



Press Release: September 12, 2012

The defining book on African oral literature has been made available to a new generation of scholars.

Open Book Publishers (Cambridge, UK), together with the World Oral Literature Project (Cambridge and Yale), has released a revised edition of **Ruth Finnegan's classic study, *Oral Literature in Africa***. The book was hailed as groundbreaking when it was published in 1970, and it continues to be the go-to text for scholars in the field. However, until now, it was out-of-print and increasingly difficult to find, especially in Africa.

This new edition makes the work freely available to use and share under a Creative Commons (CC-BY) license. For the first time, young Africans will be able to read this priceless record of the cultures and languages of their grandparents and great-grandparents, while scholars around the world will be able to read the work on any electronic reading device.

It includes a new introduction, additional images and an updated bibliography, as well as its original chapters on poetry, prose, "drum language" and drama, and an overview of the social, linguistic and historical background of oral literature in Africa.

The volume is complemented by original recordings of stories and songs from the Limba country (Sierra Leone), collected by Finnegan during her fieldwork in the late 1960s, which can be freely accessed online.

The free digital editions and online archive were financed by the collective support of readers and scholars. Donations were made via an innovative crowdfunding platform, Unglue.it, which quickly raised the target amount of US\$7,500.

Praise for the original edition of *Oral Literature in Africa*:

"A book certain to establish itself as a classic in the field of oral literature, distinguished alike for the range of its reference, the weight of its judgements and the quality of its discriminations."

— *The Times Literary Supplement*

“This is a comprehensive, scholarly and one would think definitive study of the subject.”

- *African Studies Association*

“Besides being a goldmine for scholars, it is a delight for the general reader.”

— *Journal of Asian and African Studies*

Print copies of *Oral Literature in Africa* can be ordered at www.openbookpublishers.com and through book retailers everywhere, including Kobo, Amazon.com and Amazon.co.uk – where the free ebook can also be downloaded. The free ebook is available at libraries and bookstores around the world through Internet Library’s Open Library (<http://openlibrary.org/>) and on Open Book Publishers’ website.

About Open Book Publishers:

Open Book (www.openbookpublishers.com) has changed the nature of the traditional academic book. They offer free online editions of their books to benefit scholars and readers worldwide, while also selling traditional print and electronic copies. Their authors range from early-career academics to eminent scholars, chosen on the basis of academic merit and public value through a rigorous peer review process.

About Unglue.it:

Unglue.it (<http://unglue.it>) is a crowdfunding platform which rewards rights holders for making their ebooks available to the world under a Creative Commons license. Unglue.it runs campaigns for previously published books, allowing book lovers to pledge toward giving them to the world. For more information see <http://unglue.it/press>.

About the World Oral Literature Project (WOLP):

Based at the Universities of Cambridge and Yale, WOLP (<http://www.oralliterature.org>) is a global project to record and make available endangered oral literatures before they disappear. Together with Open Book Publishers they are producing the World Oral Literature Series.

About Ruth Finnegan:

Ruth Finnegan, OBE, is Emeritus Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Open University where, as a founder member, she has spent much of her academic career. With a background in classical languages and literatures and anthropology, she has published widely on aspects of communication and expression, especially oral performance, literacy and music-making.

Contact Information:

Dr. Alessandra Tosi

Managing Director, Open Book Publishers

a.tosi@openbookpublishers.com

40 Devonshire Road

Cambridge CB1 2BL

United Kingdom

+44 (0)1223 339929