

The Biography of Photographs: A Digital E-Patriation Project in Banda, Ghana

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Bachelor of Arts, University of Victoria, 2012

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**Abstract**

In 2013, Ghana's second largest dam was constructed on the Black Volta River, bordering the Banda region. The Bui Dam, while contributing to the country's growing electrical supply, has also forced the relocation of thousands of villagers. In addition to the considerable changes to lifeways, the dam has brought attention to Banda from global businesspeople and tourists alike. In light of the ongoing changes to local social and economic processes, the Banda Thru Time project emerged. This project seeks to e-patriate images—from historic times to the present—to the communities that make up Banda.

My part in the project—and the focus of this thesis—was to create a web portal to the repository that would contain these images in addition to other historic documents. In addition to the creation of the web portal, the thesis portion of this project engages the process of digital e-patriation and the four lines of inquiry that came to inform my research: determining through what pathways digital e-patriation is initiated and achieved in a community; how collections get assembled, with an interest in the implications this has for interpretation; how a collection can be presented to unsettle the troubling either/or dichotomy of continuity and change; and how memory work relates to the process of assembling a collection for the purposes of e-patriation.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

At the end of 2013, the newly constructed Bui Dam was commissioned in Banda, Ghana. The second largest of its type in Ghana, the dam was built by the Chinese firm SinoHydro. The 400-megawatt Bui Dam was intended to increase the country's electrical supply by about 20 percent. The construction of the dam flooded the protected Bui National Park by about 20 percent and is a contributing factor to threats against wildlife populations as well as the resettling of multiple villages along the Black Volta River where it was constructed. As many as 2600 people have been relocated away from family farm land and the riverine fishing areas that sustained them into new villages with block houses and with sub-optimal farm lands (International Rivers, n.d.). Fishing communities that once made their living through riverine fishing can no longer sustain themselves, relocated as they are at a distance from the newly created lake fishing zones (Gov't of Ghana, n.d.). In addition to the major lifestyle changes wrought by the new addition to the communities, the area is increasingly being visited by tourists and business people alike. The expansion of electrification has brought additional changes to Banda—both its landscape and people.

Repatriation is a growing field of interest among anthropologists and communities alike. Particularly new in this burgeoning field is the focus on digital repatriation, or as I frame it as a component of my Master's project, e-patriation, which highlights repatriation in digital contexts (Glass, 2015). Digital repatriation efforts have contributed to the discipline in meaningful and complex ways (Silverman, 2015: 5), but more importantly have contributed to communities in meaningful ways (see Hennessy et al., 2012; O'Neal, 2013; Smith, 2008). Edwards (2011: 179) points to the notion of “photographic sovereignty (as) a concept that has been developed,

especially in a Native American context in North America, to define the right to reclaim photographs and to tell one's own history," especially in light of the effects of colonial processes on indigenous peoples around the world. This can have implications for claims to resources as well as identification processes for communities. Indeed, as Edwards (2011: 179) emphasizes, "visual reappropriation and reengagement is, in many ways, about finding a present for historical photographs, realizing the possibility for different narratives." Pels (2008: 281) has noted that anthropologists have been caught up in ethical dilemmas concerning colonial pasts. Digital repatriation has not been separate from these dilemmas. However, 'the digital' as a mode of repatriation is of growing interest for many communities around the world for reasons such as its relative ease of accessibility, as for example through a cellular device. Much of the literature on digital repatriation has focused on regions such as North America and Australia, but this project seeks to highlight the e-patriation of photographs and other archival materials to communities of the Banda area in Ghana.

The project that I have been involved with is one in which I have worked to repatriate, or e-patriate (repatriating material through an online medium rather than a strictly physical means) to the Banda communities, a set of materials that includes photographs. These materials will also be available online to the general public, including academics who might use it for research purposes. The Banda region is located in west central Ghana. Banda is defined by its Banda Paramount Chieftaincy, and comprised of 24 villages which are home to five distinct ethno-linguistic groups: Nafana, Kuulo, Ligby, Mo and Ewe (Stahl, 2001: 51)<sup>1</sup>. The history of the region has been a site of contest at times, for example during a chieftaincy dispute of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century which was centred on the rotation of two groups to the stool—Kuulo and Nafana (Stahl,

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'Banda' is used in this thesis to refer to both a geographical region and to refer to the communities that fall within the Banda chieftaincy.

2001: 63). More recently, construction of the hydroelectric dam on the Black Volta River on Banda's northern margin has displaced villagers from several communities including Bui village (International Rivers, n.d.). This development has had other implications as well for the area. Not only has it displaced communities, but it has also attracted businesspeople and now tourists to the area. Given these ongoing social, political, and economic processes, historical interest has grown within the Banda communities. This interest, along with the accessibility of the internet/digital mediums for local people, spurred the direction of this project to focus on e-patriation, where data is stored online. The fieldwork for this project therefore, took place in the digital realm, where I worked with media to produce an account of the 'process' of e-patriation.

The project itself is part of the 'Banda Thru Time' project coordinated by Dr. Ann Stahl. It engages the scholarship of multiple people throughout the past fifty years and aims to engage diverse publics with Banda's history. The project aims to circulate historical resources from the region in ways that increase its accessibility, both to community members and broader audiences (Stahl, 2015; Stahl, 2016a, b). Among the resources are images and documents from archaeologists, art historians, graduate students, colonial officials, and others. The images and documents are being made accessible through a digital repository that can be accessed by researchers and locals alike. The collections are organized into categories such as "housing the family," "landscapes," "waterscapes," "feeding the family," and "crafting." These categories highlight certain aspects of daily life in the area, both past and present. A project goal was to create an online repository of these images and a corresponding website which allows users to access the repository as along with other image- and text-based information about the history of Banda. It is located at <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/bandathruthime/>. Many of the photos that were scanned to the online repository were ones to which the community has had

limited or no access in the past. Some had previously been shared as print images, but the repository makes accessible a broader array of images from scholars' photo collections.

Among the photo collections were those of Dr. Ann Stahl, Dr. René Bravmann, and Dr. Maria das Dores Cruz. The photographs by Dr. Stahl derive from the Banda Research Project which she has directed since 1986. The project has focused on daily life and its configuration through shifting global entanglements over the last millennium and has included both archaeological research and recording of oral traditions. The photos collected by Dr. Cruz derive from the period of her 1994 dissertation research which centred on contemporary potting practices in the Banda area. The work of René Bravmann (1974), whose photographs form a component of this project, reflects the unsettling of an either/or dichotomy of continuity and change in the context of Ghana. His research endeavoured to undermine the notion that Islam's aniconic visual aesthetic took over traditional art forms in West Africa, including Ghana. Rather than viewing the arts in this area as painted with a broad brushstroke of 'change,' Bravmann sought to lay out ways in which continuity through art was also occurring in the context of Islamic influence and 'change.'

My role in the process of the project is analyzed in this thesis. Given that anthropologists are involved and inseparable from the context in which they work, the project benefited from a reflexive point of view. As the project concerns itself so much with "process," understanding my role as researcher in the process was a valuable tool for creating the website and repository. As Trouillot (1995: 26) points out, archives have value in making history. The particular selection of images as part of the archive contributes to making history. Part of this reflexivity begins with the premise of the project. The project is based on historical images of the Banda area and its surrounds. The collection as well as the dissemination of the images are all bound up in various

social, and political acts. This is not meant to be a comprehensive historical account of the Banda communities or to project the notion of a singular, homogenized community into the past. Every historical account is situated in various political, economic, social and temporal factors. This is but one highly specific collection of images which has the potential to have its meaning construed differently for different people.

My analytical focus in this paper is the process of digital repatriation and my four main areas of inquiry include: through what pathways digital repatriation is initiated and achieved in a community; how collections get assembled, with an interest in the implications this has for interpretation; how memory work relates to the process of assembling a collection for repatriation; and how a collection can be presented to unsettle the either/or dichotomy of continuity and change. To contextualize my approach to these issues, Chapter 2 outlines examples of repatriation efforts, with an emphasis on the digital medium. Chapter 3 highlights the process I used to achieve digital repatriation or e-patriation. Chapter 4 analyzes the process of memory making and memory work. Chapter 5 analyzes the dichotomy of continuity and change for understanding contemporary African communities, including a discussion regarding the consequences of this dichotomy. Chapter 6 offers concluding thoughts on the project and its value going forward.

## Chapter 2: E-patriation as Process

Repatriation is a growing field of interest among anthropologists. Particularly new is digital repatriation, as digital technologies have expanded and allowed for the production of digitized collections for museums and other source communities (see Evens and Hautekeete 2011:158; Glass, 2015; Silverman, 2015). Examples of this type of initiative have emerged globally in recent times. These efforts have assisted with cultural revitalization projects within indigenous communities. An important dimension of these projects is constituted by memory-making through the connection of people and objects (Chapter 4).

Before highlighting a few of these projects and some of the tensions that they produce, it is important to consider associated concepts and vocabulary. The term ‘digital repatriation’ has been used to refer to the return of objects through a digital medium. However, the term has proven contentious given that objects are not fully returned if they are accessible only through the digital realm, and in this way objects are not really repatriated at all. Hennessy et al. (2012) suggest that the term, ‘virtual repatriation’ holds similar challenges in that it suggests the return of objects in a virtual form. However, this implies that the holders of the object would also maintain rights in terms of the intellectual property associated with the object. This, in fact, rarely happens, as Hennessy et al. (2012) note, and copyrights are not always returned. Another concern that ‘digital repatriation’ evokes is the notion that the digital is a specific kind of mediation tool and by using this medium, one might dismiss other ways of knowing an object. Rather than viewing objects physically—in person—the digital only allows viewers to relate with it visually. It has the potential to transform objects in ways that produce different knowledges (Glass, 2015: 23). In its use of the prefix “re,” the term is problematic in suggesting that objects remain the same or untransformed throughout the ‘re’patriation process. Glass

(2015: 23) highlights the term ‘e-patriation’ as a way to identify that this form of repatriation is a unique form of mediation, allowing viewers to interact with the material in different ways than as if they were with the tangible object. For example, the subjects of the photographs in the project that are a focus of this thesis are community members of the Banda area and the area’s landscape, but the photographs themselves were taken and are owned by expatriate scholars. This complicates the use of the term ‘repatriation,’ as the photographs themselves were never ‘owned’ by the Banda communities. The term ‘e-patriation’ then, helps to identify this concern with the term, and will be used here to allow for a different understanding of the processes that shape circulation of the photographs.

‘Source communities’ is another term relevant to the literature on repatriation. Source communities are described in the literature on repatriation as those communities who were original holders of an object, and to whom that object is being returned. Complicating this term in the context of this project is that the photographs taken were never ‘owned’ by the Banda communities, but the communities do cite an interest in being able to access these images from the past. Can the source community in this case also involve those individuals who took the original photographs? While the ‘return’ of these images is not necessarily to the photographers, certainly their intellectual property is involved. It is imperative then, that ‘source communities’ not only include those Banda communities whose past is being represented, but also those who took the images. Byrne et al. (2011: 15) use the term “creator communities” to identify those who “produced the materials which were later collected and assembled together for display.” This term allows for inclusivity of the photographers as well as those whose cultural property was involved in the images. This inclusive approach allows for a more dynamic understanding of how these images get disseminated and what kind of narratives are explored from them.

The process of e-patriation contains within it multiple challenges or concerns. Among these as laid out by Evens and Hautekeete (2011: 157) is the process of digitization itself—including the politicization of digital collections--creating metadata, intellectual property and cultural property rights, and business models. Business models refer to the ongoing maintenance structures of archives. This includes the website and repository hosts, including the templates they offer for the construction of the pages, as well as the main server farm associated with the production and maintenance of the websites; this server holds the information at a physical location, which thereby includes physical maintenance of those structures. The other models—of intellectual property rights, and metadata—will be highlighted here with examples of repatriation efforts, including this project’s e-patriation scheme.

Cultural and intellectual property holds a prominent role in this type of work. The issue of cultural and intellectual property in the context of repatriation refers to both the tangible (physical, such as objects) and intangible (abstract, such as stories) properties of peoples (Lyons, 2011: 84). Coombe (1999: 261) expands this definition to consider that the basis of intellectual property relies on European notions of culture and law. This is problematic when reconciling indigenous notions of intellectual property. More specifically, she considers intellectual property as “a doctrinal field that relies upon modern European understandings of culture and its significance in human life” (Coombe, 1999: 261). This creates tension in the context of repatriation as this typically involves associating monetary ‘value’ with ‘things,’ such that those values have the capacity to commodify important cultural objects (Brown and Nicholas, 2012: 308). As an example, Brown and Nicholas (2012: 310) observe that Maori and Canadian First Nations have “crafted objects and landscapes of memory (which) have always been repositories and catalysts for generational information, linking people to each other and their land.” The

value of these objects goes well beyond monetary value. The value is in the object's ability to transport individuals across time and space, linking them together and to their landscapes. In evaluating these objects in terms of their monetary value, the significance that these objects were originally given in the context of practice gets lost, and the objects get appropriated for other uses, producing financial gain through the use of images, for example. The repatriation process would potentially dismiss the return of cultural property rights or intellectual property rights associated with repatriated objects. There is a concern among those creator communities that objects (including photographs) will be appropriated and used in inappropriate ways (Brown and Nicholas, 2012: 308).

Challenges associated with the intellectual property rights discourse are becoming more prominent in digital contexts. Two such examples are described by Gibson and Turner (2012) as well as Brown and Nicholas (2012), who have participated in the Reciprocal Research Network<sup>2</sup>. Through a digital platform Indigenous communities and researchers work collaboratively to return cultural property to those communities. While Brown and Nicholas see this online database as useful for collaborative research, they offer caution about the use of digitized materials because of the difficulties associated with transferring intellectual property and cultural property rights along with objects. Their concern centres on the cultural values that undergird the network, grounded as they are in intellectual property laws based on 'Western' notions of legal rights. As such the network may not encompass the values of Indigenous peoples whose materials are being transferred to the digital realm. The Reciprocal Research Network does, however, encourage Indigenous involvement in visual and knowledge creation and dissemination, as facilitated by digital archives of materials.

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<sup>2</sup> The Reciprocal Research Network is an online tool for cultural heritage on the Northwest Coast of British Columbia and can be found here: <https://www.rrncommunity.org/>

Another concern related to intellectual property rights is the notion that a difference between tangible and intangible is not distinguished in some cultures (Nicholas, 2010). The Moriori of the Chatham Islands are in a process of digitizing “cultural landscapes, elder stories, traditional practices, and other taonga” (Solomon and Thorpe, 2012: 246). These actions affect a shift of intangible heritage to tangible forms, in the digital. This reflects on the idea that intangible property, such as storytelling, has a distinct place in their cultural property value system. While it is clear that this is as much a part of their cultural property as tangible objects from that creator community, the legal implications following Coombe’s (1999) definition, might not facilitate inclusivity in terms of these intangible objects. Other aspects of intangible cultural heritage might include the way stories or histories are told, or the knowledge that is highlighted within them (Nicholas, 2010). These aspects can also be disputed within communities. For example, not everyone might agree on one particular story. Potentially contentious in the context of repatriation is how these intangible qualities are navigated in the domain of intellectual and cultural property rights. Nicholas (2010) notes that repatriation is not simply about returning objects to their origin communities, but can also begin to address a community’s heritage in more equitable ways, in engaging them with the rights associated with their objects. This highlights the need for a reflexive and informed involvement on behalf of anthropologists in their engagement with repatriation or e-patriation and with creator and user communities more generally.

Ginsburg (2011: 252) brings up another aspect of intellectual property that is potentially of concern in the context of repatriation, or e-patriation; that is the notion that even within creator communities, there may be systems that inform “who has access to and understanding of media...and who has the rights to know, tell, and circulate certain stories and images.” For

example, Banda communities have multiple versions of their diverse histories. The five main ethno-linguistic groups maintain different narratives, and likely have variation within those groups, for how their ancestors arrived in Banda. This has implications for how stories get told and which stories get told, which can in turn influence the ways in which the images gain significance (Ginsburg, 2011:252). Metadata contextualizes ‘things,’ in this case images, but uses specific language to do so; metadata is a tagging system that employs the description of various characteristics of an object. This might include archive numbers, names, and dates (Evens and Hautekeete, 2011: 158). It is a process of standardization for defining or contextualizing objects that get represented in museums as well as through the digital world (Glass, 2015: 21).

Metadata thus has implications for the production of certain narratives over others as the language used in metadata practices gets associated with the images, favouring certain phrases or words over others. For example, an image of a waterscape might have specific uses associated with it (i.e. a dam site), but can also relate to other practices (i.e. fishing). The metadata that gets used might highlight some things and not others. Locales can have multiple ethno-linguistic groups, like Banda, and therefore have different naming systems for the landscape, people and objects around them. By privileging one interpretation (or one language), it can be difficult to represent all of the ethno-linguistic groups of an area. In the case of Banda Thru Time, the language of image metadata is English. While this has the advantage of not privileging one among several local languages, the choice contributes to exclusions if resource users are not all able to read English. Despite this, key metadata focused on dates that the photos were taken and descriptions of place, aiding the viewer in contextualizing the photo rather than giving the photo a specific narrative.

Edwards (2011: 177) considers the relationship of people and photographs and identifies that photographs can be sites of contestation and power over the production of history for communities. While this can be applied in situations of settler colonialism and determining whose story (settler or indigenous) gets told in the historical narrative, it is also applicable to local scales of power; there is diversity within communities regarding the telling of the past. Keeping in view Trouillot's (1995: 26) observation that there are silences in history, as much as there are tellings, this politicized notion of photographs as resources may become tangible for the Banda region. Trouillot (1995: 26) suggests that silences enter history through four moments—"the moment of fact creation...the moment of fact assembly...the moment of fact retrieval...and the moment of retrospective significance." He argues that viewing silences through these moments allows us to understand how silences become part of an historical narrative; any historical narrative is an assemblage of silences. Edwards (2011: 179) takes this further to suggest that "indigenous communities have reappropriated, reengaged with, and effectively reauthored anthropological photographs, as photographs themselves are symptomatic and symbolic of peoples desire to control their own histories and their own destinies."

There are multiple ways of perceiving or seeing things (Haraway, 1988), and each of our eyes, including those on a community level, may have different interpretations. The images are relational resources that may be mobilized in varying ways. Indeed, as previously mentioned, there are different interpretations within the community, as exemplified in the Banda communities. For example, in 2010, various parties within the communities viewed their rights to land differently in the face of the construction of the Bui Dam. Because the construction of the dam forced the relocation of many villagers, the rights to compensation were disputed amongst the communities. The paramount chief, of Nafana origin, argued that the rights of the villagers

located on the river were null as they were ‘settlers’ to the region and not original owners. Another ethno-linguistic group similarly argued for their rights to compensation based on their history in the region (Stahl, 2010: 262-63). This reflects the idea that certain stories or narratives will be retold and perpetuated through this community-level power structure. In the case of Banda, this may be represented by multiple histories of the area; multiple people throughout the community might associate images of landscapes and people with different meanings and histories. Given the contextual and processual nature of these associations, it is always important to locate research involving repatriation or e-patriation in the context of the communities’ economic, social, and political processes.

Photography and images occupy a distinct status in e-patriation efforts, different from that of other objects. Edwards (2011: 172) claims that the nature of the photograph, in its ability to recreate the body of the subject, is a powerful tool. She notes that indigenous communities have increasingly sought to reappropriate images for use in creating their own narratives and controlling their own histories, different from that of the colonial narrative. This “photographic sovereignty” (Edwards, 2011: 179), is growing in value for indigenous communities. Through e-patriation, digital versions of images can be returned or given to indigenous communities around the world, to engage with the notion of photographic or visual sovereignty and the creation of indigenous narratives. While this approach can be useful in certain contexts, Shepherd (2012: 297-8) warns of the possibilities of photographs and their deeply powerful presence. He considers a collection of images involving the archaeologist, John Goodwin, and indigenous people of South Africa, which objectify people in the San community in their role as “scientific evidence.” He considers the way in which these images, and the decision to show these images, replicates specific kinds of knowledge:

“At the same time that it suggests an array of possible meanings, it [the photograph] offers its own surface as being indexical of a kind of truth. This is the source of its power, and the nature of its “second life.” Each viewing of the image restages the original drama of looking and being seen—not as an event but, as it were, through association, through replaying the tropes and ideas that clustered around the original encounter (primitiveness, blackness, sexuality, Otherness, fascination and denial, desire and fear). At the same time, it recalls the violently objectifying nature of the act” Shepherd (2012: 297-8).

The power of photography not only lies in the images themselves, but also in the showing or hiding of specific images; the “politics of representation” are at work in addition to the potentially deeply poignant images. The Banda Thru Time project, for example, contains multiple images of women engaged in different stages of practicing potting, with images drawn from time periods ranging from the early 1980s to the last decade. In earlier decades it was not uncommon for women to be bare-breasted as they worked. However, in keeping with contemporary sensibilities around ‘appropriate clothing’, the images selected for the repository do not represent bare-breasted women at work, particularly as an intention of the repository is to unsettle the objectifying nature of the ideas surrounding African communities, as discussed at the beginning of this paper.

There are examples which consider the potentials and challenges of e-patriation as well as repatriation more generally. O’Neal (2013: 166) notes that the “loss of traditional lifeways, including language, ceremonies, and their associated cultural knowledge and customs, is universally regarded as a key challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century for tribal communities.” This is

valuable for considering the effect that repatriation or e-patriation has on creator communities. O'Neal (2013) shares an example of repatriation in her discussion of the return of films to the Zuni communities. The project involved digitizing manuscripts and film from the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation collection. The collection included films produced by ethnologists in the 1920s that were intended to capture daily life in the Zuni communities. The museum worked closely with indigenous knowledge holders in the digitization of these objects. In this process, "the knowledge in these manuscripts and films can only be fully recovered if every attempt is made, while still possible, to use them interactively and to stimulate the fading memories of the traditional knowledge keepers of the cultures" (O'Neal, 2013: 180). The author highlights the value in returning objects to stimulate memory work for the community, in order to stimulate the engagement of community-based narratives. Similarly, Smith (2008) discusses 'Project Naming', which is the repatriation of photographs to Inuit communities. In this project, young community members had the opportunity to travel to the Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa to view historical photographs taken of the Inuit in the early- to mid-1900s. Digital copies of the photographs were then taken back to the community to be shown to elders and other community members. The elders reported on the contexts of the photographs, including names of individuals and the settings they were in, as they could recall the events which were portrayed by the images. This too, had a dramatic effect on memory-making, which Smith (2008: 6) describes as a process of "reclaiming native memory." The context of the photographs as relational objects stimulates memory among community members who can disseminate that knowledge to other community members. This highlights how photographs can serve to engage community members in a process of memory work, and underscores the potential for the creation of historical narratives on the part of indigenous communities.

The Banda Thru Time repository and website contains many images from the 1980s and 1990s. Since many community members are too young to have experienced those times, the context of the images will likely be remembered by those of an older generation, who can then pass on that information to the younger members of the community. For example, many of the photographs are taken of women during various practices, such as potting or cooking. Because the practice of potting is dwindling, the elder women of the community will likely have more knowledge of this practice. They can engage other community members in this process with the images as the catalyst for that discussion.

These recently published works show the growing interest in repatriating objects digitally, the benefits of which are varied. As Lyons and Hennessy (2012) cite in their discussion of the Inuvialuit Living History Project,<sup>3</sup> communities can receive these projects with great enthusiasm. Another initiative for this field of work is the Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage (iPinCH). The intention of this 7-year SSHRC-funded Partnership initiative was to pursue questions around intellectual property rights and the best practice and protocols for engaging communities with cultural property (Nicholas 2010). These questions motivate researchers to think about how digital repatriation can contribute to the larger discussion of intellectual property rights and cultural property. Similarly, Krmpotich (2010:176) has offered thoughts on Haida repatriation efforts, and suggests that they have had particular effects on “the construction, collectivization, and restoration of memory.” The repatriation of human remains from museums and other locations has been ongoing since 1996; the process of repatriating these human remains centres on respect for Haida ancestors (Krmpotich, 2010: 161). She notes that repatriation efforts have brought out notions of kinship and collective practices through the

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<sup>3</sup> This project is a website which provides access to an assemblage called the MacFarlane collection at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC. It can be found here: <http://www.inuvialuitlivinghistory.ca/>

remembering by various community members, namely, the elders. Kinship is also touched on through the work of Carsten (2007: 5), who considers kinship emerging as a “particular kind of sociality in which certain forms of temporality and memory making and certain dispositions toward the past, present and future are made possible, while others are excluded.” Relationships and kinship can be a thread for the creator community’s relationship to the photographs in the project. For example, community members who view the images might recognize family connections as subjects of the photos—mothers, fathers, grandparents, etc (Pedri, 2016). As Carsten (2007: 18) goes on to say, photographs “can demonstrate materially their immersion in their present and future families.” For example, the scholars who took the photos used for the Banda Thru Time project might view the subjects as representing specific activities (e.g. cooking, potting, etc) or specific roles (e.g. political positions such as ‘chief’ or various informants), as evidenced by the metadata associated with each photo. However, the viewers of the photos might relate differently to those photos; for example, instead of an image of women practicing potting (Figures 1 and 2), viewers may recognize the image as that of a family member (e.g. mother, grandmother, etc.) (Stahl, 2016a). An example of this is Figure 3, wherein women recognized family members while viewing the sample website (discussed further in Chapter 3). Photographs can be part of the present and future, due to linkages of kinship, and not simply products of the past. They can engage creator communities with building narratives to reflect their interpretations of the past, present and future.



**Figure 1: Bondakile potter forming a jar, 1982. Photo by Ann Stahl.**



**Figure 2: Dorbour potter headloading pottery to market, Banda-Ahenkro, 1982. Photo by Ann Stahl.**



**Figure 3: June 2016 photo viewing with Banda women**

## Chapter 3: Process and Making of the Website and Digital Repository

### 3.1: Process

The process of building a website and repository for e-patriation to the Banda communities is a focus of this paper. I take a reflexive approach here to underscore my role in the process. Given the situated character of all knowledge (Haraway, 1988) there is need to be cognizant that the project (the website and the construction of the repository) is but one highly specific account or visual possibility for the social, political, economic, and historical processes of which the Banda communities are a part. This chapter focuses on the pathways through which digital repatriation is initiated in a community, as well as the basic steps used to follow best practice as it is currently understood.

My involvement in the project began with a meeting with Dr. Ann Stahl, wherein we discussed the potentials of providing the Banda communities with some form of digital repository for images collected by scholars over the years. During a 2011 visit to Banda, Dr. Stahl and colleagues presented the Banda community with posters that could be used in local schools and the Banda Cultural Centre and intended to convey some of what had been learned through the Banda Research Project about local history.<sup>4</sup> During the course of a community event at which the posters were ‘launched’, community members notably engaged with the images that were presented on the posters; younger community members used the opportunity to take pictures of these images using their cell phones, and many people expressed an interest in seeing more historic images of Banda. Electricity is more accessible in Banda than ever; therefore, people have access to online connections, mostly through cellular devices. This

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<sup>4</sup> These posters can be found here: <http://bandathvertime.matrix.msu.edu/index.php/posters/>

provided the impetus for the Banda Thru Time project as Stahl sought means to create an online repository through which community members could easily access images and other heritage resources through their cell phones or other electronic devices. The idea was further elaborated on during her time at the Institute on Digital Archaeology Method and Practice held at MATRIX at Michigan State University<sup>5</sup>—an intensive workshop at which participants were to develop a digital project involving heritage resources<sup>6</sup> and return at the end of one year to share and discuss the outcomes.<sup>7</sup> The Institute offered resources in the creation of each project, providing training and supporting its members with expertise in digital methods. This presented a jumping off point for my involvement in the project in terms of facilitating which repository to use, focusing on open access tools and formats, and decisions about which web portal might work best for the specific project, etc. My involvement in the project was based in Victoria, and my fieldwork was done in the digital realm. My fieldwork focused on navigating the digital possibilities of the project. A timeline of these activities can be found in Table 1.

**Table 1: Timeline of Events**

Year	Event
<b>2011</b>	Community event; sharing of posters at the Banda Cultural Centre
<b>July 2014</b>	Amanda Logan’s ‘Remembering the Past’ <sup>8</sup> Celebration at the Banda Cultural Centre
<b>October 2015</b>	Ann Stahl meets with René Bravmann to gather images from his collection for use in the project
<b>November 2015</b>	Ann Stahl meets with Maria das Dores Cruz to

<sup>5</sup> This centre is focused on applying new technologies for research and teaching in humanities and social sciences. Information can be found here: <http://www2.matrix.msu.edu/>

<sup>6</sup> The Institute on Digital Archaeology Method and Practice was held in response to a growing need in archaeology to connect with digital resources and practice. It was funded by a \$250,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. More information can be found here: <http://www2.matrix.msu.edu/portfolio-item/the-institute-on-digital-archaeology-method-practice/>

<sup>7</sup> The creators of various projects that came out of the Institute shared blog posts regarding their projects. The blog posts can be found here: <http://digitalarchaeology.msu.edu/news/>

<sup>8</sup> More information can be found here: <http://www.anthropology.northwestern.edu/people/faculty/logan.html>

	seek permission to use copies of her photographs in the project; Period of image digitization begins
<b>March 2016</b>	Web page under construction
<b>July 2016</b>	KORA repository under construction; Ann Stahl meets with Banda community members to discuss project
<b>August 2016</b>	Website officially launched

This is but one pathway through which digital e-patriation can be initiated in a community. Other digital e-patriation initiatives have taken form through different pathways. One such pathway for example, might be the consultation by researchers with various knowledge holders or elders in a community, as cited by Hennessy et al. (2012). While the ‘Banda Thru Time’ project was initiated by an interest from community members in the images, consultation with community knowledge holders was not the first method in this particular pathway, but rather occurred partway through. Challenges of distance and communication were a factor. Another was that the resources (images) were owned by researchers and not the Banda communities, thereby forcing the consultation to start with the researchers to gain the appropriate materials. A sample of how the website might look, including a variety of image types, was brought forward to the community in June 2016 in order to give the community elders a sense of what the project would look like. Because it is such a visual project, it would have been difficult to give the community a sense of what the project would entail otherwise. After hearing of their enthusiasm over the project ideas at that point, the website and its corresponding repository were further developed through July 2016 and launched on August 29, 2016.

This project is distinguished by the fact that the images themselves are not necessarily being “re” patriated so much as many are being introduced to the community by means of the digital world, or ‘e-patriated.’ Whereas Hennessy (2012) recommends that a community

committee be established to determine which resources should be available for public viewing on the digital interface, in the case of the current project permissions needed to be initially sought from those who created the images. Because the ‘Banda Thru Time’ project was a collection of private photographs from various individuals, a first step was determining whether individual scholars were willing to share their accumulated collections with the repository. Photographs were then received in the form of 35mm slides and photograph negatives from collections of Ann Stahl, René Bravmann and Maria das Dores Cruz. Stahl’s images derive from various research engagements of the Banda Research Project from 1982 until present day. The Banda Research Project highlights how villagers of the Banda area are active participants in global entanglements—this includes but is not limited to their participation in the Saharan trade from 1200CE, British colonial rule from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the current situation of the hydroelectric dam constructed on the Black Volta River discussed previously. The images that were collected, however, were not narrowly research based. Rather, they were images of people and landscapes taken during the course of fieldwork that exemplified various daily activities such as potting and cooking. Many of these images were used in teaching to illustrate architectural forms or landscapes. The subjects of these images were determined by the researcher rather than the communities. The images taken by Dores Cruz were generated as part of the Banda Research Project and specifically as part of a 1994 ethnoarchaeological study of contemporary potting (Dores Cruz, 2011). The images taken by Bravmann derive from his doctoral and later research, conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s, of Islamic influence on West African art (Bravmann, 1974). As an art historian, the images taken by Bravmann are largely focused on objects created in the region.

Photographs have biographies—they have a history of their production, their circulation, their physical form, their life paths of use and storage. Kopytoff (1989: 66) suggests things have biographies, and we can ask the same questions of them that we can of humans such as, “where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far?” Here, I take a look at some of the possibilities of the images from the collection. Most of the images included in the archive are scanned from 35mm colour slides taken prior to 2008 when BRP personnel began routinely to use digital cameras in fieldwork. Most images dating to 2008 and later were ‘born digital’, taken with a digital camera. The shift to use of digital cameras substantively altered the process of image creation. Given the cost of slide and print film and its limited availability in Ghana, fewer images were produced using SLR analog cameras. Colour slides were favoured over print film given the use of slides as teaching tools—they had the capacity to be projected. Black and white print images, such as those taken by Bravmann, were useful in publications—until recent decades they were the only workable form of imagery in journals and books. The subject and composition of film-based photos tended to be selected with care at the same time as multiple shots of the same subject photographed at varying exposures were the norm. This was to ensure that one obtained a “good” shot given limited access to film developing and the time lag required to process photos. This resulted in many repeats in the film-based photograph collection. This was in sharp contrast to digital photography, in which one can see the image directly after taking it on the digital device. In addition, it is possible to delete images that are not what the photographer wanted, and retake photos in the moment, or to possibly have many versions of a shot. Another contrast between photography types that influenced the collections was based on storage capacities. The analog camera used film, which allowed for 24 photos per

roll. The digital has the capacity for much higher amounts based on the type of memory used as storage.

In terms of use, the biography of images varied depending on their form, quality and subject matter. Some were actively and frequently used as slides in university lectures or scanned into books to be published and circulated. Images repeatedly used in lectures might be stored together in slide carousels or metal boxes, while those images not selected for illustrative purposes rested in the small cardboard or plastic boxes in which they returned from the processing lab, in special purpose metal boxes designed for slide storage or in negative holders in binders. With the advent of digital applications, some analogue resources were made digital (through scanning) to be used in the digital display mediums that began to be used in classrooms routinely from the early 2000s (e.g., PowerPoint). These tended to be the same images that had been used as slides to accompany lectures. Other images remained dormant. At the beginning of this project, the negatives and slides contributed by René Bravmann travelled by ferry with Ann Stahl from Seattle, Washington to Victoria, BC in order to be selected and scanned for inclusion in the Banda Thru Time repository. His collection was a binder of negatives from his books, with a few colour slides in small boxes. The biographies of the slides were diverse, each lifespan developing in unique ways depending on the photographer's need for them, ultimately affecting their assembly into collections.

Following the reception of these photographs, images were prioritized for scanning. Each slide, as part of their respective biographies, had associated values. Some of these values include things like different types of frames (some plastic, some cardboard, some metal), different brands of film, such as Kodachrome and Fujichrome, and various other traces such as the details inscribed on the surface of the frames (including dates, locations, names, the

numbering from the process of developing, etc). The black and white negatives were kept in a binder as strips of successive images that had been cut into different lengths, sometimes four in a strip, sometimes only one.

Before I began the scanning process, it was important that I clean the slides so as to take off any dust particles or debris. I did this using an anti-static microfibre cloth as well as an air blower. Some of the images had debris stuck to them, which was difficult to remove even with the microfibre cloth, without scratching them. The cleaning process was not a perfect one. Even after wiping and blowing the images clear of dust and debris, some particles still ended up on the images. This resulted in having some images with small marks appear in the digitized photo, which carries implications for the collection, as traces of time. Parikka (2015) suggests that dust and debris is part of an object's historical trajectory throughout its life. The implication in wiping this off for the purposes of the scanning process is that the history is being wiped off or wiped away. In keeping with the theme of the images having distinct biographies, the fact that some dust and debris remains on the images might be seen as remnants of the image's history through their lifespan. The digitized photos carry with them that sense of their original production (the marks on the digitized photo from dust or debris on the slide).

If we consider the notion of photographs as having their own historical trajectories (Edwards, 2012) then these images manifest that history in the process of scanning. Through the process it becomes apparent that wiping down the scanner before use was also helpful. As the scanners are available to students, there were often fingerprints or smears on the glass which would result in some blurring of the images, therefore cleaning the surface of the scanners was also necessary. The scanning was done using an Epson Perfection V750 Pro as well as an Epson Perfection V850 Pro scanner (depending on which was available) in the University of Victoria

MacPherson Library over the course of several hundred hours. Each slide and length of negative was fit into their respective holders (which come with the scanner, as it is made specially to accommodate this type of scanning). The 35mm slide holder fit twelve slides each and took roughly 20-30 minutes per scan of each holder. I scanned the images at 4800 dpi resolution, and as .tiff files, which is recommended as ideal for archival use. Another thing that I learned during the process was that the scanner had a pattern for the direction that it scanned each image (some scanners were row by row and others were column after column), which made it easier for me to organize them according to their allotted numbers on the spreadsheet later.

Another aspect of scanning was the creation of a spreadsheet to account for the details noted (the “facts” created) through notations on the exterior mounting of the slides. This included but was not always limited to: dates, names of photographer, subject matter, names of people, objects, or places in the images, the location where the images were taken, as well as the numbers on the slides. In retrospect, it would have been good to also include the imprint number on the slide, as a record of the position an image had within a roll of film. This information can be useful in sequential ordering. As the number of slides mounted, I was given coloured labels for better organization of the slides. This became a useful tool for organizing them inside of a box (which was specially selected for containing the slides), but also for cross-referencing them with the spreadsheet. The labels were small red, removable stickers that I could adhere to the slides on which I could write numbers corresponding to those on the spreadsheet that I developed. I started numbering the photos as they came off of the scanner so that I could later enter the images’ information (from the slide) easily as I cross-referenced the number on the red dot to the number in the spreadsheet. Because I began this part of the organizing well after I had started the scanning process, I went back to the other slides (which were simply placed in order

inside the box—carefully so as not to alter their order) to organize them in the same fashion. The reason that this became important—which I did not foresee before I began the process—is that some information on the slides was illegible to me. Therefore, it was important that I could easily access certain slides at any time to correct the data after consultation with individuals who produced the photos.

Another aspect of the slide organization that arose as a ‘lesson learned’ was that of categorization. Having the slides organized into distinct categories prior to scanning would have made future sorting easier. This could have been done through a temporal order of slides (by their catalog numbers), or by topic (e.g. potting or landscape). Part of the process of scanning the images also revealed a crucial step: quality control in frequent intervals throughout the process instead of after much of the work had been done. Roughly halfway through the scanning process, it was determined that I had scanned some images backwards, and these needed to be ‘flipped’ on the computer (through photo editing software) in order for them to be usable. Some 35mm slides and negatives have a reference upon them which tells the user to face the image in a certain direction (i.e. ‘this side towards screen’), while others, such as those inserted in a plastic frame, do not. Those who worked with this technology signaled the orientation of the image by writing informational labels on specific sides of the slide frame. This was helpful when inserting the slides into a projector, for example. This was part of the learning curve for me in scanning the slides. More frequent quality controls throughout the scanning would have been beneficial to this part of the process.

The creation of the website and repository followed. After doing some research on the platforms that we would use (WordPress for the website and KORA for the repository), we (Ann Stahl and I) began to think about which template to use with WordPress to create an image-rich

access point for the photos that would also give some context to the project and Banda history. The template had to work well with mobile technology as most of the community would be accessing the website from their cellular devices. The template that we decided to go with was the 'Hero' theme from Theme Trust for WordPress. At this point, we needed to decide upon a host for the website. It was determined that we would use the University of Victoria's hosting service for WordPress sites; however, this posed a challenge in terms of using the 'Hero' theme as the University has specific templates to use for their services, and 'Hero' was not one of the available templates. After consulting with the helpdesk at the MacPherson Library, we opted for the 'Divi' theme template in order to comply with the restrictions.

One of the pressing issues of building the website at this point was deciding how the website would be organized. For example, we discussed how the images would be organized in tabs, how much text to incorporate, and which images would be selected to go onto the website and in the repository, complications of which I discuss below. Using the 'Divi' theme, we decided to connect the themes of the informational posters created in 2011 and 2014 detailing the history of the Banda region to the themes used in the website. Our themes included Crafting (Potting, Cloth, and Metal Working), Feeding the Family, Housing the Family, Landscapes, Learning from the Past, Ceremonies and Waterscapes. Within each page, such as the landscape and waterscape pages that I constructed, we added images associated with the topic as well as a general overview of the topic in order to contextualize the images. I was responsible for developing the website's frame and during the design process, I engaged in repeated 'test runs' to see how revisions made in the Dashboard looked on various devices, including cellular phones, PCs, and tablets (Figures 4 and 5). Once the general design was decided upon, I used the 'clone' function to replicate the same design throughout, only changing the information and

imagery. The process of framing the site was made time-consuming by the need to learn various functions of the WordPress theme. Ann Stahl took primary responsibility for establishing the metadata framework for the pilot KORA<sup>9</sup> repository which was also established at this time, creating fields of information that were applicable to the project (i.e. photographer, dates, locations) followed by the entry of around 50 images and their accompanying details. This was only a fraction of the 800+ photos that were scanned, but offered a sense of each category. The images and documents ingested were organized into two KORA schemes. A scheme determines the type of information or data that will be collected from records. In this case, the two schemes reflected those items discussed above, such as photographer names, date of creation, and locations for the image scheme, and document history for the document scheme. At this point, the KORA repository was not connected to the website, due to technical difficulties. Specifically, MATRIX had not developed a plugin that would allow WordPress to draw data from KORA.

With a basic site that included some images and text, as well as some images uploaded into the KORA repository, Ann Stahl visited the Banda community to gauge their reactions to this potential website. She met with Paramount Chief Nana Kwadwo Tsito and a group of his elders as well as with Queen Mother Lelee Akosua Kipefu II and her elders. Elders were asked for input on the draft web site and pilot repository and conversations ensued regarding the themes for and potential value of further developing digital heritage resources. All parties expressed considerable enthusiasm for an expanded project for which Stahl is currently in the process of seeking SSHRC Partnership Development Grant funding.

Following her visit to Banda, Stahl attended the second portion of the MATRIX DAI Institute where her goal was to finalize aspects of the web page and develop links to the digital

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<sup>9</sup> KORA is an open-source, digital repository created by MATRIX. More information can be found here: [http://kora.matrix.msu.edu/promo\\_index.php](http://kora.matrix.msu.edu/promo_index.php)

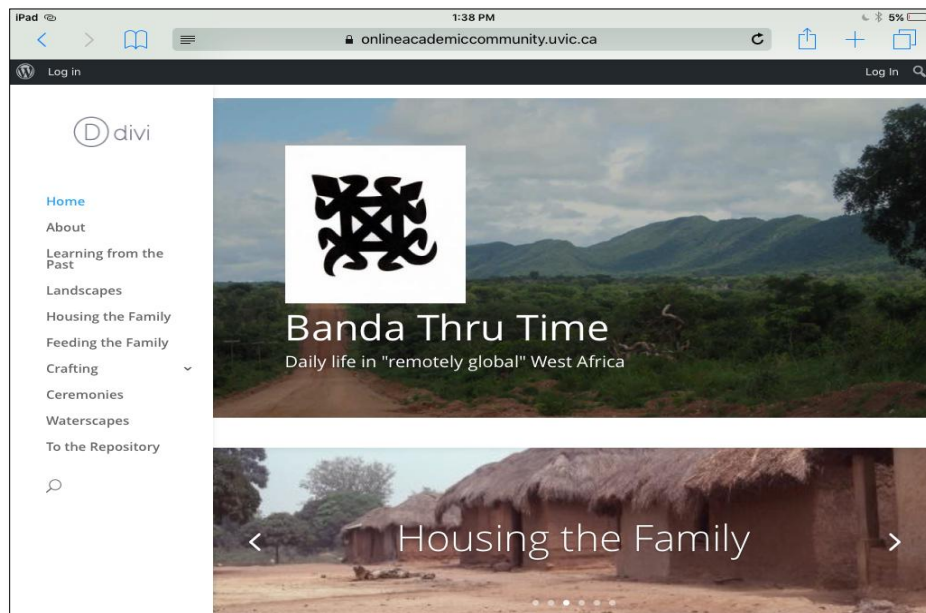
KORA repository. Here we encountered a substantive roadblock when it became clear that UVic computing would not allow installation of the newly developed KORA WordPress plug-in. We also learned that the Divi template would not allow for easy export to other templates, making the option of hosting the main site elsewhere prohibitive given the time it would have taken to strip the embedded shortcode that makes Divi easy to use but hard to export.<sup>10</sup> As such, we opted to continue with the Divi theme template as the main webpage. After much deliberation, Stahl decided the best course of action was to create a separate and rudimentary webpage, housed on MSU's MATRIX server using a basic WordPress template ("2013") compatible with the KORA repository and in turn link the subsidiary website to a "repository" page on the main Banda Thru Time website. In addition to learning that the KORA repository was not compatible with the theme, Dr. Stahl also discovered at the workshop that the KORA repository was not as user-friendly as originally envisioned. Logged on in an administrative capacity, it was very easy to use and logical, but from the user perspective, the repository was not searchable and difficult to find certain images or documents. Some of this was resolved through various work arounds, including housing some of the images and historic documents and associated metadata on the third party site, which connects the two parts of the project. While this part of the process would have been better resolved before the project had started, it was also determined that in the future, the images could be moved to a different repository that is compatible with the chosen WordPress theme or alternatively developing a web site from ground up. The Location and Landscape page that I created,<sup>11</sup> for example, is a simple page with little text and multiple historical images. I chose the amount of images based on the fact that we had to

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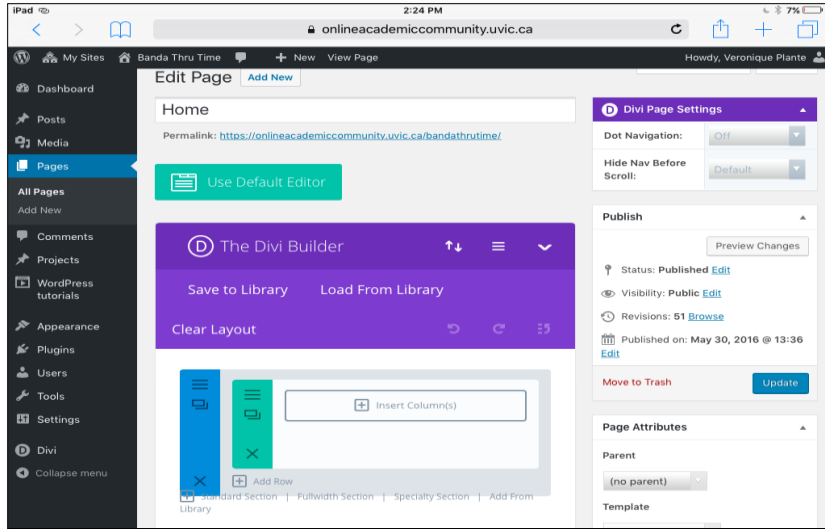
<sup>10</sup> For more on this topic see: <http://chrislema.com/divi-theme-forever/>

<sup>11</sup> The location and landscapes page can be found here: <http://bandathrutime.matrix.msu.edu/index.php/location-and-landscapes/>

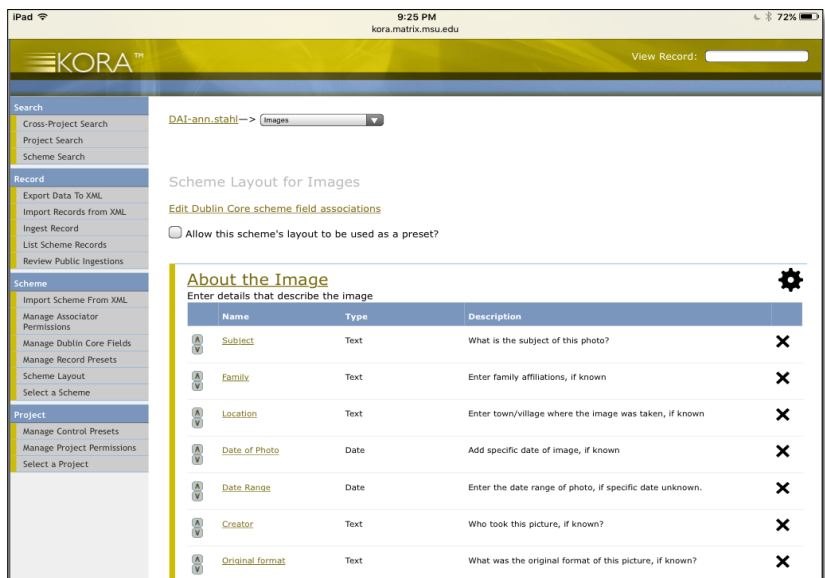
create a separate page for the repository, and did not want to overload the site with images that would make it slow to load. Also, the images had to be in a smaller resolution (around 500 by 800 px) for this same reason. The text for this page is meant to give it some context, while the images are a collection of historical locations and landscapes. The websites and associated repository were then launched on August 29, 2016 (Stahl, 2016b).



**Figure 4: Screenshot of Banda Thru Time homepage.**



**Figure 5: Screenshot of Banda Thru Time website dashboard**



**Figure 6: Screenshot of KORA digital repository when logged on as administrator**

### 3.2: Making

“People act in a flow of action unfolding over time, and interactions with things form a central part of this flow” (Robb, 2015: 167). This statement sets the theme for the second part of this chapter, which references the process of making ‘things,’ in this case the making of the Banda image archive. “Making” is a term borrowed from Ingold (2009) to highlight the importance of the act of putting the archive together. He notes that making is:

“...about the way in which materials of all sorts, energised by cosmic forces and with variable properties, mix and meld with one another in the generation of things. And what they seek to overcome in their rhetoric is the lingering influence of a way of thinking about things, and about how they are made and used, that has been around in the Western world for the past two millennia and more” (Ingold, 2009: 92).

In order to understand fully the objects that we research—or in this case, the value in archiving materials for e-patriation purposes—it is essential to consider the ways and materials with which the archives were produced. Making in this project included making the photograph—the lights and chemicals associated with that act—as well as putting together the archive and making the digital world where it would be housed. In order to do this, Haraway (1988: 583) states that “all our eyes, including our own organic ones, are active perceptual systems, building on translations and specific ways of seeing, that is, ways of life.” All of our knowledges are situated; while this can be applied to the viewer, whose eyes will develop specific perceptions regarding the material in front of them, it is also applicable to the creator. She also notes that photographs are all mediated by those who produce and view them, and as such are all very specific possibilities (Haraway, 1988: 583). Considering this, I would like to emphasize that this project is but one

highly specific visual possibility for creating an accessible digital heritage resource for the purposes of other people's history-making. This part of the chapter on making will address two central questions: 1) what implications are involved in the composition of assemblages or collections? and 2) how do metadata 'fix' objects, and what role does the agency of objects play in this?

A significant portion of the Banda Thru Time repository and websites are focused upon visual media. MacDougall (1998:68) notes that the visual in anthropology has had a tense past due to its susceptibility to misinterpretation and its convincing nature. This reflects some of the concerns of the project, specifically the idea of representation and the tension around what is appropriate to represent as well as the way in which the photographs get represented. This process situates the community in the eyes of those who decide to view the images, which will be discussed in the chapter on continuity and change. The visual is such a critical component of the project that tension around the visual had to be undermined in some ways. To do this, the project uses written components as well as the visual, which are used in giving some context to the images. Interestingly, "a significant contrast between the written and the visual in anthropology may...lie not in their very great ontological differences, nor even in their very different ways of constructing meaning, but in their control of meaning" (MacDougall, 1998:68). Following this observation, the use of both the written and visual in the project was to strategize ways in which 'control' could be exerted over meaning such that the meaning serves to upset the dichotomy of continuity and change. For example, images from the present were interspersed with the historical images to highlight a sense of continuity as well as change, which will be further discussed in Chapter 5. Rather than leaving the images on their own, the web pages provide accompanying text to give context to the images, exerting some 'control' over how the

images get viewed. The images of the dam on the waterscape page that I constructed,<sup>12</sup> for example, are coupled with text regarding the political, economic and social processes surrounding this change for the Banda region, rather than simply leaving the images to focus on ‘change.’ The historical images show the region prior to the dam being built (Figure 7); some show the construction of the dam (Figure 8); and some show the region after the dam was built (Figure 9). Drawing on images alone, this could be seen as a narrative about how Banda is changing in time. But paired with the text, the images describe the various processes that affect local people as part of the construction of the dam. This includes the displacement of various villagers and adaptations in lifeways, but also a description of how people are managing these changes. There is continuity in practice as well as change.



**Figure 7: Dam site on the Black Volta River, 1990. Photo by Andrew Black**

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<sup>12</sup> The waterscape pages can be found here: <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/bandathrutime/home/waterscapes/> and here: <http://bandathrutime.matrix.msu.edu/index.php/waterscapes/>



**Figure 8: River diversion during dam construction, 2009. Photo by Ann Stahl**



**Figure 9: Bui hydroelectric dam, 2016. Photo by Ann Stahl.**

An important aspect of making the archive are the philosophical underpinnings of objects and people that are prevalent in the contemporary discourse on materiality (Harrison, 2013). Harrison (2013: 15) highlights this philosophy as being an inherent separation of matter and mind, suggesting that objects are often thought of as unable to exert agency in social settings and are without mind or spirit of their own. A focus on this underlying philosophy can prompt consideration of the ways in which the project might uproot these underpinnings. I argue that

objects—photographs in the case of the project—have agency, which will be discussed here. The concept of agency that I use is borrowed from Harrison (2013). He describes ‘things’ as being actors, rather than simply take-aways from cultures in the past, to be acted upon in the present.

As Byrne et al. (2011: 4) argue in thinking about collections, the social and material are “fundamentally entangled.” The material is inherently connected to the social; collections emerge through the relation of both. Gell (1998: 20) notes that it is not implausible to consider all things with agency, rather than agency as a unique human condition. This reminder to think of ‘things’ as being shaped by multiple processes relates back to the idea of “making” put forward by Ingold (2009). Edwards (2011:159) reflects on thinking of objects, particularly photographs, as “moments of entanglement,” bringing to light the notion that the making of an object is just as important as the final form. The making of the images in the collection—the film that was used, the camera, the light, the chemicals—is important to the final product (the image). The process of building the archive—putting together the images, selecting modes of dissemination (i.e. which templates and repository to use)—also creates moments of entanglement. They connect together to form the biography of the images.

If objects can be said to have agency, then it is imperative that the project considers ways in which this might happen. This agency is twofold: first, the agency can refer to the objects as units which accumulate their own life history or trajectory (Parikka, 2015) and therefore bring these histories with them wherever they go, reflected in their respective biographies. This includes the notion of photos carrying weight with them, such as through the dust that accumulates on a slide over time. The second reflection regarding agency is on how objects

affect humans in the present, whether they be as individual objects or as collections, which is discussed below.

The second point regarding agency, which reflects on how objects exert their agency, or rather, how they are negotiated in the present, is of particular interest in the context of this project. Byrne et al. (2011: 5) note that “by looking at the social relations in which collections have been embedded and continue to function, [this leads] to a better understanding of the meaning of human/object relations. The materiality and longevity of collections themselves mean that they create relations that are not just a phenomenon of the past but continue to be re-negotiated in the unfolding present.” Collections and the relations that involve them are constantly being negotiated. In producing the archive for this project, I had to consider ways in which the objects or collection would affect these negotiations in the present. This exemplified itself in the consideration of nested levels of power within creator communities. Many of the images taken by Stahl and Cruz are of women involved in various activities; this has practical reasoning—for example, as women, they had access to female dominated activities. Given the quantity of images related to this, however, would gender be a concern for viewers? Would the male part of the community feel as though they were misrepresented by the images in light of the number of female dominated photos? Likewise, would certain villages that were less represented than others feel as though the project did not characterize their roles in the community? In thinking about how the objects (images) are negotiated in the present, it becomes apparent through this project that many aspects of viewership should be considered before presentation. Although these considerations did not dictate which images to pick, they were certainly under advisement when privileging certain kinds of images to assemble into the collection.

The production of a collection or the assemblage of an archive has a way of ‘fixing’ objects. Selecting images to include in the repository was a challenge in that this selection process was indicative of a specific range of criteria—both explicit and implicit—as well as being indicative of a specific viewpoint on the history of the Banda area. Trouillot (1995) remarks on the implications for inclusion and exclusion in the production of history or narratives with his example of the Haitian Revolution in historical accounts. Harrison et al. (2013) also mention that assembling things into a collection holds an inherent judgement of value. It suggests that some are worth putting into the collection, or will tell the appropriate story, while others do not quite fit the structure that is to be achieved. Despite this, it would be improbable and logistically quite difficult to include every image that was taken and put them into the archive. Some photos were clearer than others, while some were duplicates, replicating the same image with little to no variation for reasons discussed earlier. Based on these considerations, the selection process became very important. It was imperative to consider the implications of such selection, while also keeping an eye to efficiency and practicality. The collection of images then, can be said to have had some agency in determining the outcome of the archive. In some ways, the images themselves affected whether they were included or excluded from the collection, as described above. Harrison et al. (2013:15) note that agency can extend across the collective or collections, not just the individual. Considering the concept of agency put forward here, it can be said that the material component of the project exerted a sense of agency in the composition of its content, and shaped, alongside my influence and perception systems, the outcome of the final project.

Harrison et al. (2013: 5) consider objects through their affective “weight.” They use this term in two ways. First, the term describes the physical qualities of objects, which will be

discussed later. And secondly, as a way to describe the agency that objects hold and take with them. This can be political or social weight, in a sense. The meaning associated with objects and which they produce can carry significant weight in these circles, and is applicable in the Banda image archive. As noted above, would having more female dominated activities represented in the images skew the perception of Banda histories towards this? Or, does having more of certain villages represented in the archive misrepresent Banda as a whole? These questions have social and political implications for the way they are viewed. Since objects have the power to “shape and change our responses” (Knowles, 2013: 253) in the world, it follows that they can carry this metaphorical weight with them wherever they go. Again, although they have this ability, it is important to remember that the objects themselves do not take action but are relational objects.

One possibility for this in relation to the images is that they can affect memory making, which will be a topic of discussion in a subsequent chapter. Rather than viewing objects, or images in this case, as having narratives built into them, the notion here is that they require interpretations. Those interpretations still require performances in the present in order for those “objects and stories (to) find historical traction” (Harrison, 2013: 165). This has implications for how people view the past, but also how they perceive the present and future, both individually and as a group. Given the questions above, although there are uncertainties in the privileging of certain images over others, it follows that the collection of images as a whole still requires input by the viewers. An example of community viewing might be elder women in the Banda community sifting through the images in the crafting part of the website. Many of these images are female dominated and express traditional crafting practices that may not be known by younger generations. While they tell the story of those traditional crafting practices, they might also tell the story of lineage, of mothers and grandmothers, sisters, daughters. Elder women in

the community might use the images to disseminate information about the traditional crafting practices but they might also use the images as a conversation starter about their relatives, or people they knew from the past. The narratives are not carved into the images; they are produced through images, recurrently and recursively, creating layers of meaning for both individual viewers and groups.

Despite the fact that these images are located on the internet, there is an intrinsic physicality to them which deserves recognition. While cyberspace may not carry weight per se, the server and server farms which allow the internet to exist are very much ‘weighted’ objects. In addition to this, the computer or mobile device from which the images are viewed is also ‘weighted’ (Parikka, 2015); they have a physical presence for the viewer. In a broader sense, these objects are really media, which can be defined here as simply mediations for human interactions. The images as well as the devices they are viewed on are mediating human interactions, both with each other and for individual memory work purposes.

Part of understanding the way media shape interpretations is thinking about an object’s past. The images, for example, each with their own life trajectory, tell different stories. Parikka (2015) argues that one cannot know about an object without thinking about its history or narrative. In this case, this entails the whole scheme of production included in these tangible materials, in addition to the 35mm slides, negatives, scanners, computers, etc. which were used. Miller and Sinanan (2014) use the theory of attainment to consider how humans use media to interact with their worlds. This theory suggests that interactions are not more or less mediated by technology than before the “digital age” but that humans today interact differently and are equally mediated by culture. They state that “this approach is taken as foundational because it rests upon the anthropological premise that all human communication is equally mediated

because it is equally cultural” (Miller and Sinanan, 2014: 185). Technology is a means of interaction, and varies culturally as people appropriate and negotiate technologies differently. This falls in line with the notion that performance gives objects their memory-making ability (Ebron 2002:11; Harrison et al. 2013:165). This focus on mediation, however, allows the researcher to dig into the means of the interaction, rather than determining whether or not they are mediated by ‘things.’ So, if we accept that the images and everything that is associated with viewing them (i.e. device, digital platform, servers, etc.) are equally methods of mediation, we can approach the objects themselves in terms of how they affect human interaction.

As an example, consider the theme of continuity and change within this paper. The notion that using ‘new’ technologies is equivalent to ‘change’ and ‘progress’ is a widespread ideology. One might consider not just the media (including technologies), but also the human interaction in relating to the technologies. The technologies do not equate with ‘change’ and ‘progress,’ as all human experience is mediated. Whether it is a cellular device or a hand-written letter, the mediation experience by humans is equal. To carry out the prior example of viewing images of female dominated activities, if one considers only the image and the technologies that allow the image to be viewed, one might think of them as representations of historical activities acted out within the community (i.e. representations of women cooking or potting). However, it is also valuable to consider ways in which these images facilitate other responses and interactions between community members. For example, the images might—to an elder woman—be not just representations of the activities they used to be involved with, but also of family connections. This might be the grounding for the images’ value within the community. Considering the materiality of images through this lens, the consequences of media are clear.

Objects, such as the images, have individual biographies, much like humans (Edwards, 2012: 222). Parikka (2015: 6) notes that “technical media culture—digital and analog—starts from the geophysical” and that “human history is infused in geological time.” His theory is based on the notion that material goods, such as those technologies mentioned above, are harvested from natural resources, which come from the earth. This inextricable tie between nature and culture (Parikka, 2015: x), is an important facet of thinking about how the archive was made, and serves as a reminder that objects are given meaning, some of which is through their production, or the process of making. This work also highlights the idea of agency which has been the focus of this chapter. Parikka notes that this approach to media is different from evaluating solely the technologies and networks thereof that might be used (Parikka, 2015: 3). It speaks to intentionality too, in the way that these resources are harvested from the earth; some minerals and chemicals are limited and affect the quantity or method in which they are taken up, which in turn can affect how humans build the technologies in the first place. Take the images from the archive as an example. As previously discussed, photos taken from an analog camera and subsequently developed are a longer and less certain process than using a digital camera. The photographer, for example, could not be sure how the photo looked without an LCD screen to confirm. Therefore, it was important to take multiple shots of a specific frame in order to ensure that the photographer caught what they wanted. Without seeing the images until their development—which was also after the roll of film was complete—it was likely that they would take several types of shots—some over exposed, some under. This was a characteristic feature of Stahl’s collection as well as Bravmann’s. This resulted in many cases where they had multiple shots of the same image. In the selection of the images, it made sense to pick the clearest shot out of the bunch. This is a situation where the physicality of the image directly affected the creation

of the archive. The physical chemicals and light involved in producing the film photograph affected their trajectory—determined if they were going to be used in classroom settings or published books, and also if they were going to be part of this project’s archive. The process of making the photos—taking them with a film camera, involving specific chemicals and use of light, as well as the process of taking multiple shots in different ways—affected the biography of the images, and the negotiation of inclusion or exclusion into the project archive.

To sum up, objects maintain and facilitate a level of agency in their relations with humans, and they are not just finished products, but begin with the process of making and are constantly renegotiated in the present to build understanding. They cannot escape time and decay no matter their platform, not even when they are digitized. Their agentive qualities affect how humans use them in performance in day-to-day activity, and this can happen on a collective scale in addition to the individual (object). In addressing the questions from the beginning of this section of the chapter, the making of things has implications for the ways in which they are consumed in the present, as seen in the way selecting images produced a specific narrative of the Banda region. Considering the physical/tangible qualities of things in conjunction with their production (the actual ‘making’ process) influences the final form and the research regarding these aspects can be as enlightening as the study of the object itself. Themes of memory work as well as continuity and change can be analyzed through this lens as I explore in the chapters that follow.

## Chapter 4: Memory Work

Memory work is a recurring theme throughout the trajectory of this project. This chapter will engage with a characterisation of ‘memory work’ and establish context in relation to four key questions: 1) How does memory work relate to identification? 2) How does the notion of memory work affect the assemblage of the collection? 3) Does memory exist only on an individual level or can it exist as a collective? and, 4) do objects hold memories?

Memory has often been thought of as a container, which gets filled up through experiences and taken out when prompted (Jones, 2007: 9). However, this approach acts to consider memory as ‘fixed’ and unchanging, as suggested by Jones (2007: 13), and is underscored by the notion that body and mind are inherently separate entities (Harrison, 2013: 15). The first concern with this understanding of memory is that ‘fixing’ memory does not encapsulate memory as ongoing or as a process. As Jones (2007: 13) points out, “symbols always demand interpretation.” In the context of the project, it is objects (photographs) which are symbols of the past, and therefore engaging people in the process of memory work.

Remembrance is “a process distributed between people and objects and the process of evocation indexed by objects allows people to remember” (Jones, 2007: 26). As such, the process of remembering happens relationally between humans and objects. Rather than producing an exact replica of a memory throughout time, as suggested by the container theory, objects evoke memories in humans, which have the ability to change or fluctuate individually or within groups, as well as throughout different contexts, such as that of place or various social and political contexts. The theory of memory as a container does not take into account the “medium on which inscription takes place” (Jones, 2007: 191). Banks (1998: 18) considers the circulation of a

photograph as taking on meaning throughout its lifespan: “once manifest in the world it begins a career and accumulates a series of linkages and social embeddings.” While memory is not inscribed and fixed, objects take on meaning as they circulate in life, as evident by their biographies. While outwardly this may seem contradictory, the notion that objects have a level of agency, or can ‘affect’ the outcome of things (which has been established in an earlier chapter), is key. In other words, while memories are not inscribed into objects, and simply read by humans throughout time (i.e. an exact replication of memory being perpetuated), objects also have memories, and these are interpreted by humans throughout time. Harrison et al. (2013: 165) summarize this nicely: “objects in and of themselves are not histories. Stories that surround or engage them require interpretive methodologies that establish the nature of these inscriptions and their associated meanings...it is in their performances that objects and stories find historical traction.” To take Connerton’s (1989:2) point that memory facilitates our understanding of the present, it is important to consider ways in which memory is performed and negotiated to understand the past. Ebron (2002:11) notes that representation is determined through performance; this representation could be done through text, oral histories, or social encounters. This suggests that memory needs performance in order to exist in the world, sometimes through repetition or ritual (Connerton, 1989:2). The implication of this for the project is that although we have provided access to the photographs for the community’s use, it is up to the viewers to engage with—or not—and negotiate the memories that the photographs help to facilitate, through performance such as story-telling on a community level.

The theory of memory as container underscores a notion of the separation of body and mind. Jones (2007:223) claims that “we can touch and be touched, see and be seen, act upon things and at the same time be acted upon by them—all this is due to our common fabric as

‘flesh’.” The memory as container theory holds that memories are stored away neatly and taken out when prompted (by an object, for example). This does not account for the way in which remembering is active and involves multiple, dynamic processes and senses. It suggests that memory is a “complex mental structure,” (Jones, 2007:224) rather than a process in which bodies, objects, and landscapes are part of the active process. This also involves thinking of objects as unable to exert a sense of agency (Harrison et al., 2013: 15). People and things are “interstitial to each other,” (Jones, 2007: 89) representing the notion that they are tied up in relational processes of remembering and forgetting together. The implication for the project is that while the archive has been made accessible online, it does not preclude the notion of remembering or forgetting on the part of viewers, because it takes the relation of people to the archive for memory work to occur.

Memory work can exist on an individual level but also on a collective, community-engaged level. Silliman (2009: 216) notes that individuals often recall memories that are personal—sometimes through the context of social narratives. Silliman (2009) also cites practice as key in linking memory to history, performing tradition, and the general ability to retell the story of one’s (individual or collective) past. In the context of e-patriating photographs, photographs have been cited as demonstrating “materially their immersion in the present and future families” (Carsten, 2007:18) but also that they’re not just products of the past with associated ‘fixed’ memories (Carsten, 2007:17). Pedri (2016: 52) describes photographs in the Anishinabeg community as reminders of community values and memories. This conception of memory work has previously been developed in terms of family genealogies in the Banda region, and has potential impact on the circulation of images from the archive, as family members relay their stories associated with family photos, for example. As part of the Banda Research Project,

Stahl working with local research assistant James Anane, coordinated the recording of local family histories, which in 1989 and again in 2011 were distributed among the community in pamphlet form (Stahl, 2001: 79-80). These have been uploaded to the second website as part of the project. Family genealogy is considered to be “a technology of memory” (Ebron, 2002: 107). In terms of the current project, although the images do not explicitly aim to produce family genealogies, an aim is to, through repository metadata that includes individual names and their family affiliations, connect images that were associated to the family history documents that Stahl and Anane (1989) created, enabling people to make links among repository sources. By locating these family histories and associated images online, the community can engage with material that is valuable to them based on their family connections. Agency is always a factor in the interactions between humans and objects, however (Silliman, 2009). As memory is not a simply ‘fixed’ thing, it requires interpretation and performance through various means, and the family histories and associated images are no exception to this; it is possible that various parts of the family histories will be contested or agreed upon, as suggested by Stahl (2001: 80). This is but one example of the potential for memory work to occur in the context of Banda’s histories.

Memory work can occur on a collective scale as well as within an individual. While memory can be considered in collective groups to be a ‘carrying forward’ of traditions (including ideas, practices, stories, language, etc.), as shown by O’Neal (2013), memory should also be reflected as “not simply shared but...actively created or constructed through collective remembering” (Jones, 2007: 41). Climo and Cattell (2002: 77) claim that “only individuals have memories,” but in the context of this paper, it is important to reflect that while individuals can certainly have memories, so too can the collective (Carsten, 2007; Connerton, 1989; Krmpotich, 2010). More specifically, in the way that objects and humans interact relationally between and

amongst each other to construct memories on the individual level, the group, which brings its own set of dynamics, can also construct memory amongst and between humans and objects. As memory work is a collection of actively remembering and forgetting, the group dynamic can establish different memories than the individual might. That is to say, the individual and group memories may differ in some ways, as the dynamic between people and objects shift. In the case of family history in Banda, for example, viewers from certain ethno-linguistic groups might remember the past differently from other groups, even though they are all part of the larger Banda community. In fact, the phrase ‘memory work’ (Carsten, 2007) implies that memory is actively worked at and it is no different here. This example also highlights the notion that memory work on a collective scale can be “a highly political act,” according to Natzmer (2002: 161). In contexts where peoples have been oppressed, their collective memories may have been forgotten, or what Climo and Cattell (2002: 29) call “hidden histories (silenced histories),” which may later be “recovered by the groups whose voices have been silenced.” For example, in Banda, a particular version of history was articulated during Nafana rule under a specific Nafana chief in a particular context (Stahl, 2001: 74); while this accounts for Nafana group history, it silences the other ethno-linguistic groups’ histories in formal accounts. While the significance of this statement is not to be undermined, memories are not simply ‘recovered’ as if existing in a space somewhere and only needing to be retrieved. Rather, performance gives memory work meaning in community settings, as Mack (2011) describes performing “storied practice” in the Nuu-chah-nulth community.

“My sense now is that the knowledge will revive if we return to those practices collectively and as individuals. Thus, though we may not know how to build our canoes or paddle them now, we have reason to hope that

this knowledge will return if we embed ourselves in the kinds of practices that generated it. It seems to me that our best hope in resisting imperialism is not through negotiating complex treaty agreements, drafting a proper constitution, or securing a right to self-determination... Our challenge is to thicken our connection to our stories through sustaining simple practices of, for example, feasting with our hawiih. It is not a matter of returning to an old and almost lost story. It is a matter of looking back to those stories through practice” (Mack, 2011: 305).

The focus here connects memory work to an active participation and construction through practice.

Given the notion that memory is worked at through performance and practice, this can affect the assemblage of the archive. Based on its content—both text (including family histories) and imagery—this assemblage can also “exercise power over the production of history” and sustain long-term effects (Stahl, 2012: 79). The either/or dichotomy of continuity and change is one such example. In acknowledging that assemblages can serve to “exercise power,” this project seeks to undermine this particular form of power (the power of assumptions regarding modernity), in order to create a space where the community members and others can create and share memories amongst themselves. It is important to consider that the images came from a creator community, which produces its own memories. For example, many of the images taken were reflections of specific activities or categories such as potting or cooking. These reflections might vary from the way in which the Banda communities and others might view the images. For example, rather than viewing the categories, they might see images of relatives, or loved ones.

Miller and Sinanan (2014:110) state that “technology is a means, but relationships are the ends.” Memory is worked at through practice. The technology or medium—in this case, the photographs—are the means of creating and sharing memories, but the relationships and the memories that are created and shared are the ends. The archive allows for the photographs to become accessible to the Banda community, but the memories and relationships that will be performatively generated through them are the processes that give them meaning.

## Chapter 5: Continuity and Change

A theme which propelled the work of this thesis project is that of the dichotomy of continuity and change. The notion of continuity and change has implications for the discourse around societies and is an important framework for thinking about the consequences of repatriating images to the Banda community. Stahl (2012: 160) reflects on the consequences that the dichotomy—and its underpinning assumptions—can have on African communities:

“assumptions of continuity feed entrenched notions of African societies as standing outside the flow of history and the challenge can be to demonstrate change in the face of an overarching conviction that village life is lived ‘as it ever was’.” Given the context in which the photographs from the project are being repatriated—that is, growing populations of business people and tourists coming into the Banda region—there is a possibility that viewing these images from the past might spark comparisons that support these notions of village life as being unchanged or not having ‘progressed.’ As discussed in Chapter 3, a focus of Banda Research Project activities in 2011 was to develop informational posters, detailing aspects of the past in Banda.<sup>13</sup> Amanda Logan, a scholar engaged in the Banda Research Project, further contributed by creating posters for the community that shared ideas about past activities that people formerly engaged in such as potting, metal working and the use of different foods that people now consume infrequently. These practices formally afforded Banda people a degree of self-sufficiency that has given way in recent decades to the need to participate in commerce-based activities for survival. The concern for the repatriation of these images in terms of continuity and change was to think about how the images get viewed, and to unsettle the dichotomy as much as possible in order to

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<sup>13</sup> These posters are located in the Banda Cultural Centre in Banda-Ahenkro for community use. They can be viewed here: <http://bandathrutime.matrix.msu.edu/index.php/posters/>

develop different notions of how the Banda community gets perceived by outsiders. For example, the waterscapes page of the website notes the difficulties that some communities face due to the construction of the Bui Dam, rather than just showing images of before its construction and after. It is valuable to consider the dynamism of practice in this context, as it can help to underscore the notion that ‘change’ is not always associated with ‘progress’ (Stahl, 2014: 6)—a familiar trope which undermines variability in humans as well as social and political-economic variabilities—while also highlighting notions of continuity.

The foundation of the dichotomy of continuity and change is important in relation to the Banda communities. Silliman (2009) contends that the categories of the dichotomy are pre-conceived before analysis. He notes that the categories take on “ontological status” thereby informing the work (or perception) that is undertaken, and that “they set up an either/or scenario that pulls material evidence to one side or the other of the dichotomy” (Silliman, 2009: 213). For the purposes of this project, these preconceived or ‘commonsensical’ notions might set up how the photographs get perceived in their viewing. Part of unsettling this dichotomy was to consider ways in which the photographs were presented. In other words, it became apparent throughout the process that some written context might be useful for discussing practices that were evident in the images. This helped to set up some context for people viewing the images, whether they were already familiar with the material or not. This way, through some understanding of practice, viewers might not automatically shift into that ontological status of predefined categories of the dichotomy. For example, the images related to land and waterscapes show before, during, and after the construction of the Bui Dam on the Black Volta River. Without context, the commonsensical categorization might be to suggest that it is a place that is ‘progressing’ as it now has a major source of electricity. However, given the text that is

associated with the images, one learns that not only does the dam provide a great deal of electricity to Ghana, but it also displaced many villagers and unsettled their connection to the land and water. This is particularly useful as the general public will have access to the site, and will be given more context for the continuity and change that is ongoing.

Another aspect of unsettling the dichotomy throughout the project was that of image selection. There was a conscious effort to select images that, in conjunction with text-based information on the website, unsettled the dichotomy. Suggested here is the notion that selecting certain images to present and neglecting others would present a specific historical account. For example, I specifically selected three images which showed the construction of the Bui Dam—before, during, and after shot. By including these three rather than just one or two, I was able to highlight through imagery the textual component which discusses the challenges that the Bui Dam posed to Banda communities. The assemblage of photographs would then be a way to present the notion of continuity and change in a way that spoke to both categories, rather than leaning in a particular direction. Through this editing process, I was able to create a storyline for the images. The concept of assemblage used refers to Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage theory: "assemblage refer(s) to a series of heterogeneous groupings which the grouping itself could be distinguished as a whole from the sum of its parts. Importantly, such groupings are mixed, and social or cultural groupings are not distinguished from natural ones (or vice versa)" (Harrison et al, 2013: 18). This is important as it speaks to the notion of the collection as a whole bearing meaning in the context of continuity and change—as was intended. Rather than the individual parts (or images), the collection speaks to the dichotomy in a way that is constructed, such as with the Bui Dam example. I specifically constructed meaning through the collection of the three images. In the creation of the collection (or assemblage), the selection of images became a

source of thinking through notions of continuity and change. Changing landscapes became apparent in contrasting the older images with more recent ones, such as the images showing before, during, and after the construction of the dam.

As Stahl (2012) reminds us, many African communities get lumped into a preconceived category of staying the same or being stuck in the past. Highlighting the changes in landscape in conjunction with the continuity of practice can serve to help unsettle the discourse that surrounds continuity and change in African contexts. One way to do so is to create an assemblage which shows the general public that throughout changes are embedded in broader political economics. The notion of continuity and change does not necessarily indicate that people are either changed or ‘unprogressed’ throughout history, but rather that practice is worked at and changing landscapes and materials (such as shifting from earthen-walled construction to concrete used to build houses, for example), can co-exist with continuous practices. This underscores the notion that the changing landscape in Banda has a fundamental effect on how people relate to their world. In other words, people and landscapes are inextricably linked. Basso (1996: 105) also notes that humans are deeply situated in time and space. The project would be remiss therefore to not draw attention to the concept of landscape in conjunction with time, especially in the context of continuity and change in the Banda region, as it comprises such an intrinsic part of how people experience their day-to-day.

Ebron (2002: 10) brings up the idea that “the literature on representation reminds us that we have learned to imagine regions through repetitive tropes.” While the case of African communities is often brought up in the context of continuity without change, it is important to understand what concepts of continuity and change stand for. Silliman (2009: 223) suggests that continuity involves repetitive practice between humans and objects to sustain connections. This

might involve the viewing and reviewing of the website and repository in the case of the project. This notion of continuity is relevant to the archive as is the notion of repetition in the context of this dichotomy for the project. While this is the case, it is also seen that changes in materials and objects are evident. The ‘Housing the Family’ page, for example, refers to the construction of homes and village planning. An aspect of change visible through the images is the proliferation of electricity poles and paved roads. Change is not new to the Banda landscape, however. The grid-patterned streets and structure of the community was influenced by British colonial practices in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, highlighting that change is an ongoing process, much as continuity (Stahl, 2001: 63). The paved roads are evidence of change (in materials), but the continuity of village planning from the colonial practices of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is evident in the patterns for paved roads. Continuity and change do not have to be separate and distinct entities. This is another case wherein textual information gives context to the imagery found on the website. It is another concept of the pre-conceived categories which feeds into the historical telling of peoples’ past. The project seeks not only to undermine the qualities which represent the Banda region as being ‘static’ or ‘unchanged’ but also to undermine the initial imagination of regions which repeat and perpetuate the idea. In other words, the project considers continuity and change on a smaller, more local scale, such as through the paved roads example, in addition to thinking through how repetitive tropes might be undermined on a larger, more global scale—for example, how outsiders might read and understand the website that details the connections of paved roads to prior paths of movement. While the scope of the project cannot claim to be meaningful in both of these areas, it was important to consider how the project might step away from perpetuating these scales of repetition, through the inclusion of text-based context, for example.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The ‘Housing the Family’ page does this, for example. While the images depict many differences from historical

The project also highlighted the importance of practice. The organization of the website and repository is largely organized around specific practices. Images and text are located under topics such as ‘Crafting’, and ‘Feeding the Family.’ Silliman (2009: 216) notes that “practice offers the vital link between history and memory, as the mechanism of creating and recreating those ties, of performing tradition, and of developing new ways of living in the world.” With respect to the images and their categorizations (practice-based), this highlights the continuity of practice and changing landscapes. The text and imagery available on the website offer viewers a historical link to practice in the Banda region. Silliman also highlights, however, that forgetting is an important part of practice. It is possible that things are socially forgotten, and actively so (Silliman, 2009: 223). For example, thirty years ago in the Banda region, while it was commonplace for women to go bare-breasted, it is not common practice today, as it is now a stigmatized practice. The website is implicated in this as the collections that were originally amassed for this project contained some with this practice; however, they were not demonstrated in the website for reasons discussed earlier. This type of social practice emphasizes the performance involved in forgetting. While practices can be seen as illustrative of continuity, so too can the lack of certain practices, and this constitutes an important part of memory work which has been discussed.

As the images are entrenched in their own historical frameworks, so too is the dichotomy of continuity and change. Pels (2008: 286) discusses the ontological assumptions that underpin categorizing using this dichotomy and their links to colonialism that are still very much alive in contemporary discourse. He suggests that “the definitions of human difference (are) based on

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to contemporary times, the text assists the viewer in gaining an understanding of the underlying continuities, such as the paved roads being influenced by British colonial practices of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The page can be found here: <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/bandathrutime/home/housing-the-family/>

temporal inequality” (Pels, 2008: 286). This highlights the notion of “static” versus “developed,” but on a temporal scale, which carries with it assumptions about peoples ‘living in the past.’ This takes on notions of development as being ‘beneficial’ and ‘bringing people into modernity’ which are then carried forward by policies set by the development industry (Pels, 2008: 286). For example, after the construction of the Bui Dam, coverage of the construction stated that Ghana could now “boast” of a third hydroelectric dam, suggesting that development is favourable, even advantageous (Gov’t of Ghana, n.d.). This cycle underscores the weight that the either/or dichotomy of continuity and change can have for certain contexts. For the case of Banda, it is important to consider these consequences in that the region is increasingly populated and visited by tourists and business people. The role of continuity in this context might also affect the establishment of legitimacy in the area’s history. Due to the social, political, and economic changes that are ongoing within the Banda region, continuity might be valuable in establishing who has historical anchors there; ongoing continuity in the midst of change proves to some extent that the people who were there before have a legitimate right to the landscape and its resources. Addressing notions of continuity as well as change within the project, but more specifically engaging with both of these in relation to each other, can illustrate the dynamism of this community, in relation to their ongoing entanglement with social, political, and economic processes. While the distinction between the two categories is inherently problematic, creating a context which engages with both can serve to bring them to light and give pause for reflection that these distinctions can cause. In the current project, this was achieved through use of text as well as imagery, as in the example with road paving.

A point of consideration for the concept of the continuity and change dichotomy is that of the physical presence of the repository or archive of photographs. The physicality of objects is

discussed in an earlier chapter, but manifests itself here in terms of its relationship to continuity and change. Trouillot's (1995: 26) moments of fact creation, fact assembly, fact retrieval, and retrospective significance are of import here. Photographs physically captured their subjects, but not throughout every moment in time. Rather, the photographs are from various years, various circumstances, and contexts. The photographs have also been subject to selection, reflecting on the last two of Trouillot's moments. This critically affects the outcome and design of the photos as well as their assemblage. The silences, as per Trouillot's 'moments' are evident throughout this project.

Pink (2011) develops an approach to digital visual anthropology that both underscores the potential of this visual representation in anthropology as well as cautions about the use of it. While the 'Banda Thru Time' project is not strictly digital visual material (it involved the use of slides, negatives, etc), the digital was certainly a large component of the final form. In other words, the archive is located within a digital realm, and although the data itself is located on a remote server located at Michigan State University in North America, its access is through digital means. Pink (2011: 214) considers digital visual anthropology to "involve, broadly, the use of digital resources and technologies in anthropological research, representation, teaching, collaboration, and public anthropology." The value in using Pink's digital visual platform as an approach to this specific context is that it pushes us to consider the ways in which the digital both represents the way people and objects are characterised as well as the way in which people might interact with the material. Given the concerns related to notions of continuity and change, this section will outline the materiality of this project in relation to the dichotomy here.

In developing ideas around the notion of continuity and change, the physical—both what the photographs represent as well as the photographs and other representational material—

configures the process. The digital visual approach—having a digital space for collections (i.e. website and repository)—allows the physical to become more centred in the research process. In having a digital visual component (i.e. the archive), the physical aspect of the work becomes highlighted; indeed, the presence of the archive itself is proof that the present is entangled with the past, as the historical images and documents are being brought together in the present. It is a manifestation of a representation of the past being negotiated in the present. The physical aspects which are represented by the photographs (i.e. objects, people, and landscapes) affect the dichotomy of continuity and change. The way in which these ‘things’ are represented (i.e. the photographs as well as the media with which to view them), can affect the intensification or unsettling of the continuity/change dichotomy. For example, in the project, the design of the website affects this unsettling of the dichotomy. Rather than simply uploading images for viewers to see, there is accompanying text to contextualize the images. The waterscape category<sup>15</sup> for example, gives visual representations of before, during and after the construction of the Bui Dam. Alongside the text, the reader can determine the effects of the construction of the dam more fully. They can understand that not only is the area burgeoning with electricity, but it also has profound effects on lifeways of villagers who lived on the river.<sup>16</sup> The design, which includes both visual and textual elements, also has distinct categories under which to find those elements. This hierarchy of organization is important to the overall way in which the information is represented. It highlights a practice-based valuation, which in turn leads back to the dichotomy of continuity and change, as these elements are also practice or performance based.

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<sup>15</sup> This page can be found here: <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/bandathrutime/home/waterscapes>

<sup>16</sup> A film by Devin Tepleski, a student researcher in the Banda Research Project, called ‘Mango Driftwood,’ details this process. It is available here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ubmaq\\_oxwfQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ubmaq_oxwfQ)

Banks (1998: 19) suggests that while the physical object is important, so are the physical aspects that produce and disseminate that object, such as digital technology. The project, for example, uses a digital interface—a website and repository—which are located on a server farm, but will also be viewed on cell phones and other devices by community members. The physical is deeply rooted throughout every stage of the project, from construction to viewing. In conjunction with this, Parikka (2015: 1) highlights the importance of considering the technology “as an active agent in the ontological and epistemological sense...media structure how things are in the world and how things are known in the world.” If the technology is considered an active agent in this sense, then it is valuable to consider the technologies used in this project—including the slides themselves— as active agents shaping the outcomes of both the creation and use of the archive. Returning to the biography metaphor, the creation and life of the slides and other components of the archive (i.e. the digital world in which it lives, the server that feeds it), actively shaped their exclusion or inclusion and position in the archive. Photos that were duplicates were gauged against each other and selected for best clarity of image; photos that fit the topics highlighted by the website (housing, crafting and so on), were up for contention. In the shaping of the archival assemblage the photographs had a fundamental role in the decision making process.

Multiple factors can enhance or undermine the role of continuity and change in common assumptions about African societies. Stoler (1989: 136) states that “anthropologists have taken the politically constructed dichotomy of colonizer and colonized as a given, rather than as an historically shifting pair of social categories that needs to be explained.” While this statement was made in relation to the work of anthropologists and the consequences of their work, I believe that it highlights an important thread throughout this project: the notion of taking for granted the

assumptions that underpin contemporary discourse and thinking on the subject of continuity and change. Specifically, this project has addressed that continuity and change are often pre-conceived notions that we would do well to attend to, specifically in this case thinking about Banda and its relation to the world. Considering the dichotomy of continuity and change as politically and socially constructed helps us to negotiate ways in which we might step outside of the dichotomy or undermine its power in contemporary discourse regarding contemporary societies.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

The thesis project has exemplified one way in which to provide a resource for memory work and cultural awareness in an ongoing context of change for the Banda communities. It is comprised of a digital repository of images, accessible to locals and others, as well as a website portal from which to access the images. This portal also contains written content which provides context for the images. My aim in this thesis that accompanies the digital resources was to describe a pathway for initiating e-patriation in a community, determine how collections become assembled to form an archive, analyze the process of memory work for communities, and unsettle the either/or dichotomy of continuity and change. I have described complications that arose in assembling the collection and how metadata in this context was affected. An ongoing thread throughout the paper has been the concern to contextualize continuity and change as dichotomous entities; this important theme has been referred to in terms of how continuity and change can co-exist, and that one does not necessarily negate the other, as is often assumed in popular discourse. This theme in relation to Banda has been analyzed in order to step outside of the dichotomy and undermine its power in contemporary discourse regarding contemporary communities. I have argued for memory work occurring on both an individual and collective level. I have argued that memory work is multi-faceted; it is not simply 'held' by objects or brains, but rather is a relational experience between humans and objects as well as the land around them. The implication of this for the website and repository are that they are not simply 'holding' ideas of the past, but are to be engaged with and memories performed. Basso (1996: 105) views "human existence (as) irrevocably situated in time and space, and keenly aware that social life is everywhere accomplished through an exchange of symbolic forms." While the digital medium brings with it particular challenges and potentials (Pink, 2011), I have

underscored in this project how these can be navigated in e-patriation projects. One important thread throughout this paper (and project) has been the value in understanding the context of the community through scholarly sources before initiating steps to e-patriation. In the project, this included understanding various historical processes, such as the road paving example. It was valuable to the analysis of the continuity and change dichotomy to understand that the paved roads were based on colonial processes from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so that this information could be included in the text, reflecting on the possibility that continuity and change are not mutually exclusive.

While there is no specific template to follow in a project such as this, it is valuable to have a sense of how things might flow, and what challenges might await in different parts of the project. This project provided me with multiple ‘lessons learned.’ One of these lessons in this project was related to project management. Without knowing what steps were coming up (i.e. how the KORA repository would/would not be compatible with the ‘Divi’ theme, or creating a sense of order with scanning the images partway through the scanning process), it was valuable to go through these steps in order to gain an understanding of how project management might be achieved in this context. Learning how repositories and websites are compatible is one thing to determine prior to beginning a project such as this. Another valuable tool to use for the scanning portion of this project is numbering slides or images with something like adhesive coloured stickers that won’t damage the slide or image. This should be done in conjunction with the scanning so that the numbers that are created digitally match the numbers on the slides. This helps when returning to those images for documentation purposes or anything else that arises (such as having to re-scan one particular slide for example. Prior to the scanning process, it would be useful to organize slides in some fashion. This might be done temporally (i.e. when the

slides were taken), or perhaps by topic (i.e. ‘Potting’ or ‘Landscapes’). This would make returning to the slides for future reference easier. For example, in the selection process for the archive, one could simply turn to designated topics and sift through those images rather than the whole collection several times for different topics. Finally, an important lesson learned from this project is that of quality control. During the scanning process as well as the website and repository building, make frequent ‘checks’ on the quality of the work. In other words, make sure that the scans are appropriately oriented and that the webpage design is compatible on multiple platforms. This will be useful in that one won’t have to go back at a later date and make changes which might affect the rest of the project. Rather, the changes will occur as the project develops. The following is a table provided as a kind of ‘checklist’ for digital project management in this field.

**Table 2: Checklist for Digital Project Management in E-Patriation**

Challenges	Action
<b>Design</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Select website host and design template. This includes things such as ease of design/user-friendly, the ability to migrate web pages, compatibility with project goals (does the design allow you to achieve these?), etc.</li> <li>2. Select repository host and assess its capabilities in relation to project goals</li> <li>3. Check compatibility of website and repository</li> </ol>

<b>Organization</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Organize collection into categories (e.g. via temporal or topical categories)</li> <li>5. Organize images into one physical location (e.g. a box, to easily flip through to specific images at later dates)</li> <li>6. Select method of tracking (e.g. stickers to unite physical images with digital data)</li> <li>7. Create spreadsheet to track: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Slide or image numbers (which should be the same digitally and physically)</li> <li>II. Image details (such as printed number indicating position within roll, brand of film used, date printed, etc.)</li> <li>III. Photographer</li> <li>IV. Information written on the image (including but not limited to names, dates, locations, etc.)</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>Quality Control</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. During scanning (check orientation of images, resolution quality and load times, etc)</li> <li>9. Test lower resolution images on website and repository for quality and compatibility</li> <li>10. Check data storage for reliability (quality check flash drives before saving too many images to a faulty drive)</li> </ol>

This project has illustrated one possible way to initiate e-patriation in a community. The growing interest in this form of repatriation highlights the need to seek ways in which local contexts can first be understood as well as the consequences of taking such actions. While it is important to always have in mind the notion of best practice, Ingold (2009: 98) also reminds us that “life is open-ended: its impulse is not to reach a terminus but to keep on going.” This underscores the need to always be conscientious in these types of projects. Additionally, it reminds us that the growing field of digital repatriation or e-patriation is also open-ended, and that continuity in this burgeoning field also means that there will be change as ‘best practice’ changes. As Miller and Sinanan (2014: 191) address, “neither a brighter beginning nor a lost past, the future will be just another example of us.” While they speak to the continuity and

change in people, I believe this also represents the continuity and change in the field of digital anthropology; while there will be changes throughout the growth of this field, so too will there be continuity in addressing important cultural projects through digital technologies.

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