



Narrating our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History (Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture)

By Elizabeth Tonkin

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Elizabeth Tonkin looks at how oral histories are constructed and how they should be interpreted. Her study is illustrated through a wide range of examples of memory, narration, and oral tradition, including many from Europe and the Americas, and with a particular focus on oral histories from the Jla Kru of Liberia, with whom the author has carried out extensive research. She also draws on and integrates the insights of a range of disciplines, such as literary criticism, linguistics, history, psychology, and communication and cultural studies.

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Review

"Tonkin provides a lucid discussion of how oral history is constructed....the strengths of the book are many....numerous illustrative examples from predominantly oral cultures in Africa as well as from industrialized Europe and America....perhaps the most significant feature of the book is its unified approach." Anthropological Linguistics

"...this is a very thoughtful and delightful work, carefully argued, the fruit of wide reading and sustained thought....It is also a delight to read." Anthropos

"...provocative, yet offered in an uncommonly unpretentious and engaging fashion. Her work is a welcome addition to the declining number of full-scale interpretations of oral historiography, by whatever name, and, although addressed primarily to anthropologists, it is worth historians' close attention as well." David Henige, Journal of Interdisciplinary History

About the Author

Tonkin is Professor of Social Anthropology, The Queen's University of Belfast.

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