

Ishmael Laryea Konney
Not More Than a Page

Embarking on this research was a vital part of my thesis project and gaining the needed support to make the trip was a dream come true.

For a long time, I have been interested in telling the story of my people through performance. The stories of the Ga people have been distorted on so many accounts and it was imperative for me to travel home and interview knowledgeable people. It was also vital to conduct this interview to highlight the importance of oral tradition which is embedded in the customs of most communities in Ghana and Africa at large. Most of the people I interviewed were told these stories by their forefathers and me learning from them is how these stories are transferred from generation to generation. Oral literatures are preserved and transferred from generation to generation through songs, poetry, folklore, sculptor, dances, etc. Oral tradition and memory are the preferred choices of documentation because of the large number of tribes, the variety of languages spoken, the diverse ways of living, and most importantly the difficulty of sustaining written documents (Tiérou 1992, 9). Kariamuwelsh Asante similarly shares in the idea and highlights that those oral narratives serve as methods of documentation for Africans. She believes that oral tradition is a genuine creative process that is visible in the works of every African artist and appears in all art disciplines (Asante 1990, 73).

It is my plan to make this interview available to communities within the Ga township to have access to the information. I was surprised to hear some of the stories that I heard in this interview because quite the opposite was taught to me in school. I could have done my thesis project without the interview but the messages I would have been sending across to the audience might have been inaccurate. To tell the story of my people, I wanted to make sure I was serving my audience with the journey as it happened. It was essential to have the accurate information because I knew I would be sharing the interview with people in the community, and this will help them know about their history. The youth currently are not interested in learning about the history, and I believe this is as a result of the extinction of the folks to tell the stories. The story is not widely available and accessible so makes it difficult for people to know. Although this information is for my current thesis project, the bigger picture is to preserve and make accessible this information to the youth and upcoming generation.

Without this grant, it would have been impossible for me to make the trip down to Ghana. In my culture, meeting people face to face and discussing issues with them is more accepted than on phone. So, traveling to Ghana and meeting with the religious leader and setting a time to grant the interview was the best option. Also, the interview was granted because I was present, and the religious leader felt how eager I was to learn about my culture. This eradicated any idea to conduct the interviews over phone call or zoom. Moreover, I was able to witness a ritual that is done before the main festival is celebrated. The festival clashes with the school year so it was impossible for me to stay and witness all the ceremonies that are done for the festival. The one I witnessed was the cleansing of the Kings throne. The ritual was to go to the sacred stream of the town to fetch the "sacred water" that will be used in the cleansing of the chief's throne. It is known that the sacred stream was the only water that flowed when the people of La settled in the town and one of their deities inhabited the stream. The source of the stream is not known but it miraculously flows and has been flowing for many years serving the people of La.

Reference List

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