35 Oral Tradition as Commitment in Modern African Poetry** ..... 715  
Sola Owonibi and Richard Bampoh-Addo

**36 The Masked Snap, The Snapped Mask: Mask, Power, and Betrayal in African Cultures** ..... 735  
Aderonke Adesola Adesanya

**37 Caribbean Orality** ..... 759  
Hanétha Vété-Congolo

**38 The Re-invention of Myths, Legends, Panegyrics and Folktales in the Afro-Latin-American Diaspora** ..... 777  
Félix Ayoh’Omidire

**39 Zora Neale Hurston: Retrieving Folk Memory in *Mules and Men*** ..... 803  
Joseph McLaren

**Part IV Orality, Technology, and Popular Culture**

**40 Orality, Media, and Information Technology** ..... 819  
Kole Odotola

**41 Orality and Information Communication Technology ..... 835**  
Tunde Adegbola

**42 Orality and Advertisement: Swahili Proverbs in Mobile  
Phone Service Ads in Tanzania ..... 849**  
Charles Bwenge

**43 Reinventing Oral Traditions Through Arts and Technology ..... 865**  
Stephen Folaranmi and Oyewole Oyeniya

**44 De-Territorializing Lyrical Performances via Digital Culture ..... 889**  
Abubakar Aliyu Liman

**45 Orality and Technology: Transforming Traditional Songs  
to Popular Music ..... 907**  
Rosaleen Oabona Brankie Nhlekisana

**46 Performance of Folklore on Television: New Vistas  
in African Folklore Renditions ..... 925**  
Rose A. Opondo

**47 Orality, Cinema, Film, and Video ..... 941**  
Henry O. Unuajohwofia

**Part V Oral Tradition, Folklore, and Education**

**48 Restaging Oral Narrative in Civic Education ..... 959**  
Kimingichi Wabende

**49 Orality and Early Childhood Education ..... 975**  
Damola Adesina

**50 Teaching Folklore and Oral Traditions: The Folktale  
Medium as Pedagogy ..... 995**  
Michael Oladejo Afolayan

**Index ..... 1011**