



Oral Tradition as History

Jan M. Vansina

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Jan Vansina's 1961 book, *Oral Tradition*, was hailed internationally as a pioneering work in the field of ethno-history. Originally published in French, it was translated into English, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, and Hungarian. Reviewers were unanimous in their praise of Vansina's success in subjecting oral traditions to intense functional analysis.

Now, Vansina—with the benefit of two decades of additional thought and research—has revised his original work substantially, completely rewriting some sections and adding much new material. The result is an essentially new work, indispensable to all students and scholars of history, anthropology, folklore, and ethno-history who are concerned with the transmission and potential uses of oral material.

“Those embarking on the challenging adventure of historical fieldwork with an oral community will find the book a valuable companion, filled with good practical advice. Those who already have collected bodies of oral material, or who strive to interpret and analyze that collected by others, will be forced to subject their own methodological approaches to a critical reexamination in the light of Vansina's thoughtful and provocative insights. . . . For the second time in a quarter of a century, we are profoundly in the debt of Jan Vansina.”—*Research in African Literatures*

“Oral Traditions as History is an essential addition to the basic literature of African history.”—*American Historical Review*

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