Religion in the Digital Age

Suzanne Preston Blier
1. **Data**: Locating Core Knowledge

2. **Questions**: Challenging the known (Contestation, Change Point of View)

3. **Results**: Finding something new (Discovery, Chance, Invention)
Geographical Information System

Collaborative Work Spaces

"Somebody must be watching us."

GIS
Collaborators and Contributors

- Harvard FAS Departments: African and African American Studies; Anthropology and Archaeology; Earth and Planetary Sciences; Economics; History; Government
- Harvard W.E.B. Du Bois Institute
- Harvard Committee on African Studies
- John F Kennedy School of Government
- Harvard Institute for Quantitative Social Science
- Harvard School of Public Health
- Harvard Graduate School of Design
- Harvard Map Collection
- Harvard Music Library
- Harvard Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology
- Harvard Geospatial Library
- Harvard MIT Data Center
- Harvard DataVerse Network
- Aluka: African bibliographic, archaeological, historical, botanical data
- Boston University: African historical layers by John Thornton
- Congo scholar Marc Felix: African language and ethnographic mapping
- EIS Africa: data, technology, information sharing
- Emory University: the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database
- J-Stor: bibliographic data and articles
- MIT: Arabnet Islamic architecture
- Suffolk University: Afrithera historical African Maps
- Oak Ridge National Labs: LANDSCAN population mapping
- TARA: African Rock Art
- UNESCO: World Heritage Sites
- University of Cape Town: Zamani Project cultural heritage sites with visual and spatial documentation
- University of Iowa: Art and Life in Africa Project
- University of Southern Florida: Africa Historic Climate Change data
- University of Southern Illinois: G.I. Jones Photographic Archive of Southeastern Nigeria
- University of Virginia: The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life Database
- University of Wisconsin: African Focus: Image and Sound Collection
- United States Geological Survey: geology collection
- Vanderbilt University: East African music recordings
- Yale University: the Human Relation Area Files
Using GIS to “see”

Google for most of Africa

HMC base mapping same location
Using Google Earth

- Freetown, satellite view
With GIS: Seeing Through Time

Comparison of 1960 and 2008
Who, Where

Historic Base Maps

1722 Delisle
Locating Images
Lot size reign variables
1600-1890
Royals at the Periphery
**Fields in Ethnographic database**

We have compiled ethnographic data on over 900 African cultures primarily from George P. Murdock’s Ethnographic Atlas of the World. Since we have over 90 fields of data for each culture, the database will allow us to examine issues of creativity from a wide range of perspectives.

1. Agriculture
2. Animal Husbandry
3. Boat Building
4. Carte Classification
5. Class Classification
6. Code Number
7. Cognate Kin Groups
8. Community Organization
9. Conquest Frequency
10. Conquest History
11. Custom Marriage
12. Cultural Typology
13. Distribution of Inheritance
14. Distribution of Moveable Property
15. Extended Family Organization
16. Family Organizations
17. Fishing
18. Floor Level
19. Floor Level Copy
20. Gathering
21. Gestural Variation
22. Ground Plan of Dwelling Copy
23. Ground Plan of Dwelling
24. Height Variation
25. High Gods
26. House Construction
27. Hunting
28. Inheritance of Moveable Property
29. Inheritance of Real Property
Types/Places of Slaving
Art and Innovation

Gesture Variables
Neck Length Variables
Proportions
Classicizing (traditional) Cultures (blue)
Experimental (innovative) Cultures (red)
Intermediary Cultures (green)
People who live in...

Experimental: Greater Proportion of circular houses
Active Gods
Spatializing Movement

Africamap
Local Resources

Harvard Map Collection Index