

**Developing and Integrating Community
Archives with Institutional Repositories toward the
Goals of Decolonization, Heritagization, Enhanced
Accessibility, and Repatriation: Some Challenges
and Opportunities from the Field**

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ABSTRACT

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- **This paper first summarizes the state and scope of recent collaborative field research on a variety of performance and general cultural traditions among the Ewe of southern Ghana. The summary highlights the communities' strong concerns regarding challenges to archiving, transmission and sustenance of their traditions with emphasis on how not only to build and transform the community-oriented archives and learning centers, but also how to acquire (repatriate) and (re)learn from those scattered in private and general, digital media domains. The paper further supports current critical perspectives and practices that privilege decolonial processes of community ownership, empowerment and reciprocity that are key to the goals of community archiving, ownership, and heritagization. Both heritagization and digitalization are argued as essential components of community archiving that serve immediate and long-term goals of (re)learning and sustaining culture through active and systematic programs of re-performing and enriching culture beyond common notions of recovering the past (*Sankofa*). Identities are not static and Ewe traditions are what they are because they look through the past, into the present and toward the future as necessary to sustaining their collective identities and the aspects of arts and culture that inform these identities. There is, therefore, these communities thus further justify the need for perspectives, approaches and technological resources to remain resilient, adaptive, and consistent with local needs and objectives of curating heritage, heritagization, community ownership and empowerment. The paper concludes with an enumeration of specific contributions to the current literature of debates and emerging perspectives, and finally with practical examples drawn from the fields and as supported by a newly established collaborative project focusing on digital return, digitalization and heritagization (Bayreuth Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence).**
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IMPORTANT DISCLAIMERS & CLARIFICATIONS

- **Complex topic with nested subthemes.** This is necessary partly because of several years of longitudinal and cross-disciplinary field projects and practices resulting in an ever-expanding, cumulative *personal* archive

DEFINING THE “ARCHIVE”--1

- "The ritual archive is the only archive that keeps the invisible alongside the visible [...] indigenous researchers are connected with knowledge-bearing locales as particular social agents “in ways that **academically trained scholars lack the full capacity to become.**” (TOYIN FALOLA)
- “the archive—the good **one—produces memory**, but produces forgetting at the same time.” (JACQUES DERRIDA)

DEFINING THE “ARCHIVE”—2

MY WORKING DEFINITION

- An archive begins and endures as individuals and communities recreate. re-create, imagine and express or communicate these creative imaginations, histories, and beliefs through interconnected multisensory spaces. Memory remains a privileged site but is built and sustained through the integrative functions of the multisensory. **The common parlance “KNOWLEDGE BODIES” is not just a hypbole; it signifies majestically about the primal place of individual corporealities within which memory and the senses are domiciled—domicile is a synonymn for “archive”!**

PERSONAL ARCHIVE?

- INDIVIDUAL COLLABORATORS IN TEAM RESEARCH CONTEXTS
- FORMER STUDENTS
- VOLUNTEERS
- NEBULOUS, EVER-EXPANDING DIGITAL WORLD (INCLUDING THE IDEA OF “*ROGUE ARCHIVES*”)

CONTENTS/SCOPE OF PERSONAL ARCHIVE

- WIDE RANGE OF EXPRESSIVE CULTURE, ca. 1980--
- SYMBOLIC ENACTMENTS IN TIME AND SPACE
- MUSIC, DANCE, VISUAL DISPLAY/COMPLEX
- RITUAL, SECULAR, POPULAR, ART EXHIBITIONS
- INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS, FESTIVALS
- CONCERTS, WORKSHOPS (LOCAL, INTERNATIONAL)
- AFRICAN DIASPORA PERFORMANCE TRADITIONS

MAJOR FIELD TRIPS IN THE LAST 9 MONTHS

Table 1: List of royal funerals and installations

Royalty	Status/Rank/Position	Event	Location
Togbui* Gligui Tengey Dzokoto VI ¹²	Paramount Chief, Dufia (town chief) and Head of Bate Clan	Funeral	Anyako, Volta Region of Ghana
Togbui Gligui Tengey Dzokoto VII	Paramount Chief, Dufia and Head of Bate Clan	Installation	Anyako, Volta Region of Ghana
Togbui Nyaho Tamakloe VI	Paramount Chief, Miafiagã (Left Wing commander),** Dufia and Head of Adzovia Clan	Installation	Whuti, Volta Region of Ghana
Togbegã*** Gabusu VI	Paramount Chief and Head of Torkoni Clan	Funeral	Gbi-Hohoe, Volta Region of Ghana
Mamagã Dewotornyoo I (buried July 2021)****	Paramount Queen Mother	Funeral	Gbi-Hohoe, Volta Region of Ghana

COMMUNITY CURATION AND THE DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

- MOTIVATIONS
- INTENSIVE AND EXTENSIVE COLLABORATION
- DECENTERS POWER HIERARCHIES
- SELF-OWNERSHIP ORIENTED
- HERITAGIZATION AND SUSTENABILITY

COMMUNITY CURATION AND THE DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE, CONTD

- RECIPROCITY AND BELONGING SUPERSEDE TRADITIONAL MODES OF “REPATRIATION”
- NO REAL SENSE OF SELF-OWNERSHIP IF COLLABORATOR-RESEARCHER DOES NOT “BELONG”
- SENSE AND *PLACE* OF CO-OWNERSHIP ARE NOT LIMITED TO TIME-SPACE OR INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES
- LIKE A CELLPHONE IN YOUR HAND, COMMUNITY ARCHIVE CAN BE AN **ENABLER**

COMMUNITY CURATION AND THE DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE, CONTD

- EMPHASIS ON CO-CREATION, CO-EXPERIENCING
- RELEVANT ASPECTS OF PRACTICE RESEARCH
- ACKNOWLEDGING PLURAL EXISTENCE OF CULTURAL ARTIFACTS AND INTANGIBLE TRADITIONS, INCLUDING RELATED KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS
- INTEGRATING **HERITAGIZATION**—re/creating culture toward empowerment, sense of belonging/identity at local and national levels

ACCESSIBILITY AND OTHER CHALLENGES

- RESOURCE SHARING WITHOUT HIERARCHIES
- *COMPETING AND ALTERNATIVE NARRATION AND FRAMING OF “TRADITION”* QUALITY CONTROL??
- MECHANISMS FOR ENSURING EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES
- QUESTIONS OF CRITERIA/STANDARDS
- OPEN ACCESS AND QUESTIONS OF RIGHTS
- *INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE EXPERTS(?)*
- MEASURING IMPACT ON QUALITY OF LIFE

THE LIMITS OF ARCHIVING AND OPEN ACCESS

- CHALLENGES OF *HALO* TRADITION (MEMORY) AMONG THE ANLO-EWE, GHANA
- QUESTIONS OF HERITAGE
- RESTRICTED RITUAL CATEGORIES BUT WHICH NOW POPULATE YOUTUBE [DZ]



THE LIMITS OF ARCHIVING AND OPEN ACCESS, CONTD

