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Conference:

Narrating (Hi)stories.

Storytelling in/about West-Africa

October 18-20, 2012

Goethe-Institut Accra/Ghana

Call for papers

In the year 2012, the world will celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of the German *Children's and Household Tales*, whose first volume was published in 1812 by the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Research has meanwhile unravelled the history of this collection, and many of the mysteries and enigmas connected with the origin of its stories have been studied in detail. Whatever is to be said about the Grimms' tales, there is no doubt that their work was extremely influential all over the world. Besides inspiring numerous similar collections in other European countries, in the long run it gave rise to the discipline of historical and comparative folk narrative research, a discipline that at present enjoys a truly worldwide appreciation. One of the many fascinating questions initiated by the Grimms' tales is the interaction between oral and written literatures: orality often draws from written tradition, while written tradition, in particular the large romantic collections of fairy-tales drew considerably from older texts that to some extent originated from other cultures and traditions.

Africa still today is a continent in which oral tradition is very much alive. In the region of West-Africa, we witness the mingling of traditions originating from the old African kingdoms as well as the Arab world and Europe. Long before the first Europeans conquered the continent, narratives had migrated to the region by way of transsaharan trade. Scholars of African studies, both Western and African, have achieved a considerable amount of research dealing with African oral traditions and knowledge about the narratives in this region. Meanwhile, numerous questions remain to be dealt with. Besides the traditional focus on the origin and migration of narratives, one might also ponder about the relevance of written tradition as documented by the hundreds of thousands of manuscripts preserved in the city of Timbuktu, some of which were written as early as the fourteenth century.

Meanwhile, African oral tradition is not only of interest to scholars of narrative. It is well known that the African griots are probably the most important single medium for the preservation of historical

knowledge, and international history has developed a recent new interest in global orientation. This point serves to underline the fact that, in African tradition, stories and history are closely related to each other. By relating history, African stories also contribute decisively to the construction and appreciation of modernity, since they are both rooted in ancient tradition as well as constituting part of modern reality.

Considering this situation, which is particular for West-African tradition, we invite international scholars to participate in the conference Narrating (hi)stories: Storytelling in/about West-Africa. The conference will be organized in the German Cultural Institute in Accra, Ghana. It will give scholars from different disciplines a platform to present their research, discuss current research topics and reflect new perspectives on narratives in and about West-Africa.

The proposed papers (20 minutes) should relate to any of the following aspects:

- Different genres of West-African narrative tradition
- Narrating as a means of preserving tradition and adapting it to modernity
- The role of storytelling for assessing local history
- Studies of West-African narrative tradition in the international context

Proposals should contain a 300-400 word abstract, a short biography of the presenter and current contact details. Please send your proposal by e-mail to both of the following addresses: lundt@uni-flensburg.de; umarzol@gwdg.de. The deadline for proposals is March 1, 2012. Presenters will be notified about the acceptance of their proposal by May 1, 2012.